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# RELIGION

## AND AMERICAN CULTURES

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# RELIGION AND AMERICAN CULTURES

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An Encyclopedia of Traditions,  
Diversity, and Popular Expressions

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VOLUME ONE

Gary Laderman &  
Luis León

EDITORS

FOREWORD BY  
Amanda Porterfield

A B C  C L I O

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## FOREWORD

This encyclopedia stands as an important landmark in the study of religion in America. It represents a more democratic appraisal of American religious life and a fuller endorsement of religious pluralism than has often been expressed in the past. It also represents a culminating moment in the more general understanding of religion as a form of culture.

This cultural understanding of religion first came into prominence in the 1970s with Clifford Geertz's definition of religion as "a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations" ("Religion as a Cultural System," 1973). Geertz's definition steered clear of the kinds of normative claims many scholars of religion tended to make about how religion should operate and how people ought to respond to some commanding religious or theological principle. As an anthropologist, Geertz stayed down on the ground, so to speak, investigating the symbolic structures sustaining particular cultures and interpreting the religious concerns and theological claims he found in terms of how they functioned to keep those cultures intact. He was interested in how religion actually worked, and especially in its role as a constructor of human cultures.

Scholars have now been familiar with this Geertzian approach for several decades. But scholars of American religion have sometimes found it difficult to apply it here at home. For one thing, the habit of making normative claims about American religion, and about where Americans have fallen short in their religious lives and what we ought to do to make it right, is so deeply ingrained in scholarly expectation that it is hard to shake. Another thing is that religions close to home are difficult to conceptualize. It is easier to think about religion as a cultural symbolic system if it exists in some faraway, exotic place we might dream of inhabiting, but do not participate in, or have to accommodate, as part of normal life. This encyclopedia

represents the difficult path and goes a long way in the effort to understand how American religious cultures actually function.

Significant advances in understanding American life can be gained by approaching religion in the United States as a big set of different cultures. But such an approach only comes by viewing religion as a cultural construction of reality, and thus by laying aside, at least partially and temporarily, religion's own claims to be something more. Many of the scholars writing essays for this encyclopedia have been pioneers, and are now masters, of this cultural approach to religion in America. Through their work, we are finally able to see that religion in America is just as mind-bending, peculiar, and fascinating as religion in Balinese culture or in Indochina.

Of course, the fact that Balinese and Indochinese religions can be found at home today in America, and are no longer as far away or exotic as many Americans once thought they were, helps us think outside the box of normative judgment about American religions to conceptualize them more openly, and less moralistically, as forms of cultural expression. In other words, the expanded study of American religion represented by this encyclopedia is not simply a scholarly achievement but also the result of the expansion and growing inclusiveness of American religion itself. Never before in American history has religion been so diverse, and never before has religious diversity drawn so much popular attention or been so widely celebrated as a form of cultural wealth. To be sure, religious diversity has existed in North America since prehistoric times. But it has often been suppressed and seen as a threat to social order. Today, by contrast, many Americans see religious diversity as a form of social capital and a sign of self-determination and cultural freedom.

If a price has been exacted for this religious wealth



and freedom, it may be erosion of belief in the existence of American culture as a singular thing. As the title of this encyclopedia indicates, American cultures are many. Even though religion can be conceived as a more or less universal phenomenon consisting of fairly predictable concerns—such as sacred time and space, ritual performance, sex, death, and evil, as the organization of Volume 2 suggests—it always and only exists in particular cultural situations. In North America, the diversity of cultural expressions of religion has become more apparent, while the notion of a singular, uniting religious culture is increasingly a thing of the past.

In earlier decades, many historians of American religion simply assumed that they inhabited such a singular, uniting religious culture and applied themselves to chronicling its development over time. For example, in the first half of the twentieth century, one of the most influential of these scholars, William Warren Sweet, argued for the preeminence of mainline, evangelical Protestantism in American culture and described its growth alongside the expanding frontiers of U.S. territory and its contributions to an emerging national strength. For Sweet, democracy was not only rooted in Protestant culture but also depended on Protestant hegemony for its future. In 1951, in *American Culture and Religion: Six Essays*, he wrote: “The great basic freedoms which we enjoy in the Anglo-American lands—religious liberty, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and the right of self-government—are to a large degree Protestant accomplishments. And if they are to be retained,” he warned in one of his last writings, “they must be preserved by a united and intelligent Protestantism.”

Without denying the significant contributions Protestants *have* made to the establishment of democratic freedoms in the United States, few, if any, historians of American religion today would defend Sweet’s embrace of a unified Protestantism as the essential prerequisite for the preservation of these freedoms. Indeed, the tide has turned so dramatically in this regard that many scholars of American religion are quick to point out that, at many junctures in the past, Protestant domination of American culture hindered expression of these freedoms.

This encyclopedia represents the development of a

long process of releasing perceptions of American religious life from expectations of Protestant control and of coming to acknowledge the vibrancy of other religious cultures and their claims to independence and equal status. It represents a degree of cultural and religious pluralism that William Warren Sweet and his colleagues would not have thought desirable or possible and reflects a transformation in American religious life itself as well as a new scholarly approach and attitude. With its section on Protestantism in Volume 1 standing in alphabetical order following sections on African American, Asian American, and ten other religious cultures, *Religion and American Cultures* manifests a new level of scholarly acknowledgment of American religious democracy. It also reflects new levels of vitality, differentiation, and pride within American religious life itself and a new sense of confidence among non-Protestants in their own religious position and status. If Protestants played an inordinately large role in defining and controlling religious freedom and voluntarism in the past, that dominating Protestant role has been superseded by the culture of religious pluralism to which it, mostly unintentionally, gave birth.

There may be a negative side to this new religious democracy. Alongside the question of whether America is better or worse off with lowered expectations about a single, unifying culture drawing people from different groups together, there is the problem of how critical inquiry into religion can find real depth in a religious democracy where each religious culture demands and receives its place in the sun. How can critical inquiry into the harmful effects and inanities of particular religious cultures proceed without falling under suspicion as antidemocratic or politically incorrect? Upon what commonly shared principles might such inquiry proceed?

In addition to its other virtues, this encyclopedia lays some of the necessary groundwork for discussion of this problem. Through its fair-minded and well-structured presentation of American religious diversity, these volumes provide an excellent starting point for comparative analysis of the influences, outcomes, and interplays of America’s various religious cultures.

*Amanda Porterfield*

## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Just exactly what is “religion and American cultures”? What kind of encyclopedic knowledge is possible about religious life in this nation—and equally important in this regard, what counts as “data” in such an intellectual exercise?

These impossible questions have driven this project from its enthusiastic inception to its sobering conclusion. The resulting three-volume encyclopedia, containing close to 200 entries and more than 75 primary documents, offers but one possible set of categories, questions, and meanings with which to map the religious terrain of American life. These collected essays do not represent a definitive cartography, nor do they represent a singular perspective. Our editorial strategy was simply to ask people whom we had identified as experts to write on a particular theme, and to work with them on their topics. Our goal was to invite interesting people who could speak to the issues in a fresh and meaningful way.

We believed from the beginning that religious phenomena in American culture are uncontainable and cannot be summed up and neatly organized into a set of volumes that provide readers with cross-referenced, direct access to this dimension of American experience. Cognizant that we could never have the last word on the topic, we attempted instead to mark a moment in scholarly thought from which new questions and research may follow. Herein we propose a perspective, or rather, a set of perspectives, that treats culture and religion as two inextricably bound determinants of American life that, both historically and, paradoxically, still today, exist in the midst of celebrated secularity. The essays contained in this volume tell familiar stories in unfamiliar ways, and unfamiliar stories in ways that are familiar—of the same family. Even while the essays sometimes challenge and contradict our own scholarly opinions, we support the rigor, passion, and integrity with which each article

was written. The contributors have deftly produced intense pieces that disrupt accepted wisdom and conventional understandings of religion in America. Although they represent many different disciplines, all were committed to disturbing readers’ easy familiarity with religion and opening up new avenues of vision on the topic.

Hence, this collection is radically unlike its precursors, not only in content but also in form. We avoided the traditional enumerations and spatial mappings that are limited to regional variations on Christian denominational and cultural presence. Similarly, we made no pretense of providing an exhaustive or “numerically proportionate” representation of communities. In other words, although the encyclopedia includes the largest American Christian groups, it does not insist, like many of its predecessors, on a Protestant cultural hegemony. We have attempted to pay attention to many groups of actors in the American drama, often from their own unique perspectives rather than from the point of view of a Protestantism said to dominate all cultures and religions in the United States.

In the first volume we have grouped essays under large headings that encompass ethnicity, institutions, and other forms of community. Essays on African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinas/Latinos stand together with Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and new religious traditions as primary areas of affiliation. Shorter essays collected under the larger categories explore more specialized, relevant topics and religious identities in greater detail.

Throughout we have recognized the imperfections inherent in this task; essays in both volumes could have been ordered in a multiplicity of arrangements. The final design reflects our desire to group North Americans as they identify themselves: simultaneously in ethnic and religious codes. Our goal was not

the “balkanization” of American religions but rather to advance an understanding of cultural difference that enables engagement and appreciation and also recognizes the permeability and instability of religious identities.

In this regard, the second volume explores the many ways in which Americans communicate with and understand one another in cultural idioms imbued with spirituality. Expanding on the themes explored in Volume 1, Volume 2 is premised upon America’s stubborn religious paradox: Polls indicate that over 90 percent of those asked are believers in God or in a higher, supernatural being and reality, and yet, only very few Americans attend a religious institution weekly—one study suggests less than 20 percent. Where, then, are Americans getting their beliefs about God? How do they form ethical positions? How do they understand death? How do they develop spiritual practices? Where do America’s religious sensibilities originate?

In response, we propose a sociological and anthropological definition of religion: an ultimate belief and value system, a “worldview,” understood through and constituted by various types of symbols, rituals, myths, and other cultural forms of expression. Additionally, we shift emphasis of these explorations from the noun, “religion” (which generally implies specific traditions like “Hinduism,” “Judaism,” and so on), to the adjective, “religious” (which can take into account a variety of relevant phenomena situated in the perennially American border space at the intersections of culture and religion). In this way, cultural narratives and practices become indistinguishable from those deemed religious—particularly to those who are constantly reordering the imagined lines between the sacred and the profane. As a result, we employ the term “religious cultures,” which serves to demarcate groups, identities, and other formations constituted by religion but perhaps not explicitly declared as such.

Today’s religious beliefs and practices are not only determined by a broad range of religious “traditions” but also by various forms of religiously constituted artifacts, spaces, values, and commitments that encompass ethnicity and other markers of social groups. In effect, religious cultures provide a system of signs and more ambiguous symbols (rituals, myths, and more)

that work to locate people in relation to themselves, to others, and to the cosmos. Religious cultures may draw upon conventional faith traditions, but they are also creatively produced by individuals and community members who seek meaningful, satisfying truths that speak to their everyday lives—of love and death, suffering and healing, triumphs and tragedies, and justice and injustice.

Recognizing that the process of meaning-making in American religions has been shaped strongly by historical contexts, we set out to reflect this reality as well. Thus, the third volume gathers primary materials that span the breadth of American history, beginning at the end of the fifteenth century and extending into our own times. Some of these sources will be familiar to the reader, but others may be surprising. Here we wish to spark further research on American religious cultures that strays far from the well-trodden path of Protestant church history and American exceptionalism. We hope to move the discipline beyond the nationalist and Christian agendas not so softly spoken in so many tellings and retellings of American religious history.

The entries and documents in *Religion and American Cultures* vividly demonstrate a fresh social restructuring by exploring both the new spirit of religious diversity and multiculturalism and the religious cultures that have emerged outside of conventional religious traditions. For making this possible, we are indebted to many people. Todd Hallman, now at M. E. Sharpe, first conceived of this project as simply a study of ethnic multiculturalism. We are grateful for his initiating idea. The volumes would not have been possible without the generous efforts and guidance of the project manager at ABC-CLIO, Patience Melnik, and the editorial support of Jennifer Watts and Paula Shakelton, graduate students in Theological Studies at Emory University. Additionally, we wish to thank our generous and creative editorial board: Diana Eck, Colleen McDannell, Robert Orsi, and Anthony Pinn. Finally, this study of American religious cultures would not have been possible were it not for our teachers at the University of California, Santa Barbara. It is to them that this work is dedicated.

Gary Laderman  
Luis León

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AFRICAN AMERICAN  
RELIGIONS



**D**rawing from African and European signs, symbols, myths, and rituals, enslaved Africans in North America forged unique systems of meaning. The content of these systems found expression in many forms, including music, decorative arts, folktales, and religion. The latter supplies perhaps the best vantage point from which to note the development of African Americans in relationship to themselves, others, and the expansive universe. Wrestling with these relationships gave rise over time to religious cultural forms located in and articulated through the African American church, voodoo, conjure, hoodoo, Islamic practices, and other modes of religious expression. These developments are significant in many ways. The history and content of African American religious culture provide glimpses into what it means to be African American in the United States and what it means to be culturally American.

### **The Middle Passage: Africans in North America**

Contact between Europeans and Africans took place early and without vast, brutal, and dehumanizing consequences until the sixteenth century. New World exploration introduced the possibility of great wealth through access to a variety of resources that extended beyond the gold-mining operations under way in West Africa. This apparently limitless supply of goods required an equally expansive labor force. Initially, indentured servants from Europe—often secured through misleading information concerning profit-sharing opportunities—provided labor in the New World. Indentured labor proved difficult to manage and of limited benefit, however. Of even less benefit was indigenous labor—indentured and enslaved. Yet the potential economic gain required a labor force, and the slave labor market already in operation in the Caribbean and Brazil seemed the best alternative. With time, Africans were brought from a variety of locations—Angola, the Bight of Benin, the Gold Coast, and so on—to North America.

The rationale for the development of the slave trade in North American colonies is clear: Other forms of labor were problematic and costly. Enslaved

Africans were easily identifiable, which made escape more difficult for them than would be the case with Indians and Europeans. The physical difference between Europeans and Africans had broad implications. When the English began to describe Africans as “black,” the long-standing connotations of the term—as stained, soiled, or dirtied—took on flesh. As scholars such as philosopher Cornel West have noted, negative color symbolism became attached to the physical appearance of Africans, making their enslavement seem more “reasonable.”

Although Spaniards held Africans in Florida during the sixteenth century, the first enslaved Africans in the North American colonies arrived in Virginia in 1619 and Manhattan in 1625. Enslaved Africans initially arrived in small numbers, but the importance of the African presence led to more shipments of human cargo. For example, as W.E.B. Du Bois noted in his 1896 study of the slave trade to North America, one trade company, between 1680 and 1688, used 249 ships to transport some 46,000 Africans. Many scholars have argued that by the late eighteenth century, enslaved Africans represented roughly 50 percent of the total population of the British colonies in North America. All things considered, trade to North America represented roughly 5 percent of the total slave trade in the Americas. Although one might speculate that trading in slaves was a practice more likely associated with southern colonies because of the labor needs on tobacco and rice plantations, Puritans in New England began trips to Africa as early as the 1640s, and by 1775, Africans in New England represented roughly 10 percent of the population.

Africans, who were distinguished in name—Negar or Negro—and by physical appearance, were often used as a measuring stick by which the English assessed themselves and their society in religious and mundane terms. Differences in appearance, social habits, and cultural production were interpreted by the English in ways that painted Africans as barbaric and of less value than Europeans. Tied to this difference and degradation was a sense of Africans as heathens, in contrast to the Puritans and other colonists, who, to the extent that they were Christian (and En-

glish), possessed the “truth.” It was only natural that religion would become contested ground in the North American colonies. Many Europeans settled in the colonies for religious reasons, and religious sensibilities often served as a justification for their less than honorable relations with Africans.

### **African American Religious Culture and the Church**

Some colonists saw slavery as an opportunity to bring Africans into a proper understanding of God’s word. In this way, they believed, they could add to the Kingdom of God by converting the lost. Africans, the argument went, were capable of understanding the gospel if it was presented to them. For many influential colonists, such as Cotton Mather of Massachusetts, God had placed Africans under the control of Puritans as part of a providential plan. This idea fostered a sense of responsibility among the Puritans that they accepted with all sincerity and seriousness. Because God ultimately controlled the destiny of each human, Christians could not afford to neglect any soul. Nonetheless, Puritans and other Christian slaveholders faced a dilemma that pitted economic and social sensibilities against religion. To Christianize enslaved Africans could result in economic loss and social disorder, but failure to spread the gospel contradicted Jesus’ calling of the redeemed to service: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Matthew 28:19–20, Revised Standard Version). Yet the low number of Africans with recorded membership in Puritan churches speaks a continuing fear over the ramifications of Christianizing slaves.

In southern areas, Puritan preachers were supplanted by workers from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, which after 1702 gave notable attention to converting slaves. The approach taken by the society met with some opposition because it entailed teaching Africans to read and write in order to understand the catechism. In response to this opposition, the society further advocated the benefits of conversion, and, when and where possible, it continued its work in spite of a

short supply of ministers. Beginning in the 1730s and especially during the 1740s, the revival services that shaped the Great Awakening sparked the interest of both Africans and Europeans who acknowledged the urgency of religious reform. In part a response to the Calvinistic ethos that pervaded many colonies, it fostered a type of conversion marked by fantastic spiritual breakthrough expressed in strong emotional terms. Evangelists such as George Whitefield and Gilbert Tennent promoted a religious experience that differed greatly from the staid traditions of the Puritans and Anglicans.

Baptist and Methodist evangelists spread this revival fire throughout the colonies and brought into their various churches both the bound and the free. Historian Albert Raboteau reported Methodist records showing a growth in African membership of almost 10,000 between 1786 (when membership records were first distinguished by race) and 1790. In addition, Raboteau noted that Baptist churches, although less diligent with record keeping, showed an African membership of roughly 20,000 during this same period. This first Great Awakening was matched by a second wave taking place in the early 1800s. This time the revival focused on the middle portion of the country, or the frontier, as it was known.

In both cases, the success of Methodist and Baptist evangelists in gaining converts was due to a variety of factors. First, these ministers were free to move and conduct services in ways unknown to Puritan and Anglican ministers, many of whom were wary of too much freedom in religious expressions. The relative freedom to address the geographical and attitudinal demands of the South also translated into a sense of spiritual individualism that allowed both enslaved Africans and slaveholders to think beyond the confines of Anglican and Puritan precepts and structures. For example, the teachings of the Great Awakening revivalists did not place an emphasis on reading the catechism and other forms of religious training. As a result, inner commitment supplanted literacy as the prerequisite for conversion and spiritual renewal. In short, an emphasis was placed on experience as opposed to doctrinal conformity.

Enslaved Africans began to play a new role in preaching the gospel as formal training became less important. Anyone who had salvation and felt a calling to preach, evidenced by some ability and talent,

could do so. Throughout the regions touched by the Great Awakenings, at least in areas without restrictions concerning African preachers, those of African descent proclaimed the gospel to both Europeans and Africans, serving as both lay and ordained ministers and marking the development of new religious possibilities for the new converts. There were, of course, challenges.

To maintain the system of slavery while preaching the gospel, European missionaries and evangelists provided religious instruction without exposing slaves to literacy. It was also common practice to instruct slaves in the presence of whites to make certain the gospel did not cause rebellion, especially in the aftermath of well-known uprisings led by Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey, and Gabriel Prosser. Catechisms and other forms of instruction were clear with respect to the slave-master relationship to ensure maintenance of the status quo.

Africans recognized the contradiction, but those who embraced the Christian tradition moved beyond these falsehoods. It is also possible that some Africans came to the North American colonies already aware of the Christian faith, having lived in civilizations that had been Christian for almost 200 years before the establishment of the North American slave trade. In any case, they took the gospel preached to them, which in some cases they remembered from an earlier time, and made of it a liberating religious experience. They dropped the message of docility toward authorities and understood the Christian life as a free existence. Those who sought to shape the Christian faith in ways that responded to their existential condition and spiritual needs developed what is commonly referred to as the "Invisible Institution." This term refers to the often secret religious gatherings, sometimes called "hush harbor" meetings, held by enslaved Africans out of earshot of their owners during which they forged unique religious symbols, myths, and doctrine.

Although very little is known about these secret meetings, accounts collected through the early twentieth-century Works Progress Administration (WPA), which collected life histories of former slaves, provide some sense of what they entailed. It is safe to say that, in keeping with the tone of the Great Awakenings, they included energetic displays of enthusiasm, with participants "catching the spirit" and shouting praises to God. At times the sense of religiosity required a re-

jection of "worldly" activities such as dancing, drinking, and the playing of certain types of music. Life as a Christian, it was understood, called for denying secular practices and embracing a strict lifestyle. Such a lifestyle was inspired by a recognizable conversion experience often followed by a long period of remorse over the sinfulness of one's former lifestyle and a surrender of old ways in favor of a more "godly" form of conduct.

It was often difficult to develop the sense of community in which such a degree of holiness could be practiced and nurtured in churches run by slaveholders, which did not always allow for close spiritual companionship among slaves. The continued reluctance to include those of African descent in the full workings of the church made the development of independent churches run by Africans, in existence as early as the 1700s, more attractive and necessary. This was the case among free and enslaved Africans in both North and South.

Blending African and European worldviews and religious sensibilities into a unique expression of the Christian faith, these churches grew, nurturing the beliefs, desires, and sacred and secular goals of the Africans and their descendants. In them, the nascent religious sensibilities and ritual structures forged during the hush harbor meetings blossomed. What these churches represented was not just Christianity in African communities; rather, they pointed to the Africanization of the Christian faith. These churches addressed the particular needs of Africans in America and marked the lingering presence of African structures through, for example, the importance of water baptism and possession, complete with "dancing in the spirit." Even understandings of conversion as a process or journey hearkened back to African understandings of initiation and secret societies. At times outlawed and more frequently harassed, many of these early, independent churches increased their membership and maintained their autonomy even before the Emancipation Proclamation (1863). Within these independent and visible church structures, much of what we currently recognize as the Black Church Tradition took shape.

There is another side to the Great Awakenings that also sparked the development and growth of an Africanized Christianity. The success of the fiery services associated with these Awakenings must not be



overestimated. It is currently acknowledged that throughout the antebellum period the number of Africans who actually converted was insignificant. For example, as historian Margaret Washington Creel (1988) has argued, the effects of the Great Awakenings among the Gullah of South Carolina were minimal. The challenge of converting slaves was amplified in areas such as coastal South Carolina, where mission efforts picked up little steam until the 1830s and faced the challenge of a large and somewhat insular African population. Even when mission work was marked by what some considered success, early efforts to Christianize enslaved Africans were less than productive because the oppression they experienced made status-quo depictions of the gospel difficult for slaves to embrace. Therefore, although undeniably important and central to any understanding of African American religious culture in North America, churches do not tell the full story. Life in North America forced a certain type of angst through the negation of African humanity. In turn, this negation was confronted through religious experience and expression in a radical reworking of religious sensibilities, performance, and aesthetics for the unique purposes of an African population. In some instances this religious experience took the form of Christian faith and practice. In others it entailed a tenacious affirmation of African traditional religious practices.

The hush harbors, which fostered a unique version of Christianity, also spawned a host of other religious traditions. If the meetings were clandestine, as is the common belief, they may have also served to nurture non-Christian thought and practices. In other words, various religious formulations coexisted, some finding more open expression than others.

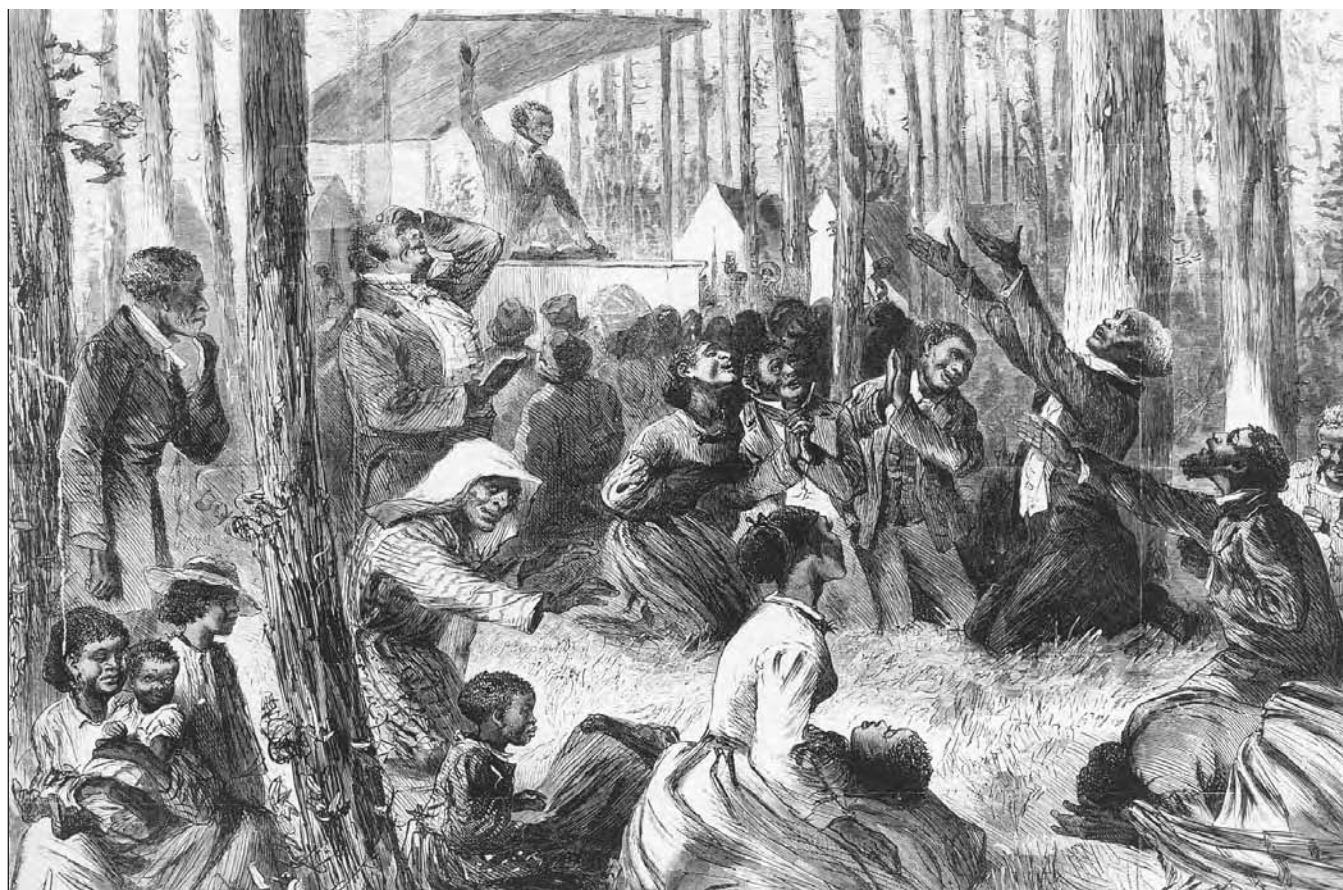
### **African American Religious Culture beyond the Church**

In years past, the debate over the nature of religion in African New World communities centered on the question of African cultural retention. Two mid-twentieth-century scholars in particular—E. Franklin Frazier and Melville Herskovits—were concerned with the types and strengths of African thought and practice that enslaved Africans incorporated into their New World practices. Some argued that the Middle Passage was too harsh to allow for significant cultural

retention. Others argued that there is evidence of significant retention. As scholars such as historian Michael Gomez have noted, there is substantial evidence suggesting religious practices outside church structures in the colonial and antebellum South. It is true that by the early 1800s, the vast majority of Africans were born here, thereby marking the emergence of unique African American cultural formations, including religion, which showed a “polycultural” dimension. Charles Long’s work in the history of religions is helpful on this point.

In *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion* (1986), Long argued that enslaved Africans dealt with two essential moments: (1) a recognition of their “second creation” as captive beings reduced in status by slavery, and (2) a recognition of their “first creation,” a “re-membering” of an early consciousness that was not limited to their objectification. This understanding led the way for a movement back to the fundamental humanity and worth of Africans. In this way, religions within the context of early African communities in America entailed an effort to create an alternative consciousness, an alternate mode and expression of humanness in history. What is of particular importance is Long’s refusal to confine this notion to the creation of Africanized Christianity.

It is true that the Middle Passage and the hardships of enslavement ruptured many aspects of life, most notably community and family as understood in West Africa. Yet it did not completely destroy the cultural fabric. Evidence of this is present, for example, with respect to the religious sensibilities of many enslaved Africans. Work within the social sciences on African American material culture makes it difficult to think about African American religious practice in narrow, church-bound ways. The religious history of enslaved Africans and their descendants is complex, layered, and nuanced. This complexity and “thickness” has been long recognized with respect to the Caribbean and South America, where the predominance of Roman Catholicism (and the cult of the saints) and the large number of Africans provided a religiously insular environment. Although more visible in these areas, such a complexity must also be acknowledged in North America. Religious conversion in large numbers came late to the North American colonies with the Great Awakenings; nevertheless, the colonies pro-



An African American meeting in the South, 1870s (Library of Congress)

vided a less than welcoming environment for African gods. And yet material remains and recorded narratives speak to signs, symbols, and practices associated with African cultural groups—Yoruba, Fon, Ewe, Dahomey, and the like—that represent a grand and complex African religious culture on North American soil.

Although the Christian God replaced other representations of the African high God, that does not mean that lesser deities died or were completely consumed in the persons of Christ and the Holy Spirit. That is to say, some Africans maintained religio-theological links to African belief systems through a continuing devotion to deities such as Shango, god of thunder, the ancestors, and other lesser spirits associated with natural forces and the land. It was understood that attention to the gods, spirits, and ancestors was necessary for the maintenance of a balanced life. A sensitivity to the spirit world is recognizable in the decorative art of enslaved Africans. Quilts, for example, depicted the signs and symbols of African gods. A deep reverence for the ancestors is attested to in the

elaborate burial practices of the early African Americans, such as leaving favored objects to be used by ancestors in the spirit world. Markings on grave sites found throughout African communities in America also demonstrate the survival of African symbolism. This attention to the deceased is associated with a number of beliefs and belief systems. A belief in reincarnation, for example, is evident. The interconnectedness of the physical and spiritual realms, accessible through certain bodies of knowledge and practice prevalent in the belief system of slaves taken from the Akan and Igbo, also stands out.

One can add to these several healing-related materials and practices, particularly in southern areas such as South Carolina, Mississippi, and Georgia. Coupled with these practices, in areas such as Louisiana the maintenance of African-derived practices combined with the Catholic ethos to produce voodoo. Even outside these areas, conjure, hoodoo, and other practices such as working with roots pointed to the persistence of blended religious practices. Charms, amulets, and

other religious materials attested to the thriving religious consciousness these practices represented. There are clear distinctions between the systems mentioned here. Concisely stated, voodoo is more closely related to West African devotion to the *vodou*, or gods, than hoodoo, root work, or conjure, which are less cosmologically formal and more concerned with the religio-magical manipulation of mundane items for the securing of protection or material gain. Some of African descent noted for their religious abilities, such as the priestess Marie Laveau, developed large followings and helped to shape a powerful cultural reality that remains very much alive in the “low country” and beyond.

In addition, as Allan Austin, a professor of African American studies, has pointed out, African Muslims traveled with Spanish explorers while others arrived as servants in Spanish Florida and Louisiana. There is also evidence to suggest that a good percentage of the Africans brought to the North American colonies were Muslims who maintained dimensions of their faith. This presence is evidenced by advertisements for slaves with Islamic names such as “Mamado” (Mamadu). Although North Americans did not have the religious knowledge necessary to document this Islamic presence in substantive ways, there are accounts of African Muslims such as Job Ben Solomon, a runaway slave, who could write and quote the Qur’an, and Bilali from Guinea, who lived on Sapelo Island in Georgia. WPA interviews with Bilali’s descendants speak about the continuation of Islamic practices by pointing to diet, prayer habits, the witness of faith, use of Arabic language, and the passing down of Islamic names to children. Such efforts to maintain the Islamic faith in the North American environment met with mixed success, at times resulting in a blending of Christianity and Islam through which Jesus, for example, was linked to Muhammad. Although Islamic practices, signs, and symbols were altered over time, cultural memory within African American communities results in an openness to Islamic orientations as presented during the early twentieth century. This was also the case with systems of ritual and doctrine related to West and Central Africa.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries marked a significant migration of African Americans into northern (and southern) cities due to economic difficulties and sociopolitical oppression in the rural

South and the promise of opportunity within urban areas. Upon arrival in cities such as Chicago, migrants found themselves economically frustrated and socially isolated. Many naturally turned to African American churches for assistance only to find that many of them were more interested in safeguarding their mainstream status than in meeting the socioeconomic and spiritual needs of the new arrivals. Large numbers of migrants, denigrated for their “less refined” religious ways and their economic difficulties, caused a strain on established urban African American churches. In response, the churches turned inward and became preoccupied with individual salvation, putting aside an understanding of the gospel of Christ as something requiring a commitment to spiritual growth and mundane betterment. It was not until the Civil Rights Movement that African American denominations gave renewed attention to a fuller range of human need—including spiritual growth, economic opportunity, social flexibility, and political voice.

In spite of these difficulties, some migrants developed a presence in mainline African American denominations, and some moved into African American congregations within white denominations. Still others participated in W. J. Seymour’s emerging Pentecostal movement. What is significant during this period with respect to religious identity and culture is the manner in which many migrants established new religious practices. These migrants found the goals of African American churches revolving around inclusion in the larger society at odds with their lower economic and social standing during the period before and after World War I. They needed a religious orientation or culture that better addressed their socioeconomic, spiritual, and political needs and questions. Numerous religious possibilities developed. For example, the Moorish Science Temple (1913), founded by Timothy Drew, or Noble Drew Ali, took Christian principles and added an understanding of African Americans as Asiatic, or Moors, and encouraged a familiarity with non-Western thought. It was argued by members of this group that their teachings included the thought of Muhammad, Confucius, Buddha, and Jesus. Their goal was to rethink the position of African Americans based upon a reconfigured relationship with the divine. Other traditions, such as the Nation of Islam, emerged and embraced a similar form of nationalism premised upon the divine election of

black people and the demonic nature of current conditions. Of the two—the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam—the latter has held a more consistent place in African American communities.

From 1930, with the first appearance of Master Wallace D. Fard Muhammad, through the ministries of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X (before he left the Nation of Islam in 1964), and to the current work by Minister Louis Farrakhan, the Nation of Islam has remained a major religious force. Although the Nation of Islam's status within the orthodox Islamic world is questionable, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad's son, Imam W. Deen Muhammad, has worked to establish an orthodox African American Islamic community, one engaged in interreligious dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church and other traditions. Whether following the orthodoxy of W. Deen Muhammad or the Nation of Islam under the leadership of Minister Farrakhan, African Americans participate in a religious ethos present with the arrival of Islamic slaves such as Job Ben Solomon and Bilali.

Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and its African Orthodox Church, during the early twentieth century, also provided a religious outlet for many within this migrant group. Garvey, like Noble Drew Ali and Elijah Muhammad, argued that there was a profound link between people of African descent and God (who is black). Garvey believed that God would reestablish the greatness of Africa through the progressive activities of African Americans. The UNIA was the largest mass movement of African Americans in the history of the United States, but Garvey's efforts took place within the context of other, less nationalistic movements. The ministry of figures such as Father Hurley and Prophet Jones within the Black Spiritual Movement, as well as Father Major Jealous Divine (Peace Mission Movement) and Sweet Daddy Grace (Universal House of Prayer for All Peoples) must be mentioned in this context. These four—Father Hurley, Prophet Jones, Father Divine, and Sweet Daddy Grace—developed religious practices and sensibilities that responded to the socioeconomic hardships of African Americans in the early to mid-twentieth century. Drawing on the Bible, numerology, Eastern traditions, and other available spiritual guides, these religious leaders sought connections between religiosity

and materiality and between spiritual health and physical well-being.

The work of many of these early twentieth-century religious leaders and communities continued throughout the late twentieth century and into the twenty-first century with a strong presence in cities such as Detroit, New York, Atlanta, and Washington, D.C. They continue the earliest efforts by African Americans to forge meaning through religious avenues, and in this way they contribute another strand to the complex fabric of African American history and religious culture.

—Anthony B. Pinn

#### SEE ALSO

Islam in America: Islamic Organizations in America; Protestantism in America: Pentecostalism; Death: Mourning Rituals; Popular Theodicies: Antebellum America, Civil War and the Late Nineteenth Century, Colonial Period, Evil in the Twentieth Century; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Rights Movement; Ritual and Performance: Dance: Science: Healing

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## AFRICAN AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY

Christianity forms by far the largest religious segment of the African American community. Denominations exist in great variety, but Protestants and Catholics predominate, with the former constituting well over four-fifths of all African Americans who claim religious affiliation. In the course of American history Christianity has been central to the private and public lives of the great majority of blacks. It has provided or undergirded a search for ultimate or sacred meaning, a respect for racial history and culture, and an avenue and rationale in the quest for racial freedom, equality, and empowerment in an often hostile environment.

### **Black Christian Origins**

Scholars in the past half-century have increasingly pointed to the multiracial, multiethnic origins and character of Christianity, which has included people of racial-ethnic African descent since its beginning and throughout its history. Black Catholics, in their church traditions, and black Protestants, in their reading of Scripture, have informally kept the knowledge of this African and Christian connection alive among themselves even when mainstream scholars have not embraced or accented this reality. Overwhelmingly, black Protestant and Catholic Christians in the United States are spiritual descendants of Africans who converted to the faith beginning in the North American colonial era. In the earliest decades of their presence in the Americas, Catholics, Anglicans, Congregationalists, and others succeeded in missionizing a small but significant segment of Africans. The greatest success in missions, however, belongs to evangelical Protestant groups, such as Baptists and Methodists. In all these denominations, Christianity did not merely pass from whites to blacks, but from whites, blacks, and Native Americans to whites, blacks, and Native Americans.

This active leadership role in Christianity produced as early as the 1700s independent black congregations in both the North and the South. These included the First African/First Bryan Baptist Church in Savannah, Georgia, established in 1788; black denominations such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church, founded in 1816; and several Catholic orders, such as

the Oblate Sisters of Providence in the 1830s and the Holy Family Sisters in the 1840s. In evangelical Protestantism, black ministers, whether officially ordained or not, played an active role in Christian ministries prior to the formation of independent organizations. Outstanding evangelical ministers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries included a host of persons, such as George Liele, Andrew Bryan, Richard Allen, Jarena Lee, James Walker Hood, Elizabeth Broughton, and Amanda Berry Smith. Ministers such as William J. Seymour, Charles H. Mason, and Ida Robinson were instrumental in the rise and spread of the Pentecostal and Holiness traditions in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was not until the post-Civil War period that identifiably black Catholic priests finally overcame resistance and prejudice to achieve ordination, including, first, Augustine Tolton, and later, John J. Uncles.

### **African American Christians, Racial Justice, and Missions**

The faith of African American Christians has throughout American history motivated their quest for racial freedom and justice. Much of the impetus for the founding of independent congregations, denominations, associations, and conventions in the 1700s and 1800s was, along with the search for freer and more Christian treatment in religious circles, the struggle against slavery and poverty. Enslaved African American Christians, who often practiced aspects of their religion unseen by slaveholders, proved innovative and resilient in embracing and spreading what they regarded as true Christianity—a spiritually meaningful and empowering version affirming freedom as the will of God and denuded of racial supremacy. This commitment to freedom, both spiritual and temporal, was a motivation not only for ministers, such as Jermain Loguen, later bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AMEZ), but also for laypeople, such as David Walker, a Baptist, and Harriet Tubman, a Methodist. Henry McNeal Turner and James Walker Hood were among the church leaders active in organizing churches during the Civil War



The Reverend Cecil Williams preaches at Glide Memorial Methodist Church, 1995 (Kevin Fleming/Corbis)

and postwar years and in exercising political and economic leadership of the newly freed during this time. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Catholic Daniel Rudd and the Baptist Nannie Helen Burroughs, both active laypeople, worked to keep their respective church siblings focused on their political and economic responsibilities to the larger body of African Americans.

Like their white counterparts, black Christians made impressive efforts in the arena of foreign missions. As early as the late eighteenth century and into the early quarter of the nineteenth, black individuals, families, and even churches traveled to Africa, particularly the Liberian colony, to establish a black government and spread Christianity and Western civilization to their African kin. Daniel Coker of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, who traveled to Sierra Leone, and Lott Carey, a Baptist from Virginia who went to Liberia in the early 1820s, led the pre-Civil War effort to combine African colonization and Christian missionary work. After the Civil War, there

was considerably less emphasis placed on colonization but the quest continued for world missions, especially to lands populated largely by African or black peoples. The labors of persons such as Andrew Cartwright, of the AME Zion Church; Emma B. Delaney, of the National Baptist Convention; and other men and women, both clergy and laity, including ministers, teachers, nurses, doctors, and others, were notable.

### **Urbanization, Civil Rights, and Liberation Theology**

The years 1915 to 1950 witnessed a mass exodus of African Americans from the rural South into both northern and southern urban areas in search of greater economic and political freedom, especially in light of the hardening grip of Jim Crow segregation, racial terrorism, and disfranchisement in southern states. Increasingly, the new context obligated black Christians to readjust their formerly largely rural and

small-town lifestyles and ways with new urban realities. This era was marked by the rise of new church structures, increasing memberships in Holiness and Pentecostal denominations, a blending of sacred and secular music into the new gospel sound, and the continued rise and spread of non-Christian groups, such as the Moorish Science Temple, the Nation of Islam, and a number of black Hebrew groups. With greater contact between blacks and Roman Catholics in the northern urban areas came a significant increase in the number of black Catholics. Just as the United States overall was becoming less and less a Protestant nation, so was the African American religious community further diversifying.

With the rise of the modern Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s, many black leaders and churches became highly visible as they entered the limelight of national attention. Martin Luther King, Jr., a Georgia-born Baptist minister, and his organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), played an active role in public, nonviolent resistance to segregation, disfranchisement, poverty, and later the Vietnam War. In addition, many grassroots, ordinary civil rights and political leaders and activists, symbolized by the Mississippi ex-sharecropper Fannie Lou Hamer, were motivated by their religious faith, as were people in the older human rights groups, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Urban League. In the late 1960s and 1970s, Black Theology, under the leadership of James H. Cone, who joined the faculty of Union Theological Seminary in New York, and Black Womanist Theology, under the leadership of academics such as Jacquelyn Grant, a professor at the Interdenominational Theological Center, emerged in academic circles. Cone sought to combine the black nationalism and respect for black culture that were characteristic of Malcolm X, who moved from being a spokesperson of the heterodox Nation of Islam to Sunni Islam, with the Christian-motivated quest for racial justice exemplified by King. Grant felt that both Black Theology and Feminist Theology were incomplete and flawed, the former because it did not address the issue of sexism and patriarchy within the African American community, and the latter for not addressing racism. Her approach was to do both. Along with the secular renaissance of academic interest in black history and culture, beginning especially

in the 1960s and early 1970s, these liberation theologies have greatly influenced scholars of black religion across many disciplines and subdisciplines. By the early twenty-first century, African American scholars and others were applying similar race, class, and gender critiques and chronicling black contributions in the study of ethics, biblical studies, homiletics, pastoral counseling, and other enterprises.

### **African American Christianity and the Twenty-First Century**

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, African American Christianity faces a number of challenges and opportunities: ecumenism or church mergers involving black and white denominations; a persistent socioeconomic underclass in the black community; staggering statistics involving divorce and single-parent homes; racial profiling, redlining, and other overt and subtle acts of racial prejudice; the growth of nondenominational Christian groups; the emergence of megachurches; increased competition from non-Christian religions such as Santería and various forms of Islam; the growth of the Hispanic or Latino population, which is displacing blacks as the largest racial-ethnic minority group; and race-specific aspects of the adversities facing the general U.S. population associated with economic downturns and terrorism. It will be of great interest to witness how black Christianity minimizes the negative aspects of the challenges while augmenting the positive elements of its opportunities.

—Sandy Dwayne Martin

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Catholicism in America; Protestantism in America; Pentecostalism; Public Theologies and Political Culture; Civil Rights Movement, Feminisms

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## AFRICAN AMERICAN RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Religious leadership has been the most consistent context for African American independence and individual empowerment. Prohibited by law from political engagement and by cultural bigotry from institutional advancement, African American preachers, spiritual healers, prophets, and priestesses have functioned for nearly 400 years as the power brokers and establishment figures within the African American community.

It would be foolhardy to reduce the African American religious leader to a single type or list of characteristics. Within American culture, African American religious figures have been associated with expressive preaching and a progressive politics. During the long history of African Americans, however, a wide diversity of leadership styles, rhetorical gifts, and theological goals have guided varied groups within the African American community. If there is one issue that unifies African American religious leaders, it is the continuing struggle to manage the consequences of racial segregation and oppression during slavery (1630–1863) and the subsequent legal codes that racially divided the United States for nearly a century thereafter.

Many African American religious leaders are unnamed figures, having lost their historical identity to slavery. Although slaves were marginalized within American social life, they cultivated religious hierarchy and practice among their own local communities. The art of religious conjure, managed under the guidance of a root doctor, fused herbal medicine with magical practice. These specialists, most often women, functioned as physicians and spiritual guides in cultures denied the ability to construct traditional

institutional structures and services. The work of these religious leaders endures into the twenty-first century within the Afro-Cuban faith of Santería and Haitian American voodoo practices.

After the American Revolution and the abolition of slavery during the civil war, African American religious leadership emerged from the anonymity of chattel communities. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, African Americans created a religious culture of complex depth and range. Depending on the geographic context and audience, different themes emerged as driving organizational principles among African American religious leaders.

### Apocalypticism

Until the Emancipation Proclamation, slavery cast a pall over the nation, encouraging many within the African American community to question the sanctity of a nation complicit in such evil. Some believed that the sins of slavery would cause the nation to self-destruct, having incurred divine retribution for a nation's hubris. In the South, such apocalypticism motivated the slave revolts of Denmark Vesey, a South Carolina Methodist minister, in 1822, and of Nat Turner, a slave preacher from Virginia, in 1831. In the North, the Boston-based Baptist churchman David Walker articulated a similar message in his famous abolitionist tract, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1829). Walker's strident millennialism earned him enemies among white abolitionists who bristled at his use of Christian theology to argue for righteous justice against slaveholders.





Lithograph depicting portraits of Richard Allen and other A.M.E. bishops (Library of Congress)

### Respectability

As the battle over slavery raged, independent black churches emerged in the North. The majority of African American congregants became either Baptist or Methodist during the Second Great Awakening. Historians have explained this denominational affinity by citing the simple requirements for conversion and ministry, as well as the appeal of the more emotional forms of worship encouraged among Baptists and Methodists. From the perspective of leadership, however, these denominations also offered models for mainstream respectability that would have appealed to antebellum free blacks striving for economic and social assimilation. For example, when lay preacher and former slave Richard Allen (1760–1831) founded the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in 1816, he upheld conservative Anglican worship patterns and

civic etiquette while encouraging a racially grounded religious egalitarianism. This approach included allowing women, such as itinerant Methodist preacher Jarena Lee (1783–?), to preach so long as they maintained a decorous carriage. Allen was not alone in his effort to promote black respectability through theological commitment. William Seymour (1870–1922) became a leader of the Pentecostal movement after starting a prayer meeting in his Los Angeles home that developed into the Azusa Street revival in 1906. Like Allen, Seymour encouraged theological discipline among his parishioners, a perfection—or “holiness”—that demanded a sanctified life and concentrated worship. One of Seymour’s followers at Azusa Street, C. H. Mason (1866–1961), founded the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), which would become the largest black Pentecostal denomination in the nation.

### Activism

Regardless of their programmatic intent, few African American religious leaders have not invoked some social purpose or political perspective in their message. African American religious leaders formed the basis of the black elite in the United States, and they were unique among the elite for their regular contact with the black masses. This position encouraged an activist impulse among African American religious authorities. With the exception of Frederick Douglass, the prominent black abolitionists in the North were ministers. As black independent churches emerged in the South during Reconstruction, many provided housing, day-care services, and educational opportunities, sharing with the broader Progressive movement a sense of Christian responsibility toward the less fortunate. Alexander Crummell (1819–1898) was an Episcopal priest and public theologian in Washington, D.C., advocating education, self-improvement, and, ultimately, the cultivation of a black gentry that could sustain the progress of the race. Mary McLeod Bethune (1875–1955), a Presbyterian schoolteacher, founded the Bethune-Cookman Institute in 1928 to provide intellectual and spiritual development for southern black youth. Whereas Crummell and Bethune sought to foster African American growth within existing social boundaries, Major Jealous Divine (c. 1880–1965), known as Father Divine, sought to expand the racial mindset of a nation with his Peace Mission Movement during the 1920s and 1930s. Father Divine committed to a strict moral code and a communitarian ethos, abolishing all references to race within his missions and personally providing balm to all those—white and black—suffering from sickness and poverty.

Following a similar activist impulse, the members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), headed by Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–1968), worked to demolish the structural constraints on African American life. During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, King invoked the millennial rhetoric of David Walker, arguing that African Americans were the last hope for America. Using principles of nonviolence to organize his protests against southern segregation, King claimed that only through the suffering of innocent blacks could the nation be redeemed for its racist sins. His activist poli-

tics and ecumenical Christian message made him the paradigm of African American religious leadership in the minds of many U.S. citizens, and the dignified carriage of his fellow SCLC colleagues endures as a symbol of religious protest. The Civil Rights Movement inspired many contemporary African American religious leaders bent on social change, including Jesse Jackson (1941– ) and Al Sharpton (1960– ).

### Separatism

Ever since Absalom Jones (1746–1818) responded to the forced segregation at a Methodist church in Philadelphia by founding the first black Episcopal congregation in 1794, some African American religious leaders have advocated the separation of black religious practice and worship from white church hierarchy and racism. Many black leaders argued that the only freedom African Americans could achieve would be a freedom apart from white America. For some, this meant repatriation to Africa. AME bishop Henry McNeal Turner (1834–1915), along with many other prominent African American leaders, advocated migration to Africa throughout the late nineteenth century. Marcus Garvey (1887–1940) founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in 1914, advocating black business ownership and political independence with the goal of an eventual return to Africa. Although Garvey's dream was never realized, his plan for African American liberation had an enormous impact on black activists in the twentieth century.

### Nationalism

Marcus Garvey's vision of repatriation was premised on the belief that Africans belonged in Africa and that they needed to reject white America—particularly white American Protestantism—in order to free themselves from bondage. Many other African American religious leaders shared Garvey's critique of white power structures, reclaiming other national identities in an effort to distance themselves from their oppressors and cultivate personal dignity. This strand of religious leadership is particularly evident within the African American Muslim tradition. Noble Drew Ali (1866–1929) founded the Moorish Science Temple in 1913, teaching that blacks were Asiatics and therefore



Malcolm X speaking to the press, 1963 (Bettmann/Corbis)

Moors, or Muslims. Wallace D. Fard (?–c. 1934), founder of the Nation of Islam in 1930, and Elijah Muhammad (1897–1975), his chief disciple, attracted a strong following with their message of personal discipline, economic independence, and black racial supremacy. Malcolm X (1925–1965), perhaps the most famous African American Muslim, who converted from the Nation of Islam to Orthodox Islam in 1964, symbolizes the diversity within the black Muslim tradition. Although famous for his strident racial separatism and opposition to King’s Civil Rights Movement, Malcolm X also emphasized a nationalist sensibility in order to uplift African Americans from grinding urban poverty and cultural alienation.

Black Muslims were not the only African Americans rejecting white Protestantism in favor of other traditions considered more suitable to African American racial identity. Catholic layman Daniel A. Rudd edited a black Catholic newspaper, the *American*

*Catholic Tribune* (1887–1895), in which he argued that salvation for African Americans lay not in the racially divided Protestant churches, but in the Roman Catholic Church, with its diverse calendar of saints and entrenched liturgical tradition. Some urban blacks considered ancient Hebrews their ancestors and claimed Judaism as the true black faith. UNIA choirmaster Arnold J. Ford (c. 1890–c. 1935) founded Beth B’Nai Abraham in Harlem in 1924, and in 1930 emigrated to Ethiopia to join the “Falasha” Jews present in that country, establishing a pattern of African American Jewish migration to Africa or Israel during the twentieth century.

### Spirituality

Many individuals within the African American community have provided religious leadership without the support of a particular congregation or religious movement. Examples include the abolitionist Sojourner Truth (c. 1797–1883), philosopher-sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois (1868–1963), and media entrepreneur Oprah Winfrey (1954– ), individuals who transcend racial boundaries and denominational demarcations with their rhetorical fusion of faith and power. Though not “preachers” in the traditional sense, their leadership within the African American community could be termed “religious,” as they combine a commitment to racial leadership with a publicized divine calling.

—Kathryn Lofton

#### SEE ALSO

Islam in America: Conversion to Islam, Islamic Organizations in America; Protestantism in America: Denominationalism, Emotion, Pentecostalism; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Rights Movement; Violence: Apocalypticism

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## AFRICAN AMERICANS AND ISLAM

Islam began in seventh-century Arabia with the last revelation from God (the Qur'an) delivered to the Prophet Muhammad. Those who adhere to the commandments of the Qur'an, called Muslims, believe that it is the last in a long series of revelations to the human community from Allah (God) and that humans are to worship only God. Thus, Muslims believe in the works of all the prophets beginning with Adam and ending with Muhammad. They believe in the original texts of revelation, angels, predestination, and the Day of Judgment. Muslims discipline themselves by five times of daily prayer; restraint, or fasting, from sunrise to sunset for thirty days during the month of Ramadan; purifying their wealth annually through a voluntary tax; and, if able, making a pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, at least once in their lifetime. There are over a billion Muslims in the world, and estimates of 6 million to 11 million in the United States, of which a significant portion are African Americans.

Islam began in what was to become the United States with slavery. It is estimated that 30 percent of the slaves taken from West Africa were Muslims. Documented also is the fact that these slaves attempted against all odds to keep Islamic practice alive. Some scholars have asserted that there are numerous Islamic retentions in this society as well as in other parts of the Americas in which Muslims were enslaved. Formal, institutionalized Islamic structures have existed in the United States for almost a century. African American Muslims represent every philosophical, political, and spiritual stance in the Muslim

world. Researchers have estimated that African American Muslims also represent the largest single ethnic group of American Muslims and about one-third of the American Muslim community. As physicians, engineers, architects, teachers, professional athletes, social workers, and blue-collar workers, African American Muslims are having a significant, though largely unnoticed, impact on the African American community and American society as a whole. After centuries of Christianity, which at times was forced upon them, many African Americans have chosen Islam as their worldview.

### Early African American Muslim Communities

Barely fifty years out of the yoke of physical slavery, Islamically focused communities began to appear on the East Coast and in the heartland of the United States. Despite changes in the status of blacks after the Civil War, many white Americans still refused to accept Americans of African descent as full citizens or even human beings. Segregation rapidly became the new physical control over the black population, and lynching, the tool of enforcement, instilled psychological control. In many ways the actions of white Christians affirmed the notion that blacks needed to seek and find a religion of their own. Islam was a natural alternative for several reasons. Islamic conventions in storytelling and naming had been retained, for example, and many African Americans had met Muslim immigrants or had gained knowledge about Islam at the turn of the twentieth century from other sources.



Elijah Muhammad, leader of the Black Muslims, addressing a convention in Chicago, 1967 (Library of Congress)

Americans of African descent knew, from blacks who had gone to help construct the first governments of Liberia and other available media, that Islam was the religion of the slave regions in Africa.

The first Islamic communities sought to give some identity markers to ex-slaves and first-generation “freed” men and women. Identity was a central issue for African Americans at the turn of the twentieth century because they were counted as three-fifths human, noncitizens, and generally only trainable in areas of agriculture and home economics. Without the freedom to vote, own property, or participate in American society, and lacking the resources to go to the unknown continent of Africa, the issue of identity loomed large. Eschewing the black Christian churches, the Moorish Science Temple (1913), Universal Islamic Society (1926), and Nation of Islam (1930) developed into communities of black Muslims with firm black and Muslim identities. Other Islamic communities, such as the Ahmadiyyah Movement in

Islam (1921), First Muslim Mosque of Pittsburgh (1928), and Addeynu Allahe Universal Arabic Association (1930), which included immigrant Muslims, focused on a purely Islamic identity.

Few of those outside of these nascent Muslim organizations took note of them as they developed in the African American communities. To assist in their development, members created savings plans at mosques and temples that formed the beginnings of an economic effort to be self-sustaining entities. All communities kept the Islamic principles of prayer, fasting, and avoidance of pork, alcohol, and drugs. There were community newspapers that endeavored to sell products made in the community and provided information on American society and African affairs and culture. Those with black nationalist leanings developed mythologies to explain the conditions of black Americans, the origins of slavery, and the hatred that white Americans harbored against them. All communities saw Islam as the “true” religion of black

people and the only way to establish themselves as humans in the world and especially America.

By the middle of the twentieth century, one community, the Nation of Islam, had begun to garner the attention of the news media. Its assertion that the white man was “the devil,” as evidenced in white destruction, was well publicized. Other communities benefited by the attention paid to the Nation of Islam and quietly grew in size. All of these communities, by the second half of the century, were alive and well. By the 1960s, Islam in African America was firmly planted and growing in record numbers.

### Contemporary African American Muslim Communities

African American Muslim communities, though still in the process of development, in the latter part of the twentieth century represented a broad range of Islamic philosophies, ideologies, and religious understandings. Muslims in Africa, the Middle East, and South and Southeast Asia opened doors to African Americans to study Islam abroad and in the process learn about the world. Hundreds of African American Muslims from both well-established and newly formed organizations studied overseas on scholarships, teaching programs, and personal resources. Many received university degrees from schools in Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. Armed with a more extensive knowledge of the world, these African Americans were in the forefront of many of the Black Power organizations and student groups on American campuses.

African American Muslims made other significant advances in education, as in business, throughout this period. Muhammad’s Universities in the Nation of Islam formed the first African American Muslim school system in the 1940s. These schools provided alternative education for black youth with an emphasis on Islamic studies and Arabic along with traditional Western studies. Many more Islamic elementary schools opened in the 1960s as Muslims sought alternatives to the public school system. Muslim businesses had already begun to be mainstays in the black community, providing a variety of services such as cleaning, laundries, produce, books, and wares from abroad. By the 1960s, however, the lifting of the im-

migration restraints on “Asians” permitted many more Muslim immigrants into the country. Many of these immigrants would find their first religious homes in African American Muslim communities.

By the 1980s, the number of African American Muslims had grown to several million. They began establishing schools overseas for their children, most notably just outside of Dakar, Senegal. By the 1990s, African American Muslims were firmly rooted in the American religious landscape and the Muslim world. They are often world travelers who speak Arabic or French in addition to English. They participate in and organize relief efforts for Muslims in Kashmir, Pakistan, Somalia, and Bosnia. They have also firmly implanted Islam in American public life.

African American Muslims have been elected to political office and work on interfaith committees, in social services, and in many other fields. They bring with them an Islamic presence in dress, etiquette, and work ethic. Their growing presence has continued to challenge black Christianity and the American perception that all Muslims are Arabs. They provide an alternative worldview for the African American community, often successfully eradicating drug traffic, prostitution, and petty crime in the areas in which they live. As Islam grows in the United States in the twenty-first century, many African Americans will try to ensure that the particular African American cultural contributions to American Islam are not lost.

—Aminah Beverly McCloud

#### SEE ALSO

Islam in America: Ahmadiyyah Movement, Conversion to Islam, Islamic Organizations in America; Violence: Lynching

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## AFRICAN-DERIVED AMERICAN RELIGIONS

African American religious identity in the United States historically developed within a dialogical kinship between black Christian practices and African-derived religious orientations. However, the recounting of this religious history has been dominated by black ecclesiastical and denominational studies, often relegating the history of African-derived religions to the realm of folklore and magic. Nonetheless, African-derived religious orientations have been both viable and meaningful forms of religious expression for African Americans throughout their tenure in North America.

According to historian of religion Albert Raboteau, access to Christian religious instruction was severely limited for Africans during the first century and a half of their enslavement in the United States. During this period and beyond, Africans in North America attempted to maintain indigenous cultural traditions such as ethnic names, marriage rites, and burial practices. They also sought to maintain a sense of religious integrity through African-derived practices.

Most common among the African-derived practices in North America were voodoo, hoodoo, and conjure. Voodoo largely dominated the African religious culture of New Orleans. A major factor fueling this religious tradition in Louisiana was the increased migration of French planters and their enslaved Africans immediately after the Haitian Revolution. New Orleans became the center of voodoo activity, with figures such as Marie Laveau and her daughter at the heart of its ceremonial life. Historical accounts of voodoo in New Orleans emphasized the centrality of the snake deity, drumming, dancing, spirit possession, and divination. Its documentation was advanced in the early twentieth century with the works of anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston.

The practices of conjure, often used interchangeably with “hoodoo,” mirrored African rituals of divination, charm production, and “rootwork,” or herbalism. Conjure and hoodoo created a space for the power of human agency within an elaborate religious world of spirits, ancestors, charms, divination,

and folklore. Because African-derived traditions and their clientele were not always exclusive of Christian influences, Raboteau concluded that in “the United States African religions and Christianity came to be more closely and inseparably interwoven than in any other slave society in the Americas.”

In the past few decades, the United States has seen a resurgence of African-derived traditions in black religious formation. During the 1950s and 1960s, increased Caribbean migration from islands such as Cuba and Haiti was instrumental in transplanting African-derived traditions such as Santería (Lucumi) or Vodou to North America. Clandestine ceremonies emphasizing dancing, drumming, ancestral veneration, spirit possession, and animal sacrifice continued to characterize these transplanted traditions in the United States. Moreover, in 1993, a U.S. Supreme Court decision brought the ritual practices of African-derived traditions to the forefront of American public life when the Court ruled that the State of Florida’s ban on animal sacrifice violated the First Amendment rights to the “free exercise” of religion. The Supreme Court ruling was symbolic in not only upholding and protecting the state’s 70,000 Santería practitioners but also in transforming longtime pejorative images of Africa’s religions in the New World.

—Tracey E. Hucks

### SEE ALSO

Latina/Latino Religious Communities

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"The voodoo meeting in the old brick yard," 1882 (Library of Congress)





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ASIAN AMERICAN  
RELIGIOUS  
COMMUNITIES



**W**here are you from? Whether you are an immigrant from Pakistan, a fourth-generation Chinese American, or a native Hawaiian who has set foot on the Mainland, this is a question that you are inevitably asked. Because of your distinct physical features, people usually take you as a foreigner; they assume you were not born in the United States and that America is not the place you call home. And if they would have to guess your religious background, they would surmise that you are either Buddhist, Hindu, or a practitioner of some equally alien faith. Although Asian Americans have been in the United States for over a century and a half, and in the case of native Hawaiians, are a people indigenous to what is now American soil, they are perpetually viewed as “strangers from a different shore” (Takaki 1998).

“Asian American/Pacific Islander” (API) refers to those of Asian, Filipino, or Pacific Island descent. As an overarching designation, this category is actually composed of many groups differing in national origin, ethnicity, language, and length of residence. Religion in Asian and Pacific America is an equally complex affair and includes all the major world religions (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Zoroastrianism) as well as new religious movements (for example, Soka Gakkai, Falun Gong, Cao Dai), folk religions (such as ancestor veneration and Korean shamanism), and indigenous forms (Hmong, Pacific Islanders). Given the countless variations that exist, APIs must be viewed as a group whose identity is necessarily heterogeneous, hybrid, and multiple (Lowe 1996). Very few assumptions can be made about Asian Americans’ religious affiliations, and attention must be paid to the sociohistorical differences that are the hallmark of API religions.

Nevertheless, Asian American history can be described in terms of broad historical patterns. It has been characterized by two major waves of immigration. The first began in the middle of the nineteenth century and continued until the passage of the 1924 National Origins Act. This act, along with other nativist measures, virtually cut off all immigration from

Asia, and the Asian American population remained fairly stable until the 1960s. In 1965, Congress passed the Hart-Celler Act (or the 1965 Immigration Act, as it is popularly called), which eliminated the previous quota system and set in motion a new influx of Asian immigration and a recomposition of the API community. It was also around this time that activists of Asian descent decided to eschew the term “Oriental” in favor of the self-chosen name “Asian American.”

In contemporary times, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders constitute approximately 4.5 percent of the total U.S. population and are considered one of the fastest growing minority groups in the nation. APIs are an especially distinct group in terms of their religious affiliation and cultural influence. The majority of Asian Americans are Christian—43 percent, according to the 2001 American Religious Identification Survey (Kosmin and Mayer 2001). However, a significant portion of the API population identifies as non-Christian; 28 percent profess Buddhism, Hinduism, or Islam as their faith. Given these figures and long history, APIs have added immensely to America’s religious diversity, and by their very presence they continually challenge the boundaries of religious freedom and tolerance.

API groups are roughly identified according to their geographic location (East Asian, Filipino, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander). Within these broad categories, APIs are further distinguished by their ethnicity, from which certain generalizations about religious identity emerge: East Asian Americans include Chinese, Korean, and Japanese Americans, whose religious background is informed by an admixture of Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism (although the vast majority of Koreans immigrated to America as Christians). Filipino Americans are predominantly Catholic, and Southeast Asian Americans from Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and Myanmar (Burma) are largely responsible for bringing Theravada Buddhism to America. The religious background of Vietnamese Americans, also viewed as Southeast Asians, is more similar to that of their East Asian cousins. South Asian Americans from the Indian subcontinent are often Hindu but

also include Sikhs, Orthodox Christians, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, and Jains. Pakistani Americans draw from a Muslim heritage. And Pacific Islanders are predominantly Christian or Mormon but have blended indigenous practices into their faith.

If one had to characterize a spiritual sensibility that cuts across this diverse set of ethno-religious cultures, the centrality of family and a cosmological appreciation of the interdependent nature of our existence would be primary features. Remembering one's ancestors—their sacrifices and unique accomplishments—constitutes both a spiritual legacy and a sacred duty for Asian Pacific Americans. In the American cultural context, in which the API presence is seldom acknowledged and continually erased, keeping alive the memory of one's forebears becomes even more significant. Thus, a historical perspective is a necessary key to understanding API culture.

A historical glimpse at API life begins with the large-scale Asian immigration that began in the mid-1850s as Chinese set foot on the West Coast in search of their fortune on "Gold Mountain." These Chinese Americans practiced a form of traditional religion reflective of their Southern Chinese roots. The first Chinese temples in the continental United States were erected in San Francisco in 1853, and the number of temples eventually rose to twenty-five throughout California. Here, Chinese immigrants were able to offer homage to various Taoist, Buddhist, and other folk figures and offer prayers to these deities on behalf of themselves and their ancestors (Kuan Yin, Kwan Kung, and T'ien Hou were among the most popular). Chinese immigrants also established associations where deities and ancestral records specific to a particular family or "clan" were housed.

After Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, immigration from China drastically diminished. This decrease, however, did not end the flow of Chinese into the United States. Immigrants devised clever strategies to circumvent such legislation. After the 1906 San Francisco earthquake destroyed the city's public records, Chinese Americans were able to claim that they were American-born, and therefore U.S. citizens. As citizens, they were then able to sponsor family members from China, and from this opportunity sprang the phenomenon of "paper sons," who were able to purchase fake documentation in order to immigrate. Since caring for one's ancestors and

maintaining family rituals were an important concern, this enterprise complicated matters. "Paper sons" often felt obligated to attend to the households of their "paper fathers" as well as surreptitiously carry out sacred duties to their own families.

Living in an environment hostile to their presence as well as to their religious beliefs, Chinese Americans would find little incentive to maintain traditional customs and rites. Viewed as the "heathen Chinese," they became the targets of Christian missionizing efforts that were for the most part successful. Many converted to Protestant Christianity and formed ethnic-specific congregations that are still in existence today.

In the late 1800s and into the early 1900s, significant numbers of Japanese, Koreans, and Indian Punjabis made their way to America and worked primarily as laborers in the fields of Hawaii and the western United States. Like Chinese Americans, they, too, were affected by a series of anti-immigration, miscegenation, and citizenship laws that specifically targeted the Asian population. Despite the acute prejudice and harsh conditions that early Asian Americans had to endure, these immigrants were able to construct temples, churches, and *gurdwaras* (a Sikh site of worship) in which they were able to sustain religious community and their spiritual faith. The religious histories of Japanese Americans and Korean Americans tell the story of cultural survival and spiritual endurance in the face of government attack and colonial repression, respectively.

In 1907, a sizable number of Punjabi men began to arrive in the United States. They traveled through Canada and first found work constructing the Western Pacific Railroad. They would later take on jobs in lumber mills and foundries. Ninety percent of these early Indian immigrants were Sikh. Sikh men could easily be distinguished by their turbans and beards, which they retained as part of their faith. It is therefore ironic that these first Sikh Americans were mislabeled as "Hindoos." Sikhs and the small number of Muslims and Hindus did come together to form the Hindustani Welfare Reform Society in support of Indian immigrant rights and Indian independence (the Ghadr). The early Sikh community lives on in an especially unique form. Since only a handful of Indian women were allowed to immigrate in the early 1900s, and antimiscegenation laws prohibited marriages between Indian men and white women, Punjabi men



Boys studying at a Sikh temple, Bridgewater, New Jersey, 1996 (David H. Wells/Corbis)

began taking Mexican women as wives. The children of these unions often spoke Spanish and English and adopted the religion of their mothers—Catholicism. Yet they still continued to take pride in their fathers’ “East Indian” or “Hindu” identity (reclaiming the misnomer), and a new American religious community was born (Leonard 1994).

Several waves of immigration have come to characterize the history of Filipinos in America. The first wave included “Manila men,” who set foot in Louisiana in the mid-1700s, as well as *pensionados*, or Filipino students, who came to the United States in the early 1900s for purposes of higher education. The Pensionado Act of 1903 under which these students temporarily migrated was part of America’s larger colonial effort in the Philippines and sought to train select individuals for high-status positions upon their return to the territorial state. The second wave, or Manong generation, journeyed to California via Hawaii as farmworkers and menial laborers from 1906 to 1934. Immigration came to a halt when the

Tydings-McDuffie Act was passed in 1934, in which Congress granted the Philippines its independence and simultaneously withdrew the privilege to enter the United States that Filipinos had enjoyed as territorial wards. A third wave of immigration took place from 1945 to 1965, after Filipino soldiers fought alongside Americans against the Japanese during World War II. Filipinos in each of these pre-1965 waves suffered a most precarious status as the nation from which they emigrated fell under America’s colonial shadow.

Again, like other early Asian American groups, Filipino Americans found innovative ways to spiritually sustain themselves amidst hardships and uncertainties. Fraternal organizations, such as the Legionarios del Trabajo, the Caballeros de Dimas Alang, Inc., and the Gran Oriente Filipino, Inc., served as mutual aid societies. They were imbued with religious themes (“human brotherhood under the Fatherhood of God”) and an ethical mission (“clean life” and “moral training”). In the case of the Filipino Federation of

America, a spiritual arm of the organization would develop and transmute into its own religious movement. In addition to these outwardly secular but inwardly spiritual brotherhoods, Filipino Protestant churches and associations, such as the Filipino-American Christian Fellowship, would take root.

Of course, the primary religious institution for Filipino Americans would be the Catholic Church. Early Filipinos were not often embraced by other American Catholics, however. In addition, non-Filipino clergy commissioned to serve Filipino American parishioners did not understand the distinct needs of the community, nor were they sympathetic to the ways in which these immigrants and their progeny practiced a Filipino-ized Catholicism that laid claim to unique rituals and celebrations (such as Santa Cruzan/ Las Flores de Mayo). Two ethnic-specific parishes were established in the United States: St. Columban's Church in Los Angeles and Our Lady of Martyrs Church in Seattle (in which Filipino Americans and Japanese Americans worshiped side by side in the years before Japanese American internment). In addition, Our Lady of Peace Cathedral in Honolulu became the religious home for many Filipino Catholics in Hawaii. Even as Filipino Americans have adjusted to American Catholic life, their faith retains a distinctive feel and flavor all its own.

The American colonial enterprise also had a direct impact on Pacific Islanders who migrated from the U.S. territories of Guam, American Samoa, and Hawaii (which became a state in 1959). Religiously, these Pacific Islanders were the target of intense missionizing efforts by Protestant Christians, and subsequently, by Mormons, or Latter-day Saints. Indigenous practices and sensibilities still persist, however, especially as Pacific Islanders attempt to carve out their own religious identity and these spiritual systems are incorporated into the wider political struggles for Hawaiian sovereignty and the protection of the land, which Hawaiians deem sacred.

After the passage of the 1965 Hart-Celler Act, which marked a significant turning point in API history, skilled professionals and artisans, as well as those with family members already in America, were allowed to legally migrate and settle. A record number of APIs moved to the United States, and this tide of immigration remains unabated today. This second wave of immigration from Asia has greatly diversified

the Asian American population in every possible way—ethnically, culturally, economically, and religiously. It includes immigrants from the Philippines, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Mainland China, Burma, Tibet, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and India. The newest of this post-1965 group to arrive come from Southeast Asia. Throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, Vietnamese, Laotians, Cambodians, and Hmong migrated to the States as refugees and were relocated to different regions of the country as part of the government's resettlement efforts. They have brought with them Vietnamese Mahayana Buddhism, Vietnamese Catholicism (which, like Filipino American Catholicism, boasts its own rituals and saints), Theravada Buddhism (Laotians, Cambodians), and indigenous and popular religions (such as Ua Dab [Hmong] and Cao Dai [Vietnamese]). A number of Southeast Asians are also beginning to frequent and form Protestant churches of their own. Religion plays a central part in the lives of these newest arrivals. As involuntary migrants—many of whom are still dealing with the legacy of war, oppression, and genocide, and who have been thrown into a foreign environment with few resources and skills—many Southeast Asian Americans take spiritual refuge and find social comfort in the ethnic temple or church.

The America that post-1965 immigrants experience is very different from the one their API predecessors encountered. The rhetoric of multiculturalism and religious pluralism has displaced nativist discourses. Arguably, America is no longer a white, Christian nation, but one that is home to many faiths and cultures. This change, along with a growing fascination and interest in Asian religions and cultures, has given way to a new environment in which Asian and Pacific Americans have approached the maintenance of their ethnic faiths with greater confidence and pride. Opulent temples, thriving gurdwaras, and Asian American megachurches are now an integral part of the urban and suburban religious landscape.

Despite these outward gains, discrimination and misunderstanding still linger. An examination of temple-building successes and problems across ethnic and religious lines reveals racism of a more insidious nature. In their attempts to establish religious sites, Sikhs have been greeted by the same unwelcome response experienced by Taiwanese Buddhists. Racist resistance is rarely stated openly, but rather posed in the

form of zoning laws and concerns over traffic, noise, and neighborhood aesthetics. Indeed, Asian Americans who practice religions outside of mainstream Judeo-Christian traditions face a double task of trying to internally sustain their communities and outwardly translate their faith to a wider American public.

Asian Americans from Pakistan, India, Indonesia, China, and the Philippines make up the largest percentage of Muslims in the United States (Kosmin and Mayer 2001). In the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, these communities suffered physical violence and social prejudice. Racial and religious misunderstanding is not simply reserved for adherents of Islam, but is similarly experienced by Sikh Americans, who are often mistaken for Muslims because of their physical appearance and head coverings. In response, these groups have rallied and formed their own advocacy groups (such as Sikh MediaWatch). As concerns for “homeland security” mount, other Asian Americans have responded as well. Japanese Americans, driven by the memory of internment, have spoken out against political detentions and racial profiling. During World War II, Buddhist ministers were the first to be taken away to concentration camps, and Japanese Americans were quick to realize the message behind these targeted raids. As Asian Americans have generally learned, racial profiling and religious profiling often go hand in hand.

API Protestant Christians and Catholics have had their own challenges to face. The Asian American ethnic church or parish is seldom recognized as a unique institution and often rendered invisible within the larger frame of American Christianity. Because of their race, APIs are seen as recent converts and non-paradigmatic believers, or “second-class” Christians (Yoo 1999). However, Asian American Christians of various ethnic backgrounds boast a long history of faith that, in some cases, actually dates back to before immigration (such as in the case of Korean Americans and Filipino Americans). It is true that a large number of APIs have abandoned the religious traditions of their ancestors and have converted to Christianity, and like other racial-ethnic groups, the API population is experiencing a surge in conversions to evangelical Protestantism. But as scholars of Asian American religions are careful to point out, this process is often a mutual one, a double-conversion in which Asian

American subjects are converted, or “Christianized,” but American Christianity is also in turn “Asian Americanized” through the cultural presence of these individuals and groups. In addition, Asian American Christians develop their own stories and rituals that bespeak a community’s specific experience. For instance, Cambodian American Christians find special resonance in the story of Noah and link this biblical tale to their own watery escape or “salvation.” Through these typological links, Asian American Christians not only draw strength from the biblical text but also envision themselves as living agents of “God’s Word” and the Christian tradition.

Although many API Christian congregations are mono-ethnic in composition, the 1990s has seen the emergence of a unique phenomenon: the Asian American Christian church. Many of these congregations are evangelical in orientation and are mainly attended by nonimmigrant APIs. For members of these pan-ethnic institutions, racial-ethnic identity is a salient factor that informs their faith as well as what they see as the church’s larger mission. They recognize the unique character of their experience as Asian Americans (parental expectations, racism, the desire for upward mobility, basketball as a popular pastime) and seek a church that caters simultaneously to their lifestyle and their spiritual needs. Asian American identity, categorically understood, becomes the defining (yet elusive) factor on which these churches are based. The growing popularity of these institutions, most notably in the urban areas of Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area, attests to the inextricable link between religion and culture and the persistence of race in American society.

Finally, it is worth speaking about those APIs who seem to have no religious affiliation at all. Asian Americans are twice as likely to describe themselves as “secular” in comparison with members of other racial-ethnic groups (Kosmin and Mayer 2001). This is not surprising. Other factors aside, “religion” is a more alien concept, that is, less intuitive, for many Asian Americans, especially those of the immigrant generation, than it is for the majority of the American public. Americans usually conceive of religion as an allegiance to a particular faith, a belief in God or a similar higher power, or something that is dependent on regular church attendance. Religion and spirituality in Asia, and by extension, Asian America, often



fits none of these requirements. Asian American religiosity, by its very nature, is syncretic and draws from folk stories, cultural beliefs, community wisdom, and personal invention as well as from the various faith traditions. It is difficult for certain Asian American religious practitioners (such as Hmong, Buddhists, and Hindus) to envision an anthropomorphized, all-powerful God with whom one has a personal relationship. And for many Asian Americans, spirituality is philosophically informed (such as in Confucianism), rather than divinely inspired, and religious faith is often indistinguishable from secular interests.

Hence, understanding religion in Asian and Pacific America requires a new lens—one that takes into account the porosity of API life. Instead of the term “religion,” which does not fully capture the richness of an API spiritual sensibility, it is perhaps better to conceive of Asian American religions as “spiritual cultures” (Nakasone 1996) in which the sacred takes more fluid and unconventional forms. Through this new lens, we might be better able to see, appreciate, understand, and analyze what continues to serve as the main sources of spiritual strength (the significance of family, food, and community gatherings, for example) and spiritual witness (Asian American arts and literature, storytelling cloths, and the like) and to discern the lively traces of religious presence that the lives of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders elegantly bear.

—Jane Naomi Iwamura

#### SEE ALSO

Buddhism in America: Buddhist Churches of America, Mahayana; Catholicism in America; Religious

Communities, Soka Gakkai International–USA, Theravada Religious Communities, Tibetan Buddhism, Zen; Hinduism in America: Hare Krishna Movement, Hindu Temples, Reinventions, Vedanta Society; Islam in America; Protestantism in America; The Body: Asian Body Practices

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## CHINESE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Compared to the study of Chinese religion in China and the Asian diaspora, religion among the Chinese in North America is underresearched. Asian American scholarship has given little attention to religion. Generally speaking, American religious studies also have not explored the Asian American experience. Promising new works, however, are emerging from the cross-fertilization of scholarship in race and ethnicity with religious studies. This new scholarship is opening up new perspectives about the impact of transnationalism, the Chinese diaspora, and the changing definition of Chinese identity.

The Chinese immigrant experience in North America is disproportionately bound up in China's encounter with European and American Protestantism despite the longevity and deep influence of Chinese religious traditions and expressions. China's defeat at the hands of Protestant Great Britain during the Opium War (1839–1842) forced open its ports to European and American trade and destabilized the Southern Chinese economy. Furthermore, the Protestant-inspired T'ai-ping rebellion (1850–1864) wracked more havoc in Southern and Central China. The socioeconomic dislocation that resulted from China's encounter with European Christian nations in the mid-nineteenth century created conditions that encouraged Chinese emigration. With the abolition of the African slave trade, many Chinese were recruited to replace Africans as cheap labor for primarily British and American colonial projects in Southeast Asia and the Americas. During the twentieth century, the small merchant class in the Chinese diaspora increased and became associated with affluence, high educational attainment, and Christianity.

The overwhelming majority of Chinese who immigrated to the United States in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries were men from Guangdong Province, hence the earliest Chinese American population was relatively homogeneous. By 1880, the Chinese American population had reached 100,000, and it peaked at 118,746 in 1900. Discriminatory immigration laws in 1875 had the effect of dramatically

reducing immigration by Chinese women. When this factor was combined with the antimiscegenation laws enacted in many states, ghettoized "bachelor" societies in American Chinatowns were created. The Chinese Exclusion Acts of 1882, 1892, and 1904 prohibited Chinese laborers from entering the United States, resulting in a large decrease in the immigrant population in the early decades of the twentieth century. These years nevertheless witnessed an increasing number of Chinese families as a new generation of acculturated English-speaking Chinese Americans came of age. This group formed the majority of Chinese Americans in the 1930s and 1940s, leading many to believe that the Chinese would assimilate into mainstream American society. Immigration from China began in earnest during the 1940s and 1950s. After the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed in 1943, and the anti-Asian discriminatory features of immigration law were removed in 1965, a larger and more diverse Chinese population migrated to the United States from various parts of Asia, though a 20,000 annual quota was applied to immigrants from China and Taiwan. In 1981, Taiwan was given its own quota of 20,000, and in 1986, Hong Kong's quota was increased from 600 to 5,000 per year. In 1995, Hong Kong's annual quota was raised to 20,000. Consequently, the Chinese American population increased from 106,334 in 1940 to more than 2.4 million in 2000, most of which were immigrants.

At the heart of religion among the Chinese is a distinct worldview that has survived and adapted to dynastic changes, philosophical devaluation of popular religion, nationalism, modernization, and secularization. This worldview continues to influence religious and nonreligious Chinese today. Essentially, this outlook views the world as a "living system" where all things are interrelated. From the art of feng-shui, the yin and yang rhythms, and the five qi (or ch'i), the Chinese worldview, like that of Native Americans, sees the world itself as a sacred place of power and mystery. The role of humanity is to cooperate with this sense of natural sacredness. Honor and respect



Curious American gentry watch Chinese men pray at an altar in San Francisco, California, 1871 (Corbis)

for one's ancestors are an extension of the interrelatedness of all things, including familial relationships across the generations.

Daoist and Confucian philosophical ideas that emerged from this worldview have also shaped the character of Chinese religion and religious practice. The importation and eventual sinocization of Buddhism has also been influential. More recently, Christianity has become more widely accepted. Such a flexible worldview has given Chinese popular religion a more eclectic approach toward diverse religions that can even accept iconoclastic and sectarian movements. In contrast to this generous toleration toward vastly different religious traditions, the Chinese state has historically sought rigid control over the religious life of its subjects. Since the Communist Revolution, diasporic Chinese in nations with relative religious freedom have produced a remarkable

variety of new sects and revitalized older religious traditions. This is especially true for Chinese in North America.

Chinese American religious history has been influenced not only by immigration patterns and demographics but also by historical developments in North America and Asia. One might divide Chinese American religious history into three periods: (1) masculine "traditional" religion (1850–1900); (2) Protestant modernism (1900–1965); and (3) postmodern pluralism (1965–present). During the first period, the predominantly male Chinese community attempted to reproduce traditional Chinese religious practices on American soil. More than forty temples were built in the United States and Hawaii by the turn of the century. In California alone, more than twenty-five were erected in the 1870s and 1880s. These temples were reported to attract thousands of adherents. During

this period, there is evidence of religious fraternal orders (*tongs*) that became involved in reformist or revolutionary politics in China. On the surface, they appeared to be alternatives to the temple-oriented religions, but these fraternal orders were part of a long tradition of religious iconoclasm that was indigenous to Chinese society. Those in the Chinese American community during this period attributed their discriminatory treatment to a weak and backward China, hence they were very attuned to developments there. As China began to embrace Western modernity at the turn of the century, adherence to formal traditional religious practices declined and state-centered secular nationalism occupied the attention of Chinese Americans.

Because Protestantism was so closely identified with European and American culture, many Chinese Americans in the second period were favorably disposed to it as a resource for Chinese national progress. At the same time, many Chinese Americans also rejected religion entirely, and some even participated in anti-Christian protests in the mid-1920s. Their experience of modernity and nationalism created an iconoclastic view of traditional religion. Nevertheless, mainline American Protestant missionaries had established such a strong track record of pro-Chinese support in the face of anti-Chinese hostility that it was difficult to dislodge their favored status in the Chinese American community. The mainline Protestant willingness to engage modernity also made them attractive to inquisitive Chinese Americans. Until the 1960s, American Protestants were a significant presence in the Chinese American community, especially among the sixty Chinese congregations nationwide that had historical affiliations with these denominations. The Chinese congregations also made a disproportionate impact on the Chinese American community.

Since 1965, there has been an explosive growth of diverse indigenous Chinese religious organizations and sects, including Chinese evangelical congregations. Large Chinese Buddhist temples have been built in Southern California and near New York City. Moreover, recent working-class immigrants have brought traditional religious practices to the United States. Today, the Chinese American population is extraordinarily diverse along socioeconomic, national, dialectic, intergenerational, and religious lines. It ap-

pears that the most active religious communities have been the more than 1,200 Chinese evangelical congregations in the United States and Canada. The “postmodern condition” has distanced Chinese identity in North America and the Chinese diaspora from the demands of the Chinese state, whether Communist or Nationalist. For instance, the formation of distinct Taiwanese religious sects and evangelical groups reflects, in part, a Taiwanese indigenous resistance to the claims of the Nationalist Party. Furthermore, Chinese born or raised in America also question how Chinese identity will change among the acculturated. Consequently, the meaning of Chinese identity and religious identity is undergoing a transition. The People’s Republic of China’s growing influence in global politics and economics may also trigger different Chinese American religious responses.

In an atmosphere of American religious freedom, various Chinese religions are proliferating. The different emerging groups engage in the retrieval of traditional religions, the acceptance of sectarian groups such as evangelicals, and the redefinition of Chinese cultural identity. The internal diversity among religious Chinese in America will continue to shape and reshape the meaning of being Chinese in a postmodern world.

—Timothy Tseng

#### SEE ALSO

Buddhism in America: Tibetan Buddhism; Protestantism in America; The Body: Asian Body Practices

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## JAPANESE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Like all immigrants, Japanese Americans who came to the United States, Canada, Hawaii, and South America brought their religions with them. In most Japanese American communities, Buddhist temples, Shinto shrines, and Christian churches became the center of communal life, providing social services such as language schools and youth activities as well as a place for spiritual ceremonies, such as weddings, funerals, and seasonal celebrations. Unlike white European immigrants, however, Japanese American religious communities were subject to special scrutiny and discrimination, both because of the perceived racial difference between Asians and whites and because Shinto and Buddhist practices were thought to be un-American.

Japanese immigrants began coming to the United States at the beginning of the Meiji era (1868–1912). Two classes of Japanese citizens were allowed to emigrate: (1) farmers and others from the rural countryside, who were recruited to work on sugar plantations in Hawaii; and (2) young men, urban city dwellers, whose purpose was to study in the West, improve their English, and earn college degrees in order to return and help modernize Japan. These “schoolboys” moved to large cities in the United States, especially Los Angeles, Seattle, and San Francisco, enrolled in high schools and colleges, and worked as house servants or in other service jobs to earn a living. Some of them were among the first Japanese converts to Christianity, coming into contact with Christian missionaries who had previously established a social and religious outreach to Chinese immigrants during the Gold Rush era in the American West. The first Japanese American Christian congregation in the United

States was established in 1877 by a group of students who met in the basement of the Chinese Methodist Church in San Francisco. By World War II, there were approximately eighty Japanese American Christian congregations in the United States and in Hawaii.

A large number of Japanese immigrants came to the United States by way of Hawaii, which was annexed as a territory in 1898. They established a wide variety of Buddhist congregations—Nichiren, Soto Zen, Shingon, and Tendai among them. But most of these immigrants were from rural farming provinces where the Jodo Shu and Jodo Shinshu sects were especially influential. Thus, Jodo Shinshu Buddhism became the most prominent religion in the Japanese American community. Before World War II, the Hongpa (or Nishi) sect of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism emerged as the largest of these groups, establishing nearly 100 temples, primarily in the Pacific Coast states and Hawaii. The first were established in Honolulu in 1889, in California in 1899, and in Canada in 1904.

Buddhist institutions were the cornerstone of community life in most Japanese American neighborhoods. Buddhist priests were leaders in the community and often served as liaisons to both Japanese and U.S. authorities. For example, as the California Assembly sought to further restrict the rights of Japanese to own property and educate their children, the head of the Jodo Shinshu Mission regularly lobbied white community leaders, writing letters defending his community against charges of heathenism and emperor worship.

Many Buddhist temples served as community centers and schools. Buddhist temples adopted Western modes of operation and organization, including Sun-



Praying in front of a shrine, Salinas, California  
(Michael S. Yamashita/Corbis)

day schools, church choirs, and youth groups. In Hawaii, for example, the Buddhist mission established Japanese-language schools for the second generation (*Nisei*). The social events that took place at the temples were especially important for the Nisei generation. The network of Young Men's and Women's Buddhist Associations provided the youth with a common peer group and the opportunity to exercise leadership within their own communities. This was especially important to those Nisei who lived in rural areas, isolated from the larger Japanese American community, where they became more vulnerable to the humiliating effects of bigotry and racism. Retaining their Buddhist faith in a Christian country was a challenge for the Nisei generation, but it provided them with a means of preserving their self-esteem and retaining an important connection to their parents and their Japanese heritage.

Religious faith and organizations were an important focal point for Japanese American communities before

World War II. They were, however, vulnerable to attack from white Americans who misunderstood Buddhism and Shinto. In Japan, Shinto, which was based on a belief in nature spirits, blended with Buddhist beliefs into a set of syncretic traditions and customs. During the Meiji era, a form of state-sponsored Shinto held the emperor up as an object of reverence. Japanese citizens expressed their loyalty to their nation in part by expressing loyalty and reverence to the emperor. In the United States, white Americans confused this state-sponsored Shinto with the more syncretic blend of religious customs. In many Japanese American communities, Shinto shrines were built to acknowledge the importance of nature spirits and ancestors in the daily life of the community. Building Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines was, to some white Americans, evidence that Japanese immigrants were heathens, pagans, or somehow incapable of being loyal to the United States.

At the start of World War II, the U.S. government interned 120,000 members of the Japanese community, both the Nisei who were citizens by birth and their parents, who had not been allowed to become citizens. Many Buddhist priests were detained for the duration of the war because of their leadership roles in the community and their close ties with religious officials in Japan. In Hawaii, Japanese Americans were not interned, but all the Buddhist priests were arrested.

Both Christianity and Buddhism survived in the camps. White American supporters provided internees with prayer books, Bibles, sutras, and other religious necessities. Services were often led by laypeople, and the various Buddhist sects worshiped together. Although Buddhist institutions had been gradually adapting to the American context for years, the camp experience exaggerated the need to Americanize in order to assimilate. Most dramatically, in 1944 the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist leadership changed the formal name of the organization from the Buddhist Mission of North America to the Buddhist Churches of America.

Christianity and Buddhism remain vital aspects of the Japanese American community. Christian churches and Buddhist temples were central to the successful effort to organize the community to demand redress for internment in the 1980s. Christian churches especially have been instrumental in their

outreach to newer Asian immigrants arriving in the United States since the reform of immigration laws that had previously barred them. Older Japanese congregations have reformed and become more “pan-ethnic” in order to more effectively address the needs of these new arrivals.

But Japanese American religious institutions have struggled with declining membership since World War II. Assimilation and an increasing rate of intermarriage have had an effect, and as Japanese Americans have achieved a greater degree of economic advantage, they have moved further away from the traditional neighborhood churches and temples. In spite of the fact that the Buddhist Churches of America has recently celebrated its hundredth anniversary, congregations are aging and there is a struggle to maintain the interest and loyalty of the third (*Sansei*) and fourth (*Yonsei*) generations. Japanese American religious institutions in the twenty-first century will

struggle to find a balance between diversity, pluralism, and acculturation.

—Lori Pierce

#### SEE ALSO

Buddhism in America: Buddhist Churches of America; Generations

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## KOREAN AMERICAN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Religion, primarily Protestant Christianity, has been the most salient feature of the Korean American experience as a racial-ethnic community. Korean Americans have been in the United States for nearly a century and have now surpassed a population of 1 million. Their history is marked by three waves of migration and settlement: 1903–1945, 1945–1965, and 1965–present. In every wave, religion, as it has been manifested through institutions, ideas, and practices, has been a critical framework by which Korean Americans have given shape to their times. Religion has provided its adherents with vital social services, racial-ethnic spaces, and a means of faith and meaning. Recent studies point to the vitality of religion, evident in the nearly 3,000 Korean American Christian churches nationwide. Although figures vary, survey data suggest that 65 to 70 percent of Korean Americans are affiliated with Protestant ethnic churches, with Roman Catholics (10 to 15 percent) and Buddhists (10 to 15 percent) constituting the remainder of the population. Unlike some Asian American communities, Koreans

in the United States—past and present—have been deeply influenced by the dominance, diversity, and, at times, divisiveness of religious experience.

### 1903–1945

The first wave of Koreans, numbering approximately 8,500 persons, entered the United States beginning in 1903 largely as a labor force for sugarcane plantations in Hawaii. Religion played an important role from the very start as recruiters for American companies in Korea called upon Protestant missionaries in Korea to persuade those in their care to make the journey to the islands. As a result, Protestant Christians were among the first Korean Americans to venture to the United States, and approximately 40 percent of the early community claimed to be Christian.

Congregations on the plantations, in Honolulu as well as on the mainland, quickly became the gathering place for Korean Americans, serving as clearing-houses of information and social services. Churches

also provided spaces, under the umbrella of religion, to explore a wide range of issues, including the status of Korean Americans as a racial-ethnic minority in the United States and their role in the independence movement to free Korea from Japanese colonial rule. Key immigrant expatriate leaders such as Ahn Chang-ho, Pak Yong-Man, and Syngman Rhee all were influenced by the reform-minded ideas based in the Christian institutions (schools, hospitals, and churches) that had helped shape their worldviews. Moreover, Korean Americans looked to religion for a sense of meaning amidst the often harsh realities of life and labor that they encountered. At the same time, religion could also be the source of division. Churches and religious organizations could not but be enmeshed in the politics of community formation. For better and worse, religion, represented in the mix of the theological, cultural, political, and social, infused the lives of the majority of Korean Americans.

### 1945–1965

Approximately 14,000 persons—Korean wives of American servicemen and their children, war orphans, and professional workers and students—arrived during the second wave of migration, which was marked by the end of World War II and Japanese colonialism and the Korean War (1950–1953). Ties to the United States via the military, educational institutions, and church-related institutions provided select Koreans a means of starting new lives in America. Although not much is known in detail about this period, immigrant churches established during the first wave of migration offered students and professional workers, in particular, an opportunity to find a form of meaningful community.

### Post-1965 Period

The passage of new immigration legislation by the United States in 1965 removed restrictive and discriminatory measures that had been firmly in place for close to five decades. Korean immigrants, along with others from Asia, entered the United States in increasingly larger numbers, and at the peak in the mid-1980s, figures topped 30,000 persons per year. This influx transformed smaller, historic Korean American communities in urban settings such as Los Angeles

and New York, and it is these newer immigrants who make up the majority of the million or so Korean Americans in the country today. The boom in the population has been accompanied by a literal explosion of immigrant churches, temples, and other religious organizations. This largely Protestant phenomenon in part reflects the growth and spread of Protestant Christianity in Korea, but it is also clear that many men and women affiliated with churches after their arrival in the United States.

Religion continues to be the heart of this racial-ethnic community, informing the daily lives of men and women in the midst of the pressures of economic survival and sociocultural adjustments set into motion by the migration and settlement process. Institutions range from small, house-based groups to megachurches that rival any religious organization in the country in terms of membership, programming, and resources. Religion has continued to play a critical social service function for Korean Americans, creating webs of relationships that attend to a host of needs that immigrants face. Religious and racial-ethnic space has been intertwined for Korean Americans as well as for many other immigrant groups throughout our collective history, and this factor has had a significant impact on Korean American culture. Religious institutions have offered psychic and physical space within which individuals and communities can affirm traditions and customs from the home country even while wrestling with the changes and conflicts that can be engendered by new settings. As a source of faith and meaning and as a locus of ritual and spiritual practice, religion—from attending services in churches and temples to the less institutional, more popular forms of devotion and ritual activities—has a powerful and enduring influence in the life of Korean America.

Perhaps the defining moment of the post-1965 period has been the 1992 Los Angeles riots, or uprising, as some have called it. The ways that this event and its related issues have been refracted through the religious landscape of Korean America—from joint services with African American congregations, to community assistance programs, to apathy, denial, and neglect—suggest that while religion has been and continues to be at the core of this community, its nature is by no means uniform. The rise of second-generation, English-speaking Korean American, pan-Asian



American, and multiracial/ethnic institutions signals the dawning of a new era.

—David K. Yoo

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Protestantism in America; Generations: Children and Young People

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## PACIFIC ISLANDER AMERICAN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Pacific Islander Americans are a lot of different peoples: Samoans and Hawaiians, Tongans and Guamanians, Fijians and Tahitians, Maori and I-Kiribati, and dozens more. Their experiences of religion, migration, and residence in the United States are as various as the names of the islands from which they come. All the Pacific Island peoples who reside in America, however, have certain things in common. They all remain connected to the places from which they or their ancestors came to a degree unusual among immigrants in the United States. In the islands, they all experienced Western colonialism and dislocation, either by being taken over by the United States or a European power, by being forced to migrate from their island homes, or both. All the island peoples experienced intense missionary efforts by Americans and Europeans for generations. As a result, the peoples of the Pacific are among the most thoroughly Christian of the world's peoples. Christian churches and families are the most important Pacific social institutions in the islands and in the diaspora. At the same time, in all the islands and among islanders in the United States, elements of non-Christian religions remain alongside the religions of the colonizers.

Pacific Islander Americans number perhaps half a million. The largest group, Hawaiians, totals 250,000. A bit more than half of these live in Hawaii, and another sixth in California; the rest are scattered across

the continental United States. Hawaiians entered the American orbit in the second half of the nineteenth century when the grandchildren of New England missionaries and other Americans first achieved economic dominance over the Hawaiian Kingdom and then overthrew the monarchy and petitioned for Hawaii's inclusion in the American empire. Incorporation was completed with Hawaiian statehood in 1959. Since then, tourist economics have driven up the price of living in Hawaii to the point where nearly half the Hawaiian people have been forced into exile in other parts of the United States.

Guam, Hawaii, and Samoa became American colonies in 1898. Two hundred years of Spanish colonialism on Guam had nearly expunged the native Chamorro people. The Guamanians who have made their way along the sinews of empire to the United States since World War II are a mixed multitude of Spanish, Chamorro, Filipino, and other ancestries. About half of the 50,000 Guamanians in North America live in California. The Samoan archipelago was divided by German and American colonizers. Western Samoa became an independent republic, but American Samoa remained tied to the United States. When the U.S. Navy abandoned its base in Samoa after World War II, Samoans who had worked for the navy followed it home. These events set up a network of migration that linked Pago Pago with Honolulu



Native Hawaiian Tom Pico throws an offering to the fire goddess Pele off a cliff in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, c. 1994 (Michael S. Yamashita/Corbis)

and Los Angeles as well as other points of the Pacific diaspora, including Auckland and Sydney. About half of the 65,000 Samoans in the United States live in California, another quarter in Hawaii.

The histories of other Pacific Island peoples are less tied to direct U.S. colonial interventions. People have been moving around the Pacific for many centuries. Modern colonial links have taken as many to Aotearoa (New Zealand) and Australia as to the United States. Tonga was never formally colonized, yet 20,000 Tongans live in the United States. England was the colonial power in Fiji and Aotearoa, France in Tahiti. Each of these has contributed significant numbers of Pacific Islanders to the American population. For every group except Hawaiians, the largest number of Pacific Islanders currently resides in California. Hawaii holds the second-largest number of residents for all the other groups except Tongans, who have a large colony in Utah connected with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The social systems of Pacific Island peoples also exhibit enormous variety. Tonga and Hawaii built centralized monarchies in the early modern era, and Samoa and Fiji were divided among a multitude of chiefs. So it is with Pacific Island religions: Variety is the order of the day. One common theme in native island religions, however, is intimate connectedness with the land, the sea, and their creatures.

In Hawaii, for instance, the land, wind, ocean, and rain are living things. All life force springs from them. There is no radical disjunction as in Western religions between living creatures and the landscape. It all has life, consciousness, intention, emotion, and action. All beings have greater or lesser amounts of *mana*, or spiritual power. Each aspect of nature—a volcano, an outcropping of rock, a marsh, the sea turtle—is associated with a god or goddess (*‘aumakua*) and is in daily relationship with human beings. Supernatural beings abound and interact with humankind. Pele, the spectacular, violent, beautiful goddess of the volcano,

rains death. The *menehune*, the little people who preceded Polynesians in the islands, live on in the forests and play tricks at night. In Hawaii before Europeans appeared, the strict social hierarchy was supported by the *kapu* system of prescribed behaviors and relationships. *Kahuna* were religious specialists, chosen from the noble class, who made prayers and sacrificed to the gods.

By the end of the nineteenth century, missionaries had converted nearly all the peoples of the Pacific (New Guinea was an exception) to one or another variety of Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church is the dominant Christian group in Guam and Tahiti, and it has significant numbers of adherents throughout the Pacific. In Hawaii the most influential Christian churches have been New England Congregationalists and their descendants. In the Cook Islands and Fiji the London Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Methodist Church held sway. In Tonga, Samoa, Hawaii, and several other island groups, Mormons joined the Protestant and Catholic mix in large numbers.

From the beginning, Christianity blended with elements of pre-Christian religions. In Samoa, the Siovili cult combined Christian imagery and theology with native messianism even before the Europeans reached the islands. Creative combinations of European-derived religious themes, attitudes, and practices continue in the islands today and among Pacific Islanders in the United States. Hawaiian Catholic farmers pray to the god Lono in hopes of a bountiful harvest. A

Mormon bishop tells of seeing Pele walking in the volcano Kilauea and of leaving an offering to protect his house from a threatening lava flow. Samoan Mormons and Methodists gather to sing hymns and drink kava, a mild intoxicant used in ancient religious gatherings. A Methodist minister talks with menehune.

At the same time that there are blendings, Pacific Islander Christians are fervent in what they see as orthodox Christian commitments. Although nature-centered island religions appeal to nonislanders of a New Age bent, few Pacific Islander Americans are members of a New Age movement.

—Paul Spickard

#### SEE ALSO

Catholicism in America; New Religious Traditions: Mormonism; Protestantism in America; Ritual and Performance: Tourism; Sacred Space

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## SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

South Asia refers to the subcontinent that includes the nation states of India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. Immigrants to the United States from South Asia may be Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jain, Sikh, Buddhist, or Zoroastrian; their presence has changed the cultural and social landscape of America, just as living in America has had important consequences for the way their religious traditions are practiced and transmitted. Although the religious, ethnic,

and linguistic diversity of South Asian Americans is vast, they share many issues of identity formation and maintenance as “new” minorities in American culture and face common questions about the relationship between religion, culture, and ethnicity within that identity.

South Asian religious traditions in America are shaped first by who and what has been brought over from the subcontinent and who and what has been

left behind. Scholar of Hinduism Vasudha Narayanan, for example, referred to goddesses associated with lower castes, specific agricultural contexts, and/or animal sacrifice as “the goddesses who don’t get visas” (Narayanan 1992). Second, these traditions are shaped by who and what their adherents meet on American soil. The parameters vary according to historical factors and sociological patterning, which may differ in important ways from one tradition to another. One major difference among South Asians in America concerns the shift that may occur in their majority or minority status through immigration. For example, Hindus, who belong to an overwhelming religious majority in India, have become in the United States both an ethnic and religious minority. Parents who grew up in India simply absorbing Hindu practices and values by osmosis, since they were all around them, are now faced with consciously teaching their children these practices in ways in which they themselves were not. Indian Muslims shift from identifying with a religious minority to joining a multiethnic Muslim minority in America. Pakistani or Bangladeshi Muslims, in contrast, adapt from being part of a religious majority to being treated as a double minority (South Asian and Muslim) in America. For most South Asian Muslim immigrants, their American experience is the first context in which they begin to understand on a very physical level what it means to belong to a worldwide *umma*, or Muslim community, joining Friday prayers for the first time with non-South Asian Muslims. Indian and Pakistani Christians who immigrate to America are suddenly part of a religious Christian majority, but one with which they may not identify culturally.

Not only are particular majority/minority statuses left behind in South Asia, but so, too, are wide spectrums of class, educational, and regional differences within each religious tradition. Internal diversity is visible at almost every village or town center or urban thoroughfare in South Asia. Certain regions, castes, and class groups are overrepresented, however, in the immigration pool; not in the mix at all are representatives of very low economic classes or nonliterate practitioners (unless of the grandparent generation, joining their children). Only part of the Hindu pantheon immigrates with the highly professional, middle-class immigrants who typically make their home in the United States. Deities requiring animal sacrifice or

those who are said to possess their worshipers are not usually among those transplanted to America; they are left behind because of *who* is left behind. Similarly, for Muslims, shrines to saints (*dargahs*), varieties of religious healers, and public processions to celebrate the death anniversary of a saint or Muharram are left behind in South Asia.

All South Asian religious traditions leave behind their close association with the physical topography of the land, particular sacred pilgrimage sites (even as a few new ones may be gradually emerging on American soil), and the association of festivals with specific seasons and agricultural cycles. In America they become urban and suburban traditions. Diversity is also streamlined in the self-presentation of minority religious traditions to the majority culture in America. For second-generation South Asians, this simplified presentation may be the one that is absorbed, since they have not personally experienced the range of diversity of religious traditions in South Asia, or even the diversity present within their own tradition.

Although the vast majority of post-1965 South Asian immigrants are English speakers, English was not their mother tongue, nor was it the language of worship and ritual in South Asia. The first-generation immigrants may be thinking in Urdu, Hindi, or Telugu, even as they are speaking English in a religious context, but their children, the second generation, are primarily thinking in English. Language thus influences their understanding and experience of South Asian religious traditions and meanings. For example, non-Hindu visitors to American temples will often learn, either through the temple informational pamphlet or conversation, that the images of the deities housed in that temple are focal points of concentration, but not actually the deities themselves. Part of this interpretation is due to the use of English, since no English word connotes “life” in an image; and it becomes difficult to say in English that one is actually worshipping the deity as a stone.

As South Asian traditions adapt to American cultural contexts, their members often do not interact with each other as much as they may have in South Asia itself. Fewer Hindus in America regularly interact with South Asian Muslims than do Hindus in Hyderabad, and although Buddhist and Hindu neighbors may have grown up together in Kathmandu, here in the United States they have joined distinct reli-



An Indian mother and daughter perform a ritualistic dance, Laguna Niguel, California (Trip/S. Grant)

gious and cultural associations. Student organizations on American university campuses such as the Indian Cultural Exchange and the Pakistani Student Association may be technically nonreligious or nonsectarian; however, they often carry with them the identities of the religious majority of their respective countries. Second-generation South Asian Americans often attribute to religious identities features that are, in fact, shared across religious boundaries in South Asia. For example, a Hindu Indian-American college student returned from his first visit to an Indian Christian church in Atlanta, Georgia, exclaiming that there were several “Hindu” characteristics to the service, including the harmonium and the devotional songs called *bhajans*. He had never met Indian Christians before and had always associated these musical forms with religion (Hinduism) rather than culture (Indian).

The impact of South Asian religions on the Ameri-

can landscape grew significantly when the Immigration Act of 1965 repealed immigration quotas based on preexisting ethnic identities of the U.S. population, thus opening quotas up to immigrants from the South Asian subcontinent. These immigrants were students and highly educated professionals, most of whom were also English-speaking. Many of these immigrants came to the United States for educational and professional opportunities, but they did not always intend to stay permanently. However, as their children grew up as Americans, members of the first generation of South Asian immigrants realized they had already made the choice to stay when they arrived. Hindus began building temples as a way of sacralizing the American landscape and putting down deeper roots; Muslims built mosques and community centers; gurdwaras and Jain centers have been built in American cities with large Sikh and Jain populations; and numerous mainstream Christian denominations share their sanctuaries with Indian congregations.

Religion has become an important primary cultural identity marker and carrier for many South Asians in America that it never was for them or their parents in South Asia. There, one’s primary identity may have been associated with place, caste, language, or family rather than with religion per se. In South Asia there were many other channels for cultural transmission outside of religious contexts, whereas for many South Asians in America, religion has become a (if not *the*) primary context for identity formation and maintenance. As a result, many of the first generation say they are more religious in America than they were “back home.” This means, in part, that they have had to be more verbal and reflective about their own traditions in the United States, where they are both ethnic and religious minorities, than they were in their native lands and that they have had to take up active leadership of religious institutions (temples, mosques, and religious centers) in ways that they would not have had the need or opportunity to do in South Asia, where specialists abound and religious bureaucracies do not require the same degree of lay participation.

An Americanization of Hinduism, for example, is reflected in the fact that a Bengali Brahmin engineer employed by an urban transportation authority is regularly called upon to perform rituals for the Bengali community on particular festival days, something he would never have done in Calcutta. As more tradi-

tional temples and mosques have been built, however, more ritual specialists and priests have been brought over from South Asia to serve in these institutions. On another level, the American context has opened up to many South Asians religious participation from which they were excluded in South Asia. For example, in South Asia, Muslim women do not (and are not permitted) to attend mosque services. Their ritual practice is primarily domestically based. In the United States, however, women regularly attend the mosque. One Pakistani woman said, "In Lahore I had no need to attend mosque because the Qur'an was [recited] all around me. But here in the U.S., to hear the Qur'an I need to go to the mosque." Other South Asian Muslim women point to the fact that in America they have had the opportunity to read the Qur'an in translation (rather than only reciting it in Arabic, which they do not fully understand) and say, "We are better Muslims here than we were in India."

The shape of South Asian religious traditions in America will continue to change and will become more and more dependent upon second-generation South Asian Americans as they become adults and take over leadership of their communities. A flow of new members from South Asia is likely, however, and connections to South Asia are much more easily maintained than in the past through the Internet and through advances in transportation that make it easier to travel between the subcontinent and America.

—Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger

#### SEE ALSO

Hinduism in America: Hare Krishna Movement, Hindu Temples, Reinventions, Vedanta Society; Islam in America: The Ahmadiyyah Movement, Islamic Organizations in America, Sufism in America, Sunni Religious Communities; Sacred Time: Thanksgiving

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BUDDHISM IN  
AMERICA





American Buddhism is a recent invention. Buddhism itself began in India in the fifth or sixth century B.C.E. when the Buddha is said to have achieved enlightenment. As it moved north into China and Tibet and south into Sri Lanka and Thailand, the Buddhist tradition changed dramatically. Americans will no doubt also transform Buddhism, though it is far too early to determine precisely what shape that transformation will take. Buddhism did not come to the United States until the mid-nineteenth century, and the overwhelming majority of Buddhist groups active in the country today are only a few decades old. A toddler in the worldwide Buddhist family, American Buddhism is just beginning to craft its identity in what Buddhists affirm is an ever-changing world.

Statistics regarding the number of Buddhists in the United States are unreliable. Roughly four out of every ten of the immigrants arriving in the country since 1965 have come from Asia, and the U.S. Census Bureau reported that there were more than 10 million Asian Americans in the United States in 2000. Although many of them are Buddhists, a precise figure for the overall American Buddhist population is not known. Harvard University's Pluralism Project has documented more than 1,200 American Buddhist centers, but it is difficult to determine how many Buddhists patronize those centers and how many more practice Buddhism on their own or in smaller groups. Many Americans who sympathize with Buddhist philosophy or practice Buddhist meditation do not call themselves Buddhists. Moreover, many Americans who self-identify as Buddhists do not consider Buddhism to be a religion. Plausible estimates of the American Buddhist population range from half a million to 5 million, and 2 million to 3 million seems to be a fair estimate.

Moreover, it is difficult to pin down precisely what American Buddhists believe or do. There is tremendous variety today inside American Buddhism. Some meditate, while others chant. Some affirm traditional Buddhist doctrines such as karma and rebirth, while others reject those doctrines. All American Buddhists, however, trace their lineage to Siddhartha Gautama,

the ancient Indian prince who would come to be known as the Buddha ("Awakened One"). Most agree to rely on the Three Jewels: the Buddha, the Dharma (Buddhist teachings), and the Sangha (Buddhist community). Most also affirm the Four Noble Truths, core Buddhist teachings that define the human problem as suffering and outline a path to its cessation (nirvana).

There are many ways to cut the American Buddhist pie. There are monks and lay practitioners, meditators and chanters, and the committed and the lukewarm. However, the most basic and useful division in American Buddhism seems to be between birthright Buddhists (who inherited their Buddhism from practicing parents) and convert Buddhists (who came to the tradition themselves via conversion). Most American Buddhists, perhaps as many as three-quarters of the overall Buddhist population, are birthright Buddhists. Many in this group emigrated from Buddhist countries. Others were born into Asian American families that have practiced Buddhism for generations. Convert Buddhists are much smaller in number (perhaps one-quarter of the American Buddhist population). Some scholars have referred to this group as "white Buddhists," but many in this group are Hispanics and African Americans.

Birthright Buddhists and convert Buddhists have, for the most part, disparate histories and divergent concerns. Even in cases where the two groups occupy a shared center, they typically interact little, forming what one scholar has described as "parallel congregations" whose paths rarely cross. Yet the distinction between birthright and convert Buddhists is not absolute. More than 10 percent of the priests in the Buddhist Churches of America (a predominantly Japanese American group) are Euro-Americans. Many of the most successful convert Buddhist groups were established by immigrant teachers, and many are still headed by tulkus from Tibet, Zen masters from Korea, or monks from Sri Lanka. Moreover, some children of Americans who turned to Buddhism during the heyday of the counterculture in the 1970s have themselves inherited the Buddhist faith, even though they participate in so-called convert congregations.

### Three Yanas

A more traditional division separates American Buddhism, like all other forms of Buddhism, into three *yanas*, or vehicles: Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. Each of these Buddhist types has a strong presence in the United States.

Theravada, which means “Way of the Elders,” is Buddhism’s oldest and most traditional school. Prominent today in Kampuchea (formerly Cambodia), Myanmar (formerly Burma), Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon), Laos, Thailand, and other Southeast Asian countries, it emphasizes the monastic path of renunciation. Today in the United States, it is visible in roughly 150 temples catering mostly to recent immigrants and refugees. Theravada has also influenced the Insight Meditation Movement, which attempts to bring a modern version of Theravada meditative practices to U.S.-born converts and sympathizers.

Theravada Buddhism first emerged in the United States in 1893, when Anagarika Dharmapala, a Buddhist layman from Ceylon, delivered a speech at the World’s Parliament of Religions, an interreligious gathering held in Chicago in conjunction with the World’s Columbian Exposition. In the wake of the parliament, Dharmapala established an American outpost of his Maha Bodhi Society, but Theravada Buddhism did not really take root in the United States until after 1965. The first of America’s 150 or so Theravada temples was started by the Buddhist Vihara Society, incorporated in Washington, D.C., in 1966 by Sri Lankan monks. The vast majority of the roughly 600 monks staffing those temples were born outside of the United States. Many do not speak English, and for the most part they interact with birthright Buddhists from countries such as Thailand, who call these centers *Wats*, and Sri Lanka, who refer to them as *Viharas*.

Though strongest in the immigrant community, the Theravada tradition also has a presence among converts and sympathizers, most notably in the Insight Meditation Society (IMS). This organization was founded in 1975 on the grounds of a former Catholic seminary in Barre, Massachusetts, by Joseph Goldstein, Jack Kornfield, Jacqueline Schwartz, and Sharon Salzberg, all of whom had studied with Theravada teachers in Asia. In 1988, Kornfield established a West Coast outpost called Spirit Rock Meditation

Center in Marin County, California. Initially the IMS stressed *vipassana*, or insight meditation, but in recent years it has also focused on *metta*, or loving-kindness meditation. Although both *vipassana* and *metta* are traditional Theravada practices, IMS teachers have adapted those practices to American circumstances. IMS stalwarts have also published a variety of best-selling books. They have been pioneers in Jewish-Buddhist dialogue, in part because all the key IMS founders were Jewish by birth.

In the convert community, Theravada Buddhism is largely a lay affair, but the United States is home to a few Euro-American monks. The British-born Ajahn Amaro is most closely associated with the Abhayagiri Forest Monastery in Redwood City, California. U.S.-born Thanissaro Bhikku lives at the Metta Forest Monastery north of San Diego. Both of these monasteries are American outposts of the Thai forest tradition. And while both house monks, they also serve lay practitioners (and support their activities) by offering retreats.

Mahayana means “Great Vehicle.” This form of Buddhism predominates in China, Japan, Korea, and other East Asian countries. One reason Mahayanists claim their vehicle is greater than the Theravada way is that it makes enlightenment available to laypeople with families and jobs rather than restricting it to monks and nuns who have renounced familial and social obligations. The Mahayana path is also said to be greater because it emphasizes other-oriented compassion over the supposedly self-serving wisdom so highly prized by its rivals (though empathetic concern for others has always played a part in the Theravada tradition). Such compassion is embodied in *bodhisattvas*, Mahayana heroes who vow to help all beings achieve enlightenment.

The Mahayana Buddhist tradition is most visible in the United States in hundreds of Zen centers that dot the American landscape. In these centers, both major forms of Zen—Rinzai (which employs the *koan*, a paradoxical phrase for meditation) and Soto (which emphasizes *zazen*, or “just sitting”)—are widely represented, though far and away the most common Zen practice in the United States is to blend these two traditions together into a hybrid Zen tea.

Two of the most venerable and influential Zen institutions in the United States are the San Francisco Zen Center (SFZC), founded in 1962 under the direction



A statue of a seated Buddha in a Japanese garden, San Francisco, California (Reinhard Eisele/Corbis)

of Shunryu Suzuki, and the Zen Center of Los Angeles (ZCLA), established by Taizan Maezumi in 1967. Today SFZC has a wide-ranging operation that includes Green Gulch Farm and Tassajara Zen Mountain Center. Though Maezumi died in 1995, his work lives on in a variety of organizations affiliated with the White Plum Sangha. Those groups include John Daido Looi's Zen Mountain Monastery in the Catskills of New York and Bernie Glassman's Zen Peacemaker Order.

Another influential Zen lineage in the United States began with the Japanese Zen reformer Hakuun Yasutani and worked its way into America largely through the work of Philip Kapleau and Robert Aitken, both students of Yasutani's. Kapleau established the Rochester Zen Center in Rochester, New York, in 1966. Aitken established a Zen group in 1959 later known as the Diamond Sangha. He worked with Beat poet Gary Snyder to establish the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, a key organization in "engaged Buddhism," an activist form of Buddhism that seeks to apply

Buddhist teachings and practices to the betterment of society. Both Kapleau and Aitken were early and eager Americanizers of Zen. Noting that Buddhism was Sinified in China and Japanized in Japan, Kapleau has worked hard to Americanize Zen by urging his students to chant sutras in English and to wear American clothing during sitting practice.

Although many Americans joined Zen centers, particularly during the Zen boom that began in the 1950s, many more got their Zen from books. These "bookstore Buddhists" were trained not by teachers but by texts, including Jack Kerouac's *Dharma Bums* (1958), Kapleau's *The Three Pillars of Zen* (1965), and Shunryu Suzuki's *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* (1970)—all American Buddhist classics.

Mahayana Buddhism is also present in the United States in the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA). The grandfather of American Buddhist institutions, the BCA is a predominantly Japanese American group. It began as the Buddhist Mission of North America, but in 1944, members interned at the Topaz

Relocation Center in Utah renamed the group. It survived the traumas of World War II internment camps but never regained the momentum it had enjoyed as Japanese American immigration was taking off in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Today the BCA is likely America's second-largest Buddhist organization. Based in San Francisco, it reports sixty-one temples and 17,000 adult members.

BCA members practice Jodo Shinshu ("True Pure Land"), a Mahayana form that traces its origins to the thirteenth-century Japanese Buddhist reformer Shinran. Jodo Shinshu practitioners distinguish themselves from other Buddhists by their core practice: chanting the *nembutsu*, a phrase invoking Amida, the Buddha of "Infinite Light." Practitioners believe that faith in the saving grace of Amida Buddha will ensure rebirth in a heavenly realm called the Pure Land. In the post-World War II period, BCA members were eager Americanizers of Buddhism, proving that birthright Buddhists, like converts, have accommodated ancient Buddhist traditions to modern circumstances. They referred to their leaders as "bishops" and "ministers" and sang hymns such as "Onward Buddhist Soldiers." Though their numbers have dwindled, the BCA remains an important force in American Buddhism. Its leaders have authority rooted in a 100-year history in the United States, and they have used that authority to bring Buddhist perspectives to public policy issues such as school prayer.

Another influential Mahayana Buddhist group is Soka Gakkai International-USA. SGI-USA is likely the largest Buddhist organization in the United States. It is certainly the most diverse, with a strong presence of Hispanic and African American converts alongside Japanese American birthright Buddhists and Euro-American converts. Like the BCA, SGI-USA has its origins in thirteenth-century Japan, though its roots led to a reformer named Nichiren. Nichiren Shoshu, an offshoot of the Nichiren school known as "True Nichiren," first came to the United States in 1960. In that year, Daisaku Ikeda, the president of a lay movement inside Nichiren Shoshu called Soka Gakkai ("Value-Creation Society"), visited the United States and founded Soka Gakkai of America (later Nichiren Shoshu of America, or NSA). Though this group initially attracted Japanese Americans, it was soon aggressively recruiting non-Asians, particularly blacks and Hispanics. In 1991, a fragile peace between

Nichiren Shoshu priests and their lay followers led to a schism that produced a priestly group known as Nichiren Shoshu Temple (NST) and a much larger lay group called SGI-USA. The core practice for SGI-USA practitioners is chanting the Daimoku: "*Nam-Myo-Renge-Kyo*" ("Hail to the wonderful Dharma of the Lotus Sutra") and parts of the Lotus Sutra itself. They believe that this practice brings both spiritual and material benefits, including health and wealth. Today SGI-USA boasts roughly seventy centers and claims 100,000 to 300,000 American members. NST controls six temples in the United States and its membership is markedly smaller.

Yet another important Mahayana institution is Hsi Lai Temple, the largest monastery in the United States. Located in the Los Angeles area in Hacienda Heights, California, Hsi Lai ("Coming to the West") is an American outgrowth of Fo Kuang Buddhism, established in Taiwan in 1967 by a proponent of "humanistic Buddhism" named Master Hsing Yun. Hsi Lai, which caters mostly to Chinese Americans, was caught up in a fundraising scandal after a visit by Vice-President Al Gore in 1996, but it appears to have weathered the storm. In addition to meeting the needs of monks and nuns, Hsi Lai works with a lay organization called Buddha's Light International Association to offer classes in Chinese languages and arts.

Vajrayana ("Diamond Vehicle") Buddhism originated in India and flowered in Tibet. Popularly known as Tibetan Buddhism, this tradition incorporated elements from Tantrism and shamanism into Mahayana Buddhism. Following the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950 and the Tibetan diaspora beginning in 1959, Tibetan Buddhism moved back into India. Tibetan Buddhists distinguish themselves from other practitioners of Buddhism by intoning mantras such as *Om mani padme hum* ("O the Jewel in the Lotus") and by using cosmic maps called *mandalas* as aids in visualization.

This school is most closely associated in the United States with the Dalai Lama, the spiritual and political leader of the Tibetan people and the person most responsible for the Buddhist vogue of the 1990s. Tibetan Buddhism came to the United States, however, long before the 1990s. In 1958, a year before the Dalai Lama fled from Tibet into exile in India, Geshe Wangyal incorporated the Lamaist Buddhist Monastery of America (now the Tibetan Buddhist Learning

Center), America's first Tibetan monastery. In 1969, Tarthang Tulku established the Nyingma Meditation Center in Berkeley, California. Chogyam Trungpa came to the United States in 1970. He settled in Boulder, Colorado, where he founded the Naropa Institute in 1974. Of those three men, Chogyam Trungpa was the most influential. In part because of his unorthodox style, he earned the respect of the Beat poet Allen Ginsberg, who worked with Trungpa to transform the Naropa Institute into the country's first Buddhist university.

Although birthright Buddhists predominate in Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism in the United States, converts predominate in Vajrayana Buddhism. Only about 3,000 Tibetans actually live in the United States. Therefore, almost all of the interest that surrounds Tibetan Buddhism today must be traced to Euro-American converts and sympathizers. Perhaps the most important such convert is Robert Thurman. Though Thurman was the first American to be ordained a Tibetan Buddhist monk, he traded in his monastic garb for academic robes and now teaches at Columbia University. He is also active in the Free Tibet movement, which captured the imaginations and energies of many college students in the 1990s. In 1997, *Time* named Thurman one of the twenty-five most influential Americans. But even his influence in American Buddhism was minuscule when compared with the Dalai Lama, who despite his official residence in India emerged as the most important figure in American Buddhism in the 1990s.

### Three Great Awakenings

Americans have been attracted to Buddhism at least since the early nineteenth century, when Buddhologists first began translating Buddhist scriptures into English. Since that time, converts and sympathizers have stimulated three Great Awakenings to Buddhist truths. The first real Buddhist vogue began in the late nineteenth century. Sir Edwin Arnold's popular life of the Buddha, *The Light of Asia*, introduced Buddhism to a wide audience in 1879. At the World's Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in 1893, talks by Anagarika Dharmapala of Sri Lanka and Soyen Shaku of Japan gave Buddhism a human face. In the 1890s, a New York newspaper noted that "it is no uncommon thing to hear a New Yorker say he is a Buddhist now-

adays," and quoted a Baptist minister who had asked, "Shall we all become Buddhists?" The immediate answer to that question was, of course, no, though a few nineteenth-century Americans did convert to Buddhism, beginning with Theosophists Henry Steel Olcott and Helena Blavatsky, who formally embraced Buddhism in Ceylon in 1880. Convert Buddhism did not gather much force, however, until the 1950s, when Jack Kerouac and the Beat movement built on earlier efforts by the Japanese-born writer D. T. Suzuki to popularize Zen. The history of American Buddhism, therefore, begins not with convert Buddhists but with birthright Buddhists, and it is closely tied to American immigration history.

Buddhists first immigrated to the United States in the 1840s. In that decade, the Transcendentalist periodical *The Dial* published the first translation of a Buddhist scripture in the United States, and Buddhist sympathizers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau began to take Buddhism seriously. The 1840s was also the time of the California Gold Rush. Drawn by rumors of riches buried in the Rocky Mountains, Chinese "forty-niners" fled to the land they called *Gam Saan* (Gold Mountain). They brought their religious traditions with them, setting up home altars and public shrines that typically made room not only for Buddhas but also for Taoist heroes, Confucian sages, and popular folk deities. In 1853, America's first Chinese temple arose in San Francisco's Chinatown. By 1880, there were more than 100,000 Chinese laborers living in the United States, and by the end of the century there were 400 syncretistic Chinese shrines dotting the West Coast.

The United States is often described as a place where religion and politics operate in separate spheres, but politicians have played a key role in the development of American Buddhism, largely by regulating the supply of Buddhist teachers and students coming from Asia. In 1882, the U.S. Congress responded to nativist efforts to "Keep California White" by passing the Chinese Exclusion Act, which effectively cut off immigration from China and stunted the growth of Chinese American Buddhism. Japanese immigrants arrived in Hawaii in the 1880s and the continental United States in the 1890s. Over the next few decades, 200,000 Japanese arrived in Hawaii and 180,000 in the continental United States. The vast majority of these immigrants practiced Jodo

Shinshu (“True Pure Land”) Buddhism. Their first Buddhist temples arose in Hawaii in 1889 and on the mainland (in San Francisco) in 1898. In 1899, they established an organization that would become America’s first Buddhist denomination. Initially known as the Young Men’s Buddhist Association, this group was renamed the Buddhist Mission of North America in 1914.

In the teens and twenties, the U.S. government again altered the course of American Buddhism. In 1917, Congress created a “barred zone” that cut off immigration from South and Southeast Asia. In 1924, it included Japan in that barred zone, effectively bringing Japanese immigration to an end. Dwindling immigration forced many Chinese American and Japanese American temples to close their doors. World War II brought even greater challenges. In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt promulgated Executive Order 9066, which authorized American officials to arrest and incarcerate Japanese Americans in internment camps. Before the war was over, close to 120,000 would be interned, and virtually every member of the Buddhist Mission of North America would be detained in a wartime camp.

During this period of exclusion, convert Buddhism came into its own, thanks to the pathbreaking work of key Japanese Zen teachers and the catalyst of the Beat movement. Three students of Soyen Shaku’s, the Rin-zai Zen monk from Japan who attended the 1893 World’s Parliament of Religions, were particularly influential. Nyogen Senzaki and Shigetsu Sakaki (also known as Sokei-an) founded centers in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York City in the 1920s and 1930s, while D. T. Suzuki’s books kept Zen on the minds of intellectuals. Zen did not really take off in the United States, however, until Jack Kerouac and other Beat writers discovered Buddhism in the 1950s. Alan Watts, another important Zen popularizer, would dismiss “beat Zen” as “phony Zen,” but Beat novels and poems prompted many young Americans to experiment with Buddhism and in the process laid the groundwork for the country’s second Buddhist vogue, which occurred in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.

Zen was the Buddhism of choice during this Second Great Awakening. At least as interpreted by the Zen author D. T. Suzuki and the Beat poet Gary Snyder, Zen’s emphasis on naturalness, silence, freedom,

and spontaneity was the perfect antidote to what many saw as the stultifying Judeo-Christian orthodoxy of Eisenhower’s America. During the 1950s, composer John Cage brought Zen to the avant-garde music scene with a performance of “4’33”,” which consisted of four minutes and thirty-three seconds of silence. Also in that decade, Jack Kerouac wrote *Dharma Bums* and *Time* reported that Zen was getting more popular. The 1960s saw a proliferation of Zen institutions, and during the 1970s Zen books such as Robert Pirsig’s *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (1974) filled the bookshelves of the country’s “bookstore Buddhists.”

Birthright Buddhism would not thrive in the United States until the government reversed its anti-immigration policies in landmark legislation in 1965. In that year, Congress put an end to a national origins quota system that had effectively terminated Asian immigration since 1924, opening the door to the country’s newest and most powerful wave of Buddhist immigration. Soon immigrants and refugees were building Buddhist temples in urban centers across the United States, and newly arrived Buddhist teachers were establishing centers for converts and sympathizers interested in Buddhism’s many manifestations.

Today the United States is in the midst of yet another Buddhist vogue, American Buddhism’s Third Great Awakening, which started shortly after *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* began publication in 1991. This time the Buddhism of the day is Tibetan, and the key spokesperson is the Dalai Lama, whose charisma inspired three Hollywood films and a host of bestsellers during the 1990s. But his strong voice has by no means drowned out others.

Thich Nhat Hanh’s current status among Buddhist converts and sympathizers is second only to the Dalai Lama’s. Like the Dalai Lama, with whom he is often compared, Thich Nhat Hanh is a refugee from his homeland, an activist for peace, and an author of bestselling books. A Vietnamese Buddhist monk who went into exile in France in 1966 following his criticism of the Vietnam War, Thich Nhat Hanh regularly visits the United States, where he is active in a variety of organizations, including Parallax Press and the Order of Inter-being. The press and the order are both leading advocates of “engaged Buddhism” (a term coined by Thich Nhat Hanh).



A Buddhist temple in Chinatown, New York  
(Trip/M. Lee)

Buddhism's Third Great Awakening can be seen in a wide variety of popular media, including films, television, and even advertising. It is most evident, however, in publishing, where Buddhism is as much a magic password today as Zen was in the 1950s. The Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh are the two leading brand names in Buddhist books, but a variety of homegrown authors are also exceedingly popular. Stephen Batchelor has made a name for himself by rejecting "religious Buddhism" in favor of a secular version, which he describes as "Buddhism without Beliefs." Sylvia Boorstein describes herself as both a faithful Jew and a practicing Buddhist. Her books, which include *That's Funny, You Don't Look Buddhist* (1997), have focused on synthesizing Buddhism, Judaism, and psychotherapy. Works by Jack Kornfield, who, like Boorstein, is associated with the Insight Meditation Movement, have stressed a Buddhist form

of the Protestant Social Gospel. All of these writers appeal to "bookstore Buddhists"—converts and sympathizers whose primary source of information about the tradition comes from reading texts rather than interacting with teachers.

The real American Buddhist story at the end of the twentieth century, however, was the flowering of Buddhist diversity in a foreign land. After 1965, Buddhist immigrants from Korea, Thailand, Tibet, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos joined the Chinese American and Japanese American Buddhists who had been in the country for generations. Many flocked to cities such as Los Angeles, which, according to some observers, became the most diverse Buddhist city in the world. Others moved to smaller cities and even rural areas, prompting the construction of Buddhist centers in small towns from Connecticut to California.

### Americanization

As both Buddhists and historians know, everything changes. So it can be stated with some certainty that Buddhists will adapt their traditions to American circumstances. Precisely how Buddhists will Americanize Buddhism is not yet clear. Although Buddhism has been active in Asia for two and a half millennia, it has been a force to be reckoned with in the United States for only a few decades. Nonetheless, some patterns seem to be emerging. These patterns are most visible among converts and sympathizers, who are often the most aggressive Americanizers, but they can also be seen among birthright Buddhists, particularly in institutions such as the Buddhist Churches of America that have a long history in the United States. Immigrant monks grapple today with practical questions, such as whether it is permissible to wear winter coats in Chicago or to drive cars in Los Angeles. Birthright Buddhist congregations also wrestle, as Catholic and Jewish immigrants did in the nineteenth century, with how to enter the American mainstream without compromising their distinctive religious identities. To what extent should Buddhism be practiced in Japanese? Is it permissible to translate key mantras or koans into English?

Inside the convert community, the key trend seems to be democratization. Influenced by the Enlightenment commitment to equality and the Protestant belief in the priesthood of all believers, American Bud-



dhists are flattening out the stark distinctions that exist in most of Asia between monks and nuns, on the one hand, and laypeople, on the other. There is a strong anticlerical strain in American culture that goes back all the way to Puritan efforts to uproot all sorts of Catholic “superstitions,” and that strain has prompted American Buddhists to undercut traditional prerogatives of monks and nuns even as they elevate the position of laypeople. A series of sex scandals at Buddhist centers in the 1980s and 1990s accelerated this democratization trend. In the aftermath of a sexual scandal involving Shunryu Suzuki’s spiritual successor Richard Baker, the San Francisco Zen Center began to elect its spiritual leaders. Other Zen centers have followed suit, adopting a form of congregational polity widespread in Protestant America but unknown in Buddhist Asia. Although birthright communities have rarely gone so far, many are also contributing to this laicization process, in part because many of their temples were established and funded by laypeople.

A related trend is feminization. Over half the Buddhists in the United States are women, but women are doing far more than participating. They are also leading Buddhist groups and writing bestselling Buddhist books. The long list of female teachers active in the United States includes Tony Packer, Pema Chödrön, Ruth Denison, Joko Beck, Sharon Salzberg, and Joanna Macy. Although most of these teachers are “white Buddhists,” some are not. Wendy Egyoku Hakao, abbot of the Zen Center of Los Angeles, is of Japanese and Portuguese descent. Thynn Thynn of the Sae Taw Win II Dhamma Center near Sebastopol, California, is Burmese-born. Jan Willis, a Tibetan Buddhist, is an African American.

American Buddhists also seem to be bending the Buddhist tradition in the direction of social activism. In keeping with the Social Gospel tradition evident in American Christianity and Judaism, engaged Buddhism has become particularly popular in the United States. The influence of engaged Buddhism, which scholar-activist Christopher Queen has referred to as Buddhism’s “fourth yana,” can be seen all across Buddhist America: in peace groups such as the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (established in 1978) and the Zen Peacemaker Order (established in 1997), and in a variety of Buddhist-inspired soup kitchens and hospice programs.

Most American Buddhists, particularly on the convert side, seem confident that these and other “Americanizations” are giant steps forward, but a small group of critics have begun to wonder whether America’s greatest contribution to Buddhism may be to banalize and commercialize it, transforming a tradition deeply suspicious of the Self into an engine of self-absorption. “It is not simply an historical accident that Buddhism begins with a person walking away from a life of luxury, from a palace, a family, art, from security and every comfort,” *Tricycle* editor Helen Tworokov noted, just before asking whether efforts at Americanization amounted to efforts by secular materialism to co-opt Buddhism (Tworokov 1994, xv). Robert Thurman has concluded that the secularizers who would strip Buddhism of key doctrines such as karma and rebirth simply aren’t real Buddhists. Thanissaro Bhikkhu described much of convert Buddhism as a grand game of telephone in which “things get passed on from person to person, from one generation of teachers to the next, until the message gets garbled beyond recognition.” One of the key Buddhist concepts lost in that game is renunciation, which Thanissaro called the “huge blind spot in American Buddhism.” John Daido Looi of Zen Mountain Monastery also sees the cultivation of a monastic tradition of renunciation as a key antidote to aggressive Americanization. “Most of the lay practice that goes on among new converts in America is a slightly watered-down version of monastic practice, and most of the monastic practice is a slightly glorified version of lay practice,” he contended. “To me, this hybrid path—halfway between monasticism and lay practice—reflects our cultural spirit of greediness and consumerism” (Looi 1994, 56). Philosopher George Santayana once observed that “American life is a powerful solvent. It seems to neutralize every intellectual element, however tough and alien it may be, and to fuse it in the native goodwill, complacency, thoughtlessness, and optimism” (Santayana 1920, 4). Only time will tell whether Buddhism itself is neutralized by this powerful solvent.

The future of American Buddhism lies in the hands of birthright Buddhists, convert Buddhists, and, oddly enough, American legislators. In the past, laws that restricted and later liberalized immigration from Asia played a crucial role in the development of American Buddhism by shutting the door or paving

the way for the immigration of monks, nuns, and lay practitioners. Should immigration remain fairly open, the United States will probably continue to manifest an astonishing array of Buddhist forms. In the near term, convert Buddhists will likely continue to aggressively Americanize their chosen tradition, while birthright Buddhists of a new generation will struggle as their parents have with how best to hold fast to tradition while adapting to the ever-changing circumstances of American life.

—Stephen Prothero

#### SEE ALSO

Asian American Religious Communities; Chinese American Religious Communities, Japanese American Religious Communities, Korean American Religious Communities, South Asian American Religious Communities; The Body: Asian Body Practices; Science: Healing

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## BUDDHIST CHURCHES OF AMERICA

Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) is one of the largest and oldest Buddhist organizations outside of Asia, having celebrated its centennial in 1999. It has approximately 20,000 members, 55 active ministers, and 60 member temples spread across eight districts from California to New York with headquarters in San Francisco. It also oversees the Institute of Buddhist Studies, a seminary and graduate school that is an affiliate institution of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. The BCA belongs to the Shin Buddhist sect, or Jodo Shinshu, originating in thirteenth-century Japan with the community of Pure Land Buddhists who gathered around the religious figure Shinran, a priest who broke with established tradition by openly marrying and living among peasants and fishermen with his wife, who also became a priest in the Shin tradition. Her involvement eventually led to the creation of the largest Buddhist women's associations in the world, called the "Fujinkai," including the Buddhist Women's Association of the BCA.

There are separate organizations for the Shin sect in Hawaii and Canada. These are the Honpa Honganji of Hawaii and the Buddhist Churches of Canada, respectively. The original parent organization for all three branches of the Shin sect in North America is Nishi Honganji, the largest of ten branches in Japan. However, the BCA now operates largely autonomously even as it maintains close ties to the Nishi Honganji and recognizes the abbot of the latter, Koshin Ohtani, as its abbot as well.

In keeping with the current practice of referring to Buddhist religious institutions in English as "temples," the majority of BCA institutions refer to themselves in this way (Senshin Buddhist Temple, Buddhist Temple of Marin, and so on). In the early history of the BCA, however, most institutions were called churches (Senshin Buddhist Church, Stockton Buddhist Church, for example), in part because the members saw themselves as the Buddhist counterparts to Christian churches in the United States. Hence the name Buddhist Churches of America, which continues as the official nomenclature into the present.

At one level the matter of nomenclature is a merely formal matter, but at another, it is indicative of the

evolution and tensions within the BCA as it has developed over its century-long history. The majority of early Japanese immigrants to the United States were members of the Nishi Honganji, and as a critical mass of ethnic Japanese settled on the West Coast, a need arose for Shin organizations. This need was met by Japanese priests sent over by the parent organization. The early temples served as social enclaves of support and activity as well as centers for spiritual seekers.

On the one hand, the establishment of religious identity was a component in the process of Americanization as Buddhists began to lay claim to a U.S. cultural identity. For example, Buddhist hymns relying heavily on Christian models were composed and continue to be used in BCA temples today. Buddhist churches were built as a synthesis of traditional Japanese design and Western, especially Protestant, architectural influence, with pews and pianos or small organs. On the other hand, critical self-evaluation was initiated almost from the beginning as debates around organization, liturgy, and doctrine took place both formally and informally. Extended retreats were organized with featured speakers from both Japan and the United States, and the Institute of Buddhist Studies not only served to educate the ethnic Japanese congregation but became an important gathering place for emerging American Buddhists such as Alan Watts and Gary Snyder.

The outbreak of the Pacific war devastated BCA temples. Virtually all of them were forced to suspend activities and lost much of their property. With the signing of Executive Order 9066, congregants were forced into internment camps located throughout the interior of the United States. As community leaders, BCA ministers were singled out for suspicion as spies and sent to the harshest camps away from their families, even though there was not a single case of espionage that was ever brought to trial. Although few in number, the ethnic non-Japanese members and supporters of the BCA sometimes risked their careers and lives to protect temple assets and support interned congregants.

After the war, the majority of temples were able to reestablish themselves, often under severe conditions of discrimination. Apart from the essential spiritual



Hsi Lai Buddhist Temple, Hacienda Heights, California (Trip/T. Freeman)

and social support they provided, the BCA temples became centers for the development of Japanese American identity. Many religious and cultural activities developed that never existed in the Japanese Shin temples, such as *taiko* drumming, the O-bon festival (held in July to pay homage to ancestral spirits), and youth basketball. These elements of temple life were often developed by the second- and third-generation members (*Nisei* and *Sansei*, respectively), especially the *Sansei*, who became conscious of their unique cultural and spiritual identity throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

Today, it is not uncommon to find elements from the various phases of the BCA's history coexisting side by side within the same Sunday service: elderly members listening to Japanese sermons and chanting scripture in the traditional Japanese manner; younger ones singing English hymns that still reflect their Christian influences; *taiko* drumming, which often reflects a synthesis of Japanese *taiko* and Latin rhythms; and a radical political consciousness. BCA

temples have expanded their activities into such areas as social welfare (food collection for the needy, sometimes in conjunction with Christian churches and Jewish synagogues), chaplaincy, and drug-addiction rehabilitation. The membership of BCA continues to reflect its ethnic origins, with over 90 percent being Japanese Americans; however, increasing numbers of non-Japanese Americans have also been joining its member temples.

Although the BCA has continued to evolve through the changing currents of its membership and American society, it is also beset by problems and challenges: decreasing membership; lack of ministers; overreliance on the doctrinal and liturgical dictates of Nishi Honganji that may not be entirely appropriate in the context of the United States; lack of communal and generational cohesion; problematic aspects of inherited feudal and patriarchal structures; loss of grounding in positive aspects of tradition; and lack of proactive innovation and too much passive adaptation. Whatever its problems, the BCA continues to be

a major component of American Buddhism that begs further examination and understanding.

—Mark Unno

#### SEE ALSO

Asian American Religious Communities: Japanese American Religious Communities

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## MAHAYANA RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Mahayana, which literally means “Great Vehicle,” first arose as a Buddhist movement in northern India and Central Asia around the first century B.C.E. Contrasting Mahayana with other schools of Buddhism, which they labeled as Hinayana, or “Small Vehicle,” its proponents emphasized its superior ability to attain liberation for all beings. Mahayana rhetoric and symbolism continue to shape the self-understanding, practice, and ideals of Buddhists in China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and Tibet. Some of the more influential organizations in the United States that regard themselves as representing the Mahayana approach include Foguang Shan and Tzu Chi Hui, both with links to Taiwan; the Order of Inter-being, founded by the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh; Korean master Seung Sahn’s Kwan Um School of Zen; and a wide range of communities with ties to Japan, such as the multitudinous Zen centers, the Buddhist Churches of America, and Soka Gakkai International–USA. Although these diverse groups vary enormously in their methods and immediate goals, they share a symbolic discourse that includes such notions as the bodhisattva ideal, buddha nature, expedient means, emptiness, and interdependence.

The small groups of clergy and laity scattered throughout northwestern India who initiated the Mahayana movement distinguished themselves from other Buddhists not so much in practice as through a change in soteriological (salvation) nomenclature. Previously, reference to Siddhartha Gautama as Shakyamuni Buddha, or “Awakened Sage from the Shakya

Clan,” indicated the uniqueness of his place in world history. He alone of all beings of the current eon was seen as having attained full enlightenment purely through his own wisdom and cultivation. His disciples could also achieve liberation, but only through his guidance, and those who were believed to have succeeded were labeled *arhats*, or “saints.” Although the final attainment was equal, the implication was that an arhat would not leave so profound a spiritual legacy on subsequent generations as the Buddha had. Advocates of the “Great Vehicle” chose to celebrate the equality of ultimate soteriological status and the concomitant breadth of impact that any highly enlightened being inevitably must have. They therefore made the vow to become not merely arhats but full-fledged buddhas so as to lead all beings to liberation. Having undertaken such an aspiration, they claimed themselves to be *bodhisattvas*, or “beings bound for awakening,” a designation that hitherto had referred to the innumerable lives leading up to enlightenment for Siddhartha.

Mahayana Buddhists continued over time to expand the conceptual field of the notion of “buddha.” Shakyamuni himself had averred that other beings in previous epochs had preceded him in attaining full awakening. The Mahayana embellished on this assumption, giving ever more elaborate descriptions of various buddhas and the worlds, or “fields,” over which they presided. For Pure Land practice, Amita-bha Buddha (Amito Fo in Chinese, Amida for the Japanese) and his Land of Bliss, located somewhere



Buddhists meditating at San Francisco Zen Center, 2002 (Ed Kashi/Corbis)

far to the west in the cosmos, took on special significance, although Bhaisajyaguru and other buddhas have also had their share of devotees. The hope of such practitioners is that through concentrated devotion they can be reborn in one of these pure lands where cultivation toward enlightenment encounters fewer obstacles than in our own world. Therefore, there are infinite buddhas throughout the universe who are either physical manifestations, such as Shakyamuni, or more immaterial “bodies of bliss,” such as Amitabha, of one essential “buddha suchness.”

Just as there are innumerable buddhas through space, so will there be an infinite number of beings attaining such liberation through time. Mahayana practitioners assert that all beings inherently have a seed of buddha suchness within them and that once they have made the vow to fully realize this “buddha nature,” that is, become bodhisattvas, enlightenment is inevitable, although it may take myriad lifetimes to achieve. *Mahasattvas*, or “great beings,” are those bodhisattvas who are on the verge of taking the final step and are merely waiting for the appropriate time

to do so. The rotund, jovial figure typically seen at the entrances to East Asian Buddhist temples is Maitreya, our world’s next buddha. Other great beings include the Bodhisattva of Compassion (Chinese: Guanyin, Korean: Kwan Um, Japanese: Kannon), who comes to the aid of anyone who calls out to her; Kshiti-garbha, who has vowed to remain in hell until its chambers are empty; and Manjusri, known for his profound sagacity. These bodhisattvas are especially venerated for the universal compassion they symbolize, for their concern is to use their loving-kindness and wisdom to lead all beings to full enlightenment.

Because beings are at various stages along the path to enlightenment, buddhas and bodhisattvas are said to employ a variety of *upaya*, or “expedient means,” to match their guidance to the capabilities and interests of the audience. This explains the plethora of scriptures (*sutras*), and especially those doctrines and instructions that prima facie contradict one another. It is not a question of some sutras being right and others wrong, but rather that one holds the highest, ultimate truth, while the rest are contingent and relative, suited

for those of lower cultivation. For the Tiantai school of China, it is the Lotus Sutra that encompasses and surpasses the teachings found in all other scriptures. The Nichiren traditions of Japan hold that the sublimity of the Lotus Sutra is so deep that merely reciting its name has profound soteriological ramifications.

Two concepts regarded as vital to the full realization of ultimate truth are *Sunyata*, or emptiness, and the universe's radical interdependence. Sunyata extends the logic of the early Buddhist teachings of non-self (*anatman*) and impermanence (*anitya*) so that they are not merely ontological but also cosmological principles. Nothing in the world has a permanent, abiding self-nature, for all is in constant flux and process. An existential realization of this truth is *prajna*, wisdom. Through such a realization, one recognizes that all is empty because all is interdependent; solid outlines of individuality disperse, revealing a world in which all things rely upon and contain all others.

Mahayana temples in the United States both express these assumptions and teachings, through architecture, art, and forms of practice, and are shaped by them. The majority of Mahayana groups, with the exception of Tibetan and Zen centers and Soka Gakkai, primarily serve immigrant populations from East Asia, with little outreach to the wider American society. There are approximately 200 Chinese Buddhist temples and associations dotting the American landscape, the majority in urban areas along the Pacific Rim, on the East Coast, and in Texas. The grandest of these temples, in fact the largest of any Buddhist monastery in the Western Hemisphere, is Hsi Lai Temple just outside of Los Angeles, the flagship facility of the twenty-six outposts that the Taiwanese organization Foguangshan has built in the United States. For Foguangshan, the bodhisattva ideal of saving all beings is a call for missionary work to spread the dharma worldwide. To date, however, the vast majority of its membership has been overseas Chinese. The other Buddhist organization headquartered in Taiwan with a significant presence in the United States is the Buddhist Compassion Relief Association, or Tzu Chi Hui, which has approximately two dozen offices scattered around the country. Its approach differs from that of Foguangshan in that, as almost entirely a lay association, it has neither built temples nor stationed monastics in America. It, too, is modeled on the bodhisattva ideal, but since for Tzu Chi Hui fol-

lowers alleviating physical suffering is primary, most of their activities center on donating substantial funds to improve medical care in deprived areas.

There are perhaps 150 Vietnamese Buddhist temples in the United States, most quite small. The typical structure is simply a converted house with one or two residing monks or nuns who serve the local Vietnamese American population. The one notable exception to this pattern is the network of "lay sanghas" (that is, lay communities) founded by Thich Nhat Hanh in association with his Order of Inter-being. When Thich Nhat Hanh makes one of his regular visits to the United States from Plum Village, his headquarters in France, he conducts retreats and lectures in both Vietnamese and English to accommodate the growing number of Americans without a Vietnamese background who have become attracted to his teachings and have read some of his many books. As can be seen from the name of his order, the radical interdependence of all life has been a vital assumption shaping Thich Nhat Hanh's practice and social activism ever since he first came to the West in the late 1960s to call for peace in his native country.

Those Mahayana groups that have transcended their Asian ethnic heritage have generally done so through appealing to upper-middle-class Caucasians. This is the case with Japanese Zen communities, Tibetan groups, and the Order of Inter-being. The one Mahayana organization that has successfully attracted a wide spectrum of Americans is Soka Gakkai International-USA, the lay association founded in Japan in 1930 and currently under the leadership of President Daisaku Ikeda.

—Stuart Chandler

#### SEE ALSO

Asian American Religious Communities: Chinese American Religious Communities, Japanese American Religious Communities, Korean American Religious Communities

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## SOKA GAKKAI INTERNATIONAL–USA

Soka Gakkai International–USA (SGI-USA) is an independent American branch of a modernist and humanistic form of Nichiren Buddhism with origins in Japan. It was founded in the 1930s by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, a progressive educator and convert to Nichiren Shoshu, a priestly sect based on the writings of Nichiren, a thirteenth-century reformer whose teachings rest on the Lotus Sutra. Resisting the rise of Shinto militarism, Makiguchi was arrested by Japanese authorities, and in 1944 he died in prison. In the late 1940s and 1950s, Soka Gakkai was revived and grew rapidly in the chaos of postwar Japan under the direction of Josei Toda, Makiguchi's chief disciple, who also spent war years in prison. In 1960, Soka Gakkai came under the leadership of Daisaku Ikeda, Toda's disciple, who further developed its unique blend of Buddhism and humanism and built it into an international movement. Throughout these years, tensions between Soka Gakkai's modernism and the traditionalism of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood increased until they erupted into a schism in 1991. Soka Gakkai has since emerged as a form of Buddhism wholly run by and dedicated to the needs and aspirations of laity.

SGI-USA is a unique form of American Buddhism for a number of reasons. First, its practice traditions are distinctly different from the sitting meditation associated with Zen, another major form of Japanese Buddhism thriving in the United States. Soka Gakkai's primary practice is to chant Daimoku, the phrase "*Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo*," and selected portions of the Lotus Sutra. This is done before a scroll called the *gohonzon*, a mandala-like object first created by Nichiren. It is thought to embody the essence of the

Lotus Sutra and is installed on altars in Soka Gakkai homes and community centers. Soka Gakkai teaches that benefits are to be gained from chanting these concrete needs such as good health and financial well-being or more abstract goals such as character formation and courage.

These pragmatic and idealist dimensions of practice are consistent with the lay spirit of Soka Gakkai, which since its beginning in Japan has been this-worldly, progressive, and optimistic. But at the same time, Soka Gakkai expresses traditional religious ideas about the nature of the universe common to other forms of Mahayana Buddhism. Its members understand chanting Daimoku to express a universal buddha nature thought to pervade the cosmos and to be inherent in all people. The point of realizing buddhahood, of attaining enlightenment or liberation, is to have the courage to express one's own best aspirations while creating vibrant, healthy, and supportive forms of community.

The historical development of SGI-USA has also contributed to its uniqueness. Its origins can be traced back to the 1940s and early 1950s when Japanese war brides first arrived in the United States. After a visit to the States by Ikeda in 1960, they began to disseminate Buddhism using a form of proselytizing called *shakubuku*, which had contributed to the extraordinarily rapid growth of Soka Gakkai in postwar Japan. Shakubuku is understood to be a means of refuting the errors of other Buddhist schools and introducing people to the liberating power of Nichiren Buddhism. It is also a central part of practice inasmuch as sharing the power of Daimoku is considered an expression of compassion for others. In response to public criticism,



the intensity of this mode of proselytizing was moderated in the 1970s both in Japan and in the United States.

SGI-USA is also known for the ethnic and racial diversity of its members, which has made it the most multicultural form of Buddhism in America. This quality has been an element of SGI-USA from the outset because of the involvement of Japanese women who came to the United States after marrying African American servicemen. During early shakubuku campaigns, this background helped to foster its growth in African American families and the inner city. By the time shakubuku activities slackened in the 1970s, SGI-USA had already gathered in substantial membership in the Euro-American, African American, Hispanic, and Asian American communities. Since that time, an egalitarian ethos inherited from the movement in Japan has increasingly been focused on race and ethnicity issues. Women play a very prominent role in SGI-USA and, as in Japan, are often cited as the driving force in the movement. It also has a significant number of members drawn from gay and lesbian communities.

Since the 1991 break with Nichiren Shoshu, Soka Gakkai doctrine has increasingly reflected the humanistic and modernist orientation pioneered by Makiguchi, Toda, and Ikeda. Many of its Buddhist values and ideals are now expressed in secularized language. Members characterize the spiritual transformation wrought in calling forth buddha nature by chanting Daimoku as carrying out a “human revolution,” a phrase popularized by Ikeda in his semifictionalized account of the history of Soka Gakkai in postwar Japan. On the basis of this personal transformation, a central goal of Soka Gakkai is to create a more peaceful and humane society, a vision of the future referred to in more traditional terms as *kosen-rufu*. Expressing ideas derived from the pedagogical theories of the movement’s founder, Makiguchi, the phrase “value creation” is often used to describe activities that encourage peace, humanism, compassion, and creative self-expression.

In the mid-1970s, Ikeda began to systematically recast Nichiren’s religious spirit in terms of a threefold agenda—peace, culture, and education—which is now normative language in the movement worldwide. Soka Gakkai’s dedication to peace is part of a broader Japanese reaction to Japan’s militarism in the 1940s

and America’s use of nuclear weapons at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This focus has led Soka Gakkai to create a series of institutions, publications, and exhibits devoted to building a more peaceful society. In this country, SGI-USA peace work is carried on by local chapters and, more formally, through the Toda Institute in Hawaii and the Boston Research Center for the Twenty-first Century, an affiliated institution that sponsors conferences and publications dedicated to nonviolence, environmentalism, gender, and other issues. Soka Gakkai also cooperates with other peace-related organizations, such as the Gandhi Institute for Reconciliation at Morehouse College in Atlanta and the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a Jewish human rights and Holocaust study center in Los Angeles.

Soka Gakkai’s emphasis on culture gains expression in many ways. The movement in Japan has built two art museums and created Min’On, one of the foremost sponsors of international dance and music performances in Tokyo. SGI-USA counts a wide range of performers among its members, most prominently jazz musicians Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter. More important, artistic expression is considered a kind of ancillary spiritual practice for its members. This aspect is most conspicuously represented in its tradition of “culture festivals,” a hallmark of the movement in Japan since the 1950s and now a fixture in movements around the world. Cultural festivals are seen as opportunities for members to avail themselves of the disciplines of the performing arts and to experience the joy of creative self-expression. To marshal the determination to perform and to cooperate with others in collective endeavors—be these gymnastics, marching bands, or choral presentations—are viewed as expressions of Buddhist humanism. In the language of the movement, they are opportunities to overcome obstacles and to undertake one’s own human revolution. These festivals are, moreover, keyed to Soka Gakkai ideals about creating a peaceful and more humane society.

The third pillar of Soka Gakkai, education, has been a primary passion throughout the movement’s history under the leadership of Makiguchi, Toda, and Ikeda. It has deeply informed all their efforts to make Nichiren Buddhism relevant both to Soka Gakkai’s members and to the broader society. The movement in Japan pioneered formal educational efforts by founding the Soka school system, which includes pri-

mary and secondary institutions outside Osaka and Tokyo. Soka University in suburban Tokyo is a liberal arts institution, secular in orientation but infused with the spirit of Buddhist humanism. All these schools were founded by Ikeda but dedicated to the spirit of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi. SGI-USA undertakes its own educational endeavors through its publications, exhibits, and cultural festivals. In the spring of 2001, moreover, Soka University in America (SUA) opened in Aliso Viejo in Orange County, California. SUA has given Soka Gakkai's commitment to formal education a global reach. Its stated mission is to educate students in languages and other critical skills needed to assume leadership roles in the Pacific Rim in the twenty-first century. A secular institution, Soka University of America is also an expression of the humanist and Buddhist ideals of Soka Gakkai, which have moved into public prominence only since its break with Nichiren Shoshu.

—Richard H. Seager

#### SEE ALSO

Asian American Religious Communities: Japanese

American Religious Communities; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Liberalism

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## THERAVADA RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

The contours of traditional Theravada Buddhism began to take shape in India by the third century B.C.E. and spread throughout South and Southeast Asia in subsequent centuries. Theravada (“Way of the Elders”) has come to the United States via two main pathways—American interest in Theravada beliefs and practices and immigration of Theravada Buddhist populations from Asia. In both cases, traditional Theravada faces significant dynamics of adaptation and reconstitution in its American context.

Interest in Theravada Buddhism in America predates any measurable immigration of Asian Theravada Buddhists to the United States. Influenced by the scholarship of the day, many Buddhist converts and sympathizers in the 1800s and early 1900s were attracted to Theravada's purported rationalism and historical primacy, seeing it as the purest contemporary expression of the Buddha's ancient teachings and the religion most compatible with a modern scientific

worldview. Some within the esoteric stream of American religion, most notably Theosophists, also found aspects of Theravada Buddhism attractive. A great deal of interest during this period galvanized around the figure of Anagarika Dharmapala, a Ceylonese reformer who attended the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 and later established an American branch of his international Maha Bodhi Society.

Recent indigenous interest has been fostered by several Western teachers of Theravada's distinctive *vipassana* (insight) meditation, most of whom trained in Asia under influential lay and monastic masters such as S. N. Goenka, Mahasi Sayadaw, and U Ba Khin. The vipassana movement in the United States has experienced steady, though decentralized, growth since the 1970s. One observer estimated that at least 300 vipassana groups met weekly across the country in the late 1990s, up from 30 in the mid-1980s (Fronsdal

1998, 178). Pioneering the movement was German-born Ruth Denison, a student of U Ba Khin's in Burma, who conducted vipassana retreats in Europe and the United States in the early 1970s and later established a retreat center in California called Dhamma Dena.

The most successful institutional expression of the vipassana movement has been the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts, founded in 1975 by Joseph Goldstein, Jack Kornfield, and Sharon Salzberg, and its sister organization, Spirit Rock Meditation Center, near San Francisco. The majority of vipassana practitioners appear to be middle-class, educated, Euro-American baby boomers. Many participate in small sitting groups and attend periodic meditation retreats. The vipassana movement has adapted selected aspects of traditional Theravada Buddhism to meet the personal and psychological needs of an American clientele. For instance, vipassana is extricated from its monastic context and applied to a lay lifestyle, emphasis is placed on vipassana's pragmatic benefits rather than on traditional Theravada's ultimate goal of liberation from multiple lifetimes, and special attention is paid to cultivating loving-kindness (*metta*) in one's own life and relationships with others. In these and other ways, the American vipassana movement is extending the transformations of traditional Theravada Buddhism begun by Asian vipassana teachers and other reformers in the modern period.

Some innovators have gone even further by employing vipassana and other Buddhist practices and concepts without acknowledging their source. Perhaps best-known is Jon Kabat-Zinn's work at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, which includes the Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society. One observer suggests that such "disguised" forms of vipassana practice may have the most impact on American society (Fronsdal 1998, 165).

Immigrant Theravada Buddhism in the United States is a post-1965 phenomenon. The "pull" of liberalized U.S. immigration policies beginning in that year, plus later social and political "push" factors following the conclusion of the Vietnam conflict in 1975, brought hundreds of thousands of immigrants and refugees to the United States from the five Asian

countries with majority Theravada Buddhist populations—Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon), Myanmar (Burma), Thailand (Siam), Laos, and Kampuchea (Cambodia). These groups vary widely in their socioeconomic success in adapting to American society, with immigrants from Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand generally faring better than refugees from Laos and Kampuchea.

The Theravada Buddhism practiced by these groups includes ethnic distinctions as well as shared religious characteristics. For instance, all Theravada Buddhists observe *Wesak* or *Visakha*, the celebration of the birth, enlightenment, and final passing away of the Buddha, but each group also observes its own calendar of celebrations, such as New Year's festivities and commemorations of significant historical or legendary events. Likewise, many generic Theravada rituals are held in common, while other rituals have group-specific meanings and heritage. All of this represents classic immigrant ethno-religion in which ethnic and religious identities are fused into an inextricable cultural amalgam. Old World perspectives and practices are transplanted to the New World where they undergo a dynamic process of preservation, adaptation, and transformation.

Asian American Theravada Buddhists practice their ethno-religion in three main venues—homes, businesses, and communal institutions. In homes and businesses, the religion is usually family-based and relatively informal, often focused on an altar dedicated to the Buddha, a variety of deities and spiritual beings, and/or Buddhist luminaries such as revered monks and lay teachers. For instance, most Thai restaurants in American cities have a small Buddha altar somewhere on the premises where the owners dedicate a sampling of dishes in daily Buddha *puja*, a common ritual of homage or veneration of the Buddha. Monks from local temples are often invited to Thai restaurants or homes for a *dana* (donation, giving) ceremony, one of Theravada Buddhism's most important ritual interactions between *sangha* (the monastic order) and laity. Here the monks receive the gift of a meal from their lay supporters and in turn bestow a ritual blessing carrying great spiritual merit upon the donors.

Communal expressions of Asian American Theravada Buddhism take place primarily in cultural asso-

ciations and temples. In many American cities the immigrant community first established a cultural association to observe homeland celebrations and consolidate ethnic identity. Temples often evolved from or in conjunction with such associations. By traditional definition, a Theravada temple (*wat* or *vihara*) serves as both a communal ritual facility and a monastic residence. Some temples in the United States house several monks, others just a few or only one. Some are not capable of supporting full-time resident monks but accommodate visiting monks for short periods of time. The presence of monks is vital to traditional Theravada Buddhism since the monastic sangha provides a “field of merit” for the lay practice of the religion. The vast majority of the monks in immigrant Theravada temples today are imported from Asia.

The first immigrant Theravada temples in the United States were established around 1970, and thirty years later there were more than 200 temples nationwide. Large and well-established temples serve as centers for the immigrant community’s expression of its ethno-religion. Many lay individuals and families visit such temples regularly to perform acts of personal piety. Weekly, monthly, and yearly communal gatherings include both specifically religious and more generally cultural elements. Special attention is usually paid to transmitting the community’s ethno-religious heritage to the American-born generations through weekday and Sunday school programs, summer camps, youth groups, and special activities. The immigrant founders often express concern over the excessive “Americanization” of their offspring and wonder whether the next generations will take responsible leadership of their temples. The younger generations struggle with their identity as Asian Americans liminally situated between the transplanted Old World heritage of their parents and grandparents and the American culture of their day-to-day world. They have an acute awareness of being a double minority in U.S. society—ethnically as Asian Americans, religiously as Buddhists.

Theravada Buddhism fulfills different sociological functions for its respective streams in the United States. For Asian American Theravada Buddhists, it affirms an ethno-religious identity; for non-Asian converts and sympathizers it satisfies a spiritual quest. These two streams intersect at times—for instance, in

“parallel congregations” found in ethnic temples (Numrich 1996) and in the work of monastic meditation teachers who move between the two constituencies (Seager 1999, 151–157)—but it is unclear at this point what long-term influence these streams will have on each other. The dynamics of Theravada adaptation and reconstitution in the American context epitomize the larger story of Buddhism in America. It remains to be seen whether Theravada’s traditional privileging of a monastic sangha will continue in this country, where lay expressions of Buddhism predominate. As noted earlier, the vipassana movement has nearly severed its connection to Theravada monasticism, and it is questionable whether immigrant Theravada temples can rely on imported monastic leadership indefinitely. American Theravada Buddhism may eventually take on very different contours from its traditional Asian forms.

—Paul David Numrich

#### SEE ALSO

Asian American Religious Communities; South Asian American Religious Communities; Generations: Baby Boomers

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## TIBETAN BUDDHISM

Tibetan Buddhism is today a small but vibrant North American religion existing alongside an ever-increasing number of Buddhist traditions. Stimulated by China's subjugation of Tibet in the 1950s and the subsequent flight of more than 100,000 refugees, it has been successfully transplanted into American soil where it has flourished for the past few decades. Three specific factors have contributed to its success: (1) Charismatic Tibetan teachers, including most centrally the Dalai Lama, have founded hundreds of meditation centers, converted numerous Americans, and successfully acquainted the general public with Tibetan Buddhism through their students, lectures, and books; (2) politically active groups aimed at promoting Tibetan freedom, raising awareness of human rights abuses inside Tibet, and influencing U.S. policy have been formed; and (3) exiled Tibetans, many of whom are part of the recent Tibet-U.S. Resettlement Project, have immigrated to various parts of the United States, bringing with them not only religion but a determination both to preserve and adapt Tibetan culture and arts. Although the first two factors have been mentioned by several contemporary authors (Seager 1999; Lavine 1998; Fields 1992), the third has not been adequately recognized for its contributions to Tibetan Buddhism in the United States today.

### Historical Background

Tibetan Buddhism belongs to the Vajrayana, or "Diamond Vehicle," an esoteric (tantric) branch of Indian Mahayana that reached Tibet around the seventh century. In the centuries that followed, Indian tantra blended with elements of indigenous religion and Chinese Buddhism, and four major orders emerged in this Himalayan region: the Nyingmapa, Kargyupa, Sakyapa, and Gelugpa. Sharing central Mahayana philosophies, these schools also have their own distinct spiritual heroes, practices, and texts. From the seventeenth century on, both the preeminence of the Gelugpa order and Tibet's distinctive theocracy were established; in 1642, with the support of China's Mongolian rulers, Sonam Gyatso, the fifth Dalai Lama, was heralded as Tibet's spiritual and secular

ruler. Tenzin Gyatso, the present and fourteenth Dalai Lama, is considered a reincarnation of this great leader. He is also venerated as Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva of compassion and patron saint of Tibet.

In 1959, following a decade of Chinese aggression, the sixteen-year-old Dalai Lama fled to India, knowing that Lhasa would soon be taken, and afraid for his life. Approximately 140,000 people have followed him into exile, including many important religious teachers. Although the majority have settled in South Asia, 8,000 to 10,000 now live in the United States.

### Early Tibetans in America

The first Tibetans to set foot in America were members of a small delegation that visited Washington, D.C., in 1948. Led by the historian Tsepon Shakabpa, these officials hoped to establish trade relations with the world's new superpower and thus demonstrate their country's sovereignty. This they felt was necessary in light of accelerating Chinese claims that Tibet was, and had long been, part of the "Motherland." Their mission met with little success, however, as President Harry S Truman, afraid of alienating China, refused to meet with them.

Within a year of this delegation, Telopa Rinpoche was invited by Johns Hopkins University to teach Tibetan language, becoming the first Tibetan to settle in America. He was followed in 1952 by the Dalai Lama's brother, Thubten Norbu, who taught at Indiana University, and in 1955 by Geshe Wangyal, who was brought by Kalmuk Mongolians living in Freehold Acres, New Jersey. There Wangyal established America's first Tibetan monastery, in the process attracting a small number of converts, including the now preeminent Tibetologists Robert Thurman (who in 1997 was deemed by *Time* one of America's twenty-five most influential individuals) and Jeffrey Hopkins (who has formed a leading center for Tibetan Studies at the University of Virginia). Another important early teacher was Deshung Rinpoche. Invited to the University of Washington in 1961, he taught the now well-known figures Turrell Wylie, Leon Hurvitz, Gene Smith, Agehananda Bharati, and Edward Conze. Through these activities and students, both



Two monks bow out of respect as they approach the Dalai Lama, Washington, New Jersey, 1981  
(Sheldon Collins/Corbis)

the religious and scholarly dimensions of Tibetan Buddhism were launched.

At about this same time, as the Chinese army was consolidating its control over Tibet, a different kind of Tibetan journeyed to America. Brought secretly by the CIA, several hundred men were trained in Colorado as guerrilla fighters and then airlifted to the Nepal-Tibet border with the goal of regaining their country's independence. The United States discontinued this covert operation in the late 1960s, when President Nixon established diplomatic relations with Beijing.

### Tibetan Teachers, American Converts

The myth of Tibet as Shangri-la was firmly established in the American imagination with Frank Capra's 1937 film *Lost Horizons*, and several books on Tibetan Buddhism that were widely read in the 1960s (including W. Y. Evans-Wentz's *Tibetan Book of the Dead* [1927], Lobsang Rampa's *Third Eye* [1956], and Lama Govinda's *Way of the White Clouds* [1966]). It was not until the 1970s, however, that North Americans

became interested in practicing this tradition. Before then, Buddhist enthusiasts were almost exclusively attracted to Japanese Zen. This shift was stimulated in part by returning hippie-travelers who had encountered Tibetan refugees in Nepal and India. But a far more significant impetus was the second wave of Tibetan teachers, beginning with Tarthang Tulku in 1969 and Trungpa Rinpoche in 1970.

With their centers in place and their books widely circulating, these and subsequent Tibetan teachers who settled in America invited the senior-most members of their lineages to visit periodically, thus lending authority to their activities and their predominantly white, upper-middle-class organizations (which now number in the hundreds). But because of Chinese pressure, the Dalai Lama—who was pictured on the cover of *Time* in 1959 and hailed as a Gandhi-like hero—was not allowed to visit the United States until 1979. Since then, he has done more than anyone else to popularize Tibetan Buddhism (his books frequently appear on the bestseller list, and his lectures invariably sell out). Yet he has been helped in this by North American scholars, whose works have prolifer-

ated in the past two decades, and by high-profile actors and musicians such as Richard Gere, Harrison Ford, Philip Glass, Adam Yauch, and Patti Smith. The media's love affair with this "simple Buddhist monk" has also contributed to Tibetan Buddhism's popularity in the 1990s, with films such as *Little Buddha* (1993), *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997), and *Kundun* (1997), a *Vanity Fair* cover story, copious Internet sites, and Apple ad campaigns (where the chuckling Dalai Lama urges viewers to "Think Different").

In general, convert centers revolve around a Tibetan master. But in recent years, several dozen Americans have been designated as teachers, with a few recognized as incarnate lamas (such as O. K. Maclise, Alyce Zeoli, Catherine Burroughs, and Steven Seagal). Characteristic of convert Buddhism in the United States more generally, the emphasis is on group meditation and lay practitioners, with few ordaining as monks or nuns. Although immigrants, refugees, and citizens born into Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism tend to significantly outnumber converts to these same traditions, the opposite is true on the American Tibetan Buddhist scene.

### **Tibet Buddhism and Politics**

Tibet enthusiasts are not only involved in religion, however. Many are actively involved in promoting the Tibetan political cause. In fact, some political activists working for Tibet's sovereignty are not practicing Buddhists per se. The first politically based organization was the Office of Tibet, established in New York City by the Dalai Lama in 1964 to raise the Tibet issue at the United Nations. Other groups include Students for a Free Tibet (with some 400 campus chapters), the U.S. Tibet Committee (a human rights organization in New York City), the International Campaign for Tibet (a Washington, D.C.-based group aimed at influencing U.S. policy), and Friends of Tibet (an umbrella organization for many independent local support groups). This movement received an enormous boost when the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. Additional nourishment has been provided by numerous Free Tibet concerts, annual demonstrations marking the 1959 March 10 uprising in Lhasa (usually staged in front of Chinese embassies and the United Nations), and the recent willingness of political leaders, includ-

ing Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, to meet with the Dalai Lama. Although all this activity is politically motivated, the Dalai Lama's campaign is couched in religious language emphasizing nonviolence and compassion, thus both reworking the tradition to suit contemporary concerns and acquainting the American public with Tibetan Buddhist ideals.

### **Tibetan Immigrants and the U.S. Resettlement Project**

The Tibet-U.S. Resettlement Project (TUSR) was established in 1989, with the help of Congressmen Barney Frank and Tom Lantos and Senator Ted Kennedy, to settle 1,000 exiled Tibetans in twenty-one U.S. cities. Since Tibetans in exile were not officially recognized by the U.S. government as refugees, and most did not have citizenship in the countries where they had settled, a new piece of legislation was enacted in 1990 labeling them as "displaced" immigrants. The first TUSR group arrived in 1992, and its members were assisted by local people in finding housing and jobs. In 1995, the program's second phase began whereby participants were allowed to bring family members. Since then, more than 3,500 additional Tibetans have come as part of TUSR. Several thousand more are permanently, temporarily, or illegally settled in the United States, bringing the total Tibetan immigrant population to between 8,000 and 10,000.

As is the case with other Buddhist traditions now being transplanted to America, there is little interaction between most Tibetan Buddhist converts and immigrants. The former are primarily interested in pursuing their newly adopted (and adapted) spiritual practice, whereas the latter are more concerned with preserving their culture while simultaneously entering the American mainstream. Clustered together in two dozen cities, Tibetans gather for Tibetan New Year's celebrations, the Dalai Lama's birthday, and the Enlightenment Day of the Buddha (often in rented spaces), but they tend to practice other aspects of their religion at home instead of at the centers established by converts. There are, however, three spaces where these communities overlap: at events revolving around the Dalai Lama or other famous visiting Tibetan teachers; at Tibetan art fairs, which are often organized by immigrants, and cultural events, such as

museum exhibitions and performances by Tibetan dance and opera troupes from India; and at Tibet-related political demonstrations. Yet, by and large, Tibetan immigrants and convert Tibetan Buddhists continue to be what Paul Numrich has called “parallel communities” (1996, 63–74), with converts outnumbering immigrants. Still, combined, these various groups have contributed enormously to a growing awareness of Tibetan culture and politics while placing a vibrant, changing Tibetan Buddhism firmly on the American religious map.

—Tara Nancy Doyle

#### SEE ALSO

Asian American Religious Communities; South Asian American Religious Communities; Popular Culture

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## ZEN

Zen Buddhism has been popularized to the point of stereotype—a placid monk, sitting cross-legged in a spare room or on a high peak, speaking enigmatically. The amalgamation of Asian and American sensibilities has resulted in an eclectic religious practice. Zen Buddhism is a Japanese Mahayana Buddhist tradition derived from the Chan sect in China. The words “Chan” and “Zen” are derivatives of the Sanskrit term *dhyana*, which means “meditation.” In Japan, the two most popular sects of Zen Buddhism are Soto and Rinzai. Most schools of Zen Buddhism stress some form of meditation practice, either sitting meditation, called *zazen*, or walking meditation. Zen Buddhists in Japan also practice other forms of worship, such as chanting portions of the Lotus Sutra. Rinzai Zen developed the practice of *koan* meditation, often described as the contemplation of an enigmatic puzzle designed to help the student break through ordinary thinking to a more enlightened state of mind. In Japan, Zen is primarily a monastic tradition, with a strict regimen of training for monks. Lay participants

might occasionally participate in intensive meditation training, but temples and monasteries focus on training professional clergy.

In the United States, Zen Buddhism gained popularity in the 1950s and 1960s. This so-called Zen Boom was linked to youth and counterculture movements. Zen Buddhism achieved prominence in American popular culture when large numbers of Euro-Americans began to convert; build temples, or *zendos*; hold retreats; and invite Japanese monks as teachers for their communities. These converts have adapted the practice of monastic training to a lay audience, creating a hybrid form of Buddhism transformed by American culture.

Both Rinzai and Soto Buddhism were initially brought to the United States by Asian immigrants, but the manner in which they spread differed substantially. Soto Zen missionary priests were dispatched from Japan, and the central mission was to minister to Japanese immigrants and their children. They built temples that became community centers as well as



centers of religious worship. Rinzai Zen, however, proved to be more iconoclastic and was brought to the United States by independent monks who came as the guests of Euro-Americans. These monks took advantage of the small but dedicated group of individuals who became interested in Buddhism as the result of studying Theosophy, traveling to Asia, or reading the growing number of Buddhist texts that were being translated into European languages in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. After World War II, these two divergent strands of Buddhism met and mutually influenced one another.

Soto Zen was one of the smallest of Buddhist sects established in the Japanese American community before World War II. In Hawaii, the first Soto Zen temple was established in 1903; in California, the main Soto temple was established in 1934. These temples, though small, were a vital part of the Japanese American community, providing community meeting space for youth groups and women's organizations. In addition, many temples offered Japanese language instruction for second-generation (Nisei) Japanese Americans. Temples served as centers for many forms of social service and outreach. Soto temples held regular worship services on Sundays, conforming to the American convention. These services, generally conducted entirely in Japanese, consisted of chanting, silent meditation, and a sermon by the priest, followed by a social hour. Some temples established youth groups or Sunday schools so that the Nisei generation could be educated in the faith of their parents. The internment of Japanese Americans during World War II wreaked havoc with the community. Priests were deported or jailed; while interned, Soto Buddhists cooperated with Jodo Shinshu, Nichiren, and other Buddhists in worship services in the camps.

After the war, the Soto Buddhist temples maintained close contact with their headquarters in Japan. In 1959, Shunryu Suzuki was sent to the United States as a missionary to Sokoji, the Soto Zen temple in San Francisco. By the early 1960s, a small but influential number of artists and writers had begun to write about Buddhism, particularly Zen. Some, such as Jack Kerouac and Alan Watts, dabbled in Buddhist philosophy. Others, such as Gary Snyder and Philip Whalen, were serious students and meditators. Because many of these writers and artists who popularized Buddhism lived in the San Francisco area, Suzuki

began to attract a following of Euro-Americans interested in learning meditation. While still providing services to the Japanese American community, he began to teach them. The meditation students prompted Suzuki to write *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* (1970), a primer on Zen philosophy and meditation practice for Americans. They would later found the San Francisco Zen Center, one of the most well-known Zen temples in the United States.

Rinzai Zen was also brought to the United States by immigrants, but in this case by a small number of Japanese priests and laypeople who taught small groups of Euro-American Buddhist converts and sympathizers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These men, Soyen Shaku, Nyogen Senzaki, Sokei-an, and Soen Nakagawa, did not establish temples in immigrant communities. In fact, there were no Rinzai Buddhist temples in Japanese immigrant communities, and the Rinzai priests did not work extensively among Japanese Americans. The communities they helped to found were small but became the cornerstones of the many meditation centers that were a part of the postwar Zen Boom.

In 1893, Soyen Shaku spoke at the World's Parliament of Religions. The religious leaders from around the world who spoke at this gathering, a part of the Chicago World's Fair, attracted an unprecedented audience. Euro-Americans heard about Buddhism, Islam, and other non-Christian religious traditions for the first time. After the parliament, Soyen Shaku toured the United States, accompanied by his young student, Daisetz Teitaro (D. T.) Suzuki, who served as his translator. Suzuki went on to live in the United States for several years, working for the metaphysical publishing house Open Court Press, before returning to Japan. He married a Euro-American, Beatrice Lane. In Japan, they founded the journal *Eastern Buddhist*. He wrote dozens of books on Zen Buddhism, including *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (1949) and *Zen and Japanese Culture* (1959). These works became enormously popular among Euro-Americans who took up the study of Buddhism after World War II. Suzuki returned to the United States after the war as a visiting professor at Columbia University and as a participant in the East-West Philosophers' Conferences held at the University of Hawaii.

Several factors account for the fact that Zen has thrived in the United States. First, Japanese teachers



Buddhist nun at Shasta Abbey, Mount Shasta, California, 1973 (Ted Streshinsky/Corbis)

were diligent and persisted in their desire to spread Buddhism to the West. Many worked anonymously for years before they met with any success. Nyogen Senzaki, for example, worked in and around Los Angeles lecturing to small Euro-American meditation groups. Shigetsu Sasaki, or Sokei-an, labored in a variety of menial jobs before founding the Buddhist Society of America (later known as the First Zen Institute) in 1931.

Second, these priests and teachers made personal and professional contact with groups of artists and intellectuals who helped to popularize Buddhism. Paul Carus's Open Court Press, for example, published dozens of books and monographs that formed the core of Buddhist writing in English. Christmas Humphreys, the founder of the Buddhist Lodge in England, played host to any number of European, Asian, and American intellectuals who expressed interest in Eastern religions. A young Alan Watts was among his correspondents. Watts went on to marry the daughter of Ruth Fuller, Shigetsu Sasaki's wife. Watts's writing helped to popularize a highly eclectic version of Buddhism. These networks of poets, writers, and intellectuals were important because they often had access to the resources necessary to support small sitting groups. They provided the financial means and the spiritual energy to promote their beliefs through meetings and lectures, buying and sometimes publishing the necessary books and monographs.

Third, the cultural atmosphere of the United States after World War II lent itself to a less rigid, more individualistic approach to religious consciousness. The countercultural movement, with its emphasis on individual expression, mind expansion, and peaceful coexistence, dovetailed with the growing stereotype of Zen Buddhist practice. Although many who dabbled in the rigorous practice of Zen Buddhism quickly abandoned it, a substantial number became true converts and began adapting their understanding of Zen

Buddhism to their lifestyles. Zen Buddhism in the United States is notably less devotional and textually oriented than the practice of Zen in Japan. It is also less monastic. American temples never became monastic retreats but catered to lay practitioners who had full-time jobs and families. The American form of Zen has also been more open to the leadership of women than its Eastern counterpart, and female practitioners have been instrumental in challenging male-dominated leadership of American temples. Reflecting the interests and values of middle-class whites, it has yet to make strong inroads into black and Latino communities.

—Lori Pierce

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Asian American Religious Communities; Japanese American Religious Communities; New Age; The Body; Asian Body Practices; Popular Culture

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CATHOLICISM IN  
AMERICA



## Multicultural Origins

Catholicism in the United States has a rich history that, while reflecting a properly “American” character, benefits from a truly multicultural heritage. The significance of this history and heritage becomes increasingly evident as the Catholic Church in the United States today continues to welcome a growing number of immigrants from around the world. It is a history influenced by major demographic shifts: By 2010 most Catholics in the United States will be Spanish-speaking. In a sense, this reality represents a return to the beginning, when the first Catholic Christians to set foot on territory that is now the United States were themselves Iberian Christians from southern Spain. In the meantime, millions of Catholics from literally every corner of the world have emigrated to this country. Despite the inevitable process of Americanization, together they have constructed a church that continues to draw from the many cultures that have contributed to its heritage—and that will also form its legacy to future generations. At the same time, the integration and assimilation of Catholics in the larger U.S. society have given birth to a uniquely “American” Catholicism.

The origins of Catholicism in what is now the United States can be traced back to the Iberian Christianity first brought to the New World by Christopher Columbus. Significantly, the Iberian Christian faith of the first conquistadors and missionaries was itself already multicultural. For centuries, Spanish Christians had lived alongside Jews and Muslims, the latter having conquered most of the Iberian peninsula 800 years earlier. Indeed, this unprecedented period of religious and cultural pluralism came to an end the same year that Columbus set sail; in 1492, Ferdinand and Isabella “reconquered” Spain for the church and expelled the Jews from the newly united, Christian Spain. The Catholic Christianity that was brought to the New World thus had a long history of encounters—at times pacific but at other times violent—with other religions and cultures. The influence of those encounters can still be seen and felt in the religious and cultural life of Spain today.

In the American colonies, Catholics once again came into contact with peoples who were dramatically different from them. Though the Spanish had come to “evangelize” and “civilize” the indigenous peoples whom they encountered, the conquest gave birth to a new multicultural reality, a *mestizo* people (that is, a people of mixed race and culture). If Latin America is today predominantly Catholic, this is a Catholicism that, like the countenances of millions of Latin Americans, reveals the profound influence of an ongoing encounter among cultures, races, and religions. Mestizo popular Catholicism has incorporated and adapted religious symbols and practices from indigenous religious traditions, which often exist side by side with Iberian Catholic traditions. In North America, however, this mixture of races, cultures, and religions would continue only in the areas still controlled by Spain, especially the areas that now make up the southwestern part of the United States. Despite the inevitable process of enculturation into the dominant U.S. culture, this mestizo Catholicism also survives among Latinos living in the United States.

The Catholic faith was also brought to North America in the seventeenth century by French missionaries, who established colonies along the North, from Acadia to the Great Lakes, and along the Mississippi River to the Gulf Coast. The most successful and enduring colony was established in New Orleans. Like the Spanish, the French colonists were accompanied by clergy who constructed an elaborate system of missions, or “reductions,” for the purpose of evangelizing the Indians. The influence of French Catholicism can still be felt throughout these areas, from the far Northeast to the northern Great Lakes and from St. Louis to New Orleans.

The seventeenth century also witnessed the first influx of English Catholics. Between 1634 and 1776, they established an important presence in Maryland and Pennsylvania. The character of this presence was, however, quite different from that of the Spanish and French Catholics. The English settlers and clergy were a religious minority within a larger Protestant population. The Catholic Church, therefore, was not

an intrinsic element of English colonization as it had been in the case of the Spanish and French colonies. As a minority, the English Catholic community confronted the same issues of survival and identity that any minority group must face. Consequently, although the clergy accompanying the Catholic settlers to the English colonies had originally been engaged in evangelization efforts among the Indians, their focus soon turned away from the Indians and toward their own English Catholic population. Increasingly, the primary concern became less that of gaining new converts to the faith than catechizing and ministering to the Catholic community itself.

Despite their minority status, however, the Catholics of Maryland were socially and financially influential. Having been granted a charter by King Charles to establish the colony, the earliest Catholic settlers owned a great deal of land and built large plantations. The Catholic clergy in Maryland was itself composed primarily of Jesuit priests who often owned plantations and slaves. One of the most prominent Catholic families was the Carroll family of Carrollton. Charles Carroll became one of the first great Catholic political leaders in the English colonies. His cousin John Carroll, a Jesuit, in 1789 became the first American bishop and in 1791 authorized the founding of the first American Catholic college, Georgetown College (now Georgetown University). Both were sons of the Enlightenment who promoted Republican principles and religious toleration. Indeed, the respect that they won from their Protestant colleagues in the colonies' struggle for freedom from England would go a long way toward overcoming the religious prejudice that the minority Catholic population as a whole continued to face.

### The First Wave

During the nineteenth century, the Catholic population in the United States grew dramatically, both in sheer numbers and in institutional visibility. Between 1830 and 1870 the Catholic population of the United States grew by 1,300 percent. This growth was largely the result of immigration, especially from Ireland and Germany. Mexican-American Jesuit sociologist Allan Figueroa Deck has called this the "first wave" of Catholic immigration (Deck 1989). Another reason for the rapid increase in the number of Catholics was

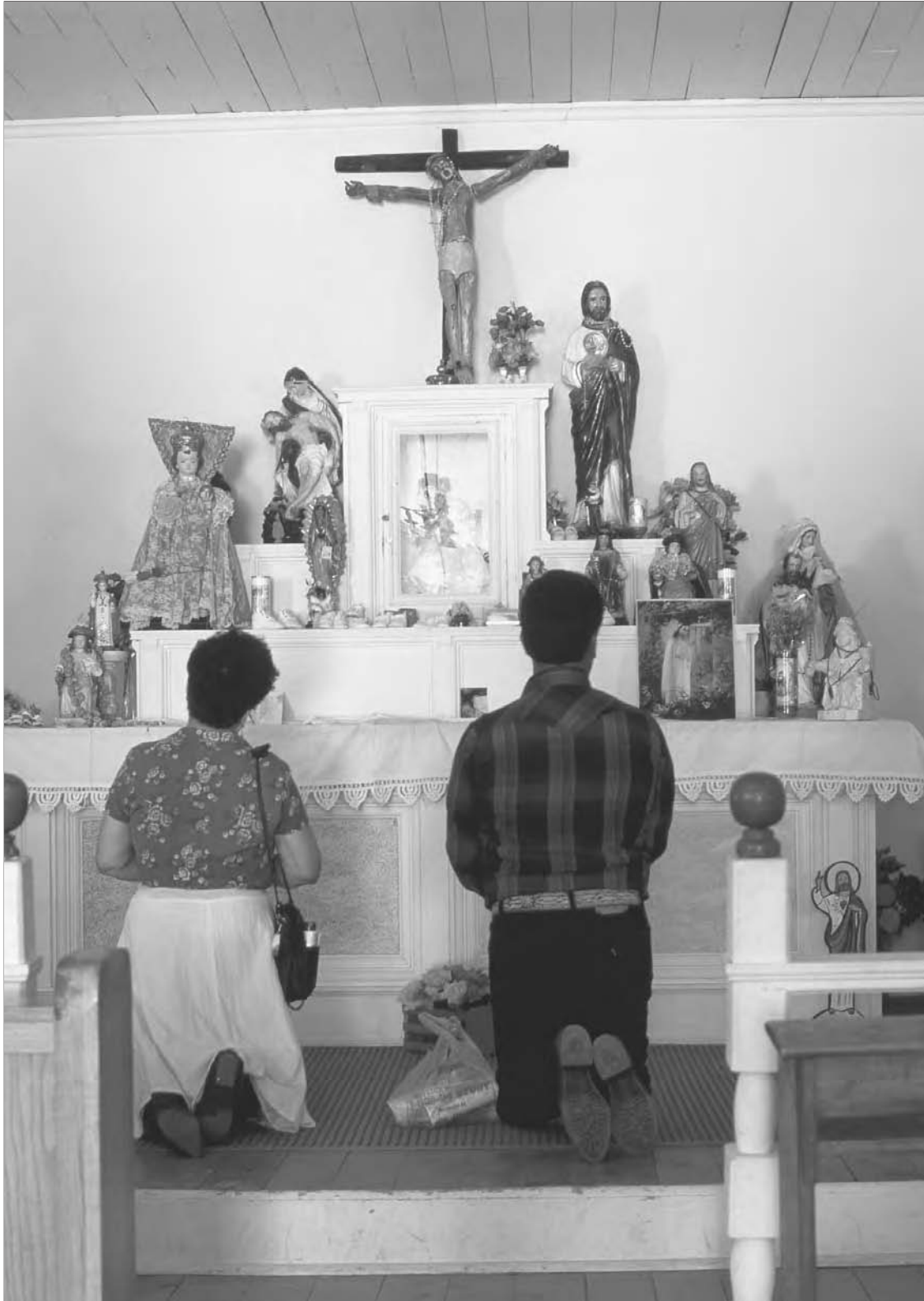
the annexation of almost half of what was then Mexico through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), which concluded the Mexican American War. Moreover, both immigration and annexation were making the U.S. Catholic population increasingly diverse culturally, even if this diversity was not always reflected or represented in church structures.

The rapid growth and increasing diversity of the Catholic population was not always met with tolerance or acceptance by the larger, predominantly Protestant U.S. population. Anti-Catholic prejudice reached a peak of intensity in the Know-Nothing Movement of the 1850s when its leaders accused the Catholic Church of promoting everything from anti-democratic, autocratic practices to superstitious, anti-biblical religious beliefs. This antagonism was often met, on the Catholic side, by an equally defensive attitude that saw in Protestantism a threat to Catholicism's institutional unity and a dangerous emphasis on the right of the individual believer to interpret the Bible without the aid of a priest.

During this period, the heart of Catholic life was the parish, which often functioned not only as a center of worship but as the key source of communal identity for ethnic groups. One did not simply belong to a Catholic parish, but to a German parish, an Italian parish, or some other ethnically based Catholic community. The parochial school became, in turn, a crucial institution for preserving Catholic and ethnic identities even as it prepared students through formal education to enter the mainstream of the larger society. The women religious, or nuns, who directed and taught in the schools were themselves an essential part of the Catholic Church's expansion in the United States. A further source of religious and cultural identity that was rooted in the parish was the devotionism that became especially widespread in the second half of the nineteenth century. Devotions to Jesus, Mary, and particular saints provided a spiritual, affective foundation for Catholic religious and ethnic identity in a land that often seemed alien, not only because of its different cultural characteristics but also because of its predominantly Protestant religious ethos.

### Americanization

Since the French Revolution, the Catholic Church had resisted modernity. In his *Syllabus of Errors* (1864),



Worshippers at the Santuario del Señor de Esquipulas at Chimayo, New Mexico, believed to be the site of miraculous cures, 1996 (Kevin Fleming/Corbis)



Pope Pius IX had officially condemned the founding principles of the Enlightenment, principles that lay at the very roots of U.S. society: the separation of church and state, religious freedom, individualism, liberalism, and rationalism. Nevertheless, numerous American Catholic leaders believed that if the Catholic Church was to survive and thrive in the predominantly Protestant United States, the church must be willing to incorporate and adapt the best aspects of that society to their own religious faith and traditions. Among the major figures in this “Americanist” group were Archbishop John Ireland of St. Paul and Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore. A more conservative group, more antagonistic toward modern liberal culture and fearful that any rapprochement with the surrounding culture could too easily lead to a loss of religious identity, was led by Archbishop Michael Corrigan of New York. In Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical *Testem Benevolentiae* (1899), the Catholic Church officially rejected any extreme form of Americanism that would result in an uncritical Catholic assimilation into U.S. culture. Despite the position taken, however, no specific individuals were accused or singled out.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the Catholic Church in the United States continued to deal, above all, with the challenges of continued immigration. Americanism as a movement may have been stifled in the wake of *Testem Benevolentiae*, but the intellectual heirs of that movement retained an important place in the national Catholic dialogue, and the question of the church’s relationship to the larger U.S. culture was at the very heart of the American Catholic experience. The prejudice that Catholic immigrants continued to encounter only made the issue more acute and urgent.

Nevertheless, Catholics were increasingly becoming participants in larger national debates. Rooted in long-standing Catholic teachings on social issues, which insisted on the necessity of a fundamental commitment to social justice and the common good, several Catholics gained national prominence as leaders of social reform movements. The Benedictine monk and theologian Virgil Michel (1890–1938) was a liturgical reformer who argued for the intrinsic connection between Christian worship and social justice. Perhaps the most influential of these Catholic reformers was Monsignor John Ryan. His 1906 book, *A Living Wage*, was very influential in the debates over min-



Saints’ festival, Boston’s North End (Trip/S. Grant)

imum-wage legislation, and Ryan himself was a passionate proponent of the rights of workers. With so many Catholic immigrants among the working class that suffered such devastating poverty during the Great Depression, Catholic concern for the plight of the worker was often born of personal experience.

In the years after World War II, especially, Catholics were becoming vocal participants in national and international debates. The increased integration of Catholics into the nation’s political life reached a symbolic culmination in 1960 with John F. Kennedy’s presidential candidacy. Kennedy’s victory was followed shortly thereafter by perhaps the single most significant event in twentieth-century Catholicism, the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). In convoking the council, Pope John XXIII called for an *aggiornamento*, a greater openness to modern culture on the part of the church. By recognizing the value of cultural pluralism, historical development, and the

communal character of the church itself, the council facilitated the growing rapprochement between U.S. Catholics and the larger U.S. society. Moreover, American prelates and theologians played important roles in Vatican II. This was especially true in the case of the council's *Declaration on Religious Liberty*, which, greatly influenced by the thought of the American Jesuit theologian John Courtney Murray, strongly affirmed the right to religious freedom.

The Vietnam War caused as much division within the Catholic community as it did within U.S. society as a whole. During the 1960s, many Catholics became involved in the peace and civil rights movements. Activists like the Jesuit priest Daniel Berrigan engaged in civil disobedience. At the same time, religious leaders such as Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York supported the war.

The divisions between "conservative" and "liberal" Catholics became especially acute toward the end of the decade. The 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, issued by Pope Paul VI, which reaffirmed the Catholic Church's opposition to artificial contraception and abortion, brought to the surface the long-standing tension between the church and modern U.S. culture. Indeed, numerous Catholic scholars have suggested that the encyclical created a "crisis of authority" in the church, making it appear outmoded and irrelevant to a world undergoing a "sexual revolution" and causing U.S. Catholics to feel increasingly disaffected from their church. Whether the passionate opposition to *Humanae Vitae* was a cause or merely a symptom of the disaffection is a question that has itself divided Catholic scholars ever since.

Although the issues raised by *Humanae Vitae* continue to divide Catholics in the United States, a number of other important issues have become central to the life of the church during the past three decades. An important internal development has been the growing shortage of ordained clergy. The need for more priests has, in turn, led many Catholics to question the requirement of compulsory celibacy for priests and the exclusion of women from the priesthood. One consequence of the priest shortage has been that, in parishes and dioceses throughout the country, a growing number of laymen and -women are today exercising important leadership roles, whether in parish councils, social outreach ministries, or a broad range of other aspects of church life.

## The Second Wave

The impact of the clergy shortage has been further exacerbated by the renewed growth of Catholic immigration into the United States. If the first wave of Catholic immigration came primarily from Europe, this second wave (Deck 1989) comes primarily from developing nations in the Third World, especially Latin America. The obstacles faced by the new immigrants are often similar to those faced by the millions of immigrants who arrived from Germany, Italy, or Ireland in the nineteenth century. One important difference, however, is that the earlier immigrants usually brought their clergy with them, and contemporary immigrants from Latin America are rarely accompanied by clergy. A predominantly Catholic continent, Latin America is itself confronting a critical shortage of priests.

The influx of Catholics from Latin America and other non-European cultures has strained resources but has also energized and revitalized the U.S. Catholic Church. As it faces the growing diversity within its walls, the church is discovering the spiritual riches of other cultures and, indeed, rediscovering aspects of the Catholic tradition that had been depreciated or forgotten in modern Western Catholicism. As the first wave of European Catholic immigrants struggled to become accepted as full members of modern U.S. society, they often left behind popular Catholic devotions that, in the larger society, were derided as superstitious, immature expressions of religious faith; in the modern, rationalistic world of twentieth-century America, such popular practices were perceived as irrational or infantile, at best, and dangerous or idolatrous, at worst.

## Popular Catholicism

Vatican II opened Catholicism not only to the virtues and benefits of modernity but also to some of its more ambiguous aspects, such as its suspicion of predominantly affective (rather than rational) and symbolic (rather than word-centered) forms of religious expression. As they successfully entered the mainstream of modern culture, Euro-American Catholics rejected the very sensorial and communal character of Catholicism that had long distinguished it from Protestantism. The statues, devotions, and proces-

sions that Euro-Americans had abandoned were now being reintroduced, however, in the popular Catholicism of a new wave of immigrants.

Such forms have endured among Third World Catholics, millions of whom continue to emigrate to the United States. Latino Catholics, for example, preserve popular practices through which, for generations, they have lived out their faith. This popular Catholicism introduces into U.S. churches a more communal, affective, and incarnational dimension. Conversely, Latino Catholics often experience U.S. Catholic parishes as alienating or "cold."

It is not surprising, therefore, that the most successful and vital movements among Latino Catholics have been the charismatic and *cursillo* movements, with their strong emphasis on affective, communal expressions of faith. The former emphasizes the role of divine inspiration in the life of the community, an inspiration expressed in regular, communal, ecstatic prayer and song. The latter movement is based on a weekend retreat that also emphasizes the need for inspiration and conversion expressed through emotional forms of communal prayer. Each movement calls for an ongoing conversion process embodied in a total commitment to Christian discipleship on the part of the participant. The *cursillo* movement, especially, has generated and inspired hundreds of Latino Catholic leaders, who number themselves among the millions of *cursillistas* in the United States.

Another distinctive characteristic of Latino Catholicism is that it is rooted less in the parish than in the home and neighborhood. For centuries, Latin America has experienced a dearth of priests, particularly native-born ones. Consequently, many Latin American Catholics have relatively little regular contact with clergy. This is especially true in far-flung rural areas. A regular sacramental life, centered on the weekly Sunday Mass, is not possible for millions of Catholics. In such a situation, sustaining a life of worship demands the development of religious practices or rituals that, while drawing on "official" Catholicism, are not completely dependent on either the parish structure or clerical leadership. The result has been a rich complex of religious practices, usually led by women, that are centered around the *altarcito*, or home altar. Out of historical necessity, the parish church is thus complemented by the "domestic church."

These different ways of expressing the Catholic faith can be sources of tension or misunderstanding among Catholics, but they can also be opportunities for mutual enrichment. The lived Catholic faith of Latino Catholics is an important resource that can help the larger church address issues such as the priest shortage and the alienation of so many Catholics from the church. The presence of a Latino Catholic community, and other Third World Catholics, at the very heart of the U.S. Catholic Church can witness to the possibility of recovering a strong sense of community, a vibrant worship, and an active laity.

The most important challenge confronting U.S. Catholicism in the new millennium may indeed be the evolution of the Catholic Church in the United States from a predominantly European to a predominantly Third World church. The earlier, European Catholic immigrants often encountered prejudice from a society that viewed them as backward or uncivilized because of their religious practices, which were perceived as inferior to more "rational" and "enlightened" forms of Christianity. Ironically, these immigrants' Catholic children, having now successfully entered mainstream U.S. society, are tempted to dismiss the second wave of Catholic immigrants on similar grounds. The future of U.S. Catholicism will no doubt be shaped, to a great extent, by the way in which U.S. Catholics respond to the diversity within their own church.

—Roberto S. Goizueta

#### SEE ALSO

Asian American Religious Communities: Pacific Islander American Religious Communities; Latina/Latino Religious Communities: Central and South American Religious Communities, Cuban American Religious Communities, Mexican American Religious Communities, Puerto Rican Religious Communities; The Body: Pain; Death: Days of the Dead (Días de los Muertos), Roadside Shrines; Material Culture: Modern Catholic Church Decorations; Popular Theologies: Antebellum America; Ritual and Performance; Sacred Space: Shrines; Science; Science: Healing; Sexuality: Masturbation

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## CONVERSION TO CATHOLICISM

Most American Catholics, immigrants and their descendants from Ireland, southern Germany, Italy, Poland, the Slavic countries, and Latin America, were raised in Catholic families. A minority, however, have been converts, some because they married Catholics, others because they became convinced that Catholicism was the most authentic expression of Christianity.

Before the Catholic Church's internal reforms at the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), a non-Catholic marrying a Catholic was expected to become a Catholic also and was required to promise that all children born to the couple would be brought up in the Catholic faith. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, moreover, the church in the United States worked hard to win converts, kept statistics on the number of conversions annually, and celebrated whenever distinguished individuals became Catholics.

Among the best-known converts in the nineteenth century were Orestes Brownson and Isaac Hecker, both Yankee Protestants and friends of the Transcendentalists. Brownson (1803–1876), in *The Convert* (1857), a religious autobiography written after his 1845 conversion, explained that he had tried every variety of Protestantism and found all of them deficient. Claiming to offer salvation by faith, he said, they actually required rigid adherence to a particular interpretation of Scripture and mortification of the conscience and intellect. Catholicism, by contrast, made claims that he found convincing, based jointly on Scripture and tradition and taking into account the historical development of Christianity through the ages. Anti-Catholic polemicists of his era argued that Catholicism was rigidly doctrinaire, the enemy of free thought. Brownson turned the accusation around on Protestants and argued that Catholicism possessed a rich and varied intellectual patrimony. In *Brownson's Quarterly Review*, which he edited and nearly all of which he also wrote for thirty years, he explored these Catholic cultural riches and showed how they could be used to interpret events of his own era such as the American Civil War.

His friend Hecker (1819–1888) preceded Brownson into the Catholic Church by one year. Hecker

had had a succession of religious experiences, including ecstatic visions, and felt that merely joining the Catholic Church was insufficient for his ardent temperament. He took the further step of becoming a priest and joined the Redemptorists, a missionary order working mostly with German immigrants. After a disagreement with them, he, along with several other Yankee converts, in 1858 founded the Paulist Fathers, whose special mission was the conversion to Catholicism of other “Anglo” Americans. Their journal, *The Catholic World*, founded in 1865, joined Brownson's *Review* as the mouthpiece of American Catholic intellectuals.

Hecker, almost as prolific a writer as Brownson, argued in *Aspirations of Nature* (1857) that Catholicism was ideally suited to America. After all, the American Republic and its Constitution presupposed the existence of virtuous citizens. Protestant theology, emphasizing humanity's absolute depravity, held out little hope that such virtuous citizens could be found. Catholicism, by contrast, with its more optimistic anthropology (in which humanity, though harmed by Original Sin, was not absolutely depraved by it), conformed better. Catholics, far from being latently disloyal, as their critics alleged, were the American Republic's ideal citizens.

Brownson and Hecker hoped and expected that other educated and high-minded Americans would follow their example and convert. Occasionally their hopes were fulfilled. Nathaniel Hawthorne's daughter Rose Hawthorne-Lathrop (1851–1926) was one; she founded an order of nursing sisters (naming them “The Daughters of the Puritans”) and created a network of Dominican hospices for terminal cancer patients. Brownson and Hecker also believed that Catholicism was compatible with the nineteenth century's daring intellectual revolutions. In this hope they were misled: At the turn of the century, a papal condemnation of “Americanism” (1899) cast a shadow over Hecker's memory. The papal condemnation of intellectual “Modernism” in 1907, moreover, obliged Catholic intellectuals to turn away from critical methods in biblical and historical studies and away from evolutionary theory in biology. Twentieth-century converts, accordingly, tended to be refugees



Portrait of Dorothy Day, 1934 (Library of Congress)

from modernism, critics rather than champions of the modern world.

No twentieth-century convert has drawn wider or more favorable notice than Dorothy Day (1897–1983). A radical journalist and Greenwich Village bohemian in the teens and early 1920s, she became a Catholic in 1925 and resolved to live up to the austere and exacting demands of Catholic social teaching. This teaching, based on Pope Leo XIII's encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), reproached the industrialized world for its inhumane treatment of the human individual. As harsh in its criticism of capitalism as the Marxists, it offered a quite different remedy based on the selfless teachings of Jesus.

In the bleakest days of the Great Depression, Dorothy Day founded a House of Hospitality in the slums of New York City and tried to live up to the papal demands. She offered food, clothing, and shelter to whoever needed it, for as long as they needed it, with no questions asked and no requirement that they first submit to a sermon. She published *The Catholic Worker*, a proletarian but anticommunist newspaper

that condemned capitalism and communism with equal vigor. Day opposed American participation in World War II and the development of a nuclear arsenal during the Cold War. She was arrested in the 1950s for refusing to participate in a civil defense drill.

Vastly different in experience and attitude was Carlton Hayes (1882–1964), a professor of history at Columbia University who pioneered the development of international relations as an academic field of study. In a series of influential books written after his conversion, themselves drawing discreetly on papal teachings, he condemned militant nationalism as the great evil of the early twentieth century, interpreting it as a form of parody religion. He and most of the other scholars who founded and led the American Catholic Historical Association in the years after 1917 were converts who together established an intellectually rigorous Catholic historiography in America for the first time.

When the Spanish Civil War began in 1936, most American Catholics supported Francisco Franco against the Republic, whose supporters burned churches and killed priests and nuns; some even treated him as the savior of Catholic Spain. Hayes, by contrast, far more knowledgeable about the atrocities perpetrated by both sides, kept at arm's length from either, with the result that he was chosen by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to be America's ambassador to Spain during World War II.

Clare Booth Luce (1903–1987), playwright, congresswoman, millionaire-publisher's wife, and later American ambassador to Italy, was one of the great celebrity converts of the 1940s. She was converted at the end of World War II by Monsignor Fulton Sheen (1895–1979), a spellbinding preacher, pioneer of television religion, and specialist in the conversion of the rich and famous. Less heralded at the time but more significant in the long run was the conversion of the young novelist Walker Percy (1916–1990), who went on to create one of the most distinctive fictional voices of the mid- and late twentieth century. Percy's conversion, moreover, was a sign of things to come. Less bombastic and "triumphal" in tone, more open to the morbid and tragic side of Catholicism, he lacked the apodictic confidence of his convert predecessors.

After Vatican II, the Catholic Church ceased its eager search for converts. It accepted all other Chris-

tians as “separated brethren” rather than “heretics” and embraced the principle of ecumenism. Striking individual conversions continued, often (among intellectuals) because of the individual convert’s excitement for the work of such distinguished converts as Hecker, Day, and, in Britain, Cardinal John Henry Newman, G. K. Chesterton, and the novelists Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh. Conservatives found Catholicism particularly congenial, and one of the leading postwar conservative intellectuals, Russell Kirk, became a Catholic in 1964.

As a group, these converts were too diverse to permit easy generalizations. They had this in common, however: They had studied Catholicism as adults, rather than learning it by rote as children. The defensive mentality of the immigrant church in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had discouraged intellectual adventurousness among children and teens. These adult converts, therefore, were among the first Catholics in America to discover the intellectual riches their church and its tradition offered. Paradoxically, they became the teachers of

later, and more intellectually rigorous, generations of young Catholics in the days before Catholic exclusivity came to seem inappropriate.

—Patrick Allitt

#### SEE ALSO

Protestantism in America; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Conservatism

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## NUNS AND PRIESTS

The story of American nuns and priests—religious orders of women and men who vow poverty, chastity, and obedience to the Roman Catholic Church—belongs to the larger story of encounter between the Old and New Worlds. Catholic priests first arrived in North America as part of Christopher Columbus’s second voyage in 1493, and the subsequent efforts of Jesuit and Franciscan priests to convert native populations to Catholicism eventually claimed the larger part of the continent for France and Spain. Nuns and priests long played a role in the colonial rivalries of European powers. For example, the Ursuline sisters, the first order of nuns to arrive in what is now the United States, came to New Orleans in 1727 with the backing of a commercial company commissioned by France to guard its claim to possession of the Mississippi Valley. Protestant colonists, meanwhile, increasingly viewed Catholics as foreigners in their midst, and the identification of nuns and priests as guardians of suspiciously Old World values and practices made

them targets of nativist prejudice well into the twentieth century. Far from European models, American nuns and priests needed both to maintain their ties to the Roman hierarchy abroad and to forge new roles that would enable them to survive in an often unsympathetic environment at home. As leaders of what were by the mid-nineteenth century largely immigrant enclaves, nuns and priests helped give cultural coherence to an ethnically diverse population of U.S. Catholics, who managed as a result both to become more American and to maintain a sense of separateness from the larger culture.

When America’s beginnings are identified with the history of the thirteen British colonies, the role of priests looks marginal. At the time of the American Revolution, just twenty-four priests ministered to 25,000 Catholics who were concentrated largely in Maryland, the colony founded by English Jesuits. It was through the work of Catholic priests, however, that the narrow strip of land that first became the



A priest reads a prayer at a Catholic Mass  
(Trip/T. Freeman)

United States was already bordered by French and Spanish territory extending to the Pacific Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Arctic Circle. Both Virginia and Massachusetts Bay had passed laws in the 1640s declaring perpetual imprisonment for any priest who came within their borders, and animosity toward priests remained strong even as the colonies grew more religiously tolerant because priests were typically seen as symbols of religious *intolerance*. The British government's diplomatic recognition in 1773 of the Roman Catholic bishop of Quebec, for example, brought forth accusations of "priestcraft" and "popish conspiracy" from Protestant colonists who feared an alliance to restrict their own freedoms. That Catholicism managed to secure a foothold in the new United States at all was largely thanks to the shrewdness of John Carroll, appointed first American bishop by the Vatican in 1789. Carroll's Maryland family had staunchly supported Independence (a relative

had been the only Catholic to sign the Declaration), and Carroll's vision of American Catholicism was likewise one of greater autonomy from foreign authority. American priests needed in any case to proceed without help from American civil authorities and with limited direction from Europe, where their various orders were based.

The same was true for American nuns. According to a papal law of 1298, all nuns were to be enclosed within convent walls, and they remained officially cloistered until 1633, when Vincent de Paul founded the Sisters of Charity, the first noncloistered religious order. (Strictly speaking, only women in cloistered religious orders are nuns. Women in noncloistered religious orders are known as sisters, although in American usage the two terms are interchangeable.) Nuns who arrived from cloistered orders in Europe, however, quickly found it necessary to adapt their patterns of interaction to American life. American Protestants tended to view cloistered nuns with suspicion and made bestsellers of books whose titles—*Secrets of Nunneries Disclosed*, *The Veil Lifted*, *Convent Life Exposed*, *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery*, and others—promised titillating glimpses into this hidden world. Imputations of licentiousness aside, contemplative communities were judged unproductive by American standards. And unlike their European counterparts, which were supported by the government and by the patronage of aristocratic families, American religious orders needed to be self-supporting. American nuns who gradually assumed more active roles made careful choices about the kinds of work that could profitably be pursued in an atmosphere of public indifference or distrust. The vast network of parochial schools and Catholic hospitals founded and largely staffed by nuns—unparalleled achievements in the history of American education and health care—were practical responses to the challenges they faced. These institutions, in turn, enabled Catholic culture and values to thrive even outside of churches and away from the influence of priests.

It was the organization and tact of the earliest generations of priests and nuns that enabled the Roman Catholic Church to survive in the United States, but it was immigration that made it the largest single denomination in the country by the latter half of the nineteenth century. In 1830, some 240 priests led churches still largely clustered near pre-Revolutionary



Catholic settlements in Maryland, the Carolinas, and near the Gulf of Mexico or the Canadian border. By 1850, some 2,000 priests served 1.5 million Catholics, now concentrated in Protestant strongholds in the Northeast. European-born priests and nuns who came to America with dreams of being missionaries to Indians instead found themselves ministering to urban immigrant populations whose mix of racial and ethnic groups was as yet unknown in other countries, all the while facing fierce anti-immigrant and particularly anti-Irish sentiments from native-born Protestants. Immigration brought tensions as well as vibrancy to U.S. Catholic life. U.S.-born Catholics were known to disparage what one bishop called the “Irish rabble,” and Irish-born priests, one-third of the total by 1850, often failed to appreciate the distinctive cultures of the older French and Spanish settlements. Catholic immigrants from Ireland, Germany, Italy, eastern Europe, and the Caribbean, meanwhile, often observed different celebrations and feast days, making their neighborhoods both more insular and more Catholic. Convents and seminaries, in turn, became magnets for immigrant women and men, whose achievements in education, health care, and social services helped both to counter anti-immigrant sentiments in the broader culture and to give to U.S. Catholicism a distinctively transnational character.

The story of New World religious orders is inevitably implicated in slavery and its legacies. The first order of nuns founded in the United States, the Sisters of Loretto of Kentucky, was established with \$450 that the order’s first superior obtained from selling her slave. Until the middle third of the nineteenth century, Catholics were concentrated in the southern United States. Slavery and the plantation system enabled many orders to survive in the absence of the endowments that funded their counterparts in Europe. The Jesuits, for example, held 300 slaves on southern farmlands until the 1830s. The Ursuline nuns in New Orleans benefited from slavery even as they violated civil laws by teaching literacy to slaves and teaching black and white children side by side. The Catholic hierarchy failed to articulate a unified position on slavery. Catholic priests and bishops spoke out for and against slavery, and nuns served as nurses on both sides of the Civil War. In the nineteenth century, a number of white-identified U.S. orders counted among their members women and men who were

legally black, though evidence of this was often suppressed. Francis Patrick Healy, a Jesuit priest who became president of Georgetown University in 1874, was born a slave, the son of an Irish father and a slave mother, though he covered his racial identity for most of his career, and Georgetown did not officially admit black students until the mid-twentieth century. (Several of Healy’s siblings also entered religious orders.) Efforts to ordain black priests and to support black parishes, begun ambivalently after the Civil War, nearly came to a halt in the early decades of the twentieth century and were not revived until the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

Just as some nonwhite women and men who sought to escape racism found an ambivalent refuge in vowed life, so many gay men and lesbians have historically found opportunities for service and spiritual flourishing in religious orders, even though the Catholic hierarchy has never officially acknowledged their presence and maintains a public face of intolerance toward homosexuality in general. Ongoing conflicts within the Catholic Church over issues of sexuality and gender, together with the uneven march of opinion on these issues in the wider world, have contributed to a decline in the number of U.S. priests and nuns in the past several decades. Many priests and nuns left religious life in the wake of Vatican II, confused over what their new roles should be. The expected influx of younger people drawn to more liberal definitions of religious life never materialized, however, owing largely to the conservative teachings of Pope John XXIII’s successors. The 1968 papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, which reiterated the church’s ban on all artificial forms of birth control, brought many U.S. priests and nuns into conflict with the Vatican and into uneasy relationships with the laity, many of whom have questioned the authority of celibates to counsel them on sexual matters. Nuns and priests who have challenged the church’s positions on contraception, abortion, AIDS, and reproductive technology have been censured. Would-be nuns and priests who in the past chose vowed life as a haven from gender or sexual discrimination now find greater tolerance outside the church. With a shortage of priests, the church’s refusal to ordain women or to support the fuller participation of nuns in ministry has left many parishes without leadership.

Today the number of U.S. nuns and priests is at a

decades-long low, and their average age—somewhere in the sixties—promises no sudden renaissance of religious life. The history of American nuns and priests is one of resilience, however, and reports of their demise are probably premature. Those who remain in religious orders despite their disagreements with the Vatican point out that for as long as the Roman Catholic Church has avoided schism, ideological diversity has ultimately strengthened rather than weakened it. Some of those leaving U.S. religious orders are being replaced with priests and nuns recruited from elsewhere in the world. This is nothing new, in one sense: Nuns and priests were largely foreign-born for most of U.S. history. What is new is that these recruits are coming no longer from Europe but from South America, Africa, and Asia. This new leadership reflects the changing face of U.S. Catholicism, which has always flourished best in periods of demographic ferment.

—Tracy Fessenden

#### SEE ALSO

African-American Religious Communities; Latina/Latino Religious Communities; Native American Religions and Politics; Sexuality

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## OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

The basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City is the most visited pilgrimage site in the Western Hemisphere. Long acclaimed as the national symbol of Mexico and officially recognized within Roman Catholicism as the patroness of the Americas, today Guadalupe appears among an increasingly diverse array of peoples, places, and religious groups in North America and beyond. Her numerous devotees encompass self-proclaimed “Guadalupan Jews”; her image adorns a Sikh temple near Española, New Mexico, as well as the shrine room at the Kagyu Shenpen Kunchab, a Tibetan Buddhist center in Santa Fe; a growing number of Latino Protestant congregations celebrate the December 12 Guadalupe feast; and Protestant pastors and theologians have deemed Guadalupe a source of hope, strength, and liberation for the suffering and downtrodden. Catholic shrines dedicated to her are in place as far north as Johnstown, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, and Bishop Fred Henry of Calgary, Alberta, has advocated making Guadalupe’s feast a holy day of obligation—a day of

required attendance at Mass—for all Canadian Catholics.

As Guadalupe’s presence and influence have become more diffuse, so have the ever-expanding writings about her in theology, the humanities, and the arts. Books on Guadalupe during the past decade encompass theological works examining her place as a source of empowerment for Mexican American women and the mother of the new *mestizo* (mixed blood) humanity in the Americas. Theologians and other scholars have also examined topics such as the significance of Guadalupe sermons during the colonial era, the theological and pastoral significance of the Guadalupe event, indigenous and Protestant perspectives on the Guadalupe tradition, the experience of contemporary pilgrims to the Guadalupe basilica, and ritual dances dedicated to Guadalupe as an embodied expression of faith and prayer. Novelists, essayists, poets, and artists seek to unveil and develop Guadalupe’s meaning and potential for groups such as undocumented Mexicans in the United States, Chi-

cana and Chicano activists, and farmworkers. They also offer a critical feminist analysis of Guadalupe's power in the lives of women—both to transform women's lives and to sanction their subordination in church and society. Contemporary literary and artistic works often reflect Guadalupe's connection to the goddess Tonantzin, whom the indigenous peoples reportedly worshiped in pre-Columbian times at Tepeyac, the site of the Guadalupe basilica.

Historical analyses continue to predominate in Guadalupan studies, particularly explorations of the documentary evidence for Guadalupe's 1531 apparitions to the indigenous neophyte Juan Diego. The first published account of the apparitions was in Miguel Sánchez's 1648 volume *Imagen de la Virgen María, Madre de Dios de Guadalupe*, but devotees believe Juan Diego's testimony is the basis for *Nican mopohua*, a similar account first published in Nahuatl, an Aztec language still spoken in south-central Mexico, as part of a 1649 work. Widely acclaimed as the foundational text of the Guadalupe tradition, the *Nican mopohua* recounts Juan Diego's encounters with Guadalupe, who sent him to request that Juan de Zumárraga, the first bishop of Mexico, build a temple at Tepeyac in her honor. At first the bishop doubted the celestial origins of this request, but he came to believe when Juan Diego presented him with exquisite flowers that were out of season and the image of Guadalupe miraculously appeared on the humble *indio's tilma* (cloak).

Though millions of devotees have an unwavering conviction in the historical veracity of this apparition account, scholars have hotly debated the issue for centuries. Their disputes revolve around controversies about the dating and authorship of significant primary sources, the lapse of over a century between the 1531 date given for the apparitions and the first published apparition narratives, and the scant treatment of the apparitions among prominent sixteenth-century Catholic leaders in New Spain, including the complete absence of Guadalupe references in the known writings of Juan de Zumárraga. No one doubts that a shrine dedicated to Guadalupe at Tepeyac has been active since at least the mid-sixteenth century; the disagreement is whether the shrine or the apparition tradition came first. In other words, did reports of Juan Diego's miraculous encounter with Guadalupe initiate the shrine and its devotion,

or is the apparition narrative a later invention that provides a mythical origin for an already existing image and pious tradition? Infrared photography, fiber analysis, and other "scientific" studies of the tilma are an important component of this raging debate, which most recently resurfaced when Pope John Paul II canonized Juan Diego in July 2002, renewing arguments about whether or not he ever existed.

Some historical works examine the evolution of Guadalupan devotion. These works raise a vital question rarely addressed in historical examinations of Guadalupe: Given the numerous miraculous images of Christ, Mary, and the saints that dotted the sacred landscape of colonial Mexico, how did the Guadalupe cult rise above all others and emerge from a local devotion to become a regional, national, and then international phenomenon? Numerous devotees concur with the *Nican mopohua* that news of Guadalupe's miraculous presence on Juan Diego's tilma immediately attracted people from "everywhere" who came "to see and marvel at her precious image." Extant primary sources suggest a more measured growth of Guadalupan devotion as revealed in the gradual spread of Guadalupe paintings, medals, sermons, *cofradías* (confraternities, or pious societies), and feast day celebrations, as well as the increasing choice of Guadalupe as a name for places, children, shrines, and churches. Initially concentrated in Mexico City and the environs, by the mid-eighteenth century the devotion had spread to many locales in New Spain, especially through urban networks that linked other municipalities to the political, economic, social, and religious center of Mexico City. Guadalupan devotion expanded first and foremost toward the north. San Luis Potosí leaders began a successful effort to establish the first Guadalupe shrine outside of Mexico City in 1654. Subsequent foundations included a Franciscan mission dedicated to Guadalupe in what is now Ciudad Juárez (across the river from El Paso, Texas) in 1659, a church at Querétaro in 1680, and in 1708 at Zacatecas a Franciscan *colegio*, one of the missionary training centers where friars prepared for apostolic work among the indigenous peoples of northern New Spain.

In New Spain indigenous peoples invoked Guadalupe as the protector of their dignity and right of self-determination, while colonial leaders paradoxically engaged Guadalupe's power to enhance native peo-



Currier and Ives lithograph of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe (Library of Congress)

ples' acceptance of Spanish rule and missionary efforts. Devotees from every walk of life invoked Guadalupe's protection from enemy attacks and other maladies, such as epidemics, most notably a devastating 1737 epidemic in Mexico City and the environs. The diminishment of the epidemic after political and religious leaders in Mexico City publicly declared Guadalupe the patroness of their city accelerated the spread of Guadalupan devotion to other municipalities throughout New Spain. Subsequently, *criollos*, people of Spanish blood born in the New World, took the leading role in this effort, arguing that they did not depend on Spain for the Catholic faith since the Virgin Mary had elected to appear in their own land and extend to them the singular gift of leaving her image on Juan Diego's tilma. These arguments symbolically linked Guadalupe with the *criollos*' growing aspirations for independence, which culminated in Miguel Hidalgo's early nineteenth-century cry for independence under the Guadalupan banner, which initiated a struggle that sealed Guadalupe's place as the national symbol of Mexico. Thereafter, Guadalupe has been strongly linked with nationalism and human rights, such as the struggles of farmworkers in California and among the indigenous peoples of Chiapas. Far from diminishing earlier meanings of the devotion, Guadalupe's more recent association with social causes and collective identity has increased invocation of maternal care and defense against natural disasters, illness, and numerous other misfortunes.

Today millions of devotees cherish the memory of Guadalupe's encounter with Juan Diego, but they also fervently recount the countless favors, blessings, and miracles that they profess their patroness has bestowed upon them, both individually and collectively. Like previous generations of Guadalupe's faithful,

they acclaim her as a source of strength, endurance, hope, and healing. Their testimonies, convictions, and veneration of Guadalupe illuminate the ongoing evolution of this fascinating sacred tradition.

—*Timothy Matovina*

#### SEE ALSO

Latina/Latino Religious Communities: Mexican American Religious Communities; The Body: Tattooing; Popular Culture: Cultural Saints; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Feminisms

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## PUBLIC CATHOLICISM

The term "public Catholicism" refers to the various modes of presence of Roman Catholics and the Roman Catholic Church in the public, or nonprivate, realm of modern societies. For the purposes of this article it refers specifically to Catholicism in the United

States, the nation that pioneered the modern separation of religion into private and public spheres.

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which prohibits the establishment of any one religion by the federal government but ensures the free exer-

cise of religion for all, did not lead to the thoroughgoing privatization of religion. Rather, it channeled religious expression into new modes of public presence. The story of public Catholicism in the United States therefore turns upon the ways in which the church adapted itself to church-state separation, religious pluralism, voluntarism, and other distinctive features of the U.S. religious settlement.

Catholics built their own school system, for example, which was “nonpublic” in the sense that it was not originally open to the public at large or supported by public funds. The parochial school system (so called because it was located on the grounds of the Catholic parish and supported largely by the parishioners) prepared Catholics to become good citizens of the republic and public servants (such as policemen, firemen, civil service workers, and politicians); in the latter part of the twentieth century, it also educated an increasing number of non-Catholics, especially inner-city minorities.

The Roman Catholic Church also built and staffed the largest “private” health-care system in the United States and served a non-Catholic as well as a Catholic “public.” By the latter part of the twentieth century, the actual differences between Catholic hospitals and public hospitals, both of which relied on government funding and grants, had become a subject of intense debate.

The historian David J. O’Brien has identified three fundamental modes of the Catholic public presence. The first is the interest group mode, identified with the waves of immigrants who began to arrive in huge numbers from Ireland in the 1840s and were joined by Germans, Poles, Lithuanians, Italians, and several other European national groups who continued arriving on U.S. shores until the 1920s, when restrictive immigration laws took hold. A second major migration, featuring Asian Catholics from the Philippines, Vietnam, and Korea as well as Mexican, Puerto Rican, and other Latino/Latina Catholics, began when the laws were changed in the 1960s.

The interest group or immigrant style of public Catholicism was predicated upon the notion that Catholics could wield enormous political power if they organized themselves and voted as a bloc. By 1860, Catholics constituted the largest organized religious group or denomination in the United States. Although ethnic differences ensured that Catholics

would not always vote a uniform ticket, they crafted powerful political machines such as New York’s Tammany Hall, a bureaucratic organization of precinct workers, ward leaders, a citywide committee, and an overall boss that brought order to city government under Irish Catholic leadership in the 1870s. During its heyday (1880–1920), Tammany Hall selected candidates for office, distributed patronage, and mediated between the city’s ethnic groups, businesses, and governments. Under Mayor Richard J. Daley (1902–1976), a staunch Irish American Catholic, Chicago boasted its own version of a well-oiled machine.

The political machine was not the only expression of immigrant-style Catholicism. Millions of working-class Catholics embraced trade unions to defend themselves from exploitative employers. Moreover, in the early twentieth century, Catholic bishops and priests, while professing to be aloof from politics, used their political clout to resist changes in laws restricting birth control and to ensure that Catholic interests were respected in social service and welfare legislation. The corporate mentality of immigrant Catholicism stood behind the astounding success of Catholic schools and hospitals, which attracted generations of loyal Catholics of every ethnic background.

Interest group public Catholicism has reappeared with new vigor among the recent wave of immigrants from Latino and Asian countries. They rely on their strength in numbers to demand foreign-language parishes, which have become the base for community organizing, providing grassroots empowerment of poor people and minorities through self-help organizations.

At the other end of the spectrum is what O’Brien called the evangelical mode of public Catholicism. The term “evangelical” in this context refers to Catholics who follow the radical gospel of Jesus Christ, often unmediated by the institutional church. Catholics operating in the evangelical mode see their “public” calling as preaching the good news, imitating the self-denying example of Christ, and calling Americans to prayer and witness against the unjust policies and practices of the U.S. government and, at times, the Christian church itself.

Like the immigrant style, the evangelical mode of public Catholicism has its roots in the nineteenth century, specifically in the domestic missionary work of



Chicago mayor Richard Daley discusses urban affairs with John Fitzgerald Kennedy, 1962 (Bettmann/Corbis)

the Paulists (the Missionary Congregation of St. Paul the Apostle), the first American male religious order, and its founder, Father Isaac Hecker. God had chosen the United States as the site for the flourishing of the kingdom of Christ on earth, Hecker believed, and the Paulists were initially dedicated to raising the consciousness of all Americans, especially the old-stock Yankees of the Northeast, to this sublime truth.

In the twentieth century, the social-prophetic dimensions of the evangelical mode developed under the aegis of Dorothy Day, the founder of the Catholic Worker Movement and a proponent of Christian pacifism. Day and her disciples lived among and dedicated their lives to the working poor of all races. American Catholic radicalism subsequently found voice in prominent public figures such as the best-selling author, social critic, and Trappist monk Thomas Merton and the antiwar radical Daniel Berrigan, a Jesuit priest.

After the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), which emphasized the imitation of Christ and the reading of the Bible, Catholics adopted the evangelical style in greater numbers. Vatican II, which coincided with the Civil Rights Movement and the first stirrings of protest against the war in Vietnam, reoriented Catholics to questions of social justice and called them to exercise what soon came to be called “a preferential option for the poor.” Catholics became peace and civil rights activists, opponents of abortion, advocates for the homeless, and conscientious objectors. Personal conversion, detachment from a corrupt society, and commitment to the community of faith typified their witness to Christ.

Evangelical Catholicism has been a small and at times marginal movement within the American Catholic church. Yet perspectives and values drawn from the movement have been incorporated into the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ pastoral letters

on war and peace in the nuclear era (*The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, 1983) and on the U.S. economy (*Economic Justice for All*, 1986). The mode of these pastoral letters, however, like the work of the U.S. Catholic Conference (the bureaucratic arm of the U.S. Catholic bishops), is best described as falling within the republican style of public Catholicism.

Republican Catholicism dates back to the eighteenth century and to the public presences of the Catholic Church during the early national period of American history. John Carroll, who in 1780 became the first Roman Catholic bishop of the United States, personified the republican style in his patriotic embrace of the freedoms guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution. A century later, his most prominent successor as archbishop of Baltimore, James Cardinal Gibbons, presented a copy of the U.S. Constitution to Pope Leo XIII. Like his "Americanist" colleagues in the U.S. wing of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, Gibbons was convinced that Catholics would continue to thrive under the American system of government, including its practices of church-state separation, freedom of religion, and religious pluralism. As the leading Catholic prelate of his day (he served in that capacity from the 1880s until his death in 1921), Gibbons spoke out on public issues (he was a prominent advocate of the direct election of senators), penned patriotic tomes illustrating the complementarity between Catholic and American identity, and became friend and confidant of several U.S. presidents.

The republican style is thus characterized by a willingness, and at times an eagerness, on the part of Catholic bishops, priests, religious, and laity to participate in and influence the public debate on a variety of issues, ranging from the conduct of U.S. foreign policy to the legality of late-term abortions, from the fight against racism to federal legislation regarding refugees. The U.S. Catholic Conference acts as a lobby on Capitol Hill, and the bishops have testified on behalf of specific legislation. Republican-style lay Catholics teach in universities and colleges, manage government offices and private companies, and inhabit Washington, D.C., think tanks and policy centers.

Unlike immigrant-style Catholics, the proponents of republican-style Catholicism, though not indifferent to the specific needs of Catholic families, invoke

Vatican II's dictum that the church has no specific agenda of its own but seeks to defend human dignity, promote human rights, and protect the marginalized and most helpless members of society. These values are, or are not, championed by particular politicians and embedded in particular laws, however, and in presidential election years the bishops have offered testimony to the platform committees of both parties and issued "political responsibility" statements to the Catholic faithful setting forth their views on a broad range of issues.

In the twenty-first century, the Roman Catholic public presence in the United States is characterized by each of these three modes. When addressing all Americans, with their many religious faiths, Catholic leaders draw upon a republican-style discourse that is grounded in reason and speaks the language of "the common good." When addressing Catholics as members of the faith community, they adopt the evangelical style. Finally, when Catholics petition corporations, banks, and governments in neighborhoods and local communities for economic justice, they do not hesitate to retrieve the language of the interest group that their ancestors perfected in the immigrant era.

—R. Scott Appleby

#### SEE ALSO

Public Theologies and Political Culture; Ritual and Performance: Civic and Political Ritual Performances; Sexuality: Abortion

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## VATICAN II

The Second Vatican Council (October 11, 1962, to December 8, 1965) instituted the most sweeping changes in the Roman Catholic Church since the sixteenth century. Most observers thought that Pope John XXIII, who was seventy-seven years old when elected pope, would simply maintain the status quo during his papacy. But on July 25, 1959, he announced plans to hold the Second Vatican Council. The council opened the church to the contemporary world by updating its theology and pastoral practices. It coalesced decades of theological and pastoral ferment into a comprehensive overhaul of the church that continues to shape it to this day. After the death of John XXIII in June 1963, his successor, Pope Paul VI, oversaw the council to its conclusion. For this twenty-first ecumenical council of the church, more than 2,600 bishops and 400 expert advisers and observers (including Protestants and Catholic laymen and -women) convened in four three-month-long sessions. The council issued sixteen documents (constitutions, decrees, and declarations) setting forth positions on matters ranging from the church's self-understanding to religious freedom and relations with other Christians and non-Christian religions.

The scope of issues dealt with by the council is evident in the various documents: Constitutions dealt with the church, revelation, liturgy, and the church in the modern world; declarations addressed ecumenism, religious freedom, and non-Christian religions; and decrees established policies on missionary activity, the laity, Eastern Catholic churches, the bishops' pastoral office, the ministry and life of priests, priestly formation, renewal of the religious life, Christian education, and social communication. The council not only dealt with a broad range of concerns but for the first time in the modern era genuinely constituted a council of the world church. European and European-born (missionary) bishops had dominated previous councils, but non-Europeans constituted a majority at this council, even though Europe still had the largest single contingent. Numerous preparatory commissions solicited input from a variety of scholars and church officials and drafted documents for consideration by the bishops at Vatican II. The docu-

ments favored the pastoral dimension of the church's mission rather than its doctrinal or juridical aspects. Further, the documents located the church's teaching historically, recognizing that the truths that the church teaches are couched in language that is conditioned by the time and place in which official formulations of doctrines took shape.

Pope John XXIII emphasized that the council was to be an *aggiornamento*—an opening of the widows to allow fresh air into the church and to bring it up to date. The council sessions generated lively debates between bishops. Some wanted to maintain structures, habits, and theological interpretations in place for centuries; others advocated new directions, not simply confirmation of long-standing practices. The council adopted a progressive stance. Prominent theologians constructed new or revised ways of thinking about the church and its role in society. These views informed and influenced the discussions among the bishops, who ultimately voted for documents that favored a model of the church as a pilgrim people of God rather than a hierarchical institutional model. By emphasizing the responsibilities of all the baptized, Vatican II urged the laity to take a more active role in the mission of the church.

The Second Vatican Council set the tone for the church in the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. The participants at the council realized that the church would be changed significantly by the documents they constructed, and they proved ready and willing to allow contemporary thinking to influence many practical aspects of church life. Two examples of these changes occurred after the council, when bishops' national conferences were empowered with greater autonomy and members of religious orders studied their origins and histories in order to better reflect the vision of their founders, which often resulted in changes of garb, constitutions, and styles of ministry. The immediate postconciliar period engendered both excitement and confusion. Catholicism shook off its medieval trappings and embraced modernity, but not without dissenting voices. Some Catholics felt that the church they had grown up in was slipping away, and the changes disturbed



Pope John XXIII is carried ceremoniously to St. Peter's Basilica for the inauguration of the Second Vatican Council, 1962 (Bettmann/Corbis)

them. Considerable numbers of priests, sisters, and brothers left the active ministry, and vocations declined sharply.

The council affected American Catholics from its opening to its implementation. During the council, Americans received regular news reports of council activities and could follow the contributions of American bishops and theologians. The American Jesuit theologian John Courtney Murray was one of the most influential advisers because of his contribution to the Declaration of Religious Freedom, which recognized the separation of church and state, an acknowledgment particularly pertinent to the United States, which upholds such a separation in its constitution.

American Catholics, along with other Catholics worldwide, immediately experienced the effects of the conciliar changes. The first document implemented, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, changed the language of the Mass in the United States from Latin to English and introduced contemporary music and instruments, often replacing baroque hymns with folk music and pipe organs with guitars. The priest now faced the people instead of having his back to them, and the liturgy of the Eucharist involved active participation of the laity, who responded to prayers out loud during the Mass. Laypersons served as readers of the Scripture lessons and eventually were permitted to distribute the bread and the cup at Commu-

nion, which people now could receive in their hands while standing instead of directly on their tongues while kneeling. Even the architecture of churches changed to accommodate the new liturgy, with many churches designed in the round to bring the people closer to the altar, which now stood in the center of the sanctuary rather than against the front wall of the church.

Catholics most directly encountered the effects of Vatican II in their local parishes. The changes introduced by Vatican II were initiated by the actions of the pope and bishops during the council, but the pace and the methods of change were often influenced by local factors, such as the willingness of diocesan bishops and pastors to implement change. The period immediately following Vatican II gave rise to considerable experimentation in the American church as bishops, priests, nuns, brothers, and the laity all searched for effective ways to implement the changes recommended by the council. New relationships between the clergy and the laity were forged in which the laity assumed wider responsibilities for the ministry of the church. Leadership roles traditionally held exclusively by priests began to be shared by the laity. For example, advisory parish councils composed of laypeople became significant voices in parish governance. Parishes added laypeople to their professional staffs to engage in ministry full-time.

The council generated great enthusiasm and far-reaching expectations on the part of American Catholics. Some interpreted the changes instituted by

the council as too many and too fast. Others thought that the church should change more rapidly and across a broader spectrum. To this day, the church is affected by the council documents and different interpretations of their meaning. Interpreters of the council remain divided between conservatives and liberals, with the former trying to rein in the democratizing effects of Vatican II and the latter pressing for further democratic structures.

—Chester Gillis

#### SEE ALSO

Material Culture: Modern Catholic Church Decorations

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# HINDUISM IN AMERICA



There are more than 1.6 million Hindus in the United States. Although a substantial number are immigrants, primarily from India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and the Caribbean, there are also Euro-Americans and African Americans who have either converted to Hinduism or have adopted a significantly identifiable Hindu way of life. The immigrant Hindus are primarily from India or in a double diaspora, that is, descended from a Hindu community outside of South Asia. Many of the approximately 67,000 devotees in the United States and Canada of the Hare Krishna Movement are Euro-Americans. Differences between the various Hindu communities are directly related to caste, class, educational qualifications, and place of origin of the members as well as their relationship to the host country. In addition to those who identify themselves as “Hindu,” millions of others participate in endeavors now dissociated from Hindu religious contexts and perceived through the framework of health-care institutions or leisure activities. These activities include, but are not limited to, yoga, specific kinds of meditation, diet, and complementary medicine.

Since many of the immigrants in the post-1965 era have been urban professionals of the upper classes, local deities and forms of worship prevalent in the villages of India and among the lower classes are not present in the United States. Selected elements from the more than 3,500 years of religious life in India have been retained, transformed, and transmitted in the diaspora. Through processes of assimilation, accretion, and adaptation, some traditions have been renewed and revitalized while others were marginalized and discarded. Hindus in the United States strongly support temple culture, transforming temple buildings into community centers; frequently conflate ethnicity, culture, and religion; and overwhelmingly use the performing arts, especially dance and music, to transmit Indian and Hindu worldviews to the younger generations.

The Hindu tradition in India is incredibly complex. In fact, there are many Hindu traditions and no centralized organizational structure or lines of authority. There is no college of cardinals and no equivalent of

the pastoral minister or trained clergy to disseminate theology. Priests are ritual specialists with little or no knowledge of the textual traditions. Hindus by and large do not get any formal institutional training about their religious heritage. Having grown up as part of a larger majority culture in India, therefore, they have learned about the religion by osmosis; upon immigration to the United States they are left to their own devices to practice and transmit their religion in more intentional ways.

Most Hindus have only a passing acquaintance with the philosophical infrastructure of the various traditions, or even of their own strand of Hinduism. Cultural conventions, rather than orthodoxy, are important in the first generation of immigrants. Cultural Hinduism is based on pride in ethnicity, which may be exhibited by any or all of the following: wearing traditional Indian clothing for festive occasions; displaying Indian/Hindu artwork in the home; consuming regional Indian food; using religious paraphernalia at home, at work, and even in the car; participating in music and dance; celebrating festivals in the community; being acquainted with the major epics of the Hindu tradition and understanding their depiction in dances; and sharing in a video culture involving secular and religious shows. It is in this context that one may think of the first generation as consisting of cultural and devotional Hindus.

Thus, cultural markers, on the one hand, and sectarian and community differences, on the other, are retained by the continual influx of first-generation immigrants, while a more homogenized version of Hindu beliefs is emerging among second-generation Hindus in the United States. Those in the second generation in the metropolitan areas of America have often gone through Hindu “Sunday schools,” or *bal vihar* (youth centers). They tend to focus on epic stories and particular philosophical systems as transmitted through Vivekananda (1863–1902) or Chinmayananda (1916–1993), who were both religious leaders and educators. These schools, and summer camps with a religious component, have become very popular. Although immigrants find them a convenient method of training second-generation Hindus, they do tend to homoge-

nize Hindu beliefs and practices into a more simplified approach. For example, they valorize certain texts, such as the Bhagavad Gita, over others; teach particular methods of conducting domestic worship, or *puja*, and emphasize the neo-Vedantic philosophical tradition. There are, however, a few exceptions to this generalization. Children who grow up in community environments with specific theological orientations, such as in the Swaminarayan movement from Gujarat, retain their distinct religious identity.

Many communities import traditional religious leaders, gurus (both male and female), and *harikatha* (literally, “stories of Lord Vishnu”) experts from India and sponsor them on summer tours. These itinerant leaders serve as lightning rods to raise a philosophical, devotional, and sometimes nationalistic consciousness.

### Early History in America

American sailors encountered Hindu traditions and culture when they traveled to India in the eighteenth century and kept detailed logs of what they witnessed. Statues, icons, and other material culture from India framed the first encounters with Hinduism during the “age of the sail” (Bean 2001). Intellectually, although early translations of Hindu sacred texts influenced the New England Transcendentalists, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, it was through the visit of Swami Vivekananda, a delegate to the World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, that Americans came to know about at least one branch of Hindu teachings in a direct manner. At Vivekananda’s behest, the first Hindu temple, known as the Vedanta Temple, was built in San Francisco in 1905 and dedicated in early 1906. It functioned primarily as a meditation center. The monastic institution established by Vivekananda still flourishes in some parts of the United States. Vedanta centers in New York, Chicago, and Ganges, Michigan (the Vivekananda Monastery), are well known and espouse interfaith worship.

Although Vivekananda was perhaps the best-known Hindu visitor to America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, other holy men, including Swami Yogananda (1893–1952) and Baba Premanada Bharati (1868–1914), also visited the country. These men shaped the intellectual encounters between Hindus and Euro-Americans. Immigra-

tion by Indian men, including Sikhs and Hindus from the Punjab area, was common, however. Several thousand came to work on the West Coast of the United States and Canada. Since there was no sizable migration of Hindu women at that time, many of these men married Mexican American women. A large number of these early immigrants were initially unskilled workers. One important exception to this pattern was Jhamandas Watumull, a well-educated Indian businessman who immigrated to Hawaii in 1915, and his brother, Gobindram, who arrived a year later. The Watumull family eventually created a vast network of exemplary philanthropic funds for arts, education, and research as well as collaborative and cooperative enterprises between Indians and Americans. Their experience represents the earliest example of Hindu immigrant success stories. The early wave of immigration, however, could not be sustained under pressure from the Asian Exclusion League. In 1917, Congress passed a law placing a “barred zone” on immigration from Asia.

Minor changes in the law became effective in 1946, however, allowing a quota of 100 émigrés from India annually, and major reforms were instituted in 1965. Thus, there has been a steady increase in the Hindu immigrant population in the United States. Unlike the unskilled workers and religious men who came to America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the new immigrants have mostly been professionals. Many of the women who immigrated in the mid-1960s came to join their husbands who had already migrated to Canada and the United States. Since the mid-1970s, there has also been a steady flow of students and professional women from South Asia. It was the arrival of these professional families that led to the building of the first large Hindu temples in America. The first two temples claiming to be “authentic” were built in Flushing, New York, and Penn Hills, Pennsylvania, and consecrated in 1977. These early temples grew out of the many classes in performing arts that were being conducted for the new immigrants and the young second-generation Indo-Americans.

### Hindu Institutions in America

There are many kinds of temples as well as meditational and yoga centers in the United States, and one



Young Indian girls perform a traditional dance at the celebration of Diwali in Seattle, c. 1995 (Dean Wong/Corbis)

may classify them in any of several ways. One way is to group them by the devotees' geographical place of origin. For example, there are temples that largely serve North Indians, South Indians, or immigrants from Guyana or Trinidad, or, more specifically, people from particular states in India. Ethnicity and culture overlap with religion in the Hindu traditions, and there is great diversity in the language and the culture of worship. There may be devotional songs in Gujarati in one temple along with reverence for the nineteenth-century teacher Swaminarayan; in another, a Tamil priest may recite the 108 names of Vishnu or Shiva in the worship rituals. One may also classify institutions according to those that are primarily devotional in texture and those that emphasize self-effort, meditation, or yoga. Although most institutions in the United States and Canada are not exclusively oriented toward either devotion or meditation, in general they are more devotional in focus.

The many social divisions, or "castes," in the Hindu traditions are present, though in a much more

diluted way, in America. Caste is reflected strongly in American Hindu temples only in specific contexts—the priests who perform formal rituals are usually males and from the Brahmin caste, for example. There are further divisions along community lines—that is, members of the same caste may choose different philosophical traditions or deities to worship. Thus there are Vaishnava (followers of Vishnu), Shaiva (devotees of Shiva), and other sectarian communities that worship the Goddess. Many marriages are still arranged within caste groups in India, but the boundaries of the caste and community groups are widened considerably in the diaspora.

Although most Hindu temples in South India are sectarian in nature, that is, dedicated either to Vishnu, Shiva, or a particular manifestation of a goddess, most temples in the United States and Canada are nonsectarian and house a wide range of Hindu deities. There are, however, significant exceptions to this pattern. Particular communities, such as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness



(ISKCON) and the Swaminarayan, set up temples with icons and forms of worship representative only of their own traditions, excluding prayers and rituals seen in other Hindu communities or geographic areas. The Swaminarayan community (which has built a large Hindu temple at Neasden, just outside London) has temple communities in hundreds of cities and towns across North America. A sectarian community that relies exclusively on the salvific power of Lord Vishnu-Narayana and the teachings of the nineteenth-century preceptor Swaminarayan, its members feel comfortable in a temple where they believe their monotheistic faith is not compromised by shrines dedicated to other Hindu deities. The movement has seen it as a priority to have its own temples where the community can regularly gather, and a centralized bureaucracy in India oversees the building of these centers. The Swaminarayan community is also in the forefront of volunteer work and gathering food for the homeless in the Americas. A few other temples, such as Sri Ranganatha Temple in Pomona, New York, are built with a particular community in mind; in this case, the Sri Vaishnava tradition. This tradition considers the eleventh-century preceptor Ramanuja as its main interpreter of scripture and worships the Lord Vishnu and the Goddess Sri, or Lakshmi. This temple, therefore, unlike most others in America, does not have shrines for Shiva, Ganesha, or other Hindu deities.

### A Taxonomy of Indian Communities

There are several kinds of Hindu communities in the United States. A general rule of thumb in North America is that the smaller the geographic area under consideration, the more inclusive the group. A large city may have very specific groups based on caste, community, and language lines; smaller towns, such as Allentown, Pennsylvania, have one large, shared worship facility for Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains.

The Hindu communities are broadly divided on issues of caste, sectarian community, or veneration of a particular religious leader. There are also Hindu communities based on caste. The Society of Brahmins (Brahmin Samaj), for instance, congregates in various parts of America. In some areas of India, “community” is conflated with “caste.” Thus, there are pan-American groups that have members of the Bhand or

the Patel/Patedhar community, and so on. Some groups are organized on sectarian lines. The Kannada-speaking Vira Saiva or Lingayat community from the state of Karnataka, for example, whose members are exclusive followers of Lord Shiva, has pan-continental gatherings every other year. Specific communities that focus on veneration of a particular teacher or guru are also to be seen all over the Americas. There are Sai Bhajan groups, that is, communities that meet weekly or fortnightly to sing hymns in praise of the teacher-saint Sathya Sai Baba (1926– ). Many other gurus, such as Ma (Mother) Amritanandamayi (1953– ), have loyal followers who meet regularly.

There are also many cyber-communities based on sectarian affiliation; listservs are dedicated to particular traditions where men and women want to just discuss the sacred texts—Sanskrit and vernacular—of their tradition or matters relevant to living a religious life on the American continent. These cyber-communities bring together people from all over the world in virtual forums to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Some Hindu groups are based on political philosophies or social and cultural activism connected with India. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) seeks to raise Hindu self-consciousness through a number of cultural, educational, and religious activities, including sponsoring conferences and symposia. The Hindu Student Council is active on many college campuses. Many sponsor celebrations of festivals and mount projects such as “Hindu Awareness Week.” A few are active in the discussion of sociopolitical ideologies such as “*Hindutva*,” an Indian nationalist movement.

Although religion forms a useful way of identifying groups, there are other social factors perceptible in the organization of immigrant communities. Broad divisions are seen among Hindus who come from different geographic areas; thus, Hindus from North India, South India, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, South Africa, and so on tend to form separate communities if there is a large enough population in the place of residence. A further subdivision for the Indian communities is by way of language group. Such groups include the Tamil Sangam (Society of Tamil People), the Kannada Koota (Kannada [People’s] Group), and the Gujarati Samaj (Gujarati Society). Two large language-based organizations are the Telugu Association of North America (TANA), and the American Telugu

Association (ATA). These communities meet regularly and have annual events, which in some cases involve a turnover in the millions of dollars and are attended by several thousand people. The celebrations include programs with classical and semiclassical dances, popular cinema, visits by movie stars and political officials (in some cases the two categories coincide), clothing and jewelry exhibits and sales, and continuing medical education courses to attract physicians. The groups cut across religious boundaries and castes and are found in all major metropolitan areas.

There are other Indian associations in America with predominantly Hindu members that are based on professional ties, such as the American Physicians of Indian Origin. These sometimes wield considerable economic and political clout. Many first-generation Hindu and Indian immigrants work in health-related professions, the hospitality industry, or educational institutions.

### Building Temples and Sectarian Affiliations

Perhaps the most noticeable feature of Hindu communities outside of India is the tremendous time, monies, and energy expended in the building of temples. From the time of the Mi Son Temple in Champa (Vietnam), which was rebuilt in the early seventh century after a fire destroyed the earlier shrine, the Prambanan temples of Java (Indonesia), built around the ninth century, and the Angkor Wat Temple, built in the twelfth century, temples have been the centers of Hindu communities overseas.

As in India, Hindu temples built in other lands—with a few exceptions, such as those built by the Swaminarayan community—are decentralized without being part of an overarching organization or denomination. Prior to building a temple, most groups begin to meet informally in someone's house or in a community hall. After an initial period of fundraising, they may move to their own separate space. These spaces may be old churches, health clubs, or school buildings, or, if the funding prospects look reasonable, a new building.

The architecture for new temples may be simple, consisting of a large community hall with shrines on one side, or it may be a complex structure with rooms for worship, large halls for various community events, a small fire pit for performance of Vedic sacri-

fice, and regular classes for religious education. The Bharatiya (Indian) Temple at Detroit has all these features and adapts features such as stained-glass accents, usually associated with Western religious structures, into its design.

South Indian-style temple building involves the cooperation of regular building construction personnel and engineers as well as *sthapathis*, or traditional architects trained in indigenous forms of architecture. The *sthapathis* follow or adapt rules governing the dimensions of the temple by using complex sets of criteria and conventions that date back more than fifteen centuries. Thus, the size of the temple and its dimensions depend not just on the building codes of the town or the finances of the community but also on religious factors such as who the main deity is, the numerical value of the town in which the temple is located, and half a dozen other criteria. Temples in either the northern or southern style may incorporate a tower. In general, North Indian temples have fairly simple towers and South Indian temples have decorative ones. The latter are modeled after eleventh- and twelfth-century temples built under the great Hindu dynasties of South India. After an outer shell is built by local construction companies, traditional sculptors working for a master *sthapathi* come to the temple and work for years on "Indianizing" it. Such projects have been carried out successfully in most metropolitan areas of the United States.

Although groups in smaller towns in the United States and Canada can only afford to build one community temple, those in larger cities, such as Chicago or Atlanta, have between eight and twelve temples in the metropolitan area. New York, New Jersey, and the Bay Area have large Hindu communities with more than a dozen temples in each place. The temples form the center of a community of Hindus who share sectarian, geographical, linguistic, and/or devotional characteristics. The Hindu Temple of Atlanta, for example, attracts South Indians primarily from the states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, and Karnataka. The Shakti Mandir of Atlanta is the center for devotees who speak the Gujarati language and who worship the Mother Goddess in various forms.

Hindus are generally monotheistic in philosophy and multitheistic in practice. In America, most Hindu temples have an array of deities established in shrines. One of the most popular Hindu deities in the Ameri-

can context is Vishnu, who is seen in South Indian temples in a particular manifestation known as Venkateswara, or Balaji. Rama and Krishna, two of the many incarnations of Vishnu, are also seen in many temples. Almost all temples have a shrine for Ganesha, the elephant-headed deity who removes all obstacles from one's path. The goddesses Lakshmi and Durga are also popular, as well as Shiva, who is depicted in many different manifestations. Many temples also have shrines for Hanuman, the divine monkey devotee of Rama. Special shrines and temples to the South Indian gods Ayyappan and Murugan are more rare but still present in this country. Noticeable by their absence are temples to the Goddess Kali. She is present in small shrines in some temples, and there are Internet "virtual" shrines for her. Worship of Kali is prevalent only in some areas and communities of India. Appreciation of this fierce Hindu goddess requires an empathy for and a deep understanding of the different Hindu worldviews and philosophies, something seldom present outside areas where the Indian culture is dominant. There is also a question of territoriality; in America, she has been appropriated by some New Age movements with which the Indian Hindus do not identify.

The images of deities are carved in India according to traditional criteria, and in some South Indian temples they have to be coordinated with the dimensions of the temple tower and structure. Through the ritual of *prana pratishtha*, that is, "establishment of breath," the icons are said to become charged with divine power and to become living manifestations of the deity. Thus, in many Hindu theologies and communities, the icon of the deity in the temple becomes a living, palpable incarnation of the divine. The divine power is said to remain there for as long as the deity and devotee desire the presence.

When a Hindu community decides to build the first temple in a city or town, there are initial discussions on questions of sectarian affiliation, which deity is to be enshrined, and proposed styles and modes of worship. It is in this context that we find the greatest fragmentation among the various Hindu communities. Devotees of various deities frequently lobby to have the temple primarily dedicated to that god or goddess. The temple, which is meant to unite the Hindu communities in the diaspora, frequently becomes the cause of division. Because there are many

traditions (*sampradaya*) and many communities in Hinduism, a consensus is almost impossible. Lines are drawn on sectarian, caste, and regional bases, and the debates continue, as they have all through the history of the tradition. In the larger towns, the sectarian groups sometimes have a large enough population to build a temple just for themselves.

In addition to being a center for individual piety, temples set up by Hindus from India serve as large community halls for the local population. These temples function as institutions that have self-consciously undertaken the role of educating the younger generation of Hindus born in America. This project is accomplished through weekly language and religion classes, frequent religious discourses, classical music and dance lessons, and summer camps. The temple also often offers study circles for adults. In all these matters, the temples in the diaspora are different from those in India and have assumed functions found in the community at large in the home country. Regular newsletters and updated Web pages provide an outreach function. New temples are rising up all over the American landscape, and in many cases the community hall is being built even before the shrine. This is understandable in a situation where members of the Hindu tradition are trying to assert their identity in the midst of a larger society in which they feel marginalized and sometimes disenfranchised culturally and linguistically. The community hall is a place where different Hindu groups can meet; hold language, music, and dance classes; and celebrate the many festivals of the religious calendar. The halls are also rented out for weddings, graduations, and other events. Annual "variety entertainments," usually consisting of dance performances by local children and dinners, mark big festivals such as Deepavali, the Festival of Lights.

Diasporic communities observe almost all the major Hindu festivals in temples or community centers. They also celebrate days important in the Western world, such as the Gregorian New Year. Every temple has its own set of rituals congruent with a particular style of worship based on texts and customs in India. In South Indian temples, there are daily, weekly, seasonal, annual, and special votive rituals. Frequently, the annual festivals are made to coincide with a long weekend in the summer. There is generally no congregational prayer; priests offer worship on behalf of

the congregation. Meanwhile, people may move from shrine to shrine or just sit someplace in the hall and chat with friends. Although no single day of the week is considered the most holy, crowds are large on the weekends when people are off from work. Regular prayers in the temple may be a simple *arati*, where a camphor flame is lit as an adornment for the deity, or the priest may recite the 108 or 1,008 names of the god or goddess in a short ritual called *archana*. In North Indian temples, there are frequent *pravachans*, or sermons, and prayers are sometimes congregational. The prayer may be a loose stringing together of various songs of adoration, or *bhajans*. Recitation of and classes on the Bhagavad Gita are also popular in some North Indian temples. In most temples, devotees are given fruit or other foods that have been blessed by the divine. The consumption of this *prasad* (literally, “clarity” or “divine favor”) is an integral feature of most Hindu worship.

In addition to the traditional festive days, Indo-Americans celebrate many “Western” holidays in the temple. On the first of January, many Hindu temples have special *darshans* (viewings of the deity). The enshrined deities are frequently dressed in grand clothes, as they are on Hindu festivals, and the collection in the offering box is very high. Mother’s Day, graduations, and other occasions are also marked with new, innovative rituals hailing the Goddess as the supreme mother or focusing on the Goddess Saraswati as the progenitor of all knowledge.

Although there are many differences in architecture and modes of worship, there are at least two common elements in the temples set up by most Hindu communities of Indian origin. First, the temples focus primarily on devotional practices as opposed to meditational or yogic exercises. Second, whether they are in Fiji, Mauritius, or the United States, many sponsor either regular classes or special programs involving various forms of classical Indian dance such as Bharata Natyam. This dance form has become one of the main ways of transmitting Hindu culture to the younger generation in the diaspora, especially the girls. The performing arts are, of course, central to many Hindu traditions, and both the form and content have religious significance. Learning the dance forms and performing them in public events during festival days, therefore, is one of the main avenues for young girls to participate in the larger Hindu community.

In addition to worship activities and performing arts events, many Hindu temple communities sponsor humanitarian service programs. Such programs help Hindus to connect with the Judeo-Christian community in America. Many of the communities organize blood drives through the temples, an act that is unusual, given the polluting quality of blood in the Hindu Brahmanical tradition. The Atlanta Swaminarayan Temple and the Hindu Temple of Atlanta participate in food drives in the city and have in successive years been the institutions to donate the most amount of food. Other outreach activities may involve working with Christian organizations. Members from the Hindu Temple of Atlanta work in the soup kitchens of the Atlanta Union Mission, an evangelical institution, especially on weekends close to Hindu festivals like Sankranti (which usually falls on January 14). Sometimes they also link the holiday with activities connected to Martin Luther King Day. Another instance of collaboration between church and temple is seen in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Here, devotees from the Indo-American Cultural Center and Temple in Kalamazoo work with “Gospel Kitchens” to provide food for the homeless during Thanksgiving.

### Other Religious Communities

Along with temple communities consisting of Hindus from India (and sometimes Sri Lanka, as in the Ganesha Temple in Bayview, near Toronto), there are Hindu groups whose members are primarily of European descent. These are sometimes devotional in texture and revere a founding teacher as well as Hindu deities. Well-known examples include the Hare Krishnas, founded in 1966 by Sri Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada (1896–1977), and the International Society of Divine Love (ISDL). The ISDL has a beautiful, large temple built in the middle of 230 acres that is dedicated to the “divine cowherd” (Krishna). Ironically, it is located right in the middle of ranch country near Austin, Texas. Many others, such as the Self-Realization Fellowship, founded by Swami Yogananda (1893–1952), best known for his *Autobiography of a Yogi* (1946), focus on yoga and meditation and attract Hindus from India as well as Westerners.

There are some movements that, although grounded in Hindu traditions and founded by teach-

ers born in Hindu families, now speak to a larger audience. These organizations do not present themselves as Hindu or even as “religious” institutions. Movements such as Transcendental Meditation, started by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1911– ), have initiated millions of members, but their focus is more on individual meditation for physical, mental, and social well-being than on liberation from the cycle of life and death. TM does not present itself as a religious tradition, and most certainly not as Hindu, though the forms of meditation, worldviews, and practices it espouses are all identifiably part of the long Hindu history.

The Siddha Yoga tradition, founded by Swami Muktananda (1908–1982), focuses on a spiritual experience that is said to be available to all human beings regardless of their religious affiliation. Nevertheless, the form of spiritual awakening, called *shakti-pat*—devotional practices that include chanting, meditation, selfless service, veneration of the teacher, and particular forms of worship—comes from specific Hindu traditions such as Kashmir Shaivism and Vedanta and texts such as the Bhagavad Gita. The Bhagavad Gita’s emphasis on the ways to salvation—knowledge, selfless action, and devotion—is brought into play in this movement. Despite the Hindu framework, devotees come from and are encouraged to stay with various religious traditions. Proponents of the Siddha Yoga movement say they are not interested in teaching Hindu-specific principles or beliefs and do not argue about religious differences. They do, however, portray the discipline as a form of spirituality without beginning and promise an experience that was attained in the past by great yogis and sages. To follow this path, they say, is to follow “the supreme love of our own inner Consciousness,” and the main objective is to unfold the “God-consciousness which lies hidden in all human beings” (Muktananda 1994).

### Domestic Rituals

Although Hinduism is centered around the temple in America, domestic rituals and daily praxis form an integral part of Hindu life. As part of a minority religion without a large supporting family or community, Hindus get easily overwhelmed at having to practice rituals at home. Deepavali, the Festival of Light celebrating the victory of Lord Krishna over

Narakasura, the demon of hell, as well as the return of Lord Rama to Ayodhya, is celebrated more as a community event in the United States than a domestic ritual. Navaratri, a fall festival lasting nine nights and ten days, is celebrated in different ways depending on the region of India from which a particular group has come. People from Gujarat dance the nights away in large community centers. Women do traditional dances called *garbha* (“womb,” here referring to the creative powers of the divine) to nontraditional disco music. The dances are done around an icon or representation of the Mother Goddess (Amba Mata). These dances are introduced to children when they are very young, and the modern style of the music and fast-paced nature of the dances help to sustain their interest. Hindu women from South India celebrate this festival with a tableau of dolls. They also perform the equivalent of chamber music in family homes. Women from the Punjab region honor seven young, prepubescent girls as manifestations of the Goddess and give them presents.

Annual or occasional votive rituals performed by women are common in India and are continued by immigrant Hindus. Women relatives and friends gather on particular days of the year to celebrate the Goddess by fasting and feasting and then perform rites (*vratas*) for the happiness of the entire family. The Varalakshmi Vrata (“The Votive Ritual for Lakshmi Who Grants All Boons”) is conducted in late July or early August by many women from South India. Although it is a domestic ritual in India, in the Americas there are large celebratory gatherings at homes and in temples. Many women congregate at temples and carry out the ritual worship together.

The *karva chauth* is a ritual performed by women of the Punjab area in the month that falls roughly between October 15 and November 15. It is performed on the fourth day after the new moon. Women eat while there is still starlight in the early morning and begin their fast soon after that. They fast the whole day and are exempt from doing their regular household chores. During the day, a special story giving the “origin myth” is read. The ritual is for the well-being of the husband and makes the point that the woman, through the proper observance of the ritual, has enough power and good merit to create happiness for the husband. Varieties and forms of this ritual, or similar ones to obtain a husband, are found all over India

in different Hindu castes and communities. Although this ritual is usually undertaken by a woman in her parents' house in India, in the United States and Canada women, dressed in bridal finery, usually gather in someone's home and undertake the fast together to keep each other company.

Sacraments are celebrated at homes and in temples with officiating priests. A child's naming ceremony is still a private affair at home, but the giving of the first solid food, the first birthday, weddings, and a man's sixtieth birthday, which in some communities is enacted like a wedding, are all celebrated with joy. Weddings are frequently truncated from the two-day versions that often exist in India but still involve a cast of thousands, or at least hundreds, of friends, even in the diaspora. Although the core rituals are faithful to those practiced in India, many ancillary ones are added or adapted to suit a Western environment. For instance, bridesmaids may be included, the ritual may be frequently interrupted so that translations or explanations of the mantras may be provided, and attendees are urged to sit and watch the ceremony. The latter is the most difficult for many Hindus, who are used to treating weddings like a large party or even a local carnival in India and move around socializing while the ritual is going on.

Hindus in America are also usually involved in regular meetings in which they teach and learn classical and semiclassical (*bhajan*) music. Many families meet regularly—some weekly, some less frequently—to learn and sing religious songs. The songs are “Hindu-ecumenical”; that is, they are addressed to various gods and goddesses and inclusive in nature. Some groups gather on an ad hoc basis to learn or recite prayers such as the Vishnu Sahasranama (“The Thousand Names of the God Vishnu”) or the Lalita Sahasranama (“The Thousand Names of the Goddess Lalita/Parvati”). The singing is accompanied by a simple instrument such as a harmonium and concluded with an *arati*, a lamp waved in front of the altar, and food (*bhojan*). Bhajans and bhojan are sustaining and transparent features of Hindu religiosity, and in towns where there are no temples, they become primary ways of expressing communal faith.

One annual event showcasing classical religious music was instituted in India by Bangalore Nagaratnamal (1878–1952). This is the Tyagaraja Utsava (Festival of Tyagaraja), named after an eighteenth-century

composer. It is a grand celebration and has grown to be one of the best-known music festivals in India as well as for Hindus in the diaspora. Tyagaraja Utsavas are celebrated with great *éclat* not just in Tiruvaiyaru, the place where Tyagaraja lived, but in every major city in the United States and Canada. The most prominent festival is in Cleveland, Ohio. Usually held in the springtime, it showcases some of the best musical talent from South India and the United States. Both men and women sing in the festival, which lasts one day in small towns, a long weekend in most larger cities, and in Cleveland, a full week.

Apart from the religious content of the songs, it is through the identification with the composer's emotions that the singer or dancer participates in the spiritual community. When a singer or dancer recites the woman poet Andal's (eighth-century) verses or dances her songs, she is participating in her devotion. Dances, music, and rituals at home and in the temple are based on participation of the devotee in the myths of the many saints and the many acts of redemption attributed to the Gods Vishnu and Shiva or the Goddess. The devotees participate in the passion and surrender of the saints whose verses they utter, and through this identification, link themselves with the devotional community extending through time. Thus, the devotion of the saints and the composers of the prayers are appropriated by the devotee who recites, sings, or dances the words. Many of the dance teachers have their own studios in the larger metropolitan areas, and in many smaller towns they tend to teach in temples.

### Designer Communities in Cyberspace

Just as the Hindu tradition appropriated and utilized print and audiovisual technologies in India, the Internet revolution has helped Hindus in the diaspora to articulate their traditions and create communities. The Internet and the availability of e-mail networks have had a tremendous impact on the transmission of the Hindu tradition and have led to the creation of cyber-communities and physical communities worldwide. Tens of thousands of Hindus are in the software business in India and America. They have used the technology to learn more about their particular *sampradayas*, or traditional communities, and to connect with other members of their particular subcaste

around the world. The result is that the many Hindu traditions are global and transnational in a way that they have never been before. From the creation of cyber-communities to software facilitating cyber-worship of Ganesha, which clicks into place when the computer is turned on, the technology is transforming the dissemination of Hindu culture and rituals. One may say that because of this technology, more middle-class urban Hindus, who may have had only a desultory or cursory understanding of their tradition, now have a broader and deeper knowledge and are linked with other members of their subcaste or subcommunity. They may also be linked with those who follow a particular teacher, guru, or *acharya* (traditional teacher who comes in a lineage that has been established in the past) and enter into conversation with them.

The dissemination of information in a speedy and accessible manner has made Hindus proactive in their efforts to understand theological doctrines and participate in ritual actions. The circulation of information results in Hindus getting in touch with their traditional teachers and reading about and then supporting activities in temples in their ancestral villages in India as well as in various parts of the world. The gurus, leaders of diaspora temples and traditional teachers of the various Hindu theological lineages, have all set up Web pages to create communities for their adherents. Sometimes the adherents set up these Web pages in honor of their teacher. The Sri Vaishnava community, for example, has a Web page for the tradition as a whole and also has Web pages for many of the subcommunities and groups that follow a specific lineage of teachers as well as a plethora of e-mail listservs to connect Sri Vaishnava devotees of various institutional affiliations. Thus, the trend in diaspora temples, which went in the direction of creating a generic, nonsectarian Hinduism (with many deities in one place of worship), is now reversed through Web pages and listservs creating groups that are set up by and for adherents of a particular teacher belonging to a particular lineage. These trends have led to the formation of designer Hindu cyber-communities. Further, the rather casual and easygoing relationship that Hindus had to their teachers or lineages in the past is being transformed into closer ties with direct e-mail access. Articulation of these relationships and the connections of

traditional texts in ritual contexts further encourages others to participate in the same structures.

Web sites for gurus are the most copious, and adherents of popular teachers, such as Sathya Sai Baba, have set up dozens of pages in their honor. There are hundreds of Web pages devoted to gurus listing their itineraries; discussing their teachings, thoughts, and sayings for the day; providing accounts of miracles; and describing their participation in educational and charitable enterprises. Local chapters of devotees for popular teachers are also listed by Internet services, often leading to the formation of small congregations that meet regularly to sing devotional songs and share stories and teachings.

E-mail listservs also create communities of people who share the same beliefs but are spread out geographically all over the world. These members also participate in e-journals to circulate information about such matters as celebrating traditional birthdays of teachers, ritual fasting days, and the like. This knowledge seems to lead, at least judging from e-mail listserv statistics, to increased participation in community institutions, temple activities, and community gatherings in private homes. The listservs also announce frequent tele-*panyasanams*, that is, tele-sermons, by hooking up the devotees in the United States with a traditional teacher in India through conference phone calls on weekly or monthly schedules.

Although there is a veritable flood of information available through the Net, some traditional safe restraints are self-imposed and observed. Thus, in some e-mail discussion groups, members may self-consciously refrain from the explanation of "secret" or esoteric mantras of a subcommunity, as they feel that such expositions are only proper within the context of a personal relationship between a teacher and a spiritual aspirant.

Thus, the many kinds of Hindu communities in the United States are in a paradoxical position. They are moving toward a nonsectarian model through temples and display a more homogeneous trend in the teaching of beliefs to second-generation Hindus. At the same time, however, the constant influx of first-generation immigrants means that there is a continued pull to maintain distinctions among different strands of Hinduism. Moreover, computer technology is helping to create virtual communities with

members from specific traditions. First-generation Hindus tend to be culturally Hindu and focus less on religious philosophy, and the second generation understands Hinduism more through the prism of particular Sunday school curricula. Hindu temples can be classified broadly as those that focus primarily on devotion, meditation, or service. They frequently emphasize devotion to a deity or teacher, and these ties often form a major part of the group's cohesion. Although the communities in Southeast Asia were part of a society where royal patronage was a major factor in the creation of centers for worship, it is through combined community resources that temples have been built and maintained in the diaspora. These temples are the community centers through which Hinduism is transmitted, primarily through ritual and the performing arts. With the constant travel between the United States and India, and with the advent of Internet technology, dissemination of the traditions has never been faster or simpler.

—Vasudha Narayanan

#### SEE ALSO

Asian American Religious Communities; South Asian American Religious Communities; New Age; Goddess Spirituality; Ritual and Performance; Sacred Space; Cyberspace; Science; Healing

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## HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

Krishna devotees, chanting the Hare Krishna mantra in the streets of American and European cities with their shaven heads and saffron robes, were the most visible face of the Eastern religions exported to the West in the 1960s. The “Hare Krishna Movement,” registered as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), is a branch of what is traditionally known as Gaudiya Vaishnavism, a movement inaugurated in East India by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in the sixteenth century. Chaitanya, accepted as an incarnation of Krishna by his followers, established a religious system featuring the chanting and dancing in public places that remain prominent in Bengal and other parts of India.

Gaudiya Vaishnavism is a monotheistic tradition that has its philosophical roots in the theistic schools of Vedanta philosophy stemming back to the great Vaishnava theologians Ramanuja in the twelfth century and Madhva in the thirteenth. These schools, in turn, have their roots in the Upanishads, the earliest philosophical texts of India. Krishna is considered to be the Supreme Being by the Gaudiya school, rather than a derivative incarnation of Vishnu, as other Vaishnava schools hold, and the devotees can interact with Him through five primary *rasa* moods, or types of relationships. These five *rasas*, which constitute a distinctive theological feature of the sect, are *santa*, quietistic or neutral; *dasya*, servitude; *sakhya*, friendship; *vatsalya*, parental; and *madhurya*, erotic. Thus one can relate to Krishna in a quietistic meditative mood or, more actively, as a servant to a master, as a friend to a friend, as a parent to a child, or as a lover to the beloved.

The Bhagavata Purana is the principal scriptural text for Krishna-centered theology. Its tenth book depicts God at play, interacting with his devotees as a master, friend, child, or lover in *lilas*, or devotional pastimes. The school considers these *lilas* of Krishna to be not only the activities of God during His descent to earth but a sample of God’s eternal *lilas* that transpire in His transcendent spiritual realm within Brahman, the term given to the ultimate truth in the Upanishads and Vedanta philosophical texts. Thus, in addition to his activities as the protector of religion in every age, Krishna comes to attract souls back to

His eternal spiritual realm, called *Goloka*, by displaying His *lila* pastimes, and exchanging *rasa* through His relationships with His devotees. The primary *rasa* of interest to the Gaudiya school is the conjugal *rasa*—interacting with Krishna as a lover.

To be eligible to participate in Krishna’s *lila*, however, a soul must be freed from all taint of personal desires and selfishness and completely immersed in loving, meditative absorption in Krishna. A further distinctive feature of the Gaudiya school is the belief that Krishna incarnated again in the present age in the form of Chaitanya in order to spread the process of yoga by which souls enmeshed in the turmoil of the world can develop their innate love of God, become freed from the sufferings of material life, and return to His transcendent realm of Goloka. Since the name of Krishna is considered to be identical to Krishna Himself, Chaitanya traveled around India engaging in the ecstatic chanting and propagation of the Krishna mantra—“Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama, Rama, Hare Hare.” This chanting and hearing of the names of Krishna is the primary feature of the form of yoga practiced by this school—*bhakti yoga*, devotion to God. The practice is bolstered by immersing the mind in hearing, reciting, and remembering the stories of Krishna’s *lilas* from the Bhagavata Purana; worshiping the deity form of Krishna in the temple; visiting the places of pilgrimage associated with Krishna; and participating in other devotional activities.

Chaitanya’s disciples, the six Gosvamis who resided in Vrindavan near Krishna’s birthplace, were sophisticated men of letters and wrote numerous volumes formulating and articulating the theology of the sect in the sixteenth century. The Chaitanya tradition remained centered primarily in East India and Vrindavan until the early twentieth century, when a follower of Chaitanya’s, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, established a missionary wing called the Gaudiya Math. This branch attempted to propagate the chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra around India and even, via missionary activity, in the West. In 1965, Bhaktisiddhanta’s disciple, Bhaktivedanta Swami, arrived in New York City as a representative of the Gaudiya lin-



Hare Krishnas on the beach, Venice, California (Trip/J. Stanley)

eage. Alone and penniless, Bhaktivedanta sat in Thompkins Square Park and began to chant the Hare Krishna mantra. Although the first few months were difficult for the seventy-year-old swami, or *prabhu-pada*, as he was called by his disciples, he soon began to attract a small but devoted following, and the Hare Krishna movement was born.

Although the movement's strict requirements—no meat, fish, or eggs; no intoxication; no sex outside of marriage; and no gambling—contrasted sharply with the bohemian lifestyle of the Lower East Side, Bhaktivedanta's teachings gave meaning and purpose to many disaffected youth. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness soon spread to other major cities of America and subsequently sprang up across Europe and other world metropolises. By the time Bhaktivedanta Swami passed away in 1977, ISKCON had well over 100 temples and dozens of farm communities, restaurants, and *gurukula* schools for the society's children. In India, in particular, the opulence and lavish worship conducted at ISKCON temples

all over the subcontinent have caused them to be highly frequented places of worship. Bhaktivedanta Swami was also a prolific author and translated and published most of the multivolume Bhagavata Purana; the entire multivolume Chaitanya Caritamrita, depicting the life of Chaitanya; and dozens of other books on the practice of Krishna devotion, which his disciples translated into all the major languages of the world.

Despite being heir to a rich and sophisticated Indian devotional tradition, the movement was plagued by scandals during Bhaktivedanta's lifetime. The young hippies Bhaktivedanta attracted found themselves suddenly managing a rapidly growing international organization. Questionable fundraising tactics, coupled with an isolationist mentality and the excesses of neophyte proselytizing zeal, brought public disapproval and caused the movement to be a prime target of the anticult crusades of the late 1960s and 1970s. The postcharismatic phase of the Krishna Consciousness Movement in the West—the time since

its founder passed away almost a quarter of a century ago—has been a period of particularly dramatic turmoil and has presented the movement with new sets of problems. Bhaktivedanta did not clearly specify how the lineage was to continue and how new members would be initiated after his demise, and when he passed away, eleven of his senior-most disciples monopolized the initiatory function of the sect, which they divided into world zones. In time, most of these eleven gurus became embroiled in various dramatic scandals and the system came under increasing attack from other members of the movement. Even after the zonal guru system had been dismantled and the authority of initiation extended to any of Bhaktivedanta's disciples in good standing, scandals connected to the new gurus have continued to erupt regularly, mostly involving deviations from the vows of celibacy. Frustration with this state of affairs developed into an ongoing reform position known as *ritvik*. According to this view, all incoming second-generation members of ISKCON were to be considered Bhaktivedanta's direct disciples even after the founder's death, and not disciples of his disciples.

As a result of such crises of leadership, the movement has splintered into a variety of independent expressions and is undergoing further schisms centered on issues of transmission of authority. A majority of its members have disaffiliated themselves from the institution, and there has been a widespread exodus of large numbers of its constituency to other branches of the Chaitanya lineage in India. The turmoil has spawned various debates over dogma, particularly in instances where Bhaktivedanta's teachings conflicted with previous authorities in the lineage, resulting in the formation of an orthodoxy and the excommunication of heretics. The organization is also experiencing something of a suffragette movement as members react against the historical disempowerment and denigration of women, who have long been denied access to prominent roles in the institution as a result of the *sannyasi* (male lifelong renunciate) culture and ethos that developed in ISKCON in the 1970s. This trend resulted in the fiercely contested but historic appointment of a woman to ISKCON's Governing Board Committee (GBC) in 1998. Moreover, ISKCON is faced with a major looming child abuse case sponsored by more than 100 alumni of its *gurukulas*, private religious boarding schools (which have for all in-

tents and purposes become defunct in the West). Such problems have shaken even the movement's most loyal followers and threaten the very survival of the institutional aspect of the tradition.

The movement also faces other serious issues that will determine its relevancy on the religious landscape of the modern world. Its scriptural literalism, and subscription to *varnasrama*, the social system of ancient and medieval India, bring it into conflict with the dominant intellectual and social currents of our times. Elements within the movement have matured and made efforts to redress the excesses of the past, however, opening themselves up to dialogue with, and influence from, the academic, social, legal, and other mainstream institutions of the greater society. As with any more established religious tradition, there is an inevitable tension between a fundamentalist, literalist element and a more liberal, progressive one. Ultimately, the very fact that there is now a wide spectrum of participatory possibilities outside the jurisdiction of ISKCON suggests that the tradition of Gaudiya Vaishnavism has taken some broader roots in the West. If it can emerge from its crises of transplantation and institutionalization, as well as from the trauma of its present postcharismatic turmoil, the tradition has a unique role to play amongst the various Hindu traditions that have flourished in the West. It is the only representative of the prominent monotheistic sects of India to have attracted converts on a wide scale, as most other expressions of Hinduism that have attracted Western interest are representatives of monistic sects. All in all, the trajectory of the Hare Krishna Movement provides fascinating material from the perspective of the study of religion and offers a unique glimpse at the formative stages of a religious expression struggling to establish roots in a foreign environment.

—Edwin F. Bryant

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Asian American Religious Communities: South Asian American Religious Communities; New Religious Traditions

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## HINDU TEMPLES

Building temples in America has been an important step in establishing the visible presence of Hindu communities here. Most Hindu immigrants to America would not have become involved in the planning and building of new Hindu temples had they remained in India. In the United States, however, there was no physical and cultural infrastructure for the maintenance and support of a Hindu community. Many new Hindu citizens have found themselves deeply involved in creating the institutions needed to serve the growing Hindu population. In building temples, they have also built a sense of community among themselves and have learned to negotiate with their new American neighbors. They have had to establish their nonprofit status and raise money, and in many cases, they have encountered the strictures of zoning boards and the regulations of city councils.

The post-1965 immigrants did not come to a land completely devoid of Hindu institutions, however. The Vedanta Society, launched in the 1890s by Swami Vivekananda, has more than fifteen "centers" across the country, from Boston to St. Louis to San Francisco. In the 1960s and 1970s, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) had temples in dozens of cities. The Vedanta centers, with their rows of chairs, worship books, and philosophical sermons, offered an assimilated form of Hinduism

that had intellectual appeal. The Krishna movement was intensely devotional and offered opportunities for *puja*, or worship, and festivals more like those of Hinduism back home. In the late 1960s, both groups were largely Euro-American; by 2000, they had undergone many changes because of the growing participation of Hindu immigrants from India. ISKCON temples, in particular, became the first temple homes of many immigrants. In some cities, Hindu immigrants and their children continue to gravitate toward the ISKCON community because of its English-language religious instruction.

For most Hindu immigrants, however, temple life in the United States did not begin at an ISKCON temple or a Vedanta center. Instead, immigrants gathered in homes with Tamil, Gujarati, or Bengali friends for special occasions. Gradually, these family groups began to rent public halls for their festival gatherings. Beginning in the 1970s, one city after another began to develop a "temple society." Eventually, they purchased land, consulted ritual architects, engaged engineering firms, and began construction. Temple completion usually takes many years, from the ritual groundbreaking ceremony, called the *bhumi-puja* (the worship of the earth), to the festive dedication, called the *kumbhabhishekam* (the consecration of the temple by the sprinkling of sacred water). In



Hindu temple in Malibu Canyon, California, 1991 (Catherine Karnow/Corbis)

South Indian temples, the final phase is building the *rajagopuram*, the elaborately decorated temple tower high over the entryway. When this step is completed, another kumbhabhishekam is in order.

America's first purpose-built temples were in Queens, New York, and in the Penn Hills outside of Pittsburgh. Both had kumbhabhishekam rites in the summer of 1977. Since that time, major Hindu temples have been built and dedicated in dozens of American cities. In the 1970s, Hindu temple societies were formed and began their work in Boston (Sri Lakshmi Temple), Chicago (Sri Ram Temple in Lemont and Balaji Temple in Aurora), Albany (Hindu Temple of the Capital District), Detroit (Bharatiya Temple in Troy), Houston (Sri Meenakshi Temple in Pearland), and Los Angeles (Sri Venkateswara Temple in Calabasas).

The 1980s saw more new temple initiatives. The Siva Vishnu Temple in Lanham, Maryland, formed in 1980, had its consecration rites in 1990 and finally dedicated its rajagopuram in 2002. The Hindu Tem-

ple Society of Northeast Ohio was formed in 1981 and completed the first phase of building in Liberty, Ohio, in 1986. The Hindu Cultural Center of Tennessee was formed in 1980 and opened its Sri Ganesha Temple in Nashville in 1985. The Hindu Temple of San Antonio was formed in 1984 and opened in 1989. Hindu temple projects were also launched in such places as New Orleans; Casselberry, Florida; and Parma, Ohio, outside of Cleveland. This process continued energetically through the 1990s, with new temples opening in 2001 in south Florida and Middletown, Connecticut, and in 2002 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Wilmington, Delaware; and Omaha, Nebraska.

### Temple-Building Dilemmas

Deciding what kind of temple to build is one of the first tasks of a Hindu temple society. What style of architecture should prevail? How can such a style be adapted to the climate in America? Should there be

one central deity in whose name the temple is consecrated? If so, which one? What should the temple be named?

In Pittsburgh, these dilemmas eventually led to the building of two temples. The Sri Venkateswara Temple in the Penn Hills is South Indian in inspiration. Its central shrine is dedicated to Sri Venkateswara, the form of Vishnu worshiped at India's most popular Vaishnava shrine, Tirupati in Southern Andhra Pradesh. Not far away in Monroeville, the community built the Hindu-Jain Temple, a broadly ecumenical temple that originally included sancta for the Jains and Sikhs as well as several altars dedicated to different Hindu deities.

In Nashville, Tennessee, the Hindu community addressed these questions in another way. To decide upon the central deity, the community sent out a ballot. In this distinctively American electoral fashion, Nashville Hindus elected Ganesha to the central sanctum. But beyond the widespread popularity of the elephant-headed Ganesha, the community also catered to both Vaishnava and Shaiva devotees by installing images of Vishnu and Shiva to either side of Ganesha. Along the sides of the great temple room, the community placed the shrines of deities popular in regional and sectarian movements, such as Jagannatha Krishna from Orissa and Sri Nathji Krishna from western India.

### Temple Typology

The various types of temples provide an indication of the emerging shape of Hinduism in the United States. First, there are the large temple complexes, basically South Indian in their atmosphere and ritual idiom, built by Tamil- and Telugu-speaking immigrants. The Pittsburgh, New York, Atlanta, and Houston temples are striking examples of the many temples that have been built along these lines. Some temples of this type, such as the Sri Venkateswara Temple in the Penn Hills and the Sri Meenakshi Temple in Houston, are dedicated to the name of one particular deity, even though the shrines within are many. Other South Indian temples have taken a different approach in dedicating the temple to two deities, providing broader equal treatment for both Vaishnava and Shaiva worshippers. The Siva Vishnu Temple dedicated equally to both deities in Lanham, Maryland,

and similar ones in Livermore, California, and Parma, Ohio, are examples of this strategy. In all these temples, the divine images are likely to have been made of the dark granite hewn by the artisans at Mahabalipuram, south of Madras. In some temples, however, the incorporation of deities such as Rama, Sita, and Hanuman, especially worshiped in North India, has also meant the establishment of white marble images made in Jaipur, Rajasthan. This expansion of the South Indian paradigm is exemplified in the Sri Venkateswara Temple in Bridgewater, New Jersey.

A second group of temples are specifically North Indian in style and purpose. Here, the dominant language is likely to be Hindi or Gujarati and a broad range of deities will be worshiped, most of them carved in white marble in Jaipur. The Durga Temple in Fairfax, Virginia, completed and consecrated in 1999, has the Goddess Durga as its central image, while the Bharatiya Temple in Troy, Michigan, is explicitly ecumenical and takes its name from the word for India, *Bharat*. The Bharatiya Temple is of modern design, with four huge arching wooden trusses supporting the roof of the sanctuary. Although the Durga Temple and the Bharatiya Temple are purpose-built, most North Indian temples are transformed from other uses, such as the Hindu Temple of Metropolitan Washington and the Geeta Temple and Divya Dham in Queens, New York. In addition, there are dozens of smaller Caribbean Hindu temples opened by Trinidadian immigrants in New York, Texas, and Miami.

A third group of temples are more broadly ecumenical and include not only a range of Hindu deities but also Jain and even Sikh shrines within the temple complex. Here a good example is the Allentown, Pennsylvania, temple, which is called Shantiniketan, the "Abode of Peace," named for the educational, cultural, and religious community founded in Bengal by the Nobel Prize-winning poet Rabindranath Tagore. Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains joined in building the red brick temple. The central altar of the sanctuary bears the white marble images of Radha and Krishna, the altar to the right contains the Guru Granth Sahib of the Sikhs, and the altar to the left bears a white marble Tirthankara of the Jain tradition. The three communities gather for different forms of worship, at different times, while sharing some of their celebrations and cultural performances in common.

A fourth type of temple is the sectarian temple established under the leadership of a strong religious teacher—a swami or guru. Among Hindu temples with a specific sectarian focus is the Ram Kabir Mandir in Carson, California, dedicated to the saint Kabir, a mystic, poet, and reformer who lived in the sixteenth century and is considered to be the divine guru by this temple community. The Swaminarayan movement, with origins in Gujarat, is a devotional *bhakti* movement focusing on the form of Vishnu, who became known to his followers as Swaminarayan. He is seen as a human manifestation, or *avatara*, of the highest divine reality, and his successors are understood to be earthly manifestations of the perfect devotee. In the 1970s, this movement began building temples in the United States and now has more than a dozen major temples. Its first temple was in Queens, New York, dedicated in 1977. Its largest temples are in Edison, New Jersey, where an enormous warehouse has been transformed to a Swaminarayan Temple, and in Bartlett, Illinois, outside Chicago, where one of America's largest Hindu temples has been completed. The Pushti Margi community, with its roots in Rajasthan and Gujarat, is dedicated to the path of devotion to Krishna, especially as the divine child. Its largest center in the United States is the rural temple complex in central Pennsylvania called Vraj, after the homeland of Krishna in central North India.

### Temple Life

Building a temple and consecrating its divine images is a major step for an American Hindu community. The divine is understood to be fully present and accessible in these images and therefore present and accessible to the community of the faithful. The gift of

divine presence also means the responsibility to offer hospitality, as one would a beloved guest in one's home. Therefore, moving from a makeshift altar in a public hall, where the images can be put away at the end of the ceremony, to a fully consecrated divine image installed in a temple is an important and costly step. It means providing a priest to be present at the temple daily to offer services and represents a step toward a permanent Hindu presence in America.

The Hindu temple also takes on a more significant social role in the American context than it has in India, as many of the rites that might ordinarily be done at home are now conducted in a temple setting. Taking a page from other American institutions with large kitchens and fellowship halls, Hindu temples have tended to expand their facilities to become community centers. Hindus increasingly gather at temples for festival days such as Diwali, the autumn Festival of Lights, and for life-cycle rites such as weddings.

—Diana L. Eck

### SEE ALSO

Asian American Religious Communities; South Asian American Religious Communities; Sacred Space

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## REINVENTIONS

Most Hindus in the United States today are immigrants who arrived after the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act. Scholars point out that in the American context, religious institutions often become the means to construct ethnic communi-

ties and identities because Americans view religion as the most acceptable and nonthreatening basis for community formation and ethnic expression (Warner 1993, 1058). Having to be the repository of ethnicity transforms immigrant religion.



Two women talk during the Diwali Hindu New Year celebration at a Hindu temple in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, c. 1990 (David H. Wells/Corbis)

### Changes in Hindu Organizations

Two types of organizations have proliferated among the immigrant Hindu Indian community in the United States: *satsangs* (religious congregations) and *bala-vihars* (child-development associations), neither of which is common in India. Satsangs and bala-vihars consist of a group of Hindu families who meet periodically (once a month or even more frequently). Satsang groups conduct a *pooja* (worship), generally led by lay leaders and consisting of prayers, chants, and *bhajans* (devotional songs). Sometimes there is a discussion of Hindu texts. Although satsangs are practiced by a few sects around the country and in a few regions of central North India, they are not a widely prevalent form of Indian Hinduism. Bala-vihar groups conduct religious education classes for children and are largely a diasporic invention.

Group religious activity is not generally a part of Hinduism in India except during temple and village festivals. In India, Hindus worship largely as families

or as individuals in their homes or a temple. However, in the diaspora, there is a tendency for Hindus to adopt “congregational” forms of worship and learning.

The primary reason for Hindu Indian immigrants to adopt congregationalism is the need for community. Immigration generally results in the isolation of the family from relatives and friends. For Indians, who are the most dispersed group in the United States, the only way to meet other Indians on any regular basis is through attending the meetings and functions of religious organizations. Another consequence of immigration is that Hindu Indians, who were part of the majority group in India, are transformed into a minority group in the United States. As nonwhite immigrants and practitioners of a religion and culture that is generally misunderstood and negatively stereotyped in the United States, many Hindu Indians soon feel the need for a support group, both for themselves and their children (Kurien 1998).



Hindu student organizations are another diasporic invention for many of the same reasons. It is often in college that issues of identity become important, particularly for minority groups. Hindu student organizations provide the second generation (and sometimes Hindu students from India) a forum where they can discuss these issues in a safe space. Now prevalent in many of the universities and college campuses around the country, they are the counterparts of the typical campus religious organizations of other groups and denominations.

Two other types of Hindu institutions that are widespread in the United States are temples and pan-Hindu federations or umbrella groups. Although these institutions are prevalent in India, both manifest certain unique features in the United States. One distinctive feature of American Hindu temples is that most of them tend to be more “ecumenical” (Williams 1992, 239) than temples in India. In India, many temples are devoted to a single regional deity and the local language is used for rituals and worship. In the United States, in contrast, usually Hindu groups from different backgrounds have to unite to build a temple because of the enormous expense involved. Thus, American Hindu temples commonly house the major Indian deities as well as deities from several, sometimes opposing, traditions. Rituals and worship are generally conducted in Sanskrit, but where the “meaning” of religious practice becomes important, they are frequently explained in Hindi or English for the benefit of the eclectic audience. Hindu temples in the United States also perform a range of cultural services not performed by temples in India, becoming cultural and social centers for Hindu Americans. *Satsang* and *bala-vihar* groups frequently meet at the temple. Temples also offer Indian language, music, and dance classes and have a central hall where dance, drama, and music recitals are performed.

Several Hindu umbrella organizations have sprung up in the United States with the goal of uniting, educating, and mobilizing Hindu Indian Americans of different backgrounds in support of Hindu interests. In India, there are two major interlinked Hindu umbrella groups—the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS, National Volunteer Corps) and the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (VHP, World Hindu Council)—and one political party, the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP, Indian People’s Party), all known collectively as the *Sangh*

*Parivar* (Family of [Hindu] Organizations), with branches all over the country. In the United States, however, there is a greater number and variety of such groups. In addition to the branches of the VHP, a parallel organization to the RSS, called the HSS, for Hindu *Swayamsevak Sangh*, and the BJP, there are several regional Hindu groups. In general, such organizations are strong supporters of *Hindutva* (Hinduness), the Hindu nationalist movement that is currently the leading political force in India. Typically, they consist of a small core of dedicated, largely male activists who try to disseminate their message through speeches and writings and by organizing meetings, youth programs, and celebrations of Hindu festivals. Claiming to represent Indian American Hindus, umbrella organizations act as the watchdogs and defenders of Hinduism and have been involved in campaigns against negative portrayals of Hindu deities, icons, and music by American businesses and the entertainment industry. They also sponsor the visits of *Hindutva* leaders from India, meet with American public officials to discuss concerns of Indian Americans, and raise money to support causes in India.

### Changes in Practices and Interpretations

American Hindu practices and interpretations reflect both adaptations to being immigrants in a non-Hindu country and attempts to make Hinduism more compatible with American culture and society. Hinduism in India consists of an extraordinary array of diverse interpretations and practices. However, Hindu Indian Americans have taken upon themselves the task of simplifying, standardizing, and codifying the religion to make it easier for their children to understand. Hindu umbrella organizations and Web sites summarize the “central beliefs” of Hinduism or the “basic principles of Hindu dharma.” Speakers at Hindu student organizations give talks about the “essence of the *Gita*” (which is generally defined as the central Hindu text). In the process, a capsulized, intellectual Hinduism is created that is very different from the diversity of ritual practices and caste observances that are characteristic of everyday Hinduism in India.

Although temple communities in the United States try to adhere to orthodox practices as far as possible, there are still many modifications that have to be made to accommodate to the American context. Thus

temples in the United States celebrate new festivals such as graduation day, Father's Day, and Mother's Day. Religion scholar Vasudha Narayanan (1992) has provided several other examples. Temples adapt the Hindu ritual calendar in such a way that major rituals and festivals are celebrated over the weekend or on other American holidays, for example. Traditional Sanskrit chants have been modified and new ones composed that sacralize America as a holy land for Hindus. Narayanan also used examples from a temple on the East Coast to make the point that Hinduism has been used to cater to American popular psychology.

As in the case of other immigrant religions, Hinduism in the United States has become the axis around which Hindu Indian Americans construct community and ethnic identity. The content and meaning of this ethnic identity are explicitly articulated by the Hindu umbrella organizations. They describe Hindu Indian Americans as being the proud descendants of the world's oldest living civilization and religion and counter the negative American image of Hinduism as primitive and bizarre by arguing that contrary to American stereotypes, Hinduism is very sophisticated and scientific. American Hindu leaders explicitly use the "model minority" label when referring to the Hindu community and attribute the success of Indians in the United States to their Hindu religious and cultural heritage, which, according to them, makes them adaptable, hardworking, and family-oriented.

Because Hinduism and Hindu organizations are more important in the immigrant context, many immigrants become susceptible to the appeal of Hindu nationalist leaders who use the message of Hindu unity and pride to recruit members. Many Hindu Indians in America who participate in the activities of Hindu organizations in this country claim that they are "better Hindus here" and "more Indian" than many Indians in India, who they feel are abandoning their cultural traditions and becoming more "Westernized" (see Kurien 2001). American Hindutva organizations similarly see themselves as the torchbearers and guardians of Hindu Indian tradition and values. In their speeches and writings, the leaders of such organizations stress the need for American Hindus to be more aggressive about defending and disseminating Hinduism. That there is a close relationship between

the Hindu renaissance that is currently taking place in India and the development of an American Hinduism has frequently been pointed out (Mathew and Prashad 2000; Rajagopal 2000). Investigations in India and the United States have established that much of the financial resources and support for the Hindu nationalist movement in India comes from Indian Americans (Rajagopal 2000, 474; Mathew 2000).

Thus, in a variety of ways, Hindu Indian Americans are reinterpreting and restructuring Hindu theology and practice. Since this is a group that wields considerable influence among the leadership and masses in India and within the global Hindu community, these interpretations and practices are being transmitted to India and around the world through the mass media and the Internet. Undoubtedly then, American Hindus will shape the face of global Hinduism in the next century.

—Prema A. Kurien

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Asian American Religious Communities: South Asian American Religious Communities

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## VEDANTA SOCIETY

The Ramakrishna Vedanta movement is the oldest organized form of Hinduism in the United States. This movement and its founder, Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), laid the foundations for all subsequent Hindu groups in the West. Inspired by the teachings of his spiritual master, Sri Ramakrishna (1836–1886), a Bengali devotee of the Hindu Goddess Kali who was also steeped in the nondualist philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, Swami Vivekananda came to this country for the first time in 1893 to attend the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago as a representative of the Hindu tradition. His popular success at that historic gathering, and the interest, if not controversy, inspired by his lectures gradually led him to conceive of a spiritual mission to the West. He nurtured that initial following through private teaching sessions and fledgling group organizations during his two extended stays in the United States, from 1893 to 1896 and from 1899 to 1900. Building from the two Vedanta Societies he founded, in New York and San Francisco, subsequent swamis have expanded upon his work in America. As of 2001, there were fifteen Vedanta centers throughout the country, each under the leadership of an Indian swami, including several retreat centers and monasteries, and a total national membership of approximately 3,000. Between his two American tours, in 1897 Swami Vivekananda founded the administrative and outreach branch of the Indian monastic work, headquartered at Belur Math outside Calcutta in West Bengal. This headquarters selects swamis for leadership roles in the United States as well as for its many centers in India and the rest of the world. As such, the Vedanta Societies are branch organizations of an Indian monastic institution. This framework provides the American societies with the advantage of spiritual and institutional groundedness but also with the challenge of

trying to forge an authentically Indian message that is also sufficiently adapted to Western people.

The teachings of Vedanta draw upon a combination of traditions: (1) Ramakrishna's mystical insights, which emphasize the love of God, renunciation of the world, belief in the unity of all religions, and spiritual experience; (2) the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, according to which each soul is potentially divine; and (3) the social activism of Swami Vivekananda, who established the Ramakrishna Order with the twin ideals of renunciation and service. The breadth and universalism of this message, in addition to its practical approach and lived embodiment in charismatic swamis, are cited by devotees as reasons for its appeal.

Among the many swamis who expanded upon Swami Vivekananda's work, five deserve special mention. They made important contributions to the movement and helped to graft Vedanta onto American soil. Swami Abhedananda, head of the New York Vedanta Society from 1897 to 1910, pioneered the idea of Vedanta as a science; Swami Prabhavananda, leader of the Vedanta Society of Southern California in Hollywood from 1928 to 1976, a prodigious writer and translator, attracted several famous Western writers and artists and spearheaded the most successful journal to date of American Vedanta, *Vedanta and the West*, from 1938 to 1970; Swami Ashokananda, in charge of the Vedanta Society of Northern California in San Francisco from 1932 to 1969, opened monasteries and branch centers and attracted many to seek the monastic life; Swami Nikhilananda, head of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York from 1933 to 1973, contributed enormously to the accessibility of Ramakrishna's message by producing a readable translation of Ramakrishna's Bengali conversations, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*; and Swami Bhashya-

nanda, leader of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago from 1965 to 1991, opened approximately two dozen satellite centers throughout North America and staffed some of them with his newly trained American swamis. This effort was suspended in 1987 because those stationed at Belur Math believed that such quick expansion was premature.

Maintaining a balance between Indian ideals and Western contexts has always been a challenge. The early swamis, in particular, following the example of Swami Vivekananda, made vigorous attempts at acculturation. American-born Swami Yogeshananda, reminiscing about Swamis Prabhavananda and Ashokananda in the 1950s, noted that they determined “to put India behind them in a sense; to try to *feel* themselves Western and American, in order better to identify with us. They saw, as we said, through our eyes” (Yogeshananda 1995, 59). For Swami Ashokananda, this commitment extended to an active discouragement of Indian music, ritual, and even food in the Vedanta centers. When Belur Math tried to enforce stricter codes regarding the separation between the sexes at his Hollywood center, Swami Prabhavananda replied that Indian rules could not apply to American centers.

After a period of growth following World War II, the Vedanta Societies entered a period of decline in the 1970s, with slowing membership and fewer monastic recruits. Since the mid-1980s, however, two factors have combined to indicate increased vitality, even if they do not always work in tandem. The first, as a result of the liberalized immigration laws of 1965, is a new Indianization of the centers, with Indian, especially Bengali, families seeking Ramakrishna swamis for familiar guidance in adoptive lands. In cities with large Indian populations, overall attendance at Sunday lectures has risen. With it have come increased calls for Hindu food, music, and ritual, such as the festivals of Krishna and Ganesha, which are now celebrated along with those for Ramakrishna and Vivekananda at the Chicago center. Indian Vedantists are also generous financial contributors, as the new satellite centers at Toronto and Washington amply testify.

Partly in reaction to this increased Indianization, many Western devotees are calling for a revitalization of Swami Vivekananda’s original vision for a truly Western Vedanta. One avenue for the exploration of

these issues is a lay magazine called *American Vedantist*. The editors take as their explicit mission the translation of Vedanta into Western cultural and philosophical terms. This is not merely an academic project; such devotees also exhort the Vedanta movement as a whole to engage in self-scrutiny and dialogue and to combine passion for spiritual growth with the practicality and freedom of spirit emblematic of American attitudes. *American Vedantist* is one of several projects of Vedanta West Communications, dedicated to expressing Vedantic idealism in the West through music, words, and art.

In the same vein, other devotees—Indian as well as Western—urge those in leadership positions at Belur Math to relax their prohibition against the conferral of leadership positions on American monks. Moreover, they have asked them to encourage nuns from the Sarada Math order to visit the United States on teaching missions. Sarada Math, founded in honor of Ramakrishna’s wife, Sarada Devi (1853–1920), in 1954, is a sister monastic institution to the Ramakrishna Order. More locally, one hears calls for increased lay leadership training, greater involvement of women, and commitment to social outreach in American, not simply Indian, contexts.

Since the mid-1980s, numerous lay groups, inspired by the ideals of Vedanta but not necessarily affiliated with the order, have sprung up to address precisely these needs. Prominent among them are the centers of the Sarada Ramakrishna Vivekananda Association, founded in 1983 to make the teachings and transmission of the lineage accessible to a wider, more liberal American audience. Mother’s Trust, Mother’s Place, an interfaith community started in 1991 by Swami Bhashyananda, who put a woman devotee in charge, is another. The Sri Sarada Society has supported activities of the Sarada Math in the West, and American Service to India finances overseas projects. Various Vedanta-based prison counseling programs have also been active in American cities.

The new Indianizing and Westernizing trends visible in the Vedanta Societies of the twenty-first century can be mutually invigorating. Indian parents can be allies with Western devotees in trying to develop a spirituality that is both Indian and appealing to youth brought up in the United States. The first U.S.-born Indian monk is already in monastic training in India; it is hoped that he, and others like him, will return to

help forge an acculturated Vedanta. Another sign of renewed creativity is exhibited by the use of the Internet in presenting the ideals of Vedanta. For instance, through the Web site of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, one can e-mail a monk or nun with questions; order glossy pictures of Hindu gods, goddesses, or swamis; listen to an audio clip of a lecture delivered by Swami Prabhavananda; contribute to relief work in India; and learn about local interfaith meetings. In addition, the Ramakrishna Order has affiliated two new American centers: The Vedanta Center of Greater Washington, D.C., the first new center in twenty years, opened in 1997; and a year-round retreat center at Ridgely Manor in Stone Ridge, New York, where Swami Vivekananda stayed for ten weeks in 1899, opened in 1998. Both are under the local leadership of American monks, Swamis Atmajnanananda and Atmarupananda, although they are supervised by the senior Indian swami at the Vedanta Society of Southern California, Swami Swahananda.

Unlike other Hindu movements in the United States, such as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), the Vedanta Societies have a firm institutional base in India that provides vision, external control, and a supply of monks. They are also distinguished by their relatively Westernized approach to vegetarianism, ritual, and male-female relationships (in recent years there has been a relaxing

of the austere message regarding sex-renunciation in marriage); their philosophical rather than ecstatic approach to God-realization; their Western public lecture format combined with instruction by Hindu guru; and—in spite of new forays into the Internet—a conservative conviction that spiritual growth and influence should proceed quietly and freely.

—Rachel Fell McDermott

#### SEE ALSO

Asian American Religious Communities: South Asian American Religious Communities

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ISLAM  
IN AMERICA



Muslims in America are just like any other religious group. Beyond the common identity they share as Muslim, they are internally diverse, professing a variety of beliefs, observing dissimilar rituals, and reflecting cultural as well as historical differences. Some are longtime residents of the United States; others are new arrivals or immigrants. Some are Anglo-American, but many more are Arab American. An even larger percentage are Asian, especially South Asian. But the largest subset of American Muslims is neither Anglo, Arab, nor Asian; it is African American.

The histories of these different communities of American Muslims do not converge, and in a sense the construct of “Islam in America” or “American Islam” imposes a false sense of unity on them. Yet because the media, both domestic and foreign, is fascinated with American Muslims, especially in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, one must try to make sense of the component elements of a putative American Islam. In the final analysis, one must also try to distill from media accounts of their stereotypical traits and distorted historical past a more accurate depiction of who the “real” American Muslims are and how their history has developed in the United States.

### Historical Prologue

Islam emerged in two distinct communities in the United States. Although both shared the name “Muslim” and professed allegiance to “Islam,” it would be misleading to depict them as either identical or convergent. One track concerned immigrant Muslims, who came from a variety of regions outside North America. They came to the United States for a variety of reasons—political, social, and/or economic. They also came in very small numbers until after World War II. Even when restrictive immigration quotas eased in the early 1950s, it was not Asian Muslims but European immigrants who were favored. Muslims who did come to the United States, whether from West or South Asia, were mostly upper-class, socially mobile professionals. They tended to settle in either Chicago or New York. It was only after the Immigra-

tion Act of 1965 that large numbers of South Asian Muslims, along with smaller groups of Arabs, Turks, and Iranians, migrated to the United States.

Numbers are hotly debated, since religious loyalty cannot be easily or accurately measured in the United States. Nonetheless, it is likely that the total population of all American Muslims by 1970 was less than half a million, with no more than 200,000 from West or South Asian countries. By the end of the second millennium, however, the number of South Asian Muslims alone, including Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and Afghans, along with Indians, exceeded 1 million. Not only were these Muslims varied in social background, educational level, and professional skills, they were also dispersed throughout the major metropolitan areas of North America.

The other group, running parallel in its historical development to immigrant Muslim Americans, consists of descendants of African American slaves who became Muslim. The process of conversion, or “reversion” (since many of them were recovering a faith held by ancestors from Africa whose religious identity had been obscured, if not obliterated, in the brutal Middle Passage), dates back to the eighteenth century, but it did not develop into a full-scale social movement until the twentieth century. Embrace of Islam was linked to the efforts by African American leaders to find a cultural, as well as an economic and political, identity apart from the dominant Anglo-Protestant system that had produced, then defended and prolonged, slavery. Marcus Garvey signaled a return to Africa in the early twentieth century, and among those who responded to his call was Noble Drew Ali. Rather than return to Africa, however, Noble Drew Ali attempted to awaken his fellow Americans to their true roots in an African or Moorish collectivity. By the 1920s, he had founded the Moorish Science Temple of America. It became the forerunner for the Nation of Islam. First W. D. Fard, a mestizo itinerant preacher, and then another itinerant preacher, Elijah Poole, later called Elijah Muhammad, emerged from Detroit with the message of redirection and hope for black people through identification with African Islam. Though Fard mysteriously disap-





A mosque in Chicago, Illinois (Trip/M. Lee)

peared in 1934, Elijah Muhammad expanded his message, and also its social basis, into what is now known as the Nation of Islam.

The so-called Black Muslims were Muslims in name but in practice advocated black separatism from white society as their principal objective. Their strict discipline included prayer five times a day, but with minimal attention to Arabic as the language of prayer. Modest dress was obligatory—black suit, white shirt, and bow ties for men; long dresses, head coverings, and no makeup for women. Not only pork and alcohol were to be avoided but also any contact with white society; intermarriage, whether with Anglo-American Christians or with other Muslims of different races, was strictly forbidden. Social values were transmitted and reinforced through schools linked to Nation of Islam temples; their curriculum stressed separation from whites and, above all, pride in an African Muslim heritage.

The movement expanded in mid-century America despite efforts by the FBI in the 1950s and 1960s to limit its scope through harassment of its leaders. Eli-

jah Muhammad attracted to the Nation of Islam a Detroit petty criminal named Malcolm Little who rose to prominence as Malcolm X. Malcolm X became a public figure in his own right; Elijah Muhammad and other Nation of Islam leaders became jealous of Malcolm's flare for capturing media attention. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, as told to Alex Haley (1964) and later filmed by Spike Lee (1992), tracks the triumphs and the tragedy of Malcolm X. Soon after he returned from a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1964, he denounced the Nation of Islam as itself non-Islamic because it preached separation of races while universal Islam, as he had observed during the pilgrimage, promoted the equality of all persons regardless of race. He attempted to found his own counter-organization but was assassinated in 1965.

When Elijah Muhammad died in 1975, the legacy of Malcolm X blossomed into full view. Even before he went on the pilgrimage, Malcolm had been close friends with one of Elijah Muhammad's sons, Wallace, or Warith, Muhammad. Warith, like Malcolm, favored a more inclusive, less confrontational form of

Islamic observance for African Americans. Warith and his father had disagreed during the latter's lifetime, and another disciple, Louis Farrakhan, had sided with Elijah against Warith (and Malcolm X), advocating Islam as the basis of a separatist movement reserved for blacks only. During the past quarter of a century, that division has remained firm, with Warith becoming Imam Warith Deen Muhammad and assuming leadership of what is today the Muslim American Community, while Minister Louis Farrakhan, after 1978, declared himself the leader of the rump Nation of Islam, a successor to the original Nation of Islam but with fewer followers.

Many within the African American Muslim community have attempted to quantify how large a following each branch has garnered. How many follow Imam W. D. Muhammad and identify themselves both with American society at large and with the transnational Muslim world, and how many opt for the black separatist goals of the Nation of Islam as announced by Minister Farrakhan? It is a question obscured by the national prominence of Louis Farrakhan. His successful Million Man March in 1997 mobilized African American men, both Muslim and non-Muslim, to converge on Washington D.C., and he continues to advocate social and political issues that call attention to the plight of an African American underclass that has been ignored by the dominant Euro-American overclass. Yet Sunni Muslims regard Farrakhan as a heretic, and his actual cohort may be as few as 20,000–30,000 followers. By contrast, the less visible Imam W. D. Muhammad is the acknowledged leader of the largest, though not the sole, Sunni community of African Americans, which totals some 2 million to 2.5 million members.

### Internal Differences

The parallel histories of immigrant and indigenous Muslims have repercussions for any analysis of Islam in America. There are, to be sure, other, smaller groups who also deserve mention. Many Euro-American converts to Sufism have looked to the Sufi Order of the West, dedicated to the Indian spiritual leader Inayat Khan, who died in 1927 and was succeeded by his son, Vilayat Khan. It is loosely affiliated with Sunni Islam, unlike the Naqshbandiyya, a major Asian Sufi order that is firmly allied with Islamic “or-

thodoxy” and also attracts followers in Europe and the United States. Another movement that confronts rather than straddles Sunni Muslim norms is the Ahmadiyyah. It has attracted African Americans as well as Euro-Americans. Like the Sufi Order of the West, it originated from a South Asian exemplar, Ghulam Ahmad, and became a missionary force for Islam throughout Africa and Asia as well as in Europe and North America. Its leaders claim that the Ahmadi community worldwide exceeds 10 million, yet because of their conflict with Sunni beliefs, they are not even admitted as Muslims by spokespersons for “orthodox” Islam. Similarly, a small but active Shi'i group pledges its allegiance to the Agha Khan, revering him much as Sufis of the West honor Vilayat Khan and Ahmadi look to Ghulam Ahmad. Members of the Ismaili community in North America worship in spaces separate from Sunni Muslims. They also recite special poems, known as *ginans*, and observe both the Prophet's birthday and the anniversary of the Agha Khan's accession.

Attention to these and other groups of Muslims in the United States should not obscure, however, the broadest difference within the Muslim American community, that between the two largest subgroups of American Muslims, the immigrant South Asian group and the indigenous African American group. “There is a peculiarity of two parallel lines of Islam in the United States—the immigrant and indigenous,” noted Ali Mazrui, “[and] one of the issues that Muslims have to resolve is how to deal with this duality of indigenous versus immigrant Islam; and how to build bridges between them. Efforts have been made, but we still haven't found adequate solutions. There are so many difficulties yet to be resolved” (Mazrui 1997, 177).

The duality between indigenous and immigrant American Muslims is fundamental to the future of American Islamic beliefs and culture. Differences between them may persist or may attenuate, but they can never be eradicated. They will remain distinctive markers of cultural disparities that, despite creedal and ritual sympathies, separate African American from South Asian Muslims. Their basis is a racialized class prejudice against African Americans that predates the twentieth century and circulates beyond the parameters of a Muslim American community, however broadly defined its membership.

Yet scholars of Islam, along with many Muslim spokespersons, are reluctant to recognize the sociopsychological chasm between immigrant and indigenous Muslims. The “imbalance in power relationships between the immigrant group and the native-born,” predicted one scholar/activist, “is most likely to be resolved within a single generation.” How? Because “the financial power of the immigrants will gradually coalesce with the numbers and financial resources of the African-American Muslim community to create a Muslim political presence in Washington, *in sha’Allah*.” (Nyang 1999, 74)

### Political Influence

It is precisely the question of potential political influence that fuels much discussion about Islam in America. On the one hand, there are groups from the Christian Right who believe that Muslims in America are already too numerous and too organized and that Muslims will not only become more populous than Jewish Americans but will also influence political agendas both at home and abroad. Their recurrent emphasis is on the newer generation of Muslim immigrants who have assimilated to the United States and become American Muslims. On the other hand, the members of this new Islamic generation, unlike their parents, realize that to protect their rights as Americans—and Muslims—they have to speak out. Some mosques, for instance, educate their communities to be more politically assertive, registering voters and holding programs on such topics as how to be an active PTA parent. Freshly minted Muslim lawyers also have joined other ambitious young politicians in Washington, and many aspire to higher offices that they believe will become attainable through the power of bloc voting.

But projecting a united Islamic front in American politics ignores the social fault line between immigrant and indigenous Muslims. The rubric of civil society depends on the self-perception and agency of individuals; its commodity is symbolic capital. Self-perception may translate as accommodation, but its goal is prestige: to find not just acceptance but also validation and success in the host culture. The other side of symbolic capital is equally important, though less pleasant. It reflects isolation or resistance from the immigrant group itself as well as from elements in the

host society. In twenty-first-century America, there is a double side to prejudice for South Asian Muslim immigrants: It is, in the first instance, the prejudice of extant norms and of those who both enforce and perpetuate those norms, but it is also the internalization of those same norms by immigrants who seek success in the host country even while retaining residual loyalty to their country of origin.

This double effect of prejudice works persistently against African Americans in general and African American Muslims in particular. Even though they are a major component of American Islam, African American Muslims do not enjoy equivalent social status with other, non-African American Muslims or with other non-Muslim Americans. Until they do, it is impossible to project “an American *umma* distinct from the racial-ethnic identities that have often served to divide and separate rather than to unify” Muslims (Smith 1999, 187).

To frame the issue in terms of Islamic practice, one needs to understand the pivotal roles that race and language play in the tug of war between immigrant and indigenous Muslims. Namely, for Asian immigrant Muslims, the Arabic race and language are highly valued. They do not simply pick and choose between different versions of Islam. To the extent that a variant or heterodox version of Islam exists, and is linked to African Americans, it becomes doubly tainted: It is both American (not Arab) and linked to the underclass, the underprivileged, the discriminated against, the oppressed. African American Muslims are not given equivalent billing on the menu of options for immigrant Asian Muslims. So vast is this gap between American ideals and the African American lived experience that one astute Asian observer has lamented “the process by which new immigrants have for over a century (mis)translated the black American presence into their own perplexed lives” (Singh 1996, 99).

The Asian immigrant and African American communities also developed very differently in terms of minority social experience and political activism. Whereas the Civil Rights Act defined the 1960s for African Americans, it was the 1965 Immigration Act that forever changed the pattern of the Asian presence within the United States. The full impact of both acts was not felt until the 1980s, when it became evident that most of the people of the world on the move—



Muslims pray in an Islamic mosque, Pembroke Pines, Miami, Florida (Trip/J. Greenberg)

immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers—were of dark color. U.S. Immigration policy, unlike that of West European nations, attempted to avoid racialized xenophobia, in part because of the Civil Rights Movement. Yet racialized class prejudice against “people of color” remained even when the practical result of the new immigration policy was to expand beyond all expectations the number of Asians who came to work and to live in the United States.

So deep is this prejudice that it has influenced others who have observed, analyzed, and described American Islam. In *American Medina: A Study of the Sunni Muslim Immigrant Communities in Chicago* (1998), Garbi Schmidt analyzed intergenerational as well as professional cross sections of the diverse immigrant community in greater metropolitan Chicago. The author noted extrinsic racialization in the contest over language, dress code, and mosque space between Arabs and South Asians. But what of their expectations about inter-Muslim racial values? They are seldom noted, except with reference to African American Muslims. Schmidt observed, for example, an especially powerful local preacher, an African Ameri-

can convert to Islam in the Chicago area, who focused on “Islam as the solution to the social gap between white and black America.” The young preacher, Schmidt wrote, “formulates Islam according to an African American experience that still, by the late 1990s, is placed at the bottom end of the social scale” (Schmidt 1998, 151). In other words, the message of the preacher, and even his personal example, may be appealing, but he was speaking against the norms of a highly racialized society where black is still equated with “behind” and “beneath,” that is, lagging behind the groups in power and situated beneath the expectation for success that most immigrants harbor. Similarly, an Egyptian researcher, in examining a Houston mosque and Islamic center, discussed at length relations between its Arab and Pakistani members. Yet when she turned to African Americans, her observation was stark: “Immigrant Muslims choose to identify themselves with whites rather than blacks. . . . This is evidenced by the fact that the children of Arab and Pakistani immigrants rarely marry African Americans” (Bakr 2000, 213). In other words, the barrier between immigrant Muslims, whether Asian

or Arab, and African American Muslims remains high.

### Media

The *Utne Reader* is a summary of the alternative press that tries to correct the distortions of the mainstream press. Hence it seemed appropriate that in 1994, for its special tenth anniversary issue, it ran a feature section on Islam. The centerpiece consisted of three media images to which Americans have become addicted: the Terrorist, the Veiled Woman, and the Demon Demagogue. The section included five articles reprinted from other sources: Karen Armstrong on the Prophet Muhammad, Akbar Ahmed on terror and tolerance, Pamela Smith on Islamic capitalism, James Shiffer on Dixie Islam, and Latifa Weinman on Muslim women. Although the resulting profile was much more accurate than those found in mainstream representations of Islam, the issue included, and repeated, incorrect estimates of the size of the American Muslim community. "Islam, the second largest faith worldwide—with a billion adherents—is the third largest in the United States, after Christianity and Judaism. Some researchers project that Islam will be number two here [in the United States] by early in the 21st century; there are already more Muslims than Episcopalians in America" (*Utne Reader* 1994, 76).

There are two major problems with this assertion. The first is its holistic claim that Islam, like Christianity and Judaism, is a religious tradition whose power, prestige, and worth can be calculated by numbers of adherents. In fact, figures of growth do not necessarily reflect superiority, as it is often implicitly assumed, and the value of different religions cannot be determined on this basis. The second and even greater problem with this assertion is its untenability. The U.S. Census has never included a question on religion, and all estimates about the size of religious communities presume the truthfulness and accuracy of those doing the reporting. Yet Muslims (and many other religious groups) tend to exaggerate the number of their adherents, as well as the rate of their growth, in order to underscore their doctrinal superiority.

Although such numbers are frequently used to indicate that Islam is on the rise, the foundation for this claim is as slippery as it is reversible. In 1991, an independent non-Muslim researcher estimated that there

were 3.3 million Muslims in the United States as of 1980 and that the number would likely double, to 6.6 million, by the year 2000. In 1992, the American Muslim Council survey, using identical methods, claimed that there were already 5 million, and possibly 8 million, Muslims in the United States. And in 1994, two researchers at an Islamic university in Chicago, East-West University, came up with similar figures. Yet another independent, non-Muslim survey conducted in 1993 came up with drastically lower figures: The National Survey of Religious Identification (NSRI) conducted what its leaders claimed was "the largest and most comprehensive poll ever on American religious loyalties, and the most accurate and detailed as to geographical distribution" (Kosmin and Lachman 1993, 4). It found there were far fewer Muslim Americans than the Muslim polls had indicated. According to the NSRI, as of 1993 there were slightly more than half a million (527,000) Muslims in the United States.

It is tempting to say that the NSRI study was obviously wrong because it was based on interviews of Muslims by non-Muslims, with uncertainty, suspicion, and outright fear accounting for the reluctance of the former to disclose their actual religious identity to the latter. Even allowing for such skepticism, however, one must also doubt the accuracy of the estimates provided by Muslim institutions, especially since their leaders have too strong a stake in validating their existence and promoting their discourse through high estimates. Religious groups that do not have worries about their acceptability in American culture, by contrast, have sometimes gone to great lengths to obtain accurate figures: Unitarians and Episcopalians, for example, for the past four decades have carefully scaled down their membership rolls in response to rigorously monitored internal surveys.

Yet the larger problem is not the size of the American Muslim community, whether it is 2 million or 7 million. The immense problem is the gap in subcategories between South Asians, Arabs, and African Americans according to the published results of different Muslim groups. The American Muslim Council, for instance, divides Muslims by race and national affiliation, with South Asians making up 24.4 percent of the total, Arabs 12.4 percent, and African Americans 42 percent (a figure later cited by Ali Mazrui). Yet the 1994 study conducted at East-West University

only two years later gave a breakdown as follows: South Asian, 29.3 percent; Arab, 32.7 percent; and African American, 29.9 percent. Some sources routinely cite one set of figures or the other without ever noting alternate views.

Even more astonishingly, a scholarly book on Islam in America noted neither the discrepancy between the total population estimates of Muslims and non-Muslims nor the incommensurate internal ratios between Arabs, South Asians, and African Americans. "Although the projections range widely in terms of the current population, and there is sometimes disagreement as to who should properly be identified as Muslim," wrote Jane Smith in 1999, "the consensus is that somewhere around six million Muslims live permanently in America and that the community is growing steadily." But who are these 6 million Muslim Americans? "The largest group of Muslims in America," Smith asserted, "is comprised of first-, second-, and third-generation immigrants," but she quickly added: "Perhaps 40 percent of the Muslim community is African American" (Smith 1999, xii–xiii).

The problem with this wholesale generalization is that it privileges all immigrants by nationality as Muslim, even when some, such as Iranian immigrants, for instance, are clearly not religious; at the same time, it upgrades immigrants by according them a cohesiveness comparable to that of the "smaller" African American Muslim community. Ignored is the systemic friction between Asians and Africans, with immigrant Asian Muslims considering indigenous African Muslims less as fellow believers than as members of an inferior racial and social group. The conflict extends beyond institutional leadership to the very invocation of labels. "We reject the term American Muslim," wrote a spokesperson affiliated with the Muslim American Society of Imam W. D. Muhammad. "We reject that term. There is nothing in the Koran about anything coming before the word Muslim. We say Muslim American. They (immigrant Muslims) emphasize American. Sometimes when you want to be accepted you will emphasize certain aspects (of yourself). We already know we're American" (Mattingly n.d.).

More than seventy years ago, the Chicago sociologist Robert Parks mused that "the immigrant who settles in a foreign community, meets with discrimination and prejudice because he is identified with a race

or nationality [or religion], which is regarded by the native peoples [*sic*] as inferior–inferior mainly because different. The stranger, though he may be accepted as a utility, is rejected as a citizen, a neighbor, and 'a social equal.' A social equal, as ordinarily defined in America, is one that you will be willing to have your daughter marry" (Park [1931] 1950, 366). Park's words ring true today when considering the relationship between indigenous and immigrant American Muslims. Even if Asian Muslims were to overcome the barriers of prejudice linked to the Anglo-Protestant norms of most of their neighbors, they still would have to overcome its internalized reflex, for they, like other non-Muslim South Asians, continue to assume that a hierarchy of value and status exists as regards race and class, projecting racialized class prejudice among themselves as well as between Asian and non-Asian Americans. As long as that racialized class prejudice characterizes Islam, as it does other religious communities, there will not be a unified *umma*, whether 2 million or 10 million strong, nor will a Muslim political agenda, either at the regional or national level, form to advocate the rights of all Muslim Americans.

—Bruce B. Lawrence

#### SEE ALSO

African American Religions: African American Religious Leaders, African Americans and Islam, African-Derived American Religions; Asian American Religious Communities: South Asian American Religious Communities; Judaism in America; Popular Culture: Religion in the News; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Fundamentalism; Sacred Space

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## AHMADIYYAH MOVEMENT

The Ahmadiyyah Movement began in 1889 on the Indian subcontinent as a reform movement and emerged as one of the most active and controversial of the modern communities claiming Islam as its basis. The founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, was born in the Punjabi village of Qadiyan in the late 1830s to Sunni Muslim parents and died in Lahore on May 26, 1908. During the nineteen years he formulated the philosophy of the movement, he confronted Sunni Islam with some compelling arguments. In response, the rest of the Muslim world declared the movement non-Muslim. The central differences between the Ahmadi community and Sunni Islam focused on three issues: the finality of the prophethood of Muhammad, what happened to Jesus on the cross, and the concept of jihad.

According to his own writings and his biographers, at the age of forty-one Ghulam Ahmad began to receive revelations from God convincing him that he was the “Promised Messiah,” “renewer of religion,” and “a person spoken to frequently by Allah or one of His angels” (Friedmann 1989, 49). Given that he was also a Sunni Muslim, he had to assert his claim to the status of prophet against more than 1,000 years of Islamic belief that the Prophet Muhammad was the last of the prophets coming with revelation for all humankind. Ghulam Ahmad’s claim to prophet status led to numerous debates among the learned in the Muslim community, finally inspiring an amendment to Pakistan’s constitution acknowledging the finality of Muhammad as the last of the prophets as a stipulated part of the definition of “Muslim” belief. Ghulam Ahmad argued that God would not have left the Muslim community without guidance after the Prophet Muhammad’s death. In this assertion, he had some support in the philosophies of Shi’a Islam and Sufi Islam, both of which assume ongoing guidance to the Muslim community.

Christian missionary activity seems to have assisted Ghulam Ahmad in making his understanding of the Qur’an clear. He was, according to his own works, incensed at the attacks on Islam made by the Christian church and felt that there should be no compromise with Christianity and its missionaries. He felt some loyalty toward the British, however, somehow separating the Anglican Church from the people who be-

longed to it. Nevertheless, he argued against the notion that Jesus had died on the cross and risen to heaven and claimed instead that he himself was the promised Messiah who had come to reform humankind, saying that God revealed this to him. One of his own tasks, he said, was to “convince Christians of their grievous error in considering Jesus as God or part of God” (Adamson 1989, 67). He spent his life challenging other Muslims on his various claims of prophethood and messiahship. Lastly, he challenged the contemporary Muslim understanding of jihad (“struggle”).

According to most interpretations, the greatest type of jihad is a personal struggle with human desire and surrender to the will of God. The lesser form is physical exertion in the cause of Islam, such as war, whose preferred nature is that of defense. These notions derive from several portions of the Qur’an. The issues for Ghulam Ahmad were when and how often to fight in the name of Islam. For him, the Muslims should fight whenever they were being killed, whenever they were prevented from practicing their religion, and whenever their land was taken. The British did not prevent Muslims from practicing Islam and were not killing Muslims, so Muslims should not struggle against the British, he reasoned. Muslims should struggle against Christians about the scripture itself. On the death of Ghulam Ahmad, even though he left a will in an attempt to prevent any division, the community found itself split over at least two other issues: the nature of community leadership and the manner in which the movement should conduct its activities among non-Muslims.

On the issue of leadership, one group (later to be known as the Lahori Ahmadi) contended that the followers of Ghulam Ahmad are not infallible, thus they cannot give binding instructions as he did. Instead, the opinion of the majority of the Supreme Council should prevail. The other group (later known as the Qadianis) felt that guidelines for the future of leadership in the community were clearly outlined in Ghulam Ahmad’s will. The second issue, concerning non-Muslims, was no less contentious. The Lahori group concentrated its missionary activities on spreading the essentials of Islam rather than teaching distinctively



Ahmadi concepts. The Qadianis felt that the uniqueness of the Ahmadi was the most important thing and that to mask this was potentially dangerous for the young community.

These issues played important roles in Ahmadi decision making, especially regarding where to spread the movement. The Lahori group established its first mission in Britain in Woking in 1912, and the Qadian group arrived later, in 1924, to form another center in another part of London. The first Ahmadi to arrive in America was Mufti Muhammad Sadiq. He arrived and remained for three years, establishing, in July 1921, the magazine *The Moslem Sunrise*. He also established the first Ahmadi center, in Chicago, in 1922. Ahmadiyyah missionaries worked exceptionally hard to introduce Islam to largely white, Protestant America, but with marginal, if any, success. Their greatest success was among black Americans.

After establishing themselves firmly in the West, the groups focused a great deal of their energy on translating the Qur'an. By 1993, they had reportedly produced translations in fifty-four languages. They also published texts that gave readers clear information on Islamic beliefs and practices. Ghulam Ahmad had initiated this focus on publications and translations in 1901 with a monthly magazine called *Review of Religions* that explained what the Ahmadiyyah Movement in Islam hoped to achieve. The magazine had brought out in the public an intense dislike for Islam on behalf of some of the West. This state of affairs was viewed as a challenge. Disputations between Ahmadis and Christians and/or Sunni Muslims were sought and sometimes engaged.

For many Americans, the Ahmadiyyah Movement in Islam was their first introduction to Islam in any form. In America, most of the converts were black Americans. The arguments against Christianity were appealing, and the wholehearted welcome by these immigrants to Islam inspired many people. The rapport between the Ahmadi and black American communities grew as they challenged American racism, claiming that Islam was the solution to discrimination in America. By the 1960s, the immigrant Ahmadi community grew, as did the numbers of Sunni South Asian Muslims. The old tensions began to take shape again.

Black American Ahmadis then were exposed to Sunni Islam and its hostility to the basic tenets of the Ahmadi Movement. Though the Ahmadi increased

its rhetoric on the evils of racism during the Civil Rights Movement, the numbers of black Americans joining the Ahmadi Movement began to dwindle for two very important reasons. The newer immigrant Ahmadis were not as welcoming to their black "brothers and sisters" as the earlier ones had been, and the organization itself refused to elevate educated black Americans to the status of missionary. Many black Americans who remained in the movement after the doors of immigration opened for tens of thousands of Muslims felt that the very racism they decried was being practiced in the community. Most of these moved on into Sunni Islam. Those black Americans who are Ahmadi today still face challenges from the Sunni community. Some have assumed leadership roles. Internally, however, the community has kept to very strict Islamic practices.

In the Ahmadi community, there is strict separation of gender, veiling of women with *niqab* (face veils), and strict adherence to prayer times, fasting, and charity. There is a hierarchal organizational structure such that every member has the fullness of community. In Sunday classes, both children and adults study the teachings of Ghulam Ahmad, read the Qur'an and hadith literature, and learn about Islamic jurisprudence and Islamic history. There are five associations based on age and gender: Majlis Ansaarullah (men over forty years old), Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyyah (young men between fifteen and forty), Majlis Atfal-ul-Ahmadiyyah (boys under fifteen), Lajna Ima' Ullah (women fifteen and over), and Nasraatul Ahmad iyya (girls under fifteen). The activities of these associations are designed to maintain and nurture the faith. Ahmadis only marry other Ahmadis, thus this community is very close-knit yet international. Through national and international conventions, young people are able to meet with prospects of finding a spouse.

Today, the number of Ahmadis in America seems stable. They are very separate from either the Sunni or the Shi'a communities, and since an Ahmadi cannot pray behind an imam who is not Ahmadi, there is little hope of an area of meeting. The hostility toward the community is such that members are quite secretive when out in public and usually do not announce that they are Ahmadi. Thus, it is difficult to estimate the size of the Ahmadi community in the United States.

—Aminah Beverly McCloud

**SEE ALSO**

African American Religions: African Americans and Islam

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## CONVERSION TO ISLAM

Conversion to Islam is defined as the formal statement of faith (*shahadah*) in front of one to three witnesses. The shahadah, stated in Arabic, proclaims that there is only one God and that Muhammad (c. 570–632 C.E.) is God’s prophet. Generally a formal ritual of conversion also contains a statement that the individual was not forced to convert and that he or she freely chose Islam as his or her religion. Some Muslims argue that a ritual bath (*ghusl*) is also required, but this practice is not common in the United States. Additionally, there is some dispute as to whether women may act as witnesses for male converts, but there is no record of an individual’s conversion being declared invalid in such instances. Ritual acts following the statement of the shahadah depend entirely on the ethnic and/or cultural group of which witnesses are members. It is common for witnesses to shout *Allahu Akbar* (“God is most great”) after the shahadah is articulated. In predominately African American mosques, it is also common for people to embrace converts and congratulate them on their new lives. In mosques composed of mostly Middle Eastern and South Asian Muslims, it is generally required that witnesses embrace converts three times, pressing the right cheek, then the left, and again the right while reciting one of several Arabic salutations. After these initial rituals are completed, nothing more is done. Nor are there classes for new converts in most Muslim communities in the United States.

Conversion to Islam in North America follows patterns found in other areas of the Muslim world. There are two primary modes of conversion to Islam in America: (1) social conversion, and (2) individual conversion. Social conversion historically has been the most common way people have made their way into Islam. Social conversion denotes widespread conver-

sions among family, clan, and social groups and occurs because of cultural desires to maintain group solidarity. In places such as Southeast Asia, cultural conversion took place when clan or village leaders formally converted to Islam. Conversion of the leaders’ dependents was generally seen as perfunctory and resulted in little immediate change in ritual or sumptuary practice. Learning Muslim rituals and cosmological or theological ideas frequently took generations.

In early Islam, cultural conversion resulted in theological and legal debates concerning the status of converts in the Muslim community and the kinds of ritual practices and theological beliefs that were required to define one as being Muslim. Although these debates have never fully been settled, belief in the provisions of the shahadah generally defined one as being Muslim. Prioritizing belief over ritual adherence has meant that social converts have felt little immediate need to change long-standing sumptuary practices, especially those that have important social meanings for the group.

In North America, the largest social conversion group is composed of former members of the Nation of Islam who broke off to form the Muslim American Community and now constitute approximately 20 percent of North American Muslims. When Elijah Muhammad died in 1975, he appointed his son Wallace D. Muhammad (now Warith Deen Muhammad) as his successor. Although the specifics of Wallace D. Muhammad’s conversion to Sunni (orthodox) is a matter of debate, upon his assumption of control of the Nation of Islam (NOI) he immediately began a long process of disbanding the NOI and leading his followers into Sunni Islam. By the early 1980s, most of Elijah Muhammad’s former followers had made the transition to mainstream Islam. This process,



African American Muslim women shopping in a supermarket, Washington, D.C., 1991  
(Catherine Karnow/Corbis)

however, meant different things to individual members of the community. Many original members kept their previous conversion names and continued to use many of the accoutrements of worship common in the NOI. Second- and third-generation members, however, have been more willing to adopt more mainstream aspects of Sunni piety. This generational change is most noticeable in modes of dress. Older women who followed Warith Deen into Sunni Islam still dress in clothing more acceptable in the NOI, wearing hats with brims and long, Western-style dresses. Their daughters, however, tend to wear headscarves covering their hair, which is shaped into a bun in the back, and their granddaughters wear more traditional *hijabs* (headscarves covering their hair, ears, and neck). Similarly, men who came out of the NOI tend to wear Western-style suits, whereas their sons and grandsons tend to wear *shawar khamis* (baggy trousers and long shirts more common in immigrant communities from South Asia) to worship services.

Individual conversion, according to many scholars, is often prompted by some kind of personal crisis causing one to question earlier religious, political, or cultural assumptions. This crisis leads individuals to look outside their previous epistemological frames of reference for answers to new questions. In North America, one of the primary crises prompting converts to look to Islam is a perception that traditional Protestant churches have lost their social and religious cohesion. Many Muslim converts complain that the complexity of American society has caused intense feelings of social alienation. Mainline Protestant churches, they contend, no longer provide the social and religious solidity they once did. This shortcoming is especially felt in what are understood to be confusing theological concepts and a paucity of ritual activities. Converts see Islam as providing simpler theological concepts and more pronounced ritual behaviors—both of which for them instill greater feelings of communal and religious identity.

Often the first thing individual converts change is their name. Although name changing may take generations in some parts of the world, especially where local practices are blended with Islam as a part of larger social conversion, in North America it is fairly common practice to change one's name within the first year after conversion. Among African Americans, one of the most common names to take is "Hakim," while among Euro-Americans "Yusuf" and "Muhammad" are popular. Additionally, many American converts, especially ones from strong Christian backgrounds, frequently assume the name "Isa" (Arabic for "Jesus") to reaffirm their Christian connections.

Publicly proclaiming conversion to Islam to coworkers and family, however, may take time—several months if not years. Public and popular conceptions of Islam as a foreign and non-Western religious tradition have led many individual converts to hide their conversion out of fears of rejection or prejudice. This has become especially true in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. Although there were widespread reports of an upsurge of conversions following the attacks, many new Muslims chose to hide their new faith for fear of reprisals from non-Muslim Americans.

Learning new rituals, such as prayer, procedures for ritual purity, dietary restrictions, and salutations, is of immediate concern for individual converts. Historically, Islam has not emphasized teaching new converts "how to become" Muslim. Where conversion has been on a social level, new Muslims have felt little pressure to fit into new collectivities and thus have tended not to pay much attention to acquiring ritual expertise, instead emphasizing belief as the defining characteristic of "Muslim." Individual converts, in contrast, have a tendency to place greater emphasis on expertise in ritual acts and sumptuary practices as a means of gaining communal acceptance. In America, the need felt by converts to quickly learn new rituals and practices—and thus become more integrated into Muslim American society—has frequently led many into more conservative forms of Muslim piety. Most American and newly immigrated Muslims have nonreligious forms of employment and thus have little time to spend teaching individual converts about Islam, however. The lack of religious specialists is acute in the American Muslim community because the majority of mosques do not have any full-time, or even

part-time, paid positions. Leadership in most communities is almost always voluntary, meaning that new converts have few people to turn to for advice.

This void is frequently filled by members of conservative Muslim groups such as the Tablighi Jama'at, which engages in missionary work within the Muslim community (*umma*). The Tablighi Jama'at preaches a very basic and conservative view of Islam that emphasizes tolerance and focuses on learning and perfecting ritual and sumptuary practices. Its members abstain from political and theological discussions since these, they argue, create divisions in the community. Instead they seek to teach and reinforce ritual and sumptuary modes of behavior as the way of perfecting the *umma*. Because of its emphasis on a simple message and basic ritual and sumptuary methods, the Tablighi Jama'at attracts many new individual converts. Rarely will individual converts make it through their first year as new Muslims without some contact with Tablighi members. Many new converts, however, find the Tablighi lifestyle too austere and usually shift into more mainstream forms of piety after they have gained knowledge of basic ritual and sumptuary exercises.

Increasingly, new converts are seeking nontraditional paths to learning about Islam. Many take courses offered at public and private (non-Muslim) universities, for example, to learn about their new faith. Thus, in many instances they are studying Islamic history, practice, and theology under the direction of non-Muslim academics. It remains to be seen how this nontraditional form of "religious" education will impact the Muslim community in the United States. It is clear that many new converts see Islam as the solution to personal and social crises. It may take decades, however, to discern how these converts will change the face of Islam in America and around the world.

—R. Kevin Jaques and Donna L. Meigs-Jaques

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African American Religions: African Americans and Islam; Catholicism in America: Conversion to Catholicism

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## ISLAMIC ORGANIZATIONS IN AMERICA

### Masjid-Based Organizations

The *masjid*, or mosque, is fundamental to Islam. The word *masjid* literally means “a place of prostration” and refers to specific buildings where communal prayer and preaching are conducted. In the United States and around the world, the *masjid* is the focal point for community activities and organization. Most *masjids* in America are governed by a board of directors (although this body has various names) that manages the financial operations and long-term planning of the organization. Directors are frequently community leaders and fundraisers who are appointed through various processes of selection. Most *masjids* are governed by a set of guiding principles, or a constitution, but the form and content vary widely from community to community.

Beyond the board of directors, many *masjids*, though it is unknown exactly how many, have an *imam* (“one who stands in front”) who functions as the spiritual leader of the community. The most basic function of the *imam* is to lead prayer, and any male Muslim who can recite the required verses of the Qur’an in Arabic and who has attained the age of majority can fill this role. In most communities, however, the *imam* also serves as the primary organizer of community activities and the main legal and theological authority. In many *masjid* communities, the *imam* has a seat on the board of directors, and frequently he serves as its chair.

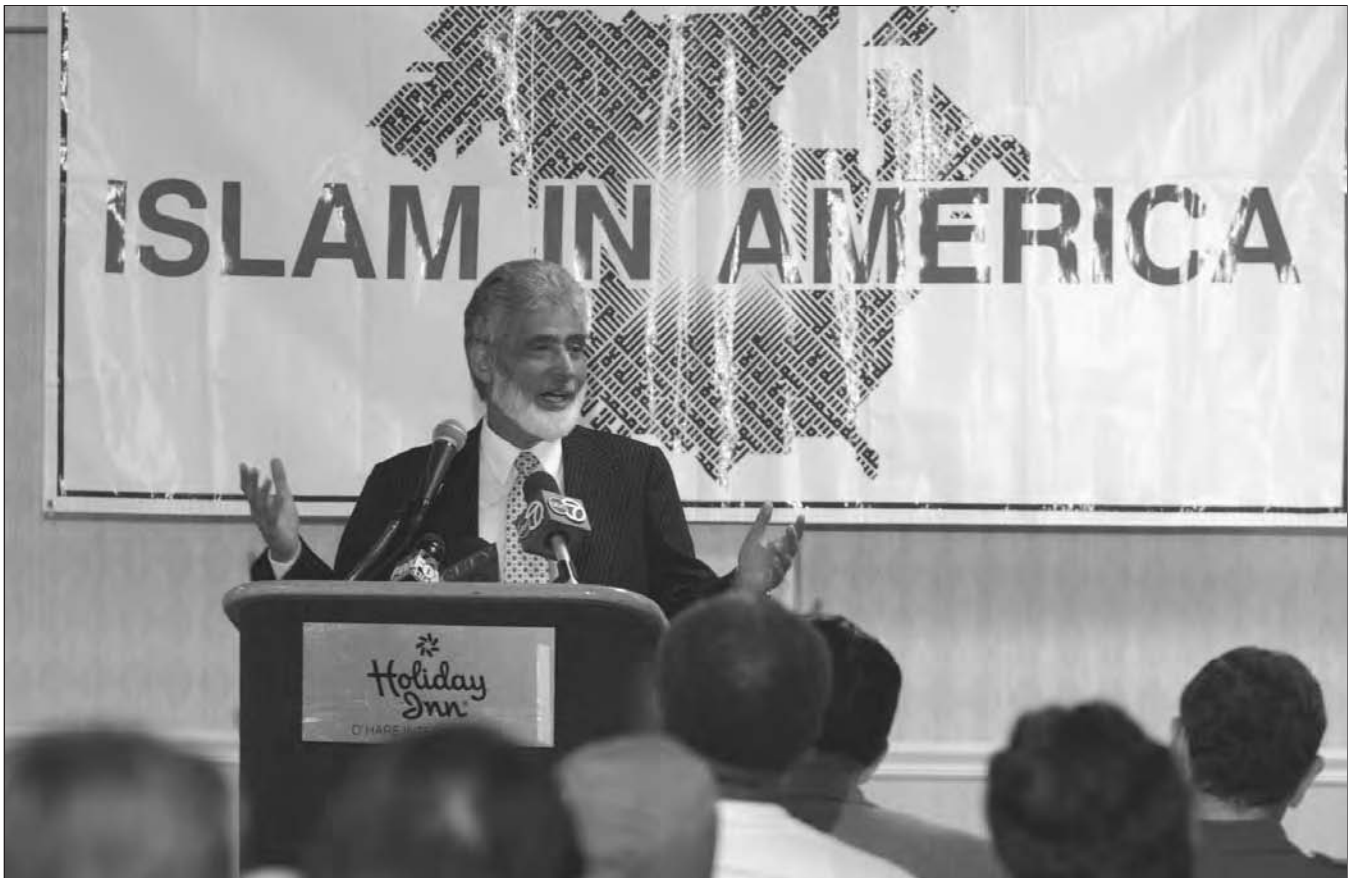
### Masjid Auxiliary Organizations

In many communities, the *masjid* also functions as a clearinghouse for a variety of auxiliary organizations. These organizations are usually referred to as *da’wa*

groups, a term used to describe a broad range of activities that includes everything from proselytizing and fundraising to helping battered women. *Da’wa* means “to call” and is generally taken to mean calling non-Muslims to Islam, or, more frequently, calling Muslims who for various reasons may not be participating in community activities, or who are behaving in ways contrary to local standards, back to correct practice and participation. In many, if not most, American Muslim communities, women are prevented from participating in the direct governance of the *masjid* but have an important role in the administration of auxiliary groups. Organizations such as Sisters United in Human Service, an auxiliary group founded in Atlanta, Georgia, in the 1990s, is organized and maintained by women with the purpose of promoting education, health awareness, economic development, and awareness of Islam among poor and minority women of all faith backgrounds. It was originally established by a group of Muslim women affiliated with the Masjid of Atlanta al-Islam. Although it has since developed independent sources of funding and has become a separate entity, it maintains some formal ties to the Atlanta organization.

### Regional and National Masjid-Affiliated Organizations

Most *masjids* exist as independent organizations that are only loosely affiliated with larger regional or national bodies. Perhaps the largest *masjid*-affiliated organization is the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT), which holds the deeds to as many as 60 percent of all American *masjids*. NAIT is a member organization of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and functions primarily as a financial clear-



Sayyid Syeed, secretary general of the Islamic Society of North America, opens the society's regional conference in Rosemont, Illinois, 2002 (Associated Press/AP)

inghouse for a variety of Muslim groups in the United States. NAIT is modeled on the traditional Islamic *waqf*, or trust, in which a person sets aside land or some other kind of commodity and commits its income to charitable uses. As a trust, NAIT supplies start-up loans and grants to Muslim businesses and charitable foundations and funds the building of new masjids and the renovation of older Islamic centers.

There are also a number of national religious organizations that have more concrete affiliations with local masjid communities. The two largest are the Muslim American Society (MAS) and the Darul Islam National Community, both predominately African American organizations. In 1975, Warith Deen Muhammad, following the death of his father, Elijah Muhammad, disbanded the black nationalist Nation of Islam (NOI) and began a twenty-year process of leading his followers into orthodox Sunni Islam. Although his organization went through a number of

changes, by the 1990s he had established the MAS as the parent organization of several hundred masjids, many of which had formerly been NOI temples. The MAS claims a membership of approximately 2 million and is widely seen as a model of economic and social mobilization in the American Muslim community. Darul Islam began in the early 1960s in Brooklyn, New York, among African American Sunni converts. It became active as a black nationalist social-reform organization and developed an extensive prison outreach program by the early 1970s. In 1971, H. Rap Brown, in prison for attempted robbery, converted to Sunni Islam and quickly became a leader of the movement upon his release. By the early 1980s, Brown, now Jamil Abdullah al-Amin, broke with the Darul Islam movement, because of its drift toward Islamic mysticism, and founded the Darul Islam National Community. Though much smaller than the MAS, the National Community developed an extensive net-

work of member masjids across the United States, especially in the South. It has tended to be much stricter in its interpretation of Islam than the MAS and has generally been seen as less willing to build bridges with non-Muslim religious communities.

### National Muslim Organizations

The late 1970s and early 1980s witnessed the development of a number of national Muslim organizations in the United States. The largest and most broadly based is the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), which was founded in 1981. ISNA, based in Plainfield, Indiana, was formed by the former members of the Muslim Students Association (MSA) as an umbrella group for a wide range of professional Muslim organizations. It has since developed into one of the most visible Muslim organizations in America. ISNA publishes the bimonthly *Islamic Horizons* magazine and hosts conferences dealing with issues ranging from strategies for community organization to imam training and how Muslims can respond to challenges posed by increased popular and media scrutiny following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

MSA, widely seen as ISNA's parent organization, was founded in 1963 at the University of Illinois by Muslim students, predominately from South Asian and Middle Eastern backgrounds. Since its founding, MSA has become the premier Muslim organization in the United States, with more than 100 campus affiliates. Many of the Muslim political and social action organizations that have developed since ISNA's founding are headed by former members of MSA. In the late 1990s, MSA underwent a number of changes on the campus level (though not on the national level) as Muslim students from Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf attempted to introduce more stringent interpretations of Islamic piety. On several campuses, more liberal Muslim students, especially those born in the West, formed new student organizations to promote more inclusive religious worldviews. Frequently called Muslim Student Unions (MSU), these new organizations promote the participation of women and interfaith discussions with other religious groups.

Largely owing to the success of ISNA and the inspiration of MSA, a number of social and political action groups developed in the 1980s and 1990s focusing on promoting Muslim interests in areas of public policy.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), based in Washington, D.C., is primarily concerned with cataloging acts of anti-Muslim discrimination in the United States and lobbies legislators to enact and enforce laws that protect Muslims and other minorities. Other organizations, such as the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) and the American Muslim Council (AMC), are directly involved in lobbying the president and Congress for laws that promote Muslim rights in the United States. Although MPAC has tended to remain politically neutral, AMC took the controversial step of endorsing Republican candidates, including George W. Bush, in the 2000 elections. AMC has attempted in recent years to promote itself as representing Muslim "swing" votes and has tried to parlay that influence into greater access to political officials, especially those with socially conservative agendas.

These are just a few of the organizations important in American Islam and demonstrate the wide array of entities that exist in the United States with differing purposes and agendas. Like all major American religious communities, Muslims in the United States have benefited from the freedom of religion and assembly guaranteed to all citizens by the U.S. Constitution. In the aftermath of the September 2001 attacks, however, Muslim organizations have come under unprecedented scrutiny. It is too early to assess how pressures from governmental and public agencies for greater access to bookkeeping practices, membership lists, and organizational agendas will impact the continuing development of Muslim mass movements in the United States. At the very time that many Muslims feel a greater need for organizations that promote Muslim community development and social protection and integration, some Muslim leaders worry that fears of greater levels of governmental interference in Muslim American life will dampen public involvement and drive many American Muslims into political and public apathy and inaction. Others worry that such heightened attention may serve to radicalize some on the margins of American society and create a subculture of antiauthoritarian organizations reminiscent of the 1960s.

—R. Kevin Jaques

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African American Religions: African Americans and Islam; Public Theologies and Political Culture

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## SHI'ITE MOVEMENTS

Historically, the term *Shi'a* refers to a branch of Islam that originated with the partisans of 'Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad. The early Shi'is claimed that 'Ali was the only legitimate successor to the Prophet Muhammad, having been explicitly designated by him at Ghadir Khum. The Shi'is further restricted leadership of the community to the family of the Prophet, the *ahl al-bayt*.

With 'Ali's coming to power in 656 C.E., Shi'ism emerged as an effective religio-political movement. Although unable to join him in battle, the Shi'is also supported Husayn, the son of 'Ali, in his failed uprising against the Caliph Yazid in 681. The massacre of Husayn and his forces at Kerbala was an important milestone in Shi'i history as it affirmed notions of injustices endured by the progeny of the Prophet and exacerbated a passion for martyrdom. After the death of Husayn's half-brother Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya in 700, a chiliastic vision was incorporated into the Shi'i worldview. A group of Shi'is called the Kaysaniyya refused to accept his death and maintained that Ibn al-Hanafiyya was hidden near the mountains of Medina. Subsequently, many other Shi'i leaders (called *imams*) were proclaimed as the Mahdi, the eschatological Messiah.

Shi'i theology and jurisprudence took definitive shape in the times of the fifth and sixth imams, Muhammad al-Baqir (d. 733–737) and Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 765). In particular, the latter articulated Shi'i beliefs in the *imamate* (religious leadership) and was largely responsible for the construction of a definitive legal system. The imam, he stated, had to be divinely appointed, was infallible, and possessed knowledge that was divinely inspired. It was this notion of the divinely inspired and charismatic leadership of the

imams that distinguished Shi'ism from the majority Sunnis. Ja'far al-Sadiq also trained disciples who transmitted his juridical pronouncements, forming the basis of the Ja'fari school of law. Ja'far's refusal to accept political office and alleged proclamation of the doctrine of dissimulation (*taqiyya*) ensured that henceforth the Shi'is would adopt a politically quiescent posture.

During the times of the imams, Shi'ism was further distinguished by the presence of multitudinous factions that maintained disparate notions of religious leadership. The Zaydis, who followed Zayd b. 'Ali (d. 740), son of the fourth imam, asserted the notion of a politically active imam. Various Shi'i extremist elements (called the *ghulat*) deified the imams and asserted notions such as the transmigration of souls and perpetuation of prophethood. After the death of Ja'far al-Sadiq, a faction called the Isma'ilis proclaimed his son Isma'il as his successor. After Isma'il's death, they went underground and reappeared in tenth-century Egypt to establish the Fatimid dynasty. In 1094, the Isma'ilis were divided into the Musta'li (now called Bohra) and Nizari Isma'ilis. The latter espouse esoteric doctrines and believe Islamic law to be in abeyance. They accept the Agha Khan as their spiritual leader.

A turning point in Shi'i history came in the year 874 C.E. when the eleventh imam, al-Hasan al-'Askari, died. Amidst competing claims for succession, his infant son Muhammad was proclaimed to be the twelfth imam and promised Mahdi. This group formed the backbone of the Twelver Shi'ites, the largest of the Shi'i factions. It is with this group that the rest of the essay will be concerned.

The twelfth imam was believed to have entered a "minor" occultation from 874 to 940 C.E. During this



time, he reportedly communicated with various agents, four of whom attained prominence. When the fourth agent died in 940, the imam was reported to have entered a “major” occultation. The appearance of the eschatological messiah, he believed, would coincide with the establishment of the kingdom of justice and equality.

### Shi'ism during the Occultation

During the minor occultation, the apolitical Shi'i scholars composed many juridical and theological tracts. The most famous of these is al-Kulayni's (d. 939) canonical work, *al-Kafi fi 'ilm al-din*. The political milieu ameliorated for the Shi'is in the tenth century when the Buyids (945–1055) came to power in Baghdad. Shi'i jurists now filled the leadership vacuum that was engendered by the major occultation. Under state patronage, they used the more sophisticated intellectual tools of *kalam* (“theology”) to vindicate beliefs in the imamate and the occultation of the imam. Prominent scholars, such as Ibn Babuya (d. 991), al-Mufid (d. 1022), Sharif al-Murtada (d. 1044), and Muhammad Ja'far al-Tusi (d. 1067), composed important theological and juridical tracts. Shi'i works in biography, ethics, exegesis, and history were compiled by these and other scholars of the time.

The coming of the Seljuq dynasty in 1055 was a major setback for the Shi'is, who were persecuted by the new rulers. The Shi'i center of learning moved from Baghdad to Najaf. Under increased persecution, the center moved to Aleppo in 1145 and then to Hilla, where it remained for a long time. The jurists of Hilla made significant contributions to Shi'i jurisprudence.

Unlike Baghdad, Hilla was spared from destruction when the Mongols overthrew the 'Abbasids in 1258. In a more favorable milieu, Shi'i intellectual thought flourished. The prominent Shi'i scholar Nasir al-Din Tusi (d. 1274) was among the chief advisers to the Mongol king Hulagu Khan. Tusi wrote copiously in diverse fields, including philosophy, astronomy, ethics, geography, and mathematics. Later, the renowned jurist 'Allama Hilli (d. 1325) was affiliated to King Oljeitu (d. 1316). Hilli was reportedly responsible for his conversion to Shi'ism.

'Allama Hilli was largely responsible for introducing the principles of *ijtihad* (“reasoning”) into the Shi'i legal system. Gradually, reasoning was incorporated as a

potent source for inferring rulings that were not explicitly treated in the revealed texts. This marked the development of a new methodology for deducing laws.

The Lebanese city of Jabal 'Amil was established as a center for Shi'i studies during the time of Muhammad b. Makki al-'Amili (also known as Shahid al-Awwal—the first martyr). Although he had studied with many prominent Sunni scholars, Shahid I's Shi'i proclivities led to his imprisonment in Damascus and eventual execution in 1384. Another erudite scholar of Jabal 'Amil, Shahid al-Thani (the second martyr), was executed in Constantinople in 1558 by the Ottoman authorities for expressing Shi'i legal opinions. When Hilla was destroyed by the Musha'sha'a dynasty in 1449, it was eclipsed by Jabal 'Amil as a center for Shi'i learning. Jabal 'Amil attracted Shi'i scholars from different areas.

### Shi'ism in Iran

Another defining moment in Shi'i history came in 1501 when Shah Isma'il (d. 1524) was crowned as the first king of the newly established Safavid dynasty in Tabriz, Iran. Claiming to be a representative of the hidden imam, Isma'il declared Twelver Shi'ism as the state religion of Iran. He promulgated popular Shi'i practices and even sanctioned the mention of 'Ali's name in the call to prayer. Later Safavid kings invited Shi'i scholars such as Muhaqqiq al-Karaki (d. 1533) from Jabal 'Amil to replace Sunni scholars. Shah Tahmasp (d. 1576) promoted popular Shi'i practices, such as the public cursing of the first three caliphs and the commemoration of Husayn's martyrdom by public flagellations.

In 1597, Shah 'Abbas I (d. 1629) moved his capital to Isfahan. He also built religious schools and encouraged the scholars (*ulama*) to move there. Mir Damad (d. 1040) developed the illuminationist school of philosophy in Isfahan as esoteric Shi'ism became a significant component of the Shi'ite intellectual milieu. The most distinguished scholar of Shi'ite theosophy was undoubtedly Sadr al-Din Muhammad Shirazi, called Mulla Sadra (d. 1641). Although he was continuously persecuted, Sadra articulated a new school of theosophical Shi'ism. He synthesized diverse philosophical and mystical thoughts to formulate what he called “Transcendent Wisdom.” Sadra's cosmology of human perfection was based on an esoteric hermeneutic

of the imams' teachings so as to attain enlightenment or cognitive experience of the transcendent. His cryptic writings enabled him to develop unorthodox theological views and to elevate philosophers over traditional legal scholars.

Sadra also attacked the ulama for their emphasis on the legal expression of Islam. The ulama responded by denouncing him. The most influential scholar of the time was Muhammad Baqir Majlisi (d. 1699). A prolific writer and a powerful figure in the state apparatus, Majlisi sought to suppress mysticism, philosophy, and Sunnism by asserting a strictly legalistic and dogmatic form of Shi'i Islam. He also encouraged the expression of popular Shi'i rituals such as visitation to the shrines of the imams and public mourning for Husayn. Shi'i philosophy was marginalized but not eliminated.

At the same time, a major rift arose within the Shi'i religious hierarchy. The Akhbaris, led by Mulla Muhammad Astarabadi (d. 1623), attempted to establish Shi'i jurisprudence on the basis of traditions (*akhbar*), rejecting, thereby, the predication of the Shi'i legal system on a rationalist basis. They also refuted attempts by jurists to appropriate the authority of the imams (the *usuli* position). Finally, under the leadership of Wahid Bihbihani (d. 1792), the *usulis* won the battle for using reasoning as a valid source of law, destroying, in the process, the Akhbari influence in the Iraqi holy cities of Kerbala and Najaf. *Usuli* victory also accentuated the authority of Shi'ite jurists.

### Shi'ism under the Qajars and in Modern Times

Under the Qajar dynasty (1794–1925), the ulama faced a major challenge from Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad Shirazi (d. 1850). In 1844, he claimed to be the *bab* ("door") to the hidden imam, and in 1848 he claimed to be the hidden imam himself and declared Islamic law to be abrogated. This was the precursor to the Bahai movement under the leadership of Baha' Allah (d. 1892) in 1863. The ulama denounced the Bahais as heretics who should be killed.

Under Qajar rule, the ulama further enhanced their authority as the sole exponents of the law. Usage of interpretive reasoning, institutionalization, and centralization of leadership crystallized eventually in the concept of *marja' al-taqlid* (imitation of the most learned jurist). Murtada Ansari (d. 1864) was recognized as the most qualified *marja'* (source of reference for ju-

ridical rulings) of his time. The doctrine enhanced the authority of the ulama as the sole source of guidance. Later, the actions of a believer who did not adhere to the rulings of a *marja'* were deemed to be invalid. In postrevolutionary Iran, based on the controversial concept of *wilaya al-faqih* (comprehensive authority of a jurist), Ayatullah Khomeini established a theocratic state. Claiming the same degree of authority as the hidden imam, Khomeini argued that the function of a jurist was equivalent to that of an imam.

In the Arab world, Shi'ism continued to flourish in Najaf, whereas Kerbala was a continuous pilgrimage site for Shi'is visiting the shrine of Husayn. Bahrain also became an important place for Shi'i learning after it was conquered by Shah 'Abbas I in 1602.

Today Shi'is are to be found in various parts of the Middle East, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and East Africa. There are approximately 1 million Shi'is in America. Early Shi'is migrated to America in the 1880s from Lebanon. In the twentieth century, various political, social, and religious reasons contributed to the increase in the American Shi'i population. Large Shi'i groups are to be found in Detroit (Lebanese), New York, and Los Angeles (Iranian). Since the 1970s, the Shi'i *maraji'* (pl. of *marja'*) have exercised much influence in America as they have established religious centers and sent their deputies to oversee communal religious and social activities. Gradually, many "ethnic" centers have been established. Traditional services and rituals have been imported from homeland countries. This trend has engendered much tension between the younger and older members of the Shi'i population. Attracted by the revolution in Iran and the emphasis on social justice in Shi'ism, an increasing number of African Americans have embraced Shi'ism.

—*Liyakatali Takim*

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## SUFISM IN AMERICA

Sufism is the mystical or inner dimension of the Islamic tradition. Although some scholars argue for pre-Islamic origins of mysticism within Islam, the Sufis themselves claim to derive their practices and concepts from the fundamental Islamic sources, the Qur'an and *Sunna*, the practice of the Prophet Muhammad.

The emphasis on *tawhid*, or the unity and uniqueness of Allah in Islam, opens the door in its strongest formulations to an almost monistic sense that there is nothing other than God. Hence, the idea of the extinction or annihilation of the seeker (*fana*) in the divine consciousness is a prominent aspect of Islamic mysticism.

Historically the Sufi tradition developed through modes of ascetic, ecstatic, and institutional manifestations. The presence of mysticism in Muslim cultures was quite influential and pervasive, and Sufis are often credited with major roles in the Islamization of regions such as South and Southeast Asia, where Sufi immigrants learned the local languages and conveyed Islamic and mystical teachings in vernacular poetry. In these various regions, Sufi practices often took on the local color, for example, incorporating musical performance (*Qawwali*) in the case of the Indian Chishti Order, and shamanistic feats in Central Asian variants.

Central to institutional Sufism is the role of the Sufi teacher, the *Shaykh* (Arabic) or *Pir* (Persian). The disciple promised allegiance to this teacher and was to obey him unquestioningly. Initiates in spiritual lineages were said to be following a *tariqa* (way, method)

that crystallized into specific sets of practices within the particular Sufi orders. Some movements, such as the Qadiri Order, named for Abd al-Qadir Jilani (1077–1166), were diffused worldwide, and others had more local provenance.

In the United States, Sufism's introduction occurred around the time of the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893. Following that, the first major Sufism teacher was Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882–1927), who came from India in 1910 on tour as a Hindustani musician and then began spreading the teachings of the Chishti Sufi Order in both America and Europe.

Sufi influence in the United States remained very limited until the late 1960s. For one thing, there was not a strong Muslim presence in America until after the change in the immigration laws of 1965 that opened access to larger numbers of non-Europeans. Around the same time, the counterculture movement of the 1960s and concomitant interest in Eastern spirituality revived interest in Inayat Khan's movement. His son, Pir Vilayat Khan, revived the movement in the 1960s under the name "Sufi Order in the West" or the "Message in Our Time." At present the name is the "Sufi Order International," reflecting the more transnational currents of today. Inayat Khan's grandson, Zia Inayat Khan, was invested with the succession of the order in 2000 and presently conducts teachings from his base at the Abode in New Lebanon, New York.

In the United States today there are roughly three types of Sufi movements. One strand is more universal or New Age in outlook, invoking Sufism and as-

pects of Muslim tradition but not demanding formal conversion to Islam from its adherents. Included in this category are the Sufi Order International, the Society for Sufi Studies (Idries and Omar Ali Shah), the Sufi Islamia Ruhaniat Society (Samuel Lewis), and the Dances of Universal Peace Movement.

Other orders, while largely recruiting among Americans, are grounded in the Islamic *shari'a* (ritual law) and see being Muslim as essential to spiritual progress within the Sufi tradition. Most of the leaders of these movements are immigrants from Muslim societies. Notable here are the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order, the Helveti Jerrahi Order, the Guru Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship, and the Mevlevi Order. Academics associated with American Sufi movements, such as Huston Smith and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, have advocated the pursuit of a perennial truth and sympathetically presented Islamic teachings in the light of inner or mystical understandings. Frithjof Schuon (1907–1998), a Swiss who ultimately settled in Bloomington, Indiana, was influential in disseminating a strand of this “Perennialist” or “traditionalist” understanding. At the same time he functioned as the head of a Sufi order known as the Miramiyya, a branch of the Shadhili Order. His leadership in America has been succeeded by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Finally, American Sufis include pockets of immigrants from Muslim societies, particularly in large urban centers such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, who follow Sufi practices very similar to those in their home societies.

Sufi ritual and institutions have been adapted to the American context, however. Some aspects of “popular” Islamic practice, such as the visitation of the shrines of departed saints (*awliya*), have fallen away, and a more accommodating attitude to the presence and participation of females has developed. The practice of erecting tombs or shrines to departed Sufis has been transplanted to the American context as the first generation of leadership, including Murshid Samuel Lewis (1896–1971, New Mexico), Guru Bawa (1901–1986, Pennsylvania), and Shah Maghsoud (1916–1980, California), has been memorialized in American soil.

The constituencies and membership of these various American Sufi movements vary, as they represent diverse religious and social orientations. The Sufi Order International and the Idries Shah Movement have had a broader impact on mainstream American cul-

ture than others because of their publishing activities and outreach efforts through transpersonal psychology, holistic health, and Sufi dancing. Members do not have to make radical lifestyle or social adjustments and tend to be white middle- and upper-class spiritual seekers. Interest in these movements probably peaked in the mid-1970s. Although the Sufi Order claims that 10,000 persons have taken an initiation with Pir Vilayat Khan, many more Americans have attended Sufi seminars, camps, or read publications.

Perennialist Sufism along the lines of the writings of Frithjof Schuon, S. H. Nasr, and Huston Smith has also reached a broad American cultural audience through media such as television interviews with Bill Moyers and publishing activities in both scholarly and popular contexts. The impact of these movements is primarily through dissemination of ideas rather than through participation by many followers in organized movements.

In the case of the hybrid, or Islamic Sufi, orders, the impact on mainstream American culture is less significant because the ideas propounded are more specific to Muslim concerns. As Sufi interpretations of Islam—for example, the idea of charismatic leadership and the intercession of pious saints (*awliya*)—are not accepted by all Muslims, it should not be thought that such movements are supported by the entire American Muslim community. At the same time, many non-Sufi Muslims appreciate their success in drawing Americans to Islam.

Public awareness of Sufism in the West has increased through music and literature. For example, the American poet Coleman Barks’s translations of the thirteenth-century poet Rumi are bestsellers and have been performed by celebrities such as Deepak Chopra and Madonna. World beat music also introduced to the West the Sufi-inspired music of Pakistani Qawwali artist Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan (1997) and Moroccan Gnawi performers.

Sufism is practiced in both the Shi'i and Sunni branches of Islam, and a number of Shi'i orders, including the Ni'matullahi and the Oveyssi-Shahmaghsoudi, have followings in both the Iranian émigré and the broader American community. Sufism has had a proportionately smaller impact among African American Muslims, although some interest has been sparked by activities of the Tijaniyya, an Africa-based order, and by the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order, which proba-

bly has the most diverse following amongst the Sufi orders in the United States. It should be noted, however, that even the earliest African American proto-Islamic movements, such as the Ahmadiyyah and the Moorish Science Temple, were sympathetic to mystical and occult streams, including some Sufi influence.

—*Marcia Hermansen*

#### SEE ALSO

African-American Religions: African Americans and Islam; Asian American Religious Communities; South Asian American Religious Communities

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## SUNNI RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Sunni is the abbreviated term that identifies the dominant theological school among Muslims. The opposing group is known as the Shi'a, which literally means "partisan." The word "Sunni" is derived from the Arabic expression "*ahl al-sunna wa al-jama'a*," which may be translated, "the people who follow the prophetic tradition and espouse the unity of the community."

Sunnism is a label that emerged around the eighth century following much conflict among Muslims centering on succession battles, which started a few decades after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. It is a theological orientation that developed gradually as its leaders attempted to adopt a moderate position from a confluence of several highly contested theological and political debates.

After the civil war between the caliph 'Ali and his rival, Mu'awiyah, there emerged several political factions, each of which buttressed its case with a religious and theological justification. Thus politics and the formulation of creedal statements were intimately related. On the one hand, there emerged the intolerant Kharijite group, which established a very narrow definition as to who was a Muslim and declared anyone who

committed a major sin to be an unbeliever. On the other hand, one response to Kharijite extremism was to suspend ethical judgment on those who committed egregious political errors, especially the conduct of rulers that could be deemed to be sinful. Another response was to follow a theology of justice based on reason and accountability. The most prominent among this trend was the Mu'tazila, an eighth-century group of rational pietists. They internalized a version of Stoic logic and articulated their ideas in the discourse of dialectical theology known as '*ilm al-kalam*.'

Ahmad bin Hanbal (780–855), an influential scholar and specialist in prophetic reports, opposed the Mu'tazila when the Abbasid state adopted its creedal formula and proclaimed to impose it on all theologians. The followers of Ibn Hanbal advocated a strict scripture-based teaching and showed little unease if their creedal formula resonated with an element of anthropomorphism and literalism as distinguishing characteristics. The Hanbalis claimed to represent the authentic tradition of Islam unsullied by foreign ideas and presented it as the most orthodox tradition.

The big break for orthodoxy occurred when a leading member of the Mu'tazila, Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari (c. 874–936), broke rank and tried to formulate a theology closer to the Hanbali position. He did so by placing the rationalist tools and arguments that he had mastered into the service of traditional orthodoxy. It was al-Ash'ari who began to formulate in a systematic manner the elementary ideas that later became associated with Sunnism. Ash'arism, as his theological school became known, offered the middle ground between the various political and theological tensions of the formative period of Islam. It was not the strict rationalism of the Mu'tazila, nor was it the radical divine voluntarism of the Hanbalis, but a position in between.

Ash'arism reinforced the legitimate authority of the first four successors of the Prophet Muhammad. It countered the Shi'ite doctrine that claimed that the hereditary successors to the Prophet, known as the *imams*, were infallible. Contrary to the Sunnis, the Shi'as believed in hereditary succession after the Prophet, starting with his cousin and son-in-law 'Ali, who was followed by his descendants. Instead, Sunnis argued that political office was decided by the will of the community and not by divine appointment. Sunnis follow the prophetic model behavior (*sunna*) as reported by the Prophet's companions, provided that such prophetic authority can be accurately verified.

In the Ash'ari version of Sunnism, the essential beliefs are that God acts in the world and re-creates it at every instant in time. In theory, Ash'arism denies causation and potentialities in favor of the direct efficacy of God in the production of events. Human beings acquire the will to act in history, but God creates and produces all acts. God's omnipotence and unfettered power to act defines Ash'ari voluntarism. Evil, in addition, was the product of God's will, the Ash'aris argued, much to the chagrin of the Mu'tazila.

Another school, that of Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (850–944), differed in some respects from Ash'arism and maintained that evil did not take place with the good pleasure of God. Maturidi also allowed greater room for human efficacy. In the later development of this school, the absolute efficacy of human will was emphatically stated. Ash'arism did play a critical role in structuring the doctrine of the Sunni theological tradition.

Sunnism can be viewed as a very broad rubric and a flexible umbrella term that includes Hanbalis, Ash'aris, Maturidis, and some other less well-known theological tendencies. Although Sunni-Shi'a polemics did surface during the 1980s in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution, which was Shi'ite in its theological expression, there have been efforts to create some form of ecumenism between the two schools. In the middle of the twentieth century, there were efforts in Egypt to create greater harmony and reconciliation between the two schools with limited results. However, in conflict-ridden societies such as Lebanon and Pakistan, theological affiliations often become markers of identity and are exacerbated by bloody politics.

—*Ebrahim Moosa*

#### SEE ALSO

Asian American Religious Communities: South Asian American Religious Communities

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JUDAISM  
IN AMERICA





American Judaism is the richly textured product of the interaction between American and Jewish cultures. For hundreds of years, successive waves of Jewish immigrants came to America. Each cohort brought their own particular varieties of Jewish practice and belief, which came into contact with the evolving values and norms of American communal life. The development of a distinctive American Jewish culture grew out of this interactive process; it is an amalgamation of the history of Jewish immigration, religious innovation, economic circumstances, and political developments. American Jewish culture reflects some of the most significant trends in modern American and European history. In many ways, it follows closely the trajectory of Enlightenment thinking and the emancipatory dreams of French and American revolutionaries. For this reason, an examination of American Jewish culture reveals a great deal about the development of modern sensibilities, many of which continue to define normative ideals of American culture at large. But American Jewish culture is not only about sociological themes and historical trends; it is also the cumulative story of America's Jews. It reveals the human desires of these individuals: their hopes for acceptance, their struggles to balance life as Americans and as Jews, their understandings of what it means to be a Jewish individual and a member of a Jewish community. These conflicting desires have created profound but productive tensions that have been a defining characteristic of American Jewish life.

These tensions go back to the earliest history of Jews in America, dating to the mid-seventeenth century. Since that time, American Jewish immigrants have displayed strong but different goals. They longed to fit in and to be accepted as simply American, but at the same time, they were also committed to maintaining their distinctive Jewish identities and their commitments to Jewish practices. America provided a unique opportunity in this regard, one that differed significantly from those in the largely European countries most Jewish immigrants had fled. In those countries, anti-Jewish regulations kept Jews in relative poverty and restricted their civil rights. Jews had lived

in clearly defined communities; their theoretical borders were maintained not only by the oppression and discrimination presented by the outside world, but also by the communal norms and social expectations enacted and upheld by the Jews themselves. Some of this changed with the emancipation of Europe's Jews, but by that time many of these behaviors had become firmly entrenched. America, in contrast, had no history of state-sanctioned anti-Semitism. Founded on the very principles that prompted the emancipation of the Jews in Europe, America was a country that—at least in theory—allowed for diversity and accepted difference among its people.

The Jewish experience in America shows the limits and possibilities of that acceptance. Early Jewish immigrants here found significant economic opportunity as well as the personal freedoms necessary to follow those opportunities as they moved north, south, or west. Jews were entitled to American citizenship, although they were also officially denied some political liberties (for example, they were barred from public office). America offered religious freedom; Jews were allowed to build religious institutions and to worship as they saw fit, although they were also subject to a debilitatingly high church tax. American Jews were also quick to embrace the idea of religious freedom in the broadest sense of the term. Without the social controls exerted by Europe's tightly knit Jewish communities, it was not unusual for American Jews to compromise Jewish ritual observance in response to the demands of the economic opportunities provided by their new land. And although the economic opportunities were plentiful, Jews remained a socially marginalized group—tolerated but far from accepted by American society at large.

America's Sephardic Jewish community remained small and rather insignificant until the mid-nineteenth century. Those years brought a large influx of German Jews, who were escaping an increasingly restrictive environment in their homeland. These individuals brought a new vitality to American Jewish life. They imported America's first rabbis and began building communal and philanthropic institutions reminiscent of the ones they knew at home. Most signifi-

cantly, they introduced America to Reform Judaism, which would prove to have an enormous influence on American Jewish life and culture.

Reform Judaism was very much a product of the European Enlightenment and so found fertile ground in an American society imbued with similar values. Prior to the Reform critique, Judaism had been inseparable from Jewishness. Together, they comprised a religious, ethnic, and cultural whole; Jews understood themselves to be a people as well as individuals committed to a shared faith. The Enlightenment brought a new wrinkle to this understanding. It introduced a new sense of universality to European—and American—thought. Thinkers began to focus on sameness, rather than difference, as a tool for understanding variations in the human experience. This shift had tremendous consequences for European Jews, many of whom were granted citizenship for the first time—with the understanding that they were citizens first, and Jews only by nature of their religious beliefs. Reform Judaism grew out of this understanding; it emphasized the religious nature of Jewishness and eliminated a number of traditional Jewish practices that seemed too particular, overly restrictive, or just irredeemably out of date. In addition, Reform worship was modified to mirror the Protestant norm and to minimize more particularistic Jewish practice. Services were shortened, decorum was emphasized, and a weekly sermon in the vernacular was introduced.

American Jews embraced Reform Judaism with a great deal of vigor. By the end of the nineteenth century, over half of America's synagogues associated themselves with the Reform movement. Reform Jewish communities were established throughout the Midwest, as German Jewish immigrants followed the American move west in their role as peddlers and merchants. This occupation proved lucrative for many Jews, who were able to achieve a measure of economic security, and they began to carve out a space in America's growing middle class. A few Jewish families achieved notable financial success at this time; most of these people lived comfortably elegant lives in America's major urban centers. But despite their wealth, education, cultural achievements, and desire to fit in, these families were never fully accepted by other members of the American upper class. This snubbing was to become symbolic of the

American Jewish experience until well into the twentieth century. It is certainly demonstrative of the way notions of Jewish difference have influenced the development of American Jewish culture. Enlightenment theories and promises of freedom and equality only went so far; Jews were tolerated but not accepted. Their similarity to the white Protestant majority gave them access to economic opportunities that were denied to African Americans and Asian Americans whose racial differences set them too far apart. Despite this advantage, Jews were always kept at arm's length from the social acceptance that would mark full integration into the dominant culture.

The little security acquired by America's German Jewish community was deeply challenged by the next wave of European Jewish immigration. Between the years 1880 and 1920, approximately 2 million Jews immigrated to America. The vast majority were fleeing Eastern European countries such as Poland, Russia, and Ukraine in order to escape increasing violence and widespread persecution. Untouched by Reform Judaism or by the Enlightenment philosophies that shaped it, these Jews were committed to traditional Jewish observance. Many were uneducated, and most were terribly poor. They put a new face on Jewishness in America; their dress, language, eating habits, and style of prayer all contrasted sharply with that of their German Jewish predecessors. This was particularly unsettling for the established Jewish community, whose members had worked hard to become more American and feared losing whatever status they had achieved by having their Jewishness associated with the overt ethnicity of the new arrivals. Their concern was not unfounded, given the expressions of xenophobia and anti-Semitism that appeared increasingly among the populace and in the press. It appeared that Jewish difference was tolerated as long as it was subtle, or at the very least kept to the private domain of home and religious worship.

As the earlier German Jewish immigrants clung to their newly acquired American identities, they searched for ways to instruct this wave of immigrants about the details of becoming American. This effort was especially notable in New York City, where most immigrants from Eastern Europe made their homes in the crowded tenements of the Lower East Side.



Jews praying on Brooklyn Bridge on New Year's Day, 1909 (Library of Congress)



A thirteen-year-old reads from the Torah at his bar mitzvah (Ted Spiegel/Corbis)

German Jewish women, in particular, embraced the opportunity to acculturate their fellow Jews in the ways of the American middle class. Drawing on social work theories developed in the late nineteenth century, these women created settlement houses—educational institutions that provided instruction in the basics of adapting to American middle-class life and creating an American home. Covering topics such as how to dress, what to eat, and how to clean and maintain a home, the settlement houses aimed to erase the styles of appearance and behavior that marked the new immigrant as different. More specifically, they encouraged the embrace of middle-class American notions of style and propriety. The settlement house system was meant to ensure that the Eastern European Jews would take on the values and aesthetics their German Jewish benefactors upheld, those of the middle class.

The tensions that existed between the older and newer Jewish immigrant groups are suggestive of some of the assumptions that define American religious life. In America, religion was understood to be largely a matter of individual faith—not a commitment to communal norms or an expression of cultural particularity. The idea was that individual Americans might attend different places of worship, but once outside those doors, religious differences should become insignificant. The influx of religiously observant Jews challenged this assumption. Their religious commitments were expressed not only in their synagogues but in all aspects of their lives. Observance of Jewish dietary laws restricted what and where they could eat, and keeping the Jewish Sabbath and celebrating Jewish holidays affected their patterns of work and how they spent their small amounts of leisure time. Immigrants would often look for work in industries with a significant Jewish presence (the clothing industry, for example), which facilitated their ability to adhere to their religious commitments. These Jews were not only Jewish in synagogue—they were Jewish all the time, everywhere they were. They implicitly challenged the idea that religion is a private endeavor best performed in clearly delineated spaces at carefully appointed times. In this way, the Eastern European Jewish immigrants disrupted an element of American self-understanding, which did little to endear them to the general public. Not unlike the expe-

rience of their German Jewish predecessors, the experience of the Eastern European immigrants reveals the limits of the American promise of tolerance. Indeed, America responded to this large influx of European Jews by instituting immigration quotas and limiting Jewish access to universities, businesses, and other areas of public life.

The Eastern European immigrants did not only challenge common assumptions about where religion is most appropriately performed; they also complicated American ideas about just what religion is. Consider, for example, the Jewish labor movement. This group had very little interest in what might be called religious Judaism, but it was deeply involved in expressions of Jewishness. Although many Eastern European immigrants did arrive here with strong commitments to traditional Jewish observance, a significant minority did not. Many of these Jews came from Russia, where they had been exposed to a variety of revolutionary sensibilities. They arrived in America steeped in an awareness of the value of political organizing and the importance of issues of economics and class. With many immigrants employed as laborers in the manufacturing sector, the new arrivals naturally looked for allies in established trade unions. To their surprise, they were frequently excluded owing to the xenophobia and anti-Semitic attitudes permeating many of these organizations. Undaunted, the Jews simply formed their own trade unions, which were not organizations with a narrowly defined political agenda. Rather, they quickly expanded to meet a wide variety of immigrant needs. The trade unions built artistic, communal, and philanthropic institutions that nurtured a sense of community and helped maintain this uniquely “secular” Jewish culture. The trade unions were imbued with a distinctly Jewish flavor. Their politics were influenced by Jewish values, their publications were written in Yiddish, and they actively articulated a connection between their political commitments and their understanding of Jewish tradition. The labor movement was their expression of Jewishness.

Needless to say, this model differed radically from the normative understanding of religion in American culture. It was hard to know how to categorize people who embraced their ethnicity and immigrant culture while ignoring the religious elements so deeply valued

in American life. To further complicate things, this behavior ran contrary to that of the German Jewish immigrants, who had emphasized religion as the site of Jewish difference while downplaying other aspects of Jewishness. Rather than being destructive, however, these complexities and tensions frequently served to enrich American Jewish life. For example, Judaism's Conservative movement grew out of the desire to both affirm traditional Jewish practice and embrace strands of Enlightenment thinking that characterized much of American religious and intellectual life. Conservative Judaism developed in the late eighteenth century, partly as a result of disagreements in the Reform movement over the proper balance between religious innovation and tradition. But the emergence of the Conservative movement reflects more than ideological bickering; it also highlighted the way in which America's Jews steered a course with modernity and attempted to integrate traditional Jewish practices with modern American values and beliefs.

Conservative Judaism's rabbinical school and flagship institution, the Jewish Theological Seminary, was founded in 1897 by a group of traditionally oriented, European-born, American rabbis. Almost all of these men came from Western European countries, which is notable given the goals they set for their institution. They wanted to nurture a Judaism that made use of the tools of Enlightenment thought even as it affirmed the centrality of traditional practice; in this way, their vision was informed by both German and Eastern European perspectives. At the turn of the last century, Conservative Judaism's leaders hoped their seminary would help shape a uniquely American Judaism—in touch with modernity, in keeping with American values, but still in harmony with tradition.

For several generations, the primary challenge facing Jewish Americans was how to fit in; that is, how to become American enough to be accepted by mainstream society. As immigration slowed, accents began to disappear, dress became more conventional, work patterns changed, and social behaviors began to mimic those of the more “typical American” sort. American Jews appeared more and more “American” and the line between toleration and acceptance grew fainter, although American Jews still faced prejudice and discrimination in a number of areas—including quotas in higher education and exclusion from a number of business, professional, and social institu-

tions. Although these examples indicate that America was still not entirely comfortable with its Jews, Jews were becoming increasingly comfortable being American. By the middle of the twentieth century, many Jews had joined the postwar move to the suburbs. Like other Americans, Jews settled as nuclear family units, leaving behind the extended families and defined urban neighborhoods that had made Jewishness a normal part of their everyday lives. In this new environment, Jewishness became increasingly private; it was best expressed behind the closed doors of the individual suburban home. There, one might eat Jewish foods (and possibly adhere to Jewish dietary laws), observe the Sabbath, speak Yiddish, display Jewish ritual objects, or listen to Jewish music. In the suburbs, difference was domesticated; it was kept private and unthreatening so that families might imagine themselves as similar as the new homes in which they lived. Like the German Jewish immigrants 100 years earlier, many suburban Jews were more comfortable with Judaism than with Jewishness. Religious difference was acceptable in this environment, as long as it stopped at the door of the house of worship. Indeed, these *houses* of worship functioned as quasi-private places, a public/private space where difference was acknowledged but contained.

In this context, the Jewish journey to acceptance almost seems finished—almost but not quite. The promise of acceptance remains partial. The other side of acceptance is assimilation, the process by which individual Jews become so American that they lose any connection to Judaism or Jewishness. In an ironic turn of events, the people who had spent generations learning how to be American now had to turn their energies to figuring out how to stay Jewish. In postwar America, this task largely fell in the laps of rabbis and other Jewish professionals, who devoted their energies to making Judaism attractive to middle-class Americans who had successfully overcome their Jewishness. One approach was the development of the synagogue center, which aimed to augment its religious offerings with social, cultural, and recreational activities. Echoing the settlement houses that had served a previous generation, synagogue centers emphasized their ability to address the physical and social needs of their constituents. The hope was that these services would bring people in the door; once there, they might be attracted by more explicitly Jew-

ish offerings as well. In this way, Jewish leaders drew on educational theories that were popular in America at that time—schools (or synagogues) would do best by creating an atmosphere that encouraged individuals to develop their own desire to learn.

The development of Judaism in an American idiom was not only the province of the Jewish professional elite. A uniquely American Jewish culture was also being produced by ordinary American Jews as they struggled to find their places within and between acceptance and assimilation. For example, in the twentieth century, the festival of Channukah developed into an important Jewish occasion for American Jews. Previously a happy but relatively insignificant holiday, Channukah's rise in favor was mostly due to the fact that it falls during the month of December—making it a comfortable alternative for Jewish families confronted by the tantalizing spectacle of Christmas in America. Taking its cues from Christmas, Channukah became an opportunity to exchange presents and hold parties; in this way, Jews could be like their neighbors but still hold on to their Jewishness. They could be similar, yet different—a theme we have seen before, but here the context is quite different. In this example, difference is not a barrier held against the Jews; rather, it is a characteristic that is being actively embraced.

Finally, in the second half of the twentieth century the idea of Jewish difference was greatly affected by two events that defined a generation: the Holocaust and the founding of the State of Israel. Although neither of these events happened on American soil, they have come to shape American Jewish identities. Together, these two events gave American Jews a sense of cohesiveness and shared purpose. Fundraising organizations, such as the American Jewish Appeal (founded in 1939), provided concrete means for expressing this solidarity as American Jews raised money for troubled Jews around the world. Although the Holocaust and the founding of the State of Israel prompted both authentic mourning and proud celebration, American Jews also experienced an element of vicarious identification. Indeed, some critics questioned the strength of an identity built upon the experiences of others; many of them argued for a revitalization of traditional Jewish practices as an accompaniment to this vicarious sense of identity. Despite this critique, the Holocaust and Is-

rael remain central elements in contemporary American Jewish life.

At the same time, American Jews are embracing other expressions of Jewish identity. Jews involved in the Civil Rights Movement, the antiwar movement, and the women's movement helped create a more diverse and complicated set of Jewish relationships to the American state and American culture. Jews played a major role in many of the radical movements that helped generate a new appreciation for nonconformity and various expressions of cultural, religious, ethnic, and racial difference. In this way, American Jews helped bring about contemporary multiculturalism. And although some of the Jews initially involved in these political and social movements did not do so explicitly as Jews, the climate the movements fostered has sparked a renewed interest in Jewish religious observance and Jewish cultural production. In this more inclusive climate, religious observance has intensified across the Jewish spectrum; Orthodox Judaism has been revitalized, the progressive Reconstructionist movement has more than tripled in size, and the Jewish Renewal movement is involved with even more radical efforts to transform Jewish life. Jewish studies programs continue to be established at colleges and universities across the country, more Jewish day schools are being built, and enrollment continues to grow enormously. In New York's Greenwich Village, young Jews gather to listen to Klezmer—the traditional music of Eastern European Jews. A whole cadre of younger Jewish artists have produced works that in different ways question the nature of Jewish art and its relationship to American ideas of Jewishness.

Contemporary American Judaism has also been revitalized by critiques offered by feminists as well as gays and lesbians. These insights have been used to reconfigure Jewish scholarship, Jewish communal practices, and religious rituals. This energy has pushed the Jewish community toward a more nuanced understanding of its own diversity, and the growing presence of such groups will continue to reshape American Jewish life. Today's American Jewish community is diverse and complex. Indeed, this diversity demonstrates the fact that there is no single "authentic" form of Jewish expression. In America, there are many ways to be Jewish, and many kinds of Judaism.

—Deborah Glanzberg-Krainin and Laura S. Levitt



## SEE ALSO

Material Culture; Popular Theodicies: Evil in the Twentieth Century; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Feminisms, Liberalism; Sacred Space; Sacred Time

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## THE AMERICAN SYNAGOGUE

Since the establishment of the first North American Jewish community in seventeenth-century New Amsterdam, the synagogue has served an evolving American Jewish population as its primary institution of religious and communal life. Both historically and today, American Jews have turned to the synagogue as a symbolic locus for the preservation of Jewish traditional practice and ritual and as a critical arena for collective adjustment to the norms and expectations of the American environment.

The efforts of Jewish immigrants in every era to use the synagogue to replicate the Jewish life they had known elsewhere had the paradoxical effect of investing their institutions with a distinctively American character from the start. Efforts to concentrate all the services requisite to an observant Jewish life into the synagogue differentiated the earliest American synagogues from their European models, which had existed as one among many institutions in traditional Jewish communities. Early American synagogues were established with the traditional assumption that they would automatically include all Jews within their geographical reach, but in North America membership had to be restricted to those willing to pay dues. Without the government sanction that defined most European synagogues, synagogue leaders could neither compel all Jews to belong nor easily mandate behavior for individuals upon whom they depended for income. Finally, American synagogues were distinguished until the mid-nineteenth century by their lack of any traditionally trained rabbinic leadership.

The earliest colonial synagogues served members of diverse cultural and geographic backgrounds, but all adopted a version of the Sephardic synagogue ritual favored by those Jews who traced their lineage to the Iberian peninsula. Even though Ashkenazic Jews (of Central and Eastern European origins) soon outnumbered Sephardic Jews among those who settled in the North American colonies, Sephardic liturgies remained the norm in American synagogues until the early nineteenth century.

Growing numbers of Jewish immigrants from Central Europe during the first half of the nineteenth century shifted the style of American synagogue worship. Unfamiliar with the Sephardic liturgy and

uncomfortable with the stratified social world of established American congregations, new immigrants began to create synagogues that reflected the religious practice of their own upbringings. These newcomers thus quickly grasped the fundamental principle of American religious life—that congregations must meet the needs of their congregants. This principle would be the driving force in distinguishing American synagogues from their Old World counterparts, leading to a proliferation of synagogues and a broad range of synagogue practices.

Whether or not they were affiliated with synagogues, a majority of acculturating American Jews had by mid-century given up the elaborate series of personal observances that defined traditional Jewish life. Yet, even congregants who lived personally nonobservant lives still firmly believed that synagogue worship should be conducted in accord with traditional practice. Accordingly, changes in synagogue practice were limited to issues of decorum and aesthetics. The arrival of a small number of German-speaking rabbis, with their ability to offer Jewish legitimacy to departures from traditional practice, profoundly redefined this approach around mid-century. Although the reforming impulse of these leaders grew from Germany's emerging Jewish Reform movement, the voluntary and pluralistic character of American religious community allowed more radical innovations in synagogue practice than were possible in German communities. The 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s brought the accelerating spread of organs, choirs composed of both men and women, abridged liturgies, and increased use of the vernacular in services.

A distinctively American Reform Judaism found full expression in the many elegant synagogue buildings (or temples) that began to dot the nation's urban landscapes in the years after the Civil War. Defined by their grand facades and sanctuaries, these synagogues equated Judaism with a decorous form of public worship that enabled Jewish communities to display their own respectability as well as the eloquence of their impressive rabbis. Among the reforms peculiar to American synagogues were family pews, in which men and women could worship side by side, and the expectation that men would pray with uncov-



Interior view of Congregation Sons of Israel, Woodmere, Long Island, New York (Library of Congress)

ered heads. With these innovations, accommodating middle-class norms for female religiosity and male propriety, American synagogues were able to respond to perceived American requirements for respectability.

Concern that these impressive synagogues stood too often empty, and a desire for rabbis prepared to meet the needs of an American Israel, helped lead to the establishment of Hebrew Union College (HUC) in Cincinnati in 1875. HUC-trained American rabbis and the communities they served were able to acknowledge that synagogues should offer more than rarefied public worship. Many Americanized congregations in the 1890s sought to engage their members, both men and women, by expanding the sphere of congregational life, often using synagogue buildings

to encompass a broader range of social, charitable, and educational activities.

In 1880, a small number of acculturated but still Orthodox Sephardic congregations coexisted, with more than 250 congregations that had accepted a varied range of liturgical reforms. Offering formal worship services, serving members from varied geographic backgrounds, and featuring the dominant presence of women worshipers, these Americanized synagogues embodied many patterns that would define the future course of American Judaism. The growing influx of Eastern European Jewish immigrants, however, in numbers that would far outpace the existing community, brought new directions to the evolution of American synagogues.

The newer immigrants sought religious community in small conventicles, gathering in rented rooms (often referred to as “storefront shuls”) for purposes of both sociability and ritual observance. These prayer spaces—in keeping with the traditional male-centered expression of Jewish public worship—were chiefly occupied by men. Although created to evoke the familiarity of home, these small shuls could emerge because of the voluntary context of American religion. Seeking to grow and sustain themselves, many of these communities hoped to win more members by offering grander spaces or more pleasing cantors. In reaching out to individuals from beyond specific regional groups, they began to adopt the architectural and organizational patterns of more established congregations, including provisions for the presence of women and young people in public worship.

The 1920s brought intensified acculturation and a nationwide building boom of grand synagogue edifices. Although these congregations were generally divided between Reform temples, dominated by “German” Jews, and Conservative and Orthodox synagogues, populated by more recent “Russian” immigrants and using more traditional liturgies, all strove to be responsive to the Americanizing aspirations of their members. Built in a prosperous era, many 1920s “synagogue-centers” were built as large complexes, reflecting a desire to bring more of Jewish life into the synagogue. Assembly halls, school wings, and sometimes swimming pools stood behind the prominent facades that marked these institutions as the centerpieces of their urban Jewish neighborhoods.

Throughout the Great Depression and World War II, financial and political circumstances caused many synagogues to retrench even as the institutions and their rabbis filled a vital communal role in their communities. In the postwar decades as the American Jewish community began its suburban exodus, many older institutions relocated and new synagogues and temples arose to serve areas of new and expanding Jewish populations. The salience of differing ethnic origins waned as synagogues defined themselves denominationally rather than by immigrant origins. With the diffusion of dense urban Jewish neighborhoods and culture, public worship and supplementary Jewish education became the primary expressions of an increasingly privatized suburban Jewish identity. Although clearly the dominant Jewish institu-

tion on the suburban Jewish landscape, synagogues often sat back from the road, receding from public view. With smaller, but expandable, sanctuaries, they lacked the grand spaces that shaped the imposing public facades of their predecessors.

In the last third of the twentieth century, as ethnic expressions of Jewish identity weakened, the synagogue played a central role in the maintenance of American Jewish identity. As it had historically, the synagogue sanctuary also reflected the social currents of the age. New liturgies and rituals responded to the Jewish counterculture’s demand for less rigidly orchestrated prayer and more intimate experiences of community. Changing American expectations for women in public life resulted in expanding or redefined roles for women in all communities and in the introduction and subsequent growing number of women rabbis in the liberal denominations. Meanwhile, expanded office complexes housed staffs that became necessary to operate large-scale operations that could no longer be manned by sisterhoods and other volunteer labor.

As Orthodox Judaism experienced a powerful resurgence during this period, liberal denominations also felt pressure to demonstrate their authentic Jewishness through an embrace of more traditional practices. At the same time, a number of radical innovations—including outreach to intermarried Jews and their families, liturgies that responded to the feminist challenges of a patriarchal tradition, and acknowledgment of the rights of gay and lesbian Jews—pushed Reform and Reconstructionist communities in less traditional directions. These same forces have brought forth a combination of accommodation and resistance in Conservative and Orthodox communities.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, American synagogues continue the effort to provide meaningful and engaged Jewish community. In many Sabbath-focused congregations, the synagogue serves as the focal point for its members’ spiritual and social lives. For most American Jews, however, the synagogue remains a place to visit a few times a year to mark Jewish life-cycle events (especially Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremonies, weddings, and funerals) and a few central Jewish holidays. For this group, the synagogue serves as a symbolic reference point of Jewish identity in lives that feel mostly secular.

The synagogue in America has proven a flexible

institution in which American Jews have sought to preserve their distinctiveness in a manner that feels comfortably American. Both the history and the future of this institution lie in its continuous effort to reconcile the often conflicting forces of tradition and acculturation, seeking always to offer a meaningful American way to be Jewish.

—*Karla A. Goldman*

#### SEE ALSO

Hinduism in America: Hindu Temples; Sacred Space

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## ASSIMILATION AND JEWISH ETHNICITY

The United States extended freedoms to European immigrants and their descendants that allowed Jews a new latitude in their collective self-definition beginning with the earliest Jewish immigrants to America in the mid-1600s. The ability to create New World Jewish identities was consistently constrained by the nation’s ambivalence about whether or not outsiders were welcome. As Americans, Jews have thought of themselves as members of a religion, an ethnic group, a race, a nation, a people, and a culture, often in combination with one another. These various definitions drew on different aspects of Jewishness—language, beliefs and rituals, family and friendship ties, and political attitudes. What united these diverse identities was a wish to be American without assimilating, in the sense of disappearing into the Christian American cultural landscape, and to remain connected to Jewish history and other Jews. In addition, the need to respond to American and world anti-Semitism often served to unify Jews and create solidarity through a common cause. Jews overwhelmingly saw themselves as Americans, and thus questions such as when to speak a Jewish language or English, or under what conditions and in what ways to socialize with or remain separate from other Americans, required constant negotiation. The scholarly analysis of these on-

going negotiations demonstrates that while normative Jewish behaviors have steadily declined generation by generation, Jewish solidarity and identity have persisted. The source of that continuity is tied to a wide range of factors, including distinctive patterns of Jewish association and the persistence of a recognizable Jewish culture related to matters as diverse as food, choice of friends, and Jewish humor. It is then no surprise that Jewish thinkers in the century’s early decades pioneered the concept of cultural pluralism to articulate an alternative position to the American melting pot.

### Anti-Semitism as a Barrier to Assimilation

Anti-Semitism, which was minimal in the eighteenth century, served as a powerful barrier to assimilation by the beginning of the twentieth century. One of the key factors in the increasing anti-Semitism was the growth of the Jewish population in America from a few thousand in the eighteenth century to millions by the turn of the twentieth century. In the eighteenth century, efforts to limit Jews’ civil liberties and freedoms existed in the form of special taxes, and some states prohibited Jews from holding public office, but Jews were granted most of the rights of citizenship



Reciting the Kiddush over a cup of wine at a family's Passover seder (Seth Joel/Corbis)

and felt confident enough to fight for those they lacked.

Those relative freedoms for Jews were challenged in the nineteenth century not only because of a growing Jewish population but also because of changes in the first half of the twentieth century. Jews' practice of Judaism was under constant attack as a result of the Protestant religious revival that took place between 1795 and 1835, the Second Great Awakening. Revivalists worked to transform the United States into a Christian nation, and the conversion of non-Christians became one of the central strategies of that campaign. For example, in 1819, Rebecca Gratz, a pioneer in developing Jewish education and organizations, founded with other women the country's first Jewish charity to operate outside of a synagogue. The Female Hebrew Benevolent Society in Philadelphia provided services for Jews in order to protect them from Christian proselytizing, and offered them social services in exchange for attending church.

The Jewish population increased tenfold by 1839, largely because of immigration, while the total U.S. population doubled in that period. Following the Civil War, the Jewish population boom, in conjunction with economic and social changes in the nation, ushered in a more virulent era of prejudice. It was less focused on religious anti-Semitism, that is, the "heresy" of Judaism, than on fears of Jews' relationship to power and money. This "ideological anti-Semitism" blamed the ills of the nation on Jews and therefore treated them as pariahs who must be separated from true Americans.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, the image of Jews in the public mind became more menacing. Jewish men were stereotyped as corrupting the economy and Christian womanhood, and Jewish women were represented as the embodiment of vulgarity. By the early twentieth century, anti-Semitism had become part of a nativist racial strategy to purify the nation, which began in the 1920s with the passage

of a law that virtually halted all Eastern and Southern European immigration, and legislation that barred “nonwhites” from naturalized citizenship. Nativism reached alarming proportions throughout the 1930s and into the war years.

The decade following the end of World War II was a particularly optimistic one for American Jews. Germany was America’s enemy, and hence racism and anti-Semitism were discredited because of their association with Nazism. In public opinion polls, anti-Semitic attitudes dropped dramatically for the first time since the war. In this period the majority of American Jews joined the middle class. For the first time they lived in neighborhoods that were largely Protestant. America’s democracy and success were measured by the ability of that class to own homes and to purchase the many appliances and gadgets designed for them, to own cars, and to pay for their children’s college educations. Jews achieved a new level of integration into the society. They remained a religious minority, but they were unquestionably defined as part of white America.

It was not until the late 1970s, when American Jews reached the upper strata of the middle class, that barriers to equality were finally removed. In that period, the Ivy League ended its quotas. Private social clubs began to include small numbers of Jews for the first time since the beginning of the twentieth century. Court decisions made residential covenants illegal, allowing Jews to live in any part of a city they wished. By the end of the twentieth century, anti-Semitism had become associated with marginal right-wing groups who do not speak for the American consensus.

### **Informal Ties**

Jews have been drawn to one another throughout their American experience, but not just as a reaction to anti-Semitism. In any city with a sizable population of Jews, they lived primarily in Jewish neighborhoods until the last decade of the twentieth century. Shared neighborhoods offered restaurants that catered to Jewish needs and preferences, newsstands that carried Jewish publications, lodges and clubs, and religious institutions such as synagogues, schools, and kosher butchers, which were all settings for and sources of community. Thus, even when residential restrictions

were in place, Jews had other reasons for living close to one another.

American Jews have also reinforced their sense of connection to one another through active participation in the American political system. The presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt was crucial in the development of a Jewish voting bloc because of his openness to Jewish participation in his government. In the 1970s, Jews began to turn slightly to the right wing, but they remain the white voters in the country who are most likely to vote for the Democratic Party. Their voting was also shaped by a commitment to the State of Israel. Shared political outlooks continue to create an informal arena for the exercise of Jewish values.

American Jews persisted in maintaining extended family, like most ethnic groups, and in-group friendship as well. They avoided marrying non-Jews until the 1960s, a half-century after other ethnic groups had abandoned that pattern. In the spheres of family and friendship Jews shared a culture embodied in religious celebrations, special Jewish foods, and unique styles of talking, fighting, and joking that allowed them to maintain their uniqueness.

### **Ethnic Organizations**

Jews resisted assimilation not only through maintaining informal ties of association but also through establishing and participating in more formal organizations that combined Jewish continuity and solidarity with Americanization.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Jews immigrated to America from Germany and other parts of Eastern Europe. Both men and women created ethnic associations; societies devoted to religious duties, such as burial; and benevolent societies. These were not simply secular or religious but instead combined both. B’nai B’rith (Hebrew for “sons of the covenant”), founded in 1843, was the first secular Jewish organization in the United States, and the one most emblematic of the period. It resembled other contemporary American men’s organizations, which began rejecting Jews in the 1840s. Though secular, it expressed Jewishness through Hebrew names for lodges and a focus on Jewish fraternity, and it included women in auxiliaries. In different ways, these various organizations not only met certain religious needs but also helped

Jews to take advantage of the opportunities and meet the demands of American society.

The *landmanshaftn* (Yiddish for “hometown associations”) provide a significant example of how immigrant Eastern European Jews who came later in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries resisted assimilation by Americanizing. In New York City alone, where the majority of Jewish immigrants and their children settled, there were 3,000 *landmanshaftn*, which enrolled a quarter of New York’s Jews and the majority of the foreign-born. The most popular type of ethnic organization among these immigrants, *landmanshaftn* not only created boundaries between an emerging ethnic group and the larger society but also combined both Old and New World customs and behavior. They were committed to the civic culture of the United States, incorporating democratic procedures, writing elaborate constitutions, and exercising and expressing a commitment to liberty.

Among the most important forces withstanding assimilation were the many crosscutting ties that linked Jews to each other in a political landscape created by Eastern European immigrants and their children. Socialism, anarchism, and a radical Jewish labor movement united them around politics, the Yiddish language, and the shared experience of immigration. These various political perspectives were represented in a Jewish ethnic press, as were the affluent and middle classes, who had their own newspapers. The Jewish press was one of the largest in the United States and was published in more than five languages. The press was a crucial media for creating a variety of American Jewish outlooks that combined politics, news, advice columns, and valuable information about American society to which the majority of immigrants and native-born Jews aspired to join.

A complex expression of immigrants’ loyalty to America was embodied in their ongoing nationalist aspirations for their countries of origin. In the case of Jews, those aspirations took the form of Zionism, the aspiration for a national homeland. Though American Jews were always divided over Zionism, in the face of mounting anti-Semitism in Russia and Western Europe it became an important response to persistent discrimination. Few Jews in America intended to move to Palestine in the early twentieth century, but many still espoused Zionism as an alternative to

Judaism for immigrants who valued their common history as a people.

### Religion as Ethnicity

As Jews increasingly became accepted in American society, particularly after World War II, a complex Jewish identity emerged. Throughout the war years Jews had several routes for expressing their Jewishness in relationship to other Jews. A secular, radical Jewish identity was associated with Yiddish culture, support for the labor movement, and a commitment to leftist politics. Jews who thought of themselves as part of a religion identified with several denominations of Judaism. After World War II, with suburbanization, class mobility, and a general turn toward religion in America, many options for expressing Jewishness disappeared, leaving the practice of Judaism as a critical outlet for maintaining Jewish distinctiveness. Sociologists of the period argued that, paradoxically, the majority of Jews joined synagogues to maintain their ethnic Jewishness rather than to practice Judaism. This observation was certainly borne out by the fact that, during the 1990s, Jews had their highest synagogue affiliation rate in the twentieth century and yet attended worship services less frequently than any other religious group in the United States. Fellowship, and above all, raising children as Jewish, appeared to be the primary motivations for joining a synagogue.

### Sociological Theories of Jewish Ethnicity

Social scientists who study American Jewry are themselves divided over what is the source of contemporary Jewish ethnic cohesion. American Jews are highly acculturated. Their religious observances have steeply declined over the century, their intermarriage rates quadrupled between 1960 and 1990, and synagogue membership has plummeted. Affluent Jews are now included in America’s social clubs and serve on the boards of prestigious organizations. Parallel or separate organizations are no longer needed, and hence less popular.

An important, if controversial, perspective on Jews’ rejection of assimilation examines the relationship between changes in distinctive Jewish social patterns and



their impact on Jewish continuity. Evidence from Jewish population studies in the 1970s demonstrates that American Jews' social patterns of marriage, family, social class, residence, occupation, and education have substantially converged with non-Jewish social patterns. Nevertheless, American Jews are still different on every one of these dimensions. Jews are integrated, yet bonds between Jews, such as through family ties and educational institutions, form the foundation of communal continuity, which in turn is linked to lifestyles and new ways of expressing Judaism. Jews have acculturated, but they have not assimilated, because those social patterns, more than religious behavior, are responsible for Jews' attachment to one another and their ethnicity.

Other sociologists have discovered that by measuring a complex of behaviors and attitudes—in-group friendship, political perspectives, and philanthropic giving to others, for example—one could find evidence of strong group commitment and culture, despite the decline of religious behavior, which had significantly eroded by the 1960s.

### Internal Jewish Stereotypes

For many, American Jews over the past three centuries have provided a model of how an ethnic group can combine mobility and acculturation with ongoing identity and continuity. Nevertheless, there is significant evidence of Jewish self-hatred in a variety of cultural venues. Self-hatred points to the internalization of negative attitudes toward the group. One of the most salient examples of that self-hatred exists in internal Jewish stereotypes expressed around gender. For a century, men as well as women of different classes have stereotyped young Jewish women, in par-

ticular. They have been portrayed by other Jews as vulgar, incapable of Americanizing, as suffocating mothers, and as parasitic wives. Jewish men, in contrast, have been stereotyped by Jewish women as weak, arrogant, and unattractive. This projection of classic anti-Semitic stereotypes on either gender suggests a deep discomfort with Jewishness by Jews themselves, even in the midst of successful acculturation.

—Riv-Ellen Prell

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Generations: Children and Young People; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Liberalism

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## HOLOCAUST AND ISRAEL

Both the Holocaust and the State of Israel function as key pillars of American Jewish culture, yet neither the Holocaust nor the founding of the State of Israel took place on American soil. Although this is obvious, it is nonetheless curious, as both are fundamental to the American Jewish imagination. As a result, both the

Holocaust and Israel stand as markers of vicarious Jewish identity and of American Jews' imagined engagements with the experiences of world Jewry. These imagined engagements take various forms in experience, the arts, and memorialization. Often interrelated and codependent, American Jewish re-

sponses to the Holocaust and the founding of the State of Israel highlight their distance in space and time from those epochal events and reinforce the unique, diasporic nature of American Jewish culture.

The Holocaust, the attempt by Nazi Germany to destroy European Jewry (1933–1945), directly impacted American Jewry only after World War II, when refugees emigrated to American shores to build new lives and repair shattered souls. But during the war, American Jewry was powerless and impotent with respect to any significant rescue effort. This must be understood in the context of American wartime isolationism, lingering anti-Semitism, and Jews' fears of standing out in a country that had not yet completely accepted them. Once survivors appeared in the United States, many did not want to dwell on their wartime experiences and share their stories. Those who did were met with a Jewish society that largely did not want to listen.

The Holocaust as a focus of attention did not come onto the American cultural scene until the 1960s, and the story of Anne Frank's *Diary* is the exception that proves the rule. Though the *Diary* had already been edited and mediated by Frank's father, Otto, prior to its initial publication, it was further filtered by its stage and screen producers, who de-Judaized the story and put a positive spin on it. Anne Frank thus became the curiously Americanized icon of the Holocaust in its universalist mode, setting the basic terms for American representations of and fascination with the Holocaust. These terms would avoid images of victimization in favor of heroism and the "happy ending" and prefer universal messages over particularistic and parochial ones.

Following the trial of Adolf Eichmann (the Nazi official responsible for facilitating the murder of Jews who was captured by Israeli agents in Argentina) in Israel in 1961, the Holocaust fully entered the consciousness of American Jewry. This new emphasis was tied to a rise of American interest in Israel. The trial itself was televised in the United States, and it in fact inaugurated an ongoing fascination with the experience of Jews during World War II in the popular media. Memoirs and fictionalized accounts also reached prominence in the 1960s, and a veritable Holocaust culture was born. This culture became increasingly concerned with remembrance of the Holocaust and was fueled in no small part by the politics of American

ethnicity as well as the increasing importance of support for the State of Israel on the American Jewish scene. The Holocaust (with Israel) was becoming the primary reference point for Jewish identification in a community that was otherwise fractured denominationally, offering a common rallying point.

The theme of Holocaust remembrance found expression in educational settings as well as in various outlets of the popular media. Thus, the 1970s and 1980s saw the flowering of Holocaust memorial culture in university courses, films, and archiving projects dedicated to videotaping testimonies of those with firsthand experience of the war. Although the studies and portrayals focused on first-generation survivors of the Holocaust, this period also saw the rise of the "second generation," those real or metaphorical children of survivors who themselves began to stake a claim to the legacy of the Holocaust. One of the most significant members of this group is Art Spiegelman, whose *Maus* books depict in distilled and fantastic, comic-book form not only his parents' stories of suffering and survival during World War II but also his own struggles, as a child of survivors and as an American Jew, to make sense of his Holocaust inheritance. The 1980s also saw the inauguration of Holocaust travel, as teens from the United States (and other countries) joined pilgrimage tours that yoked, through their itineraries to both Eastern Europe and Israel, the memory of the Holocaust with the celebration of Jewish sovereignty in the State of Israel. This paradigm of "destruction and rebirth," while not limited to the American imagination, certainly found a comfortable home here.

The 1990s brought a virtual explosion of American interest in Holocaust memory, with the appearance of Steven Spielberg's blockbuster *Schindler's List* and the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, D.C., both in 1993. Spielberg's film tells a quintessentially American-style Holocaust story of individual initiative and rescue (focusing on the non-Jew and Nazi Party member Schindler and rendering Jews almost invisible in their own story) meant to be inspirational to the average American. The USHMM transposes the architecture and material of the European destruction into an American context and location, even introducing visitors to the camps through the eyes of American GI liberators. The museum in Washington thereby

frames the story of the Holocaust in and for an American audience. As American versions of the Holocaust move into the twenty-first century, imaginative modes of engaging memory and making it relevant continue to proliferate.

The role that Israel plays in American Jewish consciousness is more complicated. Although nearly every American Jew would agree that the Holocaust must be remembered in some way, American Jewry is divided as to its relationship with Israel. Contemporary practices such as the aforementioned pilgrimage tours suggest a staunch Zionism linked to Holocaust commemoration. But in fact there are divergent views as to the implications of Holocaust remembrance for an ideological stance vis-à-vis Israel, and these belie a complex history of American Zionism. Indeed, before World War I, many Americans were non-Zionist or even anti-Zionist in orientation (the Reform movement remained so, officially, until the 1930s). Although many saw Zionism as the only mechanism by which modern Jewry could reclaim its own destiny and fight anti-Semitism, others saw it as negatively tribalistic, running counter to the Jewish mission in the world. One thing is clear: Zionism in America faced a different set of circumstances than in Europe. In the United States, anti-Semitism was neither longstanding nor nationalistic, and it was not a deciding factor in provoking Jewish desires for self-determination. On the contrary, Jews in America were increasingly successful and accepted as Jews, but like all American immigrant populations, they were asked to trade their non-American nationalisms for Americanness. The United States offered a significant alternative to the dream of a rebuilt Zion, and many American Jews, particularly Reform Jews prior to World War I, preferred it.

World War I galvanized the American Jewish Zionist leadership into action, and its efforts had long-ranging consequences. As American Zionists worked to revitalize a movement, they shifted from European ideology to American-style pragmatism: American Zionism became more philanthropic in orientation, and sending money to help build the Jewish state became an acceptable alternative to emigrating and working the land oneself. This approach resolved the contradiction borne by American Jews who had no intention of leaving their comfortable lives in the

United States for a hard life in Palestine while being nonetheless supportive of a movement whose ultimate goal was emigration to Israel. This nonemigrationist view continues to be the dominant form of Zionism in America today. Compatible with the democratic and social ideals of America itself, it rejects the traditional formulation of diasporic existence as aiming toward a future redemption of exile in favor of a revised view of diasporic life as permanent, with Israel serving as a symbolic reference point only.

These pre-World War II shifts in position were also supported by new waves of Jewish immigration to America, which consisted of more traditionally minded Eastern European Jews with a stronger symbolic connection to the land of Israel. And, of course, the Holocaust finally confirmed for Jews the world over the necessity of a Jewish state in its ancestral homeland. Indeed, each subsequent war that suggested the Jews were once again at risk of annihilation strengthened American Jewish support for Israel, which most often took the form of financial contributions. This support was most unified in the 1960s and 1970s. The specter of the Holocaust continued to influence American Jewish attitudes to the Holy Land, but following the Israeli occupation of territories captured in the 1967 Six-Day War, and especially following the Palestinian *intifada* of the late 1980s and the subsequent peace initiatives of the 1990s, a sharp split could be perceived. On one side were those who, based on the Jewish experience of the Holocaust, favored a right-wing militarism to ensure that Israel would “never again” be subject to attack by any enemy anywhere. On the other were those who, on the same basis, supported a left-wing peace movement to ensure that there would “never again” be any people subjected to brutalization and dehumanization. These differences echo others that, especially in the 1990s, left the American Jewish community increasingly fractured with respect to Israeli policies and even Israel’s status as the underwriter of Jewish identity.

But these differences do not negate the fact that American Jews have a largely symbolic and imagined relationship with Israel, one that nonetheless has largely replaced religious practice and identification for a population whose Judaism is increasingly cultural and nostalgic. Except for the Orthodox (themselves not more than 10 percent of the American Jew-



Memorial Wall and detail of figures from the Miami Holocaust Memorial: Sculpture of Love and Anguish by Kenneth Treister, Miami Beach, Florida, 1996 (Patrick Ward/Corbis)

ish population), who consistently send their high-school graduates to Israel to study for a year prior to attending university, or who themselves emigrate (often settling in the territories), most American Jews keep their actual involvement with Israel to a minimum. As with the Holocaust, with which American Jewry identifies imaginatively across the barrier of time, American Jewry has transcended space in order to place Israel as well at the center of its civil (Jewish) religion. Most Jews in America see Israel in simplified, even mythical, terms, as an essential but largely unexplored and therefore imagined component of their cultural identity.

—Oren Baruch Stier

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Popular Culture; Popular Theodicies: Evil in the Twentieth Century; Public Theologies and Political

Culture: Civil Religion; Ritual and Performance: Tourism; Sacred Space; Violence: War

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## JEWISHNESS/JUDAISM IN AMERICA

Contemporary Jewish identity in America is expressed through a complex blend of social, religious, political, and cultural elements. An examination of Jewish cultural trends since the 1970s shows that shared religious practices and beliefs are a large part of Jewish identity for some—but not all—Jews; for others, Jewishness is expressed through a variety of political, artistic, or communal involvements.

American Jewishness is far more than a religious identity, and the continued influence of Jewish cultural institutions in America shows the extent to which this is the case. Jewish scholarship is just beginning to examine the critical influence that these institutions have had in supporting cultural expressions of Jewishness and in forming Jewish American identity. Since the first Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA) opened in 1854, hundreds of YM/YWHAs and Jewish Community Centers (JCCs) have been built around the country. Particularly in the postwar period—and at least partially in response to the destruction of Jewish life in Eastern Europe—these cultural institutions have emphasized programming in Jewish music, dance, literature, film, and the visual arts. In addition, many American synagogues have expanded far beyond their roles as religious institutions to provide their congregants with cultural as well as religious services. The financial support, physical space, and exposure that these institutions provide are often crucial in establishing and sustaining the careers of artists who work with Jewish themes. Some of these artists have gone on to achieve success in the nonsectarian world as well, and their creations have had a role in shaping American multiculturalism.

Jewish modern dancers such as Sophie Maslow, Anna Sokolow, and Pearl Lang began to explore Jew-

ish themes in their choreography during the postwar period. Many of their dances, such as Maslow's *The Village I Knew*, drew upon idealized images of Eastern European village life. Other pieces, such as Sokolow's *Kaddish* (named after the Jewish prayer for the dead), were specific responses to the Holocaust. In addition to being important expressions of American Jewish identity, these pieces helped to carve out a space for multicultural work within the world of modern dance.

The Israeli folk dance tradition, invented in the 1940s to create a sense of national identity in the emerging State of Israel, has also provided a forum for expressing and exploring Jewishness and political identity. Originally, the steps were designed to be simple and repetitious, so that as many Jews as possible could feel a connection to the new nation. Israeli folk dancing has had enduring success in America, and folk dance events continue to be popular events at which many American Jews can explore their identification with Israel without actually having to leave their homes in America.

The sound of Klezmer, and what has become known as the "Klezmer Revival," is another cultural trend that has had meaning for many American Jews. In response to the rise of "identity politics" and "roots" movements that began in the 1970s, many American Jews began to look toward Yiddish and Ashkenazi (Eastern European) folk culture for artistic inspiration. Younger musicians listened to old recordings and apprenticed with aging Klezmer musicians to learn the intricacies of this musical style. The result is a contemporary Klezmer music and subculture that fuse traditional Klezmer sounds with jazz, folk, and rock and use Yiddish lyrics that address issues of feminism, gay and lesbian concerns, and social justice.

The appeal of Klezmer has been matched by a renewed interest in Yiddish culture, literature, theater, film, and language in general. In addition to the popularity of Yiddish cultural courses at the Institute for Jewish Research at the Yiddish Scientific Institute (YIVO), Jewish Community Centers, and other Jewish institutions, the success of retreats such as “KlezKamp,” at which hundreds of people take Yiddish culture courses as well as Klezmer music classes, shows Yiddish culture to be important to the formation of contemporary Jewish American identity.

Alongside the resurgence of Klezmer music and Yiddish culture, there is also a somewhat less visible renewed interest in Sephardic (Spanish) and Mizrachi (Middle Eastern) Jewish music and culture. Although Eastern European Jews constitute the largest sector of the American Jewish population, there are strong communities of Sephardic and Mizrachi Jews on both coasts of the United States, as well as in Canada and Latin America. Interest in Sephardic and Mizrachi culture has provided the American Jewish community with a new sense of its own richness and diversity; it has also surfaced as a critique of the way that Jewishness in America has been constructed as a solely Eastern European heritage.

The Jewish feminist movement also emerged as a critique of American Jewish culture, and it continues to transform Jewish cultural identity. In tandem with the second wave of the feminist movement of the 1970s, Jewish American feminists began to examine their hybrid identities as Jews within the women’s movement, and as women within Jewish and American culture. This scrutiny led Jewish feminists to expose the gender bias in Jewish texts, scholarship, ritual, and leadership as well as the specific, gendered forms of anti-Semitism—for example, the prevalence of the Jewish American Princess stereotype—that Jewish women face in America. At the same time, their critique has served as a catalyst for the production of new artistic, scholarly, and religious expressions that reflect a more diverse Jewish American reality.

The growth of the Jewish lesbian and gay movements—and the later growth of Jewish queer culture—is a further testament to the diversity of the Jewish American community. These movements both criticize heterosexual privilege in Jewish religion and culture and highlight the specific challenge of dealing with anti-Semitic and homophobic bias in America.

This struggle has led to an increase in religious, scholarly, and cultural Jewish expressions exploring lesbian, gay, and queer experiences.

Many contemporary Jewish artists have chosen to examine the intersection of these diverse identities. One example of this sort of cultural expression is provided by visual artist Deborah Kass’s epic image of a cross-dressed Barbra Streisand in *Triple Silver Yentl*. This image, which comments upon the representation of Jewish women in America, the traditional exclusion of women from Jewish religious culture, as well as issues of gender and sexual identity, is just one of many cultural expressions that reflect the multiplicity of identities that comprise today’s Jewish American community.

Clearly, Jewish politics and culture are inextricably intertwined in American Jewish life. An interest in Hebrew language and Israeli culture can be an expression of Zionist-nationalist politics, whereas an interest in Klezmer and Yiddish culture is often accompanied by an identification with the Yiddish-speaking labor movement that flourished during the period of Jewish immigration to America.

Similarly, religious Judaism in America has also been influenced and enriched by Jewish American politics. Jewish holidays that had been either ignored or barely marked by the American Jewish community have been revived through contemporary politics: Rosh Chodesh, the celebration of the new moon, has resurfaced as a Jewish-feminist holiday and is marked by monthly women’s gatherings and explorations of Jewish-feminist ritual. Tu B’Shvat, the “New Year for the Trees,” has emerged as both an ecological and a Zionist holiday. Many American Jews celebrate Tu B’Shvat by planting trees in Israel through the Jewish National Fund and/or by attending a Tu B’Shvat “seder” (ritual feast) that highlights themes of environmental responsibility. Jewish text study has also been enhanced by political concerns, leading to an influx of interpretations of biblical and rabbinic texts, in both midrash and scholarly styles, reflecting feminist, gay, lesbian, ecological, and other sensibilities.

Cultural, religious, social, and political activities are all elements of Jewish identity in America, and these strands cannot be easily separated. That religiously observant Jews will often have an accompanying interest in one or more aspects of Jewish culture stands to reason. However, even “secular” Jews who define

their Jewish identity exclusively through cultural means cannot fully extricate themselves from the religion, since Jewish song, literature, and dance are replete with references to religious beliefs and practices.

For the majority of Jews, however, this separation is not a goal. Most Jews choose between all of these strands as their ethnic identifiers, expressing their Jewishness both through Jewish prayer and ritual, and through an interest in one or more aspects of Jewish society and culture, at different times and to varying degrees. To further complicate the situation, each of these categories is in a constant state of flux—different Jewish cultural expressions gain and lose popularity, new political views develop, and educational and religious trends change over time. Each of these changes adds to the range and diversity of Jewish life in America, allowing individual Jews to express their Jewishness in an ever-growing variety of ways.

—Rachel Kranson

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Public Theologies and Political Culture: Feminisms; Ritual and Performance; Sexuality: Sexual Identities

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## POLITICS AND THE IDENTITY OF AMERICAN JEWS

Participation in American politics has offered Jews unprecedented opportunities for inclusion and representation while also posing significant challenges to the maintenance of group identity. Jews acquired full political rights earlier and more completely in the United States than in any other modern state, but the logic of democratic individualism often came into conflict with the interests that Jews formed as a religious and ethnic community. Although Jews have long managed to navigate these tensions successfully, they have not overcome them. The remarkable success of Jews and their incorporation into the political power structure have only seemed to highlight the uneasy place they occupy as neither "insiders" nor "outsiders" in American life.

During the colonial period, Jews in British North America—a mix of Sephardim and Ashkenazim—gained unprecedented social and political freedoms,

rights that were expanded and formalized with the American Revolution. Although Western European Jews fought protracted battles to win emancipation during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the Jews of Eastern Europe remained excluded from political institutions well into the twentieth century, Jews in the United States enjoyed the advantages of citizenship from the beginning. Certain states, such as Maryland and North Carolina, imposed discriminatory laws, such as requiring a Christian oath as a prerequisite for holding public office, but these obstacles were eventually lifted. The U.S. Constitution made no distinction between Jews and Christians, easing the way for the full integration of Jews into American civic culture.

Although Jews enjoyed equal rights from the earliest days of the Republic, they did not always achieve social and cultural acceptance. As a result, they re-

mained extremely reluctant to mobilize as a community for political ends, lest they be seen as a group with political interests different from those of other Americans. Even after the American Jewish population increased after 1820 with immigration from German-speaking lands, the community, which never exceeded 300,000 before 1880, acculturated quickly and remained exceedingly sensitive about its position in American society. Jewish leaders tended to assert that Jews were merely individual adherents of a particular faith, and not a social or national group with a separatist group agenda. Although this definition of Jewishness never reflected the multifaceted social and cultural identity of most Jews, as a matter of public policy the Jewish officialdom discouraged the formation of Jewish political clubs, urged Jewish organizations not to identify with a specific political position, and discouraged rabbis from sermonizing on political matters. During the Civil War, Jewish leaders made much of the fact that Jews did not support one side in the conflict uniformly, but instead took up arms according to the regions in which they lived. Despite this official doctrine of political neutrality, however, in actual practice Jews—like others—could not help but approach American politics through the filter of their religion and ethnicity. Although Jews remained diverse in their political opinions and participated in a number of different American political parties, they often united in defense of religious and economic interests, supported Jewish candidates, and opposed office seekers who had earned a reputation for anti-Semitism. They strongly opposed, for example, the presidential bids of Ulysses S. Grant (1868), who had expelled Jews from the “Department of Tennessee” during the Civil War, and William Jennings Bryan (1896), who suggested that Jews were part of a conspiracy to preserve the gold standard.

Attempts to obscure Jewish political interests beneath the veneer of a purely religious identity became even more difficult with the arrival of more than 2 million Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe in the period between 1881 and 1924. The denominational self-definition embraced by the German communal elite was incomprehensible to the newcomers, who understood Jewishness as an all-encompassing national, social, political, and linguistic identity. Jewish labor unions, political clubs, and other forms of collective political action decried by the German Jew-

ish leadership seemed natural to the immigrant newcomers, who were particularly oriented toward various forms of Jewish nationalism and socialism, the two mass political movements that emerged among Eastern European Jews in the wake of the Russian pogroms of 1881 in Russia. Ironically, in an attempt to counteract what they considered the harmful potential of immigrant activism and to retain control over the public face of the Jewish community, the German Jewish establishment founded two organizations that were themselves overtly political in their goals: the American Jewish Committee (1906) and the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith (1913), both of which were concerned with Jewish defense work and public relations. After accusations of Jewish criminality were made by government officials in New York in 1909, the German Jews joined with “moderate” forces within the immigrant community in an attempt to rein in the multifarious immigrant parties—orthodox, Zionist, Hebraist, Yiddishist, and socialist—under the umbrella of a single communal body, the Kehillah (Hebrew for “community”). The Kehillah’s demise in 1922, however, underscored the impossibility of bringing all Jewish factions under a single standard in the free, pluralistic environment of America.

The new immigrants from Eastern Europe were slower than their German predecessors to embrace the American party system and were not as reticent to engage in a visibly ethnic politics. Sheltered from the same social pressures that beset their more Americanized and integrated counterparts, their primary political arena remained local, and their activism was expressed through labor unions, rent strikes, and commercial boycotts. When they did participate in the electoral process, immigrant Jews did not exhibit a strong loyalty to any one party but voted for candidates they thought best served Jewish interests and represented Jewish values. During the early twentieth century, for example, they threw their support behind figures as diverse as Theodore Roosevelt, who received the overwhelming support of American Jews in his 1904 presidential campaign, and Meyer London, the Jewish socialist elected to represent the Lower East Side in Congress in 1914.

Only in the 1920s, as the immigrants and their children began their climb toward upward social mobility, did American Jews begin to adopt a more uniform



political outlook, one that stressed liberalism and Democratic Party affiliation. Jews of this period were attracted to the Democratic fold because it seemed to offer them the best hope for inclusion and integration within the American political system. The candidacy of Al Smith, a Catholic who won the Democratic nomination for president in 1928, indicated the party's new willingness to extend political influence to ethnic and religious minorities traditionally excluded from the highest levels of government. Although they had no intention of giving up their group loyalties, most Jews saw the Democratic Party as an unprecedented vehicle for individual success and advancement. This tendency was confirmed by the victories of Jewish Democrats such as Herbert Lehman and Henry Horner, who were elected governors of New York and Illinois, respectively, in 1932.

It was the ascendancy of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, however, that confirmed the Jewish embrace of the Democratic Party. Jews had largely remained concerned with local politics through the years of the Great Depression, but the New Deal brought them a greater sense of connection to the federal government. Assembling a political coalition that elevated many Jews to important positions and instituting social welfare measures that had been pioneered by Jewish labor unions, Roosevelt gave Jews the chance to share in the national leadership as never before. Despite his failure to actively support an effort to rescue European Jewry during World War II, Roosevelt's support of a pluralistic American civic culture, which he set against the example of Nazi racism, won him a place as a folk hero among American Jews.

Jews emerged from World War II as strong liberals and one of the most loyal of Democratic constituencies. Although Democratic Party affiliation gave Jews a sense of inclusion in national life, however, the culture of postwar liberalism did not encourage the persistence of ethnic distinctiveness among whites, and Jews often felt pressured to downplay Jewish particularity in their political discourse. As a result, most Jewish leaders and organizations avoided strongly separatist agendas and stressed the "Judeo-Christian" heritage and values of the country. Jewish organizations such as the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League, which had once made Jewish defense work their focus, now pioneered in the more universal field of "intergroup relations." Al-

though many Jews were drawn to activism on behalf of African Americans, most referred to the American principles of equality and fair play, rather than their Jewishness, as the motivating factors for their involvement. Even Zionist activity, which had become widely supported by American Jews with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, was often couched in universalist terms, stressing the shared democratic values and pioneering spirit of Americans and Israelis rather than highlighting specifically ethnic concerns that might mark off American Jews as different from their neighbors. Senator Joseph McCarthy's attacks on alleged communists in the film industry—many of them Jews—as well as the trial and execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in the early 1950s, pushed Jews even further to translate ethnic concerns into the language of universalized liberalism.

The collapse of consensus politics during the 1960s lessened some of these pressures on American Jews, who over the next few decades began to express a growing impatience with the constraints of liberal universalism and exhibit a tendency to turn away from classical liberalism toward a more group-centered political agenda. Two major trends underlay these developments. First, as American Jewry became more integrated into mainstream society, Jews began to worry less about winning acceptance from their non-Jewish neighbors and to focus more on the urgency of maintaining group identity. Second, with the emergence of Black Power movements and civil rights legislation identifying minority group status mainly with peoples of color, Jews grew uneasy with the way that public culture positioned them as privileged whites. Concerned about the decreasing attention paid to them as a minority group, many Jews, especially the young, followed the lead of black nationalists in crafting a new group-based identity politics of their own. The movement on behalf of Soviet Jewry, the heightened use of ritual and creativity in Jewish worship, the new trend toward Jewish day schools, the reinvigoration of American Zionism (especially following the Six-Day War in 1967), and even the rise of the radical Jewish Defense League all borrowed from the style and rhetoric of black nationalist movements in asserting Jewish cultural distinctiveness. Ultimately, however, Jews remained ambivalent about this new turn inward, finding it hard to break with their classical liberal roots. In many quarters, the tendency toward con-

formity and universalism remained intertwined with the tendency toward ethnic revival. Because American political culture did not expect or encourage Jews to be “different” in the way that it tended to naturalize the “difference” of African Americans and other peoples of color, many Jews remained fearful that an assertive group politics could threaten their hard-won acceptance. Overall, American Jews remained invested in liberal individualism even as they struggled to reinforce group interests.

Replete with such tensions, American Jewish political culture by the turn of the twenty-first century was increasingly hard to define or categorize according to standard dichotomies. Although a majority of Jews remained within the Democratic camp, many were uncomfortable with liberal fiscal policies that did not serve their economic interests; many were against measures such as affirmative action, which reminded them of quota systems that had long retarded Jewish social mobility; and many bristled at liberal support of the Palestinian cause and criticism of Israel. The smaller yet significant number of Jews who joined the Republican ranks found themselves at odds with the outlook of traditional conservatives in their party, expressing concern about the power of the Christian Right and embracing cultural pluralism to a greater extent than most other Republicans. Although they are better represented within the political mainstream today than at any other time in American history—a fact witnessed by the 2000 vice-presidential candidacy of Joseph Lieberman—American Jews have not been able to completely embrace current formulations of liberalism or conservatism, nor have they found an easy balance between the competing pulls of group

loyalty and individualism. Neither traditional “insiders” nor typical “outsiders,” they continue to struggle with the intersection of politics and identity.

—Eric L. Goldstein

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Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion, Civil Rights Movement, Conservatism, Liberalism

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LATINA/LATINO  
RELIGIOUS  
COMMUNITIES



It's all in the frijoles," or beans, according to one popular *consejo* or *dicho*—that is, a proverbial aphorism or saying conveying sacred truths. The food, in this case beans, is said to bind together, *religare*, people of origins that are at once different and common, of various faiths, of various linguistic Spanish hybrids and inflections, and of manifold regional and mythical traditions, musical styles, and more. And yet, there is an unmistakable similarity, a familiarity—of the same family—between and among these various peoples of Latin American origins, from our nation's biggest cities to the smallest rural towns, that becomes elaborated, celebrated, and reinvented as encounters take place and increase. But it's been like this for more than 500 years, minimally. Food, language, ancient customs, certain religious idioms, a way of treating and relating to the young, to the old, and to the peer resonate from Cuba to Puerto Rico and from Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador to Brazil and the other countries of South America as migrants and long descendants from these places meet and form new and uncannily old relationships with each other in the United States. Immigrants and their children rely on inherited wisdom and individual, fresh realizations when making decisions about how to act and react, how to survive, what goals to pursue, and how to articulate more general priorities. In this regard, a well of belief, of shared symbols, and even a distinct spirituality have bound Latina/Latino peoples together.

Millions of Latino Americans are living proof of the intermarriage, cultural mixing, and new master narratives and identities taking shape in the United States: a new *mestizaje*, the (re)creation of an original people from the mixing of various Latino Americans from around the globe. There are many terms used to describe the human products of this cultural synthesis: Latin American, Spanish-speaking, Hispanic, and so forth. Latino and Latina (the feminine form) are post-modern terms, derived, perhaps indirectly, from the Latin root. "Latino" refers to a person who traces his or her ancestry to a Latin American country.

The majority of Latinos identify themselves as Catholic, but innumerable members of the commu-

nity practice indigenous traditions as well, or exclusively. Additionally, over the past 100 years, Protestantism, especially evangelical, or *evangélico*, movements, have made significant gains both in Latin America and in the Latina/Latino community in the United States. However, years of a persistent oral tradition, indigenous survival and resurgences, and the impossibility of a totalizing Christian colonization have blurred lines between faiths, practices, and believers. In the Spanish Caribbean, African diasporic traditions and spirits survived colonial regimes in processes of subterfuge, religious subversion, and "dissimulation." Under chaotic colonial efforts, African, Taino, and other autochthonous traditions flourished in an environment of confusion, toleration, and considerable yet ironic overlap in ultimate beliefs and ritual practices.

Each individual culture possesses a store of shared experiences and memories—including belief traditions, music, holidays, food, language, and rules for relating to family and friends (written or unwritten)—that provide a context for, and thus structure and inform, a consensus reality and worldview. This context, or historical frame, unfolds around a succession of events in a particular place, and ideas and ways of living subsequently emerge as a result of its influence. But worldviews, or master cultural narratives, do not appear in a vacuum; they are produced from existing and inherited discourses and arise from ideas gained from contact with other human groups, or groups not from one's own place and time. And, of course, they are also tied to characteristics of the sense environment: the natural forces influencing one's world.

In the Latin Americas, the starting point for a genealogy of modern Latina/Latino religion and spirituality must begin with the most significant event of the past millennium: the expansion of Europe, Spain in particular, into the non-European worlds, especially the Americas. Spain's colonial rule in the sixteenth century conjoined church and royal power in a dubious mission toward Christian evangelism and imperial fortune. But the church brought to the Americas had not yet undergone its first sixteenth-century "Reformation," or Council at Trent (1555–1565). It was

fragmented into localized saints, practices, and competing authorities tied by lines of pilgrimages and texts. Ironically, the collections of traditions under Spanish Catholicism resembled the “pagan” traditions they were to confront, to help reshape, and to become a part of in the worlds they encountered, both brave and new.

The history of these encounters, though exhibiting unique expressions of religion and spirituality in different places and time periods, may be delineated through broad conceptual and phenomenological categories that map a multidimensional yet singular religious field. The goal of such an analysis is to imagine and represent what Latina and Latino religions share.

### Matriarchal Core

Mesoamerican scholars have identified the domestic female space as the primary site for indigenous religious practices and beliefs to thrive even under the corrosive influence of Christian colonialism. Moorish practices of sequestering women were repeated in the Americas; as a result, private space became the place where ancient spiritualities persisted and women became the keepers of this knowledge. In today’s Latina and Latino religious worlds, women hold high status, if not within the official hierarchies of the churches, then within the domestic sphere, where stories are told of saints, ancestors, family, and friends, living and dead, and of God—all of whom illustrate a sacred proverbial truth.

The tradition of women’s curative status and leadership roles over spiritual and religious matters transmitted in domestic places binds together Latinas of all religious identities and spills out to cover the public world. Thus, many community-based activist groups across Latina/Latino barrios are coalitions of Latinas from different religious bases. In Pentecostal and evangélico churches, women have a century of ministerial and pastoral traditions on which to base their current practices. Every church has a women’s organization that is typically the leadership of the church. Healers in traditions such as *espiritismo*, *espiritualismo*, *Santería*, and *curanderismo* have long been predominantly female. And, within Catholicism, devotions to the patron saint of Mexico, La Virgen de Guadalupe, and various other holy women throughout the Amer-

icas are conducted at private home altars, at public shrines, and at churches and have thrived on the leadership of women.

### Conversion

Recent scholarly discussions on conversion among Latinas/Latinos has focused exclusively on the change from Catholic to evangelical Christianity, or evangélicos. Few have recognized the idiomatic status of religious change more generally: The narrative of virtuous conversion, of changing religious identity or improving spiritual status, has long held sway among the seekers of the Latina/Latino Americans. The earliest narratives of religious change involved the trope of dying and rising—wherein dying represents a period of darkness, crisis, trouble, confusion, or even a period of actual physical death, or a cathartic or trance state. In any case, the convert awakens to a new, renewed, more powerful spiritual state and social status. This very idea was exemplified in the Aztec creation myth, in which the earth is the advanced and regenerated state of the mother goddess Coatlicue. In ancient times, and still today, healers, or *curanderas* and *curanderos*, undergo a period of *tieneblas*, or darkness, before they realize they are “gifted with understanding.” Similarly, *santeras* and *santeros* experience distinct conversions before realizing their gifts as priests and priestesses. In the Catholic *penitent* or *penitente* tradition brought to the Americas from Spain, believers practice ritual mortification of the flesh as a period of “darkness,” necessary, like the Christ of the Gospels, to be reborn as a higher spiritual entity. Pilgrimage, too, is a ritual of conversion—wherein the believer undergoes a period of separation and trial, realization, and change. So, too, is the ritual of evangélico conversion. The evangélico testimony follows standard tropes of trial, darkness, realization, advance, and return. In fact, Catholic-to-evangélico conversion is more a shift than a change outright, since the believer remains within the Christian cosmogony. But underpinning all of these shifts is the dramatic life change embarked upon by immigrants to the United States, a pilgrimage to a promised land, and often back again to the home country. Scholars are only now beginning to draw connections between shifts in national and religious identities.



A fifteen-year-old Hispanic girl celebrating her “quinceañera” walks to the local church to attend a special Mass, Ramona Garden Projects, East Los Angeles, 2001 (AFP/Corbis)

### Exchange

The inhabitants of colonial territories shared and experimented with each other’s religions in ways that favored the colonizing traditions, those that immediately became official after Spain took control of the political sphere. And yet, in Mexico and Central America, ancient Mayan and Aztec traditions coalesced with Catholicism in sensibility, form, and ceremony. Inasmuch as Catholicism changed the Americas, the Americas changed Catholicism. Conversions (and returns) carried old ideas into new expressions.

The swarthy Virgin of Guadalupe who appeared to the newly converted Indian, Juan Diego, in 1531 continues to be closely associated with the Native Goddess designated “Tonantzin,” or “Our Mother.” Today, Aztec celebrations of Days of the Dead welcoming and honoring returning spirits of loved ones have melded with the Catholic All Saints and All Souls

Days—a time to offer prayers for deceased loved ones. The native puberty ceremony marking a girl’s fifteenth birthday has become the ritual of the *Quinceañera*. In Cuba and throughout the Caribbean, powerful African spirits, *orishas*, were given the outward appearance of Christian saints by slaves who faced persecution for religious practice. In Puerto Rico, Catholic saints became associated with regional deities and traditions organized around the agricultural cycle. Official Catholicism was concentrated in San Juan, far from the mountainous regions where “common” people lived. Such was the pattern across New Spain as churches and centers of doctrine clustered in large colonial cities, while the countryside became a liminal space for religious creativity to thrive, particularly in the domestic, private, female sphere. In the past century, ancient rituals—spiritual healing and possession, charisma, prophecy, and more—have



become reiterated in conversion to evangélico and Pentecostal religions.

### The Gift

Religious conversion among Latinos emerges as a gift from God—via the saints, the spirits, or the Holy Spirit—and as a response to crises of many stripes. The original “gift” from God becomes intricately woven into a larger matrix of social obligation, spirituality, and materiality. When Guadalupe arrived in Mexico, for example, she beseeched Juan Diego for a favor, for which she blessed him and healed his uncle from the colonial plague. This was a sacred obligatory relationship familiar to the Aztec. Latinos continue to bargain with their saints—believers pay for pilgrimages, *milagros*, *retablos*, and other ex-votos in exchange for a myriad of miracles. Healers, curanderas, and santeras receive gifts from God and in turn gift others, who in turn gift the healers. Evangélicos are given the “gift” of the Holy Spirit, for which they must gift others and obey God. Some evangélicos receive the gift of healing from the Holy Spirit as well. But the “gift” is often a miracle in one’s life. Always, however, the original gift is from God; it is imparted to humanity, who then gift each other and God in reciprocity.

### Compadrazgo and Ancestral Devotion

Latina and Latino Americanos forge bonds between family, or *familia*, and friends, or *compadres* and *comadres*, tied by the sacred value of “respect,” or *respeto*. The Spanish title “don,” or its female equivalent *doña*, signifies *respeto*; it is given to men and women who have met all their social obligations. The “don” designate is brought into a kinship network that works as a unit to empower the conjoined individuals. The first bond is blood, or family—that which does not bend to the divisions of religious difference, sexual identities, intermarriage, and more. Neither time, space, nor death can separate Latinas and Latinos from their loved ones. Death only changes the form of the relationship. Those who have been welcomed into the fraternity of *compadrazgo*, committed and loyal friendships, participate in the second bond, extended family. Native Mesoamerican traditions have pivoted

on distinctions between those ordained into the clan— young and old—and those outside. Elders especially held venerable positions for their wealth of knowledge. As a result of their similarity, treatment of loved ones flowed easily into the Spanish “don” and “doña” patronage system and beyond—into the commonly held understandings of death and afterlife. Latinas and Latinos, irrespective of religious affiliations, find solace and strength in continuing sacred bonds of kinship into old age and even after death. In the present day, elders are common members of extended Latina/Latino households, and most prefer to die at home. Christians (Catholic and Protestant) and “proto-Christians” erect makeshift home altars to deceased loved ones year-round and honor obligations to loved ones, reconnecting and remembering through the gift of respect.

Evangélico churches, like Catholics, enact effusive rituals honoring women on Mother’s Day, and also the fathers on their day. Evangélicos also use these occasions to ceremonialize their pastor and pastor’s wife or husband: The relationship is explicitly familial and grounded in bonds of exchange, the gift, and respect. The penitentes of the U.S. Southwest organize their fraternities around “prayer, faith, and the good example,” which evoke respect and communion with kinsmen and the deceased ancestors, or “ghostly brothers,” who accompany their earthly pilgrimage. Ancestors commonly incarnate in the shamanic mediumship of curanderas, espiritualistas, and santera priestesses and priests. Evangélicos have developed idiosyncratic ways and attendant biblical proofs to justify communication with spirits, a spiritual practice resonating thousands of years and transcending many physical incarnations.

### The Body

The body is perhaps the common denominator—the border—joining and separating Latina/Latino religions. Ancient techniques of understanding the human body, relating to it, taking care of it, experiencing pleasure and pain, and healing coalesced with European and African ideas and have marked contemporary religious beliefs. Spiritual healing is practiced in all Latina/Latino “popular religions.” Spiritual healing resonates from the evangélicos to espiritualistas,

guadalupanas, and santeras for the dominant Latin American tradition that holds the body as a container for spiritual realities and for multiple spiritual entities or souls—a belief traceable to pre-Christian religions. Centuries of teachings on such matters have shaped a distinct reality that thrives in Latina/Latino communities today. The belief that the body is subject to invasion by foreign and evil spirits is a faith narrative paradoxically binding together various Latino religions. It is widely held that *mal* intentions and practices can also inflict the body in cosmic dramas of spiritual balance that radically individualize seemingly universal dramas. The exact grammar codes for care of the body and soul delineate Latino believers into different practices and denominations. And yet, the majority of believers from the dominant Latina/Latino traditions hold to a dynamic spiritual logic joining the soul, the body, and the cosmos.

### Practice and Performance

Latina/Latino bodies come alive in religious dramas creating and responding to the realities of quotidian life. In each of the major religious currents of Latino life today, whether enumerated or subaltern, the tradition of an active and spiritually animated body thrives in religious performances. In other words, whereas religions in many places of today's world discount or displace the body, in popular Latina/Latino religions the body is central to religious faith put in action. Take, for example, the practice of religious fasting, faithfully enacted by Cesar Chavez (1927–1993) and others as a ritual practice of spiritual enhancement at the cost of physical mortification. Chavez and others learned to perform this rite from the ancient Mesoamericans. Today's indigenous peoples across Latino American cultures continue the performance of religious fasting, as do evangélicos, as an often public or semipublic display of devotion and dedication. Common religious performances also include annual pilgrimages—the Guadalupe pilgrimage, the New Mexico pilgrimage to Chimayo, and the Miami pilgrimage to Caridad de Cobre are but three examples of a tradition that thrives today. Performance or practices that bind together Latinas/Latinos religiously involve a laying on of hands for healing, but particularly involve rituals of public speaking, espe-

cially while under the control of a spiritual guide. This tradition is alive in our times in evangélico churches, storefront spiritual healing centers, or *botánicas*, and shrines across the Americas. Sacred public speech is often articulated in prophetic tones.

### Prophecy

Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta unionized American farmworkers by preaching a gospel of sacrifice for social justice based in spirituality, devotion, and non-violence. Chavez found and spoke his voice through his personal and familial faith: His principles were rooted in a long tradition of speaking religion and justice, a tradition of religious poetics. In ancient Mesoamerican societies, statesmen and -women, philosophers, and warriors searched for truth in poems, public oratories, performances, and other forms of *flor y canto*, flower and song. Through colonialism, natives resisted the exclusivity of Christianity and poetically blended the old with the new in dialectics of religious exchange. The prophetic tradition enables individuals who otherwise may be socially marginal to articulate a moral vision of the world that comes as if a fresh revelation from God. In Latin American communities women and men prophesy religiously—from the Santería botánicas on the street corners of Miami and San Francisco to the home altars and public shrines erected for Guadalupe and other saints, from the activist nuns and priests to evangélicas leading song, prayers, and sermons—armed only with the authority of *charisma*. This Latina/Latino prophetic tradition percolates into settings that an exclusive Christian perspective might deem secular—drag bars, boxing rinks, the sweat lodge—and into political movements such as the United Farm Workers, Mothers of East L.A., Madres de Plaza Mayo, and the female associations characteristic of evangélico churches. These groups and others have taken on causes such as immigration reform, prison reform, and, most recently, the crusade against the U.S. bombing of the tiny Puerto Rican isle of Vieques.

The prophetic tradition of charisma informs and shapes religious instruction and reconstruction, its telling and retelling, but doesn't stop there. It starts and continues a conversation that informs people's vision of the world and maps the space in between the

way things “ought” to be and the way they actually are.

### Conclusion

It is impossible to articulate a single body of uniform creeds that describe the collective religions of Latinas/Latinos. Still, common beliefs, practices, and realities bind them together across institutional traditions so that a new mestizaje is occurring in the United States and beyond. At the basis of this birth of a people is a spirituality formed out of centuries of colonialism and mixtures, resulting in a distinct sensibility, consciousness, or soul. Latinas and Latinos have learned to tolerate certain conditions and to expect and demand other things from religion. From out of the rubble of colonial destruction, a new spiritual edifice arose, and continues to emerge, identifiable as a social field of relations. People continue, and develop their inherited assumptions and abilities, to learn, maneuver, adapt, and change. The ideas that return are those that have proven effective—they have worked—but no idea or practice returns entirely unchanged. Cultures change but never go away entirely. It comes as no surprise, then, that Santería is the fastest-growing religion in Mexico and that Latinas are converting to *los evangélicos*, or that the Virgin of Guadalupe is Mexico’s most fashionable export. Each offers similar ends by similar means with varying explanations. Latina/Latino religions are a set of beliefs and practices that have unfolded over adjacent space and common time under similar rules.

—Luis León

### SEE ALSO

Catholicism in America: Our Lady of Guadalupe; Protestantism in America: Pentecostalism; The Body: Ecstasy; Death: Days of the Dead (Días de los Muertos); Ritual and Performance; Ritual and Performance; Sacred Space: Shrines; Sacred Time: Thanksgiving; Science: Healing

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## CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICAN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

The past three decades have witnessed a rapid diversification of the Latino population in the United States in terms of both the nationalities of the new immigrants and their settlement patterns. Although people of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban descent continue to constitute the largest Latino groups, more recently arrived Latinos are growing rapidly and having a significant impact on the social and religious fields in the United States.

Responding to political instability in their home country, Dominicans began to arrive in large numbers to northeastern cities such as New York, Philadelphia, and Providence in the early 1960s. The 2000 Census estimated that there were 765,000 Dominicans living in the United States, about 2.2 percent of the total Latino population (Guzmán 2001). In New York City, where the traditionally strong Puerto Rican community has seen its numbers dwindle owing to migration to Florida and back to Puerto Rico, Dominicans are becoming key players in the cultural and political spheres.

During the 1970s, when many Latin American countries were under military dictatorships, political dissidents and asylum seekers from Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay arrived, especially in the San Francisco Bay Area. In the early 1980s, military repression and rising armed revolutionary movements led to open civil wars, particularly in Central America. Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Hondurans, and Nicaraguans began to arrive in great numbers, settling in places as diverse as Washington, D.C., Miami, Houston, Los Angeles, New Orleans, and Chicago. According to the 2000 Census, Central Americans represent 5 percent of U.S. Latinos, with Salvadorans as the largest group (655,000), followed by Guatemalans (372,000) and Hondurans (218,000). Given the U.S. involvement in bolstering the repressive regimes, the federal government did not facilitate the process of settlement, as it had done before for those fleeing Communist countries. Especially in the case of Salvadorans and Guatemalans, Catholic and Protestant churches filled the void, organizing a network of safe houses and legal support known as the Sanctuary movement. The

movement drew its inspiration from biblical themes such as exodus, exile, the promised land, and the unfolding reign of God, which were key in the development of post-Vatican II progressive Catholicism, particularly liberation theology, in Central America.

The 1980s, dubbed the “lost decade,” also saw disorderly transitions to democracy and drastic economic crises throughout Latin America, which put pressure on the urban middle classes. During this period, the pace of migration from countries such as Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, and Colombia quickened considerably, bringing many urban professionals to the United States. As the crises deepened, migration circuits were also established between U.S. populations and South American rural communities, many of them indigenous (such as the Quechua and the Aymara). South Americans now represent close to 4 percent of the total U.S. Latino population. This percentage includes 471,000 Colombians, 261,000 Ecuadorians, and 234,000 Peruvians. Altogether, there are 10 million U.S. Latinos of Dominican and Central and South American origin, close to 11 percent of the country’s Hispanic population. The diversification of the U.S. Latino population is likely to continue into the twenty-first century as families seek to reunify, as transnational connections between home and host country are maintained, and as migration from countries in turmoil, such as Colombia, continues.

Demographic differentiation among U.S. Latinos has been accompanied by religious diversification. The most important contributions brought by Central and South Americans to the U.S. Latino religious field include the rapid growth of “pneumatic” Christianity, the revitalization of traditional popular Catholicism, the proliferation of African-based and mediumship-based religions, and the reaffirmation of traditions (*costumbres*) connected with indigenous identity. Pneumatic Christianity centers around a direct, personal experience of the divine through the gifts of the Holy Spirit (*charismas*). One of the most visible forms of pneumatic Christianity is Pentecostalism, which in the past four decades has shown an explosive growth throughout Latin America. Originally

emerging in the United States in places such as Los Angeles (at Azusa Street) and Topeka, and carried to Latin America by missionaries, Pentecostalism has now returned to the United States with a distinctive Latino flavor. A case in point is the Brazilian Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (*Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus*), a global neo-Pentecostal church that now has temples in major urban centers in the United States such as San Francisco, Boston, Los Angeles, New York, and Miami. With healing and exorcism sessions around the clock, the church offers a gospel of health and wealth that appeals to many Latinos struggling to get a piece of the American Dream. Other transnational Pentecostal churches may help to affirm national identities abroad. This is the case of the Evangelical Church Prince of Peace among Guatemalans in Texas (Garrard-Burnett 1998). Alternatively, some churches, such as La Gran Comisión in Paterson, New Jersey, may contribute toward creating a pan-Latino identity by bringing together migrants from various countries in Latin America under a priesthood of all believers (Vásquez 1999).

In response to the rapid growth of Pentecostalism among U.S. Latinos, the Catholic Church has encouraged the spread of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) movement, a form of pneumatic Christianity that preserves Pentecostalism's intimacy and spontaneity while stressing loyalty to the hierarchy and the cult of Mary. With its emotive music and lively worship style, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal has been particularly popular among young Latinos. In terms of nationality, a large percentage of the movement's leadership is made up of Dominican, Colombian, and Costa Rican immigrants who have had contact with the movement in their sending countries. Like Pentecostalism, CCR is a global movement involving a dense network of transnational events and connections such as retreats, seminars, and exchanges of pastoral agents (Peterson and Vásquez 2001).

The diversity of nationalities included in the growing U.S. Latino population has also resulted in the revitalization of traditional popular Catholicism, particularly of the cult of the saints and Mary. It is now common in Latino parishes to celebrate the feasts of the patron saints of the multiple nations represented. Processions, novenas, and special Masses in honor of El Señor de los Milagros (from Peru), Nuestra Señora de la Altagracia (Dominican Republic), El Divino

Niño (Colombia), Nuestra Señora de Chiquinquirá (Colombia), and Nuestra Señora de Suyapa (Honduras) now crowd the Catholic liturgical calendar alongside the traditional celebrations for St. John the Baptist (for Puerto Ricans) and Nuestra Señora de la Caridad del Cobre (Cuba). In the midst of this diversity, the Virgin of Guadalupe, whom Pope John Paul II has named "Queen of the Americas," continues to occupy a special place for Latinos, serving as the paramount symbol of pan-Latino Catholicism.

The contributions of Central and South Americans to U.S. Latino religion have not been limited to Christianity. The 1993 U.S. Supreme Court decision upholding the legality of animal sacrifice in Santería has opened the way for more visible expressions of other religions of the African diaspora. Particularly in cities such as Miami, West Palm Beach, and Orlando, where many Brazilians have settled, nascent Umbanda and Candomblé *centros* (houses) anchor informal religious-artistic networks that bring together religious practitioners with traveling *capoeira* (an Afro-Brazilian martial dance) troupes and drumming masters. In New York City and Boston, Spiritist centers offer middle-class white Brazilians self-help networks and treatment for the psychosomatic stresses of the hectic pace of life in the United States (Margolis 1994). In contrast to the more devotional tenor of U.S. Spiritualism, Latin American Spiritism has underscored the rational aspects of the beliefs in reincarnation and the afterlife, following the teachings of French pedagogue Allan Kardec. In the United States, Latin American Spiritism has interacted with folk healing systems such as *curanderismo* brought by rural Mexican and Central American migrants.

Finally, chain migration has made possible the geographic concentration of Central and South American immigrants not only from the same country but also from the same province or town. This concentration has had an important impact on the formation and maintenance of collective identity among migrants of indigenous descent. Guatemalan Mayas in Indian-town, Florida, or in Houston, Texas, for example, work in close contact with their sending villages in the Guatemalan highlands to organize cultural clubs and hometown associations dedicated to the preservation of their heritage, including their language and religion. Following the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Rigoberta Menchú, exchanges between Native Ameri-

cans in the United States and Mayan immigrants have grown as part of global efforts to develop a pan-Indian identity (Loucky and Moors 2000).

In sum, Latinos of Central and South American descent have enriched the U.S. religious field considerably. As migrants from different countries in Latin America begin to interact with each other and with African Americans and Native Americans in multinational and multiracial parishes and congregations, new forms of religious hybridity are likely to emerge.

—Manuel A. Vásquez

#### SEE ALSO

African American Religions: African-Derived American Religions; Catholicism in America; New Religious Traditions; Protestantism in America: Pentecostalism; Death: Spiritualism

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## CUBAN AMERICAN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

According to most history books, the first Thanksgiving in what was to be called the United States was conducted by Protestant Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock. In reality, the first Thanksgiving feast was held by Spanish Catholics in 1513 at St. Augustine, the first permanent settlement, established nearly a century before Jamestown. History books fail to mention that most of what was to become the U.S. South originally fell under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Santiago de Cuba. From the Chesapeake Bay to the San Francisco Bay, colonies, cities, and missions dotted the landscape, all administered from Cuba. The start of the Anglo colonization of North America would eventually lead to the establishment of the United States. Yet the proximity of Cuba to the United States created a relationship between the Anglos and the Spanish whereby neither could be ignored by the other. Throughout the history of the United States, a covetous eye has gazed upon the island, as voiced by

John Quincy Adams, who compared Cuba to a ripe apple that would gravitate to the United States once it fell from the tree of Spain, and Thomas Jefferson, who petitioned James Monroe to acquire Cuba for its strategic importance. Numerous attempts and maneuvers throughout U.S. history were conducted by the United States to either purchase Cuba from Spain or participate in supporting Cuban rebels on the island to overthrow the Spaniards.

By the start of the twentieth century, a U.S. occupation army was in Cuba, responsible for setting up a government that would become a vassal to the United States. The political and economic life of the island was conducted from, and for, the benefit of the United States. The resentment of the Cuban people to U.S. imperialism led to the 1959 Cuban Revolution under the direction of Fidel Castro. Cuban immigrants have been coming to the United States since at least the 1850s to New Orleans, since the 1890s to

Tampa and Key West, and since the 1930s to New York City; and the migration to Miami, which started in the 1960s after the revolution, represented the largest influx of Cubans to the United States. Today, Cubans represent 5 percent of the U.S. Latino population.

### The Cuban *Ajiaco*

Fernando Ortiz, Cuba's famed scholar, was the first to use the term *ajiaco* as a metaphor for the Cuban experience. Literally speaking, *ajiaco* is a Cuban consommé made from a variety of roots. In Ortiz's metaphor, these indigenous roots become a life-giving substance, symbolizing the diverse ethnic backgrounds of Cubans and how they came together to form *cubanidad*, the Cuban community.

Ortiz used this term within the context of a Cuba composed of immigrants who, unlike those who came to the United States, reached the island on the way to someplace else. For him, *ajiaco* was a renewable Cuban stew and the Amerindians, Spaniards, Chinese, and Africans all contributed to its creation. Ortiz did not use *ajiaco* to mean that Cuban culture has achieved complete integration; rather, Cuba remains "a *mestizaje* [mixture] of kitchens, a *mestizaje* of races, a *mestizaje* of cultures, a dense broth of civilization that bubbles on the stove of the Caribbean." This *mestizaje* is not a finished product; instead it is a "vital concept of constant fluidity."

For Ortiz, *cubanidad* is a "condition of the soul, a complexity of sentiments, ideas and attitudes." Although none of the inhabitants representing the "ingredients" of the *ajiaco* originated from the island, all repopulated the space called Cuba as displaced people. Although not belonging, they made a conscious decision to be rooted to this particular land. For this reason, *ajiaco* is and should be unapologetically the Cuban's authentic space from whence they develop their religiosity.

### Catholics

In order to understand Cuban religiosity, we must begin with Spain. The essence of Spanish Catholicism, forged during the centuries of the long campaign against the Muslim, was transplanted to Cuba during the foundation of New Spain. This was a faith where

avarice and evangelism merged. The quest for gold converged with a crusading fervor to rid Spain's dominions of "infidels," whether they were Jews and Muslims on the mainland or Amerindians on the margins of the emerging empire. The 700-year-old struggle to reclaim the land and vanquish the Crescent by way of the Cross fused and confused nationalism with Catholicism. As the last crusade ended in Spain, a new, vaster campaign became available. This spirit of reconquest, where Catholic orthodoxy and Spanish identity became synonymous, did not stop with the vanquishing of Jews and Moors from Spain, but journeyed with Columbus on his voyage to what later was to be called Cuba.

Throughout Cuban history, the priesthood, which was predominately Spanish and white, became an important voice on the island by catering to and identifying with the economically powerful elite of La Habana. Some of these priests went to Cuba as ecclesiastical exiles, sent from Spain as a form of punishment for church-related infractions. These priests were not the best and brightest Spain had to offer, and almost all considered Cuba a post to avoid. By the eve of the 1959 revolution, of the 3,000 Catholic priests in Cuba approximately 2,500 were from Spain, trained during the Franco dictatorship and highly influenced by the bitter Spanish Civil War victory over communism, which clothed itself in heavy religious overtones.

The Cuban Catholic Church, prior to the Cuban Revolution, was highly influenced by the denunciation of communism, understanding Catholicism and Marxism to be mutually exclusive. These priests transplanted the atmosphere of a religious crusade against communism from Spain to Cuba. After 1959, many Catholics feared the establishment of an atheist Communist rule on the island. Those who chose Miami as their response to the Castro revolution brought with them religiously cloaked sentiments about communism that had originated in Franco's Spain. The dialogue that developed between the Left and the church after Vatican II and the rise of liberation theology in Latin America came too late for Cubans. The Exilic Cuban mind was set. To be a Cuban Christian meant to participate in the crusade against communism and Castro. To recognize any achievements accomplished in Cuba, or to have an opinion that might in any way be construed as somehow benefiting or complementing present-day Cuba,

was to betray one's fidelity to God and instead proclaim an allegiance with Satan.

### Africans

The elaborate belief system of the Yoruba became part of the Cuban experience when colonial Cuba began to import African slaves to develop the urban centers and work the mines and sugar estates. These Africans were noble patricians and priests who had been disloyal to the ascendancy of new rulers. The vicissitudes of monarchic power struggles resulted in those opposing the new hegemony becoming enslaved and expatriated. Tragically torn from their ordered religious life, Africans were compelled to adjust their belief system to the immediate challenges presented by colonial Cuba. This transition created a new religious expression called Santería, where the Yoruba ethos survived by manifesting itself through Spanish Catholicism.

Four African religious-cultural structures live within the overall national Cuban ethos: the *palo monte* of Kongo origin, the *regla Arará* of Ewe-fon origin, the *Abakuá* Secret Society, and the *regla de Ocha* of Yoruba. The latter, as Santería, is the most popular among Cubans. Santería, also known as the Lucumi religion, is the product of a religious space created when Catholic Spaniards enslaved Africans. Specifically, Santería's components consist of a European Christianity shaped by the Counter-Reformation and Spanish "folk" Catholicism blended together with African worship as practiced by the Yoruba of Nigeria and as modified by nineteenth-century Kardecian spiritualism, which originated in France and was later popularized in the Caribbean.

Santería is recognized as a legitimate religion in the United States. On June 11, 1992, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the practitioners of Santería had a constitutional right to sacrifice animals in connection with their rituals. Although it is impossible to document the exact number of *orisha* worshippers, some scholars estimate that about 5 million in the United States are identified with the religion of Santería.

### Protestants

The first Euro-American Protestant worship service in Cuba (excluding the brief English occupation in

the 1700s) was held on a U.S. gunboat in 1871 in La Habana Harbor. This event characterized the relationship that eventually developed between the United States and Cuba, a relationship that understood the political through the spiritual. After Teddy Roosevelt "saved" Cuba from the Spanish empire, U.S. Protestants attempted to save Cuba from Roman Catholicism. Protestant Christian magazines at the turn of the century described the military intervention in Cuba as an "act of providence," a response to a "Macedonian Call." Although Cuban Protestants proudly claimed that the first Protestant congregation was founded by Cubans, the fact remains that 95 percent of the resources needed to build and maintain these Protestant churches in Cuba came from the United States. After the 1959 revolution, like Catholics, many Protestants came to the United States. Entire congregations disappeared on the island. Their connections with U.S. denominations provided resources for their reestablishment in the United States. Like their Catholic counterparts, Protestants, cloaking an antileftist attitude with Christian piety, understood the Castro regime as a manifestation of evil.

### The Diaspora

U.S. Latinos who are not Cubans often find it difficult to understand the Miami Cuban experience. Part of this misunderstanding is based on the social location of Exilic Cubans. Miami Cubans are whiter as well as more economically, politically, and educationally established than most other U.S. Latinas/Latinos. These pronounced differences between Exilic Cubans and other U.S. Latinos have created misinterpretations and, at times, mistrust.

In order to understand the Exilic Cuban religious mind-set prevalent in Miami, one must realize that for the Miami Cubans, the universe is conceived and perceived in its relationship to one person, Fidel Castro. Cuban émigrés differ from other Latina/Latino groups because their immigration is rooted in the changing political situation in the homeland. Other U.S. Latina/Latino groups pursue a political agenda with a variety of issues encompassing bilingual education, immigration, affirmative action, improving social services in the barrios, and police brutality, just to mention a few. Exilic Cubans, in contrast, are politi-





An elderly Cuban exiled refugee places flowers at a shrine in front of her house in Little Havana, Miami, Florida (Nathan Benn/Corbis)

cally focused—the elimination of Castro becomes an all-consuming fire central to the construction of every opinion, action, and resolution that may originate in Miami. Castro, as the incarnation of Satan, informs the daily experience of the Exilic community. *La lucha*, the very struggle of life, is geared against the figure of Castro, taking on religious proportions.

—Miguel A. De la Torre

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African American Religions; African-Derived American Religions; Catholicism in America; Protestantism in America

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## FEMINIST THEOLOGY FROM A MUJERISTA PERSPECTIVE

The publication in 1988 of *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church*, coauthored by Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Yolanda Tarango, made a presence for Latinas' religious understandings and practices in the academic world, affecting how God is understood and explained in society at large and in the Christian churches in particular. Soon after its publication, Latina women began to use the term *mujerista theology* to refer to explanations of their faith and its role in their daily struggles, to claim their right to speak with their own voice, to point out the particularity and significance of their own understandings, and to indicate the importance of religion in their culture.

As a liberative praxis that does not separate ethics from theology, *mujerista theology* understands itself as a reflective action that has as its goal liberation. As a theological enterprise, *mujerista theology* works to enable the development of Latinas' moral agency grounded in a vision of liberation that focuses on the need to be conscious of and to struggle against internalized oppressions, on transforming oppressive societal structures, and on turning away from sin in order

not only to survive but to flourish. This threefold emphasis of *mujerista theology* on Latinas' struggles for fullness of life identifies the key elements of its method: the experience of Latinas as its source and liberation as its norm. As a theological discourse, *mujerista theology* seeks to provide Latinas with an opportunity to be self-defining subjects instead of objects of theology. It uses an ethnographic method, attempting to provide a platform for Latinas' voices and recognizing them as admirably capable of speaking for themselves and explaining their religious understandings. *Mujerista theology* insists on the subjectivity of all theology and on the importance of recognizing that all theology is human-talk and has to be, therefore, open-ended.

Very important to *mujerista theology's* insistence on the centrality of Latinas' experience is the category of *lo cotidiano*, the horizon of daily life, of Latinas' common, ordinary lives. *Lo cotidiano* is enmeshed in the materiality of life, which is an intrinsic element of God's creation, and which, for Christians, God embraces in a most unique way in becoming incarnate in

Jesus. Lo cotidiano is the main arena of Latinas' struggles and knowledge and constitutes the place, the moments, and the occasions when they come to understand reality. It makes Latinas face reality, that is, apprehend it, take responsibility for it, and change it, rather than merely having an idea of it.

The centuries-old postulates that theology is "faith seeking understanding" and that God's revelation continues to unfold in the lives of the communities of faith provide a firm basis for *mujerista* theology's insistence on Latinas' experience as its source. *Mujerista* theology also embraces the more recent dictum that recognizes the epistemological and hermeneutical privilege of the poor and oppressed. As women within a marginalized community, in a patriarchal culture embedded in a likewise patriarchal dominant culture, Latinas are indeed subjugated and often saddled not only with their own survival but also with the survival of children and the elderly. This situation places them indeed among the oppressed of the world, with whom God walks in a special way, not because they are morally better but because from their marginalized position they can see a radically different future society from which no one is to be excluded.

All the theological themes that *mujerista* theology elaborates emerge from Latinas' experience of liberative praxis as it happens in lo cotidiano. One of these themes is the understanding and reelaboration of the term "kingdom of God." *Mujerista* theology speaks instead of the "kin-dom of God," of *la familia de Dios*. The image of "kingdom" in the twenty-first century has little relevance besides supporting oppressive patriarchal and elitist understandings and structures. It is much more relevant for Latinas to speak about the kin-dom of God, the family of God, from which no one is excluded, in which relations are mutual, in which priority is given to the most vulnerable and the neediest. In *mujerista* theology, the family of God—God's kin—is not something of the next world, no matter how such a world is understood. The kin-dom of God is part of this world. It is something concrete that Latinas struggle to make tangible in their communities. It needs to become a reality, and it flourishes in the midst of Latinas' struggle for justice. This perspective is not based in a false belief that human beings accomplish their own salvation. However, it does affirm that having been created by God, all are responsible for establishing justice and peace as reali-

ties in this world because they are the central elements of the gospel of Jesus. In *mujerista* theology, the resolve regarding the centrality of the struggle for justice does not negate the need for faith in God nor human dependence on God's grace.

A second theological theme in *mujerista* theology is sin, which is recognized as essentially social. Sin for Latinas involves not being responsible for their families and their communities. It involves opposing, postponing, or not facilitating the inclusion of all in the family of God, where all are loved and where everyone's rights and responsibilities are recognized. It is linked to prejudice and to the practices and institutions that do not recognize each and every individual as a moral subject capable of contributing to the good of the community. In *mujerista* theology, sin is the antiliberation force that sustains the well-being and privileges of some at the expense of the majority of the people in the world.

A third theological theme in *mujerista* theology is that of justice, which is understood as a process of inclusion that emphasizes, according to the situation at hand, elements such as reconciliation, solidarity, and equity. *Mujerista* theology understands justice as a constitutive element of the gospel message, best explained in Matthew 25:31–46, where God is identified with the poor and the marginalized. The process of justice starts with Latinas' present experience of injustice. Justice has to do primarily with establishing just relationships that affirm truthfully the concrete reality of others as embodied beings with the capacity to be self-defining, essentially relational, and involved in social, political, economic, and cultural contexts made operative by systems and institutions. Just relationships insist on the right of all persons to develop and flourish, affirming their individuality while recognizing their sociality and acknowledging the need for mutuality and accountability.

A fourth theological theme *mujerista* theology has started to elaborate is Christology that, because it is rooted in ethics, cannot say anything about Christ that does not contribute to justice and peace. Latinas live according to a Christology that is related less to the ecclesial Christ than to the historical Jesus, whom they believe walks with them in their daily struggles. Christology in *mujerista* theology is not about a Christ who was but who is, and who, therefore, is open to present and future elaborations. This concept

emphasizes that each Christian is an *alter Christus*, another Christ. In this sense, Christ today refers not only to Jesus of Nazareth but also to Oscar Romero of El Salvador, to Mama Leo and Juan Lugo of Puerto Rico and New York, to Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta of California, to the multitude of Latinas and Latinos who relentlessly struggle for liberation day after day.

Other elaborations of Latina theology that do not use the name *mujerista* also utilize liberation as their hermeneutical lens, though not necessarily as their criterion. These other Latina theological elaborations likewise insist on the Latina experience as an intrinsic element of their source, though they often do not provide a platform for the actual voices of grassroots Latinas. Although some seem to emphasize the centrality of the Bible, others seem to concentrate on an analysis of Latinas' reality as a basis for their theological elaborations. *Mujerista* theology and other Latina theological voices in the United States leave no doubt that salvation is not to be understood apart from liberation. They all insist that their goal is the liberation of Latinas, and not equality within oppressive structures, and that Latinas' well-being is tied to that of other oppressed and marginalized peoples the world over.

*Mujerista* theology is a recent enterprise and those engaged in it wish to continue to contribute to the conscientization and enablement of Latinas. They are committed to advocating for Latinas by having their voices heard at ecclesial and academic institutions. Since religion is something alive, and all theology is

contextualized theology, *mujerista* theology faces new challenges as it continues to develop. Those that seem most urgent involve the sociological and anthropological mediations used in theology, that is, the sociological and anthropological information that theology depends on for its elaborations. It is also imperative to continue to work on the methods employed in *mujerista* theology as well as on developing theological themes that arise from and are important for Latinas as they struggle for justice for all.

—Ada María Isasi-Díaz

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Public Theologies and Political Culture: Feminisms

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## LATINA/LATINO PROTESTANTISM

Latino Protestantism in the United States represents a vast, ecosystem-like complex in which Reformation belief, Iberian mystical practice, Mesoamerican affectivity and cosmivision, and African spirituality have cross-pollinated each other in varying degrees. All of the main confessional families have their Latino expressions, including groups outside the Protestant mainstream such as Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Seventh-day Adventists. The overlap of practice and believers between popular Catholicism

and popular Protestantism is another feature of the Latino Protestant garden. In the historical experience of missionaries and the missionized, the religious horticultural models ran the gamut from extirpation to substitution, implementation, grafting, and sheer neglect. Much of Latino Protestantism adopted the practice, if not the theory, of expressive Pentecostalism. In the end, religious hybridity won the day. The evolution of that hybridity can be traced through cultural practice. Focusing on the connecting strand of musi-

cal practice, for example, is one method that may be used to understand the larger issues at play in the movement's attempt to express and understand itself.

The heady romance of Erasmian humanism in early sixteenth-century Spain encouraged, in the view of the orthodox, promiscuous flirtation with new ways of feeling and thinking. While some mystical offshoots, for example that of the *alumbrados*, stretched beyond the pale of official tolerance, others later flourished under the disciplined husbandry of Teresa de Avila and Juan de la Cruz. The extirpation of theological dissent proved a more protracted matter. In the end, the germ took root in more hospitable soil, reached full flower in the exilic Bible-translating project of Casiodoro de Reina and Cipriano Valera (who studied and taught at Cambridge and Oxford), and then laid dormant to await more tolerant seasons for growth in Spain and Latin America. In historical retrospective, the Reina y Valera Bible of 1602 represented an enduring literary achievement (antedating Miguel Cervantes's *Don Quijote* and Spain's literary golden age) as well as a spiritual and cultural fountainhead for modern Latino and Latin American Protestantism.

Today, Latino and Latin American Protestant conversion remains a controversial topic, with the embrace of Protestantism representing, for some, cultural treason. For others, the embrace is celebrated as a starting point—a *tabula rasa*—in a process of religious tutelage. Yet, many *evangélicos* seem to have been crossing, and recrossing, confessional lines for a while. When viewed through the prisms of conversion narratives, missionary discourse, and religious musical cultural practice, the process of religious conversion appears as an elongated one of ruptures, overlap, and flux, one in which believers display a knack for fashioning a religious cultural identity appropriate to their circumstances.

During the postbellum period of the United States, and in the independence period of Latin American republics, both Spanish and Latin American liberal regimes welcomed Protestant colporteurs, missionaries, educators, and other agents of the Enlightenment as countervailing influences against Catholic obscurantism, ecclesiastical privilege, and conservative foes. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Protestants in Spain had reconstituted themselves as the Spanish Reformed and Lutheran Churches, taking

refuge in Gibraltar, an English protectorate, when circumstances warranted. Significant missionary efforts also had begun in the United States and Latin America under the auspices of most of the major ecclesial polities of mainline Protestantism, including, in the case of divided communions, both northern and southern branches. The evangelization of Latinos in the United States was of a piece with that of Latin Americans. The border states and territories often represented training grounds for missionary personnel preparing for assignments farther south in Mexico or in the Caribbean and Latin America.

Protestant missionaries arrived to a religious landscape in flux. In the case of the Southwest, the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo between Mexico and the United States prompted the Vatican in 1850 to transfer responsibility for its stranded flock in what is now the southwestern United States to the Catholic hierarchy based in Maryland. From his seat of operations in Santa Fe, the newly installed bishop, Jean Baptiste Lamy, and fellow immigrant Joseph Machebeuf (later bishop of Colorado) struggled to bring a restless native clergy to heel under an aggressive Americanization program. Dissident curates Benigno Cardenas of Rio Abajo and Antonio Martinez of Taos had already incurred the displeasure of the bishop of Durango, their former prelate, for their support of popular traditions such as the Penitente brotherhood, their liberal political sympathies, their advocacy of Pueblo Indian rights, and their mentoring of leaders among the landowning peasantry. Martinez was widely blamed for the Chimayo and Taos Rebellions of 1837 and 1847, respectively. Although Martinez never left the Catholic Church (after his death, many of his biological and spiritual progeny joined the Presbyterian Church), Cardenas sought out Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) sponsorship. Other Catholics found their concerns and traditions relegated to the margins of church life throughout the following century.

Ultimately, Presbyterians in New Mexico, Methodists in southern Texas and southern California, and Baptists in northern Mexico were successful in building a viable, albeit numerically small, following among Mexican Americans. Methodists were equally successful in Cuba as well as in Florida among the Cuban population. The Disciples of Christ and the Baptists realized important inroads in Puerto Rico. As

elsewhere in what Presbyterian missionary James Dale labeled the “dark regions of Romish destitution,” Latinos were deemed ripe candidates for civilization and salvation (Dale 1910, 115). The dual project required ambitious educational programs, vocational schools, theological training, orphanages, and social-welfare agencies, initiatives that would yield mature fruit decades later in the form of important social, political, and educational leadership.

The antipathy of Mexican and *tejano* (Texans of Mexican descent) liberals toward the institutional Catholic Church was echoed in the anti-Catholic sentiments of many of their patrons. A brief review of titles printed by Nashville- and New York-based church presses demonstrates the fare offered by missionaries to their religious progeny, who consumed it with gusto: *Papal Paganism, Roman Catholicism Analyzed, Romanism Debases a National Life*, and *Mexico in Transition from the Power of Political Romanism to Civil and Religious Liberty*. The conflation of Catholicism and deeply flawed culture and society would continue throughout the next half-century of evangelization and would echo in the discourse of many Latino Protestants long thereafter.

Latino Protestantism, as a cultural project, combined elements derived from Euro-American Protestant experience as well as from revived elements of the stymied Spanish Reformation, such as the Reina y Valera Bible. For example, the bulk of hymnody from this period reflected the missionaries’ preference for translation of what they considered to be adequate liturgical resources. Several of the most frequently published hymns in English-language hymnals appeared as standard tunes in early Spanish-language compilations. A cadre of early Protestant leaders from Mexico, Cuba, and Spain were also active in translation.

One result of Protestantism’s combined efforts to convert Latinos was the *Himnario Evangélico*, published in 1893 by the American Tract Society and drastically revised as the *Nuevo Himnario Evangélico* in 1914 for use in Methodist, Baptist, Congregational, and Presbyterian churches. Around 1920, original compositions began to appear alongside translations. The new compilations did not meet with universal acclaim, however. Catholic and other critics complained that “the Spanish Protestant muse” seemed to inspire “drowsy monotony and insipidity.” The lack of origi-

nal Spanish-language composition seemed endemic to most of the hymnal projects.

In his landmark study of Mexican immigrants in the late 1920s, Mexican anthropologist Manuel Gamio downplayed the possibility of any significant Protestant inroads among this population, citing the religion’s penchant for cerebral theology and its lack of colorful liturgical aesthetics. Clearly, Gamio had mainline Protestantism in mind. A survey of the more emotive, folkloric “aleluya” barrio and rural churches then springing up throughout the Southwest (and Mexico) may have led him to more prescient conclusions.

The patient construction of a Latino Protestant culture, anchored in literacy and in the Reina y Valera Bible, and increasingly in the hands of Latinos themselves after the emergence of civil rights and cultural affirmation movements, would result in Latino Protestant identities less at war and more at ease with their home cultures. Latino Protestantism provided the Chicano movement with two of its four recognized leaders, Rodolfo “Corky” González and Reies López Tijerina; several organizational leaders, such as Bert Corona of the Hermandad Mexicana and Andrew Hernandez of the Southwest Voter Registration Project; and key support for labor organizer Cesar Chavez. The latter attributed his early organizing success to, among others, Pentecostal farmworkers in Madera, California; he later received strategic support from Latino activists and caucuses in mainline denominations.

The theological maturation of Latino Protestantism has remained the bailiwick of U.S. Caribbean scholars. Puerto Rican missiologist Orlando Costas and Cuban American theologian and historian Justo González broke new soil that younger scholars have begun to till. New organizations, such as the Asociación para la Educación Teológica Hispana (AETH) and the Alianza Ministerial Evangélica Nacional (AMEN) have provided the impetus for important theological educational and activist projects, such as the Hispanic Theological Initiative, the Hispanic Summer Program, and the Hispanic Church in American Public Life project. Still, the state of theological scholarship largely reflects the unidirectional (north-to-south) production-consumption pattern of the larger academy.

Part of the mainline Protestant rapprochement with popular Latino culture resulted from earlier efforts by

Pentecostals to reverse Protestantism's alienating retreat from folk culture. Starting in the 1920s, Pentecostal hymnody sought to recapture the fiesta of Latino culture, liberating it from seemingly intractable pathologies of alcoholism and double-standard sexism and returning it to the sacred place of ritual, performance, and spectacle. Pentecostals forged a new sonic universe that incorporated as much sensory corporeality as the earlier popular Catholic visual one.

Often, economic scarcity and the absence of missionary supervision prompted a fecund production. Composers appropriated most of the contemporary popular musical genres and instruments, especially the guitar, banjo, toloche (upright bass), accordion, and percussive instruments. The new Pentecostal proletariat also democratized liturgy, creating a communitarian performance space for any layperson to express or declaim musical and poetic creations. Pentecostal composers drew liberally from mundane agricultural metaphors, landscapes, and even railroads and trains. The sweet emotive wells of matriarchy and maternity inspired numerous elegies. The bitter fruit of poverty fed scathing prophetic and social commentary. Composers also wrapped biblical passages in *corrido* (ballad) forms in order to improve the biblical literacy of their communities.

Musical cultural creativity seemed to flourish in the more autonomous and transnational settings. Juan Lugo, the founder of the Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal (IDP, now the commonwealth's largest denomination), found a ready musical collaborator in Juan Concepción. Francisco Olazabal's Concilio Latinoamericano de Iglesias Cristianas (CLADIC) spawned a notable indigenous hymnody as well. One mainline denomination experienced similar reform. The recall of Disciples of Christ missionaries from Puerto Rico coincided with a successful move for independence by islanders. The ensuing revival and emergence of an indigenous, proto-Pentecostal hymnody carried the church's liturgy beyond the point of recognition for later visitors from the mainland.

For Latino Protestants, many questions of cultural identity remained tied inextricably to questions of polity and autonomy. Starting in the latter half of the twentieth century, most denominations experimented with different organizational models: assimilation and mainstreaming (Presbyterians), separate jurisdictions (Methodists, Baptists), or semiautonomy (Assemblies

of God, Church of God). A significant number of Pentecostal churches, such as the Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, IDP, CLADIC, and a host of smaller groups, championed their historic independence and transnational ties to sister churches in Latin America. The spectrum represented as much Latino cultural flux and ambivalence as it did denominational idiosyncrasies and theological distinctiveness. These important decisions made for decidedly different results in terms of growth and identity. Although Baptists and Pentecostals have flourished, Presbyterians and Methodists have lost ground. And certainly, the inevitable socioeconomic pressures of U.S. society, and the current mega-church trend, have fostered a persistent drain of talent and resources away from Latino congregations, jurisdictions, and denominations and toward white-dominated structures. Still, in the case of developing urban ministries, the musical cultural mix may be heralding ever new patterns of hybridization. Contemporary Christian recording artist Jaci Velásquez, in truth, merely represents the evolution of a family musical legacy; her father and uncles comprised the innovative border musical groups the Latinos and the Galileans of the 1960s and 1970s.

By the time Vatican II opened the doors and windows of the Mass to vernacular languages and sounds, the Pentecostal cousins of Catholics had prepared an engaging repertoire for them to draw upon, especially via the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR). Catholics added these borrowings to their own fecund cultural production. The sudden profusion of folk instruments and sounds changed the sonic landscape of Latino Christianity. Today it is common to hear Latino Catholics sing old Pentecostal standards such as "Alabaré a Mi Señor" ("I Will Praise My Lord"), "No Hay Dios Tan Grande Como Tú" ("There Is No God Greater Than You"), and "Mas Allá del Sol" ("Beyond the Sun"). In the end, the spiritualities of restive Spain, melancholic Mesoamerica, and vibrant Africa have found full flower in pneumatic expressions of popular Catholicism and Protestantism. The theological and cultural heirs of Casiodoro Reina and Cipriano de Valera, both in the United States and in Latin America, continue to forge new, open-ended understandings of themselves as evangélicos.

—Daniel Ramírez

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Catholicism in America: Our Lady of Guadalupe, Vatican II; Protestantism in America: Church Growth Movement, Denominationalism, Pentecostalism

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## MEXICAN AMERICAN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Because of Mexican Americans' blended heritage, their religious traditions have been cultivated from varied streams, including indigenous sources, Western European Catholicism, and American Protestantism. Indigenous religious traditions and practices are still prevalent through popular expressions of Catholicism and blended forms of indigenous healing systems such as *curanderismo*. A legacy of Spanish and U.S. conquest has been the sustained presence of Christianity in Mexican American communities. Latinos are upwards of 65 to 75 percent Catholic, with many of the rest adhering to some facet of Protestantism. Additionally, there is a small but significant presence of Mexican Americans in the Jehovah's Witnesses and Latter-day Saints movements. One of the more significant events in recent Mexican American religious history has been the continued and exponential rise of conversions to evangelical denominations. There are roughly 8 million to 10 million Latino Protestants in the United States. Specifically, conversion to Pentecostal groups far outweighs conversion to any other Protestant group. American denominations such as the Assemblies of God now

count over 15 percent of their churches as Latino, with many of those found in Mexican American strongholds of the Southwest. Nevertheless, the dominant Western religious tradition among Mexican Americans is the Roman Catholic Church, and Mexican Americans have played an important role in the history of the Catholic Church in the United States.

The Mexican American Catholicism that the church found as it began its reign over the former Mexican provinces of the Southwest in the mid-nineteenth century was, and to a great extent still is, an unofficial popular Catholicism that privileges a rich devotional life of prayer to saints (both sanctioned and unsanctioned), use of the material culture of the church (candles, holy water, statues, pictures, and the rosary), and a special devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe, who over the centuries since Juan Diego's vision in 1531 has earned an unequaled place of veneration in the Mexican American community.

As Mexican Americans found themselves under American rule, they encountered new social, economic, and cultural adjustments. The church responded by assigning priests and women religious to



the Southwest to serve the growing populations in Texas and New Mexico. Problems arose as the church, represented first by European priests and later by Irish American ones, rarely saw a need to support the popular religious expressions of their Mexican American charges. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920) caused a massive population shift as Mexicans fled the turmoil and headed north. By the time this immigration wave ceased, twenty-six of forty-eight states had Mexican immigrants and, presumably, required the services of Catholic clergy. Further problems arose when the official church embarked on a campaign of institutionalizing churches without attempting to meet the real needs of Mexican Americans. The clergy tended to be insensitive to popular devotions, especially to folk saints such as healers Don Pedrito Jaramillo and El Niño Fidencio, and, moreover, not many of them could speak Spanish. Thus, an unofficial church developed alongside the official one. The former was rooted in practices that recalled the indigenous roots of the Mexican people.

With notable exceptions stemming from Catholic responses to the presence of American Protestant missionaries, the sense that Mexican American communities were being ignored and taken for granted as Catholics lingered for most of the first half of the twentieth century. A period of sustained growth nevertheless occurred during the postwar era as Mexicans and Mexican Americans reestablished their communities on the heels of the Repatriation of the 1930s and the reentry of war veterans into jobs, schools, and churches. The church responded by increasing the number of priests and women religious to administer the sacraments and by opening schools to teach children Catholic doctrine. National leadership from the church came to the U.S. Southwest in this era with the appointment of Texas Archbishop Robert Lucey, who dealt with issues of great interest to the Mexican American community.

A combination of spiritual transformation and the emergent Civil Rights Movement gave rise to a renewed interest in spiritual growth among Mexican American men in the 1960s. Many joined the *cursillo* movement, which emphasized involvement by the laity and personal commitment to the faith. The 1960s also saw a move both within and outside the church to bring the issues of poverty, racism, substan-

dard health care and school systems, and political disfranchisement to the larger American public. Within the church, movements such as PADRES (FATHERS) and Las Hermanas (groups of activist priests and women religious) forced the church to discuss Mexican American issues as well as tackle the clerical questions on the need for celibacy, the treatment of divorced Catholics, and the gay and lesbian community in the church. Outside the church, Catholics such as Cesar Chavez forced the church and the American public to examine the contemporary and historical treatment of Chicanos as the low-wage laboring class of American society.

Despite the sustained growth of the Catholic Church in the United States (it is the largest Christian denomination, with more than 60 million adherents), and although future projections estimate that nearly 50 percent of that population will soon be Latino, the persistence of American missionaries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries resulted in a stable presence of Mexican American Protestants in the religious landscape of the United States.

The nineteenth-century efforts at evangelization were carried out by Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Pentecostal groups. But as Mexican Americans were soon to find out, life for them as a Protestant community was not all that much different from life as a Catholic culture. Viewed as charges and as a mission field, American missionaries built up their religious empire with heavy doses of fiery rhetoric against the “heathenistic” practices of the Mexican population, where heathenism almost always meant Catholicism. Additionally, underlying the evangelization efforts were attitudes and practices that betrayed many missionaries’ beliefs in the racial superiority of Anglos as they began to equate the conversion to Christianity with diminishing the Mexican American culture, language, and popular religious practices.

Leadership roles for Mexican Americans in Protestant denominations were few and often lacked power to direct the communities’ affairs outside the gaze of an American overseer who often controlled the political and monetary powers of the denomination. Cases of racism, both overt and covert, marked much of the history of the Mexican American engagement with American Protestant churches. Although later religious players, such as the Pentecostal Assemblies of God, had advocates for religious autonomy in their



A procession honoring the Virgin of Guadalupe, San Juan Capistrano, California (Trip/S. Grant)

midst, they nevertheless displayed patronizing, if not racist, attitudes toward Mexican Americans. This attitude was exemplified, for example, by the episode in which famed evangelist Francisco Olazábal was stripped of his leadership role in South Texas.

Throughout the postwar years, Mexican American Protestants underwent several significant changes in their relationships with their denominations: (1) They established autonomous districts that ran their own affairs; (2) the historic mainline denominations saw plateaus or declines in membership; and (3) Pentecostal churches, both denominational and independent, experienced growth.

Autonomous districts gave Mexican Americans more decisionmaking authority over financial matters such as where to build churches and what social needs to meet within the community. The membership in mainline denominations nevertheless began to plateau or decline after the postwar period, and significant erosion has occurred over the past twenty years. Part of the reason for this decline is the inability of

mainline denominations to retain generational growth and to sustain growth in emerging Mexican American communities. The Pentecostal movement has filled in the gap. It has a willingness to pour untold resources into retaining youth and a zealous desire for conversions. Mainline Christianity's postwar prescription for sustaining Mexican American church life included neither of these components.

Pentecostalism combines the Catholic *cursillo*'s emphasis on personal faith commitment with the zealous nature of evangelical Christianity. It has become a religious home to many Mexican Americans attracted to the movement's emotional nature and its emphasis on communal growth. Classical Pentecostal denominations such as the Assemblies of God and hundreds of independent Pentecostal churches now dot the landscapes of most urban centers of the United States. Pentecostalism's growth within the Mexican American community has not been without the same problems that marked the development within other evangelical groups. The movement's

early years were marked by overt racism, paternalism, and an unwillingness to allow Mexicans and Mexican Americans autonomous decisionmaking power. Even today, some of the fastest growing Pentecostal denominations, such as the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, do not have autonomous districts for their Mexican American adherents. The exponential growth of autonomous and largely nondenominational Pentecostal and charismatic churches may be a result of the intransigence of the larger denominational bodies and their unwillingness to share political and financial resources with their Latino brethren.

—Arlene M. Sánchez Walsh

#### SEE ALSO

Catholicism in America: Nuns and Priests; Protestantism in America: Pentecostalism; Material Culture

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## PUERTO RICAN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Rather than a state in the Union or an independent Latin American republic, Puerto Rico is a colony under the U.S. flag. The contradictions of this political status have provoked much debate about how Puerto Rican religion and culture should be categorized. The dominance of the Spanish language and Puerto Rican culture even after a century of North American control makes Puerto Rican island society strikingly different from that of the United States. But because the island's 3.8 million inhabitants have a birthright of U.S. citizenship, it is not helpful to consider the island of Puerto Rico as a homeland equivalent for the nearly 3 million Puerto Ricans living stateside in the same way that Mexico is homeland for Mexican Americans. All Puerto Ricans, whether on the island or in the United States, should thus be considered as one people who express their religion and culture within different contexts.

The Catholic Church on the island enjoyed the distinction of having the first bishop to enter into an American diocese when in 1513 Bishop Alonso

Manso arrived in San Juan. The U.S. takeover in 1898, however, placed Catholicism on the defensive. Spain had not cultivated a native clergy in Puerto Rico, and the transfer of power forced Spanish missionaries to leave the island. Puerto Rico was left with twenty-nine native diocesan priests for a population of nearly 2 million. Moreover, it took a U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1905 to preserve Catholic properties that had been confiscated by anti-Catholic leaders in the transfer of powers.

In the first decade after the 1898 invasion, Puerto Rican Catholics produced the lay movement of Los Hermanos Cheos, which was organized by native Puerto Ricans from the peasantry to combat Protestantism by public instruction in the faith. The bishops assigned to Puerto Rico, however, were North Americans and did not encourage a Latin American identity for the church on the island. Generally speaking, the hierarchy strove to assimilate Puerto Ricans into the patterns of immigrant Catholicism in the United States, which featured a parochial school system, as-

served the dominance of the English language, and established pro-American organizations such as the Knights of Columbus. This Americanizing tendency of the Catholic bishops culminated in 1960 when the North American prelates issued instructions forbidding Puerto Ricans to vote for the Popular Democratic Party of Luís Muñoz Marín because of his support for birth control and sterilization plans on the island. Not only did the political party sponsored by the bishops lose the election, but the autocratic nature of the bishops' declarations embarrassed Catholics in the United States during the presidential campaign of John F. Kennedy, who insisted that the policies of his presidency would be independent of church doctrine. In the aftermath of the election, Rome transferred the North American bishops, installing a completely native Puerto Rican hierarchy by 1964.

Protestantism was severely restricted in Puerto Rico when it was a colony of Spain. The few churches opened on the island were expected to serve mostly foreign merchants. After the U.S. takeover in 1898, however, Puerto Rico became a target for a mass evangelization. At New York City's Riverside Church in 1899, Protestants signed the first of two agreements setting aside specific areas of the island for the participating denominations so they would not compete against each other in proselytizing Catholics. By mandating English as the language of instruction in the island's public schools, the U.S. regime opened employment opportunities for U.S.-based missionaries who desired a "modern" Puerto Rican society. The public school system was expected to foster Americanization, but it also implied a dismantling of Catholic traditions and the establishment of values more like those in the predominantly Protestant United States. Consequently, although the government in Washington renounced control over education on the island in 1948, Protestants have had an important role in the public schools that is greater than their numbers alone would suggest. Ironically, the Puerto Rican Protestant intellectuals formed during the first generation after the invasion were among those in the 1950s who criticized an oversimplified identification of Americanization with progress.

Catholic-Protestant antagonisms marked the first three decades of U.S. control over Puerto Rico but started to ease as a result of the dire economic conditions of the Great Depression. Far-reaching social re-

forms and desperate political struggles produced a consensus in Puerto Rican society for local rule, the commonwealth status granted in 1952. The depression also dried up much of the missionary funding for mainline Protestant churches, and by the 1950s, Pentecostals constituted nearly half of the island's Protestants.

From 1946 until 1964, Puerto Rico underwent what historians call the "Great Migration." Counting children born to the migrants, approximately 1 million Puerto Ricans left the island for the United States within a period of eighteen years. This number constituted an exodus of 40 percent of the island's population in less than two decades. Most of the migrants were peasant farmers, or *jibaros*, from the rural mountainous areas of the island, and New York City was the destination for more than 80 percent of them. In a city accustomed to absorbing foreign peoples, the Spanish-speaking Puerto Ricans were different because they were already U.S. citizens. These were the Puerto Ricans of the Broadway show *West Side Story* and the drama *La Carreta*. The first provided a liberal North American scenario for the eventual assimilation of Puerto Ricans as new "immigrants"; the second, written by a Puerto Rican intellectual, pictured return to the island as the solution to social displacement.

These competing visions of Puerto Ricans in the United States were also found within the churches. For the Catholic Church, the most important difference between Puerto Ricans and previous newcomers was the absence of a native clergy. By the 1960s, the church in New York City had trained large numbers of clergy to speak Spanish. They had learned about Puerto Rican culture and were charged with the task of creating multicultural parishes that would celebrate the Mass in different languages. The expectation of gradual assimilation was shattered with the reforms of the II Vatican Council, which encouraged cultural and linguistic differences. Because church services for Puerto Ricans in New York were now more like those on the island than they were like those among the English-speaking Catholics of the city, the distinctiveness of Puerto Rican Catholicism was reinforced at the expense of assimilation. When in 1972 the first of three national Hispanic Pastoral Encounters was held, Puerto Ricans in the United States had developed a keen sense of cultural identity and a desire to utilize church settings to preserve national traditions. Today,

those same ideals of island-mainland solidarity can be seen in most Protestant and Pentecostal churches.

Protestantism and Pentecostalism in Puerto Rico are powerful both spiritually and socially, making Puerto Ricans among the most Protestant of Latin Americans and U.S. Latinos. In fact, as part of the recent wave of Protestantization in Latin America, Puerto Rican Protestant seminaries and Bible schools have sent missionaries to Latin America. Despite Puerto Rico's origins in a patently Americanizing past, there has been a solid identification of Puerto Rican Protestants and Pentecostals with Puerto Rican culture. Protestants constitute about 25 percent of the total population on the island. The percentage of Catholics in the United States is the same; thus, Puerto Rican Protestants exist in a sea of Catholics, while in the United States the positions are reversed. Puerto Rican Protestants are firmly established on the island, however, with a network of schools, hospitals, and social service systems. Like Catholics in the United States, they are an influential minority. As a result, one cannot equate Catholicism with being Puerto Rican today any more than one can identify Protestantism with being an American.

Puerto Rican Catholicism, for much of the twentieth century, was beset with two related problems: The church lacked a sizable native clergy, and the bishops followed organizational and pastoral norms borrowed from the United States. Nonetheless, Puerto Ricans have remained predominantly Catholic. Carlos Manuel Rodríguez (1918–1963), a saintly layman actively engaged in promoting liturgical reform, became the first Latino to be beatified by Rome in April 2001. Vatican II and the creation of a native hierarchy after 1964 has produced more Puerto Rican vocations to the priesthood and religious life, as well as vigorous apostolic movements such as the *cursillo* movement and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR). Puerto Rican Catholic identity is fostered by national devotions to particular figures, such as the island's patroness, Our Lady of Providence, and by cultural components that have been introduced into the liturgy, particularly hymns written in Puerto Rican folk rhythms. The Dominican Friar of Comerio, the late William Loperena, was a prominent composer in this style.

Religious diversity has always existed in Puerto Rico, which in addition to Christianity has strands of

other religious expressions. Spiritism came onto the scene in Puerto Rico in the early twentieth century and combined with Protestant Masonry among the upper classes. There is also strong evidence of syncretism with African-based religious beliefs and *curanderismo*, or folk healing. After contact in New York with Cuban practitioners of *lucumi* (Santería), the African elements in these traditions grew more pronounced and (along with the salsa music) became an export of the stateside Puerto Rican community to the island society during the 1970s.

There has always been a strain of antiauthoritarianism in Puerto Rican religious expression, possibly because first Spain and now the United States have not been averse to using political power to influence religion. Catholics have the popular religious traditions of the home altar; the hand-carved wooden statues, or *santos de palo*; communitarian celebrations such as the *rosario cantao* (sung rosary); and the *promesas*, which oblige religious practices as a sacrifice for favors requested or received. Joined to these are a multitude of processions and devotions, including the belief that the Blessed Mother appeared near the town of Sabana Grande in 1952. Although some interpret such expressions as popular protest against Catholicism, they may merely represent an effort by Puerto Rican Catholics to acquire the religious power of a long-absent and foreign clergy. The 1992 observance of Columbus's arrival in America fostered a revival of Native American identity. Among Puerto Ricans there are highly visible groups reclaiming the Taino heritage. Some of these groups are cultural, whereas others resemble New Age religions.

Protestants and Pentecostals have not been exempt from syncretism of cultural and religious norms. Puerto Rican Pentecostals refused to submit the churches founded in the United States to U.S. jurisdiction in the 1950s, disputing the supposed need to speak English in order to be a Pentecostal. The Diosa Mita is a church that reveres a Puerto Rican Pentecostal woman as the incarnation of the Holy Spirit. New churches, such as Fuentes de Agua Viva, mix millenarianism, Pentecostalism, and personal prophecies that are not usually considered orthodox within Protestantism.

At the beginning of a new Christian millennium, Puerto Ricans manifest a strong sense of moral unity and ecumenical cooperation as a result of the issues

raised by the bombing of the island of Vieques by the U.S. Navy. The killing of a Puerto Rican by an errant Navy bomb on April 19, 1999, has led to a mobilization of Puerto Ricans in a campaign for peace. The influence of religion and religious organizations in coordinating the successful crusade to end the bombing has exceeded the influence of the island's political parties.

—Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo and Ana María Díaz-Stevens

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African American Religions: African-Derived American Religions; Catholicism in America: Our Lady of Guadalupe, Vatican II; Protestantism in America: Pentecostalism

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NATIVE AMERICAN  
RELIGIONS  
AND POLITICS





It is land that holds all knowledge of life and death and is a constant teacher. It is said in Okanagan that the land constantly speaks. It is constantly communicating. Not to learn its language is to die. We survived and thrived by listening intently to its teaching—to its language—and then inventing human words to retell its stories to our succeeding generations. It is the land that speaks N'silxchn through the generations of our ancestors to us. It is N'silxchn, the old land/mother spirit of the Okanagan People, which surrounds me in its primal wordless state. . . . I am claimed and owned by this land, this Okanagan.

—Jeannette C. Armstrong 1998, 176

From time immemorial, Native American religions have helped men and women live lives attuned to the turning earth and the shifting seasons in specific ancestral landbases. Indeed, these religions embody the most intimate knowledge of American lands ever achieved. Thus, a discussion of indigenous traditions is essential to any survey of American religious history. In the modern period, however, Native American religions have assumed another critical purpose: that of helping various Native peoples resist and survive colonialism. These communal religions carry subjugated knowledge about modernity and America. Through their teachings, songs, and ceremonies, they quicken the lives of men and women all too familiar with the catastrophic costs imposed in the name of Manifest Destiny and market capitalism. Because they shelter unique perspectives on American history, they deserve careful consideration. Finally, the great diversity of these traditions underscores the importance of including them in any survey of American religious history. Although Native Americans account for less than 1 percent of the population of the United States (there were 2.4 million Native Americans in the year 2000), it has been said that they contribute more to this country's cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity than any other population group. Comprising hundreds of nations spread over the entire continent, Native Americans have developed, practiced, shared, and adapted

an extraordinary variety of religious traditions. For what they teach about human responsiveness to the land, for what they teach about communal resilience, and for what they embody in their unparalleled diversity, these traditions belong at the center of the study of American religious history, from its earliest phases far into its unglimped future.

### Listening to the Land

All across the Americas, over countless generations Native peoples learned to listen intently to specific “land languages” (Armstrong 1998, 178). Tying themselves to specific sacred geographies, they created dances, songs, prayers, ceremonies, unique storytelling traditions, and finely calibrated moral codes to structure, express, and rebalance their relations with the world and with each other. In short, they created a wide array of religions that fused ways of life with sacred landbases. These practices produced a rich pluralism and a deep intimacy with the land itself.

Anishinaabe environmental activist and vice-presidential candidate Winona LaDuke has described her ancestors' involvement in their Great Lakes landbase, evoking in poetic terms the spiritual dimension of the seasonal round they followed: “The Anishinaabeg world undulated between material and spiritual shadows, never clear which was more prominent at any time. It was as if the world rested in those periods rather than in the light of day. Dawn and dusk, *bi-idaabin* and *oshkidibikad*. The gray of sky and earth just the same, the distinction between the worlds barely discernible. The small camps, villages, and bands would plan their hunts by dream and memory, fill their birch-bark makakoon with wild rice, maple sugar, berries, dried corn, and squash. By snowshoe, canoe, or dogteam, they moved through the woods, rivers, and lakes. It was not a life circumscribed by a clock, fence, or road. But there was a law just the same. Natural law, Creator's law” (LaDuke 1999, 115–116). Discerning this law required fluency in the oral tradition, depended upon visionary leadership, and relied upon communal experience and discussion. It also presupposed and inspired creativity.

Ancestral Native Americans were not passive beings trapped in nature. They altered their environments constantly and sometimes in revolutionary ways. As the land changed, and as a people's relationship with it altered, new songs, dances, stories, and codes emerged. New religions supplemented or supplanted those already present. Three thousand years ago, for example, many Native peoples became horticulturists, planting and harvesting food crops such as sunflowers, knotweed, and maygrass. This shift in subsistence promoted radical changes in other domains of life. Communities became more sedentary, architecture more massive and enduring, religious life more organized and grander in ceremony. With the introduction of new types of corn a thousand years ago, spiritual life and ceremonial practice changed even more dramatically.

Corn agriculture enabled a great mound-building civilization to emerge in the Mississippi Valley and beyond. Never unified in a single empire, this civilization involved many independent polities or chiefdoms of varied sizes. Significantly, these polities were hierarchical, vesting power and status in a small elite class consisting of chiefs and priests. Chiefs controlled warfare. Like priests, they ate more meat, wore special symbols, and enjoyed superior access to ceremonial mounds, even though these were constructed through communal labor. Priests regulated ritual life and enforced moral codes in light of a spiritual worldview centered on the sun and its life-giving power. Their efforts, however, did not elicit perfect consensus or produce stable polities. Although in some places population centers numbering in the thousands emerged, they did not last. Mississippian polities rose and fell. Although no written records tell us precisely what happened, some scholars suggest that Mississippian society was pulled apart by social tensions. Common people involved in new religious movements may have contested the authority of the priests and overthrown the power of the hereditary chiefs to create a more egalitarian social order. The first "American revolution" may have occurred centuries before 1776.

Not long after the overthrow or collapse of the Mississippian elite, contact with Europeans and Africans took place and the invasion of the Americas began. This great transatlantic encounter introduced to Native American peoples many new things: unfamiliar life-forms (pigs, cattle, horses, peaches, watermelons,

and so on), unknown diseases (smallpox was the most deadly), novel technologies (books, iron goods, firearms), alien ideas, hostile political and legal structures, unprecedented territorial challenges, and many forms of Christianity. The consequences of this encounter continue today even as new waves of immigration now introduce new religions to America.

Generations of non-Native writers and scholars have assumed that these changes would bring the end of Native American peoples altogether, and that their religions would inevitably disappear. They wrote as if first contact had irreparably shattered the Mississippian world; as if subsequent disease had caused Eastern Woodland people to abandon their religious leaders; as if the influx of European settlers in America made Indians irrelevant to the continent's history; as if the demise of the buffalo spelled doom for Plains Indians; as if boarding schools and Christianity had detribalized young Native men and women forever; as if citizenship and life in a modern urban world—TV and MTV—would finally erase any lingering hint of indigeneity. It turns out that the scholars got it only half right. They correctly gauged the destructive forces turned on Native America—forces that did cause the suffering and demise of many entire peoples, distinctive ways of life, aboriginal religions, and profound land languages. But scholars, fixated on finding evidence of Indians' "inevitable" disappearance, failed to fathom the resilience of Native American traditions and neglected to credit the creativity of Native peoples. They discounted the anticolonial movements that inspired Native nations to revolt in defense of their landbases, in accord with their religious values, and in the name of an emergent pan-Indian consciousness (Martin 2001). And, consistently, they incorrectly measured American Indians' capacity to change and evolve (Northrup 1997, 141). Fortunately, scholars have awakened to the truth that Indians have not vanished. In spite of the holocausts of disease, warfare, removal, forced conversion, racism, and radical changes in lifestyle, many Native American communities and religions have survived.

### **Pueblo Reverence for Rain**

The religions of Pueblo peoples of the Southwest carry forward ancestral traditions. These traditions encourage a profound respect for rain. One might say these

religions begin with rain. Whether it falls in summer storms or drops in frozen form in winter snows, rain is the source of all the life in the arid landbases of the Southwest. There, people revere rain, sing songs about it, beckon its return, and celebrate its effects. They make art, music, dance, and story to invoke its form, invite its return, and record its power. In ways as innumerable as the drops of water in a shower, rain flows through the spiritual life of Pueblo peoples such as the Hopis, the Diné, and the Indé. Among these farming peoples, liquid religions saturate life.

Pueblo ceremonial songs often feature clouds. For example, a Zuni prayer-song recorded in 1928 stresses the links between rain, crops, and the people's fulfillment. This prayer-song addressed the U'wanami (water spirits) living in springs or near the ocean. They visit the Zuni as mists, fog, dew, clouds, and storms.

From wherever you abide permanently  
 You will make your roads come forth,  
 Your little wind blown clouds,  
 Your thin wisps of clouds,  
 Your great masses of clouds  
 Replete with living waters,  
 You will send forth to stay with us.  
 Your fine rain caressing the earth,  
 Your heavy rain caressing the earth,  
 Here at Itawana,  
 The abiding place of our fathers,  
 Our mothers,  
 The ones who first had being,  
 With your great pile of waters  
 You will come together.  
 When you have come together  
 Our mothers,  
 Our children,  
 All the different kinds of corn,  
 Nourishing themselves with their  
 Father's waters  
 Tenderly will bring forth their young,  
 Clasping their children  
 All will finish their roads.

(Marshall 2000, 77)

San Ildefonso Pueblo people perform the Cloud Dance every other year in the spring. Dancers wear *tablita*, painted vertical wooden headdresses cut in a stepped design to represent clouds. They dance to the

sound of a drum, its beat suggesting thunder. San Ildefonso Pueblo member Gary Roybal said, "When songs are made, all the elements of rain and how they relate to rain are part of the song. North, south, east, and west is always how they relate. You talk about animals and you talk about mountains. When the choir is singing they point to the directions. They are talking about the land bringing the rain down for the people. They pray for a good life not only for the Pueblo people but for the world" (Marshall 2000, 68).

Pueblo people adorn more than headdresses with rain symbols. Jose Rey Toledo of Jemez Pueblo has stated, "Since the Pueblo world was based upon the rain culture, items expressive of rain and moisture were painted on the [pottery] vessels: dragonflies or toads and the like; or clouds themselves in various shapes and forms, windblown clouds, or clouds pouring a lot of water, symbolically painted" (Marshall 2000, 74). Pots display lightning jolting through the clouds, a water serpent encircling the rim, the paw of the bear that led the people to water, a rain bird, rain falling on plants, tadpoles, butterflies, frogs, and other water-associated life-forms.

Rain symbols adorn clothing as well. At Jemez Pueblo a white sash ends in long fringe to suggest flowing water, while at Zuni Pueblo jewelry features signs of rainbows and lightning. "These crafts . . . are part of prayers for moisture," said Eileen Yatsattie. "So these images represent life in Zuni. Without the water, we wouldn't be alive" (Marshall 2000, 76). Sketches of turtles, a snake, and a lizard adorn an old hide kilt from Jemez and a thousand metal tinklers tied to it make the sound of rain. The sonic reinforces the visual.

Rain also carries great symbolic and material significance in the everyday and ceremonial life of Hopis, residents of twelve villages located in northern Arizona. Tied to some of the driest land farmed anywhere, the Hopis developed over many centuries extraordinary knowledge of how to grow corn, beans, squash, melons, and peaches in this demanding environment. Their religion drips with rain symbolism. "Anything the Hopis do, it's for the rain; in any kind of dances, even your social dances, they still have to pray for the rain or a good summer or good days ahead. . . . It's all connected," said Clifford Lomahaftewa, a Hopi elder of the Sun Clan from the village of Sungopovi on Second Mesa (Marshall 2000, 35).



Chief Turtle doing a rain dance at the Native American celebration in Glacier National Park, Montana, c. 1920  
(Library of Congress)

At the Hopis' Niman ceremony in July, spirit essences called *katsinam* leave Hopi villages and return to their homes in the San Francisco Mountains. Men embodying the *katsinam* wear tall tablita, white cotton kilts, a sash with cloud and rain symbols, turtle-shell rattles, sleigh bells, and buckskin moccasins. Carrying corn and watermelons, they dance a "rhythmic stepping with occasional synchronized changes in rhythm executed with changes in the step" (Gill and Sullivan 1992, 148). They give Hopi girls *katsinam* dolls and Hopi boys bows and arrows, and all the children receive cattails, a plant that grows in water. Before the *katsinam* leave, the ceremony's leader asks them to remember the people by sending summer rains. "We may have just a few crops in our fields, but when you bring the rain they will grow up and become strong. Now go back home happily, but do not forget us. Come to visit us as rain" (Marshall 2000, 29). With this, the *katsinam* depart, not to return again until the winter solstice. After the solstice, they dance frequently at night, indoors during the winter and outdoors once it warms up (Gill and Sullivan 1992, 127).

An old stereotype portrays traditionally dressed southwestern Indians whooping and hollering in a circular "rain dance." The stereotype implies that these "primitive" people naively tried to control nature with their ceremonies, that their religions were simplistic forms of magic, colorful but ungrounded, that survive only as a form of entertainment for tourists. The truth is much more complex and interesting. Witnessing the *katsinam* dance, Pueblo men, women, and children contemplate the way of life their ancestors chose in a primordial world long ago. They deepen their awareness of the Southwest's rhythms, feel reconnected to their ancestors, and reexperience their own identity as Pueblo peoples. These ceremonies instill certain moods in dancers and observers, bring home core spiritual lessons to the children who witness them, knit Pueblo peoples to the sacred mountains, and attune them in the deepest possible sense to the movements of the clouds and the cycles of nature. Thus, the ceremonies of this beautifully intricate religion help create a real, meaningful life for its participants.

This is true, however, for only some people some of the time. Never perfectly united with each other or with the world they inhabit, Pueblo peoples do not live in some unchanging ceremonial time and space;

they are not archaic people or exemplars of a *homo religious* culture. Over the course of generations, they have embraced new prophecies, ceremonies, ways of living, and technologies. They have had to deal with horrible diseases; contend with modern agencies that alter nature and impose new forms of politics and education; and experience capitalistic development and the new types of work and social relations it requires. As a consequence, today many Pueblo men and women do not farm but hold wage-earning jobs in cities such as Phoenix, Albuquerque, Flagstaff, Los Angeles, and elsewhere. Most speak English, not their ancestors' languages. They dress like their non-Pueblo neighbors; drive cars, trucks, and SUVs; watch English-language television shows; participate in organized sports; and go to school. They do not conform to tourists' expectations or confirm New Agers' images of a superspiritual, nature-immersed people. Although some Pueblo men and women produce extraordinarily beautiful paintings, baskets, sculptures, and jewelry, most do not make art.

### Native and Modern

Even practitioners of the most "traditional" of Native American religions must negotiate modernity. In Old Oraibi in northern Arizona, perhaps the oldest continuously occupied village in North America, there are cars and trucks, homes wired with electricity, and satellite dishes. Young Hopis watch the tourists critically, fully aware of the unrealistic and romantic stereotypes the tourists hope to realize at Old Oraibi. For this reason, Hopis tolerate tourists but also regulate their access to their inner lives and ceremonial practices.

A narrow neck of land connects the main residential area of Old Oraibi to the ceremonial plaza and kiva complex. In this section of the village, Hopis permit no electricity, no cars, and, during the time of ceremonies, no tourists. Here, a different set of rules applies. These rules help Hopis remember who they really are, holding the dominant culture at bay, and allow them to focus more resolutely on the teachings of their ancestral land. After the ceremonies, Hopis resume their negotiations with non-Natives and modern technologies, but they do so now knowing that these negotiations do not entirely define their identities or purposes. Because they can move back and

forth across the two types of space and meaning, they can be modern and Hopi, Pueblo and postmodern.

As a modern people, not every Native American community has continued its ancestral religion, but many have. Each year Muscogees in Oklahoma and Seminoles in Florida perform the annual Green Corn Ceremony, a profound harvest celebration originally rooted in the Mississippian society of precontact Alabama. Other nations are revitalizing traditions that went underground or languished during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the 1990s, the Chumash people of the California coast handcrafted a great ceremonial canoe and took it to sea, resurrecting an ancestral practice. In May 1999, the Makah people of the Olympic Peninsula of Washington State killed a gray whale, thus resuming an important practice central to their oral and material culture. In spite of non-Native stereotypes of Indians as unchanging and non-technological, they determined that one of the best ways to be Makah was to be modern, using modern technology in order to make the killing as humane and fast as possible.

Change has often involved more than the adaptation of new technologies to traditional ends or the revitalization of traditional practices. To deal with the fundamental changes brought by modernity and colonialism, Native Americans have sometimes adopted new religions. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for example, the peyote religion, in spite of U.S. governmental opposition, spread across much of North America. Carried by individual practitioners who shared stories of peyote's great healing power, the religion crossed cultural, linguistic, ceremonial, and geographical boundaries to address the spiritual needs of many Native men and women. The religion involves all-night ceremonies that feature songs, prayers, discussions, and the respectful consumption of peyote. A cactus to botanists, peyote is a sacrament or holy living being to participants in its religion. In the late nineteenth century, many Native nations of the Plains, reeling from the loss of their sovereignty and the near extinction of the buffalo, found that respectful participation in this new religion cured alcoholism and defeated despair. In 1918 in Oklahoma, some of them organized the Native American Church to better defend their misunderstood minority faith.

Practitioners of this religion still suffer persecution and state-sanctioned discrimination. In 1990 the

Supreme Court, in *Oregon v. Smith*, said the State of Oregon could fire a state worker because of his involvement in the peyote religion and legally deny him unemployment compensation. This decision and the one in *Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Protection Association*, a 1988 case involving lands sacred to California peoples, diminished Native American religious freedom. But these two decisions did more than that. Legal scholars argue that they implicitly cheapened the religious freedom of other minority faiths and theoretically weakened the religious freedom of all Americans. According to attorney Walter Echo-Hawk, "Indian religion is the 'miner's canary.' Its shameful treatment signals danger to American religious life" (Echo-Hawk 1994, 14). Echo-Hawk and others warn that the *Smith* and *Lyng* decisions shrink rights guaranteed to all citizens by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

### Native and Christian

If non-Native authorities sought to suppress the peyote religion, they tried to spread Christianity. From the colonial period until well into the twentieth century, government authorities have funded missionaries and financed boarding schools where young Native men and women were compelled to convert. Convinced of the superiority of Christianity, U.S. officials banned the Sun Dance, the Ghost Dance, giveaway ceremonies, and other Native traditions. Given this painful history, Christianity's contemporary presence in Native communities elicits contradictory reactions. Some think they can redeem the religion, even though it is guilty by association with colonialist forces. Others are less sanguine. They say the religion itself is fatally flawed, that it teaches people to devalue the body, the land, and this world. Many note that the presence of Christianity divides families, communities, and peoples (Weaver 1998, 15). "How bizarre," stated Spokane writer Gloria Bird of a Catholic relative, "to have a first cousin by blood who does not know that the holiest land is the place where the bones of our ancestors, the *slawtews*, lie in the little graveyard in the Chewelah Valley" of eastern Washington (Bird 1998, 36). "I shudder to think how things might have been different if my mother had been influenced by my grandmother's Catholicism. Would I be lost, blindly running toward the Holy

Land today?" (Bird 1998, 46), Bird asked, underscoring the iconoclastic power of Christianity to turn people away from their ancestral landbases. In spite of the tensions it introduced, Christianity crossed cultural, linguistic, and ceremonial boundaries to become an important tradition, or rather, set of traditions, in Native America (Treat 1996).

Some Native Christians practice their religion in an exclusivistic fashion. They reject their people's traditional spirituality, preach against it, and seek to keep their faith free of its "inherently evil and pagan influence" (Treat 1996, 237). During the 1970s, for example, some Ojibwe Christians "boycotted powwows," "burned their Native symbols," and abandoned Native crafts (Treat 1996, 238). There was a dualistic or binary perspective in which a person was either Christian or "pagan." Such dualism, which characterizes fundamentalist Christian perspectives in and beyond Indian country, continues to color the thoughts and actions of many Native Christians. It is not, however, universal.

Instead of keeping Native and Christian religions separate or trying to replace the former with the latter, many Native practitioners fuse them. In the Cross Fire branch of the peyote religion, worshipers utilize Christian language, the Bible, and other Christian symbols in their ceremonies, using peyote as a sacrament to bring them closer to Jesus. Cross Fire worshipers equate peyote with the "road to Jesus Christ." Meanwhile, Cherokee Baptists worship in Cherokee and affirm their national cultural heritage. Still another approach characterizes many Lakotas in South Dakota. Open to spiritual power wherever they find it, some Lakotas revere the Sacred Pipe and the stories of White Buffalo Calf Woman, participate in the Sun Dance ceremony, attend ceremonies of the peyote religion, and worship in the Episcopal or Catholic church. When people participate in two religions without mixing them, scholars term it "religious dimorphism" (Weaver 1998, 19). Evidently, some Lakotas and other Native Americans are religiously polymorphic.

### Ojibwe Hymn Singing

Like many Native nations in the nineteenth century, Ojibwe peoples experienced dispossession at the hands of American settlers, government officials, and

commercial agents. Forced onto a reservation in northwestern Minnesota, they found it increasingly difficult to practice *anishinaabe bimaadiziwin*, the Ojibwe way of life (McNally 2000, 81). This way of life was closely calibrated to "the circular rhythms of the seasonal round" of the Great Lakes region. Attending this round, Ojibwes sought to maintain "the equilibrium of nature" through "balance, profound interdependence, and right relations" (McNally 2000, 24). In this never-ending work of rebalancing the world, ceremonies, dreams, and songs played vital practical roles. Ceremonies, dreams, and songs acted "as conduits for ritual and dream power" (McNally 2000, 29). They also deepened the Ojibwes' sense that the sacred was ultimately mysterious, beyond human control.

Like most American Indians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Ojibwes encountered Christian missionaries and state agents who sought to erase their religion and undermine their communal identity. They experienced a nadir toward the end of the nineteenth century, but refused to disappear. Depending upon the needs of the people, leaders rose up who resisted accommodation or embraced it (Kugel 1998; McNally 2000, 77). As it became impossible to maintain the traditional rounds of life, Christianity came to play an important role in the life of the people. Ojibwes, already open to song as a channel for the sacred, responded in their own ways to Christian hymns. Ultimately, hymn singing became a key way to express and renew Ojibwe communal identity. It remains so for a people still facing hard lives, racism, high murder rates, high suicide rates, and high rates of diabetes, alcoholism, and smoking.

Anglo scholar Michael McNally has described Ojibwe practices surrounding death to demonstrate how Native American and Christian traditions may intermix. For example, one night in 1994 a group of Ojibwe men and women gathered in a storefront building on Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis to bid farewell to an Ojibwe man who had died a rough death in the city. Loved ones stood by his body and offered tobacco and prayers for the spirit. Then, led by a group known as the Ojibwe Singers, they sang, mostly in Ojibwe, Christian hymns. At one point, between the lamentfully rendered songs, the deceased man's brother said a few words. According to McNally, the man "acknowledged how the difficulty of his brother's life was a difficulty shared by many in



the room and how they nonetheless needed to remember that, whatever the circumstances, they remain ‘a *good* people’” (McNally 2000, 4). The singers resumed, offering the hymn “Jesus Loves Me.” A feast concluded the wake. A sense of senselessness persisted, but something valuable had occurred. Thanks to the intervention of the Ojibwe Singers, death and despair had not had the last words. As McNally explained, the performance of hymns by respected elders provided sonic, material form to something too often forgotten or imperiled—Ojibwe community. Even though no ceremonial drum sounded, the songs restored a sense of Ojibwe community to individuals feeling vulnerable, distressed, and agonized. Singing these songs rekindled their desire for a communal future free of the terrible negativity that they face on an everyday basis. The hymns renewed hope.

On another occasion, after gang members shot dead a young Ojibwe man at a wedding reception, his family and friends experienced inexpressible grief. At his wake, “atop the casket were bundles of sage, pictures of the man’s children and their mother, a buckskin medicine bag, and birchbark baskets filled with offerings of tobacco and cedar” (McNally 2000, 167). The White Earth singers sang alone, employing “age-old traditions of lamentation or timeless rhythms of breath” to bring to life Christian hymns, including the closing song, “Number Four,” or “Migwech Ni Kije Manidom” (McNally 2000, 171; his translations also follow):

*Mamoiawamada aau*—Let us be thankful to that one  
*Wenji shawendagoziyung*—Those of us who are pitied so,  
*Weosimind Weguisimind*—That one who is Father, That  
 one who is Son  
*Gaye Panizid Ochichag*—And also the Holy Spirit.

A feast after the ceremony featured traditional foods (wild rice, deer meat, fry bread) as well as others commonly associated with life on a federal reservation (commodity cheese, macaroni, bologna on white bread, and Jell-O salad). The food replenished people physically, and the hymns, according to McNally, helped people find a small reprieve from chaos and violence and regain, “if only tentatively . . . the collective reflection necessary for a fresh vision of a possible communal future” (McNally 2000, 176).

## The Future

On a larger scale, at the turn of the millennium Native Americans experienced a small reprieve as events began to shift ever so slightly in their favor. As never before, Native writers, artists, journalists, thinkers, musicians, theologians, and filmmakers reached national audiences with their sounds, ideas, and visions. Native scholars helped design and will run the Smithsonian’s new National Museum of the American Indian, influencing how generations of Americans will see Native peoples. Native “legal eagles,” activists, and tribal leaders defended Native sovereignty, revitalized treaty rights, and opened the door to Indian gaming, which has spread rapidly since the 1980s. In the 1990s, Congress passed laws that were supposed to protect Native American religious freedoms, Native graves, and Native ancestral remains. A widespread trend toward “retribalization” also strengthened Native religious traditions. For the first time in centuries, it looked as if things were changing fundamentally, as if a long freezing winter had finally yielded to spring (LaDuke 1999, 134).

Despite grounds for hope, not all was well in Indian country or beyond. Annual statistics and existential realities continued to confirm horrible levels of social dysfunction, pain, and chaos in Native communities. The land fared no better, with Indian country playing host to uranium mining, nuclear testing, radioactive storage, and a host of other toxic enterprises (Jaimes 1991). New development and increasing tourism destroyed or damaged sacred sites, including the Hopi salt trails, Bear Butte in South Dakota, and locales vital to Apache religion located on Mt. Graham in Arizona. As the land and its peoples suffered, so did their original languages. As linguists looked ahead, dozens of original languages seemed headed for extinction, even though the Internet provided new ways to preserve and teach them (keyword: IPOLA) as well as new venues in which to share Native-centered news (keyword: AIROS).

Native men and women bore consistent and compelling witness to what was happening to their lands and peoples, but during the 1990s, most non-Natives did not seem particularly concerned or feel implicated, let alone complicit, in this development. Caught up in “extreme capitalism” (Frank 2000), they

glorified the market, abandoned economic democracy, and found ways to celebrate diversity without grappling with growing inequalities in American society. Such a mentality deadened the receptivity of non-Natives to Native calls for justice. In fact, some non-Natives reacted in a racist way to the very idea that “Indians” might regain treaty rights. Sport fishermen in Wisconsin, angered when Anishinaabe people reclaimed their right to fish in freshwater lakes, printed bumper stickers saying, “Save a walleye, spear a Indian [sic]” (Northrup 1997, 100). About the same time, archaeologists waged procedural and legal battles to minimize the impact of federal legislation and to protect their control of Native remains and antiquities (Thomas 2000).

Adding insult to injury, many non-Natives continued to stereotype Native peoples. Major sports team franchises refused to abandon demeaning images (for example, the Redskins and the Braves). And, just in time to discount Native voices demanding repatriation or reparations, a new discourse emerged nationally on “the rich casino Indian.” This discourse called into question the cultural authenticity of gaming tribes and entrepreneurial Natives. On another level, the discourse, because it suggested that all Indians are now wealthy, freed Euro-Americans from acknowledging the consequences of colonialism, let alone working to correct them. Promoting new stereotypes, such attitudes obscure the injuries and injustices directed at Native lands and peoples and the ongoing colonialism that Native men and women, strengthened by diverse, enduring, and evolving religious traditions, continue to resist every day.

—Joel W. Martin

#### SEE ALSO

Catholicism in America; New Age: Whiteshamanism; Orthodox Christianity: Native Alaskan Orthodoxy; Protestantism in America; The Body: Pain; Death; Generations; Popular Theodicies: Evil in the Twentieth Century; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Feminisms, Law; Ritual and Performance: Funerals; Sacred Space: Nature; Sacred Time

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## NATIONHOOD

The recognition of Native American cultures as nations rests upon precedents set from the time of European contact in America. From a European legal standpoint, by entering into treaties with indigenous peoples European nations established the implicit understanding that Native American tribes were to be treated as sovereign nations. That the United States reinforced this understanding is inarguable. The federal government, bound constitutionally to enter into treaty relationships only with other fully sovereign entities, ratified 371 treaties with Native American nations between 1778 and 1871.

Throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth centuries, American Indians' exercise of sovereignty, however, was radically curtailed. During the early 1800s, three Supreme Court decisions, which came to be known as the Marshall Trilogy, provided the basis for the extension of U.S. federal control over Native Americans. In 1823 in *Johnson v. McIntosh*, Chief Justice John Marshall maintained that clear title to all Indian lands was vested in the United States by virtue of the "doctrine of discovery" and that Indian peoples merely retained the "right of occupancy" to their lands.

In 1831 in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, Chief Justice Marshall declared that Indian tribes could not be given the same status as foreign nations but were to be considered "domestic dependent nations." In this case, Marshall argued that in entering into treaties with the United States, Indian peoples had entered into a state of "pupilage," in which they could be protected and their commerce regulated by the federal government.

In *Worcester v. Georgia*, which followed on the heels of *Cherokee Nation*, Marshall established that although American Indians had placed themselves under the protection of the federal government, they had not surrendered all rights of self-government. Although *Worcester* strengthened to some degree the notion of Native American sovereignty, these three cases effectively placed the status of American Indian nations under the domination of the U.S. federal government.

Over the next 100 years, Native Americans' ability to act as sovereign and self-governing entities was more seriously impaired. After 1850, the practice of

treaty-making was utilized primarily by the federal government to open up additional lands for white settlement by establishing reservations. The reservations were conceived by the U.S. government as "schools of civilization" in which Indians would be forced to give up their native languages and cultures, adopt European-style farming, and be converted to Christianity. The federal government provided funds for various Christian denominations to establish reservation and boarding schools. The schools, run by missionaries, forbade the exercise of all Indian cultural practices, including the use of indigenous languages. During the 1880s, Native Americans were prohibited from practicing their religions; those who disregarded the order could be tried in the Court of Indian Offenses, established in 1883, and punished by imprisonment or the withholding of rations. In 1887, the General Allotment Act, or Dawes Act, as it has come to be known, further alienated Native lands. This act, designed to encourage assimilation, divided reservations into parcels that were allotted to individuals. As a result, total Native American landholdings were cut from 138 million acres in 1887 to 48 million by 1934, a reduction of nearly two-thirds. These policies of assimilation struck at the very heart of Native American nationhood, which depends not only upon territorial and political control but also upon the preservation of distinct languages, cultural practices, and religious traditions.

In the early 1930s, Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal policies precipitated a change in policy toward Native Americans. In 1933 he appointed John Collier, a strong advocate of Indian rights, as commissioner of Indian Affairs. Collier proposed the regeneration of Indian cultures, the return to Native Americans of political autonomy, and the reversal of the termination policy with the return of tribal communal ownership of lands and resources. In 1934, Congress approved the Wheeler-Howard Act, which became known as the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA). Within ten years, 93 tribes, bands, and Indian communities had adopted constitutions and bylaws under the act and 73 had been granted charters.

The results of the IRA for Native American tribes were mixed. For many tribes, it provided opportunities to reverse the destructive results of the Dawes



A delegation of chief men from the Sioux and Yankton tribes with President Andrew Johnson in the White House, 1867. Engraving after a photograph by Alexander Gardner (Library of Congress)

Act. Yet in many cases, the governments set up under the direction of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) were modeled after Anglo-Saxon conceptions of democratic government that conflicted with indigenous systems of government. Tribes whose traditional governments were based upon local bands or villages experienced cultural disruptions engendered by the imposition of tribal governments. For many, such as the Sioux of the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations, the IRA governments increased tribal factionalism between “traditionalists” and “progressives.” Some have pointed out, however, that in many respects the IRA paved the way for a shift in federal policy toward self-determination.

The most serious attack on Native American sovereignty followed World War II. The U.S. federal government, seeking to fully integrate Indian peoples into the mainstream culture, and at the same time to alleviate the financial expenses associated with administering the BIA and honoring treaty obligations,

moved to terminate its trust responsibility with Indian nations. In 1958, Congress passed House Concurrent Resolution 108, which called for measures leading to the eventual eradication of all reservations and special programs for American Indians. Although termination was actively opposed by Native Americans and Indian advocacy groups and eventually abandoned, relocation efforts associated with it resulted in the mass migration of Native Americans to cities. Between 1952 and 1972, nearly 10,000 Indian people, urged by relocation programs, migrated from their reservations.

During the 1970s, federal Indian policy began to shift away from assimilation toward self-determination. Self-determination or nationhood has been defined as the process of decision making uninhibited by outside constraints. Self-government, in contrast, implies the recognition of a superior political power that is monitoring local decisionmaking to ensure that its decisions are compatible with the goals and policies of



Members of AIM and local Oglala Sioux stand guard outside the Sacred Heart Catholic Church during a seventy-one-day standoff with the FBI and U.S. marshals at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, 1973 (Bettmann/Corbis)

the dominant power (Deloria 1984). This distinction was at the forefront of Native American activism in the 1970s. Although activist movements such as the American Indian Movement (AIM) arose in the urban environment and included individuals with varied tribal affiliations, many of their concerns reflected those of traditional tribal peoples. The 1972 March on Washington and occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs headquarters were focused upon gaining the federal government's recognition of tribal nationhood. AIM's Twenty Points, which they presented to the White House, included the return of treaty-making authority to Indian nations as well as the review of outstanding treaty obligations and violations.

Another of AIM's goals was to address the increasing conflicts on some reservations between BIA-endorsed governments and tribal traditional people. The Native American occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973 was precipitated by increasing tribal police brutality toward those who opposed Richard Wilson,

the tribal chairman. When his opponents moved to impeach him, the BIA had supported Wilson and allowed him to sit as chairman during his impeachment. Many of the traditional people of Pine Ridge participated in Wounded Knee II, which lasted for seventy-one days, and medicine men were there to conduct ceremonies throughout the occupation.

From an indigenous perspective, nationhood involves traditional models for the way in which human existence ought to be ordered. Prior to European contact, Native American peoples had highly complex systems of government that were grounded in religious conceptions of the world. The Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy, whose system of democracy was used as a model by the framers of the U.S. Constitution, conceived of their government as a gift from a spiritual being who brought peace to the six nations of the Confederacy. The respective oral traditions of tribes provided the framework for all aspects of life, establishing the rules for subsistence activities, social

organization, ethics, and religious ceremony as well as government. In addition, most Native American creation stories designate specific territorial boundaries—landscapes in which the people would thrive and for which they were given the responsibility of ecological care. Traditional views of what it means to be a people or a nation often conflict with tribal governments based upon Euro-American models that are aimed at achieving strictly secular goals. Moreover, lack of economic opportunities has forced many tribes to make difficult choices between indigenous views of preserving the land and the substantial revenues derived from the exploitation of natural resources. In many instances, tribal governments' concern for economic welfare has outweighed traditional values of preservation of the landscape.

Although the development of stable economic bases is essential to Native Americans' nation-building efforts, cultural regeneration and maintenance are equally important. Languages, oral traditions, and ceremonial activities unique to each Native American nation form the core around which distinct identities may thrive. Many tribes have developed bilingual educational programs in their elementary and high schools to promote the retention of indigenous languages. The struggle for religious freedom continues to be of deep concern for Native American communities. Preservation of sacred sites and unhindered access to them are an ongoing concern. U.S. courts have been largely unsympathetic toward Native Americans with respect to this issue, denying First Amendment protections in cases involving control of sites in national parks and the restoration of sacred landscapes to indigenous Americans. Some Native American coalitions have utilized historical preservation laws to provide some measure of protection for

sacred sites. The protection of Native American religious freedom is also dependent upon continuing education of the non-Indian public, which often views Native American religious ceremonies as tourist attractions. The future of Native American nation-building depends upon their growing success in gaining sovereignty over cultural and religious, as well as economic, resources.

—Cynthia Carsten Wentz

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Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion, Law; Sacred Space

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## NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN ART

Native American religious and ceremonial art is as diverse as the hundreds of nations that have produced it. It is generally assumed that this material becomes evident, through the archaeological record, several thousand years before the Christian era. Because we have no written or eyewitness accounts for materials

made and used before the coming of Europeans, the exact use and meaning of ancient objects are often unknown or ambiguous. Ceremonial objects continue to be an integral part of the Native American life, some following long traditions, others created for a changing world.

To comprehend Native American religious art, the usual Western definitions of both “art” and “religion” must be extended. Religious assemblies that are altars and medicine bundles may be entirely composed of or may include natural and unprocessed forms and components. Although not considered “art” in the Western world, some of these objects are considered central to the religion of the people who make and use them. Process must often be considered above product, for frequently the making of the artwork is the ritual, and once the object or painting is completed it is no longer needed. Pueblo *kiva* (underground ceremonial chambers) murals and cave paintings of the California Chumash appear to have been repainted every time rituals were reenacted. Among the Navajo of the Southwest, elaborate drypaintings representing supernatural beings with the power to cure are “destroyed,” in Western terms, when patients sit on them to absorb their healing elements.

### Diversity of Art

Religious art varies not only between groups but also within each group as communities and individuals change with time, interactions with other peoples, relocation, and acculturation. Generalizations, which are sometimes valid within specific boundaries, must always be approached with caution. Each of the hundreds of nations speaking dozens of unrelated languages explains the visible and invisible forces in the world around them through a variety of human-made products including carvings, weavings, songs, dances, and ritual regalia. Religious systems incorporate moral and behavioral codes as well as ritual systems. For each people, certain objects became elevated to a status beyond their use value. These artworks vary from magnificent architectural achievements that both reflect the cosmos and provide shelter to small carvings that act as medicinal relief.

### The Sacred

The fact that most Native American languages have no word for either “art” or “religion” indicates the profound differences between Native American and Judeo-Christian religious thought. Native American art and religion were and are so closely woven into the social, political, and economic aspects of the culture

that they cannot be isolated for study. Making distinctions between the sacred and the secular is a Western mode of thinking that does not translate to Native American worldviews and religions. Native American objects that the Western world isolates and preserves in glass museum cases often lose their meaning because they have been removed from their cultural context. Masks, for example, are often intended as only one portion of a complete costume to be seen in movement during a dance, perhaps by firelight, or in concert with other ceremonial impersonators. In fact, masks and other ceremonial objects are sometimes intended to not be seen at all.

### Subject Matter

Represented through visual culture are origin and other myths, group histories, and supernatural figures. Whereas Native Americans do not hold a common origin belief, for most peoples the spirit world played an active role in creation, and many explain features of the world in terms of magical transformation. Masks and other artistic forms may represent the border zones where individuals and spirits converge. The tapping of power from non-human beings involves the crossing of earthly and other boundaries.

When outsiders assume that they can “read” much of this art, they are often misled. Some of the simplest (to Western eyes) masks of the Inuit of Alaska, for example, carry the most complex of stories and meanings. Similarly, it is generally not possible for outsiders to decipher elements on the totem poles of the peoples of the Northwest coast. Margins, often clear-cut to those in the Western world, may be variable and indistinct to Native peoples.

Some representations are difficult for outsiders to read because they come from intensely personal experiences. Creatures or experiences that present themselves to an individual through visions or dreams may be woven, painted, carved, or embroidered onto objects. In some cultures, adolescents have been sent to isolated places and deprived of food or sleep or provided with vision-enhancing drugs to promote the revelation of individual power sources.

### Spirits

Objects, like people and animals, are often considered

to be alive and contain spirits. Around A.D. 1000, the Mimbres culture of what is today New Mexico buried their members with objects that Westerners call bowls. These objects, with a hole intentionally pierced in the middle, perhaps to release their spirits, and usually placed over the heads of the deceased, were possibly intended as conduits for the human spirits to be delivered to the next world.

### Changes through Time

The public at large often considers most Native American art and religion to be associated with shamanism; however, this is not the case. Frequently, as cultures became elaborated, priestlike societies developed, although they often carried with them elements of shamanistic practice. Many nations, such as the Zuni and the Iroquois, have had established priesthoods connected with medicine and curing. Priests in the precontact Southeast may have been practitioners of state religions.

It must never be assumed that Native American art associated with religion is or ever was static, although it is probably true that objects most central to traditional beliefs have changed more slowly than other artworks. Knowledge systems, often explained or visualized through art, developed over long periods of time as people attempted to understand themselves, the world around them, and the world of the spirits. Artistic complexity and diversity point to long evolutions that are still in process.

Each group and subgroup of Native Americans have through time encountered different amounts and channels of exposure to other cultural ways, traditions, and religions. Inter-marriage through negotiation or capture was probably always a part of Native life. With the introduction of Christianity, some peoples gave up Native religion or combined traditional practices with those introduced. Pueblo groups living along the Rio Grande in New Mexico today blend old practices and beliefs with those of Christianity. Ojibwe artist Blake Debassige, for example, in 1982 painted *Tree of Life* in which the Great Tree, a link for many Native Americans between the underworld, earth, and sky, also stands for the Christian cross.

—Zena Pearlstone

### SEE ALSO

The Body: Piercing, Tattooing; Sacred Space: Shrines

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## REPATRIATION

*Repatriation* refers to the return of the human remains and cultural artifacts belonging to a community from which they were illegally taken. In principle, the debate is over who actually owns the cultural artifacts and human remains, and whether they represent a distinctive form of communal property, different in character from private property. Insofar as these items serve as symbolic means for ensuring the maintenance of indigenous groups' identities, repatriation policies seem to be justified. The question of their return has involved considerable controversy, not only

because those who possess them may have obtained them by lawful means but also because they maintain that they are of scientific or cultural importance such that they should be considered as existing in the public domain. In the United States the debate has occurred in the context of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), a federal law enacted in 1989. Difficulties associated with the implementation of NAGPRA demonstrate the general and long-standing problems associated with repatriation policies.



NAGPRA requires that all federally funded institutions, agencies, and museums return the human remains and cultural objects of federally recognized Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations. Although NAGPRA contains an explicit exemption for the Smithsonian Institution, the Smithsonian is obligated to repatriate under the National Museum of the American Indian Act of 1989. Cultural artifacts covered by the law include funerary objects placed with human remains or sacred objects used for ceremonial purposes. There are different repatriation procedures associated with different types of cultural items, and the rules differ depending on whether the objects are located in a museum or were inadvertently discovered on federal or tribal land after NAGPRA was enacted. NAGPRA does not apply to cultural objects found on private or state property. The secretary of the interior is responsible for monitoring compliance with NAGPRA with the assistance of a seven-member committee composed of representatives of museums and of the scientific and Native American communities.

Various programs were set up to assist indigenous groups with the submission of their requests. The Smithsonian, for instance, established a repatriation office to coordinate the inventories and the process of returning items to the appropriate tribes. The U.S. government, through the National Park Service, provides grants to tribes requiring financial assistance to undertake NAGPRA-related projects.

Among the challenges facing those charged with the implementation of NAGPRA is the identification of bones belonging to particular groups. Curators have commingled bones in bags, making it virtually impossible to separate them according to tribal membership. Moreover, the indigenous group must prove that the remains are culturally linked to them, an exceedingly difficult requirement to meet.

When the bones are returned to the indigenous group, they are sometimes reburied as part of a repatriation ceremony. One controversial example involved human remains from the Hrdlicka collection at the Smithsonian, which were repatriated to Native Alaskans in 1991 and reburied at Larsen Bay. The discovery of the Kennewick Man in 1996 near the Columbia River in Washington also raised the question of who decides whether skeletons should be

studied to promote scientific knowledge or reburied in accordance with religious beliefs. Often the conflict over the skeletal remains reveals a conflict between the priorities of the indigenous groups, which are concerned with the religious significance of their ancestors' remains, and scientific communities, which favor studying the bones to advance understanding of the human condition.

Some have worried that museums would challenge NAGPRA on the grounds that repatriation violates the Fifth Amendment principle prohibiting the taking of property without paying just compensation. If interpreted as a "taking," repatriation would be constitutionally forbidden. Commentators maintain that because Indians occupy a unique position in the American constitutional system, it is doubtful that the Fifth Amendment takings clause will be construed so as to undermine NAGPRA.

Museums have also argued against returning objects because they claimed tribes lacked the facilities necessary to preserve and display the objects. Native Americans found the notion that items should only be returned to them if they could prove they could properly take care of them to be highly offensive. They resented the implication that they lacked the ability to protect their own cultural heritage. Furthermore, they pointed out that if there were genuine concern about inadequate museum facilities, national governments could provide the resources necessary to upgrade them or negotiate custodial agreements according to which museums would retain the right to display the objects but promise to care for them as specified by the indigenous group. Indigenous groups have insisted that they should be able to choose what becomes of the cultural artifacts, even if that means destruction of the objects. Sacred objects stolen from indigenous groups that were not supposed to be seen by outsiders may have to be destroyed or thrown in a lake upon their return as required by customary law.

The willingness of those who possess cultural objects to return them varies according to political context, but the principle that cultural heritage must be returned has become established in domestic and international law. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the repatriation issues that remain concern practical questions of implementation.

—*Alison Dundes Renteln*

## SEE ALSO

Death; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Law

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## SHAMANISM

Shamanism is a contested topic in the context of Native American religious traditions. Etymologically, the term "shaman" is Siberian (*saman*), specifically Tungus-Evenki, and has no exact equivalent in any Native American language. In the original language, the root term refers to one who "knows" or "is excited and moved" (Grim 1988, 15), that is, a specially trained individual who acts as a mediator between the human community and the world of spirits. This individual is often recognized as a "master of spirits" and is able to use his or her ability to control, invoke, or solicit various powers believed to inhabit the natural world. The most frequent form of those powers is animal helping spirits, which differ according to the ecology of the group and the unique experiences of the shaman. The primary form of invocation is through rituals of drumming, song, prayer, and rigorous dance supported by communal excitement and activities such as feasting, storytelling, and dramatic enactments. In the Siberian context, as also among the Inuit and other Arctic peoples, the shaman often

travels to the world of the spirits, narrating his travel, and demonstrates a unique capacity for ecstatic or visionary states. According to some scholars, ecstasy and out-of-body experience are the defining characteristic of this type of shamanic practice.

In the Native American context, the term is often an equivocation for the generic term of "medicine man" or "medicine woman." However, every Native community has its own linguistic terms, normally several, which represent a variety of expert religious practitioners with widely diverse skills, special abilities, and training. In an attempt to identify various core attributes widely associated with "shamanism" in Native American religious practices, some scholars have proposed a theory of shamanism as a complex of traits rather than as a specific religious role or a formally recognized practice. Such a complex of traits generally consists of a belief in the power and importance of spirits; a capacity to initiate direct contact with those spirits (including the dead) through ritual and performative behavior; the use of special objects,

forms of dress, and rhythmic drumming and song; and a capacity to enter unique and extraordinary states of awareness for the purpose of assisting individuals or the community. Further, the extraordinary state of the shaman is usually characterized as one of three types: an excorporeal (out-of-body) ability to travel from the human world into the world of spirits, usually to carry out specific tasks; the capacity to call the spirits into the ritual area or into ritual objects of the performance; or a capacity to embody the spirits as a living representation of spirit presence.

In this process, the practitioner often has one or more spirits unique to that individual that together form a spirit complex. Specific spirits usually have specific powers, which are invoked for the needs of the ceremony; some spirits may be considered more powerful and multifaceted than others. The ritual practices, the objects used, and the songs sung are often transmitted from generation to generation but may be entirely unique to the individual and may cease upon that individual's death. Often the objects of the ritual are kept in a sacred bundle, which is treated with respect and handled according to various sanctions and rules. Only certain people may be permitted to use or touch the bundle, for example. Generally, there are personal stories and communal traditions to support and justify the practice, though innovation and creativity are recognized, particularly when they are seen as being initiated by the practitioner's guiding spirits. The social role of the shaman can vary widely, ranging from peripheral and liminal to central and authoritative, but he or she is expected to know how to create the appropriate setting for the invocation of spirits. In most communities, the practitioner must clearly demonstrate a successful outcome in the ritual performance as an indication of his or her authentic communion with the spirits.

Another approach to the problem of identifying common characteristics in shamanism is to regard the shaman as one who has mastery of certain altered states of awareness. As a mediator between human beings and empowering spirits, the practitioner has voluntary control over his or her ability to see and commune with the sacred powers of nature and the cosmos. He or she can enter into and sustain trance states that allow for extraordinary communication, then interact in that state with other members of the community and retain memory of the experience in

the post-trance return to ordinary awareness. These distinctions are used by some scholars to differentiate shamanism from various types of spirit possession or mediumship in which the practitioner retains little or no awareness of his or her actions or words during the performance or after its termination. Varying degrees of trance are identified as normative to this view: light trance, in which the individual retains awareness of the ritual performance and is a responsive actor in the rite; dream trance, in which the individual receives instructions or guidance through extraordinary dream experiences while sleeping or while awake but not attending to the external circumstances; and deep trance, in which the practitioner appears "as if dead" and enters into a journey away from the place of enactment. This process, which may involve various degrees of trancelike states, is "controlled and ritualized" by the expert practitioner (Jakobsen 1999, 10).

Other representative aspects of shamanism in the Native American context have been enumerated by scholars. Although many practitioners invoke and work with spirits, another type of practitioner uses and controls "pains," or small spirit-objects, which are believed to inhabit the body to cure illnesses. Other practitioners may focus on specific spirit-empowered abilities that are said to allow them to control the weather, find lost objects, diagnose (but not heal) illnesses, foretell the future (through various types of divination), protect others from ghosts or harmful spirits, make various spirit-empowered objects (often used in love and war), and/or perform miraculous demonstrations of power. Entry into shamanic practice might occur through long, rigorous training (often within family lines), or it may happen more spontaneously through alleged encounters with various spirit powers. Initiation might be structured and graded through many stages over a long course of development, or it might happen through an unexpected crisis or encounter (in dreams or awake) that is regarded as a call to the vocation of shamanic practice. Practitioners often form societies (such as dream or animal societies) with varying ranks and offices. Two common practices are healing the sick through a form of "sucking shamanism" (to remove an object or "pain" believed to cause illness) and recovery of "soul loss," which often requires a journey into the other world or to the land of the dead (Lyons 1998, 260, 264).



Navajo shaman, c. 1915 (Library of Congress)

One of the most common forms of an identifiable shamanism in North America is the shaking-tent rite as performed by the North-Central Algonkian peoples. Among the Ojibwe, the *djessakid* (or shaman) is taught directly by a *manitu* (spirit). After receiving four visions over a period of years, he (usually male) will build a special small tent of saplings covered with canvas. While the *djessakid* takes a ritual sweat, the assistants construct the lodge (four feet in diameter). The *djessakid* then approaches the lodge while calling on his spirit helpers. He may be tied hand and foot before being placed in the lodge. When the *manitus* enter the lodge, it begins to shake, illustrating their presence. Community members then ask questions of the spirits and receive answers from the entranced *djessakid*, who speaks in various voices. He may divine the cause and cure of illnesses (as told by the spirits), foretell the future, locate game, obtain information concerning those far away, communicate with the dead, or call the soul of another *djessakid* believed to be causing harm to others and force him to stop such activity. After the ceremony, the performer is found untied, having been released by the *manitus* (Lyons 1998, 246–249).

In a less theoretical sense, Native American religious practitioners have an extraordinary range of types and practices that far exceeds any easy or facile summary. In the context of colonialism and its aftermath, there has been a strong tendency to reclaim Native terminologies as an affirmation of specific religious practices. In such a context, theories of shamanism have been generally devalued as contributing little to the study of religious expertise in a specific Native community. The theoretical synthesis of such expert roles is seen as characteristic of schol-

ars removed from the actual struggles of validating contemporary religious practices in the reconstruction of unique, culturally explicit languages and complex roles irreducible to generic, abstract models. In the contemporary Native context, shamanism is seen as an outsider construct that often masks and obscures more differentiated roles within a particular community and deconstructs the rich textures, nuances, and unique differences that characterize actual Native religious practices.

—Lee Irwin

#### SEE ALSO

New Age; Whiteshamanism; The Body: Ecstasy; Death: Spiritualism; Ritual and Performance; Sacred Space; Science: Healing

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## TWO-SPIRIT PEOPLE

In 1990, gays, lesbians, and transgendered and transsexual people in the Native American community created and appropriated an indigenously and culturally defined term for themselves: Two-Spirit people. It derived from indigenous recognition of those individuals who combined both the masculine and feminine sides of life into one. The new term was introduced at

the third annual gathering for Native American gays and lesbians in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada (see Jacobs et al. 1997).

The term, though English, is used by North American indigenous people who come from communities where there are tribally specific names for a wide range of genders. It reclaims a position for “third,”

“fourth,” and “other” gendered people, who were losing their cultural ground even within the few tribes that still had spaces designated for them. Furthermore, it plays a role in building an identity politics in the ever-changing Indian communities, especially in urban and rural communities rather than on reservations where tribal languages are still spoken.

In many Native tribes in the current United States and Canada, the third- and fourth-gendered people had their own tribal names, places, roles, and duties throughout most of their history. Because of forced cultural change through physical and mental colonialism, these culturally ascribed roles gradually disappeared over the centuries. Today, they survive in only a handful of tribes, and there only in very reduced capacities. Moreover, many Two-Spirit people are increasingly acculturating and assimilating into Western environments. This shift further removes Two-Spirit roles from reservations and rural communities, leaving a void for the younger generations.

In indigenous matrilineal societies, such as the Navajo, who reside at the junction of New Mexico, Utah, and Arizona, the women are the first gender and men are the second (Mitchell 2001; Schwarz 1997, 2001; Witherspoon 1977, 91). It is the opposite for patrilineal societies, where the men are the first gender and women are the second. These tribally specific gender classifications are extended on to the third- and fourth-gendered people. In a matrilineal society, a feminine person who is not first gendered (non-woman) is a third-gendered person and masculine women are the fourth-gendered persons. A masculine woman who functions as a man in a patrilineal society is of the third gender and the feminine man is of the fourth gender.

Specific tribal names of third- and fourth-gendered people began disappearing from tribal languages after 1492. In some periods of American history, third- and fourth-gendered people were killed off (Williams 1992, 131–151) because they did not conform to Western culture’s Christian ideologies about gender types and sexuality. Moreover, some tribes themselves eliminated third- and fourth-gendered people from their tribes in order to survive in the midst of a new Christianized world that was evolving and constructing a new existence for the indigenous people of North America (Deloria 1999, 275–372).

In the process of the ever-present acculturation and

assimilation, for centuries some Native people have helped in the cultural genocide of third- and fourth-gendered people (Roscoe 1998, 1991, 193–194; Williams 1992). Currently, many Christianized Native people on various reservations are claiming that they never had third- and fourth-gendered people in their own communities. Institutionalized colonialization, and the attitudes that accompanied it, have succeeded in erasing many cultural memories and stigmatizing others so that interviewees deny the existence of current or historical gender diversity (Lang 1998, 311–313; Williams 1992, 187–192). Yet the historical records developed and maintained by the very ones who sought to destroy Native values and cultural practices reveal that gender diversity existed and was recognized in North American Native cultures and communities (Jacobs et al. 1997, 100–118; Lang 1998; Roscoe 1988, 1991, 1998; Williams 1992).

Many of the third- and fourth-gender identities evolved from cultural and religious creation stories at the core of these cultures. For example, the *nadleehi*, or feminine people born with both male and female genitalia, of the Navajo culture were created because of an incident in the underworlds described in Navajo creation stories. “Nadleehi” means “a person who is in a constant state of change” (my translation). If a Navajo is born with both genitalia and is masculine, “he” functions in the role of a man and is classified as a *dilbaa*. The literal Navajo translation for the term has disappeared, yet the word remains in the Navajo lexicon.

Navajo creation stories are made up of four underworlds. At the beginning of the first one, it was the beginning of time. There was a disagreement in the third underworld about the spiritual roles of men and women. Because of this conflict, a separation of the sexes took place. The roles of the *nadleehi* and *dilbaa* were confirmed among the spirit people. The *nadleehi* sided with the men and were obligated to do the duties designated for women, and the *dilbaa* did the same among the women. They functioned as men. In the story, the *nadleehi* and *dilbaa* spirits are discussed as already formed. The need for the *nadleehi* and *dilbaa* spirits arose, and they were created, at the end of the second underworld and within the framework of Navajo religion, and their primary roles were in the realm of Navajo religion (Thomas 1999).

In the late 1890s, the roles of *nadleehi* and *dilbaa*

began to vanish. The concept of *dilbaa* was the first to completely disappear from the Navajo tribe. The *nadleehi* were still recognized and reported to investigators as part of the culture as late as the 1930s. Since then, they have moved underground as a result of a massive influx of various forms of Christianity and imposed Western education. Sadly, they have never resurfaced as traditional public religious practitioners but seem to have disappeared completely from the Navajo Nation.

Over the past twenty years, a few traditional medicine people have pieced together cultural and religious information to resurrect the religious role of the *nadleehi* in the dances of one of the winter ceremonies (Thomas 1999). None of the younger Navajo people were interested in learning the complex songs and traditional roles of the *nadleehi*, however. At this moment, the concept of the *nadleehi* is dying its second death.

These two Navajo identities, the third and fourth genders, were included in the classification of *berdache* in Western cultures until recently. The classification started in the early 1600s, when the French fur trappers introduced it to the New World. The term was misapplied, but anthropologists and other social scientists solidified its new usage in the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth. In the latter part of the twentieth century, Euro-American gay and lesbian communities have commodified the term (Roscoe 1988, 1991, 1998; Williams 1992).

The term was never used as a gender, sexual, or ethnic identity among the third- or fourth-gendered people of any indigenous nation in North America. From the outset, the trappers applied it to homosexual and feminine men, but not to masculine women, among the tribes they encountered when they first arrived in the eastern part of Canada. Anthropologists, historians, and other social scientists, including gay and lesbian people in the public arenas, have continued to use the colonial term to verbally address the “ancestors” of the current Two-Spirit people. In indigenous communities, especially among the Two-Spirit population, it is thought that social scientists are doing this out of spite, or perhaps as an act of denial, to avoid acknowledging the rights of indigenous people to name themselves. It is one of the powers of colonialization. “Berdache” is a foreign word to Native people and is a term that the Two-Spirit community has left to the his-

tory of colonial America. In essence, during the second half of the twentieth century, Native people labeled as *berdache* by non-Native researchers readily dismissed the term and reclaimed their own and new identity as Two-Spirit (Jacobs et al. 1997).

The term “Two-Spirit” was created not only out of resistance to the constant presence of acculturation and assimilation but out of a need to re-create a cultural space in the midst of the surviving indigenous cultures. Two-Spirit people organized to reclaim themselves to their tribes and to announce themselves to those who have been in the midst of losing their tribal cultures. In some Native communities where third-, fourth-, and other-gendered people were no longer recognized, the new name created new tribal places for people and helped ensure the survival of cultural expressions that had been lost.

Moreover, the term has evolved and has made conditions more conducive for Western-defined gays and lesbians to become visible within reservation boundary lines. Cultural genocide had eliminated the traditional roles and duties of these people for many decades. Before the term “Two-Spirit” was introduced, if third and fourth genders were still mentioned in tribal stories, it was simply as a remnant of past years. The term has helped to reclaim these identities, not as a cultural replacement, but as an act of announcing the continuous existence of this gender/sexuality concept and to retain the cultural legacy of people who were so commonly part of various indigenous tribes in the United States and Canada and who played important roles in these societies.

This approach represents simply an adaptation of a method for which indigenous nations are known. They create and make something new out of something old and make a place for it among the peoples of the tribe. Even though the roles and duties of the third- and fourth-gendered people were once vastly different from what Two-Spirit people are now practicing in various tribes, they are acknowledged as continuous tribal practices. Little by little, tribes are recognizing the cultural positions of Two-Spirit people in their midst, some with much resistance from tribal members. As with any new idea and change itself, it will take a long time to make cultural spaces common for this newly “marked” gender and cultural identity of indigenous peoples.

—Wesley Thomas

## SEE ALSO

The Body; Ritual and Performance: Gender Shows;  
Sexuality: Sexual Identities

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# NEW AGE



**N**ew Age religion is a loosely organized network of men and women spread throughout the United States and other parts of the world who are engaged in the process of self-transformation and committed to bringing about a change in global consciousness—a new age. New Agers expect that a universal change will occur through the development of human potential. They believe that the divine dwells within each individual and can be fully explored using a variety of techniques. For some participants, the goal is a gradual and evolutionary transition into the Age of Aquarius; for others, it is a cataclysmic change. New Age religion took shape in the late 1960s and 1970s as an eclectic mix of world religious traditions, pop psychology, quantum physics, and occult practices. It emerged out of a stream of American religiosity that dates back at least to the nineteenth century. New Agers are committed to the transformation of both self and society through a range of practices that include channeling, visualization, astrology, meditation, and alternative healing methods such as Reiki and iridology. They share with other Americans an interest in angels, miracles, and psychic phenomena such as clairvoyance, but they combine such beliefs with Asian religious traditions, Native American rituals, and holistic healing practices.

New Age religion has no organizational structure, centralized leadership, common sacred text, or doctrines. Many individuals and groups participate in New Age practices, and some of these groups have charismatic leaders, but the main emphasis is on self-growth rather than on following the dictates of other people. Although knowledge may be garnered through texts, the most important source of knowledge is the self. Self-help books by New Age channelers and psychics are a large and growing market, however, and the most popular titles have enjoyed sales of half a million copies. Annual spending on channeling, self-help businesses, and alternative health care was at \$10 billion to \$14 billion at the end of the twentieth century. An estimated 12 million Americans are involved with New Age activities, although they may also participate in other religious organizations.

## History and Origins

Some New Age characteristics, such as its emphasis on salvation through the discovery and knowledge of a divine inner self and the continuity rather than separation of matter and spirit, have been present for centuries in the Western metaphysical tradition. What makes the New Age a new religious movement is its self-conscious updating of this older stream of thought. The American metaphysical (meaning mind-oriented and beyond the physical) tradition dates back to the presence of the first Europeans on these shores. They brought with them a range of beliefs and practices, such as astrology, that for a time coexisted with institutional religion and then became more of an underground folk tradition as churches criticized what ministers saw to be outdated superstitions. In the nineteenth century, American metaphysical religion became popular again, but in a new form blended with European imports such as Mesmerism and Swedenborgianism. It flourished in movements such as Transcendentalism, Spiritualism, Theosophy, and New Thought, all of which influenced and are reflected in the New Age movement. Central to the metaphysical tradition is the idea of correspondence between natural and divine worlds and the assumption that the self is sacred or divine.

New Age interest in psychic phenomena, astrology, and miraculous events draws from a centuries-old tradition of popular belief and practice. However, two influential figures, Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) and Franz Anton Mesmer (1734–1815), stand out as important contributors to New Age ideas because they provided explanations for these folk beliefs that captured the public imagination. Swedish mystic Swedenborg described trance states during which he had visions and communicated with angelic beings. He believed that the natural world was divine and that divine knowledge could be found within the self. Mesmer, a Frenchman, taught (particularly in his 1779 dissertation on animal magnetism) that an invisible fluid permeated all humans, plants, and animals as well as the planets and other heavenly bodies. Healing could be accomplished by manipulating this

fluid. His views were introduced from France in 1866 and influenced Spiritualists and other Americans who came to believe in the unity of all existence.

The New England Transcendentalists, especially Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882), furthered some of these beliefs in their theory of correspondence, and in their idea that a world soul united all individual souls. Transcendentalists thought that individuals should look within for their salvation and should seek to understand the harmony existing between the self and the universe. Emerson and other Transcendentalists drew from a wide range of philosophical and religious sources, including Asian religious texts and Swedenborg's writings.

Spiritualism and Theosophy emerged in New York in part as a result of the influence of Mesmer's and Swedenborg's teachings. Spiritualism's main spokesman, Andrew Jackson Davis (1826–1910), claimed to have contacted the long-deceased Swedenborg as a spirit guide. Spiritualist mediums performed in private houses and onstage, contacting the spirits of deceased love ones and other kinds of spirit guides who were said to give them messages from the dead to the living. Other metaphysical groups emerged out of Spiritualism. Most important for the development of ideas that would become central to the New Age movement was Theosophy, founded in New York in 1875 by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891). Theosophists looked to the past and to ancient cultures for truth and wisdom and envisioned a new age of enlightenment and understanding that they hoped humans could bring about. Like the Transcendentalists, Theosophists saw harmony between physical and spiritual realities and believed in the interconnectedness between humans, other living things, and the planets. In their blending of Western and Eastern religions, Theosophists established a model of American religiosity that was to become much more widespread when the New Age movement took off in the late 1960s and 1970s.

In addition to the European traditions of Mesmer and Swedenborg, nineteenth-century metaphysical movements drew inspiration from Asian religious traditions and were particularly attracted to the doctrines of karma and reincarnation. Emerson and other Transcendentalists read the Hindu classic the *Bhagavad Gita*, while members of the Theosophical Society borrowed from both Hindu and Buddhist



Portrait of Theosophist Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, 1880s  
(Bettmann/Corbis)

teachings. The influence of Asian traditions in the United States became more widespread at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth owing to the participation of Asian religious teachers such as Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) in the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893.

The writings of Emerson and Swedenborg are the seeds of what came to be known as "New Thought," a movement that coalesced at the end of the nineteenth century and that influenced and overlaps with New Age religion. During the twentieth century, Theosophy and Spiritualism became less prominent, but their metaphysical teachings dispersed throughout American religious culture and were carried on by New Thought. New Thought also borrowed from Mesmerism and New England Transcendentalism. The New Thought teachings of Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802–1866) were taken up most notably by Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science.



Norman Vincent Peale, 1966 (Library of Congress)

Quimby was a proponent of spiritual healing, of tapping the powers of the mind to heal the body. His teachings encouraged members to move toward healing and prosperity by taking a positive attitude toward life and dispelling negative thoughts and emotions. Another important New Thought figure was Emma Curtis Hopkins (1853–1925), who broke off from Mary Baker Eddy’s Christian Science to found her own school in 1886. Many of her students went on to establish organizations that make up the New Thought tradition and overlap with the New Age movement. These include the Unity School of Christianity (founded in 1889) and the Church of Religious Science (founded in the 1920s). New Thought emphasized individualism and the importance of dispelling negative thoughts and feelings in order to heal body and spirit. Popular self-help books, such as Norman Vincent Peale’s *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952), spread ideas about mental healing throughout North America. The emphasis on positive thinking

and the ability to heal oneself is a major assumption underlying New Age practices, which emerged a couple of decades later. The New Age carried on New Thought themes but was more directly influenced by Theosophy, Spiritualism, and Asian religions.

At the same time that New Thought institutions were coming together in the first half of the twentieth century, individual psychics developed loosely organized followings of their own. As with New Thought, these psychics anticipated New Age beliefs in different spirit realms and practices aimed at self-transformation. Early twentieth-century psychics such as Edgar Cayce (1877–1945) combined metaphysical beliefs and Asian religious teachings while continuing to call himself a Christian. In his approach to healing, Cayce picked up on many of the ideas that were characteristic of Theosophy and Spiritualism, especially the blending of Eastern and Western thought. His legacy continues through the Association for Research and Enlightenment based in Virginia Beach,

Virginia, which disseminates his teachings. Like Cayce, Alice Bailey, the psychic and founder of the Arcane School, was influenced by Theosophy and took up the practice of mediumship. Bailey saw herself as a messenger who was directed to write down and spread the teachings of spiritual beings who communicated with her while she was in a trance state. Bailey and Cayce believed in karma and reincarnation as well as some aspects of Christianity. They furthered the view of a world of disincarnate spirits, spirit guides, devas, and angels that continues to be central to New Age approaches to self-knowledge and spiritual growth. Cayce and Bailey set the standard for New Age channelers and prophets. For instance, in the 1960s, New Age psychic Ruth Montgomery held similar views that she spread through her publications, including *A Search for Truth* (1966). She was interested in Cayce's work and also tried to blend Eastern and Western teachings, such as Christian prayer and meditation practice.

Americans turned to astrology, psychics, channelers, and self-help literature for healing and self-transformation throughout the twentieth century. Because they were already familiar with the idea of a realm of spiritual beings, they did not need to stretch their imaginations too far to accept the existence of extraterrestrials. In the 1950s, UFO movements came together with earlier metaphysical beliefs to form an alternative religious culture from which the New Age movement emerged. Like mediums, participants in these movements transmitted messages to the public, but in this case the messages were said to be from extraterrestrials. The first well-publicized UFO sightings took place in the late 1940s. In 1947, major newspapers, including the *New York Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, spread reports of flying saucers. Many UFO devotees believed these beings were leading them into a new age of enlightenment.

Another important development in the 1950s that contributed to New Age beliefs about healing and self-transformation was the human potential movement. Psychologist Abraham Maslow (1908–1970) and organizations such as the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California (founded in 1962), encouraged the search for self-actualization that was to become central to the New Age movement. Gestalt therapist Fritz Perls (1894–1970) was an important figure in Esalen's early history. His Esalen sessions encouraged explo-

ration of the inner world and asked participants to dramatize inner conflicts by speaking with different voices from various parts of the self. During the last half of the twentieth century, Esalen added world religions to various kinds of therapy and body work.

The New Age movement became publicly aware of itself in the 1970s when aspects of the human potential movement in psychology blended with the counterculture's lifestyle and ideas of personal freedom. Added to these elements of the New Age were the "light groups" in England, where participants discussed the prophecies of a new age as found in Blavatsky's and Bailey's works. The important British New Age community of Findhorn grew out of one of these groups. Theosophist and channeler David Spangler spent several years in Findhorn and returned to the United States in 1973 to form a New Age community in Wisconsin. New scientific ideas, best represented by physicist Fritjof Capra's best-selling *The Tao of Physics* (1965), also contributed to the emergence of the New Age movement by combining Western scientific theories with Eastern religious thought.

When the U.S. government changed immigration laws in 1965 and lifted restrictions on immigrants from Asia, religious teachers such as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi appeared in the United States and gained followers, many of whom also participated in New Age practices. Spiritual leader Baba Ram Dass, who was influenced by Hinduism and spent time pursuing spiritual practices in India, encouraged New Agers to seek self-knowledge through meditation. Ram Dass's book *Be Here Now* (1971) represents the combination of Eastern religious teachings and the Western metaphysical tradition that characterizes the New Age movement. Around this same time, the New Age movement's dual emphasis on self-transformation and planetary healing became evident in the writings of important leaders, gurus, and modern-day prophets as well as in the lives of the communities they spearheaded. The teachings of spokesmen for the New Age such as David Spangler and Ram Dass were popular in the counterculture of the early 1970s but were not in the general public's awareness. In 1987, the Harmonic Convergence, promoted by Jose Arguelles, and Shirley MacLaine's televised miniseries *Out on a Limb* brought New Age ideas to public attention.



Man meditating in a spiral of stones on the beach, Findhorn, Scotland, 1990s (Sandro Vannini/Corbis)

### Beliefs and Practices

New Agers inherited the belief of continuity between matter and spirit from the Western metaphysical tradition of Transcendentalism, New Thought, Theosophy, and Spiritualism. According to this view, divine power dwells in the world and in humans rather than being relegated to a separate realm. New Agers emphasize the oneness of all existence, and many of their practices aim to break down the artificial dichotomies they say our culture has constructed. For New Agers, understanding the interconnectedness of all things makes it possible to heal some aspects of human lives and culture that are fragmented by false dualities. This aim sometimes turns into more explicit social criticism of institutions and trends that increase isolation between people. Because they believe that all things are interconnected and that human consciousness is the most highly developed, many New Agers think humans have a special responsibility to the rest of the planet. Sometimes this view of human responsi-

bility is accompanied by an understanding of the earth as a living being. This view is called the Gaia hypothesis, put forth in part by scientist James Lovelock. New Agers who take their global responsibilities seriously counsel against personal and social fragmentation and encourage planetary healing and holistic thinking. They often position themselves against other religious traditions because they are more open to feminism, nonduality (criticism of the false division between matter and spirit) and critical of scientific and religious reductionism. Their goal is to create an alternative society that will eventually replace the one in which we live.

For New Agers, like Theosophists and New Thought practitioners before them, self-growth techniques and bodily healing practices proceed on the assumption that positive thinking most effectively produces change. Emphasis on positive thinking is accompanied by the idea that negative experiences are illusory and that it is within human ability to



change negative experiences to positive ones. New Agers believe that tapping one's own psychic powers is at the root of both physical and psychological healing. But the techniques to do so are varied and diverse. Because holistic thinking stresses the continuities between all planes of existence, everyday activities such as eating food take on cosmic significance, blurring the boundary between sacred and profane. New Agers also range widely in the extent of their participation in these practices. Some New Agers form intentional communities that provide models for an emerging planetary culture that conforms to New Age ideals. Some live their beliefs day in and day out, while others attend one New Age workshop a year. For those with time and money on their hands, a plethora of New Age centers, classes, workshops, conferences, and literature offer the opportunity for personal growth. So-called growth centers based on the Esalen model have spread throughout the United States. Esalen offers about 400 workshops each year. These sessions encourage participants to realize their full potential and include body work and movement, art therapy, Eastern and Western philosophy, holistic healing, and spiritual teachings from many of the world's religious traditions. The Omega Institute for Holistic Studies in Rhinebeck, New York, founded in 1977, is another popular center for New Age activity. Hundreds of Omega workshops run throughout the year and cover a myriad of topics, including "shapeshifting," "soul discovery," and "Native Wisdom and shamanism" as well as aspects of Buddhist, Sufi (Islamic mysticism), and Hindu religions.

Like Theosophists, New Agers took from Buddhism and Hinduism the doctrines of karma (the cosmic law of cause and effect) and reincarnation. New Agers teach that death is not to be feared as it is only part of an endless cycle of the earthly and spiritual lives of individuals. Many New Agers have been through or have read about near-death experiences (NDEs). NDEs often result from trauma, such as an accident, where victims may seem to be unconscious or technically dead but later report having experienced continued awareness while medical personnel resuscitated them. Their experience while in this state usually involves a journey through a long tunnel, the presence of light, and a sense of calmness and support from those who have died before. Some men and women come to New Age beliefs because their own

touch with death proved to them that consciousness survives the body. For New Agers, death is something to learn from and not to fear, whether it is one's own death or the death of a family member or friend. Death is simply a transition into the afterlife and the cycle of rebirth. This positive view of death is paralleled by optimism about the end of the world. As in personal death, apocalypse on a planetary scale is seen to lead into a higher form of existence. The Harmonic Convergence is one example of apocalyptic thinking in the New Age movement. Jose Arguelles, author of *The Mayan Factor* (1987), used Mayan and Aztec calendars to calculate the date at which the old age would end and the new age of peace and harmony could be ushered in. Although most New Agers believe in a gradual evolution of consciousness that will lead to a new age of global understanding, some, such as psychic Ruth Montgomery, imagine more cataclysmic changes.

There is no sacred text that all New Agers look to for guidance and knowledge; however, they do learn from channeled teachings that have been recorded and published. *A Course in Miracles* (published by the Foundation for Inner Peace in 1975 and channeled over seven years through Helen Schucman) and J. Z. Knight's messages from her channeled deity Ramtha (they began in 1977) have been popular sources. Others learn from the books of famous fellow seekers, such as actress Shirley MacLaine's *Out on a Limb* (1983) or the writings and lectures of Ram Dass. Some New Age groups, such as *est* (Erhard Seminar Training), founded by Werner Erhard in 1971, hold "training seminars" in which participants are led through meditation and other exercises that help them gain self-knowledge. *Est* seminars, meditation groups, and channeling sessions offer New Agers opportunities for self-exploration as well as collective experiences.

Ram Dass's *Be Here Now* was one of the first of many books to explain techniques for meditation. Underlying his descriptions and other New Age approaches to meditation is the assumption that meditating changes consciousness and that such change can bring about healing and spiritual growth. Meditation may also involve contact or interaction with spiritual entities. As meditation encourages consciousness to separate from the physical body, meditators feel that they move into another plane of existence, some-

times called the “astral” plane. It is on this level of consciousness that individuals access spirits, have visions, and find psychic skills such as clairvoyance.

In New Age religion, salvation is obtained through the discovery and cultivation of a divine inner self with the help of techniques that can be learned from books and workshops as well as spiritual teachers. Such techniques as meditation, visualization, crystal therapy, and hypnotherapy fill New Age narratives of healing. Spiritual autobiographies bring order and meaning to healing experiences as they are transmitted and circulated through New Age networks. Holistic healing is a movement that, like metaphysical religion, existed as a stream of beliefs and practices before being taken up self-consciously by the New Age movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Like meditation and astrology, holistic healing includes practitioners who might not consider themselves “New Age.” Participants in closely related new religious movements such as Neopaganism make use of many holistic healing and self-growth techniques, though they tend to focus more on deities—a goddess or god from ancient Greece or Egypt, for instance. Neopagan rituals and events tend to be much more elaborate and theatrical than New Age gatherings. New Agers might take advantage of a number of services and practices, such as Reiki (body work that aims to help energy flow through the body), iridology (using the eyes to diagnose illness), and macrobiotics (a special diet), with the goal of self-healing and preventative medicine. New Agers are more likely than other people who adopt one or more of these practices to see them as elements of an evolved lifestyle that is part of a growing change in planetary consciousness. Vegetarian and vegan diets, massage therapy, herbal healing, crystal therapy, and fasting are all ways of caring for and manipulating the body to maximize health and prevent disease. These practices can be done on one’s own with the help of the many books available or by consulting practitioners who specialize in one or more of these holistic and dietary therapies.

According to the views of many New Agers, healing and spiritual growth can also be helped along by visiting sites of extraordinary mystery and power. Like other religions, the New Age movement has a sacred geography. Although spiritual growth can be furthered through the efforts of the mind and therapeu-

tic techniques, sacred places have a significant impact on self-transformation and healing. Many New Agers make pilgrimages to sacred sites such as Sedona, Arizona, or Mt. Shasta in northern California. Mt. Shasta (14,162 feet) is the focus of many myths and stories circulated among New Agers. First and foremost of these is the idea that the last remnants—beings and cities—of a lost and ancient culture—Lemuria, or Atlantis—are buried beneath Shasta. People tell of seeing Lemurians mysteriously appear and disappear around the mountain. Some also tell of mysterious lights, angel-shaped clouds, and spaceships over Mt. Shasta.

When New Age prophet Arguelles predicted that the Harmonic Convergence of August 16 and 17, 1987, was to be the dawning of a New Age, thousands of New Agers flocked to Mt. Shasta and other power points throughout the world, including Machu Picchu, Peru; Chaco Canyon, New Mexico; England’s Stonehenge; and Sedona, Arizona. Like Mt. Shasta, Sedona, Arizona, has accumulated its own folklore and a thriving New Age industry. Whereas Mt. Shasta has a few New Age shops selling books and crystals, Sedona’s streets are lined with them. Sedona is full of offices for astrologers, hypnotherapists, massage therapists, and psychics, and flyers advertising “soul recovery” and mystic tours through Sedona’s striking red rock formations. Mt. Shasta, Sedona, and other places are seen to exude spiritual power, thus affecting visitors by helping along a healing process or facilitating spiritual experiences such as visions. Nevertheless, for New Agers the most important sacred geography is the self, and the most important pilgrimage is to the divine within the human psyche.

### Problems and Issues

A quick look at Esalen’s and Omega’s Web sites suggests the eclectic borrowing from other cultures that characterizes the New Age movement. Nowhere has this been more problematic than with Native American spiritual practices such as vision quests, shamanism, medicine wheels, and sweat lodges. Critics have dubbed New Agers “whiteshamans” and “plastic medicine men” who are removed from Native communities and Native issues. An underlying assumption of the New Age movement is that cultural knowledge is up for grabs and does not exclusively belong

to anyone. From a New Age perspective, if all existence is unified, then particular cultural boundaries can be breached.

Other critics of the New Age movement point to the aggressive marketing and exorbitant cost of New Age workshops and healing therapies. All this focus on self-help and healing has led some critics to label the New Age movement narcissistic. Although many New Age teachers and writers promote social consciousness along with self-growth, nevertheless critics of the New Age movement charge that New Agers place all their emphasis on the self without being attentive to environmental and social ills. There is a tension among the search for self-knowledge, the kind of self-examination that takes place in many New Age groups, and the desire to change the social world, transform the planet, or bring about the Age of Aquarius. In New Age circles, techniques of self-knowledge and self-transformation coexist with the requirements of life in community. And for many New Agers, personal and planetary transformation go hand in hand.

—Sarah M. Pike

#### SEE ALSO

Buddhism in America; Hinduism in America; Native American Religions and Politics; New Religious

Traditions; The Body: Asian Body Practices; Death: Spiritualism; Popular Culture; Public Theologies and Political Culture; Feminisms; Ritual and Performance: Civic and Political Ritual Performances, Therapy and Healing; Sacred Space; Sacred Time: Ancient Communities of Time

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## CHANNELING

The practice of channeling represents an important characteristic of New Age belief systems. Channeling refers to a type of communication between the spiritual and material worlds. Like other New Age practices, channeling is used to transform the individual in a process intended to bring about a New Age in global consciousness. The spirits that are contacted are considered to have knowledge that will, if followed, bring about this change.

The practice has its roots in the nineteenth-century Spiritualism movement, which started in North America. In Spiritualism, people called “mediums” were a type of channel for entities in the spirit world to contact those in the material realm. The medium would contact the spirits and communicate the message from the spirits to those in the human realm. Spirits would communicate by rapping on tables, moving or levitating objects, and transmitting their voices through the medium. Spiritualists felt that these manifestations were departed spirits communicating with the living. Although Spiritualism has gone into decline owing to the number of fraudulent claims over the years, channeling is still practiced by some New Agers.

The current practice of channeling in New Age religions, as in nineteenth-century Spiritualism, uses a medium or channel to transmit information from the spiritual realm. Movements emphasizing channeling include the followers of *A Course in Miracles*, Theosophy, the Church Universal and Triumphant, the I AM movement, the Ramtha movement, and Novus Spiritus. In these movements, the “channel” receives information directly from the spiritual world. A difference from the Spiritualism of the nineteenth century, however, is that New Age channels receive information from enlightened masters, sometimes called “Mahatmas,” considered to be spiritual guides who have advanced spiritually to such a level that they have been freed of earthly bodies. These guides contact those who are searching and relay ancient wisdom to the seeker. These masters are considered to have once been human beings but have reached a level of perfection after many incarnations.

The channel is often “possessed” for a time by the spirit guide while the information is being transmitted

and claims to have no recollection of the encounter. In these cases, the spirit guide actually is considered to be embodied in the channel. Since the person of the channel is replaced with the “person” of the guide, the messages are either tape recorded, transcribed by a third party, or witnessed by a large group of people. Sometimes the channel will write extensively what the spirit guide wishes to transmit while in the trance state. In such cases the channel often reports having no control over the writing process or the content of the messages. The messages that are transcribed often become fundamental texts for the New Age religions, as in *A Course in Miracles* and Theosophy.

The messages that are transmitted from the spirit guides are intended to inspire a change in global consciousness. The messages discuss the continuity of spirit and matter, the connectedness of all living beings, the cyclical nature of the universe, and the ways to bring about a New Age. Consistent with New Age themes, the messages often criticize social and religious institutions that tend to isolate people from one another. The ideal promoted by these New Age groups is to realize the connectedness of humans to one another and the world around them.

Most New Age movements that accept channeling have one channel to whom all the material is transmitted; others encourage all adherents to be channels. When there is one channel, that person is chosen by the spirit guides, and this is made known to adherents in some way. Generally, those groups that choose just one channel can also control the material that is published as authentic and cohesive to a certain extent.

Channeling plays various roles in specific movements. Adherents of *A Course in Miracles*, for example, do not consider the *Course* to offer a theology, nor do they consider it a religion. Rather, they consider it one path among many to ultimate reality. The channeler for the *Course*, Helen Schucman, was apparently an unwilling participant. She reported that at first she heard an inaudible voice, “a thought impression in the form of sound,” that forced its way into her mind with the introduction, “This is a course in miracles. Please take notes.” The voice seemed to be an interior voice dictating the message to her. It could be interrupted at any time and would pick up where it left off.

The voice later identified itself as Jesus Christ. This is an example of the type of channeling that uses the medium as a transcriber, while the medium has no apparent control over the writing process or the message. This message was transcribed incrementally to Bill Thetford in 1975 and after seven years was published and distributed by a small group of people who believed the message was important. Much of the message of *A Course in Miracles* is meant to correct orthodox Christian teachings and to inspire a new worldview based in love.

The channeled message of the *Course* emphasizes the illusory nature of the material world and the reality of the spiritual world. God and His creation are thought to share one will; this is the real world. The human world is a world of perception, where the illusion of opposites and separateness exists. As in other New Age movements, each human is considered to have a spiritual self, encased in the material body, which will ultimately be united with other spiritual beings and return to the ultimate reality, which includes God. Each person must realize his or her spiritual nature and awaken from the dream of the material world to return to the ultimate reality. Humans have control only over this part of their salvation; God must make the next step to return them to Himself.

Although the message of the *Course* emphasizes the illusory nature of the world, it does not ask its students to abandon the world. Students are not asked to live an ascetic life, for example, or to turn away from friends and family. Rather, the knowledge of the illusory nature of the world is knowledge of who they, as humans, really are. If miracles are performed, it is considered to be proof of the illusory nature of the

material realm. As in other New Age movements, students are encouraged to nurture their spiritual self and become aware of their connectedness to other living beings. This view has ethical implications for the care of others and the earth. These are common themes in New Age religions.

Like other channeled material, *A Course in Miracles* relies on a medium, or channel, to relay information from the spiritual to the material world. In this movement, however, the only channeled information is the *Course*, which exists in three volumes. There was never any further channeled material, and adherents are not asked to practice channeling. The spirit guide in this case was identified as Jesus Christ, rather than a master or Mahatma. In some New Age religions, Jesus is one of the many masters and is not necessarily considered to be the Son of God, as he is in Christianity. The information channeled in the *Course* is intended to bring about a change in consciousness and usher in a New Age.

—Dawn Hutchinson

#### SEE ALSO

Death: Spiritualism

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## GODDESS SPIRITUALITY

Scholars disagree on whether Goddess Spirituality is a religion, a new social and spiritual movement, or a particular expression of popular religiosity that is becoming increasingly eclectic. Perhaps it can best be understood as a cluster of characteristics that honors nature, the female, and the creative potential of the erotic. Sometimes called Women's or Feminist Spiritu-

ality, its key characteristics are the use of female symbolism in understanding the divine, its use of myth and ritual as tools of women's empowerment and healing, its complete lack of hierarchy and formal structure, and the fluidity of its living practice. Its roots are in the questioning and search for meaning that were typical of the 1960s and early 1970s in

America. The challenges to traditional authority that occurred during this time of social unrest created a milieu out of which grew two movements that were to give birth to and shape Goddess Spirituality. The first was feminism, and the second was the spread of Wicca, a countercultural nature religion that revered women and female leadership and used both male and female imagery for the divine.

### Cultural Feminism

In their search for the origins of gender inequality, cultural feminists seized upon traditional religions and, in particular, the “maleness” of God and those who interpreted religious laws. These women felt alienated by the “truth messages” religions provided and the limited female iconography available to them; traditional religion seemed designed to promote and maintain male dominance. In 1971, noted Catholic theologian Mary Daly, in the first Sunday sermon ever given by a woman at Harvard’s Memorial Church, announced that singing sexist hymns and praying to a male god breaks women’s spirit and renders them less than human. At the conclusion of her sermon, she left the pulpit and literally walked out of the church, followed by many in the congregation. By 1973, Daly was using female imagery in articulating the divine and urging women to create their own religious rituals. In 1974, *WomanSpirit* magazine began to publish, providing a forum for women across the country to explore their spirituality through poetry, art, articles about personal experiences, descriptions of rituals, and discussions among women. In the same year, archaeologist Marija Gimbutas published her work that claimed the existence of a prehistoric, peaceful, agrarian culture that was matrifocal and worshiped a Goddess who was understood to be the Great Creatrix. “Goddess civilization” was invaded in a series of waves over a period of 2,000 years by horseback riding, patriarchal warriors from a proto-Indo-European culture who replaced worship of the Goddess with a religion based on their own male-dominated pantheon.

Other scholarly books appeared that gave the nascent Goddess movement an even greater sense of legitimacy. Merlin Stone’s *When God Was a Woman* (1976) explored evidence of widespread worship of female deities and of women as priestesses and prophets.

Stone used historical events and political attitudes to explain the biblical story of the expulsion from Paradise, the blaming of the Fall on Eve, and the resulting devaluation of women. Five hundred people attended the first U.S. Goddess Conference in 1978 at the University of California in Santa Cruz. They heard Carol Christ explain that religious symbols that are almost exclusively male keep women in a state of psychological and physical dependence on male authority. She urged women to develop new symbols that had meaning for them and suggested that the symbol of the Goddess would legitimize and celebrate female power, will, bodies, and the bonds among women. There was no need to reconstruct a sacred history; the Goddess could offer women a sacred future. Naomi Goldenberg coined the term “thealogy” to refer to what she called the study of this new feminist religion.

### Dianic Wicca

About the same time that Mary Daly walked out of patriarchal religion in Boston, a small group of women, under the guidance of Zsuzsanna Budapest, met in Southern California and formed a coven of feminist witches. They combined myths, European folk traditions, and writings of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that promoted the idea of ancient matriarchies and integrated these into the practice of Wicca, a nature-based mystery religion that had been introduced into the United States in the 1960s. Whereas Wicca venerated divinity as male and female, Budapest’s group used only female imagery and employed a creation myth of parthenogenesis that eliminated the need for the male. Calling themselves Dianics, after the virgin Goddess Diana, the coven members declared they practiced women’s or “wimmin’s religion” and did not allow male members. Although they changed some of the key gendered symbols in Wicca, they retained other symbols, including the festivals and the wheel of the year, the use of ritual and magic, the tools used in ritual, and the guiding ethos based on an immanent divine. In spite of the fact that other Wiccans were initially rejecting of them because of their single-sex practice and dismissal of the belief in the need for sexual polarity in order to perform ritual magic, Dianics were clearly Wiccan, and the Wiccan symbol of the witch was one in which they reveled.

If a major emphasis of some scholarly feminists was thealogy, the major emphasis for Dianics was experiential. As the practice began to spread, the latter invited women to join them in rituals on mountaintops, on deserted beaches, in rented church halls and in their own living rooms. Women rewrote ancient myths, consciously transforming them to reflect their own values and lived experience, and then enacted them in religious ritual. For example, the Spring Equinox became the joyful reunion of mother and daughter through the myth of Persephone, a particularly powerful symbol that contrasts with the Christian image of the Father and the sacrificed son. Myths are sacred narratives that provide truth messages about the nature of reality to a particular spiritual community. In rewriting and enacting myths in religious rituals, women were attempting to rewrite reality, at least for their own lives. The Dianic contribution was so significant that it was included as part of an educational program for women developed by the Unitarian Universalist Church.

The boundaries between scholarship and experience blurred and Goddess Spirituality was born. In an explosion of creativity, the first anthologies appeared that brought together scholars, theologians, poets, political activists, novelists, visual and performing artists, and practicing witches. Conferences and festivals sprang up across the country where workshops combined with crafts, music, dance, and ritual to offer women-only space for celebrating the divine. Women's groups began to create their own rituals—for menarche, birth, menopause, divorce, a return to school, and other significant passages in women's lives that traditional religions did not address. If the personal was political, as feminists argued, Goddess Spirituality demonstrated that the spiritual was political as well. Today, Dianic Wicca is considered a tradition within the more fluid Goddess Spirituality, although there is no denying the tremendous impact it has had in shaping contemporary practice.

### Beliefs

Even though divinity is revered as female, practitioners say that the Goddess is not simply God with a sex change. She represents a radically embodied way of knowing and being in the world. Both transcendent and immanent, she is world affirming, and both na-

ture and the body, in particular the female body, are seen as sacred and as sources of spiritual revelation. It is a spirituality brought down to earth, grounded in everyday life and in women's lived experience. Most practitioners emphasize themes of relationship, and many use the symbol of the Goddess to represent the Web of Life that links all things. Themes of healing are also prevalent, and healing is defined broadly enough to encompass a wide range of injuries, from healing an individual's abusive childhood to healing the Earth from environmental devastation. Women are encouraged to explore their potential, to empower themselves to become the women they want to be through celebratory rituals and experience of the sacred in the ordinary. A tenant of this spirituality is that one need not believe in the Goddess in order to experience her, and some followers understand her as an archetype rather than an entity. The immanent Triple Goddess, as Maiden, Mother, and Crone, is a powerful symbol that honors and integrates the female life cycle throughout life, allowing women a unique and immediate access to what they believe is the divine. Because of its permeable boundaries and shared ritual practices, it is sometimes difficult to tell Goddess Spirituality apart from some feminist revisioning of mainstream religions.

### Impact

There is no way to estimate the numbers of women in the United States who practice Goddess Spirituality, although the increasing number of books, college courses, retreat centers, Web pages, "Goddess merchandise," and tours abroad to visit places where goddesses were once worshiped suggest ongoing growth both here and internationally. There is no organizational structure, no revered charismatic leader, no sacred text, no financial support, no external authority at all. Because it is so privatized and idiosyncratic, many scholars believe it lacks the necessary qualities to ensure permanence. It is possible, in fact, that its most lasting impact will be in helping women in traditional religions expand the discourse in their own communities to better represent women's religious experiences. In the meantime, women are creating innovative rituals that they believe link them with the sacred, and Goddess Spirituality continues to spread.

—Wendy Griffin

**SEE ALSO**

Public Theologies and Political Culture: Feminisms; Ritual and Performance: Feminist Theater; Sacred Space: Nature

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## NEW AGE BESTSELLERS

New Age bestsellers—widely read mass-market books that aim to teach or inspire New Age beliefs, narratives, or practices—have been profoundly instrumental in shaping the distinctive characteristics of the New Age movement. Indeed, New Age spirituality's characteristic eclecticism, loose institutional structure, and belief in the ultimate authority of the individual self are directly related to the central role that the marketplace for books has played in its development. In addition, many Americans who read New Age books continue to participate in Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, or other faith traditions. Therefore, the cultural impact of New Age bestsellers extends far beyond those who might actually identify as New Age adherents.

The importance of bestselling books within the New Age movement has many consequences, including greatly complicating the role of authorities and institutions. On the one hand, bestsellers tend to elevate certain widely read authors to celebrity status, so much so that writers such as Shirley MacLaine or Deepak Chopra have come to symbolize the movement to many observers. On the other hand, the marketplace has a profoundly leveling influence, as each author simply offers one more product for the consideration of the consumer, with no generally recognized institutional affiliation, educational training, or historical tradition to validate credibility. This places the ultimate responsibility for selecting among competing beliefs, myths, and rituals with the individual, a process that leads to the New Age's characteristic eclecticism. In this way, New Age readers mimic New Age authors, who piece together material from a vast array of religious traditions and scientific perspec-

tives. Readers who draw so idiosyncratically from such a wide range of sources are often reluctant to organize into lasting institutions, a reality echoed in the often-heard New Age phrase “spiritual but not religious.” As many scholars have noted, because the United States has no established religion, all religious traditions, whether old or emerging, must compete in a “spiritual marketplace” (Roof 1999). The New Age movement, without an ethnic base and without deep institutional or cultural roots, has embraced the consumer book market as a way to attract those who seek a meaningful spirituality outside of institutional religion.

If any one book can stand as the defining text of the New Age movement, it is Marilyn Ferguson's *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (1980), which, according to one scholar, “has been accepted more than any other single book as a consensus statement of the New Age perspective” (Melton 1990, 121), and which sold more than 500,000 copies in its first seven years in print. Ferguson applied Thomas Kuhn's notion of paradigm shift, her own work on the brain-mind connection, and insights from Western science and Asian religions to argue that vast numbers of Americans were working together to usher in a New Age through inner transformation. This belief in social transformation through personal transformation is perhaps the defining belief of the New Age. The immense popularity of *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, its iconic status as the movement's representative text, and the very notion of a New Age conspiracy, however benign, all contributed to making this book a lightning rod for both critics and defenders of the movement.



New Age bestsellers more generally share a number of common traits that reflect the characteristics of the movement. Most of these books, for example, emphasize the person of the author and his or her own spiritual journey. Shirley MacLaine's many bestsellers, such as *Out on a Limb* (1983), illustrate this tendency. Yet, within this focus on the individual, New Age bestsellers also tend to focus on "Unity" or "Oneness" and the process of transcending old barriers, whether social, intellectual, psychological, or spiritual. Science and mysticism, nature and culture, the mind and the body, the soul and the psyche, male and female, Eastern and Western, matter and energy—these are all dichotomies that New Age authors say must be overcome. Finally, New Age bestsellers are overwhelmingly optimistic, offering happiness and health for individuals and peace, love, and harmony for humankind.

Beyond these common traits, however, New Age bestsellers reveal the diversity of New Age spirituality. In fact, the generic term "New Age" is anathema to many believers whom outside observers might classify as such. Instead, participants often identify only with a particular aspect of the New Age movement, such as channeling or Wicca. Bookstores and publishers frequently classify books according to these more specific categories rather than under the more general New Age label. Nevertheless, as paradoxical as it may seem, the solitary act of reading has been one of the primary means of building networks and forming a sense of community for adherents of these various spiritualities, even if they do not identify with the broader category "New Age."

A number of books that focus on the major themes of New Age religion have reached bestseller status. Some of the earliest recognizably New Age bestsellers sought to bridge the divide between East and West. Writers such as Alan Watts and Thomas Merton, in the 1940s and 1950s, began to introduce large segments of the American reading public to Asian religious traditions, particularly Zen Buddhism. New Age writers later adapted these traditions for their own purposes. Fritjof Capra's *The Tao of Physics* (1965) attempted to synthesize Eastern mystical traditions and modern quantum physics, a theme that Gary Zukav's *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* (1979) picked up on. Baba Ram Dass, in *Be Here Now* (1971), however, was the first bestselling author to describe the incor-

poration of Eastern (in this case, a version of Hindu) ideas, and the practice of meditation in particular, into a distinctly New Age lifestyle. Thirty years after its publication, *Be Here Now* continued to sell in large numbers—by 2002 an estimated 2 million copies were in print—and to be featured prominently in many bookstores.

The most important book of feminist spirituality that falls under the New Age umbrella is undoubtedly *The Spiral Dance* (1979), by Starhawk (Miriam Simos). She, too, drew on an established literature, including the work of Mary Daly, among others, but the wide popularity of *The Spiral Dance* exposed many Americans for the first time to feminist neopaganism and Wicca, and to the related but distinct set of beliefs known as ecofeminism. Feminist spirituality's growth and increasing public acceptance in the 1980s and 1990s is certainly due in part to the tremendous success of Starhawk's bestseller. Its rerelease in the late 1990s in a special twentieth-anniversary edition and its frequent citation on Wicca-related Web sites demonstrate its continued relevance.

The books of Carlos Castaneda, especially *The Teachings of Don Juan* (1968), introduced another key New Age theme—Native American shamanism. Castaneda told a first-person account of his encounters with a Yaqui Indian elder. This tale, augmented with psychological and metaphysical language, became an inspiration to many seeking alternative spiritual paths. Lynn Andrews's popular books, including *Medicine Woman* (1981) and *Flight of the Seventh Moon* (1984), recount a similar induction into the mysteries of Native American spiritual life. In the 1990s, James Redfield built on this tradition with *The Celestine Prophecy* (1993). Redfield placed the Native American wisdom in an ancient manuscript found in Peru, which foretold a great global spiritual transformation that was to occur at the end of the twentieth century. His narrative echoes common New Age themes in its optimism and its focus on personal and global transformations.

Many of the most popular New Age bestsellers address matters of health, healing, and the body. These books draw from a mix of Asian religious traditions, New Thought and positive-thinking ideologies, and Western medical science. Louise L. Hay's *You Can Heal Your Life* (1984), with over 16 million copies sold by 2002, stands as the landmark New Age book on healing. Shakti Gawain, in *Creative Visualization* (1979),

drew on similar positive-thinking themes and introduced the term “visualization” into the New Age healing lexicon. The most well-publicized New Age author of the 1980s and 1990s was Deepak Chopra, a Western-trained M.D. whose many books, including *Quantum Healing* (1989), *Perfect Health* (1991), and *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind* (1993), combine Western medicine, Indian Ayurveda, and a typically New Age sense of infinite possibilities. Chopra has estimated that his books sold more than 10 million copies in English alone by 2002.

Although New Age books on healing have been some of the most popular, books on channeling and UFOs have brought the movement its greatest notoriety, yet have likewise sold in great numbers. The most important book in this vein, and one of the most significant of all New Age bestsellers, is *A Course in Miracles*, which was channeled from 1965 to 1973 through New York psychologist Helen Schucman and published in 1975. This book echoes the language of the Christian Bible and stresses, like other New Age books, the power of the mind to heal the body and transform one’s life. Material from *A Course* was adapted by Gerald Gersham Jampolsky, a Stanford M.D., for his bestseller, *Love Is Letting Go of Fear* (1979). Other channeled bestsellers include *The Starseed Transmission* (1982) by Ken Carey and *I Come as a Brother* (1984), a book from the spirit Bartholomew as channeled through Mary-Margaret Moore.

Other New Age bestsellers are remembered for promoting a particular idea or practice. Ken Keyes’s *The Hundredth Monkey* (1980), for example, borrows the ideas of British biologist Lyall Watson to contend that ideas can spread globally once a critical mass of believers is achieved. Keyes’s interest was in spreading peace through global consciousness. *Exploring Atlantis*

(1982), by Frank Alper, investigates the significance of the ancient tale of Atlantis, the lost city, but is best remembered as the book that introduced crystals into New Age spiritual practice. In addition, Ruth Montgomery, in *Strangers among Us* (1979), first brought the idea of “walk-ins”—extraterrestrial souls who inhabit earthly bodies to initiate transformations—to popular attention, and Jose Arguelles’s *The Mayan Factor* (1987) announced the impending Harmonic Convergence, a new era of planetary consciousness that was to begin in August 1987.

—Matthew S. Hedstrom

#### SEE ALSO

Native American Religions and Politics: Shamanism; Generations: Baby Boomers; Popular Culture: Religion in the News; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Feminisms; Sacred Space: Cyberspace, Nature

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## RAËLIAN MOVEMENT

The Raëlian Movement was founded shortly after December 13, 1973, when a French sportswriter, race-car driver, and aspiring pop singer named Claude Vorilhon said he had an encounter with an extraterrestrial. This claim would change his life and ultimately stir ethical debates on human cloning into the twenty-

first century. Vorilhon, who changed his name to Raël, or “The Messenger,” after his first encounter, published details of his 1973 meeting with the extraterrestrial in *The Book Which Tells the Truth*, or *The Final Message: Humanity’s Origins and Our Future Explained* (1998). The being, called Yahweh, reportedly revealed that he



“Raël” delivers a speech at a conference on cloning, Tokyo, 2002 (AFP/Corbis)

was a representative of the Elohim, also known as “the scientists.” They had created humans in their own image, using cloning techniques, Vorilhon said, and viewed humanity as a social experiment that had gone horribly wrong. Much misery could have been avoided over the centuries if humans had listened to the prophets, including Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and Joseph Smith, whose teachings, actually scientific and not religiously oriented, had been misunderstood. Hence the Elohim had sent Raël as their fortieth and final prophet, and humanity had one last chance to choose either self-annihilation or advancement through the proper use of its scientific inheritance. For the next twenty years, Raël spread Yahweh’s message across France, Quebec, and other parts of Europe and North America, but with only modest success. Media attention focused mainly on the group’s uninhibited celebration of sexuality, including its enthusiastic acceptance of gays and lesbians.

The movement, however, achieved a much higher profile after February 1997, when the Scottish geneticist Ian Wilmut introduced Dolly the sheep, the first cloned mammal. The Raélians responded by establishing Clonaid.org to organize the resources necessary to clone the first human. Their efforts attracted funds, along with the assistance of a French geneticist, Dr. Brigitte Boisselier, and prompted Raël’s brief appearance on March 28, 2001, before a congressional committee investigating human cloning. Such high-profile appearances have brought the Raëlian Movement a public notoriety much greater than its numbers would warrant. The movement claims 55,000 members worldwide, although the actual number of active participants is probably much smaller. The Raëlian Movement has nevertheless sustained itself and begun to prosper in the North American religious landscape, partly through its imaginative reinterpretation of Judeo-Christian symbols and skillful use of emerging communications technologies, along with seemingly infinite adaptability. One cannot underestimate the importance of Raël himself, however. His dynamic persona and encouragement of pleasure for its own sake may resonate with members who find that established religions occasionally take themselves too seriously.

### Raëlian Beliefs and Practices

On December 13, 1973, Raël allegedly encountered a small humanoid approximately four feet in height who identified himself as Yahweh. Over the course of six days, Yahweh revealed that the Elohim had planted life on Earth as an experiment. A small group of Elohim remained, in fact, to monitor humanity’s development. The Hebrew Bible and Christian New Testament were actually chronicles of the Elohim’s dealings with humankind. The Tower of Babel, for example, was a rocket ship designed by humans. The Elohim, viewing it as a threat, destroyed it and scattered its builders. Noah was one of the few survivors of a nuclear “flood,” and his ark orbited Earth until radiation levels subsided. Moreover, the Ark of the Covenant was a nuclear-powered communications device linking the Hebrew priests to an orbiting mother ship. The Elohim had also maintained a residence within Solomon’s Temple. Raël even learned that Sa-

tan was the chief skeptic among the Elohim, doubting the human experiment would succeed. Finally, Jesus healed lepers with space lasers and walked on water using reverse gravitation. Essentially, Raël learned that miracles were actually brought about through advanced science.

Yahweh also reportedly gave several new commandments in his revelations to Raël. These centered on the notion of technology as a tool of spiritual and material deliverance, provided certain standards were maintained. First, Yahweh proclaimed the need for a “geniocracy,” or the rule of geniuses. Only those with IQs higher than 110 could vote, and officeholders would require a score of 150 or more. Second, Yahweh commanded an end to inheritances, with all goods reverting to the state. Third, Yahweh suggested that a global government and currency would help unify Earth’s warring factions. If humans followed these commandments, they could live like the Elohim, with life spans exceeding 700 years, and those who made outstanding achievements to human development would gain eternal life. Fourth, Yahweh discouraged marriage and procreation, which, while permissible, were less than ideal. The new Earth would also be free of crime and psychological imbalances, as those predisposed to such conditions would receive sophisticated medications to return them to normal. Finally, learning would become much easier, since knowledge could be gathered by specially created robotic learners, who would transfer their knowledge to a human host using an injection process called “chemical education.”

Raël initially founded the organization MADECH (a French acronym for “movement for welcoming of the creators of humanity”), but renamed it the International Raëlian Movement in 1975 after his second encounter with Yahweh on July 31, 1975. During this visit, Raël said, Yahweh rewarded him with a trip to the Elohim planet, where Raël met all of his prophetic predecessors, along with thousands of other humans whom the Elohim had deemed worthy of eternal life. All had agreed to sterilization, but this was a small price to pay for eternal bliss with all of one’s needs provided for by biological robots, who were human in almost every respect but lacked the ability to experience pain or pleasure. Such robots accomplished every tedious chore, including learning, with the

knowledge passed to their masters through “chemical education.” The robots could also become sexual partners, consistent with their task of providing pleasure and ease for their human masters.

Raël published his new experiences in *Space Aliens Took Me to Their Planet* in 1978 and began to spread his message beyond France. He continued to use Judeo-Christian symbols and language during this phase, although he interpreted biblical narratives increasingly in relation to his interests in DNA and genetics. Raël also established the movement’s formal structure, with a seven-level priesthood that ranged from “Probationer” to Raël’s own rank, “Planetary Guide.” The Elohim also informed Raël that they required an embassy for their return, which would occur sometime before 2025. After negotiations with Israel failed, Raël determined that the embassy could be built in Quebec, where he had established his headquarters, featuring the world’s tallest replica of a strand of DNA, at 26 feet, along with a replica of the spacecraft that took him to the planet of the Elohim.

Priests conduct Raëlian rituals, which include the “Transmission of the Code,” a ceremony during which the priest touches the believer’s forehead and takes a spiritual sample of genetic code, which is passed through the hierarchy, eventually reaching the Elohim. Further, the movement requires new members to renounce formally any other religious affiliation and sign papers allowing a mortician to take a bone fragment from their foreheads. Semiannual festivals also include “flyovers,” during which the Elohim fly overhead and sample members’ DNA. Believers hope that the Elohim will clone a select group of deserving members based upon this genetic information, although recent developments in cloning technology may open such opportunities to those with sufficient financial means.

The Elohim also apparently revealed that, contrary to many traditional religious teachings, humans should cultivate pleasure for its own sake. To enhance their sensual appreciation, members gather for “sensual meditation” seminars where they are encouraged to embrace their sexuality and ignore cultural taboos such as monogamy. Marriage and childbirth are discouraged, in fact, and are said to reduce one’s eligibility for perpetual life. Despite their remarkable openness to sexual diversity and gender role experi-

mentation, however, the movement has struggled to integrate women into top leadership positions.

### The Cloning Controversy

The cloning of Dolly in 1997 intensified the interest of the Raëlian Movement in cloning and genetics research. With cloning emerging as a scientific possibility, Raël began organizing the resources necessary to clone the first human. He established a corporation in the Bahamas, but officials there revoked his charter after numerous complaints. Raël subsequently moved his operations to the United States, where he claims his scientific team, led by geneticist Dr. Brigitte Boisselier, seeks to clone a human. Boisselier's organization, Clonaid, has received much of its funding from bereaved parents wishing to clone their deceased children. Its activities have not gone unnoticed by American authorities, especially after Boisselier's testimony to Congress on March 27, 2001, when she declared her intent to clone the first human. Raël's appearance a day later further alarmed federal officials. Boisselier subsequently claimed that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had pressured her that spring to move her cloning operations outside of U.S. jurisdiction. Although neither Boisselier nor Raël has mentioned the

new location, cloning efforts have presumably continued in a secret offshore lab, perhaps located in the Bahamas. Regardless of whether the Raëlians have the resources to carry out such a procedure, their public statements of intent, especially the testimony of Dr. Boisselier, have alarmed federal officials enough to make the ethics of human cloning a major legislative priority.

—Glenn W. Shuck

#### SEE ALSO

New Religious Traditions; Popular Culture; Science

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## WHITESHAMANISM

*Whiteshamanism* is a particular kind of New Age spiritual quest but with a twist: It was named by its most outspoken critics, and its practitioners do not recognize that name. The label refers to the appropriation of non-European spiritual practices, terms, or accoutrements, but at a level so superficial as to be ridiculed by the members of the cultures from which the practices purportedly come. First coined by Cherokee writer and literary critic Geary Hobson (Hobson 1978, 100–109), the term and the criticism of its practitioners were echoed by other American Indian writers over the following years, including Leslie Silko (Laguna Pueblo), Wendy Rose (Hopi-Miwok), Jeanette Henry (Cherokee), Rupert Costo (Cahuilla), Ward Churchill (Cherokee), and others. The particular targets at the time, during the 1970s and 1980s,

were literary figures such as Gary Snyder, Lynn Andrews, Carlos Castaneda, and Ruth Beebe Hill.

The works of the whiteshamans ranged from an assumption of shamanic powers by a poet with apparently appropriate props (Snyder) to fictional works passed off as a genuine autobiography (Andrews) or fieldwork (Castaneda) to insultingly imaginary concoctions purporting to be the genuine works of Native people (Hill). The common thread and most important element in the Native criticism of these individuals and their works is one of integrity—that is, they are not who they claim to be and/or do not represent what they claim to represent.

The term "whiteshamanism" itself is a compound based on two misnomers. First, it uses a racial or ethnic designation that is an American invention that has

come into common usage worldwide despite its problematic meaning. As contemporary race theorists have shown, there is no such thing as a “white” race. The term came into use during the years of colonization and slavery in order to differentiate the people who believed that they had the right to hold power from those who they believed did not. Prior to that time (and for some time thereafter), it was common for English people to speak of themselves as being of a different “race” than the Welsh or the French, whereas once having arrived in America, they all suddenly became “white.”

The word “shaman” derives from the Tungus people of Siberia and refers to an individual who serves as an ambassador between the spiritual and physical worlds. Such an individual travels between the two (or more) planes of reality, usually for the purpose of curing, and is both revered and feared. When ethnologists saw that many cultures outside of Siberia had people in similar spiritual-medical positions, they began to use the term freely. A “whiteshaman,” therefore, is not necessarily “white,” and almost certainly is not a Tungus shaman.

In fact, most whiteshamans were raised as Christians or Jews in middle-class homes, often in heartland or urban America. When Geary Hobson referred to whiteshamanism as a form of cultural imperialism, he was placing this designation alongside the genuine imperialism (the actual taking of land and resources and the restriction of the movements and freedom of Native people) and symbolic imperialism (the appropriation of Native images and names for such things as sports teams and manufactured products) that Native peoples have experienced. Whiteshamans, in the view of Native people, see themselves as citizens of the world who may seize upon any idea, image, or religious practice and adopt it as their own. When certain poets from the 1960s through the 1980s declared themselves to be shamans in their poetry readings, Native people responded that they were acting in a most un-shaman-like way by saying publicly that they were shamans, and that, moreover, they could not be shamans because they were without communities who revered and feared them. Like the Englishman who managed life in Africa better than the indigenous African people in *Tarzan*, or the many examples of “white savior” and “white goddess” films, in which a white person is captured but eventually achieves lead-

ership in the capturing culture or ends up being worshiped by them, the whiteshaman in the literary arts is no less an interloper and “wannabe,” according to the Native American critics of such claims.

These criticisms are often misunderstood by the non-Native population, especially by those who are sympathetic to the whiteshaman’s ideas or literary style. They believe that American Indian people are trying to censor their work or dictate to them what they may or may not write about. Native people respond that, to the contrary, there have been no objections to non-Indians writing about the natural world, the spiritual beings of the natural world, or even Indian cultures and ceremonies. The objection has been to the appropriation of identity and the expression of an individual’s personal interpretation of another culture’s spirituality as if this were as valid as the real thing. Non-Indians have not come under similar scrutiny for writing about American Indian spirituality and other issues when they look at the subject from the vantage point of their own culture and upbringing and maintain that position. If a non-Indian writes “coyote stories” (accounts in Native American cultures that are both humorous and sacred) but maintains the position of being a Euro-American (or African American, Asian American, etc.), looking at the genre from that vantage point, there is no problem. Identity and integrity are the key issues of interest and importance. One does not claim to be what one is not, say the critics, who believe that indigenous ceremony is mocked by those who pretend to engage in it for the purpose of show business, sports team cheers, or even education (as in YMCA Indian Guides and Princesses programs, which may seem to pass on something of genuine Indian culture but in reality are inauthentic).

Many American Indian people find it especially poignant that Euro- and African Americans often seem alienated from their own roots. Much of the frustration that has been expressed by the critics has been based on pity for people so bereft of ancestral heritage, so removed from the dust of their own ancestors, that they must cling to the traditions of other cultures. It is also important to note that, in spite of the seemingly racial overtones of the term “whiteshamanism,” Native American people do not necessarily view “race” in the same way that other modern Americans do. Adoption of individuals into families, hospitality, and generosity are traditions that extend

back through the eons in Native American cultures. Thus, some of the Native people—most notably the traditional elders, who are often genuine doctors (or “shamans”)—chide younger Indian people for being hard on the “whiteshamans” and instead tell them to understand that the “whiteshamans” are homeless and hungry people who need the help rather than the hostility of the Native people. Some Euro-Americans have been accepted as apprentices by traditional Native elders and treated no differently than one of Indian blood.

Finally, Native American critics of the whiteshamans do not suggest that people of European ancestry cannot or do not have their holy people and traditional doctors. They sometimes suggest, however, that these people have been persecuted for centuries as “witches” and subjected to some of the most horrific genocidal practices the world has ever known. By the time Europeans arrived in the Western hemisphere, they had effectively destroyed their own shamanic traditions and brought devastation to themselves in doing so. For example, because cats were associated with witches, Christians launched expeditions to kill as many cats as they could. With the cat population reduced, the rats were free to multiply, and the bubonic plague spread throughout European populations.

It is a fundamental belief in virtually every American Indian spiritual tradition that the Creator made people look different from one another, made them understand that they were born from the earth in a certain place, that the plants and animals and springs and mountains and all that exists were related to them, that they were responsible for one another, that there were rules for how to live in this world, and that each group of people would be given a different way to understand the Creator and different languages in which to pray. Europeans were no different than other peoples of the earth in this sense. However, after the Christianizing of Rome, legions of Roman soldiers wiped traditional European wisdom from the minds and hearts of the people so that when they arrived in one “Old World” from their own “Old World,” they were empty, sick, fearful, and searching for a profound transformation that would make them into an entirely new kind of people. Their first encounters with American Indians (as the indigenous people of half the world have been misnamed) helped to fill that void with new scientific information, new

foods, new ideas about how governments and societies should be run, new social structures in which the hungry would be fed and the homeless sheltered, and new political identities in which power flowed up from the people rather than down from a ruler. Perhaps it is only a natural and obvious step, from the vantage point of Native people, that the descendants of such people would look to this side of the earth for their religious sustenance rather than back to the Holy Land that their remote ancestors knew.

—Wendy Rose

#### SEE ALSO

Native American Religions and Politics: Shamanism; Popular Culture

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## WICCA

Wicca is a rapidly spreading, nature-based mystery religion that falls under the umbrella of contemporary paganism. Many followers believe it is a reconstruction of religious practices and beliefs from pre-Christian Europe that survived church persecution by going underground and being passed down through families and small, covert groups. Nevertheless, they freely admit that they practice what they also call the Old Religion, Witchcraft, or simply “the Craft” in new and innovative ways. This claim to ancient roots has not been clearly demonstrated, however, and the religious practice of today’s Wiccans is usually traced back more immediately to Gerald Gardner, an Englishman who wrote about having been initiated into a coven in the 1930s. Gardner claimed that he had received permission to publicize the group’s secret beliefs and practices and did so with the repeal of the anti-Witchcraft law in Britain in the early 1950s. Whether or not Gardner simply passed on an existing religion, explicated a creatively reshaped one, or invented one by combining practices drawn selectively from traditions such as Freemasonry, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn Society, the Rosicrucian Society, mystical Druidry, and the ritual magic of Aleister Crowley and the idealizations of the British Folk Lore Society is a matter of some debate. What is clear is that Gardner’s contribution fed into the belief that Witchcraft was an ancient pagan religion made popular in the writings of the romantics since the appearance of Jules Michelet’s *La Sorcière* in 1862. Practitioners today are typically undisturbed by the debate of origins, being more interested in the experiential aspects of the religion than in its beginnings.

### Origins in the United States

Two of Gardner’s students, Raymond and Rosemary Buckland, are credited with having brought Wicca to the United States when they emigrated in 1962. The religion spread quickly, and by 1965, the Church of Wicca was established in Mississippi. The United States was fertile ground. The harsh response of the authorities to 1960s activism intended to bring about peace, justice, and equality splashed across newspapers and television screens and shocked America

out of complacency. Disillusioned and distrustful of institutional authority and traditional solutions, some sought to find meaning in spiritual truths that came from their own subjective experience. Wicca offered a highly individualized and flexible way to do this. In addition, the changing role of women and the growth of feminism were leading some women to experience traditional religious teachings about their roles as limiting and oppressive. With its valuation of female leadership and autonomy, Wicca provided a counter-cultural venue for self-growth and spiritual exploration.

New groups of Wiccans sprang up. Some were organized by people trained in Wicca, others by people who were devouring the books on Witchcraft that were beginning to appear in the popular press, and still others were guided by a combination of research and creative inspiration. The early 1970s saw the spread of pagan books, magazines, and newsletters, along with festivals and conferences in various parts of the country, where a tremendous cross-fertilization of ideas and practices occurred. These were instrumental in creating a real sense of community and common religious culture. New versions or “traditions” of Witchcraft, not traced directly back to Gardner, began to proliferate. In 1975, diverse groups of Witches who wanted the benefits, legal rights, and protections of official church status met and formed the Covenant of the Goddess (CoG). By 1978, Wicca was listed as a religion in the United States Military Chaplains’ Handbook, and it had grown visible enough to be featured in the religion section of *Time* magazine in 1979.

### Beliefs and Practices

The development and rapid spread of U.S. pagan culture created both differences and similarities in Wiccan traditions. Perhaps the most significant similarities concerned the belief in and use of ritual magic and focus on divine immanence, or the presence of the sacred in the world and all its inhabitants. These two concepts cannot be overstressed, as the more sacred the world is understood to be, the more accessible the sacred is to each individual who seeks it, and



Wiccans believe it can most easily be experienced through the use of ritual and magic.

Divinity is personified as Goddess and God. The particular expression of these may depend on the needs of the individual, the focus of the group, or the intent of the ritual in which they are being invoked. This means that divinity is polymorphic, being understood, for example, as the Earth Mother and Sky Father in one invocation and, drawing from other cultures, Kali from India and the Celtic horned god Gernunos in another. Wiccans frequently refer to triple aspects of the Goddess as Maiden, Mother, and Crone, represented in the waning, full, and waxing moon.

There are eight major religious holidays, or *sabbats*, in Wicca. These fall on the Winter and Summer Solstices, the Spring and Fall Equinoxes, and the four midpoints between equinox and solstice. The theme and significance of these ritual events are loosely based on the Celtic agricultural year, although as Wiccans spread throughout other climate and time zones, the meaning is beginning to be adapted to fit local conditions. The sabbats are seen as a time to “reconnect” with the immanent divine, to reenact ancient myths that reaffirm pagan identity and community, to perform acts of ritual magic, and sometimes to measure personal growth and understanding. Full moon rituals, or *esbats*, may also be a time of religious ritual. Wiccans are not restrained by these dates, as any time that the group or individual feels the need, religious ritual is considered appropriate, for example in case of a healing.

Rituals are usually done in “sacred space,” an area that has been consecrated by “casting a circle” and invoking the four cardinal points of the compass and the elements of air, fire, water, and earth that Wiccans associate with the directions. Magic, or “spellwork,” is done within this circle. Wiccans believe that the principle underlying magic is similar to that underlying quantum physics, which is that everything is connected. Although scientists tend to focus on the subatomic level, Wiccans focus on the metaphysical nature of the connection, seeing it as immanence flowing through all things. Therefore, by drawing psychic energy into the body and manipulating it correctly, practitioners believe an individual can send it out into the world to affect matter toward a desired end. There are various techniques for doing this, in-

cluding a focus of attention during altered states of consciousness that are achieved through chant, dance, drumming, meditation, and the use of ritual tools or shared cultural symbols.

This belief in interconnectivity shapes Wiccan ethics. Psychic energy sent out to affect change remains connected at some level to the sender, so the sender is also affected by the change. A commonly held belief is that magic returns threefold to the sender. Therefore, negative magic is seen as destructive to self and community. There is no single authoritative text accepted by all Wiccan traditions, though all accept the Wiccan Rede, which says, “An as it harm none, do what thou wilt.” This principle provides for both considerable individual autonomy and responsibility. Starhawk, noted Witch, activist, writer, and theologian, has called it an ethics of immanence, arguing that it encourages self-knowledge and integrity, guiding people to act with consistency and to accept the consequences of their actions. Immanence flows through and connects people to all living things, therefore diversity and balance are valued. Wiccans’ environmental and social concerns are understood through this ethical system.

All Wiccan traditions share these beliefs. One belief that is not shared is that of Dianic Wiccans, members of exclusively female covens who use only female imagery to represent the divine. More feminist and generally more politically involved than other Wiccans, Dianics at one time encountered considerable resistance from other Wiccans, who typically insist on sexual polarity in their work. In the United States today, however, the traditions coexist fairly comfortably.

### Organization

A Wiccan may be a solitary practitioner or a member of a small, autonomous group called a coven, which is usually led by a high priestess and her chosen high priest. A few traditions are fairly egalitarian and have shared leadership, and Dianics may or may not have a high priestess but never have a high priest. There is no central governing body, although there are national and state groups that strive to coordinate certain activities, such as tax-exempt status, ministerial credentialing, religious discrimination issues, public relations, and so on. Ultimately, authority rests in the individual, mediated by coven membership. Although

Witches who do not trace their spiritual heritage to Gardener are not Wiccan by narrow definition, almost all traditions of Witchcraft in the United States have been influenced by Wicca. Many of these individuals are beginning to call themselves “Wiccans,” which the general public seems to find more acceptable than the word “Witch.” As there is no central record-keeping authority, it is impossible to know exactly how many people in the United States define themselves as Wiccans. The most recent estimates put the number at somewhere between 200,000 and 500,000. Although there are some regional differences, surveys show they tend to be white, well-educated, urban or suburbanite parents, who are disproportionately female.

It is important not to confuse Wicca with any form of Satanism, as Wiccans do not believe in the existence of the devil or any such entity.

—Wendy Griffin

#### SEE ALSO

Native American Religions and Politics: Shamanism;  
Ritual and Performance: Dance; Sacred Space: Nature

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NEW RELIGIOUS  
TRADITIONS



For most of its history, America has been both famous and infamous for its proliferation of new religions, and they continue to this day to take a variety of forms. Many, such as the Quakers, Shakers, Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Seventh-day Adventists, Spiritualists, Christian Scientists, Pentecostals, and Jehovah's Witnesses, are offshoots of Christianity, America's dominant religious tradition. Others, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam, have ancient lineages in other parts of the world and are new only to American culture. These traditions, likewise, have produced their own new religions, such as Hare Krishna, a branch of Hinduism, and the Nation of Islam. Sometimes a new religion that is a derivative of Christianity, such as the Unification Church, comes to America by way of another country, in this case Korea. The spiritual practices of the many different tribes of Native Americans have been in America all along but have been revitalized in recent times. There are also new religions that are more eclectic in their origins. Theosophy emerged in the nineteenth century as a worldview that incorporated both occult and Eastern religious thought. Wicca, contemporary witchcraft, began developing in the second half of the twentieth century as a form of neopaganism, a nature religion that draws on European folk culture, magical ritual and practices, and Goddess Spirituality. The many manifestations of the New Age movement incorporate ideas from both Eastern and Western religious traditions as well as insights from the sciences in their promotion of mind/body/spirit integration, the interconnectedness of all things, and the coming together of science and religion.

Innumerable causes of America's ongoing receptivity to religious innovation have been proposed. Five are particularly prominent: (1) the American entrepreneurial spirit, which affects religion just as it does other institutions; (2) the freedom of religion guaranteed by the Constitution; (3) the intensity of religious belief, enthusiasm, and seeking that continues to characterize American culture right alongside emerging patterns of secularization; (4) the possibilities for novelty and innovation in a crossroads culture where unlikely combinations of people, ideas, and practices en-

counter each other; and (5) the reality that "religion" is one among many kinds of human creativity that constantly gives rise to new forms.

In spite of the longtime presence and multiple forms of new religions in the United States, their significance and role have always been subjects of controversy. Changing perspectives in interpretation are as important a part of the story of new religions, in fact, as are the histories of particular groups. It is only recently that the scholarly study of new religions has moved from the category of religious pathology to the larger arena of religion itself, and that change has been even slower in coming to society as a whole. Forty years ago, most of the sources available about new religions were either defenses written by members of particular movements or negative critiques put forth by adversaries. It was not easy to find references, scholarly or popular, that were more descriptive and analytical than judgmental. Thirty years ago, an encyclopedia on religion in America most likely would not have had an entry on "New Religious Traditions," although there might have been an entry on "Marginal Religions" or "Cults." The latter is a term that carries so much negative meaning that it has nearly lost its usefulness as an interpretive tool. In general, the large number of new religions in American culture has tended to be perceived less as a sign of cultural vitality and more as a symptom of cultural malaise.

Historically, new religions were looked upon as heretical by those in established, mostly Christian, religious traditions—challenges to the orthodoxy of true religion. Since the early twentieth century, they have been perceived as well as a sign of something gone wrong in the larger culture and as threats to mainstream values and social stability. Infrequent but devastating episodes of violence—Jonestown, the Branch Davidians, Heaven's Gate—have reinforced public assumptions that something sinister is at work in most new religious movements. Popular stereotypes of the cult and the cult founder promote the conclusion that members of new religions are needy individuals seeking community in ultimately self-destructive ways. They are seen as willing to follow a charismatic but



Unification Church leader Reverend Sun Myung Moon and his wife marry 2,075 pairs of his followers at Madison Square Garden, New York, on New Year's Day, 1982 (Bettmann/Corbis)

spiritually, sexually, psychologically, and financially corrupt leader into untold excesses and deceptions. If this description is at one level a caricature, it has nonetheless had a stronghold on public opinion for at least two centuries. For example, accusations against Joseph Smith, Jr., founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the nineteenth century, are surprisingly similar to those brought against twentieth-century founders of new religions, such as the Reverend Sun Myung Moon of the Unification Church.

In recent years this primarily negative interpretation of new religions has come to seem too restrictive as well as inaccurate. This is the case for several reasons. First, there is the growing awareness that religious innovation is simply a part of most cultures and new forms of religion are to be expected. Second, there is the reality that the emergence of new religions in America is much too complex a process to yield to a single interpretation and especially one that cannot

explain the multiple forms that new religions take. Third is the recognition that new religions, like the established traditions, require thorough description and analysis before conclusions can be drawn about how they function in the culture. To do so requires attention to the historical moment in which particular religious movements originate, that is, to the cultural and theological tensions that give rise to them and to the specific details of their worldviews, beliefs, and practices. In other words, the study of new religions requires the scholar to develop and refine a set of questions that may be applied to particular groups before drawing conclusions about new religions in general. The overarching question in the study of any particular religion is a contextual one: What is going on in this moment and in this movement—theologically, sociologically, psychologically, spiritually, and in light of various demographic factors such as race, class, gender, and economics? To take all of these factors into account is not to idealize or romanticize new religions

or to refrain from the kind of rigorous critique that is necessary for any institution. It is, rather, to broaden inquiry into their place in American culture and history and to assume complexity rather than simplicity.

A sufficiently complex interpretation of new religious traditions assumes that when they emerge or arrive in America, they seek to enter both religious and cultural conversation. To a greater or lesser extent, they become involved in three different processes. First, either explicitly or implicitly, they present criticisms of what they consider the inadequacies and distortions of the established religions and of the secular culture. Second, they offer contributions: new revelations, insights, or experiences; new prophets and leaders; new scriptures; and/or new forms of community. Sometimes members of new religions see themselves as conservers rather than innovators, offering not novelty but renewal or rediscovery of beliefs and practices lost over the centuries or ancient wisdom that has survived only among a knowledgeable few. Third, they engage in the process of integration into the culture. This is a challenge that requires enough accommodation to social mores to avoid condemnation or legal troubles but not so much as to lose a distinctive identity, one that can attract sufficient members to survive and prosper.

### **Critique of Established Religions and Society**

The critiques that take shape in the revelations, worldviews, and practices of new religions range from the theological to the social, political, and economic. To encounter the writings and the testimonials of people who have founded new religions or who have been drawn to join them is to experience seekers, people who ask questions, who voice their doubts and their disillusionments. They describe themselves as unable to find in either the established religions or the secular culture beliefs, practices, or understandings of how the universe operates that make sense with their own experiences of life in American culture.

Among the most common complaints against the established religions is that they have lost their purity, that they have accumulated false beliefs and practices, and that the wisdom and truth of earlier times have been lost. Quakers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries accused the Puritan and Anglican establishments of fostering the trappings of outward re-

ligion, “priestcraft” and “steeple houses,” to the detriment of the inner workings of the Spirit. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Joseph Smith, Jr., was scandalized at the number of separate and adversarial Christian churches and began his religious seeking by asking, “What is the true church?” Nineteenth-century Spiritualists, whose religion was based on their belief that the spirits of the dead could communicate with the living, argued against mainstream theologies of sin, damnation, and fear of the devil and denounced the clergy who promoted such teachings. Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science, believed that Christianity had lost its identity as a healing religion and its memory of Jesus as the greatest of all healers. The Pentecostal and Holiness movements that began in the nineteenth century reacted against what they saw as a lack of religious fervor and right teaching in Methodism, just as Jewish and Roman Catholic traditionalist groups have come forth to reestablish more faithful practice to their traditions. Goddess feminists, both Christian and Jewish, who emerged in the late twentieth century take as their foundation the experiences and insights of women and refute what they describe as the otherworldly, male-dominated religions of the mainstream. They often make reference to ancient times, either historical or mythical, when matriarchal religions promoted harmony rather than warfare.

Very often the theological critiques put forth by new religions are tied to social and political issues that are interconnected with theology. The Quakers’ theology led them to oppose warfare, the swearing of oaths, payment of defense taxes, and eventually slavery. The Spiritualists defended a liberal theology partly as a means of promoting divorce reform and acceptance of public speaking for women. Numerous communal groups from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries—the Ephrata Cloister, the Shakers, Oneida Perfectionists, Amana Colonies, and various 1960s communes like The Farm—experimented with gender roles in terms of both leadership and expressions of sexuality that ranged from celibacy to free love. Many new religions, in fact, have consistently offered women opportunities for public leadership that are not as available in the established religions. They have experimented as well with a variety of economic and work arrangements. New religions put forth their multiple critiques of American society not





Shakers near Lebanon, New York; “their mode of worship.” Engraving c. 1830 (Library of Congress)

only in words but also in alternative ways of living, often in the conviction that true believers must live apart from mainstream society. The numerous new religions among African Americans testify to how both racism and racial pride can provide the impetus for new worldviews and new communities, from Father Divine’s Peace Mission Movement to the Nation of Islam to the practice of voodoo and Santería. Criticism of racism takes another form in the Unification Church, whose origins are in twentieth-century Korea. Unificationists, for whom marriage is the basic unit of society, are matched in marriage by their church, often to spouses of another race, in order to foster racial harmony in the world.

### Contributions to Theological and Social Conversation

At the same time that new religious traditions make their critiques of prevailing religions, social structures, and dominant values, they offer their own alternative

ways of believing and living out those beliefs. In their contributions to cultural conversation there is often a combination of new and old that is compelling for those whose religious questions have become acute enough to move them to seek meaning and community in a new religious tradition. Joseph Smith, Jr., presented his followers with a new revelation, a new church, a new scripture, the *Book of Mormon*, and, although he did not live to see it, eventually a new gathering place for the Latter-day Saints in the Salt Lake Basin. At the same time, his new revelation confirmed and expanded belief in the personhood of God as Father and Son who appeared to Smith in a vision as male persons “with body parts and passions.” It was a way of answering yes to questions such as “Does God still make Himself known in the world?” In Mormon theology, “The heavens are open” and God still speaks directly to his prophets about contemporary issues.

Nineteenth-century Spiritualists offered their followers physical proof through the manifestations of

spirit communications—rappings and tappings, etc.—that human beings survived the death of the body with personalities intact. Their religion, they said, offered scientific evidence for the traditional belief that death is not the end and that we will meet our loved ones again in heaven. Spiritualists, they said, could know this for certain without having to accept it merely on faith; they could, in fact, have a scientific religion. Mary Baker Eddy promised her followers in Christian Science not only a new revelation, a new church, and a new scripture, *Science and Health*, but also a new healing method based on accepting Spirit, not matter, as ultimate reality. Spiritual and physical healing served as “demonstrations,” as Christian Scientists say, of the true nature of God and the truth that God did not create sin, suffering, and evil. These are, finally, illusions, and to know this is to be healed.

Underlying the cultural and religious significance of these three very different indigenous American religions are broader questions motivated in part by the intensifying dialogue—some say the warfare—between science and religion in the nineteenth century. What is real? Spirit, matter, or both? What are the sources of our religious experiences and knowledge? Do they originate in spiritual realms outside the physical universe? Within the human heart and psyche? Or through the workings of nature? The twentieth and twenty-first centuries are no strangers to these questions, and new religious movements continue to address them in innovative ways. One of the appealing aspects of new religions is the very fact that they can often respond to pressing cultural tensions more quickly than the established traditions can. Scientific discoveries continue to inspire these new religious responses, but it is more likely to be subatomic physics, biochemistry, or developments in psychology or computer technology that are the catalysts rather than evolutionary theory or discoveries in geology, as was the case in earlier centuries.

One example of the encounters that have taken place in the second half of the twentieth century between science and religion is found in the Church of Scientology, established in the 1950s by L. Ron Hubbard. Hubbard made use of some of the insights of psychology, particularly subconscious memory, in the worldview he constructed to explain why human beings so often act irrationally against their own interests. He developed the idea of the “engram,” a sub-

conscious memory of past pain, emotional or physical, and the process of auditing to “get clear” of those memories by bringing them to consciousness. Scientology has elaborated its worldview over time to include past lives and billions of years of history, but it remains focused on promoting an understanding of human nature that interprets the interrelationship of body, mind, and spirit. It uses a “technology” that “works,” a vocabulary designed to stir associations with scientific method.

The New Age movement also fosters science/religion interaction as a way to respond to spirit/matter issues. More a collection of ideas and practices than one specific movement, the term “New Age” has been applied to everything from shoes, crystals, and music to healing methods and efforts at transformation of the major institutions of the culture. At the heart of the deepest manifestations of the New Age is the impetus to reinfuse the universe with sacred presence, to heal the post-Enlightenment splits between science and religion, spirit and matter, emotion and reason, male and female. It offers a multiplicity of responses to questions about human nature and destiny and the future of the planet that are being urgently asked in present-day American culture.

The new religious traditions mentioned thus far have sprung up in America in response to a variety of questions and needs. In the case of religions that are new to America because they have come from other parts of the world, the story is somewhat different. Religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam were familiar to at least some but not many Americans in the nineteenth century, but knowledge of these world religions—and contact with their members—has become commonplace in the twenty-first century, owing in part to the arrival of large numbers of immigrants who practice them. Americans who are not from Eastern cultures may also be drawn to them, in part because they promise new ideas for those who are seeking religious worldviews and practices that have their origins outside of Western traditions. These religions are new not only because they have arrived in America relatively recently but also because contact with American culture is motivating their own need for innovation. American Buddhism, for example, is becoming distinct from the Buddhism that is practiced in Japan, Korea, or Tibet as it accommodates itself to American culture. This development

parallels, even if not exactly, earlier patterns among Jews and Roman Catholics who came to America in great numbers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and created new forms of older, European-based religions.

### Integration and Accommodation

The issue of the accommodation of new religions to American culture and their success or failure at integration and survival is a revealing arena in which to investigate the dynamics of religion and culture. It involves not just what new religions criticize about the culture and the established religions or what they offer theologically or practically, but the broader dynamics of the relationship between religion and other aspects and institutions of American society. For new religions, the issue is one of finding ways to survive, prosper, and live peacefully, or at least without violence and constant legal problems, and to do so without losing the distinctiveness and the energy of the first generation of their founding. This task is challenging because both the distinctive appeal and the energy of a new religion come precisely from setting itself up against prevailing cultural values and institutions and offering alternatives. For the larger culture there are urgent concerns as well. One is the ongoing need to promote the most creative tension between the two rights guaranteed by the First Amendment of the Constitution: to make it possible for all citizens to practice their religions freely and to guarantee that no one religion will be given financial, social, or legal priority over another. Another aim is to protect the welfare of citizens and to safeguard them from coercion or harm. Thus, the process of integration and accommodation is a two-way street that involves ongoing dynamics between new religions and the culture.

By law, the courts cannot pass on the truth or falsity of the teachings of new religions. One of the earliest church-state Supreme Court decisions, *Watson v. Jones*, in 1872 (which involved Presbyterians, not a new religion), declared that “the law knows no heresy,” meaning that there can be no legal decision as to the truth or falsity of a particular religion’s beliefs; all religions are equally “true” under the law. But, as became clear in later decisions, the law is very much concerned with religious practices it deems harmful to the practitioners or their children and to

the values of society. What is thought to be dangerous to society, however, or antithetical to American values often changes with the historical moment, and an investigation of court decisions involving new religions is instructive as to what the larger society considers harmful or in some other way unacceptable. Can Mormons exercise freedom of religion to practice polygamy? No, said the Supreme Court in *Reynolds v. United States* in 1879. Do the children of Jehovah’s Witnesses present a danger to national security if they refuse to recite the Pledge of Allegiance and salute the flag in school? Yes, said the Supreme Court in *Minersville School District v. Gobitis* in 1940, just previous to America’s entry into World War II, a decision echoed in a similar case decided in 1943. Can Native Americans use hallucinogenic drugs—which are otherwise illegal—in religious ceremonies? Yes, said the California Supreme Court in 1964, but probably not, or at least not everywhere, according to a 1990 U.S. Supreme Court decision that upheld an Oregon ban against peyote.

Sometimes the legal issue has to do with whether a group can claim that it is a religion. The Church of Scientology has had a history of controversy with American courts over whether it is actually a religion and whether the services it offers for fees can be considered tax deductible as a religious contribution. It was granted tax-exempt status as recently as 1993. Another issue has involved children in new religious movements. When do religious practices, such as the withholding of traditional medical care or the use of corporal punishment, recruiting methods, or child labor cross the line between freedom guaranteed by the Constitution and dangerous behavior that must be curbed? It becomes obvious that there are no definitive answers to these questions that apply in all cases and at all times, and that the relationships between new religions and American culture, legal and social, are always in need of interpretation in particular cases.

Whether new religions survive and prosper has a great deal to do not just with how they are received by the culture but with the extent to which they have the capacity and the willingness to make accommodations in teachings and in practices. The extent of integration into American culture may be determined by the skill with which a new religion can learn to modify or interpret metaphorically what it once claimed

literally. A contrast between Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses offers a good example of both success and relative failure in this enterprise. Both religions—the Adventists with their origins in the first half of the nineteenth century and the Witnesses who emerged at its end—are heirs to William Miller's nineteenth-century millennialism and his conviction that the Second Coming of Christ would occur in his own lifetime. After several disappointments, when Jesus did not appear on the date prophesied, Adventists learned to be less precise in their predictions, preferring "soon" to a specific date. They became willing, as well, to modify their tendency to take a strong stand against social institutions. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, they were, if not exactly mainstream, well integrated into the culture rather than opposed to its major institutions. Their legal disputes have been confined mostly to members' refusal to work on Saturday, their day of worship, and Adventists have involved themselves with vigor in efforts to make society better. They run hospitals, schools, and relief programs, and their longtime emphasis on healthy living—no alcohol, caffeine, meat, or tobacco—has made them experts on what contemporary society has come to consider a praiseworthy lifestyle. They have managed as well to maintain their distinctive theology. By contrast, Jehovah's Witnesses denounce the major institutions of the culture, including the established religious traditions, and have experienced numerous legal disputes, many of which have been heard in the Supreme Court. Witnesses do not celebrate national or religious holidays; they do not serve in the armed services, vote, run for office, or permit their children to be Girl Scouts or Boy Scouts. They maintain a very strong religion-against-culture stance and are frequently cited in surveys as among the new religious groups in America against which there is the most disdain.

Sometimes issues of accommodation and integration focus on matters of self-identification. Participants in Wicca need to expend a great deal of energy explaining that their form of religious practice is nature religion, not witchcraft in the popular sense or somehow related to Satanism. Their uses of ceremonial magic, they have explained over and over again, are meant to bring about only positive, healing results, never to inflict harm. In the case, then, of this loosely organized and eclectic new religious tradition,

the burden of integration involves not only self-identification but also public relations. But the process of integration and accommodation goes on long after new religious movements have achieved numerical success and stability in American culture. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, known popularly as the Mormons, has a membership exceeding 11 million around the world. Church officials and members are continuing their decades-long effort to be perceived as a Christian denomination by discouraging the use of the phrase "Mormon Church." If the term "Mormon" is used, officials say, it should be as an adjective: thus, "Mormon Christians." The structures, theology, and practices of this religion will remain the same, but the official name change is a form of accommodation that will likely assure this relatively new religious tradition even further integration into American culture.

All told, the persistence, the multiplicity, and the complexity of new religious traditions in America point to the reality that they have an ongoing place in American culture. They are a part of the religious landscape and the dynamics of religious seeking and organizing as much as are the established religious traditions. They do not play just one role in society—as a barometer of negative tensions—but function in a variety of ways to provide arenas of religious and social innovation and conservation. Some will survive and prosper, becoming permanent fixtures in America's religiously pluralistic society, some will just barely survive, maintaining only a few members over a long period of time, and some will simply fade away.

—Mary Farrell Bednarowski

#### SEE ALSO

African-American Religions: African Americans and Islam; Hinduism in America: Hare Krishna Movement; New Age: Goddess Spirituality, Wicca; Death: Spiritualism; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Law; Science: Healing; Violence

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## CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

Christian Science—officially known as the Church of Christ, Scientist—is a unique and indigenous American religion and one of the few religious movements in history founded by a woman, Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910). The central premise of Christian Science—that God is omniscient and that the material world does not exist—has inspired the church’s controversial practice of encouraging followers to rely on faith healing and to reject medicine. Indeed—although the church has made a name for itself as the publisher of a well-respected newspaper, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and has become a politically powerful institution in its own right—the general public continues to perceive Christian Science as the religion of those who “don’t believe in doctors.”

Born into a New Hampshire farming family, Mary Baker Eddy published the movement’s foundational text, *Science and Health*, in 1875 at the age of fifty-six, after decades of struggling with ill health and poverty. Having attracted a small but devoted circle of students, she founded her church four years later. *Science and Health* purported to teach its readers how to heal themselves and others through prayer by focusing on the perfection of man as God’s reflection. It was inspired, in part, by Eddy’s studies with a noted Mesmeric healer of the time, Phineas Parkhurst Quimby, and by her recovery from injuries suffered in a fall on the ice in 1866, a recovery she later interpreted as her rediscovery of Christ’s ability to heal.

A charismatic and controversial figure who inspired intense loyalty from her students, Eddy became famous in Boston, where her Mother Church opened in 1894, and nationally as Christian Science branch churches proliferated across America. In 1906, there were approximately 200 branches; by 1910, more than 600. Christian Science also gained a following in other Protestant, English-speaking countries as well as in Germany.

With its emphasis on testimonies of healing—featured in later editions of *Science and Health*, as well as in two periodicals Eddy founded, the *Christian Science Journal* and *Sentinel*—Christian Science attracted those afflicted with chronic complaints or serious illnesses in an age when medical science had little to offer. The new religion proved particularly alluring to women

because of the opportunities it offered them in the church hierarchy. Many followed in Eddy’s footsteps, becoming Christian Science practitioners, or professional healers who prayed for patients in exchange for a fee.

Eddy and her movement were debated throughout the country: She was criticized by Mark Twain in his 1907 book *Christian Science* for encouraging her followers to worship her; hounded by Joseph Pulitzer’s reporters; and praised by Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross. In 1908, in response to attacks by the sensational journalists of the day, Eddy founded an international newspaper, the *Christian Science Monitor*, hoping to provide a model of responsible reporting and to spread the gospel of Christian Science. Although some of her followers believed she would demonstrate the truth of her teachings by defeating death, Eddy died in 1910 at the age of eighty-nine, one of the wealthiest and most powerful women of her day.

She left a movement that American society found simultaneously appealing (in its emphasis on Emersonian self-reliance) and troubling (for its wholesale rejection of medicine). Indeed, it inspired a number of offshoots, known as the “mind sciences” or “New Thought” groups, based on a belief in the power of positive thinking yet willing to combine prayer with medical treatment. Christian Science—governed after Eddy’s death by a board of directors at the Mother Church in Boston—remained unique in its insistence that followers reject medical care—termed *materia medica*—in favor of “radical reliance” on prayer (Eddy 1906, 41, 167). Although radical reliance has never been an official requirement of Christian Scientists (or “Scientists,” as they call themselves), the position became part of the culture of the movement and the church strictly enforced a policy against mixing medicine and Christian Science healing, disciplining practitioners and teachers of the religion for praying for those under medical care. (Following Eddy’s practice, Scientists make exceptions for dentistry and some aspects of obstetrical care.)

In order to serve Scientists who were ill, the church built Christian Science Benevolent Associations and nursing homes, sanatoria that offered a medicine-free

environment where Scientists could pray for recovery. It also trained Christian Science “nurses” who provided simple sanitary care (bathing, feeding, covering wounds with bandages) without medical intervention of any kind.

The Christian Science stance against medicine (similar to the position taken by Jehovah’s Witnesses against blood transfusions) has significantly influenced social policy in the United States. In the 1880s, the American Medical Association (AMA) launched campaigns against Christian Science and other mind-healing groups, hoping to legislate them out of existence; these efforts foundered due to the organized opposition of the Scientists, who found allies in some medical doctors, such as Harvard’s William James. A backlash against the AMA’s failed crusade resulted in many states passing statutes exempting Christian Scientist practitioners from medical licensing requirements.

In the decades following Eddy’s death, the church solidified its reputation, building impressive neo-Gothic branches in prosperous neighborhoods across the country and establishing the *Christian Science Monitor* as a substantive international newspaper. At its height, around the time of World War II, the church boasted nearly 270,000 members and some 10,000 practitioners. Its success theology attracted a number of wealthy, prominent citizens, from Lady Nancy Astor, the first woman elected to England’s House of Commons, to Hollywood heroines such as Ginger Rogers, Joan Crawford, and Doris Day. Scientists have also been well represented in politics and public service. Recent directors of the CIA and FBI have been Scientists, as were President Nixon’s famous aides, John Ehrlichman and Robert Haldeman.

As the twentieth century progressed—with its extraordinary advances in medicine, sanitation, and nutrition—Christian Science found itself facing an entirely different world from the one its founder had known. It was a world where insulin could control diabetes (once a fatal disease); where vaccines could prevent smallpox, typhoid, and diphtheria; and where new surgical procedures made appendectomy a safe, standard treatment. In such a world, the Christian Science refusal of medical treatment, particularly for children, became an enormously controversial social issue. Although the church had won unprecedented recognition for its faith-healing practices (most insurance companies, as well as Medicare and Medic-

aid, began covering the services of Christian Science practitioners in the 1950s and 1960s), Christian Scientists found themselves facing prosecution for withholding medical care from their children.

The “child cases,” as they were known throughout the movement, began in 1967 when Dorothy Sheridan, a Scientist living on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, was convicted of manslaughter in the death of her five-year-old daughter Lisa, who died after three weeks of prayer failed to heal her strep throat. Such cases continued into the 1980s as Christian Scientists in Florida, California, Arizona, and Massachusetts were tried on a variety of criminal charges ranging from child endangerment to involuntary manslaughter. Civil suits for wrongful death were filed in several cases.

The public image of the church was also damaged by a number of outbreaks of infectious diseases at its schools and camps (many Scientists decline to have their children vaccinated). In 1972, four students at a Christian Science school in Connecticut were paralyzed during an outbreak of polio. In 1985, three died during a measles outbreak at a Christian Science college in Elmhurst, Illinois. Measles spread by a Christian Science child in 1994 affected 150 people in six states.

The church responded by aggressively defending its members in court and in the press. In 1974, it successfully lobbied the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to mandate that all states pass religious exemptions in their civil laws in order to continue receiving funding for child welfare programs. Most states now have statutes specifically exempting Scientists from civil and criminal laws that require parents to provide their children with medical care.

The church now faces a challenging future. The number of branch churches has declined over the past several decades, and estimates place the church’s current overall membership at around 60,000. The institution weathered another spate of bad publicity in the 1990s when it lost hundreds of millions of dollars in a failed bid to establish a new cable television network. The Pulitzer Prize-winning *Monitor* has lost thousands of subscribers. Several scientific studies—including one by Rita Swan, a former Scientist who lost an infant to meningitis and subsequently founded an advocacy organization called Children’s Healthcare Is a Legal Duty (CHILD)—have suggested that Scientists’ refusal of medical care has resulted in higher mortal-

ity rates for both children and adults in the church than in the general population.

To counter the decline in membership, the church has embarked on an ambitious public relations campaign to market *Science and Health* as a New Age tool for healing. The church's current leader, Virginia Harris, has appeared on television and at conferences celebrating the mind-body connection, promoting a less restrictive vision of Christian Science than has been seen before. Although the church has historically refused access to outside scholars interested in its Eddy archives, it announced plans to open a Mary Baker Eddy Library for the Betterment of Humanity in 2002, billing it as the largest library in the world devoted to the work of a single woman. It remains to be seen whether this nineteenth-century movement can make the leap into the new millennium.

—Caroline Fraser

#### SEE ALSO

New Age; Protestantism in America; The Body; Science: Healing

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## COMMUNITARIAN MOVEMENTS

The communitarian impulse has been and remains a powerful expression of religious beliefs and values in American history and contemporary culture. Communitarian movements are the product of an effort to structure a community of like-minded individuals. The organizing principles that define particular communities may be a complex mix of religious and political concerns, making classification as either religious or secular somewhat problematic. Communitarian movements that are primarily religious arise from the desire of individuals to live out their beliefs and values with others. At the heart of such communities are distinctive theological and religious ideas, or particular moral and ethical practices, that define the character and purpose of the community. The religious traditions of the world are filled with historical and contemporary examples of such communities populated by monks and nuns, ascetics and devotees, disciples and followers. The desire to embody shared ideals within community structures has also existed among religious persons throughout American history.

The colonial period of American history witnessed the structuring of new societies through the colonization and settlement of European groups on the eastern

seaboard of North America. Although the motives of the colonists were mixed, in several instances the desire for religious freedom was a primary factor in emigration. Groups as diverse as Puritans in New England, Quakers in Pennsylvania, Roman Catholics in Maryland, and French Huguenots in South Carolina hoped to live according to their religious principles without interference or fear. These "communities" embodied some of the elements of communitarianism.

Such loosely defined communities, however, are not the primary examples of "communitarianism" in American history. The term applies more properly to intentional communities formed as alternatives to majority patterns in society and culture. In that sense, there were few such communities in early America. One example from the colonial era is the Ephrata Colony founded in 1732 by Conrad Beissel (1690–1768), who came to America from Germany in 1720. Mystical in orientation, this group accepted Beissel as inspired; practiced celibacy; developed distinctive rituals, including love feasts; and lived in a common dormitory. Years of internal conflict contributed to the end of the community, which occurred two years after Beissel's death.



In the years immediately following the War of Independence, several communitarian movements emerged on the American scene. For example, the Shakers, later formally known as the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, were the followers of the English prophetess Ann Lee (1736–1784), who came to America with a handful of disciples in 1774. They began living communally a few years after their arrival. In the late 1780s and 1790s they formed eleven villages in eastern New York and New England committed to the principles of celibacy, communal property, public confession, and obedience to the ministry. In 1805, they expanded into the Ohio Valley. The Shakers prospered during the first half of the nineteenth century, at one point numbering nearly 4,500 believers, thanks to effective recruitment of new members, successful economic activities, and a clear separation from the outside "world." The fortunes of the Shakers declined after the Civil War and throughout the twentieth century. One village in Maine, containing a handful of believers, remained at the start of the twenty-first century. A second communitarian group in this period, known as Jerusalem, or the Society of Universal Friends, was founded by Jemima Wilkinson (1752–1819), a visionary of Quaker background known to her followers as the "Publick Universal Friend." The community, in Yates County, New York, at its height included nearly 300 members. It declined following the founder's death—a familiar pattern for many communitarian experiments that centered on powerful leaders.

The decades following the formation of the American nation witnessed a growing number of such movements thanks to the congenial environment produced by the Bill of Rights, which guaranteed the free exercise of religion, and to the abundant open land, where such communities found relative isolation. Some of these movements came from abroad. For example, the Harmony Society, founded in 1805 in Pennsylvania by the German prophet George Rapp (1757–1847), moved two times during more than ninety years of existence, relocating in southwestern Indiana at Harmony and finally at a site in Pennsylvania called Economy. Shaped by Rapp's rebellion against Lutheran orthodoxy, the community was defined by his leadership and by the principles of preferred celibacy, ethnicity, and a vigorous work ethic. Another imported communitarian movement, the Amana Society, known as

the Society of True Inspirationists, was led by Christian Metz (1793–1867), a German pietist and visionist. Under his leadership, in 1842 the Inspirationists settled outside Buffalo, New York; in 1856 they moved to Amana, Iowa, and prospered. At one point the Inspirationists held their property in common. The community disbanded in 1932, but their name and reputation continued in Amana products.

Perhaps the most celebrated communitarian movement of the nineteenth century was Brook Farm, established by the Unitarian minister George Ripley (1802–1880) in 1841 at West Roxbury, Massachusetts. Of short duration, lasting only until 1847, this community was an outgrowth of Transcendentalism and attracted a variety of prominent intellectuals, including Nathaniel Hawthorne, and gave voice to the social views of Charles Fourier. Publicity and ideology aside, Brook Farm was an economic failure.

Two communities of American origin but of very different nature and outcome illustrate further the diversity of such movements. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or Mormons, is not always classified as communitarian, but the strong sense of community that characterized this movement from its outset justifies the category. Joseph Smith (1805–1844), the founder and prophet, shaped the theology and the community structures during the early years of the movement following its organization as the Church of Jesus Christ in 1830. Initially in western New York, then at Kirtland, Ohio, and Far West, Missouri, and finally in Nauvoo, Illinois, the Saints developed distinctive patterns of community life under Smith's leadership. In Kirtland, they established the explicitly communal United Order of Enoch. Subsequently, Mormon society was informed by a strong sense of collective responsibility and destiny. After the murder of the prophet and the subsequent fracturing of the community, the largest group of Mormons trekked west to the Salt Lake Basin to continue following the communitarian principles that still prevail in Mormon religion and culture.

The Oneida Community, founded in 1848 in western New York by John Humphrey Noyes (1811–1886), grew out of earlier efforts by this religious reformer to restructure religion and society. Noyes, arguing that the early Christian church provided the grounds for pursuit of perfection in community and for the sharing of goods, called for a new social

arrangement. His most provocative social reform, known as “complex marriage,” allowed sexual relations among all members in the community. At one point Noyes also structured a eugenics experiment. The Oneida Perfectionists were highly successful with manufacturing products, including bear traps and silverware. After Noyes was forced to flee to Canada in the late 1870s by external opposition, the community reorganized as a joint-stock company.

All of these communitarian movements have attracted sustained scholarly attention. Today, historic sites often mark the locations where these groups resided. Scores of smaller groups, however, have escaped the notice of historians and the public. Such communities often flourished for a brief moment and then passed from the scene. For example, Matthias (a.k.a. Robert Matthews), a self-proclaimed prophet and charismatic in New York State, attracted a disparate handful of followers in the 1840s who joined the cause for a time and then for a variety of reasons abandoned him.

In the twentieth century, a period of heightened communitarian activity during the 1960s often involved groups in open rebellion against societal norms. Youth, participating in the countercultural mood of the times by expressing dissent against war, racism, technology, and sexual mores, frequently established alternative dissenting communities that drew on spiritual traditions as diverse as Eastern religions, Christianity (the Jesus movement), Catholicism (Vatican II), and charismatic Pentecostalism. Notable communitarian movements inspired by such ideals included The Farm, Koinonia, the Divine Light Mission, the Unification Church, Rajneeshpuram, and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

The closing decades of the century witnessed a series of violent, tragic episodes linked to communitarian groups, including the murder/suicide of members of the Peoples Temple at Jonestown in Guyana in 1978; the fiery inferno that ended the federal standoff with the Branch Davidians at Waco, Texas, in 1993; and the ritual suicide of the members of Heaven’s Gate at Rancho Santa Fe, California, in 1997. These same years saw the rise of scores of informal communities linked loosely to the New Age movement, groups that combined such diverse elements as holistic medicine, meditation techniques, simple living, environmental concerns, sexual freedom, gender equality, and the entrepreneurial spirit with religion. Contemporary communitarian movements provide striking evidence of the continuing desire of religious individuals to form associations with others who share their spiritual principles and political interests.

—Stephen J. Stein

#### SEE ALSO

New Age; Protestantism in America; Public Theologies and Political Culture; Sacred Time: End Times; Violence

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## MIND CURE

Mind cure is one designation (among many, including mental healing and mental science) for a movement with its origins in the mid-nineteenth century that considered the mind—and its attendant powers of belief—to be capable of bringing about both physical and emotional healing. Drawing from New England

Protestantism, various new religious movements, such as Spiritualism and Transcendentalism, and alternative medical practices of the nineteenth century, such as Mesmerism, mind cure practitioners also had a deep faith in science, although what they meant by that term varied. The most lasting legacies of mind



Portrait of Christian Science leader Mary Baker Eddy,  
c. 1852 (Library of Congress)

cure lie in the host of churches that grew out of it, most notably Mary Baker Eddy's (1820–1910) development and institutionalization of Christian Science, and in the less easily defined religious/therapeutic current that continues to extol the virtues of positive thinking and the effectiveness of mental healing.

According to conventional narratives (that are often focused on explaining or debunking the rise of Christian Science), mind cure began with the teachings and practice of Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802–1866), a former watchmaker of limited education in Maine who took up Mesmerism. Mesmerism was a therapy of European origin that postulated invisible fluids or currents that passed between all living things; the Mesmerist channeled and aligned these currents in individual patients by passing his hands over their bodies. Equally distrustful of medical doctors and Christian clergy, Quimby eventually went beyond Mesmerism in his assertion that the real power to heal

came not from medical or Mesmeric interventions in the body but from helping patients to realize that the “spiritual body,” or mind, could transform the physical body. Claiming that through the power of his own mind he could talk his patients into realizing the error of their belief in disease and thus cure them, Quimby thought of his therapy as a fine-tuning of the “science” of Christianity. Whether he actually wrote the writings that were collected under his name fifty years after his death is disputed. Nevertheless, they asserted complicated understandings of the relationship between mind, spirit, and matter, an exalted role for the more spiritual “feminine” side in healing, and inspired a variety of religious innovations.

Two of Quimby's most important students, Mary Baker Eddy and Warren Felt Evans (1817–1889), went on to develop their own versions of mental healing. In her book *Science and Health with a Key to the Scriptures* (1875), Eddy claimed, on the basis of both biblical authority and her own experience of revelation, that mind was all there was, that God was mind and good, and that matter and pain were therefore error, or wrong belief. The Christian Science model of healing she advocated saw practitioners effect cures by talking to (or praying with) their patients about the principle of the goodness of the Mother/Father God and the unreality of matter and bringing their patients to the realization of these truths.

Warren Felt Evans took Quimby's ideas in another direction within what became “New Thought,” also a religious movement focused on healing through mind over matter, but one that did not deny the existence of matter. Evans's books, among them *The Mental Cure* (1869) and *The Primitive Mind Cure* (1885), expounded the notion that the unreliable senses led people to believe in the illusion of evil. If people were better attuned to their spiritual perception, Evans argued, they would realize the essential goodness of God, and furthermore, that a divine spark of God was actually lodged within them—within their naturally good bodies that emanated from God. As a healing technique, Evans stressed the use of affirmations of this goodness and the cultivation of one's deepest intuition and desires through yoga-inspired meditation practices that would allow intuition—the voice of Jesus within each human being—to be heard. New Thought was a competitor of Christian Science, and less unified institutionally, as many churches and movements came

(and some went) under its banner, including today's Unity School of Christianity.

In part because of the willingness of Quimby, Eddy, and Evans to develop theologies that valued both the "masculine" and the "feminine" aspects of God and humans, mind cure, Christian Science, and New Thought were very popular with women at the turn of the century. This popularity is also explained by the fact that women could both seek healing and become healers within these movements, thus gaining both comfort and a livelihood. The predominance of women in the movement continued in the twentieth century as the ideas exalted in New Thought and Christian Science influenced a variety of movements, including Norman Vincent Peale's celebration of *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952) and New Age writers and organizations.

Though many of the movements emerging from mind cure continue to think of themselves as Christian, mainstream Christians have been less welcoming. At the turn of the twentieth century, "mind cure" was used as a derogatory term by Protestant clergy who claimed Christian Science and New Thought were quackery and bad theology practiced by gullible women. However, the influence of mind cure endures in a range of areas, including New Age practices of

healing through affirmation, evangelical Christian "gospels of health and wealth," feminist insistence on the valuing of both body and mind, persistent questioning among scholars and the public about the relationships among religion, healing, and science, the reemergence of alternative healing practices such as osteopathy, and the complicated relationship between Christianity and modern psychology.

—*Pamela E. Klassen*

#### SEE ALSO

New Age: New Age Bestsellers; Protestantism in America; The Body: Asian Body Practices; Ritual and Performance: Therapy and Healing; Science: Healing

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## MORMONISM

Mormonism was born in 1830 in an era of religious efflorescence, a time when America was, to use Jon Butler's colorful phrase, "awash in a sea of faith" (Butler 1990). Influenced by the reality of a new country constructing itself on imagined foundations of ancient political purity, primitivism also was a powerful force shaping the religious ideologies of the age. Mormonism very much fit this milieu. Of course, in one sense, the entire history of Christianity can be seen as a primitivist quest. Hardly a group stylizing itself "Christian" has not tried to pattern its life and teachings after the biblical model. For the period between the American Revolution and the Civil War, though, as nineteenth-century theologian John Nevin observed, "The principle 'No creed but the Bible'"

was "the distinctive feature of American religion" (Hatch 1990, 81)

Ironically, the supposed perspicuity of scriptural truth that was to free back-to-the-Bible Christians from the accretions of the ages only amplified the cacophony of competing voices. Little wonder that, like numerous other antebellum Americans, young Joseph Smith (1805–1844) exclaimed, "In the midst of this war of words, and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself, what is to be done? Who of all these parties are right? Or are they all wrong together?" (Jessee 1989, 271).

Such concerns prodded the future prophet into an intense pursuit of divine direction that he claimed resulted in a series of heavenly visitations and revela-



A group of fourteen Mormon men, with Joseph F. Smith, center row, second from right, c. 1870s (Library of Congress)

tions. Among the most significant was the Book of Mormon. Smith said he was guided by an angel to retrieve from an upstate New York drumlin metal plates on which an ancient text was written and which he translated into English by “the gift and power of God.” Nearly 600 pages in length, the Book of Mormon reads like the Deuteronomic history of the Hebrew Bible, interweaving a 1,000-year New World narrative of an Israelite remnant that sailed to the Western Hemisphere around 600 B.C. with moralizing homilies and theological elaboration. The book was published just weeks before the church was formally organized in April 1830 and has been a scriptural foundation of the faith ever since. Designed to supplement, not supplant, the Bible, its consistent emphasis on the salvific work of Christ, along with its account of Jesus’ postascension visit to the New World, led twentieth-century Mormons to dub it “another testament of Jesus Christ.”

The Book of Mormon was not the only divine gift

that Joseph Smith proclaimed. Proper authority to restore the true church of Christ was another. Indeed, for the Latter-day Saints, the question of apostolic succession was crucial. In *Voice of Warning*, arguably the most influential LDS tract written in the nineteenth century, apostle Parley Pratt indicated that the problem with Christianity was its illegitimate ministry. The common mistake, he wrote, was that men read the Bible and had “the presumption to apply these sayings as their authority, and without any other commission, [went] forth professing to preach the Gospel, and baptize, and build up the church and kingdom of God.” This, he added, “brings to the test every minister in Christendom, and questions the organization of every church on earth” (Pratt 1837, 110–114).

Clearly, the only way for biblical purity to be fully and properly restored was for God to take the initiative and to again personally commission earthly ambassadors, guiding them by revelation. This was the

Mormon answer—plenary inspiration and divine authority, as real and vivid as if one were living in first-century Palestine. Since Joseph Smith could not return to the Apostolic Age, it came to him. Smith testified that John the Baptist and the apostles Peter, James, and John had returned as resurrected beings to personally pass on to him the necessary power and authority to baptize and build up the true church of Christ. Here was apostolic succession at its purest.

Hand in hand with apostolic authority went the apostolic gifts, the certifying marks of that authority. Pivotal in this perception was the LDS reading of Mark 16:17–18: “And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.” These “signs following faith” were the *sine qua non* of authentic Christianity. Indeed, by the gauge of such spiritual giftedness, one “may look at the Christian world,” remarked Joseph Smith, “and see the apostasy there has been from the apostolic platform” (Jessee 1984, 271–272). As Pratt explained, once a person understood what the spiritual gifts were, “he never need mistake the kingdom of God, but will at once discover those peculiarities, which were forever to distinguish it from all other kingdoms or religious systems on earth” (Pratt 1837, 100). Christendom had framed the excuse that the age of miracles was past and had constructed an unscriptural distinction between ordinary and “extraordinary” gifts of the Spirit simply to camouflage its own impotence.

Yet, because that divine power was housed in earthen vessels, the community of the Saints was not immune from the challenges of human association. Though there was dissent from within, severe persecution from without kept the Mormons on the move for the first quarter century of their existence and besieged them in Utah for another seventy years thereafter. It drove them first from New York; then from Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois; and finally to Utah, where negative public sentiment and adverse legislative action relentlessly pursued them from afar. Such tensions earlier had led to the assassination of Joseph Smith, but by that time the basic structures and beliefs of the religion had taken shape.

Joseph Smith summarized the LDS “articles of faith” shortly before his death: belief in God the

Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost as three separate and distinct, yet divine, beings; rejection of original sin and affirmation of personal moral accountability; a soteriology that included substitutionary atonement; the importance of proper ministerial authority and the need for ministerial organization along biblical lines; spiritual gifts; additional scripture and continuing revelation to a living prophet; a premillennial eschatology that included belief in the ultimate spiritual and territorial restoration of Israel, the establishment of the New Jerusalem in America, and the personal, millennial reign of Christ upon an earth renewed to its Edenic condition; affirmation of religious freedom and responsible political citizenship; and general encouragement to live life in pursuit of all that is “virtuous, lovely, or of good report” (see Jessee 1989, 436–437).

Arguably the single most influential Mormon doctrine was the belief in a contemporary prophet to lead the Saints as a modern Moses. For nearly a century and a half, Latter-day Saints have sung a favorite hymn, which begins, “We thank thee, O God, for a prophet, to guide us in these latter days.” The current prophet may be beardless and dressed in a business suit, but he is no less the living oracle of God. For Latter-day Saints, the word of God is continuous rather than confined to the past. It is as accessible and relevant as the latest address of the current prophet. By proclaiming the presence of an actual prophet rather than theologically trained interpreters of ancient prophets, the Latter-day Saints allow themselves both the relevancy of modern revelation and the normativeness of divine decree.

Throughout their history, this potential for authoritative adaptation has been crucial to Latter-day Saints in coping with modernization. The overarching issue from the LDS perspective has always been not whether the church is abandoning traditional ways for modern ideas, but whether God’s hand is in it. In the more than 150 years since Brigham Young led the embattled Saints to a desert haven in the Mountain West in 1847, there has been much change and adaptation in the LDS community. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Latter-day Saints’ efforts to make the desert “blossom as a rose” and build the kingdom of God in their midst were at constant cross-purposes with American expansionism and Victorian cultural sensibilities. Outsiders inveighed against the

“blight” that was Mormonism and ultimately sought legislation aimed at undermining what they saw as Utah’s economic communalism, marital promiscuity (polygamy), and theocratic politics.

Such stereotypes, of course, exaggerated these practices and their importance to the Mormon faith and overlooked the considerable continuity the Saints had with the culture around them. Closer examination suggests that the attitudes and behavior of most nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints were less countercultural, and the influence of communitarianism, plural marriage, and theocracy more superficial, than often assumed. Indeed, it may be that plural marriage and the economic cooperatism of the United Orders, which never involved more than a minority of the Saints, were doomed from the start precisely because the Mormons had always been too “American” at heart.

However viewed, the adjustments necessary to bring statehood to Utah in 1896, and subsequently to allow Mormonism to swim more in the American mainstream while retaining a certain distinctiveness, have taken place under prophetic direction. Shrouded in the “sacred canopy” of continuing revelation, LDS prophets have tended to pick and choose their way into modernity. And the membership at large, fortified with the conviction that they are being led by inspired leaders, see themselves as living “in” the modern world without being “of” it in any degree harmful to their sacred enterprise.

If Mormons, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century, have been viewed as the epitome of middle-class America, such characterizations can err in the opposite direction. Currently, one need only look at the average size of the Mormon family, at the Mormons’ health code, at their contributions to a church-wide welfare system, and at contemporary politics in Utah to see that Latter-day Saints continue also to be a “peculiar people.” Despite their educational status and relative affluence, the Mormon birthrate is twice the national average. The LDS death rate and the low incidence of a variety of diseases appear to be linked to their now strict adherence to the “Word of Wisdom,” which, among other things, proscribes tobacco and prescribes temperance. Regular assignments on welfare projects ranging from picking oranges to canning meat keep the communitarian spirit alive in a sea of individualism. And in recent decades,

majority opinions among Latter-day Saints on public welfare, the Equal Rights Amendment, the MX missile, the right to life, and same-sex marriage reflect the still powerful influence of the LDS Church whenever the leaders directly or indirectly indicate a Mormon position (May 1983; Poll 1978).

In recent decades, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has emphasized its Christ-centered faith, its focus on families, and its humanitarian outreach. Latter-day Saints believe that if they remain faithful to sacred promises made in the church’s temples (special ceremonial structures separate from the chapels that house their weekly worship), their family relationships can be eternal and extend beyond death. A major statement on families issued in the 1990s began, “We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.” It further encouraged “responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.” Several years later, at the turn of the millennium, in commemoration of Christ’s birth, the same church leaders took occasion to affirm their “testimony of the reality of [Christ’s] matchless life and the infinite virtue of His great atoning sacrifice.” “None other,” they affirmed, “has had so profound an influence upon all who have lived and will yet live upon the earth” (First Presidency 2000).

Modern Mormonism is not without its challenges. These include maintaining the security and success of its 60,000 volunteer missionaries, most of whom are nineteen to twenty-one years of age; absorbing and involving the nearly half million converts baptized annually; maintaining a proper balance between centralized governance and the need to accommodate local circumstances; wisely shepherding its considerable financial assets; and carrying out a successful public relations program that enables it to break down persistent stereotypes and misunderstandings about its faith and history. In the end, there remains a certain inexplicability about what non-Mormon sociologist Rodney Stark has called “the miracle of Mormon success” (at current rates he projects 265 million Mormons by 2080). Yet few would disagree with him in his assess-

ment that Mormonism “stands on the threshold of becoming the first major faith to appear on earth since the Prophet Muhammad rode out of the desert” some 1,300 years ago (Stark 1984).

—Grant Underwood

#### SEE ALSO

Asian American Religious Communities; Pacific Islander American Religious Communities; Protestantism in America; Denominationalism; The Body; Generations: The Family; Material Culture; Sacred Time: End Times; Sexuality: Reproduction; Violence

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## SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM

Seventh-day Adventism is a global religion that emerged from within nineteenth-century American Protestantism. Early Seventh-day Adventists synthesized the apocalyptic expectations of the failed Millerite movement with a new respect for the Old Testament law, notably the need to observe a Saturday Sabbath. Guided by a female prophet, Ellen G. White (1827–1915), they developed an alternative lifestyle that emphasized personal holiness and a healthy diet. In the twentieth century, Adventists drew closer to American fundamentalism but retained the sense that they had a unique mission—to prepare the world for the Second Coming of Christ by preaching the true Sabbath. Rapid growth in the religion occurred outside the United States, mostly in the developing world, and by 2000, Seventh-day Adventists numbered well over 10 million worldwide.

### Millerism

The Millerite movement was named after William Miller, a farmer from New York State whose study of the Bible led him to conclude that the world would end in 1843 or 1844. He gathered an interdenominational following of more than 50,000 in New En-

gland, but all were disappointed on October 22, 1844, when the Second Advent of Christ failed to occur. Several religious traditions have roots in Millerism, including the Advent Christian Church and, at one remove, the Christadelphians and the Jehovah's Witnesses. Seventh-day Adventism emerged at the margins of Millerism among the small minority of Millerites who refused to accept that October 22, 1844, had been a miscalculation. Nevertheless, it has proved to be the most successful of the post-Millerite groups.

### The Sabbath

The explanation for the disappointment of 1844 was that on October 22, Christ had not, as expected, come to cleanse the earth but had instead entered the sanctuary in heaven. The Second Coming was still imminent, but there was now no hope of salvation for those who were not already Millerites, and those who were had to demonstrate their loyalty to God by observing new commandments. Seventh-day Adventism developed among the tiny number of followers (probably less than 100) for whom the seventh-day Sabbath was the chosen test. The idea that salvation was confined to ex-Millerites was quickly abandoned, but the



Sabbath continued to serve as the defining mark of allegiance to God. By 1863, when the church was formally organized, Seventh-day Adventists had come to believe that in the end-times the United States and the papacy would enforce a universal Sunday-law and persecute Sabbath-keepers. This expectation has limited Seventh-day Adventist ties with governments and other Christian bodies. At the same time, it has inspired global evangelism, for all must be made aware of the impending Second Advent and the nature of the test that precedes it.

### **The Prophet**

The origins of other Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and practices are often to be found in the Christian Connection or in Methodism—the bodies to which the early Adventist leaders James and Ellen White formerly belonged. James brought with him the Christian Connection's anti-Trinitarianism and its determination to return to the practices of primitive Christianity; his wife added Methodism's emphasis upon an experiential, personal religion. Of the two, it was Ellen who had the more lasting influence, for her trances, and later her voluminous writings, were accepted as supernatural revelations to the Seventh-day Adventist community. Although her early visions gave the stamp of divine approval to the doctrinal innovations of her male coreligionists, her original contributions were in the traditionally female areas of health and holiness. According to Ellen White, cultivating a Christ-like character meant avoiding stimulants such as alcohol, tobacco, and meat, which might undermine a person's physical and moral well-being, and thus his or her readiness for heaven. The imminent Second Advent did not make the body irrelevant; rather, it made it more important than ever. Preaching temperance was an end-times imperative.

### **Adventist Way of Life**

Because of Ellen White, Seventh-day Adventists developed a less cognitive faith than that of the Millerites or the Jehovah's Witnesses. Adventism was no longer simply a millenarian sect but a movement where anxiety about the future could be channeled into efforts for individual and communal improvement. The church has funded a vast global network

of schools, hospitals, and food factories to facilitate and promote the Adventist way of life. One early pioneer in this area was Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, the inventor of breakfast cereal. His version of Seventh-day Adventism led him in the direction of pantheism and to separation from the church in 1907, but his example provided the impetus for Adventism's enduring involvement in medicine and health. Adventists have benefited from their institutions. Their emphasis on education, for example, has promoted upward social mobility, and the focus on healthy living has increased members' longevity. The this-worldly advantages of the Adventist lifestyle can therefore sometimes appear to be in tension with the otherworldly orientation of Adventist theology.

### **Fundamentalism**

Seventh-day Adventism has its own day of worship, its own prophet, and its own lifestyle, but it has never sought to separate itself entirely from the Protestant tradition. The ambiguous position of Adventism relative to other Protestants led to an almost continual renegotiation of that relationship throughout the twentieth century. In the 1920s, Seventh-day Adventists sought to align themselves with fundamentalism by abandoning their reservations about the Trinity and by affirming their belief in biblical authority and creationism. By the 1960s, however, some Adventists were seeking to distance the church from its new-found fundamentalism and to reshape it in a more open, evangelical mold. But as American evangelicalism became more political in the 1980s, the distance between Seventh-day Adventism and other conservative Protestants opened up once more. Adventists have not played a role in the moral and political crusades of the new Religious Right. When an Adventist splinter group, the Branch Davidians, came into conflict with the federal government at Waco, Texas, in 1993, the church's leaders were quick to distance themselves from David Koresh and his followers.

### **Adventists in America**

In 2000, there were about 1 million Seventh-day Adventists in the United States. Although the group originated in New England, it is now to be found in greatest numbers on the West Coast, where many

Adventists live close to one of the church's institutions. The majority of Seventh-day Adventists are women, but the church's ordained ministry and centralized bureaucracy are almost entirely male. Adventists are still predominantly white and live in rural areas, although recent growth has been strongest among African Americans and immigrants of Hispanic or West Indian origin. All Adventists pay a 10 percent tithe on their income, and many continue to observe, with widely varying degrees of rigor, the religious and dietary precepts of Ellen White. Because of the high level of commitment required by their faith, and the relative uniformity with which it is practiced, Adventists, like Mormons, have a strong sense of communal identity that binds them to their fellow believers not only in America but also in other parts of the world.

### Globalization

Seventh-day Adventism's remarkable worldwide growth, outstripping even that of the Latter-day Saints, has progressively diminished the importance of its American base. If growth continues at the same rate in the next century, Seventh-day Adventism will become America's single most important contribution to world religion, but one that is still only a minority faith in its country of origin. It is impossible to judge the long-term consequences of this trend. Pressure

from the developing world may influence church decisions more in the future; it has already prevented the ordination of women in the United States. Some scholars have interpreted Seventh-day Adventist history as the familiar story of a nineteenth-century sect becoming an accepted denomination, but the church's continuing worldwide growth also suggests the emergence of a new world faith. If so, Seventh-day Adventism in the United States may never settle into any of the familiar patterns of American religion.

—Malcolm Bull

### SEE ALSO

Public Theologies and Political Culture: Fundamentalism; Science: Healing; Violence: Apocalypticism

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## VAMPIRE CULTURE

Vampirism, like other religions, consists of people who have committed themselves to an ideology, maintain ethical tenets within a hierarchical system, and participate in rituals specific to their clans. Practitioners are referred to as Vampires and are part of an extensive subculture. Currently, there is a prevailing phenomenon of "Modern Vampires" whose serious commitments to their beliefs, community, and culture meet the criteria to be designated a contemporary new religious movement. Since there is no agreed-upon definition of what constitutes a Vampire, however, the Modern Vampire is an amalgamation of characteristics derived from a variety of historical and

cross-cultural archetypes. The subculture evolved from a combination of folktales, cultural myths, legends, and eventually the romanticized images found in Hollywood films and popular novels. There are many facets to Vampire culture and members range from dabblers, such as participants in role-playing games, to the extremely devoted, who are referred to as Real Vampires, or "Real Vampyres," within the Vampire community. The latter spelling is used to distinguish practitioners from Hollywood, mythological, and fictional references.

Vampire belief systems vary and may manifest simply as an aesthetic choice or an entire lifestyle based

on a sophisticated Vampire philosophy. Vampirism is practiced in Western society both individually and communally through many different organized Vampire groups variously referred to as clans, churches, covens, orders, houses, and circles. There are many subgroups of the main clans and a significant number of unrelated groups that are less well known. As with other new religious movements, it is difficult to establish an accurate number of followers; estimates range from 1,000 to 100,000 self-identified Vampires throughout the world. Commonalities among the major Vampire groups include hierarchical structures, opposition to Christian tenets, occult magical ideologies, dark symbolism and aesthetics, blood rituals, strict codes of conduct, and the desire to attain personal and political power. Rivalry among the various groups is common, with each professing spiritual superiority over the others and claiming that it is practicing the one true faith. And, like other new religious movements, many Vampire organizations and churches have asserted that they continually experience various forms of persecution by the media and through film portrayals.

### **Vampire Culture**

The “Vampyre Scene” refers to individuals, organizations, events, businesses, and so on that share an interest in the Vampire lifestyle. Vampires also distinguish themselves from Goths and the Gothic Scene, although aesthetic styles in the two are similar and many times they attend the same clubs. Many people are introduced to the Vampyre Scene through the Internet, which contains thousands of Web sites for Vampire organizations, churches, support groups, supplies, and the like. Vampires pride themselves on their use of graphics and technology to create the most distinguished and intricate Web sites.

Use of particular conventions in language and etiquette is intrinsic to Vampire culture. Most practitioners, for example, adopt pseudonyms derived from various historical, mythological, or biblical sources. Prefixes such as Lord, Lady, Marquis, Marquise, Mistress, and Master denote status in a clan. Aesthetic characteristics of the culture include clothing, referred to as “garb,” which usually reflects a historical era, such as Victorian or Edwardian, and an assortment of chains, corsets, whips, and other bondage, fetish-style

accessories. Preferred colors are usually red, black, and purple. Silver jewelry is preferred to gold since it is less representative of the rites of the Catholic Church. Music is dominated by Gothic; other genres include Industrial, Classical, Punk, Techno, and a variety of other forms. The Vampyre Scene is a serious and growing phenomenon that holds gatherings attended by thousands. The largest gathering, “Endless Night,” is held in New Orleans throughout Halloween. Equivalent European gatherings include Vampyria and the Whitby Vampire Festival.

### **Vampire Nature**

An essential, unique attribute of Vampirism is the belief in the inherent ability to acquire strength and energy from either empathic capability, imbibing blood, or drawing from the psychic energy of others. The latter is referred to as Psychic Vampirism, which has its origins in ancient folktales that identified Vampires as evil gods or demons and in Medieval legends as incubus/succubus entities. There are two primary forms of Psychic Vampirism. Astral Vampirism is the ability to send one’s astral body to attack others. The second, more common form is sometimes termed Magnetic Vampirism and refers to the ability to drain the life force of other people simply by being in their presence. Most contemporary Vampire religious philosophies entail either one or both forms of Psychic Vampirism. The ability to acquire energy from others, called “feeding” in the Vampire community, is considered intrinsic to Vampire predatory nature. There is a dispute among Vampire churches about whether it is ethical to feed off the blood or psyche of unwilling donors. Since the acquisition of human life force is the fundamental core of all Vampiric teachings, distinctive methods of assimilating life energy are what distinguish the individual rituals, fundamental principles, and philosophy of each Vampire church.

The practice that is most readily identified with Vampirism is blood drinking and bloodletting. A group of members who imbibe blood are referred to as a “feeding circle.” Despite media depictions, they rarely bite each other on the neck but usually use razor blades to make cuts into each other’s bodies and suck the blood from those cuts. It is important to clarify that not all Vampires engage in this practice. Each church has an official position concerning the prac-



A woman dressed as a vampire (Trip/T. Freeman)

tice, ranging from a neutral view of simply recognizing that it exists without encouraging it to seeing it as the highest, most sacred act of Vampire worship.

Vampires also have different views of immortality, or, more specifically, life after death. Most views differ from mythological and fictional accounts, however, which portray Vampires as rising from the grave and maintaining immortality by drinking the blood of living people. For Real Vampires, immortality is achieved in ways that are similar to those posited by other religious traditions. In some instances, the Vampire god will rise again to restore faithful Vampires to their original state. Others believe in a form of reincarnation. Some Vampires already consider themselves immortal by virtue of their ability to consciously connect to their incarnations and walk in both the spiritual and physical realms. None of the Vampire religious groups claim to achieve immortality exclusively or instantaneously through the imbibing of blood.

A custom frequently affiliated with the Vampyre Scene includes bondage and discipline sexual activity, fetishism, and sadomasochism. Such practices are related to the notion of the Vampire as predator/hunter and is a mandatory ritual in some religious groups for achieving higher levels of spirituality. In Vampire religion, sadomasochism is theologically considered one form of feeding.

### Contemporary Vampire Religious Groups

One particularly large and influential Vampire group, the Sanguinarium, has an intricate network of members. It promotes a common Vampire lifestyle made up of specific customs, etiquette, aesthetics, and ethical tenets. Members congregate at “havens” (Vampire nightclubs) and “courts,” which are social events, or “town meetings” held in specific geographic locations. There is a sophisticated system of courts and havens throughout the United States and Europe. Currently, the Sanguinarium lists ten courts on its Web site, each containing many havens. This Vampire subculture is an extensive, highly organized community whose members number in the thousands.

The hierarchical structure of the Sanguinarium, called the “Three Pillars,” consists of fledglings, calmae, and elders. There is a board of directors, called the Sanguinarium Council or Council of Vampyre International Community Affairs (COVICA), and board members are designated as ministers. Each minister has a specific function. The “Legacy” is the inner circle of the Sanguinarium. Important texts include a combination of fundamental writings from member groups, including *The Black Veil*, a code of conduct; *The Vampyre Codex*, a spiritual understanding of Vampirism; and the *Sanguinarium Lexicon of Terminology*. *The Vampyre Almanac* is the official publication of the organization.

Currently there is only one international church authorized as a Vampire religion by the U.S. government. The Temple of the Vampire has been legally registered as a religion since December 1989 and has paved the way for other Vampire groups to be acknowledged as authentic religions. Its tenets reflect a millennial religion whose origin and resurrection are explained in the *Vampire Bible*, which contains the essential knowledge to practice the religion. Sacred rites of the Temple of the Vampire include magical rituals

to achieve the traditional powers of the Vampire, contact with undead gods, and Vampiric communion. Temple members adhere to a supremacist belief that Vampires are the next stage in evolution and exist as predators of humans. They also profess that Vampires created all the religions of the world to keep humans under control, that Vampires are the rulers of the world, and that humans are nothing but a source of energy for the undead gods. The Temple of the Vampire's religious philosophy is explained in its main texts, which, in addition to the *Vampire Bible*, include *The Higher Teachings of Vampirism*—both readily available at the temple's Web site. Church publications include *Bloodlines: The Vampire Temple Journal* and *Lifeforce: The International Vampire Connection to CABAL*, a monthly newsletter. The church is organized in five levels of initiation classified as grades, or circles: the Vampire Initiate, the Vampire Predator, the Priesthood of UR, the Vampire Sorcerer or Sorceress, and the highest circle, the Vampire Adept. Membership information is also available on the Web site.

Another well-known religious group is the Vampire Church, which has an ecumenical philosophy. The stated purposes of the church are to offer a haven for Vampires, to share with others of their kind, and to learn from one another. Unlike the elitism of many of the other Vampire sects, members do not tolerate racism (among Vampires), welcome diversity, and aim to unite all Vampires in a common bond. The Vampire Church considers psychic attacks and forceful feeding unethical and barbaric and does not tolerate such practices. The church council, which is responsible for all activities, projects, Web site postings, and the general well-being of the church, is chaired by the church elder.

Other religious groups include the Kheprian Order, whose members are primarily scholar-monks, and its sister house the Sekhrian Order, whose members are mystics and scholars. Both orders follow the Sanguinarium Black Veil, also called the "Rules of 13," and the Kheprian Order is where *The Vampire Codex* originated.

There are several Vampire groups that openly state that they practice the black arts, or the "Left Hand Path." Some of the better-known groups are Lucifer's Den, Society of the Dark Sun, and the Order of the Vampire. Some of these groups also identify themselves as Satanic orders and their philosophies focus

on individuality, self-preservation, and personal empowerment. Other Vampire religious groups are Temple of Eternal Night, The Lilith Tradition, and Coven of Vampyres, but many more are unpublished, underground, or developing groups.

The Vampyre Scene may have originated out of myths and Hollywood films, but it has evolved into a serious lifestyle that constitutes an authentic subculture. It has attracted thousands of followers worldwide, and the number of associations, churches, and communities in the movement is growing. One common goal among adherents is for Vampirism to be recognized and respected as a valid religion. With this objective in mind, Vampires have set aside their differences to create an alliance referred to as the Council of Elders whose members, the elders of various houses, consist of a veritable who's who of the Vampire community. The goal of this independent organization is to communicate and discuss important issues concerning Vampires. This council, and the many dedicated clans, churches, covens, orders, houses, and circles, suggest that Vampirism is not just a temporary passing fad but a genuine new religious movement.

—Dawn Perlmutter

#### SEE ALSO

The Body: Pain, Wounding; Popular Culture: Film; Sacred Space: Cyberspace

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ORTHODOX  
CHRISTIANITY





The origins of Orthodox Christianity reach back to apostolic times with historical roots in the Middle East, the Balkans, and Slavic countries. Through missionary activity and immigration, it has become the third major Christian faith in the United States after Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Orthodox Christianity is composed of several self-governing, or *autocephalous*, churches, all of which share a unity of faith, belief, and worship. Although these churches have a common historical heritage, tracing their origins to the life and work of Jesus Christ, his apostles, and the heritage of the early church and Byzantine society and culture, they lack a central administrative structure comparable to the Roman papacy. Strictly adhering to traditional Christian doctrines and beliefs, they exhibit a rich variety of practices and rituals reflecting their diverse cultural and ethnic makeup. Orthodox Christianity in America consists of several different ethnic, cultural, and jurisdictional expressions—Russian, Greek, Serbian, Syrian, Armenian, Egyptian (Coptic), Romanian, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Albanian, and American.

### Historical Background

During the first millennium C.E., when Orthodox Christianity and Catholicism constituted a united Christendom, three historical events had a profound impact upon Orthodox Christianity and its present historical condition. In 451 C.E., a gathering of Christian bishops was held in the city of Chalcedon, the modern Turkish city of Kadiköy. At this meeting, known as the Fourth Ecumenical Council, a division occurred over the understanding of the unity of the person of Jesus Christ. The result of this disagreement led to the largest schism in the history of the Christian church at that time. Christians in the eastern half of the Mediterranean split into two groups, those who supported the Council of Chalcedon and remained united with Christians in western and northern Europe, and those who refused to accept the definitions of Chalcedon, including the Coptic, Armenian, Syrian, Ethiopian, and Malabar Orthodox Churches.

The second important historical event of the first millennium was the rise and spread of Islam in the seventh century. The Muslim advance resulted in Orthodox Christians in the Middle East living within dominant Islamic societies. For more than thirteen centuries, Orthodox Christians and Muslims have lived side by side; yet as a non-Muslim community, Orthodox Christianity in the Middle East has been limited in its growth and expansion. Since World War I, the number of Orthodox Christians in the Middle East, at one time the center and cradle of Orthodox Christianity, has diminished at an accelerated and alarming rate, resulting in the almost complete elimination of Orthodox Christians from many of these historically Christian lands.

The third significant historical event during the first 1,000 years of the history of the Orthodox Church was the conversion of the Bulgarians, Serbs, and Russians to Orthodox Christianity in the ninth and tenth centuries. Missionary activity among these people culminated in the baptism of Vladimir, Prince of Kiev, in 988 C.E., marking a milestone in the history of Orthodox Christianity. The acceptance of Orthodox Christianity by the Bulgarians, Serbs, and Russians brought the faith and culture of Greek Christianity to the Slavic peoples.

With Orthodox Christianity under Islamic rule in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, the epicenter of Orthodox Christian faith and culture shifted to the city of Constantinople—the capital of the Byzantine Empire and the political and cultural heir of Imperial Rome. Christianity of the Byzantine Empire was a medieval fusion of early Christianity, Hellenic culture, and Roman imperial society and became synonymous with Orthodox Christianity. It was during the more than 1,000-year history of the Byzantine Empire (c. 400–1453) that the main expressions of Orthodox Christianity (its theology, iconography, and architecture) were given their characteristic form.

Owing to linguistic, cultural, theological, political, and geographic variables, Orthodox Christianity and Catholicism followed increasingly divergent paths. The year 1054 witnessed open schism between Or-

thodox Christianity and Roman Catholicism that persists down to the present. Although contacts between “Eastern” and “Western” Christianity continued for several more centuries, Orthodox Christianity came to be essentially identified with Christians of the Balkans, Russia, and the Middle East, whereas Catholicism remained the faith of Christians in Central and Western Europe.

By the end of the fifteenth century, Orthodox Christians in Asia Minor and the Balkans found themselves living under the rule of Muslim Ottoman Turks. The expansion and development of Orthodox Christianity within the Ottoman Empire was limited by the authoritarian rule of the Ottomans. For the next 400 years, opportunities for catechetical and theological education were extremely limited. The centuries-old traditions, beliefs, and practices were transmitted from one generation to the next by family members and especially through the rich liturgical tradition and worship of Orthodox Christianity. Ecclesiastically, the Ottoman period led to a centralization in the administration of the Orthodox Church throughout the Balkans and the Middle East, with the Patriarchate of Constantinople at the head. Outside the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Church, with its spiritual and ecclesiastical center having relocated from Kiev to Moscow in the fourteenth century, became the leader of worldwide Orthodoxy. Russian Orthodoxy, with its own particular cultural and linguistic sensibilities, developed into a unique expression of Orthodoxy while remaining fully rooted in Byzantine Christianity.

Nationalistic movements of the nineteenth century and World War I led to the breakup of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of nation-states in the Balkans and the Middle East. Nationhood brought ecclesiastical autonomy for Orthodox Christians in Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Albania, although the self-governing churches of Serbia and Bulgaria had been independent patriarchates during the medieval and late medieval period, having lost their self-governing status with the arrival of the Ottomans.

### **Orthodox Christianity in America**

Orthodox Christianity in America dates from the first few decades of the eighteenth century when Russian

imperial and economic interests brought lay Russian Orthodox Christians to the shores of the eastern Aleutian Islands. Local contacts between Russian fur traders and Native Alaskans led to baptisms of local tribal leaders at the hands of these lay Orthodox Christians. In response to the spiritual needs of Russian citizens now making the Aleutian Islands and mainland Alaska their home, as well as the needs of the first and second generations of newly converted Native Alaskans, the Russian Church sent a group of ten missionaries who arrived at Kodiak Island on September 24, 1794. The efforts of this first Orthodox missionary enterprise on American soil were strengthened with the arrival of Fr. Ioann Veniaminov (later canonized as St. Innocent of Alaska) in 1823. By 1872 the diocese of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands had been established under the ecclesiastical aegis of the Orthodox Church of Russia with its episcopal see in San Francisco.

Large-scale immigration from Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and the Middle East beginning in the 1880s and continuing through World War I brought Orthodox Christians to the United States in large numbers. Most of these early immigrants were males who came in search of economic opportunity. When sufficient numbers of Orthodox immigrants settled in a town or city, they organized a local church community, first by drawing up a charter of incorporation and then by petitioning either the national Orthodox Church of their homeland (Greece, Serbia, Syria, and so on) or the Russian Orthodox Church, which had an established episcopacy in America, to send a priest to the newly formed community. The first such immigrant parish outside of Alaska was founded in Galveston, Texas, in 1862 and was composed of Greeks, Serbs, Syrians, and Russians. Other multiethnic churches followed. By the turn of the twentieth century, however, Orthodox Church communities were being established solely along ethnic lines. Throughout most of the twentieth century, the overwhelming majority of Orthodox Churches were homogeneous ethnic churches made up of immigrant Greeks, Syrians, Serbs, Albanians, Romanians, or Russians and their descendants. Assimilation into mainstream American society has resulted in the demise of the monolithic ethnic Orthodox Church community and replaced it with a multiethnic, Americanized parish membership.

### Faith and Practice

Orthodox Christianity is both traditional and conservative, adhering closely to the theological, ethical, and social teachings and liturgical practices formulated during the first millennium of Christianity. Particular emphasis is placed upon the dogmatic and doctrinal decisions reached at the seven Ecumenical Councils held between the years 325 and 787 C.E. At these councils, the classical Christian teachings concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, the person of Jesus Christ, and the use of material objects (such as icons) in worship were defined.

Dogma and theology in the Orthodox Church are not abstract concepts isolated from the life and activity of the believer. Less dogmatic in conception and function than Western Christian theology, Orthodox theology is often described as mystical, or *apophatic*. That is, the mystery of God and creation, and the relationship of the one to the other, although concretized in the historical events of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, remain as mysteries whose ultimate meaning will only become fully realized in the afterlife. Mystical theology does not deny the use of reason, nor does it reject the importance of a cognitive foundation for faith. However, mystical theology acknowledges the experiential and existential nature of the Christian life and gives these elements a place of prominence within the life of the Christian community. Orthodox theology acknowledges the limitations of human reason in the face of the ultimate meaning of God and the mystery of salvation and therefore allows the mediums of art (iconography and architecture), literature (ascetic treatises, hagiography, and so on), and corporate worship (liturgy, hymnography) to give vital expression to theological truths.

Orthodox Christianity shares fundamental understandings of the role and function of Jesus Christ with Roman Catholicism and Protestantism but places less emphasis on Christ's salvific role through atonement and satisfaction and more on Christ's restorative power through his incarnation and resurrection. In the person of Jesus Christ, humanity (the created order) and divinity (God's nature) are united. Salvation, that is, the restoration of fallen creation, begins with the incarnation and ends in the resurrection. The Son of God—the divine Word and preexistent Logos—

takes on flesh and is united with fallen humanity in the incarnation. Throughout his lifetime, Jesus experienced all that fallen human nature experiences, save sin. He even experienced death, yet overcame it through resurrection, thus resulting in the complete salvation of humanity—that is, the destruction of death and the promise of eternal life.

Firmly rooted in its past, Orthodox Christianity emphasizes the role of tradition. Tradition, however, does not simply refer to the beliefs and practices of the early and medieval church that have given life and meaning to Orthodox Christianity throughout the centuries. Rather, tradition moves beyond the static to the dynamic and is understood as the life of the Holy Spirit in the church. That is, it is none other than the grace and power of the Holy Spirit guiding the individual and collective lives of the church members throughout the centuries. It is for this reason that Orthodox Christianity does not maintain a strict dichotomy between Scripture and tradition, as is found in Roman Catholicism. Scripture is encompassed within this broader definition of tradition. The Protestant notion of *sola Scriptura* (the authority of Scripture alone) has no meaning for Orthodox theology, since Scripture cannot be conceived outside of tradition. Tradition is a continuous dialogue of the beliefs and practices of the church with the faithful at any given time and place in history.

Orthodox Christianity is perhaps best recognized through its ubiquitous use of religious images in worship. Icons, which may depict Christ, the Virgin Mary, martyrs, and/or saints, are found in the homes of all Orthodox Christians as well as on the walls of their churches and hanging from the rearview mirrors of their automobiles. Orthodox Christians do not worship icons; rather, they venerate and revere them. The image reproduced in the icon is precisely that, an image, and as such assists the worshiper in recalling the salvific activity of God in history. Icons serve a pedagogical role by depicting, through the medium of art, the history of salvation.

The importance of icons reflects the Orthodox Christian understanding of the created world. All creation, whether animate or inanimate, ultimately derives from God. Because of the incarnation—that is, the union of divinity and humanity in Jesus Christ—matter is capable of conveying the holiness or sanctity

of the divine. Rejecting all forms of dualism, Orthodox Christianity acknowledges that matter is capable of being redeemed. The positive value placed on the created order is best reflected in the feast of Theophany, celebrated on January 6 by Orthodox Christians. Theophany commemorates the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. This biblical event is understood by Orthodox Christians as an example of how God can sanctify all physical matter. Orthodox Christians attend services on Theophany and take home with them blessed water, known as holy water, in portable bottles to be drunk by family members at home as well as sprinkled on material objects of the home for safekeeping.

The Feast of Theophany is but one manifestation of the Orthodox Christian understanding of the nature of the created order. All creation is sacramental in nature because it is intrinsically connected to God. Orthodox Christianity is a sacramental faith, utilizing worship and ritual as a means of encountering God. The sacraments of the Orthodox Church, traditionally numbered at seven (baptism, the Eucharist, chrismation, confession, marriage, holy orders, unction), are means through which God and humanity come into contact with each other. The material character of the sacraments (bread, wine, water, oil, blessings, wedding crowns, and so on) reflects the notion that all matter is capable of being consecrated to God. Explaining how God effectuates the restoration of humanity and the world through sacramental means is not a preoccupation of Orthodox theology. Rather, Orthodoxy understands the sacraments and the sacramental life as mysteries, a word with Greek roots. God's communication to humanity through these mysteries, or sacraments, though real and tangible, remains fundamentally mysterious. The mysteries simultaneously maintain the hidden reality of the divine while serving as a mirror and form of the divine.

Worship is a fundamental characteristic of Orthodox Christianity. At the center of this worship is the Orthodox liturgy, a synthesis of early Christian liturgical tradition and Byzantine ceremony. The focus of the liturgy is the Eucharist, which consists of bread and wine. The wine is shared in a common cup, signifying the unity of those partaking in the sacrament. Like Catholics, Orthodox Christians believe that this bread and wine, through the action of the Holy Spirit, become the very body and blood of Jesus Christ.

United around this central act of the liturgy are common prayers, readings from the New Testament, hymns, the censuring of the faithful, processions, the kiss of peace, recital of the creed, and departure. The Eucharist is served just after the recital of the creed.

The ecclesiastical organization of the Orthodox Church is based upon the traditional tripartite division of bishop, priest, and deacon. Orthodox clergy are allowed to marry, and the vast majority of parish clergy do so. Celibacy is a prerequisite for promotion to the office of bishop, however. Historically, women have been ordained as deacons but have not been allowed to hold the offices of priest or bishop. Orthodox theology gives a significant place to the role of the laity in the life of the church. Adopting the notion of the "royal priesthood" of all believers (1 Peter 2:9), the Orthodox Church sees the faithful as the "conscience" of the church. Respecting the individual believer, Orthodox Christianity is fundamentally communal in nature—the individual is never understood outside of the community of believers, that is, the church. In several autocephalous Orthodox Churches, the laity participates in the election of its bishops.

Monasticism figures prominently in Orthodox Christianity. With its historical roots in the Egyptian, Syrian, and Palestinian deserts of the fourth century, monasticism has had a profound influence upon the spirituality, worship, iconography, architecture, and hymnography of the Orthodox Churches. Throughout the centuries, the monastery, in its urban and rural settings, has offered a place of retreat where the ideal of an intense and personal relationship with God can be achieved without the distractions of worldly life. It is in the cell, the hut, or the cave of the individual hermit that the intense, interior life of prayer characteristic of Orthodox Christianity developed. For the monk, the Christian life is none other than a life of prayer and repentance. St. Paul's challenge to pray unceasingly (1 Thessalonians 5:17) is sought after through the repetition of the Jesus Prayer, a short mantra that has been in use by Orthodox faithful for centuries and that has become synonymous with Orthodox Christian spirituality. The prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ Son of God have mercy on me a sinner," can be recited by both the experienced monastic and the untrained layperson. Its simple structure allows for its use at any time and in any place.

Orthodox Christianity reserves a special place of

reverence for saints and holy individuals of the past and present. At baptism, the newly initiated Orthodox Christian receives the name of a Christian saint who becomes his or her personal patron. Throughout one's lifetime, the Orthodox Christian frequently calls up the intercessory prayers of his or her patron saint, believing in the efficacy of such prayers. Built around the power of the prayers of the saints is an annual liturgical cycle of feasts and worship services celebrating the memory, deeds, and words of these holy men and women. There is no official hierarchy among the numerous saints; the importance of one saint over another usually depends upon the popularity of a given saint in a particular geographical area. Mary, the mother of Jesus, however, holds a place of particular prominence among the saints. Known to the Orthodox faithful as the "Mother of God" or "Theotokos" (Greek for "Bearer of God"), Mary is commemorated through iconography, hymnography, and special feast days for her role in the history of salvation. In her acceptance of the announcement from the Archangel Gabriel that she was to bear the Lord Jesus, Orthodox theology sees reflected the call that all Christians are to respond openly to the will of God. Rejecting the Roman Catholic doctrine that Mary was born without original sin, Orthodox Christianity sees Mary as the pinnacle of human perfection in her obedient willingness to participate in God's plan.

### **The Twentieth Century and Beyond**

Historical events of the past century have played a major role in shaping the contemporary scene of Orthodox Christianity. The 1917 Bolshevik revolution derailed the Russian Orthodox Church from its prominent position of influence among Orthodox Christians worldwide. As the sphere of Communist rule increased after World War II, the Orthodox faithful of Serbia, Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania found themselves under governments extremely hostile to their very existence even to the point of total elimination, as in the case of the Albanian Orthodox Church. During the more than seventy years of Communist rule of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Orthodoxy was tolerated as long as it facilitated the Communist political agenda. Greece, the only non-Communist Orthodox country, struggled politically and economically, suffering through a devastating

civil war, and emerged only in the 1970s as a stable contributor to worldwide Orthodoxy. In the Orthodox diaspora, Orthodox theological activity flourished among the émigrés of the Russian Revolution in France and later in America. Second- and third-generation Orthodox Christians assimilated into the American educational, economic, and political mainstream, and American Orthodoxy reached a level of maturity and stability.

The collapse of communism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has revitalized the Orthodox Churches and Orthodox Christian self-identity in these areas. However, decades of suppression, persecution, and antireligious indoctrination have severely crippled the infrastructure of the churches in these countries. Lacking adequate financial and material resources, the Orthodox Church in Russia and the former Eastern bloc countries must compete with better-organized and better-funded Christian groups who actively evangelize in the former Communist countries. Nonetheless, significant strides have been made in the reestablishment of an Orthodox Christian presence in the life and culture of these countries.

Throughout the twentieth century, the Patriarchate of Constantinople maintained its position of primacy among the other Orthodox Churches. In 1920, the Ecumenical Patriarchate took a leadership role in calling for the creation of an organization of Christian churches based upon the model of the newly created League of Nations. The result was the birth of the modern ecumenical movement. In 1964, the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Pope of Rome lifted the mutual anathemas issued by their respective sees against each other in the year 1054. Orthodox theologians have participated in important ecumenical dialogues with Non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Christians, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and members of the Reformed Churches. The Orthodox Church continues to maintain its membership in the World Council of Churches, though it does not always agree with the direction that this ecumenical body follows.

Orthodox Christianity is no longer geographically limited to the East. The presence of Orthodoxy in Western Europe and America for more than two centuries has provided a unique meeting place for Orthodoxy and the churches of the Reformation. Evangelicals and Orthodoxy have made unlikely friendships, while the process of conversion of native Alaskans to



His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I gestures during a liturgy service, Chicago, November 2, 1997 (AP photo/Tim Boyle)

Orthodox Christianity is unique within the history of Christian missionary activity in America. The Orthodox Churches in the Balkans, Ukraine, and Russia are revitalizing and growing, and their impact upon world Christianity is increasing. Even as geopolitical and demographic conditions remain in flux and Western society and culture become the dominant paradigm of an increasing number of Orthodox Christians, Orthodox Christianity continues to maintain its rich tapestry of liturgical rites and popular religious practices within the framework of a traditional Christian theology.

—James C. Skedros

#### SEE ALSO

Catholicism in America; Protestantism in America; Material Culture; Ritual and Performance: Prayer; Science: Healing

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## GREEK ORTHODOXY

In a broad sense, in America “Greek Orthodox” refers to all Christians whose liturgical practices and language are derived from those of the Greek-speaking Byzantine Empire; in a more narrow sense, it refers only to those belonging to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Although oftentimes the term is used to refer to Orthodox Christians in general, historically, Greek Orthodox Christians are of Greek ethnicity with origins in Greece, Asia Minor, and areas of the Middle East with large Greek populations (such as Alexandria, Egypt). With the independence of the modern Greek nation in 1821 and the eventual breakup of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, Greeks began to immigrate to the United States in large numbers. Looking for economic opportunity, these early Greek Orthodox immigrants eventually made their adoptive nation their home and established buildings, institutions, and programs in order to perpetuate their faith in their new homeland.

Greek Orthodox have their liturgical, theological, linguistic, spiritual, and cultural roots in the Byzantine Empire—the eastern half of the Roman Empire with the famed city of Constantinople as its imperial capital. Byzantine Christianity, although conscious of its early Christian heritage, became increasingly Hellenic in its language and outlook. By the end of the fourteenth century, through its liturgy, use of religious images (icons), veneration of saints and relics, monastic practices, and imperial grandeur, it had reached its final form. The collapse of the Byzantine Empire in 1453 did not bring an end to Byzantine Christianity. Rather, the heritage of the Byzantine Church passed on to the Greek-speaking people living under Ottoman rule. The more than 400 years under Ottoman domination led to the entrenchment of Byzantine Christianity among Greek Orthodox faithful. With few opportunities for creative growth, Greek Orthodoxy was forced to rely on its historical past and rich liturgical tradition for survival.

Greek immigration to the United States began in earnest in the 1880s and continued through World War I. An estimated 400,000 Greek Orthodox immigrated to the United States during this time. They came from Greece as well as from Asia Minor, where

the Ottoman Empire was at the end of its spiraling decline. For first- and second-generation Greek Americans, the local Greek Orthodox community or parish served as an extension of the homeland, preserving the unity of faith and culture. In cities as diverse as New York and Salt Lake, groups of Greek immigrants in the late 1800s and early 1900s incorporated and petitioned the Orthodox Church of Greece or the Patriarchate of Constantinople for a clergyman. For these first-generation Greek immigrants, mostly men, and their offspring, the church became the focal point of religious and cultural identity in a foreign land. Thus, Greek Orthodoxy came to the United States not as a missionary faith but in response to the religious and cultural needs of the early Greek immigrants and their descendants.

During the 1960s, U.S. immigration law allowed for an increase in immigration from Greece. This second wave of Greek immigrants reinforced the ethnic identity of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and created tension between fully assimilated second- and third-generation Greek American Orthodox and the first-generation arrivals. Of the various ethnic Orthodox Churches that came to the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Greek Orthodox have maintained the strongest ethnic identity.

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America was organized in 1922 under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. At that time, it consisted of some 141 parishes. Today, still subject to Constantinople, the archdiocese has more than 500 parishes and continues to serve the spiritual and cultural needs of the Greek Orthodox faithful. In 1937, under the guidance of Archbishop Athenagoras, who would later be elected Patriarch of Constantinople, Holy Cross School of Theology was established. This school continues to serve as the center of Greek Orthodox theological thought and education in the Western Hemisphere. From 1959 to 1996, the archdiocese was led by Archbishop Iakovos, an energetic visionary who provided the leadership, dynamism, and visibility necessary to place Greek Orthodoxy within the permanent purview of mainstream America. The retirement of Archbishop Iakovos coincided with the breakup of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese

into smaller units. Greek Orthodox in the United States remained organized as the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America while three new Metropolitanates were created in Canada, Central America, and South America. Today, the archdiocese is the largest and wealthiest of the Orthodox jurisdictions in America and plays a leading role in Orthodox and non-Orthodox circles.

American society and culture have had a great impact upon the practice of Greek Orthodoxy. Traditional in its theological and liturgical outlook, the assimilation of Greek Orthodox into mainstream American life—an assimilation that has been relatively quick and successful gauged by the economic and educational levels attained by Greek Americans—has led to developments in liturgical and parochial life. The lay origins of Greek Orthodox parishes in the United States, for example, resulted in the creation of lay governing boards at the local parish level. These boards or parish councils, an anomaly in the history of Orthodox parish life, continue to be vital for the functioning and maintenance of parishes. Moreover, Protestant and Roman Catholic influences can be found in the liturgical life of Greek Orthodox parishes. Pews, noticeably absent from Orthodox Churches in Europe and the Middle East, have been standard in Greek Orthodox parishes in America for decades. Choirs singing traditional liturgical hymns transposed into four-part harmony accompanied by an organ are a permanent fixture in the Sunday worship experience of Greek Orthodox. Bible studies, youth camps, retreats, and marriage preparation seminars all form part of today's Greek Orthodox experience.

Even with this inevitable assimilation, Greek Orthodox continue to maintain strong identification with more distinctive elements of their faith. A neo-Byzantine renaissance of sorts has taken place and continues to influence Greek Orthodox parishes. Churches are being constructed in the traditional Byzantine ecclesiastical architectural style with its emphasis on a central dome within a square or rectangular cross. The nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western Roman Catholic religious art that decorates numerous Greek Orthodox churches is being replaced by traditional Byzantine iconography. There is a greater appreciation, knowledge, and use of unaccompanied Byzantine ecclesiastical music among the laity. As for

the worship life of Greek Orthodox, the weekly Sunday morning liturgy continues to be the primary vehicle for corporate worship. The focal point of the liturgy is the distribution of the Eucharist—the body and blood of Jesus Christ—to the faithful. Frequent Communion, or reception of the Eucharist, among Greek Orthodox faithful is commonplace.

Within the yearly cycle of liturgical feasts and fasts, Great Lent and Easter represent a focal point for Greek Orthodox Christians. Beginning usually in February or March, Great Lent is a seven-week period of preparation for what is referred to in the Orthodox Church as the Feast of Feasts, that is, Easter. The last week of Great Lent, known as Holy Week, culminates in the crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. For Greek Orthodox Christians in America, the week of Great Lent occupies a special place within the liturgical experience of the faithful. The encounter with Holy Week was enhanced when in 1963, Fr. George Papadeas, a priest of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, compiled and published a side-by-side Greek and English edition of the entire services (with rubrics) of Holy Week. The book was designed for the layperson in the pew but was quickly adopted as the standard text used by clergy as well. The book's popularity ensured a liturgical experience for Greek Orthodox other than that of the Sunday morning liturgy. Armed with their personal copies of the small black Holy Week book, Greek Orthodox are able to follow the daily services of Holy Week and to read and ponder the theological and spiritual themes contained in the hymns and scriptural readings of these services.

Greek culture and identity continue to play an important, though less dominant, role in the life of Greek Orthodox in America. The use and knowledge of the Greek language have diminished significantly in the past twenty years. Interfaith marriages, assimilation, and an increasing number of converts to Greek Orthodoxy have dramatically changed the makeup of Greek Orthodox congregations. Yet even with this, Greek Orthodoxy continues to maintain, consciously or not, a close association between faith and culture. Many of the expressions of faith are embedded with distinct cultural influences—from the crowns worn at the wedding service to the important role played by godparents in the religious and familial life of Greek Orthodox families. For more than twenty years, the Greek



A Greek Orthodox church modeled on Santa Sophia, Istanbul, Salt Lake City, Utah (Trip/B. Turner)

festival—a one-, two-, or three-day parish festival open to the public—has become a yearly feature in the vast majority of Greek Orthodox parishes. The Greek festival offers to the outside community a taste of Greek heritage and Orthodox Christianity while providing a means of community building within the parish.

Immigration from Greece to the United States has all but ceased and the assimilation of individual Greek Orthodox Christians is essentially complete. Institutionally, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America faces four challenges in its ongoing process of acculturation: maintaining its unique identity in the face of the continued influence of Protestant and Roman Catholic worship practices; dealing with issues of self-governance; improving administrative unity with other Orthodox jurisdictions in America; and resolving the tension between a hierarchical, authoritarian tradition and the democratized society in which it lives.

—James C. Skedros

#### SEE ALSO

Catholicism in America; Protestantism in America; Generations

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## NATIVE ALASKAN ORTHODOXY

Eastern Orthodox Christianity has become assimilated, or grafted, into various Native Alaskan nations and lineages. It has become a characteristic of ethnic identities among the Aleuts, Alutiiqs, Dena'ina (Athapascans), and southernmost Yupiit (Yup'ik Eskimos). It is also a hallmark of significant lineages within other Native Alaskan nations, including the Tlingits; the Ahtna, Kolchan, and Ingalik Athapascans; and the central Yupiit.

Conversions began in the Aleutian Islands and Kodiak area during the eighteenth century through contacts with fur hunters from Russia. The first recorded baptism, of a Near Island Aleutian boy, Temnak, who had traveled to Kamchatka, was in 1747. The early contact phases involved episodes of violence, and American historiography has tended to emphasize the violent personalities and to overlook the humane. Without a focus on the humane, however, the lasting conversions cannot be adequately understood.

Close affinities, both physical and cultural, existed between the newcomers and the natives to such an extent that explorers could not easily distinguish "Russians" from "Indians." George Vancouver, exploring in the Kodiak area in 1794, described the close friendships, or "affectionate regard," that he observed between them (Vancouver 1984, 1308). John Ledyard, dispatched by Captain Cook on Unalaska Island in 1778, described them praying together "after the manner of the Greek Church" as they lived together (Ledyard 1963, 95).

Within these bonds of affinity and friendship, or interpersonal alliance, baptisms took place. Initially, they were performed by laity in the absence of clergy, as priests were remarkably few. With baptism, names were exchanged. Intermarriages also began in the eighteenth century. Women of the Aleutian Islands and the Kodiak area married men from Russia who settled down to raise families. Marriages probably took place according to local customs for community approval. Records exist of couples traveling from outlying villages to the main harbors to receive a blessing when Orthodox chaplains made landfalls from ships, an infrequent occurrence.

An important alliance formed between Russian missionaries in the Kodiak area and Native Alaskans

when they joined forces to protest the unfair management practices of the Shelikhov-Golikov Company in 1794. The fur-trading company had entered the area through violent paramilitary force a decade earlier, in 1784. It was expanding rapidly over its rivals through unethical means, including instances of forced labor in some locations, and was oppressing Russian workers along with native populations. The missionary Fr. Makarii departed from Unalaska Island with three Aleut leaders in 1796 to lodge a complaint in St. Petersburg. Despite such protests, the company prevailed. It was granted a monopoly as the Russian American Company in 1799 by imperial charter. The missionaries' number diminished from ten to four by 1805.

One missionary who stayed in the area until his death in 1836, Fr. Herman, is venerated today as St. Herman of Alaska. Embodying a continuous tradition of the desert fathers of early Christianity, in Alaska Fr. Herman eventually resumed the anchoritic (eremitic) lifestyle that he had followed in the Monastery of Valaam in Karelia. People would come to visit him on Spruce Island near Kodiak for solace or guidance, and he established an orphanage on the island. After his death, pilgrimages to his burial site, or reliquary, have continued to the present day. Miracles have been attributed to him in each generation. Hymns are still sung in his honor, with supplication, in the Orthodox Alaskan churches and chapels.

During his lifetime some people settled on Spruce Island out of a desire to live near him. One was Sophia Vlasova, a Native Alaskan. In 1820, when she was about twenty years old, she became a disciple of this monastic. She matured to high spiritual stature. A women's community developed under her leadership, and she became a teacher at the orphanage.

A new phase of the history of Native Alaskan Orthodoxy began in the 1820s after the administration of the Russian American Company had changed. It was a time of consolidation. Parishes were established for the Atka (western and central Aleutians) and Unalaska districts (eastern Aleutians, Pribilofs, Shumagins, and the tip of the Alaska peninsula), as well as for Kodiak and Sitka. It is remarkable that two parishes could be established to encompass the length

of the Aleutian Islands, although no priest had ever been assigned anywhere along the archipelago except Fr. Makarii, who had remained at Unalaska Island for less than a year in 1775–1776. Two parishes could be assigned for the Aleutians in the 1820s, and the Aleuts had already been baptized and were maintaining Orthodox practices in their own villages.

Fr. Yakov Netsvetov, a Native Alaskan, was assigned to the Atka district. The son of an Aleut mother and a Siberian-Russian father, he was sent by his parents to seminary in Irkutsk. He returned to become the first priest ever in the Atka district, where he served from 1828 to 1844. Familiar with Russian as well as Aleut from his youth, he translated Scripture into the Atkan dialect and nurtured a generation of translators, teachers, and clergy. Later, succeeded in Atka by his own Native Alaskan students, he became a missionary to the Yup'ik Eskimos and the Athapascans of the lower Yukon and the Kuskokwim regions from 1845 to 1863. Ample historical evidence, as well as enduring local memories, promoted his canonization as a saint. In Alaska today, he is venerated as St. Yakov.

The priest of the Unalaska district was Fr. Ioann (Ivan) Veniaminov. Born of local lineage in Siberia in the village of Anga near Lake Baikal, he also studied in the seminary in Irkutsk. On the islands, he cooperated with knowledgeable Aleut elders to translate the Gospel according to Matthew. Principally involved was the Aleut chief Ivan Pankov, who is named on the title page as a cotranslator. Veniaminov became so proficient in this language that he eventually composed original literature in the Unalaskan dialect, including a spiritual work entitled *Indication of the Way into the Kingdom of Heaven*. Printed in Russia, the monograph was then translated in Europe from Aleut into Russian and published through scores of editions. It has since been translated from Russian and published in numerous Asian and European languages, including English. This spiritual work, written originally for the Aleuts in Aleut, has become popular internationally.

After his ministry in the Unalaska district (1824–1834), Veniaminov served as the parish priest in Sitka, where he studied the Tlingit language (1834–1838). He was elevated to the episcopacy in 1840, under the monastic name Innokentii (Innocent), for the newly founded Diocese of Kamchatka, the Kuriles, and the Aleutians. The jurisdiction encompassed

Alaska, where he opened a parish at Nushagak, as well as missions at Sitka Island, the Kenai Peninsula, and Ikogmiut (on the lower Yukon). In 1867, he was elevated to Metropolitan of Moscow, where he organized a society to assist the Alaskan parishes. At the two-hundredth anniversary of Veniaminov's birth, the governor of the State of Alaska officially proclaimed 1997 to be the "Veniaminov Bicentennial Year" to commemorate his work and legacy in Alaska as a linguist, ethnographer, geographer, educator, and pastor. He is venerated by the Alaskan Orthodox as St. Innocent of Alaska.

The next historical phase began when Alaska was sold by Russian imperial authorities to the United States in 1867. Russian ecclesiastical suprastructures waned along with Russian imperial civic structures. The diocesan seat was moved, first to San Francisco and then to the eastern seaboard of the United States. In Alaska, village elders (women and men) maintained the cycles of worship and communicated Orthodox practices to the youth from generation to generation with the support of the dedicated, but few, local clergy, mainly Native Alaskan, who would journey from village to village.

Under U.S. authority, the Native Alaskan Orthodox people became subjected to pressures to convert from Orthodoxy to Protestant denominations. For instance, a Presbyterian minister, the Reverend Sheldon Jackson, was put in charge of education in the territory. He appointed Methodists to oversee education in the Aleutian Islands, Baptists in the Kodiak area, and Presbyterians at Sitka and in the southeast. Despite such pressures, conversions away from Orthodoxy were rare, especially in regions where Orthodoxy had long been implanted, such as in the Aleutian Islands, the Alaska Peninsula, the Kodiak area, and the Nushagak, Kenai, and Chugach areas. If the earlier conversions to Orthodoxy had been merely a capitulation to Russian imperial influence, then it is likely Alaskans would have converted in greater numbers to Protestantism, particularly as pressure and incentive to do so existed. Remarkably, they did not.

Instead of diminishing, Orthodoxy among Alaskans increased. Large-scale conversions occurred among the Tlingits at the end of the nineteenth century. Clans in the Sitka area had converted during the Russian era. Other Tlingit groups, however, converted only after the demise of Russian imperialism.



St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, Juneau, Alaska (Trip/W. Jacobs)

Pressures by U.S. missionaries eventually did cause the counterconversions of many of the newly baptized in southeastern Alaska. Yet a significant number of families remain Russian Orthodox, and this religion tends to be associated with traditional ways by important elders among the Tlingits today. Conversions of central Yup'ik villages or lineages to Orthodoxy took place even into the 1930s. Social anthropological studies in 1957 (Oswalt 1963, 131–146) were able retrospectively to describe some dynamics at Napaskiak, in 1905–1906, in which neighboring Yup'ik priests had been instrumental along with Aleut laity.

The latest historical phase began after Alaskan statehood became official in 1959. A new jurisdiction, the Orthodox Church in America (OCA), was established in 1970 when the Russian Orthodox Metropolis in America gained Alaska as a diocese and reestablished a bishop at Sitka. (Although it refers to itself as the “Orthodox Church in America,” it represents only a fraction of the Russian Orthodox population of the

United States.) Native Alaskan parishes provide financial support for the OCA and maintain their own churches and chapels.

Several cultural factors came into play to create Native Alaskan Orthodoxy. Alaskan and Orthodox perceptions coincided, for example, regarding the existence of a divine or spiritual presence in nature. Although the two understandings of this presence were not necessarily the same, there were enough similarities for Native Alaskans to find an affinity with Orthodox ideas. Such perceptions exist at the very heart of Eastern Orthodox Christianity and are manifested through various popular customs as well as through formal rituals. Perhaps the most visible among them in Alaska today are the church rituals for the sanctification of water.

Alaskan and Orthodox perceptions about sacred depictions, or iconic art, also coincided. They both involved participation with spiritual realities through representations. Moreover, traditions about naming, and the symbolic qualities of names, though not iden-

tical, were similar. Relationships with ancestors, particularly those realized through periodic memorials, were also seen in similar ways. Ancestor memorials, always emphasized in certain Alaskan cultures, especially among the Tlingit and Kolchan Athabascans, were sustained or even increased after conversion to Orthodoxy. The Aleuts, furthermore, had an ability to maintain personal stillness and attention that had been developed by ancient traditions such as greeting the sunlight daily; as a result, individuals among them were able to enter into extraordinary depths of prayer as described by Veniaminov (1984, 229).

The changes that occurred in religious orientations through the conversions are rather like those that took place elsewhere among Eastern Orthodox peoples. For instance, a distinction was introduced into the Aleut language between *an'gilaq* (angel) and *qugaq* (demon), and into the Alutiiq language between *aanki-laq* and *kalla'auq*, just as conversions introduced the distinction between *aggelos* and *daimon* into the Greek language and parallel distinctions into Slavic languages. With the host of angels, Christ came as Savior. Prayer and ritual became oriented toward the Savior and saints.

The change in orientation did not involve a radical disjunction. The main Orthodox ritual today, the Divine Liturgy, for example, with its symbolic garments for celebrants, chanting, processions, and icons, is similar to ancient Alaskan rituals. In the Alaskan rituals, masks were used instead of icons; masks and icons, however, both enact ritual participation through archetypes. Today, the ritual participation is with Christ, the saints, and the angels, but the dynamics remain quite similar to those of ancient Alaskan cultures.

Thus, a radical severance from the past did not occur and was not necessary according to Orthodox patristic theological principles. Clergy who did not reflect these principles or show much affinity with Alaskan sensitivities were not influential in Alaskan Orthodox history. The result is an easily recognizable continuity from the ancestral past, which extends, transformed, into the present.

Through their own ancestral cultures, Alaskan Native peoples could comprehend Orthodoxy and vice versa, so much so that today Native Alaskan Orthodox Christians feel that the religion is their own. Their references are not necessarily to outside supra-

structures, although ecclesiastical authority is manifestly respected and an unbroken history of the communication of this faith and its practices is known. The history is significant, as it came from early Christianity to the Greeks, then from Byzantium to the Slavs, from Russia across Siberia and northeast Asia to the Alaskans. This unbroken course of history tends to be appreciated. Yet the Native Alaskan references are primarily to their own lineages and nations, villages, and communities. These people have maintained this faith and its practices as their own for generations now, through often harsh and challenging circumstances.

—S. A. Mousalimas

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Native American Religions and Politics; Sacred Space: Shrines

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## ORIENTAL ORTHODOXY

The Oriental Orthodox churches are a set of five closely related ancient Christian traditions rooted in the Middle East, Africa, and India. They share a common theological heritage, ecclesiastical structure, and many elements of worship and spiritual practice, but all have strong “national” identities. The major Oriental Orthodox groups are the Armenian, Egyptian Coptic, and Ethiopian Coptic churches and the Syrian Orthodox tradition, which is rooted in both the Middle East and in India. Closely related in most ways to the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions, the Oriental Orthodox churches broke with these larger institutions between the fifth and seventh centuries over how best to define the relationship between Christ’s human and divine natures. The Oriental Orthodox Christians have often been described as “monophysite” in their Christology, that is, as teaching a doctrine that Christ had a single composite divine-human nature, but they themselves vigorously reject this label.

Armenians and Syrians led the Oriental Orthodox migration to the United States, founding communities as early as the late 1880s. Immigration to the United States by members of all five groups surged beginning in the late 1960s, and substantial communities and well-organized jurisdictions for each are now operating in the United States.

The Oriental Orthodox traditions are among the most ancient in Christianity. All trace their origins to the first century, the Coptic traditions to the Christian community established in Egypt in the mid-first century and associated with St. Mark, the author credited with the oldest of the four New Testament Gospels. The Syrian Orthodox tradition, linked to the Apostle Thomas, is the last Christian community carrying on the tradition of worship in Syriac and Aramaic, the vernacular language of first-century Palestine. The Armenian Church, evangelized early, treasures the claim that Armenia became the first Christian state, an event that occurred in the early fourth century.

In Trinitarian and patristic theological tradition, sacramental theology, worship, and institutional structure, the Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox traditions are virtually identical and were consid-

ered a single family of churches until a gradual division took hold between the fifth and seventh centuries. The two traditions drifted apart in the wake of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 C.E., which rejected what it called “monophysitism,” the doctrine that Christ had only a divine nature. This dispute arose in the context of the conflicts of regional theological traditions, church organizations, and political movements contending within the Roman Empire. All of the Oriental Orthodox churches rejected Chalcedon.

The Roman and Byzantine churches demanded a definition that acknowledged that Christ has two unconfused, unchanged, indivisible, inseparable natures combined in a single person. Those who would become the Oriental Orthodox insisted on a definition of Christ’s divinity and humanity as united in one nature, called “the nature of the incarnate word.” In the words of the Coptic liturgy, these two natures are united “without mingling, without confusion, and without alteration.”

Between the mid-fifth and mid-seventh centuries, there were failed attempts at reconciliation between the Byzantine and Oriental Orthodox traditions. With the rise of Islam, the Oriental Orthodox traditions moved largely beyond the political control of the Byzantine state and church, evolving as independent traditions, mostly as minority movements or nationalities in the Muslim world of the Middle East and North Africa.

Intense theological discussion between Eastern and Oriental Orthodox theologians and bishops during the 1980s and early 1990s produced a series of formal statements indicating that although the two groups have used different Christological language, they actually agree on the relationship of Christ’s two natures. Reunion of the two traditions is now a possibility and in some parts of the world is treated as an accomplished fact.

The “Non-Chalcedonian” Orthodox are in full communion with one another. In each of these churches, there have also been episodes, many concentrated in the sixteenth century, when some members affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, small communities of Catholics who worship using Armenian, Coptic, and Syrian rites persist, both



in the United States and in Oriental Orthodox homelands.

### **The Armenians in America**

The Armenian Church, the largest Oriental Orthodox tradition in the United States and the first to arrive, was carried here by immigrants fleeing the Ottoman Empire. The first Armenian Divine Liturgy was celebrated on August 4, 1889, in the meeting room of the Grand Army of the Republic lodge in Worcester, Massachusetts. In 1891, Armenians from two dozen communities in New England and New York contributed funds to construct the first Armenian Apostolic Church in America, the Church of Our Savior, in Worcester.

Immigration of Armenians accelerated during the 1890s and 1900s and peaked in the years after the Armenian Genocide of 1915. In 1898, Khrimian Hairig, catholicos of Etchmiadzin, established the first Armenian Apostolic diocese in the United States. The first several decades of the church's history in America were marked by expansion to meet the needs of a growing immigrant community. But the church also suffered constant turmoil growing out of political disagreements rooted in Armenian life in the Ottoman and Russian Empires. The persecution of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and, after 1920, under Soviet control of the Republic of Armenia, where the Catholicosate of Holy Etchmiadzin, the headquarters of the Armenian Church, is located, caused long-lasting communal strife in America.

The Armenian Apostolic Church in America was governed by a National Representative Assembly that has the unusual power of electing the church's bishops for limited terms. The politics of the National Assembly became particularly heated in the late 1920s and early 1930s, with division increasingly rooted in the question of how to respond to Soviet power in Armenia.

In September 1933, the assembly divided on a vote to depose the current archbishop, Ghevont Tourian. This struggle initiated a division in the Armenian Apostolic Church in America that persists to this day. Tourian was assassinated on December 24, 1933, while celebrating the liturgy in New York, and there was violence and division in Armenian communities around the country.

The division of the 1930s persisted and took more concrete organizational form in the Cold War atmosphere of the 1950s, when, on October 12, 1957, the group of parishes identified as the "unaffiliated diocese" was taken into the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, based in Lebanon. Since then, the Armenian Church in the United States has maintained two separate but parallel dioceses, the Diocese of America connected with the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin, and the Prelacy of America connected with the Catholicosate of Cilicia.

Both jurisdictions have diocesan structures with regional bishops sitting in New York and Los Angeles. The Diocese of America operates St. Nersess Theological Seminary outside of New York City. Combined, the two jurisdictions claim more than 150 parishes and an Armenian population of about 500,000.

Armenian churches can be found in many areas of the United States, with major concentrations in eastern New England, New York, the Middle Atlantic states, and California, especially in the central valleys of California and the Los Angeles area. They face the challenges of serving a population that includes large numbers of first-generation immigrants as well as a large group of highly assimilated third- and fourth-generation Armenian Americans. Preservation of Armenian language and culture is an important issue, as is the challenge of maintaining strong links within the church in a situation where many young people marry outside the Armenian community.

Substantial currents of new Armenian migration emerged in the 1970s as many Armenians fled Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon to come to the United States. As a result, Los Angeles has emerged as the major center of the Armenian population. With the reestablishment of an independent Armenia in 1989, the revitalization of the homeland, in the face of natural disasters, economic struggles, and war with neighboring Kazakhstan, has stimulated Armenian identity and pulled the Armenian communities together to work for a common cause. There are also ongoing attempts to unite the two church jurisdictions.

### **Egyptian Copts**

The Coptic Orthodox Church has maintained a vigorous, uninterrupted corporate life in Egypt since the first century. Current estimates of the Coptic popula-



Religious ceremony in a Coptic church in Brooklyn, New York, 1994 (Stone Les/Corbis Sygma)

tion reach as high as 10 million, and it is the only significant religious minority in Egypt. Since the mid-twentieth century, a large diaspora of Egyptian Copts has developed, with Coptic jurisdictions spreading throughout Africa, Western Europe, North and South America, and Australia. Under the leadership of the vigorous Pope Shenouda II of Alexandria, the Coptic Church has revitalized its monastic and educational institutions, developed hundreds of new parishes in Egypt and around the world, and asserted its civil rights in Egypt.

The Coptic tradition honors ancient Egyptian linguistic, cultural, and artistic traditions, including preserving the use of Coptic, the vernacular language of Egypt until the twelfth century, and a distinct and rich tradition of Christian iconography and worship. Coptic Orthodoxy is distinguished by elaborate ceremonies, rigorous fasting practices, and intense historical self-consciousness. As the strongest of the Oriental Orthodox churches, the Egyptian church also plays an important ecumenical role.

There was no organized Coptic presence in the United States before the late 1960s. The first Coptic Orthodox congregation in North America was established in Toronto in 1966. It planted missions in Mon-

treah, New York, and Los Angeles before 1970 and has developed rapidly since then. Untroubled by the jurisdictional disputes that have beset other Oriental Orthodox churches, the Coptic Orthodox community in the United States is now organized into three dioceses with more than 100 parishes. The growth of these communities has been explosive since 1980, with elaborate building programs designed to serve large and growing immigrant communities.

The Coptic Orthodox Church also operates theological seminaries in Jersey City, New Jersey, and Los Angeles, as well as a male monastery in California. Egyptian Copts are concentrated in the Middle Atlantic states and Southern California but can be found in most areas that experienced rapid growth in the 1980s and 1990s.

### **Ethiopian Copts**

The Orthodox faith has been the central religious and cultural identity for the Amhara and Tigray peoples of Ethiopia's central and northern highlands since the fourth century when missionaries brought the faith south from Egypt. The Ethiopian and Egyptian Coptic churches have been closely linked since that time.

From the twelfth century until 1959, the Coptic Patriarchate of Alexandria appointed Egyptian Coptic monks to lead the Ethiopian Church. For much of its history, the Ethiopian Church has been isolated from other Christian churches and surrounded by Muslim populations. The church is also known as the Tawahado Church (*Tewehado* is an Ethiopian term meaning “the two are one,” a reference to Ethiopian Christology).

Though pervasively shaped by Coptic Christianity, Ethiopian Orthodoxy also has strong elements of indigenous influence, which are particularly marked in its worship, which is splendid and dramatic. Alone among all the Orthodox peoples, the Ethiopian liturgical style includes dancing and drumming. A distinctly Ethiopian group of religious officials, the *debertera*, who are not ordained, are responsible for these performances. They also function as astrologers, scribes, wizards, fortunetellers, and experts in popular religious practice.

The Ethiopian tradition emphasizes Old Testament elements. Churches always include reproductions of the Ark of the Covenant; most men undergo circumcision as babies; and many observe Saturday as the Sabbath as well as Sunday. Fasting disciplines are also the most rigorous in the Orthodox world, with many eating only bread and water during Lent.

Ethiopian immigrants began to organize church communities in the United States in the late 1960s and 1970s. The headquarters of the Ethiopian Diocese is in the Bronx, New York, and more than twenty Ethiopian churches function under its authority. Other centers of concentration include Washington, D.C., and Southern California.

### Syrian and Indian Orthodox

Although the first Syrian Orthodox communities were established in the United States in the 1890s, most American adherents of the Syrian and Indian Orthodox faith have arrived since the 1970s. The two communities are closely linked. The Orthodox in India practice a form of Syrian Christianity carried to India in the first and second centuries, and ecclesiastical relations have been maintained between Indian Orthodoxy and the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch since the seventeenth century.

The Syrian Orthodox (who must be distinguished from the larger group of Arab-speaking members of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch) preserved ancient Syriac traditions of worship and faith while rejecting the teaching of the Council of Chalcedon. The church's home territory has always been the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, and most Syrian Orthodox still live as a tiny religious and ethnic minority in Iraq and Turkey.

The first Syrian Orthodox communities in the United States were established before World War I on the East Coast and in the Detroit area. Since the 1970s the church has grown significantly, and it now reports more than twenty-five parishes distributed widely around the United States. An Eastern Archdiocese is based in New Jersey and a Western Archdiocese in California.

Oriental Orthodox from India, especially from the Malankara coastal region of Kerala, have immigrated to the United States in large numbers since the late 1970s. The Malankara tradition dates to apostolic times and maintains the worship and theology of the Syrian Orthodox Church. A substantial number of divisions have taken place in the Malankara church in recent centuries, and two of the major divisions are represented in the United States. The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, a diocese of the Kerala-based Catholicate of the East, is headquartered in Buffalo. It established its first parish in Chicago in 1971. The American Diocese of the Indian Orthodox is headquartered in Queens, New York, and now claims more than sixty parishes.

—Andrew Walsh

### SEE ALSO

Asian American Religious Communities; South Asian American Religious Communities; Catholicism in America

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## PROTESTANTS AND ORTHODOXY

Over the past century, relations between Orthodox Christians and Protestants in the United States have been highly variable. Orthodox resentment over Protestant attempts to convert Orthodox believers has been high, but a relationship of special warmth flourished between the Orthodox and Episcopal Churches for most of the twentieth century. During recent decades, a notable movement of Protestants of many denominations into Orthodoxy has taken place. The total number of converts has been small by American standards, but many of these converts are unusually energetic and vocal. Although this movement has had a negligible impact on the Protestant communities they left, the long-term impact of Protestant converts on American Orthodoxy may be very significant.

Formal contact between Orthodox Christians and Protestants dates to the 1570s when a delegation of Lutheran theologians from Tübingen in Germany visited Ecumenical Patriarch Jeremiah II in Constantinople. A significant exchange of theological views took place. There was a sharper exchange with Calvinist theologians in the seventeenth century, and even more heated ones with a small group of “Non-Jurors,” a separatist group of Anglicans, in the early eighteenth century.

But the most direct background for Protestant-Orthodox relations in the contemporary era was the Protestant mission movement, which targeted Orthodox populations in the Middle East, Balkans, and Russia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Largely sponsored by the Congregationalists and Presbyterians, these movements were bitterly resented by Orthodox leaders. As significant numbers of Orthodox immigrants began to accumulate in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, especially in New England and the Midwest, Congregationalists and Presbyterians established domestic missions to evangelize the Orthodox.

Standing outside this hostile atmosphere in the early and mid-twentieth century was the Episcopal Church, whose members and clergy made many friendly gestures toward Orthodox immigrants. As a matter of policy, Episcopalians rarely sought to convert Orthodox immigrants, seeing in Orthodoxy

many parallels to Episcopal theology, worship, and church structure. During the period of heavy migration of Orthodox peoples (1890–1925), Episcopalians all over the United States offered the use of their churches to nascent Orthodox congregations. Itinerant Orthodox priests used Episcopal sanctuaries for occasional liturgies and to baptize, marry, and bury Orthodox believers. Local parish histories frequently recount the support that local Episcopal clergy and lay leaders provided by encouraging and even funding the establishment of local Orthodox congregations. Greek immigrants, for example, were often instructed by their village priests to search out Episcopal congregations in their destinations if Orthodox churches were not available to them.

Relations between Orthodox and Episcopal leaders were close in other ways as well. Interaction was especially strong with the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Episcopal Church, which shared a sacramental outlook with the Orthodox. Indeed, in the early decades of Orthodox immigration, many Orthodox leaders tended to view the rest of American Christianity through an Anglo-Catholic lens. Examples of Episcopal support for Orthodox endeavors abound. In 1939, for example, the fledgling St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary spent its formative years in space loaned by the General Theological Seminary in New York. In addition, many Orthodox clergy studied in Episcopal seminaries.

Other evangelical and mainline Protestant groups, by contrast, continued to evangelize among Orthodox immigrants and their children, whom they considered “unchurched,” until the 1950s. During that decade, it became apparent that a few Protestants were gravitating toward Orthodoxy, despite its overwhelmingly immigrant character. Some were connected to Orthodoxy through intermarriage; others were attracted by Orthodox worship styles and theology. One path-breaker was Dimitri Royster, a Southern Baptist from Texas who converted in the mid-1950s. Royster was ordained a priest of the largely Russian jurisdiction now called the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) and is at present the OCA archbishop of Dallas and the South.

This movement toward Orthodoxy increased in the 1980s when many Protestants, including several small groups, joined the Orthodox Church. At the same time, some Orthodox jurisdictions became refuges for former Episcopal priests and laity unhappy with liturgical and theological change in that church, a situation that also reflected the cooling of the Episcopal-Orthodox relationship. The size of the movement is difficult to estimate. Certainly, it involves tens of thousands of people, and its impact has been strongly felt, particularly in the OCA and in the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, which was founded by Arab immigrants but has embraced an American identity.

The most significant group movement into Orthodoxy came in 1987, when about 2,000 members of the "Evangelical Orthodox Church" were received into the Antiochian archdiocese by Metropolitan Phillip Saliba. The origins of this group went back to 1973, when former staff members of the Campus Crusade for Christ established a network of house churches called the New Covenant Apostolic Order. As they began to study church history, they gravitated toward Orthodoxy, and in 1979 they declared themselves a new denomination, the Evangelical Orthodox Church. After making contacts with the Orthodox Church in America and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, the group joined the Antiochian archdiocese. Saliba said that the Evangelical Orthodox would bring energetic American traditions of outreach to Orthodoxy, making it better known and more attractive to non-Orthodox Americans. From 1987 to 1995, the group functioned as the Antiochian Evangelical Orthodox Mission. In 1995, it was fully assimilated into the archdiocesan structure.

The number of Antiochian parishes grew rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s. During this period, the archdiocese attracted a large number of converts from the Episcopal Church. Most often, the converts were conservative Episcopalians unhappy over the ordination of women, revision of worship, and acceptance of homosexuality in the Episcopal Church. This cluster often brought with them a hard-edged conservative critique of contemporary American society, the ecumenical movement, and liberal Christian groups. Many came after long service in the ministry, sometimes bringing all or part of their congregations with them.

As a result, converts now make up a very large percentage of the leadership of several Orthodox jurisdictions. Perhaps up to 80 percent of the Antiochian archdiocese's priests are converts, the considerable majority from the Episcopal and evangelical churches. Although still outnumbered by converts who come to Orthodoxy through marriage, these ideologically motivated converts are making a significant impact on the ethos and organizational life of American Orthodoxy.

A group of writers from this group has emerged to speak for Orthodoxy, touring extensively and producing books and articles in a popular apologetic style that is familiar to evangelical Protestants but unprecedented among the "ethnic" Orthodox in the United States. Antiochian converts Fredericka Mathews-Greene and the Rev. Patrick Henry Reardon, both former Episcopalians, share an infectious enthusiasm for Orthodoxy, disdain for contemporary American religion and culture, and a desire to use Orthodoxy to reform American culture. Frank Shaeffer, the son of a prominent fundamentalist Protestant theologian and a convert in the Greek Orthodox archdiocese, is another activist conservative. Archpriest Peter Gilquist, who led the Evangelical Orthodox into the Antiochian archdiocese, has also become a popular writer and apologist, although he is less emphatic than others about conservative politics. Because these converts share an explicitly American identity and field of reference, emphasize outreach to non-Orthodox Christians, and began their careers as Protestant writers, many Americans now get their first exposure to Orthodoxy through these "native" and socially conservative voices.

Protestant-Orthodox contacts have expanded in other areas as well. Since 1990, the Society for the Study of Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism has provided a forum for academic discourse that has attracted a large number of participants from Orthodox and Protestant seminary faculties. Orthodoxy has also attracted a number of high-profile academic converts, most notably Jaroslav Pelikan, the magisterial Yale University historian of Christian doctrine, who joined the OCA in 1998. Kimberley Patton, a comparative religion scholar at Harvard University, and Susan Ashbrook Harvey, a historian of early Christian theology at Brown University, are also well-known converts from this stream, which has little in

common with the Evangelical Orthodox or Episcopal dissidents.

—Andrew Walsh

#### SEE ALSO

Catholicism in America: Conversion to Catholicism;  
Protestantism in America: Denominationalism

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## RUSSIAN ORTHODOXY

The Russian Orthodox Church and its daughter churches trace their founding to the conversion of Prince Vladimir of Kiev in 988 C.E. It is one of fourteen internationally recognized independent, or *autocephalous*, Orthodox churches in the world today. In the late eighteenth century, Russian Orthodox monks established a mission in the Russian colony of Alaska that today has developed into the Orthodox Church in America. In the twentieth century, other churches, such as the Old Believers and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, also claimed to be legitimate heirs of Prince Vladimir and established important communities in the United States and Canada.

When Prince Vladimir (r. 980–1015) adopted Christianity, he accepted a Greek bishop from Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire. The church, which closely allied itself first with the ruling dynasty in Kiev and then with Moscow, benefited from the aggressive expansion of the Muscovite state after 1350. In 1584, Moscow defeated the Siberian khanate and rapidly colonized the vast territory of Siberia; within seventy years the Russian explorer Simon Dezhnev had founded Anadyr, an outpost on the Bering Sea, at the eastern end of Siberia and a mere sixty miles from Alaska. Russian expeditions that mapped Alaska in 1721 and 1741 enticed independent trappers to the North American continent with their reports of rich supplies of valuable furs. Russians established a permanent settlement on Ko-

diak Island in 1784; ten years later, the Russian Orthodox Church sent a group of monastic volunteers there to establish the first Orthodox mission in North America.

These early missionaries and their successors overcame many obstacles, including conflicts with the authoritarian governor of the colony, Aleksandr Baranov, and hostility from Native Americans. Despite such difficulties, the missionaries and their successors succeeded in gaining converts, primarily among the Aleuts. The Alaskan mission also created important heroes for Russian Orthodox Christians who remember St. Herman (c. 1756–1837), a member of the original mission, and St. Innokentii (Ioann Veniaminov, 1797–1879), who served as a priest in Alaska from 1824 to 1840, as model ascetic educators and preachers.

### From Missionary Diocese to Immigrant Church

Faced with a dwindling supply of furs in Alaska, a cash-strapped Russia offered to sell Alaska to the United States in 1867. Despite some domestic opposition, the U.S. Congress approved the sale, and Alaska became a territory of the United States. Three years later, the Russian Orthodox Church created a separate diocese for its North American mission. The new bishop Ioann (Stefan Mitropol'skii) recognized the

need to move his headquarters to a more central location on the North American continent, and so in 1874, the diocese moved from Sitka, Alaska, to San Francisco, California.

The move to the south marked an important departure for the Russian Church and a renewed effort to make converts not only among the Native Americans of Alaska but also among the English-speaking majority in the United States. When he was appointed to the see of San Francisco, Bishop Vladimir (Sokolovskii-Avtonomov, r. 1887–1991) brought five seminary professors and eighteen students to serve as missionaries. An expert in church music, he also began translating parts of the Slavonic service into English.

The growth of the diocese was not primarily from converts to Orthodoxy but from immigration. From 1880 to 1920, immigration from Eastern Europe brought large numbers of Orthodox Christians into the United States. Greeks, Ruthenians (Ukrainians of the Austro-Hungarian Empire), Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Romanians arrived in large numbers. Many of these new arrivals joined churches that were part of the Russian missionary diocese, although other groups—especially the Greeks—created their own independent parishes.

The North American diocese also benefited from an internal dispute within the Catholic Church. In 1596, at the Council of Brest, the Roman Catholic Church had successfully converted large numbers of Orthodox Christians in Ukraine by allowing them to observe the rituals and customs of the Orthodox Church even as they promised allegiance to the pope. Large numbers of these Byzantine-rite Catholics, as they were called, came to the United States in the 1870s and 1880s and established their churches. But the predominantly Irish hierarchy of the American Catholic Church looked suspiciously at these Catholics, who celebrated Mass in Slavonic, not Latin, and whose parish priests were married, not celibate. In 1891, disappointed by the attitude of his bishop, a Byzantine-rite Catholic priest, Father Alexis Toth, led his 361 Minneapolis parishioners out of the Catholic Church into Russian Orthodoxy. More important, he began a vigorous missionary effort to win other Byzantine-rite Catholics to the Orthodox Church. The conservative Pope Pius X unwittingly aided Toth by issuing the encyclical *Ea Semper*, which demanded that Byzantine-rite priests be celibate. By 1909, approxi-

mately 20,000 Byzantine-rite Catholics had converted to Orthodoxy.

In 1900, the future Patriarch of Moscow, Tikhon (Belavin), assumed the episcopal see of San Francisco. Recognizing the importance of Eastern European immigrants for the expansion of the church, Bishop Tikhon moved the diocesan headquarters to New York five years later. Envisioning a multiethnic American Orthodox Church that would eventually become autocephalous, Tikhon created new dioceses that he filled with candidates from the different ethnic Orthodox communities: Greek, Romanian, and Serbian. He also had the entire liturgy translated into English and transformed the existing missionary school in Minneapolis into a full-fledged seminary.

### Revolution, Schism, and Ethnic Division

The Russian Revolutions of 1917 radically transformed the missionary diocese. In March, a bread riot in the capital city of St. Petersburg grew into a popular uprising that overthrew the tsar and established a provisional government. Eight months later, the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party overthrew the provisional government and established the first officially atheist state in history. Immediately, the new rulers of Russia separated the church from the state and ended state subsidies to the church. This reform struck a terrible financial blow to the North American diocese, which had depended heavily on grants from the imperial government; in 1916, the Russian government had provided \$500,000 to support American Orthodoxy. Suddenly bereft of these subsidies, the diocese found itself in a fiscal crisis.

The revolutions also radically transformed church government. With the overthrow of the tsar, the church was free for the first time in 200 years to convoke a nationwide council. (Orthodox Christians call a council of a single autocephalous church, such as the Russian Orthodox Church, a Local Council to distinguish it from an Ecumenical Council of the Church in the whole world.) At the Church Council of 1917–1918, the Russian Orthodox Church reestablished the Patriarchate of Moscow that Emperor Peter the Great (r. 1682–1725) had abolished in 1721. The new patriarch, Tikhon, had earlier served as the archbishop of the North American diocese.



Interior of St. Michael's Cathedral, a Russian Orthodox church in Sitka, Alaska, c. 1892  
(Michael Maslan Historic Photographs/Corbis)

But Tikhon and his church faced grave problems as they contended with the first atheist state in history. The most conservative bishops fled the new Bolshevik nation and, in a council held in 1921 in Sremski Karlovci, Yugoslavia, created an independent Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR). Likewise, in 1922, leftist bishops and clergy inside Russia also broke away from Patriarch Tikhon. They allied themselves closely with the ruling Bolsheviks and demanded radical reforms in the liturgy and practice of Orthodoxy. Most notably, the Renovators, as these leftist clerics were called, introduced a married episcopate and thus overthrew the ancient Orthodox tradition that required hierarchs to be celibate monks.

These schisms also immediately affected the American church. After the Bolshevik victory in the Rus-

sian Civil War, Metropolitan Platon (Rozhdestvenskii) of Odessa fled back to the United States, where he had served as archbishop from 1907 to 1914. He easily took control of the diocese, and in 1924, an All-American Council declared his metropolitanate independent of Moscow.

This newly independent metropolia also faced internal schism. Father Ioann Kedrovskii took up the cause of the Renovators, established himself as the bishop of a rival church administration, and successfully sued in U.S. courts for control of several parish properties. Although serious, the Renovatorist schism proved ephemeral both in the United States and in Russia. With no broad popular support, the Renovatorist movement collapsed when it lost favor with the Bolshevik Party. In 1925, Patriarch Tikhon promised



the Bolsheviks his political neutrality; two years later, Metropolitan Sergii, the locum tenens, provided a much stronger statement of support for the regime. In return, in the late 1920s, the Bolsheviks withdrew their support from the Renovators, who slowly began to return to the patriarchal church.

But in the Soviet Union, Bolshevik antipathy toward all religion resulted in a violent persecution of the Orthodox Church that became especially intense in the 1930s. Tens of thousands of churches were closed or destroyed; hundreds of bishops were arrested. Only after Hitler invaded the Soviet homeland in 1941 did Joseph Stalin, the head of the Communist Party, seek a rapprochement with the Russian Orthodox Church. Dismayed by this vicious campaign, the American metropolia maintained its independence from Moscow throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

Domestically, American Orthodoxy also faced ethnic divisions. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Greeks, Arabs, Serbs, Ukrainians, Bulgarians, Romanians, and Albanians separated from the metropolia and formed their own ecclesiastical administrations. These divisions were exacerbated after World War II when the ROCOR fled the Communist takeover in Yugoslavia and established its headquarters in New York. Refusing to recognize the independence of the metropolia, ROCOR created its own separate parishes in America. At the same time, the Moscow Patriarchate, angered by what it regarded as the metropolia's uncanonical refusal to submit to the Russian patriarch, sent its own missionaries to establish parishes in the United States. Thus, for twenty-five years, three independent Russian Orthodox churches competed for the hearts and minds of the faithful.

In 1970, the Moscow Patriarchate and the American metropolia finally came to an agreement. The Russian Orthodox Church formally recognized the metropolia as an independent, autocephalous church—the Orthodox Church in America. But because of ethnic sensitivities, no other autocephalous Orthodox church has accepted the new status of the metropolia; Greeks, Bulgarians, Arabs, and Albanians have all preferred to maintain their separate jurisdictions in North America. Likewise, ROCOR has remained separate from both the Moscow Patriarchate and the OCA; its uncompromising stand has even won it

American-born converts. Since the collapse of communism and the Soviet Union, ROCOR and the Moscow Patriarchate have made little progress at overcoming seventy years of separation and mistrust.

Today the main representatives of Russian Orthodoxy in North America are OCA, led by Metropolitan Theodosius of New York, and ROCOR, led by Metropolitan Vitalii of New York, but another minority group, the Old Believers, or Old Ritualists, also maintain important Russian Orthodox traditions. Because they rejected liturgical reforms introduced by Patriarch Nikon of Moscow (r. 1652–1658), they broke away from official Orthodoxy in the seventeenth century but insisted that true Orthodoxy was only to be found in their midst. The Old Believers subsequently divided into many competing sects. Old Believers immigrated to the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; today they live in colonies in Alaska, Oregon, and Pennsylvania.

—Eugene Clay

#### SEE ALSO

Catholicism in America; Native American Religions and Politics

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PROTESTANTISM  
IN AMERICA



Protestantism is one of the three major strains of worldwide Christianity and a formative religious tradition in American history. With its emphasis on *sola Scriptura* (the Bible alone) as the source of authority and its insistence that individual believers read and interpret the Bible for themselves, it was the religious tradition animating the second wave of European settlement in North America (after the Catholicism of Spanish settlers in Florida and the Southwest and the French in Canada). After settling in the Atlantic colonies, where various strains of Protestantism dominated colonial religious life, Protestants attempted to construct a godly society in the nineteenth century, only to see those efforts frustrated by the onset of the Civil War, massive urbanization, and the arrival of non-Protestant immigrants. Although Protestants had always been fractious, they divided into two camps in the twentieth century: liberal, or mainline Protestant, on the one hand, and conservative, or evangelical, on the other.

### The Protestant Reformation

Martin Luther's posting of his Ninety-Five Theses to the cathedral door at Wittenberg on October 31, 1517, unleashed a flurry of reforms within Western Christianity that fundamentally reshaped religion and culture in the modern world. Luther objected to the corruption that had riddled Roman Catholicism throughout the Middle Ages, and he urged believers to read and interpret the Bible for themselves rather than look to Rome as their source of authority. The pope and other church officials did not take kindly to Luther's challenges (the Ninety-Five Theses actually were meant as points for debate). The Catholic Church excommunicated Luther, and he proceeded to "re-form" Christianity in Europe.

The very principles that made Protestantism distinctive—*sola Scriptura* and the priesthood of believers—also ensured that it would never be a unified movement. Even in Luther's lifetime, his followers dispersed into various factions. Lutherans differed somewhat theologically from Calvinists (the Reformed tradition), for example, and both disagreed

with the Anabaptists on the issue of baptism; the Anabaptists practiced adult (or believer's) baptism, while Lutherans and Calvinists baptized infants as a rite of inclusion into the Christian community. Aside from theological differences, Protestants also divided along national and ethnic lines: There were soon Swedish Lutherans; Huguenots (French Protestants); Dutch Reformed; English Puritans, Quakers, and Anglicans; Scottish Presbyterians; and German Pietists.

### The Great Awakening

As these various Protestant groups fanned out along the Atlantic colonies, they created a rich and diverse pastiche, a Protestant pluralism that survived until the early decades of the eighteenth century. A series of revivals known to historians as the Great Awakening, however, reorganized colonial Protestants into roughly two camps: those who opposed the revival (known as Old Lights) and those who supported it (New Lights). Although denominational identities remained, the Great Awakening attenuated many of the ethnic and theological distinctions among the various Protestant groups. In the Raritan Valley of New Jersey, for instance, the Presbyterian revivalist Gilbert Tennent exchanged pulpits with Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, Pietist leader and pastor of the local Dutch Reformed Church. The Old Light opponents of the Awakening objected to the itinerancy of George Whitefield and other revival preachers. They criticized the unbridled enthusiasm of converts, and they feared that the Awakening would disrupt the social order; several itinerant preachers openly exhorted their followers to separate themselves from "unconverted" congregations and ministers.

The Great Awakening also saw the emergence of evangelicalism, a uniquely American construct and the most influential social and religious movement in American history. Although the term *evangelical* refers to the Gospels of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), it had become synonymous with Protestantism in the sixteenth century (the Lutheran Church in Germany is still known as *Evangelische*). In North America, however, a peculiar form

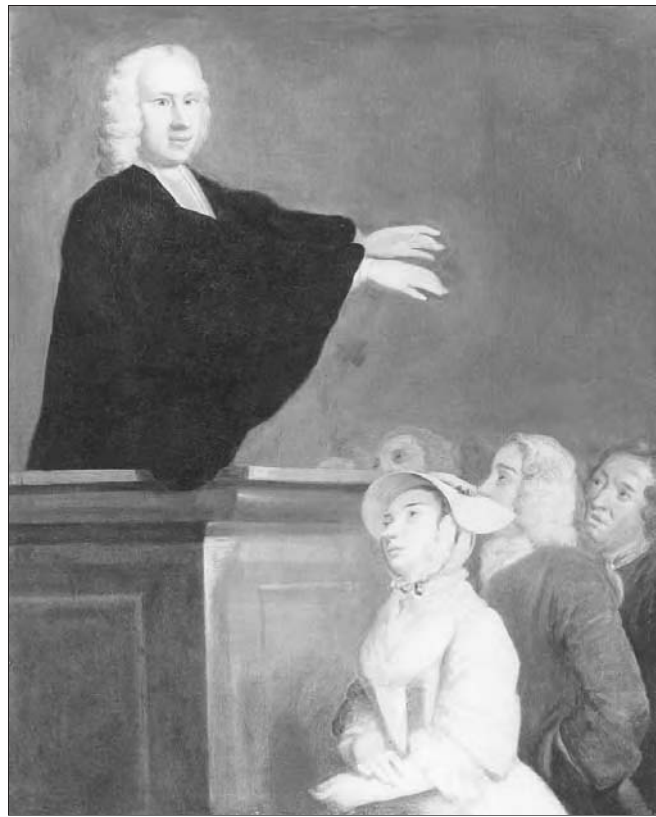
of Protestantism known as evangelicalism coalesced in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, the consequence of the combination of three “Ps”: Continental Pietism, Scottish Presbyterianism, and the remnants of New England Puritanism. The combustion of these traditions ignited the revival fires of the Great Awakening and profoundly influenced the shape of Protestantism in America.

From Puritanism the evangelical tradition in America inherited an interiority of faith. The Puritans of New England had painstakingly—even obsessively—tracked their spiritual progress in diaries. John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* provided a kind of model for understanding the inner life of the Puritan believer, whose pilgrimage was fraught with distractions and perils. Similarly, American evangelicals emphasize the importance of having one’s heart “right with God” and cultivating an inward piety. From Presbyterians evangelicals took the importance of learning and doctrinal precision, and from Pietism they appropriated the emphasis on a warm-hearted religious ardor. The combination of the three traditions produced a uniquely American construct: evangelicalism.

### The Second Great Awakening

Although the revival had sputtered by the middle of the eighteenth century and through the American Revolution, evangelical fervor continued in these years in the Maritime Provinces, under the direction of Henry Alline and other revivalists. The Second Great Awakening, a series of revivals in the decades surrounding the turn of the nineteenth century, served further to ensconce evangelical Protestantism as the religion of the people. The Second Awakening engulfed three theaters of the new nation: New England, especially northwestern Connecticut; the Cumberland Valley of Kentucky; and western New York, a region recently opened to settlement by the Erie Canal.

Each theater lent its own contribution to the Protestant tradition in America. The Awakening in the South, also known as the Great Revival, made the camp meeting into an American institution. Building on the Scottish tradition of sacramental seasons, the camp meetings provided both religious exhortation and social interaction for widely dispersed settlers. The Great Revival also routinized the whole revival tradition in America as a kind of cyclical phenom-



George Whitefield blessing the congregation  
(Bettmann/Corbis)

non, especially in the South. Camp meetings, usually marked by religious enthusiasm, became (and remain) commonplace, and by 1845 B. W. Gorham even published a camp-meeting manual of instructions on how to organize and conduct the events.

The Second Great Awakening in western New York fundamentally recast Protestant theology in America. Whereas the Puritans of New England had been Calvinists, that is, they believed that God had elected some for salvation and that there was nothing an individual could do to gain entrance into heaven, Charles Grandison Finney, a Presbyterian minister in Rochester, New York, and leader of the Second Awakening, taught a different theological scheme known as Arminianism. According to Finney, everyone had equal access to salvation, and salvation itself was merely a matter of individual choice or volition. Finney and other revivalists of his era took it upon themselves to convince and cajole their audiences to convert to evangelical Christianity, something that the Protestant preachers of an earlier era would have found heretical. Among a people who had recently

taken their *political* destiny into their own hands, however, Finney's assurance that they controlled their *spiritual* destiny as well proved to be enormously attractive. Revival preachers ever since—from Dwight L. Moody to Aimee Semple McPherson, from Billy Sunday to Billy Graham—have (whether they acknowledged it or not) used Arminian theology to persuade sinners of their need for repentance.

The third legacy of the Second Great Awakening was social reform, a movement associated to some degree with all three theaters of the Awakening, but especially with New England. The revival unleashed a great deal of optimism about the perfectibility not only of individuals but of society as well. Protestants believed that they could bring on the millennium (1,000 years of righteous rule, predicted in the Book of Revelation) by dint of their own efforts. If they worked hard to reform the ills of society—drunkenness, the scourge of slavery, low rates of female literacy—then the millennium would begin here on earth, and, more particularly, in America.

### From Postmillennialism to Premillennialism

This scheme of biblical interpretation was called postmillennialism because it held that Jesus would return to earth *after* the millennium. It was an optimistic theology because it insisted that Christians could reform society according to the norms of godliness and thereby usher in the millennial kingdom of God. The optimism of the early nineteenth century, however, soon gave way to a profound pessimism. The carnage of the Civil War dimmed hopes for a millennium, and the arrival of non-Protestant immigrants created social problems, especially in the cities. For the expectant Protestants of the antebellum period, the teeming, squalid tenements of the postbellum era hardly resembled the precincts of Zion that they had so confidently predicted.

In response to these developments, many American Protestants shifted ground. They gravitated to an alternate interpretation of the Bible, imported from Britain, called dispensational premillennialism. Dispensationalism divided all of history into different ages, or dispensations, and insisted that God had dealt differently with humanity in each of these dispensations. Ancient Israel had enjoyed God's favor during the days of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Chris-

tian Old Testament), for example, but now (in the "church age") Christians had inherited the promises made to Israel. More important, dispensational premillennialism insisted that Jesus would return to earth *before* the millennium, not after.

This theological shift had enormous consequences for Protestant attitudes about society and social reform. Those who gravitated toward dispensational premillennialism adopted what was essentially a theology of despair; their expectations that Jesus would return at any moment implied that they had given up hopes of reforming society. They turned their attentions instead to individual regeneration rather than social reform, while Protestants of a more liberal theological bent carried forward the task of social change.

### The Protestant Divide

The sudden popularity of premillennialism among more conservative Protestants had the effect of entrenching divisions between liberal and conservative Protestants in the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century. Protestant confidence in the literal reliability of the Scriptures had been shaken by the publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* in 1859. Taken to its logical conclusions, Darwin's evolutionary theory cast doubt on the Genesis account of creation, and the German discipline of higher criticism, which questioned the authorship of several biblical books, also undermined faith in the Bible. Although Protestant liberals tended to take these developments in stride, conservatives insisted on a strict doctrine of biblical inspiration called *inerrancy*, which held that the Scriptures were utterly without error in the original manuscripts (which are no longer extant).

As Protestant conservatives (with the notable exception of the Salvation Army) retreated to inerrancy and premillennialism, liberals differentiated themselves by formulating a movement that came to be called the Social Gospel. Rather than focus solely on individual regeneration, Protestant liberals worked for the regeneration of sinful social institutions as well. Social Gospelers (as they came to be known) allied themselves with Progressives to push for such reforms as the six-day workweek and an end to child labor. The Social Gospel, with its implicit socialism, lost some of its cachet after Russia's Bolshevik Revolution

in 1917, and it was overwhelmed by the social problems of the Great Depression. Not until the mid-1950s did Social Gospel ideology resurface in America, this time through the impassioned oratory of a young Baptist minister fighting against racism, Martin Luther King, Jr.

### Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy

Liberals and conservatives struggled for control of Protestant denominations in the 1920s and 1930s, battles that the conservatives lost overwhelmingly. The opening salvo had been fired a decade earlier with the publication of *The Fundamentals*, a series of pamphlets financed by two Los Angeles oilmen, Lyman and Milton Stewart of Union Oil Company. They set up a fund of \$250,000 to publish and distribute these pamphlets throughout the English-speaking world. Written by conservative theologians, *The Fundamentals* set forth conservative positions on everything from the virgin birth of Jesus and the authenticity of miracles to biblical inerrancy and the imminent, premillennial return of Jesus. Those who subscribed to these doctrines became known as *fundamentalists*.

Liberals were also known as *modernists* because they sought to accommodate Protestant theology to the modern world, even at the cost of discarding more traditional Protestant notions about orthodoxy. The struggle for control of denominational apparatus—churches, colleges, seminaries, pension funds—was contentious and even bitter at times, but when the dust settled, the modernists had prevailed. Fundamentalists were faced with a difficult choice. Although many elected to remain as a conservative force within what came to be known as “mainline” Protestant denominations, others chose to defect and start their own churches and denominations.

### Evangelical and Mainline Protestants

The fortunes of conservative Protestants suffered even more from a series of events in Dayton, Tennessee, in July 1925. In the steamy courtroom on the second floor of the Rhea County courthouse, two titans of the Progressive era, Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan, squared off. Ostensibly, they argued over the fate of a young local science teacher, John T. Scopes, who had volunteered to test the con-

stitutionality of the state’s Butler Act, which forbade the teaching of evolution in the public schools. As the trial unfolded, however, Scopes (who could not recall whether he had actually taught evolution or not) was clearly a bit player while the larger drama took place between Darrow and Bryan. Darrow sought, with considerable success, to frame the issue as a debate between science and “superstition”; Bryan, the three-time Democratic nominee for president, objected to Darwinism not so much because of its implications for Genesis but because of the harmful social implications of the survival of the fittest.

Darrow, with the help of his friend, the irascible journalist H. L. Mencken, was able to portray Bryan—and, by extension, all fundamentalists—as uneducated country bumpkins incapable of rational thought. That characterization, which persisted throughout the remainder of the twentieth century, drove evangelical Protestants underground. Rather than continue their battles against what they saw as a corrupt and corrupting world, they withdrew into the evangelical subculture, a vast and interlocking network of congregations, denominations, Bible camps, Bible institutes, colleges, seminaries, publishing houses, and mission societies—all of them free from the stain of modernism. Although there were internal differences within evangelicalism—fundamentalists distrusted the enthusiasm of the Pentecostals, for example—the evangelical subculture provided a safe harbor from the depredations of the world.

Liberals, for their part, having apparently vanquished the evangelicals, embarked on a campaign of consolidation. Under the guise of ecumenism (Christian unity), they formed the National Council of Churches in November 1949 and, within a decade, constructed a high-rise building in upper Manhattan, the Interchurch Center, to allow these mainline Protestant denominations to have their offices in proximity to one another. A wave of merger-mania ensued, giving rise to (among others) the United Church of Christ in 1957, the United Methodist Church in 1968, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 1988.

### Trading Places since 1965

The ecumenism of mainline Protestantism had the effect of leveling institutional barriers and theological



President Jimmy Carter speaks to a church congregation, c. 1977–1980 (Wally McNamee/Corbis)

differences among the various denominations. Although many saw this as a good thing, a fulfillment of Jesus' hope in John 17 that his followers "may all be one," the mergers also coincided with the beginning of a long slide in membership, attendance, and giving among mainline Protestants after 1965. Several factors contributed to this decline, including the emergence of the counterculture in the late 1960s and youthful dissatisfaction with the "establishment," but evangelicals offered an alternative to what many Americans saw as the bland and lifeless message coming out of mainline Protestant churches.

Evangelicals began to reenter public awareness about this time, offering a simple theology and an unambiguous morality to a nation weary of the Vietnam debacle, student unrest, and Watergate. When a Southern Baptist Sunday school teacher made a serious run at the presidency, many evangelicals recognized Jimmy Carter as one of their own because of his probity and because he readily declared that he was a "born again" Christian. Evangelicals, southerners es-

pecially, cast their votes for the Democratic candidate, thereby helping to propel Carter into the White House.

In the course of Carter's term as president, however, many politically conservative evangelicals turned against him. Guided by a loose coalition of evangelical lobby organizations called the Religious Right, evangelicals helped to elect and to reelect Ronald Reagan as president in 1980 and 1984. In 1988, Pat Robertson, a televangelist, ran for the Republican nomination to succeed Reagan. After modest successes early in the primaries, Robertson eventually pulled out of the race, but he mounted a more sustained effort to influence American politics with the formation of the Christian Coalition the following year. Through the efforts of the Christian Coalition and other politically conservative organizations, many evangelicals forcefully reasserted themselves in the political arena—from presidential politics to school board elections—although their influence waned somewhat in the late 1990s.



### Protestantism at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century

As American Protestantism entered a new century—and a new millennium—the divisions between evangelical and mainline Protestants persisted. Liberal Protestants were far more willing than conservative Protestants to ordain women, for example, despite the fact that evangelicals had been champions of women's rights in the nineteenth century. A still more divisive issue was the ordination and the affirmation of gays and lesbians and the question of unions between same-sex partners. These debates tore at the fabric of mainline Protestantism, with an overall trend toward toleration and acceptance, while evangelical Protestants generally condemned homosexuality and same-sex unions.

Despite the attempts of mainline Protestants to unify, the divisiveness that has characterized Protestantism since the sixteenth century continued into the twenty-first century. With representatives ranging from Quakers, Congregationalists, and Baptists to Lutherans, Methodists, Episcopalians, and a benumbing range of independent congregations, Protestantism in North America remains anything but a singular entity.

—Randall Balmer

#### SEE ALSO

Orthodox Christianity: Protestants and Orthodoxy;  
Generations; Popular Theologies: Antebellum America;

Public Theologies and Political Culture: Conservatism, Fundamentalism, Liberalism; Ritual and Performance: Dance, Prayer; Sacred Space: The Suburban Home; Science; Science: Evolution, Healing; Sexuality: Abortion, Masturbation; Violence: Apocalypticism

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## CHURCH GROWTH MOVEMENT

The Church Growth Movement (CGM) began in the early 1970s as a distinct approach to missions and evangelism within Protestant evangelicalism. An heir of the Great Awakenings and revivalism in American evangelicalism, the CGM represents a finely tuned approach that applies social science insights to the growth of churches. Though initially greeted with skepticism by many pastors, the CGM perspective came to be embraced, in whole or in part, by an increasing number of evangelical leaders. One visible outgrowth of the CGM is the emergence of megachurches, organizations that combine large congregations with shopping mall-style facilities and programs from which to choose. The CGM and its megachurches package their brand of Christianity in ways that give it a high degree of resonance with the surrounding cultural environment.

Celebrated revivalists such as George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, and Dwight L. Moody from the 1700s and 1800s provided examples in evangelistic success for the evangelical community and significantly raised the profile of evangelistic activity. As Billy Graham appeared on the American scene in 1949, evangelism was attaining increasing prominence over other traditional church activities.

Donald McGavran, a missionary in India from 1923 to 1957, pioneered the Church Growth Movement. In 1972 he published the seminal book of the CGM, *Understanding Church Growth*, which employed social science perspectives and methods in church work to enhance the growth and viability of organizations. Teaching pastors that they needed “church growth eyes” through which to see all their endeavors, he identified procedures that helped churches recruit and assimilate new members. Peter Wagner joined McGavran and they formed the nucleus of the Fuller Institute of Church Growth, which trained hundreds of pastors in the CGM perspective and methods. Some of the tenets espoused by McGavran and Wagner include a strong pastor with a free hand to enact strategic plans, a highly mobilized laity that seeks to involve each member in some facet of church service, and the homogeneous unit principle that focuses church efforts on recruiting people of the same socioeconomic class.

George Barna refined the CGM’s social science emphasis with his marketing techniques in the 1980s and 1990s. Applying his prior work for Disney to churches, Barna encouraged pastors to adopt the marketing paradigm. He had witnessed the success of companies that reacted to consumer preferences by originating new products and services and recasting old ones. The companies that tailored their products and services to the consumers, and used savvy advertising to inform the consumer, fared best in marketplace competition. In *Marketing the Church*, Barna directed pastors to solicit the input of unchurched people in their vicinity and redesign the church’s operations and offerings to meet consumer demand.

### Megachurches

Though many pastors gave the CGM a chilly reception in the 1970s, by the 1990s many had been won over, at least in part. Many evangelical churches experienced significant numerical growth in this period, and the most visible phenomena were the megachurches. Megachurches, defined as churches with more than 2,000 people in attendance, sprouted throughout the American landscape, with hundreds existing by the beginning of the third millennium. Megachurches sometimes were existing churches that grew rapidly under the new CGM techniques, but often they began as new church plants of twenty to thirty people renting space in school auditoriums and movie theaters. Dispensing with organs and choirs in favor of full bands, and using a carefully marketed blend of contemporary music, churches designed their services to be relevant to popular culture. Formal liturgy gave way to dramas, multimedia presentations, and brisk messages bereft of unfamiliar traditional Christian jargon. These churches put a premium on catchy sermon titles, illustrations drawn from everyday life and pop culture, and specific applications for the audience. Along with demographic analysis and direct mail and advertising techniques, these small church plants quickly mushroomed. Laity-led small groups became the primary means for inculcating newcomers into evangelical beliefs and practices and for providing care for one another.



The glass and steel Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California, c. 1990s (Philip James Corwin/Corbis)

A few pastors achieved particular attention and became leaders in the CGM as their megachurches became spectacles of size and innovative fare. Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral served as the initial inspiration for many others. Bill Hybels, senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church outside Chicago, enjoyed special prominence as leading practitioner of the movement. Edwin Young's leadership transformed Second Baptist of Houston, Texas, into a flagship megachurch with two campuses, attendance nearing 20,000, a K-12 private school, Sunday School classrooms for 9,000, a restaurant, entire sports leagues within the church, a fitness center with racquetball courts, two basketball gyms, an indoor jogging track, weights, and locker rooms equipped with sauna and whirlpool. Baptisms, generally viewed as an approximate indicator of conversions, grew to 2,000 per year.

The CGM, particularly the megachurches that are its most assiduous implementers, reflects the consumerism of contemporary American culture. Along

the lines articulated by Max Weber, the particular spirit of Western capitalism spilled out of the institution of the market and in time transformed other institutions, including the family, education, and eventually religion. In a cultural context in which much of everyday life is commodified, religion became commodified as well. The CGM recast evangelical Christianity, a religion thickly bounded by tradition, into a mode of faith predicated on individual consumer needs. The message of CGM churches was still redolent of the evangelical heritage, but adroitly communicated in consumer terms.

Another ethos that deeply penetrated American culture was psychotherapy. The CGM trained pastors to focus on consumers' felt needs, and in the process many pastors increasingly portrayed the central evangelical message and their church programs in therapeutic terms familiar to potential consumers. The CGM emphasizes on individual choice and therapeutic concerns enabled leaders to attain a remark-

able fit with the surrounding cultural environment and created a growing market niche in American religious culture.

—Glenn Lucke

#### SEE ALSO

Material Culture: Christian Retailing; Popular Culture; Ritual and Performance: Therapy and Healing; Sacred Time

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## DENOMINATIONALISM

*Denominationalism* refers to the diversity of doctrine and praxis that has arisen in Protestantism since the Reformation. Behind the story of denominationalism is the struggle to achieve common purposes that transcend multiformity.

Diversity may have been unavoidable in the history of Protestantism. If so, then Protestants, in response, could have either sought to somehow escape its cultural necessity or to find a way to think of it as a “good” thing. They have generally chosen the latter. Terms that end with “ism” always imply an ideology of some sort—something that people are committed to, often unconsciously—and *denominationalism* is no different.

Many Americans feel that denominations affirm and protect freedom of religion and freedom from religion. People tend to ask: How many denominations are there? What denomination do you belong to? The assumption is that the denomination is a basic and acceptable way of acknowledging religious diversity. They also tend to think that religion is somehow confined to denominations and that they can escape religion by denying denominational identification. Diversity itself acquires a religious meaning in America, insofar as religiousness has to do with the way human beings imagine and construct a sense of worthy order and meaning to existence.

This way of thinking has its origins in British and European history, the Reformation, the Renaissance,

and the American Enlightenment. Denominationalism is apparently traceable to the story of Puritanism in its English and North American continuum. The Puritan revolution (which is the English Reformation) bred diversity of theology, ritual, and ethics. The American religious historian Winthrop S. Hudson was one of the first to call attention to the Puritan roots of denominationalism. In his study of *American Protestantism*, he stated: “The real architects of the denominational theory of the Church were the seventeenth-century Independent divines within the Church of England, whose most prominent representatives were the Dissenting Brethren in the Westminster Assembly” (Hudson 1961, 37).

These Dissenters, most of whom came to be known as Puritans, were concerned to rise above the competing claims to being the “true and visible Church” that had been unleashed in the sixteenth century. They sought to remodel the inherited and established church, preserving the diversity within while ensuring a common or united front in the essential task of presenting the message of the Christian gospel to a faithless world and effecting a Christian society.

The dissenting Puritans agreed, therefore, not to be sectarian. A “sect” demands exclusive title to the truth. The word “denomination,” wrote Hudson, “is an *inclusive* term. . . . It implies that the group referred to is but one member, called or denominated by a particular name, of a larger group—the Church—to

which all denominations belong” (Hudson 1961, 34). In other words, the *nomination* (the *naming*) is the church, or the authority of Christ; the *denomination* is a subdivision, a part of that name that somehow shares its value. Here it is obvious that the original use of the word had a theological intention.

What the Puritans did not reckon on was that the differences that constitute a denomination in its particularity tend to become trivialized in the course of history—after all, if differences can be superseded, then those differences may not be as important as they once seemed. This trivialization is the basis of John Wesley’s solecism: “I . . . refuse to be distinguished from other men by any but the common principles of Christianity [whatever those might really be]. . . . From *real* Christians, of whatever denomination, I earnestly desire not to be distinguished at all” (Hudson 1961, 33). Nevertheless, marks of distinction die slowly because they are often unyieldingly bound to the religious need for identity. Human religiousness is expressed in a sense of belonging, to both a community and a tradition, as well as in private needs for conviction and experience. Therefore, denominations survived their apparent trivialization, and George Whitefield, preaching to the masses in Philadelphia in the seventeenth century, could raise his eyes to the heavens, deploring denominational loyalties: “Father Abraham, whom have you in heaven? Any Episcopalians? No! Any Presbyterians? No! Any Independents or Methodists? No, no, no! Whom have you there? We don’t know those names here. All who are here are Christians” (Hudson 1961, 45).

We observe, in the history of denominationalism, the emergence of an American rhetoric of privatization that affirms religion as an underlying “spiritual,” moral, or experiential matter—an affair of preference—a subjective concern of voluntary significance that may exist outside of the denominations. Denominations may continue to exist, but they are, at best, remnants of “organized religion,” to be overcome by representatives of Wesley’s and Whitefield’s hidden and real Christians, eventually the teachers of basic experiences presumed common to all humanity.

Meanwhile, the religious need for a teacher and for identity creates new movements and institutions. Joseph Smith was troubled in the early nineteenth century by the competing tenets of Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists. Whom should he join?

Whom should he believe? The “two personages” of his vision of 1820 answered, “I must join none of them; for they were all wrong.” The result was the formation of a new movement that became one more competitor among the American denominations.

It is likely that theological issues will continue to be part of the history of denominationalism. In *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*, H. Richard Niebuhr, in deference to the increased significance of Ernst Troeltsch, Emile Durkheim, and the new sociology, sought to analyze the importance of social factors in the shaping of denominations in America. However, Niebuhr had a theological agenda. For him, denominations were those institutional forms of Christianity brought into being by unfortunate circumstances in American history: “Among the factors which have been responsible for the continued division of European proletarian, bourgeois, and nationalist Christianity in America, for the development of new types of conflict between them, and for the rise of wholly new American schisms, sectionalism, the heterogeneity of an immigrant population, and the presence of two distinct races are of primary importance” (Niebuhr [1929] 1963, 135).

In keeping with the ecumenical demeanor of the twentieth century, Niebuhr thought that denominationalism was an evil that represented the division of the presumed essential unity of Christianity. A divided and denominational church was the result of ethical failure. According to Niebuhr, social factors, rather than theology, faith, or ethics, were the foundations upon which diverse religious movements were built. If Protestants could overcome those sociological divisions, they could reconstitute the true and undivided church, partly because “By its very nature the sectarian type of organization [much evident in denominationalism] is valid only for one generation” (Niebuhr [1929] 1963, 19). In other words, from the perspective of ecumenical theology, the denomination was a form of religious institution produced by the social inequities, especially the ethnic and racial injustices, of the rapidly growing industrial Republic. The denomination was a hypocritical form of American religion unnatural to the New Testament proclamation that we should “all be one.” Denominations were not shaped by religious sources, but by social ones. Niebuhr failed to consider, however, that social sources may indeed be religious. As late as 1961, in

an essay on “The Protestant Movement and Democracy in the United States,” Niebuhr defined denominationalism as “the system of many apparently competitive churches equally recognized by state and people” (Niebuhr 1961, 52).

Of course, Niebuhr’s theological critique of the social sources demonstrates that sociology explains only what it intends to explain. Although, from the perspective of religious studies, religion may explain something about society, the reverse is not the case. Sociology explains sociology, not religion, because religion always contains theological elements derived from its mandate to tell the human story from a comprehensive perspective that rejects reduction to any rationalistic science or social science.

By the end of the twentieth century, the term *denomination* had been transformed to designate any generally accepted religious institution. From its early Protestant beginnings, it had come to include, first Roman Catholicism, then even Judaism as an acceptable minority. However, American diversity has exploded out of its biblical or Hebraic confines so that Americans are no longer the Protestants, Catholics, and Jews who represented the American Way in Will Herberg’s 1955 sociological study *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*. We now celebrate a pluralism that is so diverse that the denomination is “a voluntary association of like-hearted and like-minded individuals, who are united . . . for the purpose of accomplishing tangible and defined objectives” (Mead 1963, 104). In other words, denominationalism is no longer a Christian or

even a Judeo-Christian term of reference. Yet it is well to note that sociologists such as Robert Wuthnow have begun to point out that the denomination is a declining form of religious identity—that people identify themselves religiously across the denominational divides by deference to convictions and practices that are ethically and theologically conservative, liberal, evangelical, interreligious, and “spiritual.” Although this is certainly true, the denominations continue to build and rebuild; they are very much part of the religious landscape of a republic in which institutions are important to the daily lives of people.

—Richard E. Wentz

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New Religious Traditions: Mormonism

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## EMOTION

Emotion is vital to American Protestantism. The confluence of medieval mysticism and Renaissance humanism, in historical concert with the rising tide of Christian antinomistic theological discourse, set the stage for a Protestant Reformation agreeable to the emotional performance of faith. Language denoting ecstasy and anxiety in the pursuit of union with God—the inventions of virtuosi such as St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila—proved broadly serviceable in translating to pious uses the fascination with the individual that was ascendant in various Euro-

pean philosophical, artistic, and political cultures. The individual was progressively constructed as a legitimate cultural artifact, and on the coattails of this process came religious emotion, conceived as a profound, and typically private, marker of contact with the divine, and, eventually, as assurance of salvation.

Europeans ever more energetically manufactured mirrors in which to gaze at themselves. They pursued greater formal definition of the individual as decorated flesh. But at the same time, they frustrated purely materialist or functionalist conceptualizations



People pray at a religious service on the beach, Newport Beach, California (Trip/S. Grant)

by fetishizing emotion as an interior, largely invisible, but crucial aspect of the authentic self, an aspect of self ironically conceived as insusceptible to projects of materialist self-definition. In consequence, the nature of the linkage of emotionality to individualism in the nascent Protestantism of early modern Europe was duplicitous, a circle of mutual reinforcement and mutual subversion. The rise of the individual engendered the construction of the ethereal emotional self, and that emotional self at the same time served as the foil for experimentation with materialist conceptions of individual agency, thus checking the growth of individuation in concrete social and political contexts.

The possibilities for self-imagining available through reflection upon the seemingly limitless universe of the emotions were hindered by the cultural command to assert the self socially in a process of self-making largely conditioned by social expectations for individual achievement. This command coalesced in the Protestant doctrine of “calling,” of trust in God’s

hand to draw a person into an occupational position in keeping with the divine plan for that person and for society. Accordingly, Protestantism emerged from the sixteenth century already riven by competing notions of self and tilting toward the objectification of the etherealized emotional self, that is, toward its embodiment as an aspect of material culture and commerce. The ongoing refinement of democratic capitalism and the efflorescence of a consumer culture in the United States has been crucial, within American Protestantism, to the acceleration of this tendency.

Theologians and religious leaders since the sixteenth century have embarked upon various projects aimed at rescuing emotion from assimilation into a materialist conception of self. The legacy of the Radical Reformation amounted to a retreat from indicators of personal involvement in the tangible world (and from commerce, in particular) and promoted refuge-taking in collective emotional performance. Moravians, Amish, Mennonites, Shakers, and Quak-

ers, among other groups, have manifested such behavior in America. Various pietistic movements in America, and especially those of German provenance, attempted to reclaim Lutheran and medieval Catholic piety understood as pure and profound emotional bonding with God. In some cases, these efforts blended with ideas and practices of Puritan origin, as in the cases of the so-called Great Awakenings in America in the 1700s and 1800s.

As the weight of the Enlightenment was more keenly felt, religious writers, in reaction, theorized more decisively a distinction between religious emotion and the business of living in the world (though the surface of those theological writings often voiced orthodox Enlightenment claims for the interrelatedness of phenomena). Some, such as Friedrich Schleiermacher, proposed an order of emotional experience in religious life qualitatively different from all other emotion. Such arguments, however important to theological debate in Europe and America, failed to steer American Protestantism from its embrace of modernity. By the early twentieth century, when Rudolf Otto framed an essentialist theory of emotion in religion—one that claimed priority for religious emotion manifest in trembling and fascination—the objectification of emotion and its construction as a commodity was already advanced in America, and plainly promoted in Protestant stagings of self-understanding such as the wide-ranging Businessmen's Revival that broke out in cities across the nation in the mid-nineteenth century.

The defense of emotion in religion as unconditioned, ethereal, and prior to theological reflection increasingly took the form of Pentecostalism, which emerged in California at the beginning of the twentieth century and arguably has represented Protestantism's most effective response to the materialist objectification of emotion pervasive in Protestant cultures since that time. Although some Protestants, especially those in the well-established mainline denom-

inations, took initiative in “giving the heart to God” in return for divine favors, American Pentecostals, hearkening back to the Radical Reformation, rejected notions of such commerce with God, embracing emotionality as a supernatural gift from God, not as a human offering in a transaction of a commercial nature. Emotional Protestantism in the form of Pentecostalism in the twenty-first century—including its anxiety about physical existence—is an American instancing of a historical trajectory of devotion to theories that have imagined emotion as pristine and irreducible. For the majority of American Protestants, emotion as a volatile compound of objective and subjective realities represents the postmodern fracturing of self, and the seemingly inexorable cultural rendering of self and feeling as commodity.

—John Corrigan

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New Religious Traditions: Communitarian Movements; Islam in America: Sufism; The Body: Ecstasy; Ritual and Performance

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## EVANGELICALISM AND GENDER

American evangelicalism arose from the blending of several divergent strains of Protestantism that had different views and approaches to gender and the roles of women. Although conservative Protestantism is typically thought to restrict women's roles and to emphasize male headship in marriage, there have actually been a variety of views and practices within this tradition—often placing some segments of the tradition at odds with others.

In the nineteenth century, evangelicals, invigorated by the Second Great Awakening, embraced a variety of social reform efforts, including the fight for women's right to vote. The earliest "feminists" were evangelicals who made their arguments from biblical texts and grounded them in nineteenth-century evangelical views of family. They argued, for example, that women, as the protectors of family and morality, needed the right to vote to fulfill their God-given responsibilities. They took active, public roles in politics on such moral issues of the day as child labor laws, abolition of slavery, and the prohibition of alcohol.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the most conservative of evangelicals, the fundamentalists, were responding to cultural changes in women's roles (and concern over the "feminization" of the church) with the development of what has been called "muscular Christianity." They increasingly limited women's ministerial roles and emphasized women's subordination in marriage. At the same time, Pentecostals, a different strain of relatively conservative evangelicals, opened up preaching and prophetic opportunities for women as leaders such as Aimee Semple McPherson, who took public roles as they felt led by the Holy Spirit.

In the mid-twentieth century, the neo-evangelical movement arose in an effort to make fundamentalism more culturally relevant. As neo-evangelicals sought to engage the issues of the larger culture from their own Christian perspective, they were increasingly changed by that interaction. Although the secular feminist movement grew in the larger culture, an evangelical or biblical feminist movement was developing inside fundamentalism and evangelicalism. As the biblical feminists made arguments for women's equality in marriage and for opening ministerial roles

to women, they did so with traditional evangelical methods of biblical interpretation.

The last quarter of the twentieth century saw something of a pendulum swing as evangelicals promoted what they called "traditional family values," but which were actually idealized nineteenth-century Victorian family values. Antifeminist factions within the subculture gained power as women sought to (and were encouraged to) return to "full-time homemaking" and as church leadership roles for women were restricted. By the end of the century, Southern Baptists, for example, passed resolutions opposing women in the pastoral ministry, even as women actively served in those roles in Southern Baptist churches.

In the beginning of the twenty-first century, conservative Protestant views on women and their proper roles in the family, in society, and in religious institutions remain tremendously complex and contested. Identification with those who support women's equality and women's church leadership, on the one hand, or with those who argue that God intended complementarity rather than equality between the sexes and that only men are called by God to be pastors, on the other, has become an issue of great importance in what has been termed a "culture war." In fact, this identification, in many ways, has replaced the earlier dividing line of biblical inerrancy.

—Julie J. Ingersoll

### SEE ALSO

Generations: The Family; Material Culture: Victorian Bibles; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Feminisms

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Aimee Semple McPherson at an evangelist meeting (Library of Congress)

## PENTECOSTALISM

Pentecostalism has become among the most vibrant and influential branches of the Christian faith in the nation and around the world. Although it is composed of adherents from countless denominations and thrives in many different cultures, the distinguishing characteristic of the movement is its commitment to an additional experience following personal salvation called the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. This event is often accompanied by the practice of “speaking in tongues” (also referred to as *glossolalia*).

The Pentecostal movement is relatively young. During the late nineteenth century, it emerged as men and women with roots in many different traditions began to separate from their mainstream Protestant brothers and sisters. Labeled “radical evangelicals,”

these Protestants rigorously sought personal salvation experiences, emphasized the imminent Second Coming of Christ, tarried for divine healing, and expected the Baptism of the Holy Spirit to be an emotionally charged experience. Among them was Charles Fox Parham, the leader of a small group of Bible students in Topeka, Kansas. Seeking a deeper relationship with God and expanded understanding of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, Parham and his students embarked on a study of the biblical Book of Acts, where they noted that speaking in tongues accompanied Holy Spirit Baptism. They, too, wanted this experience. According to the mythology enveloping the movement’s origins, on January 1, 1901, Parham laid his hands on one of his students, Agnes Ozman, and prayed that

she would experience the Baptism. She began to speak in tongues, and with this event the Pentecostal movement, which emphasizes this gift as the preeminent sign of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, was born. Historians, however, have noted that glossolalia has appeared sporadically in the history of Christianity and that radical evangelicals likely practiced it prior to the twentieth century.

A few years later, Parham went to Houston, Texas, where he recruited another small group of followers. There he met African American Holiness preacher William Joseph Seymour, who joined Parham's "Apostolic Faith" movement. Convinced that spiritual gifts such as divine healing and speaking in tongues were recurring in the modern era, Seymour decided to take the Pentecostal message west. In Los Angeles, he helped initiate the famed Azusa Street Revival in the spring of 1906, which lasted for almost three years. A number of key characteristics distinguished these meetings, defining the movement for subsequent generations. First was its interracial unity. African Americans, Latinos, Anglos, and Asians, as well as various other immigrant groups, worked collectively promoting Pentecostal theology, tongues speaking, and divine healing. The racial composition of the parishioners and their ecstatic experiences captured the attention of the *Los Angeles Times*, bringing new attention to the burgeoning movement. Yet despite its initial promise, within a few years ethnic and racial divisions splintered most of the Pentecostals into competing, homogeneous sects. Second, the men and women who attended services believed that individuals, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, should extemporaneously preach, pray, sing, or speak in tongues. This behavior created a sense of chaos during services that outsiders often mocked. Although subsequent generations allowed less spontaneity in their churches, they still generally encouraged some impromptu participation by laypeople "as the Spirit leads." Third, a crucial component of the Azusa revivals and subsequent Pentecostalism was millennialism. Based on Pentecostals' reading of biblical prophecy, they believed that their experiences of the ecstatic gifts of healing and speaking in tongues signified that they lived on the verge of the new millennium.

Among the most important and well-known Pentecostal denominations that view the Azusa Street Revival as a decisive point in their history are the

Church of God in Christ and the Assemblies of God. Founded by Charles H. Mason and Charles Price Jones, the Church of God in Christ was incorporated in 1897 in Memphis, Tennessee, as a Holiness denomination. In 1907, during a visit to the Azusa Street Revival, Mason experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. Upon his return to Tennessee, he encouraged those in his movement to seek the gift. Since its founding, the predominately African American Church of God in Christ has become the largest Pentecostal denomination in the United States. Among the propelling characteristics of the organization's success is its celebration of gospel music, which has provided a bridge for Pentecostalism into the larger American culture.

The Assemblies of God, which has the largest worldwide membership of all Pentecostal denominations, began in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Concerned about securing the future of the Pentecostal movement, representatives of various Pentecostal churches from all over the country sent delegates in 1914 to a historic meeting where doctrinal issues were de-emphasized while support for increased missionary activity and Bible training was promoted. Like many other Pentecostal sects, this first generation built a successful publishing house to help them spread their message. Within a few short years, the predominately white Assemblies of God had established creeds and institutional hierarchies, laying the foundation for their explosive growth, which has been subsequently bolstered by relentless missionary work. Churches sponsor representatives who travel overseas to share the Pentecostal faith in new cultures, and church leaders strongly encourage their members to engage in personal evangelism with their acquaintances.

In addition to strong institutions and organizational structures, charismatic individual leaders are most responsible for building the movement. The most famous of these is Aimee Semple McPherson. Converted to Pentecostalism as a teenager while living in Canada, McPherson eventually went on the road as an itinerant evangelist where she packed churches, city auditoriums, and even boxing arenas beyond capacity. The converts from these meetings filled Pentecostal and other evangelical churches all over the country. In 1923, she opened her own church, Angelus Temple, in Los Angeles, California, where she institutionalized her revival, leading to the creation of



Two disciples of the Bishop “Grace” Charles Emmanuel help a woman after her baptism, Newport News, Virginia, 1943 (Bettmann/Corbis)

yet another major Pentecostal denomination, the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel. McPherson added a few critical components to historians’ interpretation of Pentecostal culture. First, as a woman preacher in a patriarchal community, McPherson faced many challenges. She overcame them by quite consciously defying gender conventions, by crafting an elaborate defense of woman preachers, and, most important, by training hundreds of women for the ordained ministry. As a result, Pentecostals have tended to be more egalitarian in comparison to their non-Pentecostal radical evangelical brothers and sisters. Second, after settling in Los Angeles, McPherson built her own radio station, which became one of the most popular in the city. Following McPherson’s lead, Pentecostals have been quick to appropriate new technologies, such as television stations and broadcasting satellites, to help them proselytize. And third, McPherson had a sense of the dramatic. She built her church as a theater and staged elaborate productions

to entice “sinners” into her audience so that she could convert them. Much as with the “seeker sensitive” churches of more recent decades, such an approach was enormously successful.

In the 1920s, American Protestantism ruptured in the “Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy.” During this Protestant schism, Pentecostals united with many other radical evangelical groups, who together constituted a major component of fundamentalism. Committed to the Bible as the literal and unerring work of God, and a “traditional” morality that generally looked down upon such practices as dancing, attending movies, smoking, and drinking, fundamentalists rejected the liberalizing tendencies of modernist preachers who were influenced by literary criticism of the Scriptures and by Darwinian evolution. The infamous Scopes Monkey Trial became a symbol of this battle and the subsequent decline of fundamentalism’s cultural authority. Pentecostals did not give up though, and, along with many other disappointed

fundamentalists, became somewhat more culturally isolated as they regrouped. Yet instead of withering away, as many of their opponents had expected, Pentecostals became stronger than ever.

While classical Pentecostal churches continued to grow and expand, the movement itself experienced a rebirth in the 1960s, which initiated the "Charismatic Renewal." Although Pentecostals had been converting leaders and laypeople from other denominations since the turn of the century, in 1960 Dennis Bennett of St. Mark's Episcopal Parish, in Van Nuys, California, confessed to his middle- to upper-middle-class congregation that he had spoken in tongues and believed that other Christians should seek a similar experience. Such a confession enlivened this traditional church as members split into differing factions pledging their support or calling for Bennett's resignation. Like the Azusa Street Revival, this church event sparked journalistic attention. Bennett resigned. But his confession symbolized the start of a wave of Pentecostal activity in older, more "respectable" Protestant churches and in Catholic circles around the country.

Since the 1960s, Pentecostalism has increased exponentially. Traditional Pentecostal churches have had enormous success in the United States and worldwide. Moreover, many traditionally non-Pentecostal churches are embracing the practices and rhetoric of the movement. At the same time, new Pentecostal

sects continue to form in the United States and abroad. Missionaries are converting legions of men and women in other nations, and churches in the developing world have begun to send their own Pentecostal missionaries to the United States. There are no signs that this tidal wave of Pentecostalism will ebb in the twenty-first century.

—Matthew A. Sutton

#### SEE ALSO

African American Religions: African American Religious Leaders; Latina/Latino Religious Communities: Latina/Latino Protestantism; The Body: Ecstasy; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Conservatism, Fundamentalism

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## PURITANISM

American Puritanism is understood generally as the attitude of piety, or earnest devotion, toward the biblical God of the Old and New Testaments and the lifestyle dedicated to high moral standards held by the English Puritans who colonized New England during the seventeenth century. Popularly, Americans since then have tended either to romanticize and valorize the New England Puritans as America's God-fearing, self-denying "Founding Fathers" or to denigrate them as narrow-minded, intolerant killjoys (thus, the adjective "puritanical" refers to an individual or institution seen as excessively strict concerning moral issues). In either case, however, Puritanism has been considered foundational for understanding American personal

and social identity, including attitudes about religion and politics, labor and economics, pleasure and asceticism, tolerance and intolerance, and the mythology of America itself as a nation chosen by God to perform God's will in the world.

Positing the Puritans as the exclusive progenitors of America's unique sense of itself has more recently been challenged by the consideration of other early influences, such as Native American, Spanish, non-Puritan English Protestant, and African, as well as the later influences of Catholicism and Judaism and the even more recent Middle Eastern and Asian ones. Yet the relatively small Puritan-dominated population of New England during the 1600s maintains its status as

the most studied and interpreted group of individuals in American historiography, a sign of the compulsion felt by Americans, from scholars to novelists and genealogists, to understand this particular group of people and their religious culture, and thus to understand themselves as Americans.

Puritanism developed in England during the 1500s as a branch of the Protestant Reformation. After Henry VIII separated the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church in 1534, reformers took up the cause to “purify” the English Church further from what were seen as its “papist” characteristics, such as using priests as intermediaries between divine and human and elaborate liturgical worship. Adopting the rigorous theology of Swiss reformer John Calvin, these Puritans promoted four main doctrines: predestination (the belief that certain individuals were “elected” or chosen by God to be saved from eternal damnation); the covenant (the contract entered into by God and the elect community, in which it was understood that God would support and bless his people as long as they remained obedient to his will); visible sainthood (as a sign of one’s election, the responsibility of the individual believer to live an outward, visible life of obedience to God’s will according to the communal covenant); and divine providence (the belief that, according to their obedience or sinfulness, God blessed or punished his people through physical events—a good harvest, for example, or a smallpox epidemic). These theological principles generated a complex of attitudes and practices that characterized American Puritanism. In New England, Puritan theology and English principles of social organization melded to produce an energetic cultural configuration that would shape American self-identity.

New England Puritans believed that divine providence had led them to America to establish a “city on a hill,” the prototype of the ideal godly society based on charity toward less fortunate members. John Winthrop, governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, described this concept in his sermon “A Modell of Christian Charity” delivered at the founding of the colony in 1629. The belief that New England was a land chosen by God—the “New Jerusalem,” according to Puritan ministers such as Cotton Mather—and New Englanders were a chosen people—the “New Israel”—held sway throughout most of the 1600s. New England was a sacred land, its history, in which di-

vine providence acted, a sacred history. Even as institutionalized Puritanism was challenged and defeated by new political and religious views by the middle of the 1700s, the belief in American superiority as the millennial nation, chosen by God and led by godly people, with its natural resources given by God for the prosperity of His people, continued to be a motivating force in political rhetoric during the American Revolution in the eighteenth century, in the expansionist and progressivist impulses of Manifest Destiny and the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth, and in Big Brother international relations in the twentieth.

Despite New Englanders’ belief that they were God’s special people, the doctrine of predestination often produced an intense anxiety about one’s salvific status. The tension between the hope of chosenness and the fear of eternal damnation was mitigated by the doctrine of visible sainthood. A godly life included daily private devotions, regular church attendance, and the avoidance of sin. Two principles of Puritan Church formation and participation set the stage for America’s unique culture of church polity and religious affiliation: sectarianism and voluntarism. Churches were seen as voluntary gatherings of believers who had chosen to remove themselves from the corrupt world. Geographically and theologically separating themselves from the Church of England in order to establish independent churches, New England Puritans initiated the sectarian tendency among American Protestant groups to start new congregations or denominations when members disagree on matters of doctrine. Doing away with Anglicanism’s elaborate liturgy, Puritan worship was oriented around preaching, hearing, and internalizing the word of God, so that individuals became responsible for their relationship with the divine. In order to become a member of a congregation, New Englanders were expected to experience a conversion, planting the seeds for the evangelicalism that would become a hallmark of American Protestantism as well as for the liberal individualism and voluntarism that would characterize American Catholicism, Judaism, and other religious traditions.

Visible sainthood also included engaging in “worldly” activities in the community according to one’s “calling.” Whether minister, magistrate, merchant, midwife, or farmer, one was to pursue one’s calling industriously. New England Puritans com-

bined their private spiritual sensibilities with a vigorous engagement with the practicalities of daily public life, a melding that has been seen as a fundamental aspect of the American character. Divine providence rewarded diligent labor at one's calling with economic prosperity, but visible saints were not to overindulge their sensory appetites in an indiscriminate display of wealth or with idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, or sexual indiscretions. German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) first put forth the notion that Puritanism had spawned a “Protestant ethic” of hard work, financial accumulation, and frugal consumption that, by the later nineteenth century, produced America's driving economic forces of entrepreneurship and capitalism. Although some scholars have refuted Weber's thesis, it nevertheless became influential in interpretations of the Puritan strain in American culture. Liberals such as journalist H. L. Mencken (1880–1956) have used it to criticize the Puritans as self-important but pleasureless misers. Social conservatives have looked to Weber's model to applaud early New Englanders as the founders of the American Way of economic industriousness and self-reliance. But the Puritan tension between self-restraint and self-indulgence has played out in other, more personal ways as well. Americans “work hard and play harder” and can “never be too thin or too rich,” aphorisms that reflect the culture's paradoxical obsession with the accumulation of wealth and the pursuit of pleasure, on the one hand, and the asceticism of long hours in the office and diet and exercise regimes, on the other.

Among those who have criticized the ascetic strain of Puritanism within American culture, perhaps best known is Nathaniel Hawthorne (1806–1864), who described in novels and short stories, such as *The Scarlet Letter* and “Young Goodman Brown,” the oppressiveness of early New England society and the intolerance that community leaders exhibited toward those who they believed fell short of visible sainthood. Civil leaders did fear that the presence of sin in the community would undermine their covenant with God and attempted to eradicate it by imposing corporal punishment. In apocalyptic sermons, or jeremiads, Puritan ministers reminded their congregations of the impending doom—perhaps from earthquakes, famines, or Indian wars—that resulted when God's people went astray. But historian Perry Miller (1905–1963),

the founder of current early New England studies, worked to modify this excessively negative popular view of Puritan culture. Most New Englanders did not, in fact, fully subscribe to the Puritan way, and even visible saints indulged in feasting, drinking, and displays of wealth—the Plymouth colonists gave Americans Thanksgiving, now the holiday of excessive consumption that ritualizes national myths and integrates religious, civil, and cultural aspects of American identity.

In the tension between New England Puritans' belief in their chosenness as God's special people and the sense of superiority that belief generated, on the one hand, and the always present fear that God might end his covenant with his people if they did not live out the terms of election, on the other, lie the roots of America's ongoing ambivalence about its moral status and future. Christian Right spokespersons, such as Pat Buchanan and Jerry Falwell, and New Age leaders, such as Marianne Williamson, alike claim that God chose America to be the millennial beacon of light to the world but that excessive immorality has caused it to fall short of its original purpose, and they predict the nation's apocalyptic demise if it does not return to its original calling.

—Martha L. Finch

#### SEE ALSO

Death: Mourning Rituals; Generations; Popular Theodicies: Colonial Period; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion; Ritual and Performance: Funerals; Sacred Space: Nature; Sacred Time; Sacred Time: Thanksgiving; Science; Sexuality: Masturbation, Reproduction; Violence: Apocalypticism, War

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# THE BODY





Religion seems endlessly elastic when it tries to cover bodies. Certainly it stretches in every direction to name more and more bodies within the uncertain border we want to draw around “America.” Take the language of stereotypical gay dance clubs—in South Beach, Montrose, West Hollywood, and elsewhere. The DJs, leaders of these “rites,” hope to be “worshiped.” “Divas” sing the gospel lines that pierce heavenward from a tribal bass. (“Diva” entered gay slang with the opera queens, who knew that it meant “divine.”) Then, at the appointed hour, at the liturgically appropriate time, bodies of the gym “gods” appear on the floor. The bodies are flawless as temple marbles, immortal, untouchable—except briefly by other gods and then under threatening taboos (compare Vernant in Feher et al. 1989, 1:28–34).

Do the words of religion stretch too far when they cover secular and perhaps profane bodies? Should we count “worship” or “gods” as weak metaphors when speaking of dance clubs? To demote them to metaphor is to suppose that there are widely agreed-upon nonmetaphorical meanings for key religious terms. It would be better to admit that every assertion of a literal meaning in religion is an assertion and not self-evident fact. What one religious group calls “holy worship” another will call “abominable superstition.” There is no neutral language into which we can translate these quarrels before adjudicating them. Certainly the academic study of religion is not a neutral language. It is just another language, with its own pieties and taboos. Moreover, the field of religious studies has never escaped the persistent questions that mock all religious language, questions about how far any human language can reach toward what is more or other than human.

Language about bodies meets other limits. Bodies and their states or experiences elude description. It is notoriously difficult to describe the simplest sensations. Vivid writing about the body may evoke, but it hardly describes. Much academic writing about the body fails even to evoke. Authors who want to show bodies too often end up hiding them under barbarously abstract categories, theses, principles, and

conclusions. Still, the best academic “theory” reveals not only how bodies elude language but also that bodies are not nearly so obvious or settled as ordinary speech makes out. My experience of my body may seem the most obvious experience around, but it is in fact the shifting product of complex linguistic and cultural customs, as it is an artifact of intense interest for a number of bureaucracies of power, especially religious bureaucracies (Foucault 1995). Bodies are made and remade under the play of languages and cultures and in endless struggles between religious and nonreligious powers.

### Divine Bodies

Americans live surrounded by bodies of gods. So many divinities have passed or settled here, have been killed off or discovered.

Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, on their way up the Missouri River in the summer of 1804, came to “a high Hill” believed by surrounding tribes to be a “residence of Deavels,” “little people,” or “Some unusual Sperits” (DeVoto 1997, 22–24). They marched on the hill just to expose what it really was: an odd cone that caused unusual eddies in the prairie wind. Before and since, troops of European explorers, traders, and anthropologists bought or took what they named native “idols” just to show what they really were. Many of these gods are now in museums, while their cultic residences are state parks. Yet the American landscape cannot be entirely free of its older divinities. Cahokia, Etowah, or the other mounds of Mississippian culture attract pilgrims who are not merely tourists, and the native gods still figure in current religious arguments—for example, in debates about the “Lost Tribes of Israel.” Great Serpent Mount in Ohio continues to generate New Age or Wiccan interpretations. The bodies or houses of older gods remain partly inhabited for descendants of the Europeans who wanted to empty them out.

Bodies of divinities newer to America are much more widely distributed. Every Catholic parish can produce (and usually keeps on hand) the body and blood of Jesus Christ under the “appearances” of

sweet wine and papery wafers. The same parishes own fragments of the bodies of Christ's legally venerated followers—relics kept in display cases or packaged within the altar. Some Catholics or other Christian believers receive the marks of Jesus' crucifixion into their own bodies. Fictional accounts aside (the 1999 movie *Stigmata*, the 1991 novel *Mariette in Ecstasy*), there have been stigmatics in America. As a child, Marie Rose Ferron received the marks, including a crown of thorns, in Rhode Island. Her devotees claim that her body was still undecayed ten years after her death in 1936. Toward the end of 1991, a parish priest in Virginia, James Bruse, showed signs of crucifixion on his body. For more than a year, he could also make statues of the Madonna weep and rosaries change color.

Protestant Christians sometimes denounce such Catholic notions as examples of idolatry, but then they approve other performances of divine presence. For American revivalists or Pentecostals, the Holy Spirit shakes bodies, rolls them on the ground, or drops them as if dead. Those seized by the Spirit weep and shout, march in circles, convulse, or dance (Taves 1999, 86–114). These and other forms of divine action through bodies are matched in many Christian traditions by fears that evil spirits or ghosts can move bodies in parallel ways—or act through the things around them (Taves 1999, 166–206). The necessary duality of possession in Christian monotheism becomes much more complex in contemporary polytheisms. In Santería, for example, a pantheon of gods inhabits bodies to various degrees and for various purposes, each god bringing recognizable attributes.

When divine powers act in or through human bodies, they give importance to bodily structures. Our bodies have parts, organs, and members to which religious values and purposes are easily attached. Or, rather, religions attach values and purposes to segments of our bodies in order to convince us that we have certain important organs. Human anatomy is originally religious anatomy, and religious valuations continue to flow through secular speech. Those who disbelieve divine influence on bodies and who consciously secularize religious practices, such as yoga, acupuncture, or T'ai-chi, will still find themselves speaking old religious clichés about body parts—especially in America, the great Babel of speech about gods.

## Eyes

In his *History*, Joseph Smith told of the visions that led him to the gold plates and the *Book of Mormon*. Smith knew where to find the cache because of the “distinctness” of his vision (Smith 1935, History 1:34–35). Four years later, when he was finally permitted to remove the plates, he employed the stones Urim and Thummim that had been provided to him for translating the ancient script. Without those stones, he could not have read the written revelation. Smith was led by distinct visions to texts that would reveal themselves only to special “seers.”

Eyes in religion open to revelation and illusion. The divinities or (more often) their messengers appear in dreams or while waking, after long expectation or with complete surprise, on a fast or following the eating of sacred substances. Some visions bring doctrine. Others call for worship or repentance. Others still, more private, provide healing and consolation. Divine sights can lead the favored viewers to objects that are meant for others to see. Joseph Smith was led by vision to plates of writing and stones on a breastplate. The sight of them produced conviction in others. Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared in 1531 at Tepeyac, outside Mexico City, to leave behind a miraculous image of herself. Pilgrims now process on their knees to gaze at a painting of a woman floating on a crescent moon, draped in starry cloth, radiating golden light. Yet visions are inevitably occasions for religious controversy. It is an important part of Joseph Smith's narrative that he was ridiculed and persecuted as soon as he reported seeing things. The image of Guadalupe was given precisely because the local Catholic bishop and others disbelieved the first reports of her appearances. The purity of the eyes is matched by their vulnerability to instant, immaterial deception.

The language of religious vision has now been taken over by American corporate strategists. CEOs are “visionaries” who lead their staff and employees through “visioning” exercises so that they can all commit themselves to “vision” statements. The borrowing of terms may suggest how far corporate and market disciplines of the body have replaced religious ones (Turner in Coakley 1997, 32–33). But it also shows how long religious images keep their force. The eyes are still spoken of as pure discerners of far-off light.

### Ears

In Protestant America, the privileged organ for religion has been the ear—the ear as partner to voices. The sinner’s ear is the organ of revival. It receives the force of revival in the sermon and the hymn to become the instrument of conversion.

Preachers address the ear. Believers who have grown up in preaching churches can forget how odd it is that the sermon should be the central moment of public worship. The sermon is not a set of traditional prayers, whether praises or petitions or intercessions. Nor is it just the public reading of a sacred text, however often preachers claim to be giving nothing but Scripture. The sermon is a sequence of rhetorical devices meant to produce a decision. Indeed, the classic revival sermon ends with a call to the altar, to public repentance and conversion. Conversion is accomplished through the ear with all the ordinary devices of spoken sound: rhythms and alliterations, dramatic pauses or startling changes in tone. There are more extraordinary devices still—booming voices of inspired prophecy, unexpected voices from the outcast or children, the melting syllables of “tongues.”

From Christian revival, the dominance of the ear has passed to other traditions as they try to get a hearing in America. The seductions of the ear practiced in the great Protestant revivals are now common property not only for other denominations or religions, but for self-help groups. Every sect wants its talking heads on television, its self-assured hosts on AM radio. More voices want to get religion into our bodies through our ears.

### Breasts

In the archive room of Thomas Merton’s monastery, the Abbey of Gethsemani near Louisville, visitors can find a stained-glass window permanently removed from the main church during restoration. The window shows the monastic founder, St. Bernard, drinking a stream of milk from the breast of the Virgin Mary. The miracle is a famous one in monastic history, and there are paintings of it scattered among the great museums. If the paintings might be excused as art, the window is a little too physical for contemporary American Catholic worship. In *Playboy* land, the female breast has become the standard icon of (domi-

nant male) sexual desire. To remember that Mary had breasts is risky; to imagine seeing them or drinking from them is grossly obscene. The American civic religion of sentiment has often required religions to edit or repress bodies in their art or teaching. An American mother’s breasts had to be forgotten, concealed, or rendered shapeless. That sentiment applied with special force to the mother of a god.

The civic religion of sentiment rewrites older religions when it imposes new views of the body on them. It can do this most effectively by instituting new liturgies. Consider Mother’s Day, that solemn American holy day. Its history is revealing. Support for the day grew in part from Julia Ward Howe’s declaration of a “mothers’ day for peace” after the Civil War, in part from a variety of local celebrations and ethnic traditions. Legislation for a Mother’s Day on the second Sunday in May followed on the efforts of Anna Jarvis, who had been celebrating a memorial for her own mother. Jarvis’s Mother’s Day was enacted as a national holiday in 1914. Nine years later, she was already repudiating its commercialization. But the holiday went on to become the holy day it now is, the civic-religious celebration of everything about Mother except what makes her mother—namely, her body. The American Mother is memorialized as a peacemaker and homemaker. Our festival calendar requires a national celebration of fertility without body parts.

American civic religion is not now what it once was. The Anglo-Protestant ascendancy keeps falling down, no longer able to shun or police countermovements. Thus, alternative religious speeches about mothers have been elaborated in recent years. In American forms of Wicca, for example, the central deity is the Mother Goddess who gives birth to all life and continues to suckle it. She is maiden, mother, and crone, but mother above all—the motherly body underlying the physical world (Starhawk 1999). We move across her breasts whether we allow ourselves to see them or not. Some scholars would connect this talk of pervasive bodies to what they think of as the new civic religion—that cult of the advertised body. After all, Americans are supposed to be uniquely concerned with keeping young, with diet, fitness, tanning, and sporty costume. So why not think that we have finally come to a time when the language about bodies in individual religions can be frankly affirmed

within a new consensus on taking care of yourself? But then the advertised, narcissistic body is itself unphysical. It is as standardized and regimented as any advocate of Mother's Day could want. The advertised body, especially in its most electronic forms, displaces actual bodies, which seem half-real by comparison (Baudrillard 1994, 87–94, 105–119).

The triumph of advertising accomplishes more completely what civic religion once did in declaring certain body parts (or their intimate coverings) “unmentionables.” To name breasts (or a brassiere) unmentionable is to keep them curiously present under the prohibition. To displace real breasts with perfect advertisements of breasts pushes them much further away.

### Spine

Marcel Mauss coined the phrase *techniques du corps*, body techniques or technologies, to describe ways of using our bodies that we learn from our societies (Mauss 1979, 365–386; Asad in Coakley 1997, 46–49). Mauss mentioned techniques for walking, swimming, running, positions of the arms or gestures of the hands, ways of soaping or cleaning, and positions for sexual intercourse. He noted that the techniques differ within a society by generation, sex, age, and skill. Mauss also reminded us that many of these techniques cross over into religion before we even notice.

Religious ritual is the obvious example of a body technique. Liturgies of many different kinds or traditions share a preoccupation with exact posture. Ritual specialists argue for generations over how a celebrant is supposed to stand and walk, how worshipers should kneel or prostrate, how the hands are to be held in sacred spaces, and what expression befits the face. Arguments over details can divide groups. Within Slavic Orthodoxy, for example, there is continuing dispute over how to shape the fingers when making the sign of the cross. The Slavic Orthodox as a whole distinguish themselves from Western Christians not only by the direction in which they cross themselves, but by their opposition to kneeling or sitting during liturgy. These are simple cases. More complex differences over religious body techniques divide schools of ascetic disciplines (such as yoga) or sacred dance.

Religious body techniques reach far beyond ritual to discipline the whole of life. Notions of religious modesty can determine how a person walks down the street: whether the head is up or down, whether the hands are open or closed, how straight the spine is kept, how fast the pace. Where religion authorizes sharply segregated social classes (as it so often does), the classes will be assigned particular postures, gestures, expressions, and costumes. Someone of high caste will not stand like someone of low caste.

Differences of posture and other body technique can be asserted more effectively than they can be described. We have no very precise vocabulary for them in ordinary languages, and attempts to confect artificial languages have not been convincing. There is a technical vocabulary in classical ballet, but it is more like a vocabulary for pointing than for describing: “That is a jeté.” Ballet is handed down in dance studios from choreographer or dancer to apprentice over years of disciplined repetition. In the same way, religious rituals are taught by close observation and long drill. Language may gesture at religious body techniques, but it cannot grasp them.

### Genitals

In America, many religious groups seem especially preoccupied with genitals. Just as an “immoral woman” used to be a woman who didn't abide by official sexual rules, so “religious morality” as a whole is often reduced to rules about external sexual organs. The religious preoccupation is written into our criminal laws, which derive directly from Christian church law and its scriptural or theological sources. The term “sodomy,” for example, is a term that medieval Christian theologians invented for the unspecified sins of the inhabitants of Sodom in Genesis 19. American sodomy laws are still justified by the Supreme Court with reference to “Judaean-Christian moral and ethical standards” (*Bowers v. Hardwick* 1986, Burger concurring). That hyphenated tradition is invoked alongside others to prevent sex education programs in high schools and to protest public distribution of condoms or free testing for STDs. Chastity is big business for American religion.

In light of this preoccupation, it is easy to assume that all religious speech about sex is just ways of saying no. But religious discourse about human genitals

is very much more—even in the Judeo-Christian tradition, which is hardly as coherent or cooperative as that hyphen implies. In many religions, the dichotomy of male and female is written into the cosmos. Many cosmogonies make the birth of the universe like a human birth, so far at least as it requires male and female powers (for example, Lévi in Feher et al. 1989, 1:106–109). But male and female do not keep their ordinary values in the divine. Polytheisms often balance pantheons by sex—or rather by divine variations on it, including hermaphrodites or intersexes. These variations are allowed as well to certain religiously marked individuals—famously to the “berdaches” and other third-sexed individuals in Native American societies. Even in the most widespread monotheisms, the sex of the divinity and the divinity’s helpers remains confused. This god is unsexed, but still gendered male. Celibate officers or spiritual practitioners in monotheisms often hold ambiguous gender, mixing attributes of “male” and “female.”

The claim that gender is an artifact beyond biological sex is often attributed to modern feminism. The more disconcerting claim that gender is an unstable performance counts as more advanced feminism—or even theoretical antifeminism. But divinities and their closest followers have long been allowed performative freedom with regard to the interpretation of their genitals—and their real or fictive absence.

### Anus

In 1988, Andres Serrano included a photograph in a North Carolina exhibition. Part of his *Immersion* series, it showed a cheap crucifix sunk in human urine. The photograph, *Piss Christ*, provoked a controversy that led to official retaliation, including cuts in federal funding for the arts nationwide. A little more than ten years later, an equally loud, if less consequential, fight broke out over Chris Ofili’s *The Holy Virgin Mary* (created in 1996), an exuberant African Madonna encrusted with elephant dung. Ofili’s painting provoked legal action in Australia on grounds of libelous blasphemy.

Christ in urine, dung on the Virgin Mary. It didn’t matter what the artworks were trying to represent. It didn’t matter, for example, that Ofili used elephant dung to connect the icon with African customs of veneration. To put a holy image next to feces or urine

could only count as blasphemy in cultures that regard human waste as the antithesis of the holy, the very essence of the unclean.

Cultures project their anxieties and unresolved tensions onto the bodies of their members, especially the most vulnerable (Douglas [1966] 1995), through an enormous array of distinctly religious injunctions about purity or cleanliness. The injunctions may draw boundaries that cannot be crossed without pollution or may prohibit the eating of whole classes of foods; many of them, however, have to do with the human body and its by-products. Tabooed substances frequently include feces, urine, semen, and menstrual blood. Contact with these substances may require ritual cleansing or temporary exclusion. An individual who violates injunctions for dealing with them will put the whole community in danger.

The notorious American obsessions with “cleanliness” have struck many non-Americans as something like a religious system. The daily shower followed by attentive applications of deodorant and glasses of mouthwash is surely ritualistic. There are plenty of historical explanations that would trace these practices back to earlier religious movements—to Puritanism (which takes the blame for so much) or to Judaism (with its influence through the medical profession). But it might be better to use the example of cleanliness precisely to break down the distinction between the religious and the nonreligious. “Cleanliness is next to Godliness” can be read as borrowing religious authority to reinforce childhood manners. It can also be read as teaching children that washing well is a religious act.

### Legs

In Mary Baker Eddy’s *Science and Health*, most of the testimonies of healing concern internal or organic ailments: neuralgia, neurasthenia, consumption, blindness, heart disease, sore throat, tobacco addiction. But Eddy also retells religious cures that enable sufferers to get up and walk. For one woman, twenty years of suffering end when she is able to rise from her bed of near paralysis and walk out to dinner (Eddy 2000, 631–633). Getting up to walk remains the most striking sign of the miraculous cure. Healing shrines and healer’s churches display wheelchairs, crutches, canes, and leg braces. In the very best cases, these

relics are accompanied by medical documentation of the sufferer's hopeless condition and the inexplicable recovery.

For Europeans, the Native American religious figure or shaman was the "medicine man," and so "medicine" became the translation for magic or power. Medicine still competes for its territory with religion. Caring for the sick is often counted a religious activity. Religious precepts dictate medical practice, and different religious groups have established their own hospitals in order to be able to practice their sectarian medicine—a troublesome fact in a time of hospital consolidation. The unhappy cycle of debate over abortion is only the clearest example of how the claims religions make on bodies may also be made by modern medicine.

However the debate turns out, and however hospital policies are negotiated, it will remain the case that the language of sickness and health, of disease and cure, is deeply colored by religious emotions. AIDS is the obvious case of a disease first condemned with religious fervor—and "explained" by religious causality. Similar condemnations have been applied not only to other venereal diseases, but also to the diseases of the poor and even to cancer.

### Skin

"Modern primitives," Fakir Musafar called them in 1967 (Vale 1989). Others say "body radicals." They are all trying to label the resurgence of the "primitive" arts of tattooing, piercing, and scarification (Taylor 1997, 74–161). It is nothing new that Americans should use skin as a marker of religious affiliation. Skin color still marks some denominational lines, and the absence of makeup can mark others. But many Americans now seem to want more varied choices for marking skin. The choices were and are connected with religious practices.

Many tattoos are officially religious images. The selections at a typical tattoo shop will include an Old Rugged Cross, several Guadalupes, the Hearts of both Jesus and Mary, the Star of David, an Islamic crescent, "Druid" runes, the ankh, and Osiris. More sophisticated designs can be had on demand and with a suitable pattern, including Coptic, Taoist, Hindu, and Buddhist figures. The tattoos may be got-

ten impetuously or as decoration, but they can also be deliberate declarations of identity or membership, in reality or in fantasy. Some people choose designs to express faith or mark ethno-religious origin. Others want designs to show that they repudiate the established religions: a rune takes the place of a cross, a horned devil appears instead of Jesus crowned with thorns. In these ways, tattoos are like religious brands on caps or T-shirts. They declare affiliation or opposition.

For "modern primitives," tattooing goes along with piercing and other forms of mutilation. These are effects produced in skin, but also performances on skin. Fakir Musafar was a performance artist. So, too, is Ron Athey, whose piece *Solar Anus* makes of his tattooed and pierced body a microcosm for the paradoxes of procreative desire. Deliberately outrageous examples can lead us to forget that bodily mutilation is prescribed by our best-established religions, and bodily pain is often approved in them as a means of religious education or spiritual enlightenment. Male circumcision is prescribed in Judaism and Islam. Female circumcision, much more controversial, is practiced by some Islamic groups, though without official sanction. Most religions advise fasting during periods of repentance or spiritual seeking. Many seem eager to accept suffering, including some self-inflicted suffering, as a means of advancement. Pain produces its ecstasies—and its negative theologies (Bataille 1986, 190–196).

The skin can be written on by religion. It carries religious ornaments. It is cut or pierced, starved and whipped for religion. The skin is also our point of contact with the world, the blood-nourished envelope through which the world touches us and we touch ourselves. Things come to us through skin and with a sort of skin of their own (Merleau-Ponty 1968). It becomes all the more striking, then, how many religions call for skin to be covered. Sometimes the reasoning is that bare skin produces lust—or devalues marketable bodies by revealing their mysteries too soon (Culianu in Law 1995, 9–12). More radically, some religious arguments view the covering up of skin as an aid in weaning spirit or soul from dependence on the body. Skin becomes the outermost wall of a prison from which we must flee toward holiness. The wall becomes more permeable as it is made less visible.

### Effigies

Around Labor Day in the Nevada desert, there is the “Burning Man.” The festival started on a San Francisco beach at the summer solstice of 1986 ([www.burningman.com](http://www.burningman.com)). It recalled, among other events, what was supposed to be an ancient Druid ritual popularized through film in *The Wicker Man* (1973). In the film, a towering human effigy containing caged crops, living animals, and a screaming man is burned to scatter the dead year’s cares and to bring better hope for the year to come. The San Francisco solstice party, which did not include human or animal sacrifice, outgrew the beach and moved to the desert. It is now a small, temporary city, with several hundred “themecamps and villages” built around the central effigy—which is still burned.

The Burning Man is a bloodless recollection of the mythical sacrifices of real human bodies. Moreover, like Las Vegas, that other city of the Nevada desert, it is a reminder of the divine power of effigies, whether overtly religious or not. Our landscape is filled with them. If some religious groups, such as Jews and Muslims, brought prohibitions of images to America, and if other groups, such as the Shakers, invented new iconoclasm on American soil, the American genius has more typically been applied to the mass production of religious artifacts—statues, portraits, crucifixes, praying hands. Mass-produced effigies were not invented in America, but they have been perfected here in various ways. We have not only a richly material Christianity, but material religions of all sorts. The artifacts become more than material, since the special American gift has been the transfer of images out of matter or across matters. From the million texturized prints of a blond Jesus to the televangelists’ 24/7 channels, from *The Ten Commandments* (1956) to mega-Web sites for every denomination or sect, our religious images circulate in quantity, at speed.

These religious images have to compete with other images that can seem more divine—and that are certainly more widely shared. The other images may be in fact the contemporary native gods. In Gore Vidal’s novel, Myra Breckenridge writes, “I am in Hollywood, California, the source of all this century’s legends, and tomorrow it has been arranged for me to visit Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer! No pilgrim to Lourdes

can experience what I know I shall experience once I have stepped into that magic world which has occupied all my waking thoughts for twenty years” (Vidal 1997, 10). To the extent that Myra Breckenridge is not writing metaphorically, and to the extent that Hollywood’s images do inspire a devotion beyond that of the standard religions, we witness not only the triumph of effigy over original, but the reversal of linguistic field. Imagine a time when words for religious body are literally true of Internet movies and only metaphorically true of the bodies of living religious practitioners. Perhaps there is no need to *imagine* it. Perhaps we already live it.

—Mark D. Jordan

### SEE ALSO

Native American Religions and Politics: Shamanism, Two-Spirit People; New Religious Traditions: Christian Science; Material Culture; Popular Culture: Advertising; Ritual and Performance: Dance, Feminist Theater, Therapy and Healing; Sacred Time; Science: Healing; Sexuality: Sexual Dissidence, Sexual Identities

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The neon sculpture *The Man* is the focal point for the Burning Man Festival, Nevada, 2001  
(Mark E. Gibson/Corbis)

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## ASIAN BODY PRACTICES

Many aspects of Asian religions have been transmitted into American culture through body practices. Perceiving Asian religions first as practical things to *do* rather than doctrinal things to *believe*, many Americans not of Asian descent have found ways to reconcile, for example, their Christian religious commitments with non-Christian practices, or, in some cases, have been led to a fuller commitment to the Asian religions from which these practices derived.

Many Asian body practices have become mainstream. For example, a television advertisement in 2001 for an allergy medicine featured a group of white women and their teacher, an older Chinese man, practicing T'ai-chi-ch'üan (*Taijiquan*). Sometimes also called "shadow-boxing," T'ai-chi, a stylized set of slow martial arts movements practiced widely in China, has spread outside of Chinese immigrant communities in America and become popular. The broader category for such exercises is *ch'i-kung* (*qigong*), which refers to a diverse set of practices for manipulating the energy (*ch'i*) in and around one's body. A modern variation, Falun dafa (or Falungong), has gained attention in America in part because of its persecution in China. Many Asian body practices have remained marginal (or marginalized), but others have become mainstream enough, for example, to form the basis of jokes on television sit-coms and advertising. Sitting cross-legged, closing your eyes, and saying "aum" (or "om") is a widely recognized trope of Asian religion (and hence, of hippies and New Agers) in popular American culture. As a widely recognized posture of the body, it is comparable to the posture of kneeling with palms together and saying "amen." Asian-derived religious body practices have become mainstream in other ways: Many HMOs and insurance companies recognize the medical value of meditation, yoga, and T'ai-chi. Practices that perform and embody Asian religious concepts and worldviews have spread beyond Asia and outside of Asian immigrant cultures in America, not necessarily through religious proselytization but through their direct appeals to health, diet, or personal empowerment. Though some Christian groups have objected to the practice of yoga as a vehicle for Hinduism, the fact of classes

on yoga taught in YMCAs and churches indicates the spread of Asian religious practices into cultural arenas where explicitly doctrinal non-Christian proselytization would not be accepted.

For many Americans not of Asian ancestry, the first and perhaps the only time they have ever bowed to another living person was at their *dojo* (martial arts studio), when they and the other students bowed to their teacher. Although all cultures have martial arts, in popular American consciousness the martial arts are primarily East Asian: Karate, Judo, Kung-Fu, Aikido, Taekwando, Kenpo, Hapkido, Jeet Kune Do, and others. In recent years, Muay Thai, or Thai kickboxing, and other Southeast Asian martial arts have become popular. Asian martial arts have been popularized beyond the respective immigrant communities by Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, and a variety of other Asian actors, especially from Hong Kong and Japan, and by white Westerners such as Chuck Norris, Steven Segal, and Jean Claude Van Damme. In the influential television series *Kung Fu* (1972–1975), David Carradine played Kwai Chang Caine, a half-Chinese orphan who studied at Shaolin Monastery in China and then wandered the American West during the late nineteenth century. *Kung Fu* introduced Chinese martial arts and pop-culture Buddhism in what has been called television's first mystical Eastern Western. More recently, Carradine has produced a series of T'ai-chi videos. Films such as *Karate Kid* (1984), *Mortal Kombat* (1995, based on the video game), *The Matrix* (1999), and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) have brought Chinese and Japanese body practices and philosophical insights into mainstream culture.

The rhetoric and practices of various martial arts such as T'ai-chi and Aikido include explicit Taoist motifs: an alternation of yin and yang; an emphasis on gaining power through yielding, or absorbing the opponent's blows; and an avoidance of postural extremes. Romanticized notions of the life of the Samurai, mediated through Japanese action films such as *The Seven Samurai* (1954) and *Ran* (1985), have associated Japanese Buddhism with martial arts. The 1999 Jim Jarmusch film *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai*



Woman performing T'ai-chi-ch'üan in a San Francisco park, c. 1990 (Michael S. Yamashita/Corbis)

showed an urban black American's appropriation of the mingled Zen and Confucianism of *Hagakure: The Book of the Samurai* by Yamamoto Tsunetomo (1659–1719).

Philosophical and literary Taoism—fueled by an unending stream of new translations of the *Tao Te Ching*—is also appealing to Western environmentalists and New Agers, who in turn form a large clientele for Asian healing practices such as acupuncture and acupressure, shiatsu, Reiki, and Chinese herbal medicine. Traditional Chinese conceptions of the world are often evident in Chinese cuisine, and many Chinese vegetarian restaurants have Buddhist images on display and literature available. Taoist sexology has been popularized by Robert van Gulik's *Sexual Life in Ancient China* (1961) and in a less scholarly manner by Mantak Chia's *Taoist Secrets of Love* (1984) and other books. A similar popularization has made “Tantric sex” accessible to Westerners, at the price of some degree of authenticity. Sex, along with many other kinds

of Asian cultural activities, has been labeled “sacred” or “spiritual” by Westerners. A popular romantic image of Asian life as sacred in every aspect is perhaps a reaction against a perceived bankruptcy of “Western” religion (seen as ritualistic, institutional, or consumerist), and against other images (such as from missionaries) depicting, by contrast, nothing in Asian life as sacred.

However, probably the most widespread Asian body practice in America is yoga. The yoga taught in YMCAs and health clubs throughout America is usually derived from hatha yoga, the specifically physical aspect, or “limb,” of the religious system of yoga in India. In America, yoga is seen primarily as an aid to health rather than salvation, though undoubtedly many Westerners have come to Hindu religion or philosophy through this physical practice. Hatha yoga posits an axis of *chakras* (energy centers) in the body that are activated so that the *kundalini* (spiritual power envisioned as a coiled snake) may rise.

Related to yoga practice are various kinds of meditation from Asian religious traditions, most frequently *vipassana* (“insight,” usually taught by Theravada Buddhists of Sri Lanka or Thailand), *zazen* (“seated meditation,” from Japanese Zen), or Tibetan Buddhist practices. Zen, in particular, has nativized to a great extent in America since the 1960s, with the leadership of most Zen centers taken by Americans, usually Caucasian. The practice of meditation has also spread outside of Buddhism, and there has developed a significant tradition of Catholic Zen practice, especially from the example of the Trappist monk Thomas Merton (1915–1968). Certainly not all Asian-derived meditation in America is Buddhist; notably, meditation and contemplative chanting practices have been spread by the Transcendental Meditation (TM) movement led by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON, or the “Hare Krishnas”) founded in America in 1965 by Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896–1977).

—Eric Reinders

#### SEE ALSO

Buddhism in America: Mahayana Religious Communities, Theravada Religious Communities, Tibetan Buddhism, Zen; Hinduism in America: Hare Krishna Movement, Vedanta Society; New Age; Popular Culture: Advertising; Ritual and Performance

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## CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

The nerves and sinews of Christian spiritual practices are generated and maintained in relation to Jesus' body in life, death, and resurrection. Whatever the particular form of practice, whether prayer, fasting, worship, meditative walking, centering prayer, or study, the point for Christians is to grow in friendship with God, self, and others. Practices help believers focus on this love and relationship in heart, body, and mind. The impetus for this love is gratitude for God and joy in creation. The intention of practice is to increase capacities for insight in order to live compassionately and justly with stability and wisdom. Spirituality as practice for Christians in America and around the world is embodied in daily life and continues through hope in death.

Some Christian spiritual practices are traditionally public and formally ritualized. For example, the central ritual meal, the Eucharist or Lord's Supper, that commemorates Jesus' incarnation and resurrection, is usually practiced communally, not individually.

Other public practices, such as baptism, burial, healing services, and so on, are designed to shape Christian group identity and community by framing through memory an open space in which Christians together experience contemporary friendship with God. Often, these more public spiritual practices are linked to specific life stages or events. As young adults, for example, in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, members take a period of time away from their normal lives as a spiritual practice to do work for the church away from home.

Other spiritual practices, often called contemplative practices, individualize one's relationship with Jesus. Particularly, they help Christians better understand the dynamics of their drives and affections while increasing their skills for relating authentically and acting usefully as Christians in daily life—that is, to live like Jesus. Although ordained and nonordained Christians do private spiritual practices, most of them were developed in monastic communities. American

monastic communities today continue to develop practices, often building on their traditional roots. Greek Orthodox monastic communities, for example, pray using icons as their forebears did, though the artistic form may be more modern. Bridge Building Icons, a group from California, have created new icons using contemporary saints such as Dorothy Day. Icons serve as tools for focusing on specific images of God and/or the saints, illuminating Christian stories, and helping Christians integrate the meanings and energies of icons into their lives.

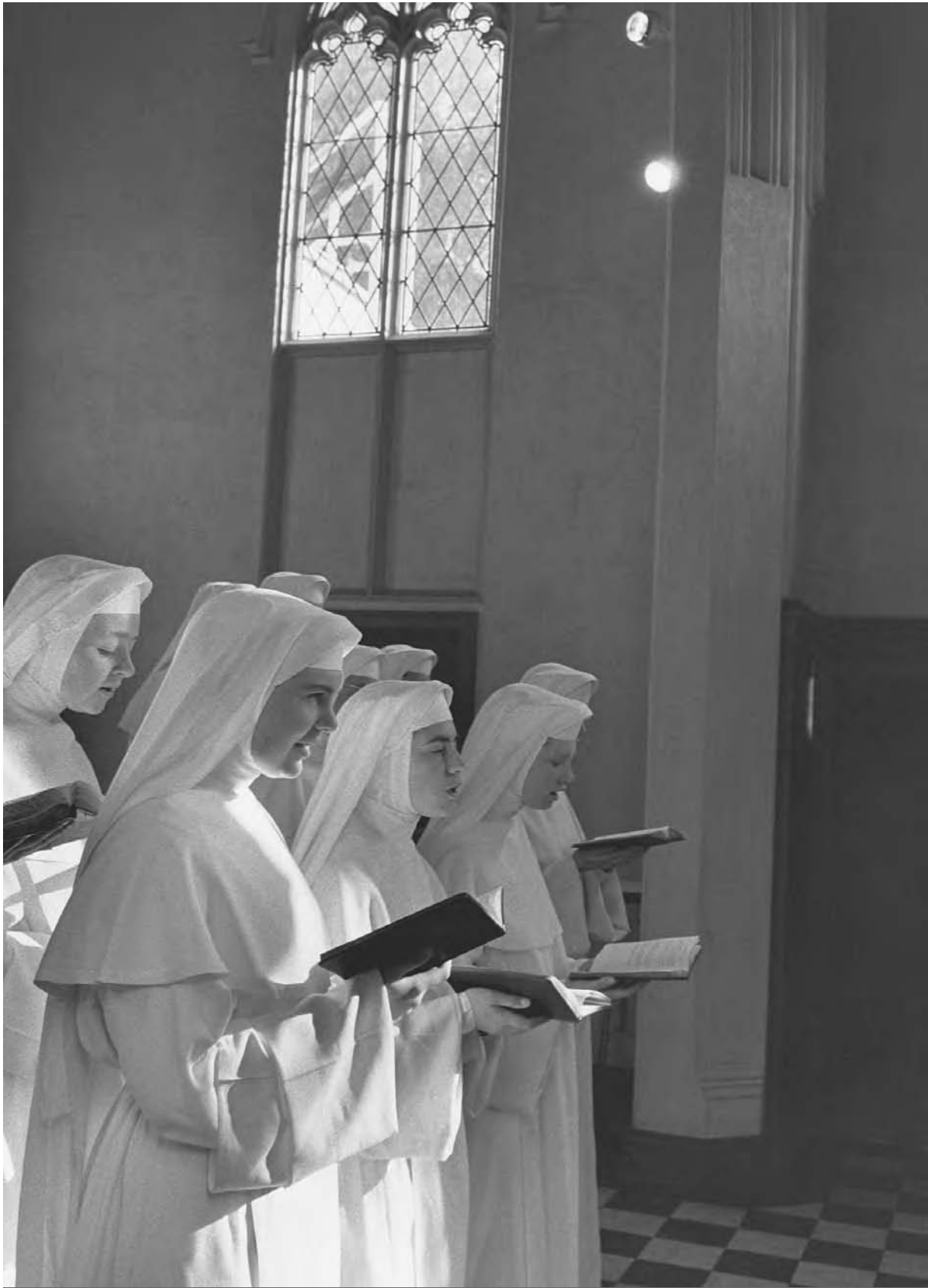
New and reconstructed forms of spiritual practices have emerged throughout the history of Christianity. The contemporary effects of globalization, specifically movements of immigrant and refugee peoples and the media, have made practices of prayer via television a worldwide phenomenon. American practices of Christian evangelism include international and highly organized campaigns. Spiritual study and/or worship using CDs and tapes from other cultures and countries reflect growing interest not only in the spirituality of other Christian communities but also the practices of other faiths. For instance, there is a growing movement of Christians going on wilderness retreats and using Native American practices. The Episcopal Church in America borrows liturgies developed by Asian Pacific Christian communities using their indigenous spiritual categories and names for God. There are several books on Christian yoga and on Christian practices rooted in ancient goddess traditions.

The basic, formalized patterns of Christian spirituality are rooted in Jewish and Greco-Roman spiritual practices at the turn of the Common Era. In the first four centuries of church history, spiritual traditions from Egypt, the Middle East, and Turkey also contributed to the development of today's Christian practices. Daily times for prayer; songs and chants; performances of vows and devotion, such as the body posture of standing during the Eucharist in honor of Christ's resurrection; and patterns of work and lifestyle were integrated from other groups. The importance of a spiritual teacher and practices of intention, meditation, and confession were re-created by Christians from other groups and eventually institutionalized. Clearly, spiritual practices also reflected historical, social, and cultural dynamics of the location in which they were developed and followed.

The culturally proscribed roles of women, for example, partially shaped the spiritual practices they pursued. The earliest women's monastic communities were under the authority of men's communities. Often, brothers and sisters, such as Francis and Claire of Assisi, made life commitments to spiritual practices, and it was the brother's authority, by cultural role, that brought credibility to the sister's devotions. Many women in the Middle Ages of Europe were known for their fasting and healing practices; for Catherine of Siena and some few others, this role included literally eating the puss of a sick person's wounds. Women like Teresa of Avila and Hildegard of Bingen were more highly educated and founded nunneries of their own. American nuns today are doing some of the most creative reinterpretation of spiritual practices, integrating rituals for celebratory dance, life stages such as menarche and postmenarche, and seasonal change.

Contemporary writings on spiritual practice reflect a wide spectrum of possibilities and an assumption of authority for leadership by the nonordained. Groups of laywomen across the United States share insights and practical tools. Their networking resonates with the medieval networks of women such as the anchoress Julian in England and Mechtild of Magdeburg, Germany. In those days, communication was more difficult, and the letters and records of visits are scant, but today the use of the Web and other media make communication of spiritual practices easier and more accessible. Women are developing practices and new images of God taken from women's lives and nature.

With the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in America came a vibrant movement of spiritual practices focusing on issues of social justice and politics. From Mennonite hymn singing at social justice marches to Quaker vigils of prayer and silence, Christians practice embodying friendship with God. The civil rights marches led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and others offered another form of practice as groups often prayed on their knees in the midst of civil disobedience actions in the 1960s. Evangelical and Roman Catholic groups from community-based Bible studies developed practices for making connections between Scripture and liberatory practices relevant to their localized forms of oppression. Improvisational sung prayer in the Taizé Community of France



Novice nuns at a Dominican convent in San Rafael, California, sing carols in the chapel  
(Ted Streshinsky/Corbis)

has shaped an international devotional tradition drawing thousands of young people to contemplate and work for worldwide communication and peace. The body of Christian spiritual practices sustains its original forms while responding to current needs and forms of expression.

—Barbara A.B. Patterson

#### SEE ALSO

Asian American Religious Communities; Catholicism in America; New Religious Traditions: Mormonism; Orthodox Christianity: Greek Orthodoxy; Protestantism in America; Ritual and Performance: Prayer

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## CLOTHING

To many religious groups, clothing is an important symbol of religious identification. The regulation of personal appearance goes beyond clothing, however. *Dress* is a more global term and includes clothing, grooming, and all forms of body adornment. Additionally, it includes behaviors related to the control of the body, such as dieting, plastic surgery, and cosmetics. Holistically, then, dress functions as an effective means of nonverbal communication. Ideas, concepts, and categories fundamental to a group, such as age, gender, ethnicity, and religion, help to define a person's identity, which is then expressed outwardly through appearance. Both individual and group identity are projected through dress.

An understanding of how dress works within religious groups calls attention to the complexity of meanings surrounding visible symbols such as dress and sheds light on the ways that bodies can communicate social and religious values. The dress of religious groups can be used to facilitate social and ideological agendas. It is used for establishing and maintaining personal and social identities, social hierarchies, definitions of deviance, and systems of control and power. As a consequence, dress within conservative religious groups is a symbol of the individual's commitment to the group and of the group's control over individual lives. For America's religious groups, dress is particularly important with regard to its role in social control and in social change.

### Dress and Social Control

Dress is an immediate and visible indicator of how a person fits into his or her religious system. As a marker of identity, it can be used to gauge the person's commitment to the group and to the religious value system. In many conservative groups, suppression of individuality is expected in favor of obedience to the rules of the religious body. Such groups use clothing to simultaneously express religiosity, ethnicity, and gender norms. Through conformity to a strict religious value system, the most conservative of the religious social bodies exert control over their members' physical bodies. Since strict conformity is often equated with religiosity, compliance to strict codes of behavior is demanded. The internal body is subject to control by the religious culture, especially with regard to food and sex. The external body, however, is much more visibly restrained. Strict dress codes are enforced because dress is considered symbolic of religiosity. Clothing becomes a symbol of social control. Although a person's level of religiosity cannot be objectively perceived, symbols such as clothing are used as evidence that he or she is on the "right and true path."

Normative social control involves personal self-regulation, informal peer pressure, and formal mechanisms. When the individual begins to offend, peers may disapprove and urge the individual to conform



to the norms. In more extreme cases, specialized agents intervene to manage the threat that an offender introduces to the social order through established measures. Thus, social control inhibits deviation and ensures conformity to norms at even the most minute level.

Through symbolic devices, the physical body exhibits the normative values of the social body. Symbols such as dress help delineate the social unit and visually define its boundaries because they give non-verbal information about the individual. Unique dress attached to specific cultural groups, then, can function to insulate group members from outsiders while bonding the members to each other. Normative behavior within the culture reaffirms loyalty to the group and can be evidenced by uniform types of attire. Gender issues are paramount in conservative dress codes, since the control of female sexuality is often of great importance in patriarchal religious groups. The dress codes generally relate to modesty and require clothing to cover the contours of the female body. Additionally, some religious groups also require that women's hair be covered.

Within American culture there are specific ethno-religious groups that intentionally separate themselves from the rest of society and attempt to reestablish the small, face-to-face community. Mennonites, Hutterites, and Amish are such groups. These groups are often perceived by the outside world as quite unusual, but that impression derives more from their deviant behaviors, visually manifest in dress, than to their doctrinal differences from mainstream Christianity. An essential factor in ethno-religious groups, social control is significant in terms of the survival prospects of the group. Among Orthodox Jews in Williamsburg, New York, social control was achieved in ways remarkably similar to those used by Holdeman Mennonites. The most important features included isolation from the external society; emphasis on conformity with status related to religiosity, symbolized by clothing status markers; a powerful clergy; and rigorous sanctions to ensure conformity to norms.

Some ethno-religious groups use fossilized fashion to separate themselves from the outside world. Fossilized fashion has been explained as a sudden "freezing" of styles whereby a group continues to wear a mode of dress long after it has gone out of vogue for the general population. This phenomenon has been

explained as expressing dignity and high social status or the group's religious, old-fashioned, sectarian identity. Within certain ethno-religious groups, fossilized fashion is used in contemporary settings as a visual symbol of traditional gender roles for women, and it generally occurs in societies that find change to be a threat.

### Dress and Social Change

Traditional gender roles that are stable for long periods of time can be marked by particular persistent forms of dress; conversely, sudden changes in dress codes are usually a sign of changes in gender roles. For example, the dress of Roman Catholic nuns became less restrictive following Vatican II in the 1960s. As the nuns' roles within the church changed, so, too, did their dress. Additionally, restrictive roles for women are usually accompanied by restrictions in women's dress, in the form of either dress codes or physically restrictive clothing.

Clothing can be used visually to provide distinctions between the sacred and the profane, especially in the symbolic separation of the ethno-religious subculture from a dominant culture. As religious groups encounter social change, dress often symbolically becomes important and certain items of a religious group's clothing may be classified as sacred in contrast to what is considered profane. Clothing then is used intentionally to visually separate these religious groups from the larger culture. Often, the rules as to dress codes are imposed by male clergy on female members of the community. Thus, patriarchal religious societies intentionally use dress codes to maintain a gendered imbalance of power.

With immigration and colonization, clothing figured into the power imbalance between people of different religious backgrounds. As American missionaries in the nineteenth century encountered indigenous peoples, clothing almost immediately became an issue. Christian missionaries advanced their own ethnocentric perceptions of appropriate behavior and dress and, often through subtle coercion, guided the acculturation of indigenous peoples. Missionaries have often taken on the role of introducing Western clothing to indigenous people as a means of "civilizing the natives." In some cases, the transformation to Western-style clothing expressed a religious group's

need to dominate an indigenous culture. In other cases, a religious group immigrating to America voluntarily made changes to their dress to facilitate their assimilation into the new society. Occasionally, however, a reciprocal relationship developed in which the indigenous group willingly took on the dress of the more powerful religious group. Strategic shifts from traditional dress to Western-style dress among the Dakota tribes in Minnesota were somewhat voluntary, for example. Similarly, European Jews who immigrated to America often used dress as a means of blending into the larger society. Hasidic Jews, however, chose to reflect their ethnicity by retaining fossilized fashion to intentionally separate themselves from the larger American culture.

The interaction between religion and culture is fascinating. Dress can be a window into the social world, which is bound by a tacit set of rules, customs, conventions, and rituals that guide face-to-face interaction. Self-presentation and self-promotion are used by people to visually present identity that is considered by their group to be in keeping with their religious values. From Christianity and Judaism to Islam, dress plays a pivotal role in religious expression. Dress figures prominently in these religious cultures as a means of representing, sometimes concurrently, both constraint and individuality. Members of each group actively construct their own lives and use dress sym-

bolically to express religious beliefs, adaptation to social change, and conformity to religious authority.

—Linda B. Arthur

#### SEE ALSO

Catholicism in America: Vatican II; Islam in America; Judaism in America; New Religious Traditions: Communitarian Movements; Protestantism in America: Evangelicalism and Gender, Puritanism

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## ECSTASY

The ecstatic human body has been the subject of some contemporary sociological speculation and debate. Many social theorists have argued that the modern body is deprived of ecstatic experience: In other words, there is an "ecstasy deficit" in American culture. For "primitives," ecstasy seemed easy: Shamanism and general intense spirituality coupled with sexual excess and indulgences in food and spirits all enabled the body to cultivate and hold transcendent pleasure and physical bliss and to achieve orgasm. The ancient Greeks developed this technique into a religious movement through their worship of Dionysus. Thus, the Dionysian principle came to signal the cultivation of physical ecstasy. In sharp contrast to

this received theory, however, some social theorists have asserted that the modern American body has developed distinct and effective ways to experience ecstatic states; more, these ecstatic methods have become part of the cultural mainstream. The Dionysian principle, they say, is alive and well in the United States today.

The term "ecstasy" comes from the Greek *ekstasis*, which means literally "to be placed outside." According to anthropological studies of religion, the cultivation of ecstasy in human experience is most often precipitated by belief in the possession of an individual by a deity and/or a spirit. That is, ecstasy occurs when a human body is captured and controlled by an

external, spiritual entity: Ecstatic religious experience eventuates when a person loses, or perhaps better, relinquishes, control of his or her body, mind, and soul to undergo a period of spiritual, psychological, and physical transcendence at the behest of a supernatural being. This ecstatic episode may be marked by the loss of bodily motor skills, fainting, unrecognizable speech and utterances, and strained bodily contortions, which can mimic the gestures of certain animals, such as snakes. The accessory phenomena associated with ecstasy are distinctive markers of shamanism as well: “speaking in tongues, prophesying, clairvoyance, and transmission of messages from the dead” (Lewis 1989, 15). Religious enthusiasts report the sensation of euphoria while in ecstasy, and also the feeling of electricity surging through the body.

I. M. Lewis, anthropologist and author of the seminal work on ecstasy, suggested that ecstatic religious experience is only rendered intelligible when located within its social and cultural frame of reference. Within the variegated American frame, the literal definition of ecstasy—to be placed outside—best serves a hermeneutics of ecstatic religious practice. Lewis argued that spirit possession and its attendant ecstatic performance confer religious authority—a form of symbolic capital—on the marginal members of a given social order: the poor, the oppressed, children, and especially women. To speak with the voice of the divine, or to speak and act after having been publicly chosen as the receptacle of the divine, is to give voice and power to the formerly mute and weak. Ecstasy provides the religious engine that can mobilize social agents to advantageously navigate cultural terrain. Or, as studies have shown, it can at once exacerbate social inequities and quiet potential protest, deepen pain, intensify fear, and perpetuate the status quo by mystifying injustice and by dissolving material discomfort into moments of spiritual utopia.

In the 1830s, French sociological observer of American nationalism Alexis de Tocqueville noted the propensity of some Americans toward forms of what he called “enthusiastic spirituality.” As he saw it, residual Puritanism, citizenship, and capitalism tied antebellum Americans together firmly in bonds of material accumulation and spatial expansion. “Although the desire to acquire the good things of this world is the dominant passion among Americans,” argued de

Tocqueville, “there are momentary respites when their souls seem suddenly to break the restraining bonds of matter and rush impetuously heavenward” (de Tocqueville [1835–1840] 1990, 534). De Tocqueville spoke here especially of the Second Great Awakening (c. 1801–1830), an intense evangelical revival wherein the borders between spiritual “enthusiasm” and ecstasy were unstable, fluid, and shifting.

In postmodern America, ecstasy is most fruitfully understood, more broadly, not as the exclusive domain of those who are perennially on the outside, but as a spiritual realm entered into by those who seek escape from—that is, who wish to be placed outside of—the spiritual void that is the legacy of the Enlightenment.

Thus, Christianity, like most major religious traditions, has unfolded a religion of the heart—emotional, pietistic, enthusiastic, ecstatic expressions through time and the body. Some Catholics and mainline Protestants alike now enjoy charismatic worship where Holy Ghost-imbued emotional states are cultivated. Weeping openly, unrestrained physical gyrations, somatic healing, and tongues, or *glossolalia*, sometimes mark such performances. This last, *glossolalia*, is the definitive characteristic of Pentecostalism—the fastest growing form of Christianity worldwide.

Beyond Pentecostals, evangelicals, and other charismatic Christians, there are many paths to ecstasy on today’s American religious map: Hasidic Jews “cling” to God in ecstatic worship known as *devekut*. Similarly, Islamic Sufism emphasizes “mystical union with God,” another form of ecstatic experience. Phenomenologically, both Hasidim and the Sufis dramatically overcome the separation between humanity and the sacred.

Along the same lines, American Spiritualists have performed spirit possession, ecstasy, and its attendant shamanic manifestations since 1848 at least. Well before that (as a result of the African diaspora) and still today, devotees of Santería and voodoo trafficked with the dead and produced ecstasy in the Americas. American philosopher William James (1842–1910) noted that mystical experience can be engendered by mind-altering drugs (even alcohol), echoing the widely held belief that some religious truths can only be fathomed through mystical, ecstatic experience—by way of sensation rather than rational thought. Small wonder, then, that the now-prevailing “designer”

drug of choice on the popular American scene is called “ecstasy,” or “x.” It is reported to produce euphoria and a sense of abandon and to heighten sexual pleasure. In late modernity, ecstatic drugs have left an indelible impression on American youth, especially since the rise of LSD in the 1960s. A new record produced by one of America’s most popular dance-club disk jockeys, Fat Boy Slim, announces that their ecstasy-oriented gathering is not actually a “rave” or “circuit party,” but church. Ecstasy, the haunting melody proclaims, will repulse problems.

When placed within the predicament of American cultural modernism, the sociology of ecstasy recalls de Tocqueville’s observation that Americans “feel imprisoned within limits from which they are apparently not allowed to escape” (de Tocqueville [1835–1840] 1990, 535). Religious enthusiasm provides Americans with the choice to be placed outside, an escape to an ecstatic space existing outside normative material and symbolic structural parameters.

—Luis León

#### SEE ALSO

African American Religions; Islam in America: Sufism in America; Native American Religions and Politics: Shamanism; New Age: Channeling; Protestantism in America: Emotion, Pentecostalism; Death: Spiritualism

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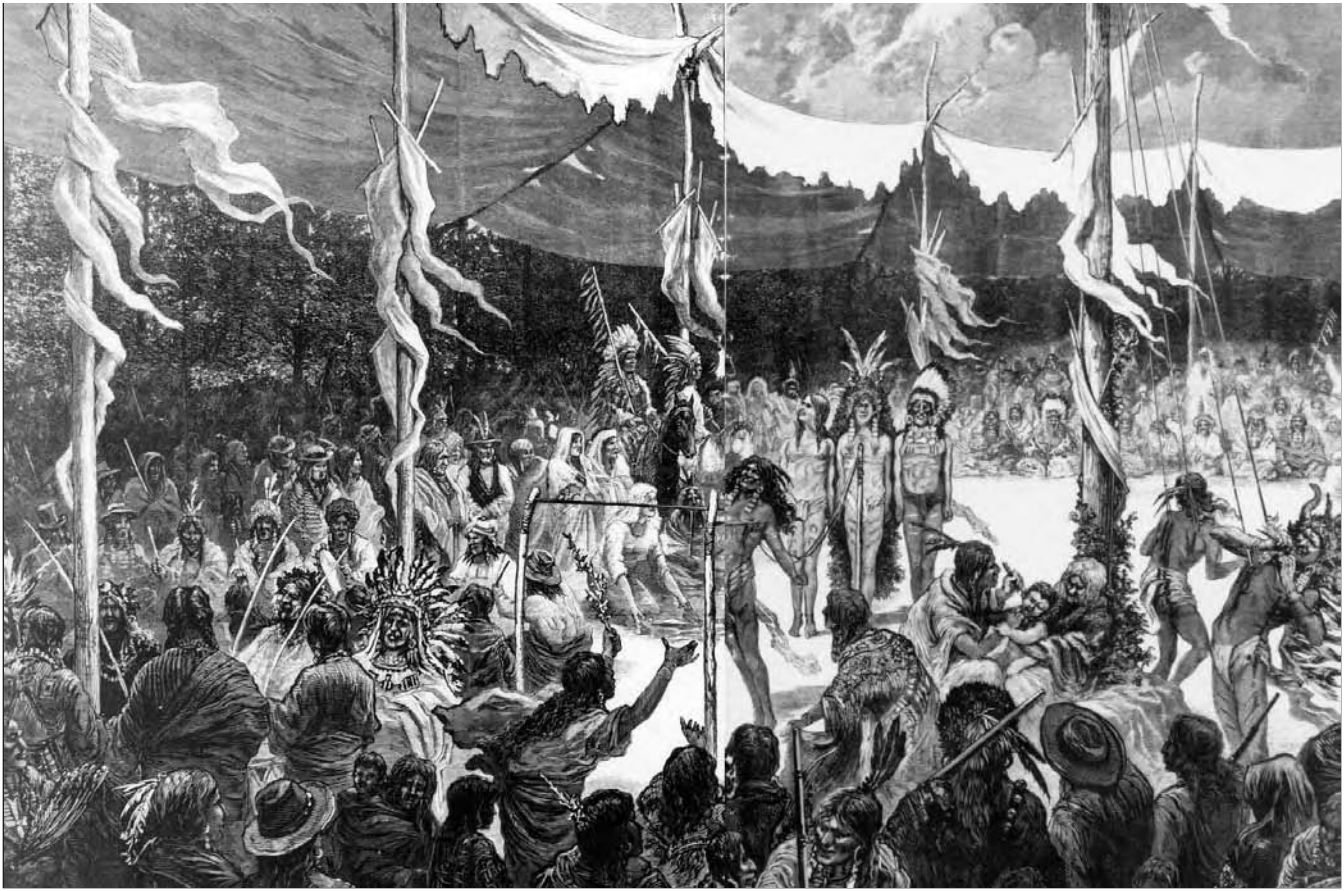
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## PAIN

The atheist-turned-theologian C. S. Lewis once described the “problem of pain” for religious believers as a question of theodicy: how to understand suffering in a world created by a good and all-powerful God. However differently religious traditions and groups have conceptualized the experience, prevention, alleviation, or glorification of physical suffering, pain marks a fundamental biological reality to which all religions must respond. As such, the distinctive discourses that surround pain within a specific religious landscape provide a fascinating lens upon the junctures of culture and biology: the places where, in Ariel Glucklich’s words, “sensation becomes representation, and conversely consciousness is experienced somatically” (Glucklich 2001, 15).

Theorists of religion have long been interested in the ways that religious practitioners have conceptualized and coped with the universal human reality of physical pain, an interest that has led to a profusion of inquiries into religious healing. Recent theorists have shifted the investigation somewhat, focusing particu-

lar attention upon groups who interpret pain as an integral, even desirable part of religious experience: a sensation that is cultivated for devotional purposes rather than simply shunned or assigned medical treatment. Practices given renewed consideration include communal habits of asceticism, initiation, pilgrimage, and martyrdom as well as more individually customized forms of self-mutilation, from wearing skin-abrasive undergarments to piercing or tattooing the skin. A crucial (if imperfect and approximate) distinction, certainly, is whether pain is inflicted from the outside by means of violence or is self-imposed. In many cases, such as rites of initiation, pain is inflicted upon young men and women or even children in order to prompt a radical identity transformation. In other cases—for instance, in forms of natural childbirth such as home birth or practices of bodily decoration, scarification, and self-mutilation—pain is either willfully self-generated or greeted appreciatively as a source of important religious and social meaning. In the words of Simone Weil, the early twentieth-century



Indian sun dance. Wood engraving, 1875 (Library of Congress)

mystic and political activist, “nothing is worse than extreme affliction which destroys the ‘I’ from outside, because after that we can no longer destroy it ourselves” (cited in Glucklich 2001, 207).

An oft-cited example of ritualized pain in an American context is the so-called Sun Dance, a broad term that encompasses certain ceremonial practices of diverse Native American groups. Owing in part to the varied events that are grouped under this category, its classification as a ritual practice remains debated (is it a sacrificial performance, for example, or a rite of renewal?). What is, however, quite clear is its reliance upon physical pain, even torture, to produce desired ends. Lengthy periods of deprivation from food and water are accompanied by dancing that engenders extreme heat, dryness, and exhaustion. In some cases, dancers’ chests are pierced and wooden poles are inserted as skewers, attaching the dancers to a Sun Dance pole toward which they run before racing backwards to tear themselves free. Leaving basic physical needs unsatisfied and enduring severe physi-

cal pain, year after year for many dancers, are acts performed in the service of higher ends, effecting a transformation of complicated sets of feelings, attitudes, and commonplace presumptions about earthly existence. Far from being avoided, pain is passionately sought as a kind of purging fire for the half-conscious self.

Scholarly attention has also been directed to what Robert Orsi has called the “devotional ethos of sickness and pain” in American Catholicism (Orsi 1996, 150). In various times and places, Catholics have viewed pain as a vital component of holiness: the *sine qua non* of true sainthood. Whether hereditary or unforeseen, biologically based or happenstance, physical suffering has often been seen as a divine gift of grace or as an opportunity for deepening one’s faith; Catholic writing has been suffused with exhaustive descriptions of bodies in excruciating (yet exquisite) pain. Christ’s suffering on the cross has been imitated in the severest terms, from acts of fasting and self-inflicted physical discomfort (flagellation, walking

barefoot for long distances in pilgrimage, intentionally chafing the skin) to literal re-creations of the stigmatic or crucified body (Glucklich 2001, 3).

Stories of chronic pain have frequently played an important role in accounts of American Protestant leaders, particularly in evangelical and Pentecostal circles. Charles Parham, a holiness leader who helped usher in the Pentecostal movement at the turn of the twentieth century, often recounted his invalidism prior to fulfilling his call to ministry, and he was apt to describe his own physical torments as “mercies in disguise.” His words were part of a narrative script in American Protestantism as old on these shores as the Puritans and still popular long after Parham departed the scene. Insistently attached to the theme of God’s healing power, and relentlessly focused upon the body, evangelicals in this tradition (using the term in its broadest sense) have been concerned first with analyzing pain and only secondarily with relieving it. Pain, in such cases, though not necessarily viewed as directly sent by God, has been thought to be divinely allowed so that the suffering soul would be wrenched into awareness of his or her vulnerability before the holy throne. Once again, pain was welcomed, at least in hindsight, as a provocation to greater sanctity: a test that helped distinguish the saintly from the damned.

As the landscape of American religion has diversified, manifold other ways of conceiving, activating, and mitigating pain have risen to the fore in ways sometimes consonant with modern medicine but in other venues clearly oppositional to it. Practices of disciplining the body’s desires (sexual, nutritional, or otherwise) in search of higher spiritual ends, as seen in many American Buddhist and Hindu communities, sometimes involve painful experiences—though these are just as likely to be termed “ecstatic” or “euphoric” by practitioners. In other cases, although pain itself may not be desired, it is the necessary by-product of a desired end: for instance, a particular kind of fit, slender, muscular, or young-looking body (Griffith 2000). But the pursuit of pain is by no means

universally accepted: Some feminists, for instance, rue the celebration of pain in religious contexts, exploring its disproportional effects upon women and children, often without their consent. From this perspective, the only proper religious response to pain is compassion, a stance accompanied by attempts to alleviate suffering wherever possible. For others, such as women committed to experiencing the full pain of childbirth, pain can and should be reclaimed as a source of religious meaning and agency, an occasion replete with potential to “transform and enhance relationships, whether with God, their husbands, or their children” (Klassen 2001, 212). Such vast interpretive differences continue to mark the intersections between socially constituted practices of religion, on the one hand, and universal yet culturally specific instances of pain, on the other.

—R. Marie Griffith

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Catholicism in America; Native American Religions and Politics; Protestantism in America: Pentecostalism; Ritual and Performance

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## PIERCING

Piercing in modern American culture can be traced to gay culture that blossomed after World War II, through the American punk scene of the 1970s, to contemporary fashion trends and more extreme practices in performance art. It often represents an attempt at physical and spiritual transformation. Absent in the early twentieth century and uncommon in mainstream life in the mid-twentieth century, piercing was considered deviant until recent decades. Because body practices that celebrated and adorned the body were associated with ethnic minorities such as gypsies (who were known for wearing jewelry) or indigenous African or South Pacific cultures (known for tattooing, scarring, or altering the body) that were considered inferior and barbaric, body modification was often associated with sexual deviance. These attitudes gradually changed in the second half of the twentieth century. Although a woman with pierced ears was considered disreputable in the early part of the twentieth century, ear piercing for women became common practice in the 1960s and 1970s. Gay men began to pierce one ear as a mark of affiliation with gay culture, and ear piercing and other adornment soon spread to men in mainstream culture in the 1980s. In the 1970s, punks began to pierce themselves with safety pins and other ornamental devices. Soon mainstream fashion adopted multiple pierces as part of a vogue for the punk look, and piercing lost its association with gay culture. In the 1980s, piercing fans began to publish magazines about piercing and specialized piercing shops opened on the West Coast. A man named Fakir Musafar, who practiced extreme body modification, popularized the idea of “modern primitivism,” also known as “primal body art” or “tribal body art.” Modern primitivism adapts body modification practices of other cultures, such as earlobe stretching adopted from certain African tribes.

As all kinds of body modification became popular in the 1990s, what were once considered extreme pierces became available at specialized piercing shops across the nation. Eyebrow, nose, tongue, nipple, navel, and genital pierces became more common, and piercings appeared in music videos and fashion shows, accelerating the trend. Some pierces were adopted from other cultures, such as the custom of

piercing the flesh below the lower lip (a labret pierce) adopted from Inuit cultures. Although some piercing fans claim that the pierces have spiritual significance based on “ancient” or “tribal” customs, a close look at many of the cultures from which pierces are adopted shows that their significance is magical rather than strictly spiritual in the traditional sense. For example, a nose pierced with the pincer of a beetle is said by some New Guinea tribes to confer the fierce fighting spirit of the beetle upon the wearer. Other piercing signifies social status or wealth by displaying expensive jewelry.

Some evidence exists that certain Native American tribes pierced as part of social and spiritual rituals, and practitioners of primal body art have adapted forms of these customs. Extreme forms of piercing are sometimes undertaken to induce altered states of consciousness and hopefully a state of spiritual clarity. A suspension procedure of piercing the skin with multiple hooks held in tension by ropes or wires is an adaptation of the Native American Mandan ritual called the Oh-Kee-Pa ceremony. In this initiation ritual, men tolerated being hung by hooks piercing the flesh of their chest. During the ceremony, also called the Sun Dance ritual by other Native Americans (for instance the Blackfoot), the initiates would often experience visions induced by prolonged pain. Although not all contemporary practitioners aspire to spiritual states or visions, some do, both via the ritual of piercing and through the prolonged pain of suspension, which probably releases endorphins in the body to produce an altered state of consciousness. Often the psychological process of preparing for a painful procedure, and support from friends and others in a public setting, contribute to the atmosphere of an initiation ritual and communal, perhaps spiritual, bonding.

—Kim Hewitt

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Native American Religions and Politics; Sexuality: Sexual Identities

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## TATTOOING

Tattooing has long held religious, spiritual, and social connotations both in the United States and abroad. Perhaps the most common explicitly religious practices in tattooing come from Chicano cultures in the Pacific Southwest states of California, New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas, but if we consider spirituality more broadly, tattooing and religion are quite closely related. The three most widely recognized religious affiliations with tattooing are Catholicism, Japanese mythology, and “modern primitivism.”

Many have interpreted Leviticus 19:28 (“Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you”) as a proscription against tattooing in all its forms. Some have gone so far as to suggest that one would be prohibited from being buried in an Orthodox Jewish cemetery if she or he were tattooed. Others have claimed that such an interpretation is overly rigid. From this perspective, memorial and explicitly religious tattoos (constituting a form of graven image) are forbidden. Nevertheless, Christians—and especially Catholics—have a long and rich tradition of making permanent and visible expressions of their faith on their bodies. This tradition dates back at least to the practices of Coptic and Abyssinian Christians, who often tattooed crosses and other Christian imagery slightly above their wrists. These tattoos reference Paul’s letter to the Galatians (6:17) where he writes, “From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”

Among southwestern Chicanos, religious tattoos tend to take several distinct forms. The most explicitly religious among these is the Virgin of Guadalupe. This image is often reserved for the back, which is one of the few spaces on the body large enough to accommodate an appropriately intricate and deferential rendition. Another common image is a pair of hands

in prayer. Some explicitly religious images coincide with prison culture. For example, images of a suffering Christ and crucifixion scenes are common among inmates, who often define such scenes as symbolic of their experiences in prison. Finally, the “pachuco cross,” a small cross usually applied with a sewing needle and India ink, is often placed between the index finger and thumb. This image was co-opted by gangs in the 1940s and 1950s and now is less an expression of religious fervor than it is an expression of affiliation with a tough, street-savvy, urban way of life. Chicano tattooing is usually characterized by single-needle or “fine-line” attention to detail and monochromaticism, which stems from prohibitions against tattooing (and subsequently, convicts’ access to colored pigments) in prison.

Few would call the “traditional Americana” tattoo aesthetic adorning sailors and carnival attractions “religious”; however, any comprehensive discussion of religion and tattoos must include it. The most common religious images used in traditional Americana designs include crucifixion scenes, memorials, Rock of Ages, and the Last Supper. Although tattoos depicting gravestones (and thus, memorials) are often quite small, the others are usually reserved for larger “canvases” such as the back or chest. These designs often gave sailors hope and confidence as they embarked on dangerous and unpredictable sea voyages. Contemporary tattoo artists, led by Fred Corbin in Oakland, California, have updated these designs for contemporary artistic sensibilities, making them much more colorful and dramatic.

Japanese mythology has had profound influences on American artistic tattooing since the late 1960s, when tattoo artists Don Ed Hardy of San Francisco and Cliff Raven of Chicago introduced Japanese full-body design aesthetics to the American public. The



images most commonly co-opted from Japanese mythology include demons (many of whom protect the tattooee), dragons, and carp. Although many Americans see demons and dragons as dangerous and frightening, their intended meanings are often quite the opposite. Among the most common demons, for example, is Hannya, who is said to protect people from evil spirits. Dragons symbolize the Taoist focus on the resolution of opposite forces, as they breathe fire but live in water. Carp symbolize perseverance in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds.

The Japanese aesthetic—covering the entire body in a single design—has also influenced American tattooing in less specifically religious ways. The American “tattoo renaissance” that began in the early 1970s has combined the Japanese approach to extensive bodily coverage with specifically American iconography. Although many of these designs (or “collections,” as they are often called) are not overtly religious or spiritual, they do go back to general principles of Eastern philosophy that espouse the interrelated and interconnected influences of all facets of the universe, as symbolized in the connection of disparate images into a unified collection.

Finally, some aspects of contemporary artistic tattooing have roots in “modern primitivism.” Those espousing such a connection often claim that tattooing provides them with a means to connect to a simpler, less technological, more spiritual past. They reference as spiritual ancestry a loose amalgamation of Native American and Polynesian ritual, often combining tattooing with piercing and cicatrization (or scarification).

The modern primitive culture’s most widely known advocate is a onetime advertising executive named Fakir Musafar. Musafar is best known for his notion of “body play,” which involves bodily alter-

ation and intense sensation as means to access deeply rooted spiritual essences of the human condition. His most widely practiced methods include tattooing, cicatrization (which many call “the kiss of fire”), piercing, corsetry, and bondage.

Modern primitivism is often, though not always, associated with “tribal” tattoos. Tribal tattoos are usually characterized by their solid black shading, abstract representation, and substantial bodily coverage (a single design can cover an upper arm or the entire back). This style of tattooing is most often associated with Leo Zulueta, whose most apparent influences are Micronesian, Tahitian, and Maori. Contemporary Americans often use these designs to connect with a somehow more spiritually satisfying pretechnological past.

—D. Angus Vail

#### SEE ALSO

Asian American Religious Communities; Catholicism in America: Our Lady of Guadalupe; Latina/Latino Religious Communities; Orthodox Christianity

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## WOUNDING

At the intersection of religion, sexuality, art, and American popular culture is the phenomenon of wounding. Although wounding occurs in diverse forms (from piercing and tattooing to scarification, amputation, binding, and branding), it is best under-

stood in the present context as intentional body modification, associated with religious beliefs or forces, in which the skin is opened and marked in a conspicuous and often permanent manner. Nearly every religious system expresses, at one time or another, a con-

cern with bodily wounds, whether in the context of ritual performance or in its central stories and icons. Wounds have traditionally marked group affiliation, and they often accompany a change of status through an initiatory ordeal or rite of passage. The Judaic tradition, for example, maintains the ritual of circumcision as one of its salient features, and Christianity has as its central motif the image of a lacerated Christ nailed to a cross. But in addition to these more familiar examples, the variety of wounding has been observed in religious contexts worldwide: in the scarification practices of several peoples of Africa, the piercings of certain Central and South American societies, and in the hooking and tearing of flesh enacted in the Sun Dance ceremonies of many Native American tribes, to name just a few.

In America, body modification, and wounding in particular, has a complicated and ambivalent history. On the one hand, the Judeo-Christian tradition, which has informed much of the social and ethical climate of the West, places a prohibition on wounding. Leviticus 19:28 explicitly forbids intentional incisions and markings of the body: "You shall not make any cutting in your flesh on account of the dead or tattoo any marks upon you: I am the Lord." Deuteronomy 14:1 seconds this sentiment. On the other hand, the Christian affirmation of Jesus as the Word incarnate complicates the matter. This injured embodiment of God in the form of the crucified Christ is valorized in much Christian art, and Christ's wounds have been the site of meditation for a host of mystics, ranging from St. Francis of Assisi (1181–1226), whose identification with Christ culminated in stigmatization (the bearing of the wounds of Christ), to the German Henry Suso (1300–1366), whose mortifications are said to have included inscribing his flesh with the name of Jesus. Although such extreme forms of bodily identification with Christ are unknown in contemporary America, this mystical tradition has underwritten some of the recent fascination with the bodily aspects of religious practices.

But it is not the Judeo-Christian tradition alone that inspires religious wounding today. In fact, much of the wounding now prevalent in America takes place less in conjunction with this tradition than in rebellion against it. Although it is true that tattooing is presently growing in popularity among certain Christian populations, as evidenced by the formation of the

Christian Tattoo Association, the more radical forms of wounding, such as scarification and piercing, have been adopted by the countercultural movement known as "modern primitivism."

The term "primitive" is fraught with problems. It has been used pejoratively to indicate "undeveloped" or "inferior" societies and has been employed to name, in a homogenizing sweep, any non-Western culture. Although the use of this term among modern primitives is far from unproblematic (relying, as it often does, on the uninformed notion that "primitive" peoples are uniformly pristine, innocent, sexually liberated, benevolent, and without cruelty), it can nevertheless be distinguished from the vein of anthropological thought that has viewed primitive people as intellectually lacking or developmentally arrested. Rather, modern primitives seek to embrace certain aspects of traditional societies that call into question the Western ideal of progress.

In particular, modern primitives have embraced a variety of wounding practices as a means of spiritual and sexual liberation and as a mode of critique of Western civilization. Heading the modern primitivist vanguard is Fakir Musafar (1930–). Adopting his name from a nineteenth-century Sufi known to insert daggers into his body, Fakir has provided a model of modern primitivism that seeks to investigate the range of sensations available to the human body and to invigorate the spiritual life of its practitioners. Inspired by photographs of pierced and scarred persons in *National Geographic*, Fakir began experimenting with body modifications in the 1930s at the age of six or seven. In the decades that followed, he has subjected his body to a wide array of modifications, including tattoos, piercings, encumberments, puncturings, and suspension from hooks inserted in his flesh. Although few, if any, other modern primitives have undergone this variety of modifications, Fakir's motivations for engaging in these activities seem to reflect the attitudes of most modern primitives.

Fakir has insisted, for example, that the Western ideal of progress, coupled with an emphasis on the accumulation of material goods and a tendency toward cultural homogenization, stifles "primal urges." Fakir and other modern primitives indulge in practices of wounding in an attempt to liberate these repressed desires. The more drastic examples of wounding are claimed to be the most effective, both sensually and

spiritually. Drawing from rituals and rites of diverse traditional societies, these modern primitives exhibit a religio-sexual pastiche of practices that aims at ever greater intensity of experience.

One source of inspiration for modern primitives is the scarification once prominent among many African peoples, such as the Nuba, the Dinka, and the Bangwa. In some cases, the children of these groups are scarred at puberty, and then again later in life, when their skin is lifted with a hooked thorn, then sliced with a small blade. The resultant crescent-shaped scars not only provide a durable commemoration of the transition to adulthood and a visible mark of group association but also grant aesthetic and erotic benefits. Indeed, the scars are regarded as beautiful and are valued for the arousal they provide when fondled in sexual encounters. Similarly, modern primitives have cited scarification as an exhilarating moment of excessive sensation, claiming that the process creates new erogenous zones. Moreover, the pain endured in such an ordeal is frequently described in quasi-religious terms of ecstasy and enhanced spirituality.

This invigorated spirituality is inseparable from the sense of community from which it derives and to which it tends. Like other factions of wound enthusiasts in the contemporary West, such as Punk rockers or those involved in the more extreme forms of sadomasochism (the infliction or reception of pain for sexual pleasure), modern primitives want to mark themselves as distinct from mainstream society and to proclaim group affiliation. They often carry out the woundings in a ritualistic setting that mimics some rites of passage in primitive societies. It is on these counts that their wounds differ most drastically from, say, the wounds of cosmetic surgery. In the latter case, the injuries are covered up as best as possible; they are meant to disappear without a trace, and are performed in order to attain a greater conformity with dominant notions of beauty. But the wounds of modern primitives are meant to be seen, even if only in certain settings. They remain conspicuous, both as marks of differentiation and as signs of membership to a group of like-minded individuals. Indeed, visibility, like durability, is crucial to the understanding of these wounds, which are bodily proclamations of a way of life that stands in flagrant opposition to the values of mainstream American culture. However, it

is nonetheless evident that, as is often the case, this subculture is being subsumed by popular culture, as the wounds of the primitives are converted into fashionable decor for modern consumers.

Running roughly parallel with the emergence of interest in body modification in the 1960s and 1970s was the development of performance art. Focusing on the body of the artist, some performances have included stagings of woundings. Among the most celebrated performers of this genre are Chris Burden and Orlan, both of whom incorporate the religious symbolism of wounds into their works. Burden is perhaps best known for his piece *Trans-fixed* (1974), in which he was nailed through his palms to the roof of a running Volkswagen. For Burden, the scars that remained after this "crucifixion" mark a rebellion against American consumerism. The French artist Orlan also appropriates Christian symbolism, though to feminist-polemical ends. Orlan's famous Soho performance, *Omnipresence* (1993), involved the live video transmission, broadcast to Web sites around the world, of the artist undergoing plastic surgery designed to transform her face into an idealized hybrid of classical visages, including Botticelli's *Venus* and Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*. This event was part of a series of surgeries, the wounds of which Orlan explicitly associated with those of Christ. However, the bloody surgical rituals that she orchestrated in these public displays of calculated abjection were also critiques of ideals of bodily perfection. Although the surgeries were cosmetic in nature, the documentation, broadcast, and subsequent collection of remnants of blood and fragments of skin all ensured that the wounds, in some sense, remained open—visible reminders of the traumas suffered by women under oppressive societal norms of beauty.

The category of trauma represents an emerging current of interest in wounding. Originally referring to physical damage, *trauma* (from the Greek for "wound") has come to refer to psychological injury, especially since the writings of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. In relation to religious phenomena, trauma theory has been used to analyze the writings and practices of Christian mystics who have sought an ecstatic loss of self by way of identification with the passion of Christ. In a similar vein, the proliferation of translations from the French of Georges Bataille's writings, which frequently evoke images of wound-

ing, has afforded this body of work a growing readership in America. Bataille sought a rupture of the self by way of meditation on images of bodily laceration to achieve an experience of ecstasy shot through with fleshly sensation. His fascination with sacrifice, auto-mutilation, sexuality, transgression, and the sacred affirmed what might be said of all these diverse practices of wounding: that whether it is an expression of piety or rebellion, differentiation or conformity, beauty or degradation, the wounded flesh is endowed with the aura of a sacred celebration, at once troubling and brilliant.

—Jeremy Biles

**SEE ALSO**

Islam in America; Sufism in America; Native American Religions and Politics; Popular Culture; Ritual and Performance; Sexuality

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# DEATH



**D**eath is an inescapable fact of human life. It is also a wellspring of inspiration for religious behavior and the religious imagination. Around the globe and throughout time, the human experience with death has breathed life into religious movements, moral communities, spiritual practices—a variety of cultural phenomena integrally related to making meaning and orienting the body in a larger cosmic vision. Even before the sacred beginnings of the Puritan era, religious life in North America thrived on the linkages between death, religion, and culture. From the colonial era to the present, however, religious preoccupations with death, and keeping the dead in place, have made an indelible mark on the contours and content of American cultural systems.

Religious traditions make sense of death for adherents and provide a familiar structure for ritual action to dispose of what remains. Although these traditions are born out of encounters with human finitude, their success hinges in large part on how convincingly they account for, and claim to transcend, the mysteries of death. This is true when someone dies of old age as well as when more complicated, politically charged circumstances surround the death of an individual, as in the case of euthanasia, for example, where conflicting views make consensual interpretations difficult.

But religion in America is not limited to the traditional forms of expression found in Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and other familiar systems. Instead, religious sensibilities find creative expression in ways that spill out from traditional boundaries and institutional frameworks. Religious life often resists containment in these formal structures; indeed, it thrives in a wide assortment of cultural activities that bring life out of death and among many types of moral commitments that secure order in the face of disorder. Rituals of death surrounding the AIDS quilt, or those spontaneously enacted on roadsides after fatal collisions, are only two examples of religious expression in the wake of death outside of specific traditions and institutions.

In the history of the United States, cultural responses to death have exhibited a range of religious

characteristics, some conventionally religious and some stretching the boundaries of convention. The strong ties between religion and death in America, both yesterday and today, should not be surprising; Americans have long been concerned with the delicate task of managing relations between the living and the dead and drawing social sustenance from the extinction of life. But Americans also participate in multiple cultural systems of meaning and communal affiliations. Naturally, in this social climate it is difficult to argue for a single American “way” of death. Indeed, from the beginning years of the republic, death could acquire a range of meanings and instigate many different ritual movements depending on the community affected. The contexts in which religion, death, and culture interact on the American scene have been complex and varied.

### **Death, American-Style**

Over the course of the twentieth century, American experiences with death were shaped by two formidable institutions that emerged at the beginning of the century and soon came to assume authority over matters of the body at the end of life: hospitals and funeral homes. Up until the early decades of the twentieth century, death usually occurred in the home with friends, family, and, in some cases, religious figures by the bedside. Dying and death in the home, and in bed, kept the experience of mortality firmly ensconced in domestic symbolism, with traditional religious meanings providing both succor for the living and direction in the afterlife for the dead.

By the turn of the century, numerous social, economic, and demographic forces began to reshape the details of dying and death, reframing the cultural scripts that gave these experiences meaning. For example, mortality rates changed dramatically at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. What demographic historians identify as a “mortality revolution” altered the social realities of death in significant ways—people began to live longer, infant mortality rates dropped, and causes of death shifted as medical breakthroughs and public health



policies made an impact on the health of American citizens.

The rise of hospitals, and the expanding cultural authority of doctors during the same period, transformed the experience of dying into something alien rather than familiar, scientific rather than symbolic, hidden rather than accessible to view. The new spaces for dying were isolated from the comforting presence of friends and family and gave medical professionals unimpeded access to the body of the patient in the fight to save life at all costs.

With the support of an increasingly sophisticated arsenal of medical instruments and technologies, many hospital doctors confronted death as an enemy posing the ultimate threat to the living patient's body—the critical field of battle where medical experts tested their knowledge and skills and faithfully demonstrated their commitment to saving life. Indeed, traces of pious dedication in the hearts and minds of doctors and nurses in the hospital setting, and the private religious thoughts and actions of patients, ensured that the scientific logic organizing the space of medicine could not keep religion outside hospital doors.

When death did inevitably win the war, the dead body generally was transferred out of the hospital and into the funeral home, where it would be prepared to make its final exit from living society. Here, in the hands of local undertakers, the body would be made accessible for viewing one last time and rehabilitated as a beckoning religious presence for the community of relations who gathered around it. Thanks to embalming, and its rapid acceptance throughout the nation in the early twentieth century, America's new ritual specialists managed many of the details for the final, and often most religious, passage in life.

In these early decades of the century, funeral homes began to emerge in towns across the nation and undertakers assumed greater cultural authority over the dead body. These undertakers, also known by the more professional-sounding name "funeral directors" and the rather awkward-sounding "mortician," often worked in close collaboration with local religious leaders in churches and synagogues to ensure that the final passage had the proper mixture of decorum, solemnity, and social value for the community. The tremendous, undeniable financial growth of the funeral industry over the first half of the century—

a period characterized by venomous attacks against the industry in the press and the production of a deeply negative undertaker stereotype in popular culture—highlights the spectacular success of American funeral specialists and the trust their neighbors and clients had in them.

The second half of the century has seen some dramatic changes in the ways Americans dispose of their dead, particularly in terms of the growing popularity of cremation. This alternative to burial, widely used in certain regions of the country, especially the West and Southwest, represents a complex development in American views on death, the corpse, and the funeral. Originally given cultural viability after the publication of Jessica Mitford's scathing attack on traditional American funerals in *The American Way of Death* (1963), cremation has become more commonplace because of consumer outrage at the high cost of funerals and because of shifting religious commitments to bodies and memories.

Numerous Hindu, Buddhist, and other large communities throughout the country follow specific traditional obligations in regard to cremation. When close relations die, they draw on deeply rooted religious cosmologies that demand cremation as part of the transition from life to life or for the final liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth. Ritual alterations inevitably occur in the American funeral home, but communities from Southeast Asia, East Asia, and other parts of the world have ensured that burning bodies is now a routine practice in the funeral business.

Changes in immigration law during the 1960s brought more and more people from cremation-friendly countries to American shores, but even more important for the future of this method of disposal was growing popular acceptance among the white upper and middle classes. In these communities, cremation did not necessarily signal a secular turn away from funerals; instead, it provided surviving community members with an opportunity to craft their own meaningful memorial service catered to the personality of the deceased and the freedom to choose the ultimate location for the sacred remains left after the fire.

In addition to institutional structures that govern dying and dead bodies, another national characteristic of death in America is the intimate link between bloodshed and patriotism. The connection between

sacrifice of citizen soldiers in military action and regeneration of national pride and commitment among the general population is a familiar one in modern nation-states in general and in U.S. history in particular. From the Revolutionary War in the eighteenth century to the War on Terrorism in the twenty-first, memories of victims who died at the hands of enemies have sustained the country during its most trying times, nourishing the deeply religious, though not exclusively Christian, source of national identity that gives American history cosmic significance.

Religious nationalism dominates the public arena when war is raging and American soldiers are dying. No conflict demonstrates this tendency better than the Civil War, which divided the nation between North and South over the future of slavery. In the midst of this crisis, voices on both sides linked the sacrifices of soldiers on the battlefields with the two opposing visions of national destiny and glory. The Gettysburg Address, given by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863, and one of the nation's most sacred documents, gives expression to the desire to inspire national unity while literally standing with the dead.

If rhetorical flourishes eloquently intertwine national meaning and loss of human life, the material landscape offers evidence of the symbolic, memorial power of the dead in the American psyche. War battlefields and monuments, national cemeteries, the Mall in Washington, D.C.—these and other examples demonstrate how the consecration of national sacred spaces, which shape collective memory and patriotic ideals, draws life from materially remembering the dead in shared public places.

### **Death and Religious Communities in the United States**

The broad themes of death in America—its public characteristics, its role in national memory, institutional oversight of the dying process, and key elements of disposal—are worked out in more limited, culturally specific ways in various religious communities as they attempt to make sense of human mortality. Although Jewish and Christian traditions shape responses to death for a large majority of Americans, a great variety of religious traditions in the United States offer alternative visions of the meaning of death and of appropriate ritual actions to put the dead

in place. A brief glimpse into three different traditions will illustrate the range and depth of these alternative views and indicate the variety of connections between death, religion, and culture in the United States.

Native Americans exhibit a vast range of cultural tendencies and social systems of meaning and organization, so it is difficult, if not impossible, to make any generalizations about Native American practices surrounding death. Within each Native community, the death of a member often initiates a ritual chain reaction that symbolically links the loss to larger cosmic realities expressed in traditional myths. A well-known death ritual among the Lakota communities in the plains, for example, is “Ghost Keeping,” one of the seven rites imparted to the people by the White Buffalo Calf Woman. These seven rites have been described by various scholars, including anthropologist Joseph Epes Brown, who reported on Black Elk’s explanation of these rituals in *The Sacred Pipe* (1953).

After giving the Lakota the Sacred Pipe, a critical ritual instrument symbolically and practically at the heart of ceremonial life, White Buffalo Calf Woman revealed seven religious rites, including the Sun Dance, the vision quest, making relations, girls’ puberty ceremonies, and throwing the ball. Ghost Keeping, or Keeping of the Soul, is performed when someone—often, though not always, a young child—dies and the living desire to maintain the presence of the ghost for a period of time, which ranges from six months to one year. A ghost may be kept because the living want to make sure the enactment of proper rituals leads it to its final, sacred destination and to ensure that the community itself remains conscious of death in life.

Ghost Keeping requires that, with the assistance of a community ritual specialist, the family of the deceased keep a lock of hair in a special bundle that also might include the pipe used to initiate the rite and other special, personal objects identified by the family. The father cradles this bundle in his arms while riding horseback around the community and then places it in a tepee, where it is cared for by close relations who perform specific actions, such as ritually feeding the ghost.

When the mourning period is over, the ritual specialist is invited to assist in the final release of the ghost. At this time the ghost is fed one last time, then ritually freed to continue its journey. The family of

the deceased give away all their belongings during the ceremony to those in attendance. Although they are left with nothing by the end of the rite, in time relatives and friends will offer the family new items, such as clothing and shelter, that are necessary for their continued survival as community members.

Euro-Americans have always been fascinated with Native American dead, both as disembodied, spiritual presences in works of literature, poetry, film, and the like and as skeletal remains, which have been extremely valuable to grave robbers, storytellers, museum curators, archaeologists, phrenologists, and anthropologists. Native American dead have haunted the popular religious imagination as well, from early colonial times, when Puritans feared malevolent Indian spirits who were thought to disturb the peace of the living, to the present, when New Age channelers have claimed to give voice to the wisdom of the Native ancestors.

Alleged communication with one particular Indian chief in the mid-nineteenth century led two young girls to initiate one of the more popular religious movements in American history. Spiritualism emerged as a full-fledged social phenomenon after Margaret and Kate Fox, who lived in upstate New York, claimed to have crossed the great divide between the living and the dead to make contact with an Indian chief named Mr. Splitfoot.

Despite the fact that one of the sisters ultimately confessed to the story being a hoax, the Spiritualism movement flourished after the Civil War and into the twentieth century. Drawing from a deep well of popular religious sentiments about the life of the spirit independent of the body, and from less accessible learned discussions from such critically important European thinkers as Emmanuel Swedenborg, American Spiritualists crafted a distinctive form of religious community that centered on interaction with the dead. Crucial to the Spiritualist worldview is one simple fact: Death is not the end.

Spiritualists in the late nineteenth century were particularly drawn toward the idea that death brought spiritual progression as well as liberation from a fragile and ultimately useless physical container; they firmly believed there were open lines of communication between this world and the next and sought to make contact with the dead through various means. Seances and other public demonstrations promising

scientific, empirical evidence of these truths enticed a number of Americans, many of whom desperately wanted to contact loved ones but could not turn to the church to gratify this spiritual desire, to consult mediums. The immense popularity today of the television show *Crossing Over*, featuring noted spiritual communicator John Edward, is only one among many possible examples of how Spiritualism has deeply penetrated the American religious imagination.

A very different approach to death can be found in Islam, a religious tradition that numbers in the hundreds of millions worldwide. Muslims are currently one of the fastest-growing religious communities in the United States. Although many have immigrated from countries in the Middle East, West and South Asia, and Africa, a large number of African Americans have converted from Christianity as well. In this diverse religious and cultural environment, Muslims share certain common principles explicitly tied to the Qur'an, the key sacred text in this tradition, and the hadith, which contains critical materials about the teachings of Muhammad.

Despite a shared commitment to specific scriptures, commentaries, and interpretations among large segments of Islam, Islamic beliefs and practices surrounding death vary. According to historian Ira M. Lapidus, Muslims do agree on the fact that death is a transitional moment leading from one mode of existence to another. Additionally, Muslims believe that humans have both an immaterial soul and a physical body and that, at death, the soul continues its existence while the body disintegrates, at least until the Day of Judgment, when the body will be resurrected and reunited with the soul and spend eternity in a blissful paradise or in a torturous hell.

Many American Muslims follow traditional ritual patterns when someone from the community dies, seeking to dispose of the body as quickly as possible and generally avoiding any services at the local funeral home. The corpse is generally washed, either by men or women, depending on the sex and age of the deceased, and then wrapped in a white cloth. Muslims do not embalm the dead, nor will they cremate. After the body is prepared, it is transported in a plain coffin to a mosque, where it is positioned at the front and oriented in the direction of the holy city, Mecca. Prayers for the dead and public sermons remind the community of the power of Allah, the inevitability of

death, and the necessity of repentance and forgiveness for each Muslim.

After the funeral, the body is buried, preferably without the coffin, in a local cemetery. The grave is dug in a southeast-northwest line, and the body is placed inside with the face of the deceased directed toward Saudi Arabia. Muslims believe the soul leaves the body at death but lingers around the corpse until it is buried. It is then immediately questioned by two angels who are sent by God to determine its ultimate fate. The living continue to act on behalf of the deceased by visiting the grave to pray or by performing certain good deeds in the days following the burial.

Like the Native American and Spiritualist cases, Muslim communities in America draw upon rich symbolic and ritual systems of meaning and action to mend the fabric of social life disrupted in the event of death. These communities find a way to make sense of death that reinforces religious identity and fortifies meaningful social relations, not only among the living, but also between the living and the dead.

### Cults of the Dead in America

Americans may be highly intolerant of anything resembling a religious cult, but in practice many engage in what can only be called cultic behavior. For example, living communities seek in various ways to reestablish ties of kinship between individuals here and in the hereafter. In contrast to ancestor worship, which generally entails domestic ritual practice for deceased relatives, cults of the dead often concentrate on groups of deceased individuals who have social and cultural significance for a much wider population than just members of a particular family.

In the United States, cults of the dead can be found in a variety of social settings and may include participants who come from vastly different social locations. They are religious to the core, even though they are not necessarily restricted to any specific religious tradition, and rely on a set of shared rituals, myths, icons, and other embodied and imaginative modes of symbolic expression to gratify personal as well as communal desires to draw life and social meaning from the dead.

In the Pueblo cultures of the Southwest, including Zuni, Hopi, and Tewa, the dead are closely associated with *kachinas*, supernatural beings who play an instru-

mental role in fertility, curing, protection, and other essential aspects of day-to-day life in these agricultural communities. Under the often harsh, dry conditions of the region, rainfall assumed critical significance, both materially and symbolically, for Pueblo Indians in various social settings. In the larger cultural milieu, rain depended in part on ritual actions incorporating the dead by the living and on the special powers of those who had died and could thus work in concert with *kachinas*, a more powerful class of spiritual entities.

When someone dies in these cultures, those who remain believe that the deceased individual sheds his or her physical body and becomes what some anthropologists have called a “breath body.” The breath body is thought to journey to the Underworld, where it continues to live as an individual identity within a network of social relations. It can reappear as a cloud, dress as a cloud, or make clouds appear with its own breath, and therefore has the power to affect the natural environment. Cults of the dead developed in this regional setting to manage the precarious relations between the living and the dead and as attempts to ensure the necessary sustenance of the entire community.

Ritual actions taken by the living assume the dead continue to have a stake in the prosperity of their former communities, even though they no longer exist in the same form they once did as members of Pueblo society. At various points in the ceremonial calendar, contact is made between living society and the Underworld and the dead are invited, through prayers, offerings, songs, and dances, to return—hopefully as rain—to their previous dwelling places. The Pueblo version of the cult of the dead, related in part to the worship of *kachinas*, has an integral place in cultural systems found in this region.

Another example of a very different kind of American cult of the dead can be found in the southeastern United States, where certain practices emerged on the cultural scene in the wake of defeat after the Civil War and persist in various guises today. The religious system associated with this cult has been labeled by historians as the “religion of the Lost Cause,” a regionally diffuse system that looks back nostalgically for a lost way of life in order to establish a distinctly southern religious identity and moral order for the present and future. According to historian Charles

Reagan Wilson, between 1865 and 1920 the religion of the Lost Cause developed in the South as a modern, even evangelical, cult of the dead.

In the context of defeat, many in southern society had to find new ways to live with death—the death of the Confederacy in general as well as the deaths of family members and cultural heroes. By glorifying the past, venerating certain key Confederate martyrs, and transforming recent history during war into myths supporting contemporary efforts to build a distinctly religious identity, southerners ritually turned to the dead for symbolic, communal, and existential support.

These ritual efforts assumed both concrete, organizationally efficient modes of coordination and looser, more dispersed and spontaneous forms of enactment. So, for example, on the one hand, the United Confederate Veterans' group, established in 1889, provided an institutional framework for ritually invoking the spirits of the dead who had fought and died bravely in the war effort but were also venerated as champions of southern morality. On the other hand, Confederate Memorial Day, which according to legend was initiated in Georgia by a grieving widow, emerged after the war as a highly popular holy day reserved for commemorating the now politically dead aspirations of the Confederacy and, more important, for venerating the fallen heroes in cemetery visits and services, processions, and public rallies.

Finally, another example of a thriving cult of the dead in America today centers on celebrities, or “cultural saints.” In this context, however, dead celebrities are the focus of individual and collective forms of worship that provide a community of fans with an iconic, spiritual presence conferring transcendence, meaningful identities, and moral stability. American popular culture is the primary arena in which this cult enacts its rituals, rehearses its myths, and resurrects the dead for public consumption.

The cultic behavior surrounding Elvis Presley is one obvious example of this phenomenon. In death, the King of Rock became a different kind of king for fans—his death did not signal the end of his reign but instead expanded his domain to the life beyond. Indeed, Elvis lives on for many who make the pilgrimage to Graceland, attend conventions, and privately commune with an assortment of possible ritual objects, including texts about the man, music made by

him, and images that keep his comforting likeness close by. The religious commitment to regularly incorporate these objects into daily life, and to ceremonially profess bonds of affiliation between the living and dead Elvis, depends on a shared, collective conviction of his ultimate triumph over death.

An institutionalized version of this cult of celebrity worship can be found in the numerous museums and halls of fame throughout the country dedicated to preserving the memory of popular, mainly deceased public entertainers and sports figures. This cult of the dead relies on pilgrims who make special visits to shrines glorifying country-and-western stars, athletes and sports teams, rock-and-roll musicians, and other celebrated entertainers whose passing leads to a transformed status in the popular imagination. Individual families who visit these places do not see themselves as participating in cultic behavior. But their worshipful actions, including purchasing mementos to bring back with them, and reverent attitudes, including the awe experienced inside these temples, indicate the ways in which the living tourists connect with the dead and honor their special presence.

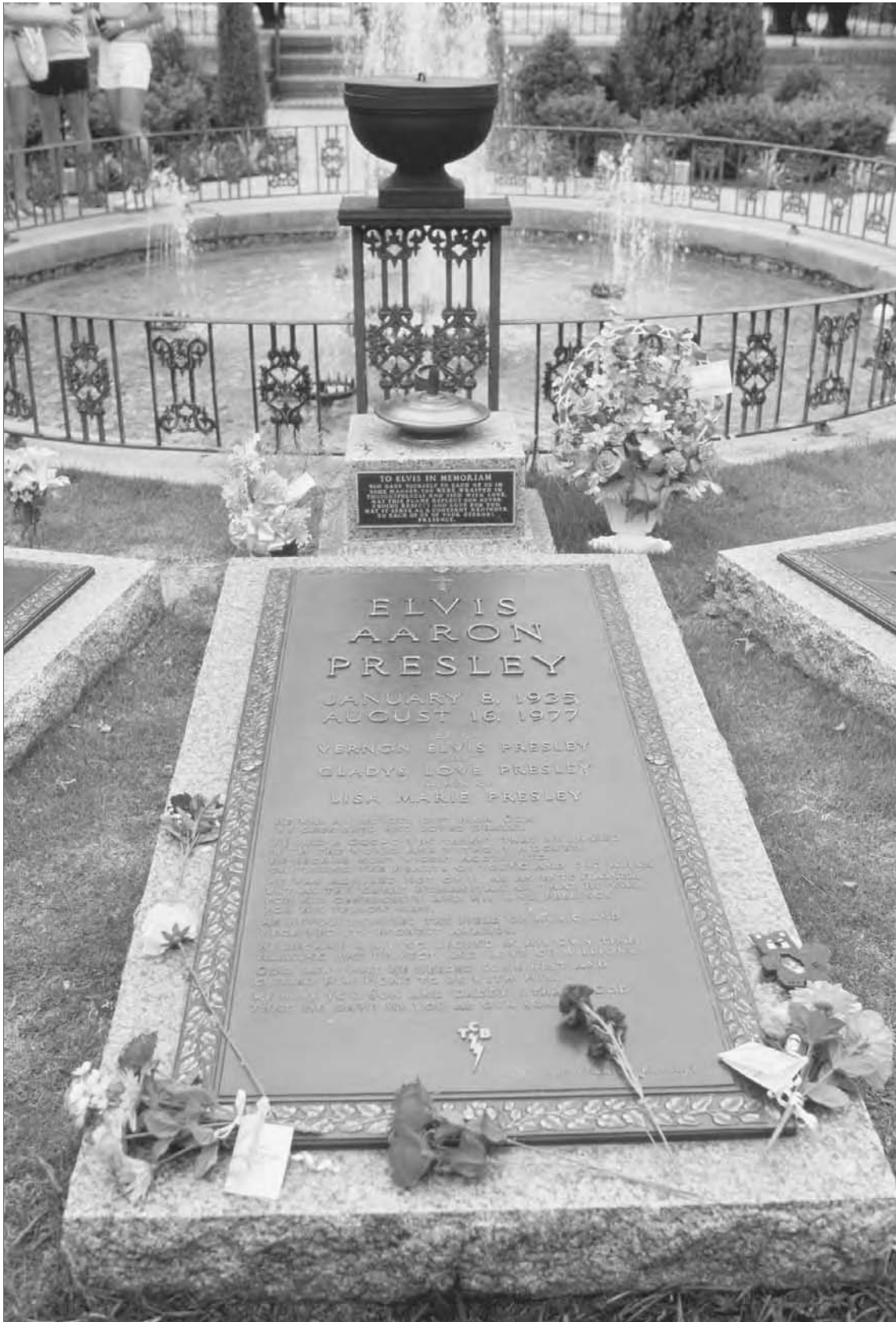
—Gary Laderman

#### SEE ALSO

Islam in America; Native American Religions and Politics; Popular Culture; Popular Culture: Cultural Saints; Popular Theodicies; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion; Ritual and Performance: Funerals; Sacred Space; Sacred Space: Shrines; Sacred Time; Science

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Flowers strewn on the grave of Elvis Presley at Graceland, c. 1984 (Henry Diltz/Corbis)

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## AIDS QUILT

The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, begun in 1987, is the largest ongoing community art project in the world. According to the NAMES Web site at [www.aidsquilt.org](http://www.aidsquilt.org), the goals of the project were to:

- Provide a creative means for remembrance and healing.
- Illustrate the enormity of the AIDS epidemic.
- Increase public awareness of AIDS.
- Assist with HIV prevention education.
- Raise funds for community-based AIDS service organizations.

The Quilt now includes more than 44,000 six-by-three-foot panels. When fully displayed, it covers twenty-four acres and weighs fifty tons. The Quilt has no religious affiliation, official status, public funding, or fixed location. Public showings are scheduled almost constantly at different locations, but only for part of the quilt at a time because of the practical difficulties involved in arranging a full display.

The Quilt has been characterized as a sociopolitical phenomenon, an artistic reflection of the AIDS tragedy, and a manifestation of cultural activism. But it is also a narrative that deserves recognition as a spiritual epic. Each panel tells at least three stories simultaneously: the story of the person who died, the story of the quiltmaker who memorialized that person, and the story of the audience viewing the panel (which is invited during public displays of the Quilt to write responses on signature squares reserved for that purpose).

The Quilt is a patchwork of rectangles sewn side by side or end to end in twelve-by-twelve-foot bound sections arranged by geography, image, or color. The materials include fabric as the common medium, but the designs and embellishments are varied and unique. Some are also highly provocative, including one drawn with HIV-positive blood and several decorated with cremated remains. Some of the panels are extravagant and complicated, others are starkly simple, but all have some personal element that the quiltmakers used to give individuality to the communal act of naming the dead. Although it represents an outgrowth of fabric traditions of the past, such as the em-

broidered memorial picture and the collective patchwork quilt, the Quilt also echoes the innovative works of feminist artists of the 1970s who repudiated traditional painting and sculpture to create works in alternative media that had long been associated with folk and decorative art.

Symbolically, the Quilt functions particularly well to represent the peculiar characteristics of AIDS, which is not a single illness but a syndrome with an open-ended list of contributing health problems that result from a weakened immune system. Notions of space that structure religious experience and identification are also reconfigured in the Quilt. A preoccupation with boundary is fundamental to individual constructions of self and relationship to others. Cultural expressions of boundaries are the outcome of the combined attempts of individuals to maintain their identities and avoid dissipation of these identities by contamination with taboos and agents of pollution. People with AIDS are often viewed as markers of individual and social vulnerabilities, contamination, and mutation and therefore are excluded beyond the boundaries. The Quilt exploits the potential inherent in this marginalized state and effects a ritual transformation of profane space into sacred space. It also changes the focus of religious belief in an afterlife from union with God and the glory of that experience to the chance to see human friends and loved ones again.

Because of its associations with domesticity and intimacy, the Quilt humanizes issues surrounding AIDS and death. Even though the Quilt lacks an authoritative plan because many hands make it, it is precisely this improvisation and collaboration that underscore communal and spiritual notions of identity. Especially when displayed in its entirety along the national Mall, the Quilt finds its ideal landscape for presentation. The nation's culture and collective memory find expression in the site of governmental power, as ordinary names are set against the memorials to the great.

The Quilt's creator, Cleve Jones, is a Quaker whose religious background shaped his vision. The Quilt's design evidences his Quaker attitudes and beliefs, such as a suspicion of war memorials and idolatry and a commitment to pacifism, to arriving at decisions by



consensus, and to understanding truth through submission to a higher authority. Yet what makes the Quilt especially compelling from a religious point of view is its ritualistic function. The Quilt is mutable, capable of and encouraging growth and replication. Made of material that fades and frays over time, the Quilt's fragility and its constant need for mending demonstrate the precariousness of material life. As a monument it lies down, covering the earth, the proportions for each panel approximating the size of a coffin. Collectively a graveyard, its symbolic associations are with that horizontal placement—the quilt on the deathbed, the grave, and the funeral pall.

The Quilt also portrays the diversity of lives affected by AIDS. The names carry the sense of overwhelming loss while unifying those individuals into a whole. The Quilt creates community among those not customarily found together: stockbrokers and housewives, children and Olympic athletes, farmers and artists, ministers and politicians, celebrities and the folk. There is no hierarchy, subordination, or ranking among the dead.

The NAMES Project began when the drug AZT was just becoming available as an effective treatment and when ACT UP—the militant advocacy group—was being formed. At the time, the identity, attributes, transmission, and prognosis of HIV infection were not fully known. The haphazard and literally patchwork efforts to deal with the frustration, confusion, and impossibility of making prudent choices are represented graphically in the construction of the Quilt.

Cleve Jones's vision for the Quilt began during a candlelight march he organized in San Francisco in 1985 in honor of Harvey Milk, an openly gay elected city official in San Francisco who was assassinated in 1978. At the time, those infected with HIV were isolated by their illness and without medical, social, or governmental concern and intervention. At the march, he spontaneously asked participants to write down on pieces of cardboard the names of the friends, lovers, and family members who had died of AIDS.

These placards were carried in the march and then taped side by side on the Federal Building in San Francisco's Civic Center where the march ended. The visual display reminded Jones of a patchwork quilt handed down within his family and used to comfort those who were ill or housebound. The idea of an AIDS memorial quilt was born. A year later he

made the first panel by spray-painting the name of his best friend, Marvin Feldman, onto a piece of canvas.

Construction of the Quilt began in sewing bees in people's homes but eventually Jones and other organizers acquired a storefront in the Castro district of San Francisco and advertised themselves as The NAMES Project, soliciting volunteers and donations. The response from the local Castro community was immediate because so many of the residents realized they needed a place for communal grieving. Soon panels began arriving in the mail in packages that also included letters, diaries, poems, songs, photographs, and other narrative and visual embellishments. This kind of potential for myriad expressions of love and compassion was central to Jones's conception of the form this memorial would take.

The first public display of the Quilt was in 1987 when it numbered 1,920 panels; it took place in the nation's capital. The NAMES Project hoped to put a human face on people's bureaucratic understanding of AIDS and to raise a battle flag against the ignorance and fear that surrounded the disease. By 1996, when the Quilt returned to Washington, D.C., for its fifth complete display, the panels numbered nearly 40,000 and covered the entire Mall from the steps of the U.S. Capitol to the base of the Washington Monument. It has not been fully displayed since then.

Having assumed the status of a holy relic (with a cult following of supporters, who are dubbed "Threadheads"), the Quilt's religious function is supported by ritual activity that has grown around public displays. These include events such as plays, lectures, speeches, and musical performances. An ongoing recitation of all the names represented on the Quilt accompanies every display. An elaborate set of procedures for laying out and folding the Quilt and ensuring its care has been established.

The NAMES Project Foundation arranges for the Quilt to be displayed in more than 2,000 locations worldwide every year. Additional efforts advanced by The NAMES Project include establishing local chapters and international affiliates to conduct quilting bees and arrange for parts of the Quilt to be shown in educational and workplace settings and other public sites. Moreover, an Interfaith Quilt Program brings together people of different religious backgrounds throughout the country to host showings of the Quilt. Another initiative combines Quilt displays at historically black

colleges and universities with AIDS prevention programs, and a South African AIDS Memorial Quilt is also being constructed. For those who cannot visit one of the many showings of the Quilt, The NAMES Project has created a Web site featuring a virtual quilt. Building an extensive archive of visual and narrative testimony is an ongoing activity of the foundation.

Now located in Atlanta, Georgia, The NAMES Project Foundation aims to expand its influence beyond its original gay constituency and to focus on communities especially vulnerable to HIV, including women and people of color. The Quilt continues to grow as more people die of AIDS. Its increasing size, and the fact that it can barely be contained or even experienced all at once, serves to dramatize the social reality of AIDS. Yet the ways the Quilt provides for people to confront the ultimate boundary space—death—demonstrate a phenomenon founder Cleve Jones described in the following way: “I was never prepared for the spiritual power and the artistic beauty of the Quilt. People say the world is becoming more secular and cynical. . . . [But] what I see so often today is a great empathy as well as phenomenal connections—which, though they may come outside of the dogma of religious structure, affirm something quite wondrous” (Jones 2000, 156).

—Kimberly Rae Connor

#### SEE ALSO

Popular Culture; Ritual and Performance; Sacred Space; Science: Healing; Sexuality: Sexual Identities

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## AUTOPSIES

Although dissections of cadavers have occurred since antiquity, the formal use of postmortem examinations in the modern era is associated with modern forensic medicine, a field that involves the scientific application of medical techniques to legal investigations. For the most part, autopsies (from *autopsia*, Greek for “to see with one’s own eyes”) are conducted to determine the cause of death in various circumstances. The use of autopsies has come to be established practice in criminal investigations, particularly if there is a suspicion of foul play; in responses to public health contagions; in evaluations of hospital performance; in efforts to confirm diagnoses; and in insurance claims processing where a death by suicide might preclude payment of benefits. Although autopsies have generated little

mainstream public debate, members of various religious minorities and ethnic groups, including the Hmong, Orthodox Jews, Muslims, the Navajo (Diné), and Mexicans, have strong objections to the exams.

Sometimes religious objections against mutilation stem from a belief that a person’s condition at the time of death will remain the same in the afterlife for eternity. Some groups believe that the body can still feel pain, even after death, or that a soul lingering near the body may experience anguish observing the mutilation. Whatever the reason for the objection, religious minorities have suffered from the failure of the government to recognize the depth of feeling associated with the offense.

In modern medicine there is a strong bias in favor

of autopsies. Not only are cadavers widely used in medical schools for pedagogical purposes, but many types of research depend on the use of postmortem examinations. The presumption in favor of autopsies is so pervasive that the leading text in the field, *Medicolegal Investigation of Death* (1993) by Werner Spitz, contains no mention of the possible religious objections to the procedure. Physicians have often expressed concern that the decline in the rate of autopsies is attributable to religious proscriptions and have challenged the validity of the prohibitions (see, for example, Geller 1984, Davis and Peterson 1996). The fact that restrictive consent rules have reduced autopsy rates has been called an international problem (Svendsen and Hill 1987).

Statutes in many states authorize autopsies most commonly when there is a suspicion of foul play or concern about an epidemic. Generally, relatives who are the next of kin are asked to consent to the performance of the autopsy. In Anglo-American jurisprudence, family members have a quasi-property interest in the body that gives them standing to sue for monetary damages should an exam be performed without authorization. When they object on the basis of religious beliefs, they may contend that the size of the damage award should be increased because the negligence caused more trauma for them than for families without such beliefs.

Judges sometimes question whether plaintiffs have accurate information about their own religious beliefs. In *Montgomery v. County of Clinton, Michigan* (1990), a Jewish teenage boy died after a high-speed chase by police, and his Orthodox Jewish mother filed suit to challenge his unauthorized autopsy, which had been required by a statute on violent deaths. According to the mother, the autopsy was unnecessary, as the cause of death was patently obvious, and it was in violation of Jewish law. The judge denied that Judaism is opposed to autopsies, commenting that the mother was "perhaps somewhat confused" about her own religious law.

Another case in which there was debate over whether religious tenets forbade autopsy was *Albareti v. Hirsch* (1993). A Muslim man was shot in the torso during the robbery of a convenience store in New York City. His family sued to try to prevent the autopsy, claiming that the procedure was inconsistent with their religious beliefs. The judge denied the mo-

tion, noting that some Islamic scholars allowed for the practice under certain circumstances, such as in the case of suspicious death.

As with all religions, there are questions of interpretation. Jewish and Islamic legal standards make exceptions to the usual prohibition to permit autopsies to save a life. Generally speaking, however, religious scholarship reflects a strong prohibition against the practice.

### **Public Policies to Accommodate Religious Objections**

Governments have, on occasion, formulated policies designed to accommodate religious minorities by providing them a means of registering their objections while they are still alive. The State of California allows individuals to apply for a certificate of religious objection, which if on their person when they die should inform authorities not to proceed with an autopsy. Unfortunately, however, few law-enforcement officials are aware of the existence of the program. Furthermore, the law permits the exam if there is suspicion of foul play or concern over the possible outbreak of an epidemic. In the end, a compelling state interest overrides the religious objection, which means that the certificate program is largely symbolic in nature.

In Florida, the State Medical Examiners Commission set up an ethical advisory committee of religious leaders to address the needs of religious communities in the state. Although the impetus behind the creation of the committee was to protect religious freedom, the committee instead served as a tool to persuade bereaved families to consent to autopsies.

Controversy raged in Israel beginning in 1944 over whether individuals with religious objections could opt not to have autopsies. After considerable public debate over this matter, the state finally relented, agreeing to recognize such objections. It is conceivable that religious objections are only likely to be recognized in a theocratic state.

### **The Rights of the Dead: Property versus Personhood**

In Anglo-American jurisprudence, dead persons have no rights of their own, even though their mistreat-

ment causes great offense. Should their relatives see fit to challenge mutilation of their bodies as contrary to their religious beliefs, then there is a possibility that their rights will be protected. Treating the dead body as “quasi-property” is a peculiar interpretation of the human being. An approach that regards the dead body as a person, a view found in some religions, may ultimately be preferable. Even the dead arguably deserve basic human rights, including the right to be treated with respect.

—Alison Dundes Renteln

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Islam in America; Judaism in America; The Body; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Law

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## DAYS OF THE DEAD (DÍAS DE LOS MUERTOS)

Days of the Dead are annual festive ritual celebrations in honor of the dead practiced in Mexico and by many Chicanos in the United States. Rooted in ancient Mesoamerican indigenous death rituals combined with aspects of Catholic practices and beliefs, the festival underscores the duality of life and death: Life cannot exist without death, in this worldview, and death is not to be feared but embraced. Lengthy ritual preparations culminate primarily around two days of festivities on November 1 and 2, which are also called All Saints’ Day and All Souls’ Day by the Roman Catholic Church. Celebrations vary in their ritual components, but many aspects remain constant. Common elements include *ofrendas* (altars for the dead), *calaveras* (skeletons) and other visual art humorously depicting the dead and the living, public processions, and artistic performances expressing

communion with the dead or personifications of Death. These ritual elements allow for much variance and creativity depending on generation, gender, class, region, religion, politics, and ethnicity. Community overnight visits to cemeteries are customary in Mexico, but daytime visits occur on a more private familial basis in the United States, often due to cemetery restrictions and more geographically distant families. The term “ritual celebration” emphasizes the festive nature of all of the ritual actions.

Contemporary expressions of *Días de los Muertos* reflect strong continuity with Mesoamerican indigenous practices yet also illustrate the complex syncretic nature of Mexican and Chicano Catholic religiosity. For the Nahua, the largest Mesoamerican indigenous cultural group at the time of the Spanish invasion in the sixteenth century, elaborate rituals for the dead



Mexican dancers from Raice de Mexico Ballet Folklórico perform a dance in celebration of the Days of the Dead, Los Angeles, California (Trip/T. Freedman)

included special food and flower offerings, overnight ceremonies at burial sites, processions, and communal feasting. Skulls of war victims were exhibited, and those of the elite would be decorated with precious stones. Extensive public rituals during several months of the eighteen-month calendar year marked the significance of the dead for the living. Each month consisted of twenty days, with several days devoted to the deceased. The most important months for public ritual were the ninth month, Tlaxcochimaco (August 5–24 of the Gregorian calendar), when the celebration of Miccaihuitontli—“feast of the little dead,” or children—took place, and the tenth month, Xocohuetzi (August 25–September 14), when the celebration of Huey Miccaihuitl—“feast of the adult dead”—occurred. For the Nahua, the dead joined the realm of a particular deity based on the circumstances of their death. For example, if a person died from drowning, he or she would enter into the realm of the rain god, Tlaloc, and be honored during the month dedicated

to the deities associated with water. The dead were thought to act as intermediaries between the living and supernatural beings. The Nahua also believed that those who died from old age or certain illnesses had to make a four-year journey to Mictlán, or Place of the Dead, and they presented food and other material offerings to assist them in their journey. Cyclical petitions to the dead also were performed in efforts to ensure that new life and plentiful harvest would continue. Hopes for communion between the living and the dead in the form of mutual assistance permeated the underlying spirituality.

Sixteenth-century Spanish Catholic rituals in honor of the dead held certain characteristics in common with those of indigenous Mexico. Influenced by Roman practices, Catholics made visits to gravesides with meal and candle offerings, and by the ninth century, Masses or eucharistic celebrations for the dead were a common practice. Bones and skulls of the deceased were at times cleansed and exhibited as a constant reminder of mortality, and skeletal figures inspired fear but also offered social criticism on contemporary issues relevant to community members. Pope Boniface IV established the feast of All Saints’ Day in the seventh century to recognize Christian saints and martyrs and to supplant Samhain (later known as All Hallows Eve), the annual Pagan Celtic ritual honoring the sun god and appeasing the dead. Pope Gregory III moved the Christian holy day from May to November 1 in the ninth century to diffuse the importance of the Celtic commemoration on October 31. In the eleventh century, the observance of All Souls’ Day on November 2 was established as a day of prayer to assist the souls of ordinary Christians in Purgatory (a temporary space between the physical world and the heavens where, according to Catholic doctrine, souls are cleansed of their sins). By the time of Spain’s occupation of Mexico, Spanish Catholics honored the dead with Masses, nine-day novenas (repetitive devotional prayers offered immediately following a death and on the annual commemoration), and food and flower offerings at home and in graveyards. Skull imagery was commonplace and special bread was given to the poor.

The ritual time spent honoring the dead was far greater in indigenous practice than in Catholicism. The dead held a much more prominent role in the indigenous cycle of ceremonies. Long periods of prepa-

ration for the dead also distinguished indigenous practices. Belief in an afterlife (although more complex for the indigenous cultures) and the ability and responsibility to commune with the dead, however, offered a point of intersection between the two belief systems.

*Syncretism* is the term most often used to describe the fusion of distinct religious systems into a new one. It implies a blending of two or more distinct and “pure” religious systems resulting in a new and distinct form. Many scholars realize the limitations of this term, however. It suggests the joining of static religions in simple historical contexts and silences power relations involving physical and spiritual violence. For the indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica, to make sense out of Christianity they had to consciously appropriate Christian rites and symbols in a manner that would enable them to maintain balance and harmony with their drastically changing world. Indigenous Mesoamericans had to decide how the religious systems could work together and choose aspects of each that they believed would enable them to maintain communication with transcendent powers. The Spanish Christians would condense Days of the Dead into November 1 and 2, but indigenous sensibilities and practices honoring the dead have survived.

The celebration of the dead varies in many parts of Mexico and the United States today. Its different expressions result from the nature of indigenous manifestations at the time of the conquest, the degree to which particular regions engaged in the process of syncretism throughout the colonial period, and more recent cultural variables mentioned above. In Oaxaca, for example, private and public ofrendas, cemetery visits, festivals, public street theater, and sand paintings are important ritual elements. In Chiapas, processions claim a central place, whereas in the state of Guerrero, “living” tombs with life-sized coffins are constructed and family members perform the parts of angels and skeletons.

In the United States, making and performing art drive *Días de los Muertos* ritual celebrations. Whether it be colorful calavera figures, intricately cut paper designs, elaborate ofrendas, or community celebrations with music, poetry, visual, and performance art, all with a Chicana/Chicano aesthetic, the art cannot be underestimated in its power to evoke communion between the living and the dead.

Chicano and Chicana artists and cultural workers formed an integral part of the Chicano movement, a national struggle for civil rights beginning in the 1960s. The movement shaped a Chicano and Chicana identity around ethnic pride, self-determination, and mass protests for social justice. Artists assisted profoundly in this process. Chicana and Chicano artists developed a symbolic language to articulate the movement and reclaim a lost indigenous Chicana/Chicano history and culture. Retrieving and reinventing Mesoamerican indigenous symbols and metaphors shaped a consciousness of resistance to oppression, and art helped to reinstate a silenced indigenous ancestral past. Community art centers such as Self Help Graphics in East Los Angeles and Galería de la Raza in San Francisco served a central role in providing the space for Chicanos and Chicanas to create and exhibit the visual language that nourished the movement for civil rights.

In the early 1970s, Chicano and Mexican artists in Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, and Sacramento reintroduced Days of the Dead to their communities as a tradition to aid the process of self-determination and cultural reclamation. In Los Angeles, the ritual also helped to heal the deep communal wounds incurred following the police killings of three Chicanos during a peaceful Vietnam War protest in 1970. The first urban celebrations were on a small scale, but by the mid-1970s, thousands were attracted to the revived tradition. Although many Chicano families had honored their dead for generations, ritual practices took on a more private nature with home altars and family visits to cemeteries. The public nature of the tradition had been lost in the United States, however, because the forces of assimilation and the Catholic Church’s rejection of the tradition had served to quell its significance as a communal death mourning ritual. Through the work of artists and cultural workers over the past thirty years, *Días de los Muertos* as a public ritual has proliferated throughout the United States and now attracts diverse ethnic groups seeking a proactive way to respond to and interact with death. Large communal celebrations include art workshops for the public and take place in parks, cultural centers, schools, museums, and galleries. Some Catholic priests are now realizing the significance of the tradition and incorporating ofrendas and other activities into their parish events.

Although many Chicanos have left the Catholic Church, they continue to identify with symbols that represent the faith, courage, and survival of their Catholic parents and grandparents. Ofrendas for the dead often reflect these allegiances as participants construct a symbolic system that contains elements of indigenous spirituality alongside elements found meaningful in Mexican Catholicism. Icons of saints, madonnas, and the sacred hearts of Jesus and Mary, for example, might share physical space with indigenous symbols such as earth, water, fire, herbs, images of duality, and Mesoamerican indigenous deities such as Coatlicue, the Nahua Mother Earth Goddess. This coexistence of Catholic and Mesoamerican symbols reflects an aspect of Chicana and Chicano *nepantla* spirituality, a spirituality at the biological and cultural crossroads where diverse elements converge, at times in great tension and at other times in cohesion. *Nepantla* is not syncretism in the traditional sense, but an example of “transculturation,” a continuous encounter of two or more divergent worldviews.

The revival of *Días de los Muertos* in the United States renews and (re)centers a people hungry for spiritual nourishment in their ongoing struggles for justice. The art that is created renews and enlarges the collective memory of a historically marginal ethnic group in the United States. Continuity with indigenous ancestral ways heals the wounds incurred by the memory of European and Euro-American colonization and challenges ongoing attempts to silence nonwhite peoples.

For Chicanas and Chicanos, publicly honoring their ancestors takes on political meaning. The genealogy being honored is indigenous and of mixed blood. Claiming public space, including streets and parks, to honor these “others” is an act of resistance against cultural oppression. And for the descendants of these “others,” parading en masse refutes daily efforts to dismiss their presence in an increasingly seg-

regated society. Publicly communing with the dead contests mainstream fears embedded in Euro-American Western cultural practices. As a ritual that honors and interacts with the dead in a familial and joyful manner, the tradition challenges a society that silences the dead shortly after a funeral. Western cultures enclose death in gated cemeteries void of color and merrymaking. *Días de los Muertos* does not replicate patterns of exclusion. The rite, with its color, humor, and friendly spirit, invites all people to approach death and the “other” without fear. The silence of death and the pain of exclusion are challenged in the festivity of this public mourning ritual.

—Lara Medina

#### SEE ALSO

Catholicism in America: Public Catholicism; Latina/Latino Religious Communities: Mexican-American Religious Communities; Material Culture; Public Theologies and Political Culture; Ritual and Performance; Sacred Space: Shrines, The Suburban Home; Sacred Time

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## EUTHANASIA

*Euthanasia*, from the Greek for “good death,” refers to a death chosen by the one to die, or by others on his or her behalf, because it seems significantly better than the death that would otherwise follow from illness or injury. The death chosen must be better primarily in relation to the interests of the dying one, or the moral justification of the act is seriously jeopardized.

For Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and for any worldview, whether explicitly religious or not, that links the origin and worth of life, and thus the respect or reverence we owe it, to beings, powers, or dimensions beyond the individual and even beyond the human community, such a choice will raise complex questions of belief and practice because of the issue of the ultimate “ownership” of or sovereignty over life. Several more limited questions arise for virtually anyone thinking about euthanasia.

Is the term “euthanasia” simply descriptive, for example, or is it also a normative term, so that applying it to a particular death represents a moral judgment about the death? Depending on one’s point of view, a normative use of the term could mean either that the death was at least arguably morally justifiable or, conversely, that it was morally reprehensible. Clearly the term does and will continue to do both jobs. However, keeping it as descriptive as possible means that the moral debates will occur after rather than before the term is applied in specific instances and therefore will keep the focus on whether this instance of euthanasia is morally defensible or not rather than on whether it is actually a case of euthanasia or not. This approach makes it easier to identify precisely where any disagreements are located and also respects the professed intentions of the agents involved to benefit the dying one.

Moreover, how imminent must the impending death be for the alternative death to be considered euthanasia? Predicting death is always difficult, but it is possible to distinguish among the prospects of a patient suffering from an aggressively metastasizing cancer, someone suffering from a slower systemic deterioration, and a relatively healthy person with no known malady but who still lives under the universal sentence of eventual death. Both traditionally and cur-

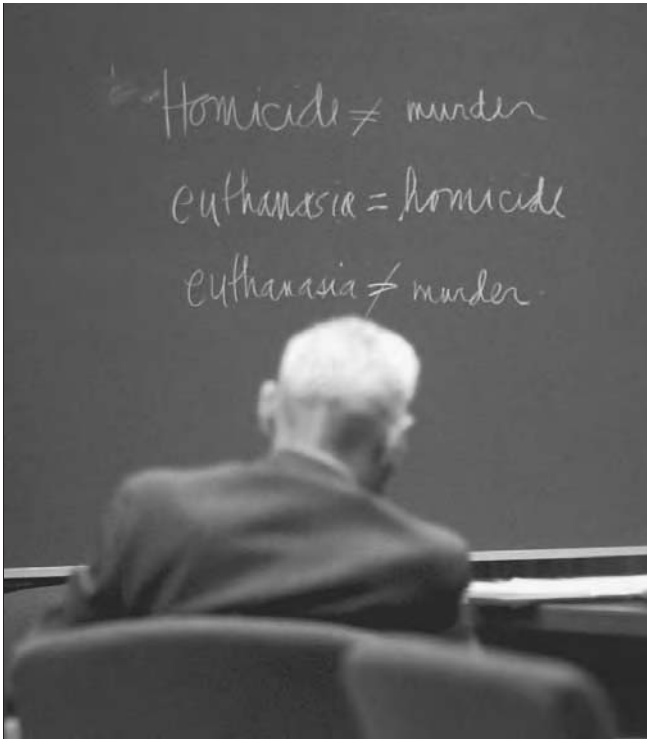
rently, most people are most comfortable speaking of euthanasia in the first case; the other two intensify questions about the quality of life and the point at which one can legitimately speak of one’s life as a “living death.” This metaphor, spoken seriously, leads to another question: If some deaths can be better than others, can some deaths be better than some lives? Or are deaths and lives incommensurable?

### Types of Euthanasia and Their Helpfulness

At one end of the spectrum are those who insist that people should always let nature take its course or submit to the divine will in matters of life and death; thus, they say, we should never speed death. Those at the other end insist that in dealing with competent, well-informed individuals, such choices belong to the dying person, and in the case of incompetent patients, to those proxies acting in the dying one’s interests. But most people stand somewhere between these two extremes, trying to weigh the potentially competing considerations involved: the right claimed by many persons to avoid the worse death, or simply to choose their own mode of exiting this life; the need to show compassion to those approaching difficult deaths; the need to keep pressure on society to develop better ways for us to minister to, sustain, and be with the dying; the fear that individuals, groups, or even society will abuse any legal or moral openings toward choosing death, especially with regard to society’s more vulnerable members; the duty to respect existing law; and, for many people of faith, an insistence on respect for God’s sovereignty over life and death.

Many in the West have sought to clarify several of these issues by distinguishing among various forms of euthanasia that initially seem to differ in morally significant ways. But there is often disagreement about which way such differences point. The paired distinctions often begin with *voluntary* euthanasia, in which the death is chosen by the dying one, and *nonvoluntary* euthanasia, in which others make the decision because the dying one is unable to choose—perhaps unconscious or being kept alive by medical equipment. Initially, the voluntary type seems morally more defensible because society often grants persons liberties





Dr. Jack Kevorkian sits in the Oakland County Circuit Court, Pontiac, Michigan, 1999, awaiting the verdict on his trial for first-degree murder (AFP/Corbis)

regarding their own lives that it denies them with regard to the lives of others.

But the voluntary case, except where a currently incompetent patient speaks through a “living will,” a document detailing his or her wishes in the event of a medical emergency, by definition involves someone who is both conscious and competent, two qualities many see as significant elements in grounding the worth and dignity of human beings. This point would seem to some to argue against ending this life. In contrast, in the case of nonvoluntary euthanasia of an irreversibly comatose patient, these dimensions are already irretrievably lost, so some would say that the *person* has already died, and that ending the struggles of the body should be a relatively easy choice, perhaps even a duty. Thus, such distinctions may be morally significant, but rarely are their messages unambiguous.

Much the same ambiguity surrounds the other distinctions often invoked. One distinction is between *active* euthanasia (also called euthanasia by commission, or, by its opponents, simply “killing”), in which death results from an action known to cause death, and *pas-*

*sive* euthanasia (also called euthanasia by omission, or simply “letting die”), in which death results from processes at work in the dying one’s body that could be slowed down but are not. There are two categories within active euthanasia: *active direct* euthanasia, in which the action performed is intended to bring the death directly—or to end the suffering by bringing the death—and has no (other) medical purpose, and *active indirect* euthanasia, in which the act that causes death is performed for other legitimate medical purposes although those carrying it out know it will also bring the death as a kind of secondary or side effect. A classic example here is the use of increasingly large doses of morphine to fight severe pain in a patient who has developed a tolerance for morphine, although it is known that the dosages will at some point sufficiently suppress vital functions to cause death. Finally, passive euthanasia may also take two forms: On the one hand, it may involve the omission of extraordinary or “heroic” means of sustaining life, such as medical treatments with low or unknown rates of effectiveness that impose such high costs, on the personal and human planes as well as on the economic level, that some moral traditions, including the Roman Catholic Church, have considered them to be morally elective or optional, or, on the other hand, the omission of ordinary medical means of sustaining life, in which the means omitted are of such known, certain, and significant effectiveness and of such reasonable cost that they are considered morally obligatory and their omission is seen as morally equivalent to suicide or killing.

Additional problems arise when the means to be omitted are not just ordinary medical means of sustaining life but the usual means by which all people sustain their lives under normal conditions, that is, nutrition and hydration. Can someone ever morally withhold food and water to avoid a presumably worse death? Although the above distinctions may clarify some of the issues, merely categorizing an instance of euthanasia along these lines rarely settles the question at hand.

### The Current Situation

Although the origins of euthanasia can be traced far back into history, the issues it raises have changed over time. Because of medical advances, the question

of euthanasia arises with increasing frequency and urgency. These same dynamics also give urgency to the issue of physician-assisted suicide, which many see as raising similar moral issues. Also, the growing emphasis, at least in the West, on the rights of the individual, and, for many, the simultaneous diminishing of the sense of the sacredness of life and the interconnectedness of life with life within community, make it ever more difficult for those who would proceed cautiously in this area to articulate interests beyond those of the individual that could conceivably check the desire of the dying one to hasten death.

But communities—persons linked to each other by shared values and commitments—have traditionally claimed to have a legitimate interest in how every life is regarded, since any life treated casually potentially diminishes the respect that helps protect the lives of all. Furthermore, readily accessible and “easy” solutions, which euthanasia may sometimes be, can slow a society’s progress in developing better ways to care for the dying that might reduce the urgency some currently feel about legalizing euthanasia.

Some, on religious or theological grounds, would caution against taking matters of life and death into our own hands, or “playing God”; others, on philosophical or naturalistic grounds, warn against “interfering with nature.” Their opponents question why the same concerns should not also be applied to uncontroversial interventions that lead to impressive benefits.

Societies have always struggled with the question of which lives, if any, may be intentionally taken. But the questions today seem more complex. Will societies, having made their peace with taking the lives of unjust aggressors and convicted criminals, now adopt what many see as a more enlightened policy and permit euthanasia for innocent persons who, because of

the tragic state of their health, no longer wish to live? And can society do this without compromising values, such as respect for life, that most societies have found essential to their long-term flourishing? There may be no definite answers to such questions. The only thing that is certain is that the debate will continue as medical technology improves and more people decide they want to have euthanasia as an option for the end of life.

—Paul F. Camenisch

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Ritual and Performance: Funerals; Science: Technology

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## MOURNING RITUALS

Mourning, the conventional act or outward expression of grief following the death of one or more individuals, has taken different forms in America throughout its history. As an articulation of normative patterns of social behavior and thought, acts of

mourning emerge as societal assumptions change over time. These expressions of sorrow are manifest in both material and ritual forms and potentially reveal insights pertaining to individuals’ or groups’ elusive or unspoken cosmological beliefs. As such,

mourning is but one expression in a cultural dialogue concerning the dead and provides a foray into better understanding a society's negotiations between its governing ideological superstructures (that is, its theology, philosophy, political theory, and the like) and its infrastructural realities (namely, demography, economics, social structures, and so on). Although various ethnic groups may share similar provisions in the way they mourn for the dead, such gestures can retain significant cultural, gender, or regional variances. Yet for all the potential insights that investigations into mourning have produced, considerable work remains to be done concerning the subject of mourning among ethnic groups in its American context.

For the Puritan settlers, the communal rituals associated with mourning the dead were shaped by pressing eschatological expectations. Belief in the imminence of the Second Coming led them to leave the graves of the deceased unmarked or distinguished with materials that quickly deteriorated amidst the New England seasons. Not until the mid-seventeenth century did New England Puritans mark the graves of their ancestors with more permanent materials. Puritans in the New World encountered death and dying with an increasing theological ambivalence. Such feelings were rooted in the uncertainties surrounding the meaning of death, which New England Puritans spoke of as both a punishment for sin and as the final reward of the faithful. Mourning rituals, such as offering prayers for the dead before the funeral, although practiced only sporadically in New England, illustrate some of the theological uncertainties many Puritans held concerning the ultimate meaning of death and the state of the soul.

Other innovations among the Puritans are also illustrative of changes in attitudes toward death and mourning in this increasingly complex culture. For example, there was an increase in the use of headstone images depicting earthly objects to symbolize death. Moreover, with the marking of burial grounds came the development of family tombs, which subtly placed emphasis on individual believers and families against the cosmic community of the saints. Other mourning practices emerged within New England Puritanism that sharply distinguished it from its European roots. Bells were tolled to announce the death of individuals throughout the New England countryside. So popular did this practice eventually become

that during epidemics the practice of tolling bells for the dead was forbidden until such plagues had passed. Some mourning practices were much more costly. "Mourning rings," often constructed of gold, enamel, and stone, were given to the friends and family members in attendance at the funeral of the departed. In addition, gloves of varying degrees of quality were sent throughout the community as invitations by family members to the funeral of a loved one. By 1724, the expenses associated with these and other mortuary practices led the Massachusetts legislature to pass several acts intended to curb such apparent opulence.

A different kind of ring played a central role in the mourning rituals of African slaves during the same time. The circle ritual, or "ring shout," as it became known in North America, was brought to the colonies by slaves from the Congo region. In its African and eventual American contexts, these rhythmic dances were performed by members of the community by moving counterclockwise in a circular fashion. Singing accompanied an increasingly quickened tempo as members mourned the dead while celebrating the community's ancient past. Many missionaries and clerics deplored the syncretistic practices among the slave community, arguing that the fusion of African ancestral rituals with Christian belief was a degradation of the faith. The roots of many other common funerary practices among African Americans during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries extended back to the shores of Africa as well.

Unlike funerals for European settlers, slave funerals often took place over the course of several weeks. Depending upon circumstances, corpses could be laid out for extended periods of time so that the community at large could pray over the body and give the spirit of the deceased a proper send-off. Given the restrictions placed on slaves during working hours, funerals often took place after the body was interred, and many times at night or on Sundays—the one day of the week slaves were not required to work. Once the body was placed in the ground, mourners put shards of earthenware on the grave as an offering to the spirit of the dead—a ritual that derived from West Africa. The importance of mourning rituals within the slave community is attested to by the fact that white slaveholders usually refrained from interference with them. Despite the potential for social unrest, and



An Irish wake. Wood engraving, 1873 (Library of Congress)

the possibility that funerals could be excuses for slaves to gather to plan uprisings—the plot associated with Gabriel Prosser in Virginia in 1800 was premised upon gathering for a child’s funeral—the slaveholders were reluctant to place too many constraints on these practices. At the same time, whites and blacks shared common mourning practices, including washing and shrouding the body, having a large feast around the time of the funeral, lavishing foodstuffs upon the family of the deceased, praying for and eulogizing the deceased, and having a funeral procession.

The confluence of several societal forces during the nineteenth century changed the way Americans mourned their dead. Principal among them was the democratization of religious life during the early Republic, a development marked by a form of populist expression challenging traditional claims of religious authority, by urbanization, and by the expansion of the nation’s commercial markets. What vestiges of traditional religious thought and practice concerning

the dead persisted during the mid-nineteenth century were decidedly transformed by the American Civil War. Although the approximately 640,000 families struggled to maintain familiar mourning practices, the dictates of war and the destruction of nearly 5 percent of the nation’s population changed these patterns. Concentrated scenes of carnage at Antietam, Gettysburg, Shiloh, and Cold Harbor required the remains of many unidentified soldiers to be buried immediately in massive trenches in order to stave off disease. Photographs of these scenes were reproduced and disseminated throughout the nation—particularly in the North—placing a demand on Victorian sensibilities about “beautiful” or “good” deaths. Yet Americans were willing to modify some practices in order to fulfill other mourning acts. The embalming of bodies, a practice not unfamiliar to but largely discounted by Americans previously, was employed to transport the remains of loved ones great distances to their families in order to fulfill traditional burial rites. Equally transforming was the creation of ad hoc burial grounds in

often distant and desolate places, which not only reshaped familiar mourning exercises within church graveyards or rural cemeteries but also helped to transform traditional notions about the sanctity of such acts.

The changes were immediately followed by immigration and urbanization patterns that furthered the creative trends of American mourning rituals. Perhaps most notable at this time was the Irish “wake,” which took place in domestic circles and evoked some of the deepest sentiments among members of the community. Despite occasional voiced misgivings by the Roman Catholic Church in America at such unseemly conduct, wakes included such notorious and boisterous practices as drinking, games, the keening (wailing), mock marriages, and smoking. Among their Protestant brethren, Irish mourning rituals included placing coins on the eyes of the deceased, dressing the corpse and mourners in stylish and sometimes elaborate clothing, and contributing stylized poetry about the deceased to favorite publications.

Although some of these patterns persisted throughout the twentieth century, new ways of dealing with the dead were emerging at the close of the century that dramatically affected modern mourning practices. As American industry became more and more standardized, so, too, did the disposal of the dead. Professional societies, most notably the National Funeral Directors Association (established in 1882), focused on standardizing practices related to the treatment of the corpse. Officials concerned themselves with procedures that included cremation, embalming, and decent burials. In replacing the traditional spheres—the home and church—in which such matters had previously been taken care of, funeral directors acquired increasing control over ritual preparations of the body and standardized procedures surrounding death and mourning. The agenda of this and other professional organizations to secure control over what was presumed to be the “decent” handling of the dead nicely dovetailed into America’s developing consumer markets and played upon traditional familial and communal concerns respecting the dead.

With the development of new laws concerning the handling and disposal of the dead, professionals within the mortuary field gained greater control of the deceased during the twentieth century. This shift, in turn, effected changes in familial and communal preparation and mourning for the dead. One outcome was the increased privatization of mourning rituals among Americans. No longer in charge of preparing the deceased for burial, families and friends were left to mourn their loss in less public forums. Another was the heightened significance of visually observing the corpse as an exercise in mourning. As embalming techniques were perfected, family and friends were enabled to gaze at the remains in a “natural state” without worrying about decomposition. By the close of the twentieth century in America, family members and friends, as well as pastors, priests, and others associated with religious communities, had only limited contact with the dead as the corpse became a commodity in the nation’s newly developed funeral industry.

—Kent A. McConnell

#### SEE ALSO

African American Religions; Catholicism in America; Protestantism in America: Puritanism; Ritual and Performance: Funerals

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## ROADSIDE SHRINES

The seemingly ubiquitous American custom of placing small decorated crosses and wreaths by roadsides and at intersections to mark the sites of fatal automobile accidents has become increasingly common within the past fifteen years or so. These homemade, personal shrines, usually no more than two or three feet high, are constructed from a variety of materials, ranging from wood or metal to concrete and even carefully arranged automobile parts. Some individuals make and market crosses on the Internet—“weather proofed, painted, and ready to assemble”—for this purpose. The decorations are also extremely varied, often reflecting an association with the deceased. Religious medals, rosaries, small statues of angels, flowers (plastic, cloth, cut, or potted), articles of clothing, and other items, such as teddy bears to commemorate children or even six-packs of beer for fun-loving adolescents, often adorn them. The creativity and idiosyncrasy of the decorations are seemingly endless.

Because of the visual affinity of these shrines with Hispanic grave decorations, some researchers have proposed that the tradition spread throughout the country from the Hispanic Southwest. The shrines are sometimes called *descansos* (“resting places”), a term signifying the roadside memorials left by the pallbearers along the route of a funeral procession in an earlier time. Hispanic peoples from Mexico and Central America have migrated in large numbers to many locations in the United States, which may also be a factor in the spread of the custom to non-Hispanic populations. Similar decorated crosses have been noted throughout Europe, however, especially in Ireland, as well as in Spain, Portugal, Italy, Yugoslavia, and elsewhere, in addition to Australia and New Zealand. Called variously by such names (in English) as roadside crosses, roadside shrines, and roadside memorials, these eye-catching shrines have been described in various publications and feature stories by both scholars and journalists. The practically countless illustrated stories published throughout America focusing on particular crosses and wreaths, in fact, have been instrumental in popularizing the custom. Web sites featuring photographs of shrines in various parts of the country have also proliferated in

recent years. For many travelers, locating and photographing roadside shrines has become a hobby.

In Hispanic custom, caskets were borne to the cemetery, or *camposanto*, on the shoulders of pallbearers rather than by wagon or hearse. The caskets were heavy, so the men had to stop periodically to rest or change places. Wherever they stopped, they marked the spot with a small cross. At least in New Mexico and other parts of the Hispanic Southwest, this custom evolved into placing crosses near the site of death. It also came to include marking and decorating the grave of the deceased, especially for *Días de los Muertos*, or the Days of the Dead. According to New Mexico writer Estevan Arrellano, “*Descansos* are not only reminders of a journey never completed, they are a work of art and perhaps one of the few authentic noncommercial folk arts of New Mexico’s Hispanics. They are created out of love in a time of pain and wonderment. These *descansos* are sculptures, in a sense earthworks, for they occupy a unique relation to the land and the environment. . . . Only out of true love does a work of art evolve” (Arrellano 1986, 42).

Roadside crosses are intended to mark the site of death and are therefore different from grave markers, which are placed at the burial site. The creation of these shrines is fundamentally a Christian tradition and is a manifestation of the folk impulse to hallow the ground where a soul has expired. Roadside shrines are closely related to the more elaborate and complex spontaneous shrines at disaster sites, such as The Fence in Oklahoma City after the terrorist bombing of 1995 or at schools in the aftermath of tragic shootings. Other famous shrines are the ones that developed in Paris and London after the 1998 death of Princess Diana.

These informal, unregulated folk shrines have become controversial in some parts of the United States. Some states have passed legislation outlawing the placement of shrines at the sites of fatal automobile accidents because the shrines themselves are regarded as a safety hazard and a distraction to passing motorists. Other states have sought to regulate the size, placement, and duration of the shrines. In Texas, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) has taken the initiative to place standardized, white crosses at



A roadside memorial for a motorcycle crash victim, San Ysidro, California (Trip/S. Grant)

fatal, alcohol-related accident sites. Markers with the Star of David also are available. Official pronouncements appear to have little influence on the erection and maintenance of these shrines, which are regarded by most citizens as private and personal and therefore not properly subject to official regulation. Heated community controversy frequently develops when people deface or remove these shrines without the permission of the family or friends who erected them. Some shrines are regarded as local landmarks and are

lovingly maintained for years; they are often decorated to reflect the season, such as Christmas and Easter. Others remain in place only a few days or weeks and are then removed by the family.

—Sylvia Ann Grider

#### SEE ALSO

Latina/Latino Religious Communities; Mexican American Religious Communities; Material Culture; Popular Theodicies; Sacred Space

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## SPIRITUALISM

Spiritualism, a religious movement that emphasized contacting the dead through the use of mediums, gained a following in the second half of the nineteenth century and continues today in a modified form in some New Age circles. Spiritualist practices allayed grief by keeping loved ones in contact beyond the grave and provided an inexhaustible source of advice alleged to be from the spirits of the famous and honored dead. Believers gained direct access to the workings of heaven, where, they said, there were seven tiers for the dead to advance through to grow in spiritual perfection and knowledge. An ethos of progress marked both heaven and earth; Spiritualists were heavily influenced by postmillennialism, or the belief that humans could perfect society, and allied themselves with every progressive political movement of the day. Although Spiritualism cut across denominational lines, it appealed primarily to middle-class people from Protestant backgrounds who published both philosophical works and reports of communications in numerous pamphlets, weekly newspapers, and books. Spiritualism also functioned as a bridge between the widening gap of science and religion. During the epoch of inventions in communications—the telegraph, the telephone, the photograph—Spiritualists understood their endeavor to be utterly scientific. They proposed that communication with the dead was empirically true if not yet fully explainable.

The movement began with a reported haunting of the Fox family home in Hydesville, New York. The Foxes' adolescent daughters, Margaret and Kate, worked out a system of "alphabet raps" (one for "A," two for "B," and so forth) for communicating with the ghost. Just as the telegraph allowed immediate communication across space, the Fox sisters' "mysterious rappings" were understood to traverse the threshold of death. Over time, the methods for talking to the dead expanded to include trance mediumship, which replaced the cumbersome rapping system with direct speech. The spirits of the dead were thought to use a living medium as a vessel, either by speaking to an individual directly or by temporarily inhabiting his or her body and using the medium's voice. Mediums developed other forms of communication, such as automatic writing, materializations (either in the form of

gifts or the physical presence of the spirit itself), and later, spirit photography.

Several cultural changes in antebellum America influenced Spiritualism. Women remained at the forefront of the movement, both as mediums and as believers. This phenomenon may be largely accounted for by shifting ideas about death. First, as Ann Braude has argued (1989), Spiritualism effectively overthrew the Calvinist policy of infant damnation. The strains of Calvinism that were still prevalent from Puritan times maintained that children who died before adult baptism were consigned to hell. Spiritualism came to life at the moment of the highest infant mortality rates of the century; grieving mothers were given continual and, it was believed, empirical proof that their deceased children were flourishing in the afterlife. Second, Spiritualism coincided with the commercialization of death in America. Just when funeral homes were taking over the women's traditional duties of caring for the dead, Spiritualism gave them a way to reclaim some of those rights and responsibilities by replacing the care of the corpse with the perpetual care for the dead in the afterlife.

The movement also tapped into the values of the young democracy—anyone with talent could become a medium. Coming at the tail end of the Second Great Awakening, a series of religious revivals in upstate New York, Spiritualism revamped the individualist ethos of the age. The possibilities of being a medium cut through class, gender, and, to some extent, racial barriers. Far from being required, training and credentials were often suspect as remnants of an aristocratic heritage. For Spiritualists, the medium, who functioned as a sort of religious leader, was most often a woman, and frequently a very young woman at that. For believers, the medium's very lack of education underscored the authenticity of the communications. Young women were not expected to be able to deliver long discourses on politics, science, and philosophy, and when they did so as mediums, this was taken as "proof" of the presence of the dead.

Mediumship in the nineteenth century had two basic forms, domestic seances and public performances. Seances were popular all across America; the more personal communications, such as those with one's



dead relatives, often took place in private homes. The sharp spike in Spiritualist belief directly following the Civil War attests to its function of continuing domestic relations beyond the grave. Grieving relatives were given assurances that their loved ones were thriving in the afterlife, surrounded by other family members and kind angels. Large, public demonstrations often invoked the famous dead, who offered advice on the contemporary situation and frequently attempted to continue their work from heaven. Francis Bacon, Emanuel Swedenborg, Benjamin Franklin, and William Shakespeare were among the favorites mediums called upon to comment on the state of American science, politics, and letters. Both forms of mediumship survive today in slightly changed ways; individual psychics often relay messages from dead relatives, and televised psychics function in much the same manner that their forerunners did on the stage.

Many of the communications from the spirit world focused on the daily activities of those in heaven. The idea of a seven-tiered heaven came from the writings of Andrew Jackson Davis, known as the “Poughkeepsie Seer.” Davis had embraced Spiritualism from the outset and saw evidence for his long-standing spiritual views in the new movement. Drawing on the works of Emanuel Swedenborg, Davis outlined a heaven that was in constant motion: the dead grew, both mentally and physically, and reports from the afterlife confirmed this notion. Children who had died completed the life cycles that had been denied to them on earth. They grew up (in spirit bodies), went to school, and even got married. The dead individually progressed through the levels of heaven, gaining in spiritual knowledge and perfection. The landscape of heaven resembled an earthly village wherein all manner of commerce, factories, poverty, or lasciviousness had been erased. Relationships in heaven were an extension of those on earth and reflected the increasing importance of romance as central to the marriage bond. Spiritualists proposed that romantic relationships did not end at death, and that there were ties of affection, called “spiritual affinities,” that accounted for everlasting attractions between humans.

The dead also delivered lengthy messages on the state of American politics. Spiritualism appealed to the reform-minded middle class, which had the leisure and the religious inclination to actively change society. Communications from heaven reiterated the

postmillennial belief in progress and spurred believers on to further reforms. In heaven, all creatures were equal, or at least had the possibility of becoming so. Although so-called primitive people were consigned to the lower tiers of heaven, they received education there that would enable them to advance like all the rest. Women were resolutely the equals of men in heaven—although equality was measured by being complementary opposites rather than by being similar—and there were spaces in heaven where only couples were allowed to enter. This ethos of progress and equality was reflected on earth in political practices, and Spiritualists were the frontrunners in all of the political reforms of the day. Their primary causes were abolition of slavery and women’s rights, but they also were interested in more obscure issues such as phrenetic spelling and even underwear reform.

Christianity itself became an implicit target for reform, since Spiritualists dispensed with the mainstream tenets of a last judgment and the concept of hell. Evildoers were forced to recognize their wrongs and often required to right them, but no grievance was outside the pale of progress. Many believers were simultaneously churchgoing Christians and Spiritualists, but some had a very casual or even uneasy relationship to religious dogma. The egalitarian basis of Spiritualism trumped traditional belief structures and opened the afterlife to all.

As time went on, the demand for increasingly dramatic effects would harm the movement by inviting charlatans into Spiritualism’s circle. More important, the fervor of Spiritualism died down with the disappointments of postmillennialism at the turn of the century, when it became increasingly difficult to maintain that humanity was marching toward perfection. The ripple effect of Spiritualism’s iconoclasm would be felt in religious articulations from Theosophy to contemporary New Age movements. Although the religious component of achieving human perfection has largely dropped out of Spiritualism’s legacy, it continues today on a much more individual basis, with the proliferation of neighborhood, telephone, and televised psychics across the country. Even as the forms of Spiritualism become private instead of political, the desire to maintain contact with the dead and to mine heaven for its knowledge remains.

—Cathy Gutierrez

**SEE ALSO**

New Age; Protestantism in America; Popular Theodicies;  
Ritual and Performance: Funerals

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# GENERATIONS



Since the first children were born in the Puritan colonies, each successive generation in America has formed religious communities with distinctive styles and unique modifications to previous standards. Cycles of stress, revival, and consolidation have transformed American culture and politics several times over in the intervening centuries. Within fifty years after World War II, a cycle involving those born in the Baby Boom (from 1946 to 1964) and their children resulted in a world in which liberal churches were losing membership, evangelical churches were growing, Catholic priests and nuns were aging as their numbers declined, Jews were learning more Hebrew but intermarrying, and everyone was dealing with new concepts of sexual morality, family, gender, and sexual orientation. Other changes included the entry of witchcraft, voodoo, and pagan religions into ordinary discourse; revivals of Native American traditions; a greatly increased presence of Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists in America; and the influence of children who grew up thinking of God as “the Force.” Boomers and their children (often called Generation X) tended to integrate religion with popular culture and to downplay theology. But among all groups, especially for those that stressed continuity (such as Jews, Catholics, and Asian Americans), and for the African Americans, Native Americans, and evangelicals marginalized by the dominant culture, the generations followed internal rhythms as well as the national cycle.

### **American Generations in History and Theory**

Because the United States emerged from a religious movement rather than evolving as a natural, ethnic nation, a pattern of generational change has always appeared. The Puritans who arrived in New England in 1620 and 1630 came on a mission as adults who had undergone spiritual rebirth and rejected the Anglicanism of their ancestors, just as those ancestors had rejected Catholicism in the 1500s. Children born in America heard of the Puritan mission from pulpit and press but did not necessarily share it personally. Numbers claiming the experience of salvation that led to

church membership lagged, even though attendance at services and support of the ministry remained mandatory; sermons lamenting the decline of religious zeal became the first literary form born in the New World. By the 1690s, Solomon Stoddard, the grandfather of Jonathan Edwards, was already running a revival in his church; the witch craze of 1692 has also been interpreted as an attempt to reassert a lost sense of mission. A pattern of decline and revival continued and extended from New England into other English colonies and other areas of the new nation, with particular moments of enthusiasm in the 1740s, around 1800, in the 1830s, and arguably in several other decades, including the 1850s, the first years of the 1900s, the 1950s, and the 1970s. Historians of American religion organized their narratives around a series of “Great Awakenings.” William McLoughlin added a generational aspect to the story, grounding it in the anthropological theory that religious life proceeds by successive phases of stress (when rituals seem ineffective), revitalization (when prophets offer a new vision that young people adopt), and consolidation (when the new vision becomes routine).

According to this pattern, the 1950s appear as a time of stress in which new living conditions made old certainties unworkable. After a period of reactionary attempts to eliminate stress, as in anti-Communist crusades or denial through positive thinking, new visions appeared in the 1960s and 1970s. Movements for civil rights, racial integration, peace, women’s equality, gay liberation, and ecological awareness recast the world; Vatican II, the Jesus movement, and various liberal theologies revitalized the churches. Then came the 1980s and 1990s, when Generation X came of age in a mood of disillusionment, though continuing much that the revival had begun.

Although not denying that generational change and revivals take place, some sociologists and historians have pointed out problems with telling the story of American religion according to a pattern of decline, revival, and consolidation. Roger Finke and Rodney Stark (1992) observed that the percentage of the American population belonging to some religious

group steadily increased from 17 percent in 1776 to 62 percent in 1980; it has hovered around 60 percent for the past sixty years. They called the perception of decline and revival an illusion of scholars, who usually belong to moderate churches and have missed the fact that newer and stricter churches have always led the revivals and grown until they entered the mainstream, softened their teachings and moral demands, then lost membership relative to population. From the time of the American Revolution to the Baby Boom, the three main colonial churches (Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians) grew in absolute numbers but lost market share. At first the Methodists outstripped the colonial churches, then the Baptists outstripped the Methodists; now Pentecostals and independent evangelicals lead the recruitment of new members. Meanwhile, Roman Catholics gained market share until they moderated their teachings in the 1960s and began to decline. But some Catholics have joined newer, stricter churches, keeping the total number of Americans participating in religion steady. Even the Great Awakening of the 1740s, the prototype for all revivals, has been described by Jon Butler as a New England phenomenon exaggerated by historians.

Although religious revivals have occurred for centuries in America, then, a pattern of decline, revival, and consolidation cannot simply be applied to interpret religious and cultural change. Closer examination of what happened to religion before, during, and after the generation of the Baby Boom reveals that generations within different social, ethnic, and religious groups churn in different currents of revival and decline. All of these currents also connect with movements in the culture as a whole.

### **The Baby Boom Phenomenon**

With regard to the Baby Boomers, revisionists have punctured one myth: the oft-repeated story that more new religious groups appeared in the 1960s than ever before. The United States has always been fertile ground for new religious groups, such as the Mormons and Adventists of the decades before the Civil War and the Christian Scientists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Holiness churches, and Theosophists of the late 1800s. The illusion that Baby Boomers were notable for their religious innovations springs from the

fact that throughout history, some new religious groups have not survived the decade of their birth; because they were so short-lived, they are forgotten, and this lowers the count of groups born in earlier periods. There is no objective evidence that more cults or new religions appeared in the 1960s and 1970s than in any other period.

Nevertheless, the years of the Baby Boom did make an enormous difference in the religious makeup of America, and those born in the Boom did become in some sense a religious community. Their sense of community grew from the size of this cohort. Between 1946 and 1964, 76 million Americans were born into a country that numbered fewer than 190 million; this meant that about 44 percent of the population in 1964 was made up of children and teenagers aged eighteen or younger, as opposed to about 20 percent before the Boom began. The Boom also ended abruptly, with a crash that led to a birthrate in 1975 lower than that of the lowest years of the Great Depression.

Sheer numbers meant that for many years the United States had a child-centered culture. Adults built new homes, schools, and colleges for their children and joined churches and synagogues to provide those children with a religious education. Population shifted dramatically from cities and rural areas to suburbs. More than any previous generation, Baby Boomers were raised in neighborhoods without elders or unmarried adults, on streets of single-family homes occupied by parents of childbearing age and their children. These families were stable and pious; divorce, intermarriage among partners of different religions, and working mothers were all rare. The rate for those attending a service of worship in any given week reached its historic peak, 49 percent, in 1958, one year after the peak year for live births in U.S. history.

As the Boom proceeded, social and cultural tensions increased. Despite prosperity, piety, and power, Americans of the 1950s lived in what they themselves called an "age of anxiety." They were haunted by prospects of atomic destruction, concerned about the war against communism in Korea and the Cold War against the Soviet bloc, and convinced by neo-Freudian psychologists that women had gained too much economic and social power from the 1920s through the war years. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) disclosed the misery of many wives



Celebrating Jewish New Year, New York City, 1907  
(Library of Congress)

and mothers in the suburban neighborhoods, where the birthrate exceeded that of India. Racial and religious conflict broke out in the South, where school desegregation ordered by the Supreme Court (1954) connected with a movement for integration and civil rights led by ministers of black churches. Moreover, the young people were not content: They found spokespeople in a series of Beat poets and folk singers, especially Bob Dylan (born in 1941), who wrote *The Times They Are a' Changin'* in 1963. The reception of Dylan's message showed that many Boomers had developed a sense of purpose, becoming what Karl Mannheim called an *entelechy*, or generational "style," as well as a biological cohort.

Times changed more quickly when the first Boomers went to college. About 50 percent of the Baby Boom, as opposed to 14 percent of their parents, would attend at least some college, and many went to seek escape from their parents' ways of life.

That included their parents' religion: Rates of attendance at services fell as Boomers became adults. The mainline Protestant denominations (Episcopalians, Presbyterians, white Methodists, Congregationalists, and Lutherans) actually lost membership, not just in market share but in absolute numbers, after 1965 for the first time in history, and these denominations continued to shrink through 1995. When Boomers got religion, they sought out evangelical churches, which recorded spectacular growth, and (to a much lesser extent) New Age or Asian groups. Many simply left religion altogether: Those identifying their religion as "None" grew from 2 percent of the population in 1962 to 11 percent in 1991.

### Baby Boom-Era Churches

To some extent church patterns of growth and decline during the Baby Boom followed the same pattern that had been typical throughout American history—stricter churches tend to grow until they become more mainstream. Dramatic exceptions occurred among African Americans and Jews, however. The African Methodist Episcopal (AME) and AME Zion churches, the oldest black denominations in America, grew by 200.2 percent and 55.8 percent, respectively, between 1960 and 1995. Both were outstripped by the Pentecostal Church of God in Christ, which went from 393,000 to 5.5 million members in those years, so that its membership now exceeds that of all the white denominations with colonial roots and both black Methodist groups, but the black moderate churches also grew, both in numbers and share of the population. Among Jews, a phenomenon that seems directly contrary to the pattern saw membership in the strictest major denomination, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, fall from 3 million to 1 million members in that same thirty-five years, while the moderate, Conservative synagogues grew from 1.5 to 2 million and the liberal, Reform congregations grew from 1 to 1.3 million.

These seemingly disparate developments connected with a similar recovery of tradition among African Americans and Jews. Many middle-class black churches, which had always used hymns and modes of worship borrowed from white mainstream Protestants, adopted gospel music, patterns of call-and-response to sermons and prayers, and dancing by the



choir and congregation during the 1960s and 1970s as it became more acceptable to affirm an African identity. Reform and Conservative Jews also explored their traditions, connecting with roots neither they nor their parents had known. Often congregations were split by younger people who wanted to use more Hebrew in worship, dress less formally for services, give less attention to beautiful and expensive synagogue furnishings, eliminate the choirs and organs adapted from Christianity, and wear yarmulkes and prayer shawls (which many Reform Jews had never used); these Boomers were simultaneously more traditional and more casual than their parents. Just as the Civil Rights Movement gave a new source of pride to African American religions, so the triumph of Israel in the Six-Day War of 1967 and its survival in the Yom Kippur War of 1973 made Jews more proud of their distinctive identity.

Baby Boom Catholics experienced their own forms of decline and revival. These Boomers were born into a church that worshiped in Latin and in which 74 percent of the people went to Mass every week (though less than 10 percent received Communion on any given Sunday, since there were still strict rules governing preparation for the Eucharist, including fasting from food and drink after midnight Sunday morning and attending Confession on Saturday). In this pre-Vatican II church, divorce was impossible and annulments were unknown, except to those who could hire a lawyer at the court of marriages in Rome. Attendance at non-Catholic services was forbidden; marriages with non-Catholics could not take place in the church. Deliberately missing Mass on a Sunday or holy day or eating meat on Friday was considered a mortal sin, punishable by eternity in Hell, as was the slightest consent to sexual feeling outside of marriage. The seminaries were full: In 1965, 50,000 Catholic Americans were preparing for the priesthood.

All these things changed within a very few years of Vatican II, which met from 1963 to 1965. Told that they must worship in English and that they could eat meat on Fridays, Catholics began to doubt the absolute authority claimed by their church. When Pope Paul VI condemned the birth-control pill in 1968, many Catholics went on using it. By 1968, weekly Mass attendance had fallen to 65 percent; by 1978, it reached 52 percent; and by 1995, it had fallen to 47 percent, only 2 percent higher than the rate of atten-

dance for Protestants. By 1975, fewer than 8,000 men were studying for the priesthood, and thousands of priests had resigned and married. The number of nuns in the United States fell from 194,941 in 1970 to 92,107 in 1995—with an average age of sixty-seven.

Yet, unlike the Baby Boomers of the Protestant mainline, Catholic Boomers did not simply leave, or maintain a shrinking establishment, but also began movements of renewal. Everyone attending Mass began to receive Communion. Folk Masses, with more modern music accompanied by guitars, made churches more casual and changed the way that Catholics dressed for worship almost overnight. Laypeople began to lead aspects of worship, to help in administering parishes, and to teach catechism, theology, and religious studies on every level, from grammar schools to universities. Knowledge of the Bible and of world religions grew. Catholic groups advocating for women's ordination, gay rights, peace, and social justice that would have been muted or nonexistent in the 1950s became outspoken and active in the 1970s. Though nuns and priests were older, those who remained were also more likely to spend time on missions to the poor in Central America or to demonstrate against the war in Vietnam.

### **Religion, Revolution, and Race**

Cultural changes in the Baby Boom years, meanwhile, subjected the whole spectrum of religious groups in America to sweeping and powerful forces. Revolutions in race relations, sexual morality, and gender roles affected even the most traditional worlds. By the 1980s, these revolutions in values, combined with political crises arising from the war in Vietnam, the Watergate scandal, and the rise of militant conservatism, had transformed relations between religion and what some in the 1950s had called "the American way of life."

When Martin Luther King, Jr., gave his "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in 1963, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy monitored the power to the loudspeakers, ready to cut off the speech if disorder threatened to erupt. King was speaking in a nation that still maintained segregation by law in most southern schools and public facilities and by custom and business practice in most northern cities. Few blacks in the South could vote, owing to lo-

cal regulations and discriminatory practices. Blacks rarely appeared on television. Even the words “black” and “African American” were unknown; King’s speech, in accordance with the custom of the day, referred instead to “Negroes.” But important changes began to take place in the wake of the March on Washington, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and President Lyndon Johnson’s order that businesses dealing with the federal government practice affirmative action in hiring. African Americans, and then other ethnic groups, began to experience new opportunities. Although most Baby Boomers, especially those born in the 1950s, had met few black teachers, police, or other authority figures, the children of the 1970s and 1980s had a different experience. Popular culture, including television shows, movies, and sports, became much more integrated. Books by writers such as Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison appeared regularly in school and college curricula. These changes were accomplished in some part by Baby Boomers, acting first as college students in demonstrations and voter registration drives, then as teachers, professors, parents, and public officials.

Nevertheless, the movement for integration experienced significant failures and setbacks, and these had at least as much cultural and religious impact as its successes. By the time Martin Luther King, Jr., was shot in 1968, he seemed a man whose time of leadership had passed. Riots broke out in northern cities every summer as people became frustrated by the slow pace of change. For many, nonviolent protest and government action seemed unable to change ingrained patterns of economic and political injustice. Following the leadership of Malcolm X and Louis Farrakhan, some black people rejected both the goal of integration and the means of nonviolence, embracing instead a nationalistic form of Islam. Taking their cues from the calls for Black Power and racial pride, white ethnic groups began to assert their own identities. In 1973, the American Indian Movement used guns to seize and hold the site of the massacre at Wounded Knee. A more subtle development began in 1965 when quotas that had restricted immigration to the United States since 1921 were lifted; immigrants from the world beyond Europe began to arrive in much greater numbers. By the 1990s, American Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims had added new elements to the experience of the Baby Boomers and

their children. The ideals of multiculturalism and diversity displaced those of integration and segregation.

Failure and success with regard to race and religion became harder to measure. In the summer of 2001, two liberal Protestant denominations, the United Church of Christ (formerly Congregationalists) and the Disciples of Christ, held a joint annual meeting in Kansas City that concentrated on race, endorsing a program of reparations for slavery to be given by the United States to its black population; spokesmen for these denominations, however, revealed that they had very few black members, and both denominations were continuing to lose membership at an alarming rate. Meanwhile, a Pentecostal group, the Assemblies of God, was growing rapidly and attracting integrated congregations, even though sermons and prayers at services never dealt with matters of race except, perhaps, to assert their irrelevance. Megachurches in the suburbs invited all to hear their conservative, at times reactionary, gospel. Members of the generations who came of age with the effects of affirmative action overwhelmingly rejected such social policies but offered more automatic respect to the religious practices of black churches, and for that matter of Haitian immigrants, Native Americans, and Hindus, than the Baby Boomers or their parents had. Although no one could say that America’s race problem had been solved or the effects of slavery expunged, the relationship of race to religion and culture had surely changed.

### The Sexual Revolution

For many, the sexual revolution of the 1960s and the feminist and gay movements of the 1970s changed values on a more personal level. Because of penicillin and other antibiotics, the Baby Boom was the first (and will perhaps be the only) generation that passed through puberty without awareness of incurable sexually transmitted diseases. Colleges of the late 1960s not only stopped enforcing rules against men and women in each other’s dormitories but established coed dorms, which remain normal today. Landlords of the 1970s started renting to couples without a pretense of marriage. With the birth-control pill, first marketed in 1960, sex appeared to become detached from procreation, and the *Roe v. Wade* decision of 1973, which legalized abortion, completed this detachment. Statistics of what came to be called a “sex-

ual revolution” included a rise in the rate of premarital intercourse among eighteen-year-old women from 20 percent in the birth cohort of the early 1940s to 30 percent for those born in the first years of the Boom, then to over 40 percent for those born from 1953 to 1955 and over 50 percent for those born in the Boom’s last years, 1962 to 1964. As incurable disease returned with the outbreaks of herpes in the 1970s and AIDS in the 1980s, sexual activity ceased to increase, but it never fell nearly as low as 1950s levels.

Meanwhile, revolutions in living arrangements redefined courtship, marriage, and family. Before 1960, unmarried cohabitation was illegal in many places and very few couples lived together before marriage. Then the revolution began, and of the couples who married between 1965 and 1974, 11 percent had lived together. By 1994 that percentage rose to 44, and 3.7 million unmarried couples were living together in the United States. Marital instability also rose dramatically. The rate of divorces per year for every 1,000 people stood at 2.0 in 1940, 2.6 in 1950, and 2.2 in 1960, but increased to 3.5 by 1970, reached 5.2 by 1980, and remained around 5 until the mid-1990s. One survey of 1998 concluded that 25 percent of American adults had been divorced at least once. Perhaps in response to this instability, about 10 percent of those living together intended not to marry. The high rate of dissolution in the marriages of Baby Boomers was often cited as a source of cynicism and loneliness by the children of Generation X. So many Americans began to live alone or in fragmented families that the percentage of households consisting of two parents and their children fell from 45 percent in 1960 to 23.5 percent in 2000.

### **Gender Roles and the Rights of Women and Gays**

Gender—the word that came to stand for the whole set of behaviors and attitudes associated with the sexes, but determined by culture rather than biology—involved changes just as significant for religion as the changes affecting race and sex. For the parents of the Baby Boom, sexual identity entailed very definite gender roles. Suburban wives remained at home as their husbands went to work and their children attended school. Homosexuality was illegal and never publicly acknowledged; women and men could be ar-

rested for dancing with members of the same sex or wearing clothing of the opposite gender. At church and synagogue, men preached and ran services while women listened, sang, and responded. God was “He” and “the Almighty Father,” without a consort, and sometimes, more casually, “the Man Upstairs.” Catholic devotion to Mary and to female saints was not used to alter this masculine emphasis but to reinforce male rulership and the male identity of God.

A challenge to gender limits began outside of organized religion as feminists such as Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, and Angela Davis began to publish their work. A new feminism grew out of civil rights and antiwar protest movements, especially as women in those movements encountered discrimination from the men alongside whom they fought, reliving the experience of women in the antislavery movement of the 1830s. Then feminists began to write theology. Employing the analytic tools of Simone de Beauvoir, Mary Daly wrote *The Church and the Second Sex* in 1969. In 1973, as the first woman ever to get tenure in theology at Boston College, she published *Beyond God the Father*. Daly was soon joined by Rosemary Ruether, a Catholic who taught in a Protestant seminary; by other pioneers in theology and church history, such as Elizabeth Clark, Judith Plaskow, and Carol Christ; and by biblical scholars such as Elizabeth Schussler-Fiorenza and Phyllis Trible. Student bodies at the liberal seminaries, such as Union Theological Seminary in New York and the divinity schools at Harvard, Yale, and the University of Chicago, were transformed as the percentage of female students escalated: At Yale, it went from 11 percent in 1963 to 52 percent in 1987. Women were ordained as priests by the Episcopal Church in the 1970s and as rabbis by Conservative Jews in the 1980s (Reform Jews and more liberal Protestants already ordained women). Though women had difficulty attaining positions of leadership, in larger congregations of moderate Protestants and Jews it soon became the norm for one of the two or three clergy to be a woman, and women led some poorer congregations on their own. Many Catholics were convinced that women should be ordained, but the pope forbade discussion of this by bishops and theologians. Evangelicals, including Southern Baptists and Pentecostals, used biblical literalism to hold the line against female leadership, but the daughter of Billy Graham began



A family walking to church together (Ariel Skelley/Corbis)

preaching with the blessing of her father, and some black women went from the Baptist to the Methodist and Episcopal folds to be ordained.

On gay rights, an even more dramatic revolution ensued. The defining event of the Baby Boom years for gays was the Stonewall riot in 1969, when police harassment of patrons in a gay bar resulted in several nights of chaos, led by young people, in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of New York City. That event led to the first Gay Pride Parade and to real changes in legal status, though not in all places; anti-sodomy laws still make homosexual practice a crime in many states, and these laws have been upheld by the Supreme Court. In 1977, Harvey Milk became the first openly gay man to hold political office when he was elected to become a member of the Board of Supervisors in San Francisco; his career demonstrated the limits of tolerance when he was shot by a former colleague on the board in 1978. The Metropolitan Community Church, a Christian denomination formed by and for gays, emerged in several cities in the 1970s. In the last decades of the millennium,

movements to ordain gay clergy succeeded among Unitarians, in the United Church of Christ, in some Episcopal dioceses, and among Reform Jews. Roman Catholics also recognized homosexual orientation as part of the human condition and ordained homosexual priests, though under the constraints of celibacy. The crisis of AIDS that has swept the gay male community since the 1980s led to many spiritual responses, including an AIDS quilt that still tours the nation and a hit Broadway play, *Angels in America* (written by Tony Kushner, born 1956), that summarizes American history, religion, and culture, from the execution of the Rosenbergs as atomic spies in 1953 to a rebirth, ushered in by the epidemic, in the 1990s.

### Reactions of the Elders

Reactions against the cultural changes of the 1960s appeared in Richard Nixon's invocation of a "Silent Majority" in the 1968 presidential campaign and intensified in a crusade against abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment during the 1970s. Evangelical

leaders such as Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell founded universities and broadcasting empires by opposing the moral decay they associated with the Baby Boomers. Robertson (born in 1930) and Falwell (born in 1933) represented the Silent Generation—the children of the Great Depression, too young to have fought in World War II but too old for the Baby Boom. They allied with such elders as President Ronald Reagan (born in 1911) and President George H. W. Bush (born in 1924). This alliance is a reminder that the Baby Boom had two sets of parents with very different experiences. Those born from 1910 to 1924 generally served in World War II and returned with a certain optimism to peacetime America; they have recently been celebrated as the “greatest generation.” This cohort produced all seven presidents from 1960 through 1992, when the first Boomer president, Bill Clinton, defeated the elder Bush. In contrast, no American born between 1925 and 1945 has ever become president. In the reactionary movements that Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell began in the 1970s and 1980s and continue to lead today, they used deep pessimism about the direction of the culture to win support. More optimistic prophets of the Silent Generation, such as Martin Luther King, Jr. (born in 1929), Robert Kennedy (1925), and Malcolm X (1925), had their years of leadership shortened by assassination.

Though it would be difficult to quantify, it seems likely that the widespread prosperity of the 1950s, which brought a majority of whites into the middle class for the first time, contributed to a change in attitude among white evangelical Protestants that led to churches growing while advocating political reaction, unlike the churches that grew in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries while advocating reform. Methodists of the nineteenth century fought against slavery and for women’s right to vote; Baptists of the early twentieth century supported populist economics and later the New Deal. But white evangelicals of 1980 voted overwhelmingly for Ronald Reagan and opposed policies that sought to extend power or prosperity to the poor, to women, or to African Americans. Perhaps liberal white churches actually lost membership, rather than just market share, because liberals sought changes and offered uncertainty, while evangelical churches grew by offering certainty and moral superiority at no more cost than renouncing

changes that many middle-class white people wished to avoid.

### **Reactions of the Young: Generation X and Millennials**

Nothing so convenient as the end of a war dates the beginning or the end of Generation X. In 1960, the birthrate began to fall; by 1965, it stood at about the same level as in 1950. By 1975, it stood below levels for the early 1930s. Sometimes known as the Baby Bust, these years of the 1970s were marked by a general loss of confidence: the oil shortages of 1973 and 1979, the Watergate scandal and President Nixon’s resignation in 1974, the loss of the war in Vietnam in 1975, and the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979 all contributed to a sense that the United States no longer led the world, or even knew its own direction. Those born in the 1970s and early 1980s often describe themselves as the forgotten children of Boomers, raised without parents at home after school and without either the certainties of the 1950s or the crusades of the 1960s. In 1983, ABC showed a film on the aftermath of nuclear war, *The Day After*, to 50 million people, and a majority of college students in a 1984 poll believed that they would die in nuclear war. They attend services of worship at rates below those of Boomers: According to Gallup (1996), 34 percent of those under age thirty attended in a given week in 1995, as opposed to 40 percent of those aged thirty to forty-nine, 46 percent of those fifty to sixty-four, and 53 percent of those sixty-five and older.

Despite the problems Gen Xers faced in their earliest years, the late 1980s brought a sense of renewal. The international situation began to improve for America with the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the American economy rebounded. The first personal computers appeared in homes and offices of the mid-1980s, and birthrates turned upward as well. Those born after 1980, who have never known a world without computers, are sometimes called the Millennial Generation. On many college campuses, the transition was visible: There were lower standards of admission, lower enrollments, and lower morale in the early 1990s as those born at the nadir of the Baby Bust turned eighteen, followed by larger classes and higher standards late in the 1990s. As younger Boomers reach the end of their childbearing years,

Gen Xers are beginning to have children. A dramatic rise in immigration has also increased the numbers of births.

In religion and culture, Generation X and the Millennials have accepted and gone beyond the revolutions that occurred during the Baby Boom. The leadership of women and of figures from popular culture has increased. For example, Madonna Ciccone, known around the world as Madonna, a late Boomer (born in 1958), has lasted more than a decade as a heroine for many Generation Xers. Madonna made religious imagery, along with gay dancers, gender play, and social commentary, into staples of her live performances and music videos; her video for the song "Like a Prayer" incorporated burning crosses, the Catholic Saint Martin de Porres, stigmata, and the choir from a Church of God in Christ. Racial barriers seem invisible for Madonna, and they erode further as white teenagers tune in to rap music and as young Christians join integrated Pentecostal churches.

The masculine, monarchical image of God that Mary Daly criticized continues to dissolve, both in religious practice and in popular culture. Scholars have pointed out the similar emphases on personal experience and harmony between New Age groups learning Asian, Wiccan, and Native American forms of spiritual practice and evangelicals who seek healing and power in the Holy Spirit. For children born since the mid-1960s, the cosmic power called "the Force" that appeared in *Star Wars* (1977) and its sequels—a series of films directly based by George Lucas (born in 1944) on the teachings of historian of religion Joseph Campbell—has provided a transpersonal concept of God and rehabilitated a kind of thinking that earlier generations would have called "magical." Social scientists have only begun to explore the prevalence of belief in astrology, reincarnation, and extrasensory perception, or the popularity of various types of meditation and bodily exercises such as T'ai-chi, yoga, and martial arts, among young Americans. At times, the New Age appears to involve nothing new, since most of its practices are so old; but the old practices have been adopted and combined by Americans in new contexts.

Without question, Generation X and the Millennials live out an ecological morality that differs from that of their parents. Anyone who remembers smoking in elevators, automobiles, and classrooms, as peo-

ple commonly did through the 1970s, knows that today's high school and college students have a different attitude even if they continue to smoke. Though the subject has not been adequately studied, the popularity of vegetarianism based on some combination of concerns for animal rights and for the effects of eating animals on human health and the human spirit has changed the menus offered in high school and college cafeterias.

### Generations and Revivals in the History of Religion

Generations can simply bring continuity. In a book called *Crow Dog* (1996), the Lakota Sioux leader Leonard Crow Dog presented himself as the successor of three other healers, his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, by that name. For many of the immigrants who have brought the numbers of foreign-born in the United States from 9.6 million in 1970 to 24.4 million by 1998, and who now build Hindu temples and Muslim mosques in the suburbs of Nashville and the neighborhoods of Queens, the hope for continuity across generations motivates religious life. Continuity remains the underlying story across the spectrum of American religion: Gallup (1996) has reported about the same percentages for belief in some God or universal spirit (about 96 percent), for affiliation with some religious group (about 70 percent), and for belief in prayer (about 90 percent) over the past sixty years.

Among generations, the Millennials seem especially interested in continuity; they often seek to appropriate all of the cultural discourse of the past sixty years, from swing dancing and rock to rap, unlike Boomers, who rejected their parents, or Gen Xers, who saw through hippie ideals. All adults since the Boom have participated in a change that began with television in the 1950s, which has blurred the distinctions between religious practice, theological argument, and popular culture. In the 1950s, a television show like *Touched by an Angel* would have ignited theological controversy, and a singer like Madonna could not have performed wearing crucifixes. Although Americans before the 1950s still respected the differences that divided churches and religions from each other, Americans of the new millennium seem to proceed on the assumption that all assertions of religion contain some truth.

Instead of attending to details of principle and tradition, they want to test religions pragmatically, that is, for their consequences in life, a task especially suited to the fictions and the social-scientific analyses that abound in popular culture.

Some changes that seem generational may be effects of age: Lower attendance at services by young people may rise when they marry and have children, then rise again as old age brings death nearer and the departure of children makes the worshipping community more valuable. Generational phenomena also look different to those in the same generation who have different cultural backgrounds: For example, the same burning crosses or crucifixes that excite or liberate white Madonna fans may offend blacks who think of the Ku Klux Klan or Catholics who see a blasphemous exploitation of religion. Finally, some “generational” developments may happen to the same person living through several eras—for example, a Boomer woman who became a professor at a divinity school in the 1970s may have come out as a lesbian in the 1980s, begun practicing Zen meditation in the 1990s, and found the courage to tell her story at the millennium.

With all of these qualifications, however, the religious and cultural revolutions of the 1960s still made a profound difference. The model that breaks revivals down into generations of stress, revitalization, and consolidation also retains some usefulness. Even Leonard Crow Dog, who danced the Ghost Dance of his great-grandfather during the occupation of Wounded Knee, dealt with opponents from the Silent Generation, recruited whites and Indians who wanted a revolution from the Baby Boom, and now finds his book sold as a college text to Generation Xers and Millennials.

—Peter Gardella

#### SEE ALSO

African American Religions: African Americans and Islam, African American Religious Leaders; Catholicism in America: Nuns and Priests, Vatican II; Judaism in America; Native American Religions and Politics; New Age; Protestantism in America: Evangelicalism and

Gender, Puritanism; Death: AIDS Quilt; Popular Culture; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Rights Movement, Feminisms; Sacred Space: The Suburban Home; Sexuality: Sexual Identities

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## AGING, ELDEERSHIP, AND RELIGION

Although aging is a biological process shared by all humans, Americans have imagined becoming old in various ways, informed by their place in time and especially by their religious and cultural traditions. Perhaps because of old age's proximity to death and/or ancestorship, perhaps because of its accrued experiential wisdom, perhaps because of traditional teachings of deference to the old, elders in many religious communities enjoy considerable prestige, if not authority, in matters of religion. Speaking broadly of American culture, the spiritual significance of aging has declined over time, as has the associated religious and cultural authority of the old. But the process has been neither unequivocal nor uniform across American groups. Certain American communities have distinguished themselves in their regard for the authority of the old and for aging as a religiously significant process. Whether Native American, African American, Asian American, or any number of more recent immigrant groups, such communities struggle to maintain traditions of honoring aging and eldership amid social and cultural circumstances in the United States that marginalize aging and the elderly.

It is perhaps a truism that each generation looks nostalgically to "the old days" when young people supposedly listened to their elders. Nevertheless, several cultural historians have identified a broad trend of what Thomas Cole has aptly called a "demeaning of aging." (Cole 1992; Achenbaum 1978; Fischer 1978). For Cole, in *The Journey of Life: A Cultural History of Aging in America* (1992), the demeaning of aging is twofold, involving, on the one hand, a decline in a shared sense of the religious significance of aging, and, on the other, the devaluation of the cultural authority of the old amid competing structures of authority.

According to Cole, the first Euro-Americans, in their affirmation of hierarchical and patriarchal authority, affirmed an early modern deference to elders, especially male elders, which produced, of course, its own resentments and challenges to their authority, and in particular to their control of land and family resources. Puritans held a deep religious regard for aging. Indeed, those who leaned toward the Presbyterian model of church polity located the primary au-

thority of the congregation in the office of "elder." But for all Puritans, old age was a kind of religious calling, a final stage of the individual pilgrim's progress on a sacred journey of life. Old age was a gift, a treasured sign of God's providence. At the same time, Puritans felt ambivalent about old age, for the very old bore witness to the limits of the human condition and thus called into question whatever meanings of reward or virtue had been attached to it.

Deep ambivalence about aging and old age is another truism that seems to span boundaries of time and culture. But at least for the Puritans, Calvinist theology placed the vagaries of old age, as it did human mortality, in the larger framework of original sin. In this, old age was elementally a shared condition: not simply a problem facing the old, but a nagging reminder to all pilgrims on the journey of life that they, too, faced limits.

In Cole's analysis, as the orthodox Calvinist tenet of human depravity came under increased challenge among evangelicals in the nineteenth century, so too did the principled, if ambivalent, shared regard for aging and old age. The new evangelical piety of the revival meeting, with its insistence on the conversion moment, worked against the "growth in grace" model of gradual spiritual development over the life course. A new evangelical moral theology resting on an individual's "self-control" forced a new appraisal of old age, characterized as it is by biologically determined losses of such control. As evangelical theologies began to push the possibilities of human perfectibility, and health-reform movements emphasized the link between the physical health of the body and the moral health of the character, old age became a highly unstable sign, one that called into question the central tenets of the evangelical project. Thus, argued Cole, what had been a shared ambivalence about aging and the old was transformed into a bifurcated view of good aging and bad aging. Longevity was valorized, even sanctified, in late nineteenth-century manuals of aging, though the loss of control in old age pointed to an individual's moral failure.

The early twentieth century added to this ideological dualism a social scientific construction of old age as a problem to be managed and solved. The old





In church in Appalachia, 1984 (David Turnley/Corbis)

were no longer viewed as those of “us” in the later stages of a shared life journey, but as a “them” to be managed in emerging bureaucratic institutions designed for their care and by professionals trained in the emergent discipline of gerontology. As old age came to be more closely associated with retirement, and as the meaning of the life passage came to be understood more decidedly in terms of work, the significance and authority of old age were marginalized further still, though with different implications for men and women.

Amid the social and economic changes that came to demean aging as a shared and meaningful process affecting all, however, there remained in American religious thought deep commitments to the dignity and equality of all human beings. There also remained numerous local examples of the continued authority of certain elders in particular families or contexts that spelled more than nostalgia or mere prestige. Faith communities have experienced disproportionate par-

ticipation of elders. And certain elders, some women among them, have enjoyed an increase in authority and control of resources with age, even while women elders generally are doubly marginalized (Buchanan 1987).

Perhaps most important, changing ideologies of old age in the dominant culture bump up against markedly different cultural and religious traditions concerning age and aging among certain groups in America. Although these groups must contend with ruling ideas about the old and social circumstances that structure their lives, in some cases their counter-cultural regard for elders has become an accentuated mark of their identity as distinct communities.

Native American traditions resound with appeals to “honor the elders,” a maxim that teaches one of the more cherished of cultural values. Among the Ojibwe people of the Great Lakes region, as could be said for most other Native communities, the very goal of the spiritual life is to live well on this earth and to contribute to the underlying harmony of the world by practicing right relations. To live to a ripe old age, then, marks a kind of religious attainment—not one that precludes an afterlife, but which focuses religious effort on maintaining proper, balanced relations with other people, plants, animals, and the spiritual sources of existence. It follows that cultural and ceremonial authority is spread out among broad circles of Ojibwe elders, with some particularly distinguished as religious specialists. Elders pray and sing on behalf of the community. They confer Ojibwe names in a naming ceremony akin to Christian baptism. Like other Native Americans, the Ojibwe have a primarily oral tradition, and thus elders represent the community’s memory: They are living libraries of myth, ritual, and healing knowledge. Today, Ojibwe people live very much in the modern American world, but they are also undergoing a period of spiritual and traditional renewal. They vigilantly keep sacred matters firmly in this oral tradition, and have perhaps even come to accentuate the relative authority of elders in this regard, for they rely on today’s elders to connect them in a living way with a living past. Yet elders are not simply the product of their years on earth accruing oral tradition wisdom. Their life experience and their authority position them to interpret and improvise on tradition to keep it relevant in new times and new contexts.

Similarly, African slaves and their African American

progeny carried with them an indigenous regard for the religious authority of elders and the spiritual significance of aging and have creatively integrated that regard into various African American religious cultures. In the Pentecostal Church of God in Christ, for example, the old are not construed in terms of “old age” or “aged” but are considered “the wise,” those who have reached the “age of wisdom.” A great deal of authority rests upon “elders” (men) and “mothers” (women), and elder women have earned positions of considerable authority despite traditional barriers to women preachers in the pulpit (Peterson 1990).

American Jews bring Judaism’s traditional view of the life course to this mix, teaching the ideal of a continuous process of learning throughout life culminating with the learned sage. Barbara Myerhoff’s remarkable study of Jewish men and women at a Los Angeles area senior center brings out the way that elders of an immigrant generation tried to improvise, at the margins of American society, on those traditions of old age as a time of wisdom and fulfillment (Myerhoff 1978).

East Asian immigrants, too, have brought with them important teachings concerning the significance and authority of old age rooted in the Confucian, Taoist, Buddhist, and local traditions of China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and Laos. In these communities, to grow old is to grow in stature, and strong cultural traditions of deference and regard for elders carry deeply into their experience in the United States. As with other immigrant communities, such traditional ideals must be newly negotiated—sometimes accentuated, sometimes contested, oftentimes both—within a dominant culture that does not thus regard the religious significance of aging or the authority of the elders.

—Michael D. McNally

#### SEE ALSO

African American Religions; Asian American Religious Communities; Judaism in America; Native American Religions and Politics; Protestantism in America: Pentecostalism, Puritanism

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## BABY BOOMERS

The term “Baby Boomers” applies to the large, post–World War II generation. As this term suggests, it describes a population brought about when the country’s birthrates rose precipitously from 1946 up until 1958, and one that remained relatively high for another six years. From the years 1946 to 1964, 76

million Americans were born—the largest cohort of youth ever in American history. In Europe, Canada, Australia, and elsewhere in the world, there was a population boom during this period, but nowhere as much so as in the United States.

Baby Boomers are important in American life for

both demographic and cultural reasons. Because of its demographic size, the cohort has shaped the nation's mood and social institutions at every phase during their life cycle. In the 1950s and 1960s, schools expanded to accommodate them; in the 1980s and 1990s, their midlife concerns encouraged a "spirituality industry" devoted to addressing their deepest concerns; in the first decade of the twenty-first century, as their parents die, they will be the beneficiaries of the largest intergenerational transfer of wealth in American history. Culturally, they were born at a time of strong emphasis upon familism, movement to the suburbs, and Cold War ideology against the Communists. But by the time they came of age in the 1960s and 1970s, it was a period of widespread questioning of values and changing lifestyles. As young adults, they were at the forefront of a cultural shift affecting gender roles and sexual norms, lifestyle choice, and concerns about war and the environment. They were the first generation to grow up on television; the first for whom "the Pill" and other birth-control techniques were widely available; the first to be targeted beginning even as children, and then subsequently at every life-stage, by Madison Avenue as consumers. As a generation they were deeply touched by the Kennedy assassination, the Vietnam War, and Watergate, resulting in a loss of confidence in social and political institutions and a decline in civic participation.

The generation's impact on political, cultural, and religious life has been huge. There were declines in local and national voting as Boomers entered into adult life—patterns that have continued to the present within the United States. Political party loyalty declined as compared with their parents' preferences, and the number declaring themselves as Independents increased as the proportions identifying as Democrat or Republican decreased. A tendency to question authority led some to social protests, but far more within the generation became politically indifferent. The rise in single-issue politics over the past several decades appears to be linked to the generation's tendency to think through each issue carefully and arrive at a position in keeping with their sense of autonomy and responsibility.

Culturally, the generation in various Western countries is associated with "postmaterialist values," or an emphasis on personal well-being, feminism, lifestyle choice, the environment, and other quality-of-life

issues. Having grown up in a time of affluence, and thus not having to worry greatly about their basic material needs such as food, housing, and clothing, an expanded sector of middle-class Boomers shaped an ethos for the generation focused largely around personal freedom, self-fulfillment, and self-acquisition. Commentators have used various terms to describe the generation in their adult years, including "narcissistic" and "consumption oriented."

Religiously, there has been no massive dropping out of churches, synagogues, mosques, or temples for members of this generation. Rather, there has been a major shift in institutional loyalties. Many Boomers dropped out of the so-called mainline Euro-American Protestant churches that were closely identified with the bourgeois culture of the late 1960s and 1970s. Obligation to faith and churchgoing lost much of its hold in this religious sector. An older civil-religious consensus collapsed in the face of a growing religious diversity and questioning of the link between religious beliefs and values, on the one hand, and national and international political practice, on the other. Some who dropped out of the churches and synagogues turned to Eastern meditation and practices, but far more joined popular evangelical Christian churches. There was a noticeable increase in "religious nones," or those unaffiliated with any religious institution.

Research on Boomers at midlife suggests that spiritual concerns loom large, in keeping with their post-materialist values. Boomers appear to move in and out of religious groups more frequently than did their parents. Many are attracted to special-purpose religious groups advancing a particular cause or fashioning faith in accord with a particular lifestyle. Some find meaning as they delve more deeply into faith traditions; others are *bricoleurs*, cobbling together a religious worldview from a global supply of beliefs, symbols, images, and practices. As with previous generations, becoming a parent is often the occasion for returning to active religious participation. And Boomers are no different in this regard, although, as their children themselves grow up and often drop out of churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques, Boomer parents frequently drop out again as well. They tend to privilege personal needs, biography, and sharing of concerns as they search for a religious or spiritual community in which to belong, or, as is often the case, a small group in which to participate

for a specified, and usually short, period. Generally, the religious terrain this generation has created can be described as fluid and multilayered. Many are committed to a faith tradition, but in actual practice they tend to express their faith in styles that are culturally current and by drawing from a variety of ideologies and meaning systems.

—Wade Clark Roof

#### SEE ALSO

New Age; New Religious Traditions: Communitarian Movements; Protestantism in America; Public Theologies and Political Culture

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## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Unlike generations, which are generally defined as those born around the time of watershed events, such as Baby Boomers and the “greatest generation,” defining who fits into the category of children and youth is much more difficult. Children are often characterized by what they are not: They are not responsible; they are not capable of making life-altering decisions. They are not adults. Having only this negative outline to fill in, adults create programs for young people that reflect their adult assumptions about young people. From youth groups to Hebrew school to Faith Formation classes, many established religious institutions in the United States have put tremendous effort into building children’s faith by teaching various doctrines and theological affirmations. They craft these programs both to help the youngsters begin their journey of religious practice and belief and to guarantee the group’s survival into the next generation.

Established religious groups have elaborate religious education programs that help guide children through various processes of initiation—bat and bar mitzvahs, First Eucharists, and Confirmations—so that they might commit themselves to their parents’ religion and carry it on into the next generation. These ritual moments work to deepen the children’s relationship with their God and with their congregation. Additionally, these rituals function to ensure that parents will bring their children to religious education classes at least for a few years. Through these classes

and other activities, churches work to instill in the next generation a sense of loyalty to their faith so that they might follow its precepts when they grow older and have their own families, thus sustaining the religion into the future. Many of these organizations have added attractive features such as religiously oriented popular music and coffee shops to their youth ministry programs to keep children interested in their faith as the secular society changes.

Few new religious groups have been successful in creating a second generation as faithful as the first, however, perhaps because they focus primarily on keeping their adult members and gaining new adult converts. Some of these groups have recognized the need to educate children about, and include them in, religious rituals, though there is often much disagreement about how this should be done. For Wicca and many other New Age movements, for instance, instructing children in religiosity is particularly difficult because the groups value individual spirituality rather than adherence to proscribed religious tenets. Although these newer movements continue to struggle with how to educate young people, a small number of groups, most prominently the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which have focused on their youngest members since their earliest days, have sustained themselves and have continued to grow. These groups, like the more established religions before them, have discovered ways both to keep parents



Children praying in a classroom, Garfield, New Jersey (Trip/J. Greenberg)

bringing children to religious education classes and to instill a sense of belonging in the children that helps to ensure their continued participation as they grow older.

These religious education programs reveal much about how the particular group views children and human nature. Conservative Christians, for example, who believe children are inclined toward greed and rebellion, often put great emphasis on the consequences of children's choices. More liberal groups, however, who believe that children are pure and closer to God, highlight their spirituality and trusting nature in constructing their educational materials. How children feel about these programs, and what they learn from them, however, remain unclear.

Although many children may be interested in God, heaven, angels, and other religious phenomena, there is no evidence that this is an innate and universal trait in children. Recently, some researchers have been trying to uncouple the often-assumed relationship between children and spirituality to examine how and

why such an assumption developed and to understand how children interpret their own religious lives.

Since children have virtually no choice about whether or not to attend religious services and rituals, they have a variety of relationships with the church, ranging from those who are dragged to the sanctuary and classes, refusing to pay attention as a form of protest, to those who work hard to develop and maintain a relationship with God and their church. Even within the latter group, however, many children who are excluded from certain adult rituals, such as the Eucharist, simply because of their age see themselves as anonymous entities in their church rather than as integral members of their congregation. Perhaps, then, children are a distinct community within religious institutions that has yet to be understood.

—Susan Ridgely Bales

#### SEE ALSO

Judaism in America; New Age; Wicca; New Religious Traditions; Mormonism; Protestantism in America;

Protestantism in America: Church Growth Movement;  
Ritual and Performance: Childbirth

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## THE FAMILY

Myths are stories that, by design, are part fiction and part truth. Classic myths are often benign tales that frame general moral truths in fictional or idealized depictions of events and persons. A less noble sort of myth, stories that we might playfully call “myth-conceptions,” aims at dressing up falsehoods in the rhetorical forms we associate with truths. These are the “myths” that come packaged in compelling and credible forms of communication such as history books, news media, films, and advertising that look to be fact but may be seriously misleading or outright deceptions. These are the kinds of myths that beg to be debunked.

The life of families is intimately tied up with both kinds of myths. As historian John Gillis wrote in *A World of Their Own Making* (1996), we all live in two families, an actual family and a mythic family. The former is made up of those actual people, relationships, and activities that we associate with our family life. The mythic family is the set of idealized images, ideas, and expectations about family life that hover below and above our actual family lives and that have a powerful effect on how we experience and evaluate family. These myths of family come from many different sources. Not surprisingly, people are rarely fully aware of how many myths of family life we hold. Nor can we distinguish easily between what is myth and what is real in our experiences of family life.

Because families are tied up with myth in so many ways, it is useful to distinguish several distinct influences of myth on family in the United States. The

first involves the myth as “charter.” That is, for anthropologists, a myth often represents a charter justifying the founding or the continued existence of a group. Families in traditional societies commonly tell mythic stories to justify their distinctiveness and provide a shared understanding of origin and common characteristics. Kinship groups such as clans or lineages often have mythic stories telling of their founding ancestors or ancestresses. They recount how a kin group came into being, either through primary origin tales or by more historically framed stories of social conflict, division, and reformation. The Old Testament is a very famous source of such mythic tales of origin for the tribes of Israel.

In the United States, the only family stories that begin from scratch are Native American origin tales of the emergence of tribes and clans. For the rest of us, as anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer pointed out (1948), our family origin stories begin in the fact that the United States is a settler society. Many American family myths include a canonical story of breaking away from the “old country,” arrival, and resettlement.

Rebellious breaking away from a fatherland or motherland and settlement in a new country become a charter for a kind of “generation gap” myth of family history, a distinctive picture of the regeneration of family life based upon the children rebelling against their parents’ generation, then moving on to reestablish themselves anew. In this context, American family myths always reveal a tension between appropriating a history and identity that celebrate the

continuity of ethnic or religious distinctiveness and an equally powerful thrust to break away from the older generation, blend in with one's neighbors, and become Americanized. This tension is vividly captured in Donald Katz's *Home Fires* (1992), an account of three generations in the life of a postwar Jewish family on Long Island.

Family histories, told during family celebrations, often recount these stories of origin, migration, and settlement. For some families claiming relatively long American histories, they involve stories of how ancestors came from England on the *Mayflower*. Other immigrant families use Ellis Island as the starting point for their American origins, beginnings that included the bestowal of new names, the first step in the Americanization process. And the process continues. Whether the idiom is Yankee, Vietnamese, Irish, Hmong, Jewish, Italian, Arab, Mexican, Chinese, or any of the other groups that make up our country, the circumstances of migration and resettlement, of being different and becoming American, of breaking away and finding new forms of community, all have a lot to do with the canonical myths that American families

tell themselves about who they are and where they come from.

There are probably important regional variations in the United States to how family myths get made and when they are told. In the South, for instance, nuclear families often have very vivid stories of the family lines that make them up, complete with origin tales, memorable odd relatives, and a clear picture of the inherited family characteristics that make each family different. This tradition has contributed to the role of southern writers in American literature as tellers of family stories.

Because American families are continually breaking up and remaking themselves, they are particularly prone to misreading nostalgic myths about themselves. These are the deceptive myths referred to above as "myth-conceptions." In her book *The Way We Never Were* (1992), family historian Stephanie Coontz tried to correct a number of these shared nostalgic myths about the American family. Americans tend to view the complexity of their modern family lives in relation to mythic images of a simpler time when a *Leave It to Beaver*-style family predominated, and her historical corrective involves emphasizing that American women have long been involved in the workplace and that the post-World War II withdrawal of many women to the home was actually an atypical pattern in American family history.

In a similar demythologizing vein, John Gillis reminded us that the modern American family as we know it, with its nostalgic sense of its own identity and its clear boundaries, is largely a Victorian invention. Family boundaries were unclear and permeable, and families often included non-kin who worked for the family in one capacity or another. Part of the American tendency toward nostalgic myths of families past is the recurrent American sense that the "traditional" family is in trouble and on the verge of falling apart. This conviction can be seen as a persistent theme throughout the past two centuries of American history and must be viewed as a myth all its own, one that reproduces as an image of general family history, the fragile developmental history of each American family as it undergoes its phases of foundation, formation, self-definition, and inevitable decomposition.

No essay on the American family would be complete without a mention of the role of modern media



Two Czechoslovakian refugee families in New York, 1939  
(Library of Congress)



A young couple with their baby, 2000 (Tom and Dee Ann McCarthy/Corbis)

in the creation and reproduction of family myths. We are all bombarded on a daily basis with many consciously produced images of family life that become inevitably integrated into our own personal mythologies of the family. These come from theater, books, films, and, most notoriously, representations of family in television shows and advertising. An entire history of family myths could be written for each genre of media. And many of the changing ideas that we share in the United States about the family come from changes in how family life is represented in the media, particularly television.

The idealized family of the 1950s and 1960s—middle-class, white, and suburban with traditional gender divisions of labor—gave way in the 1970s and 1980s to a celebration of family variation. By the 1990s, images of the dysfunctional family began to emerge in which the illusion of the all-knowing father and mother gave way to a *Married with Children* type of family scene. The kids seemed to always be wiser than their parents, and the family was always near collapse. By the end of the century, family sit-coms began to give way to representations of “friends” sitting in permeable living rooms. There was a conspicuous absence of generational differences or family ties. These sit-coms, such as *Seinfeld* and *Friends*, served to emphasize a myth of the voluntary family where the tensions of generational authority are replaced by the tensions of ambiguous relationships.

The relation between these media-driven myths of family and the actual conditions of family life are complex and go in both directions. Displaying the mix of fiction and fact alluded to at the beginning of this essay as the basis of all myth, these media-driven myths not only reflect real changes in American family life but also exert a strong influence on how Americans conceive of what is happening to their families.

—Bradd Shore

#### SEE ALSO

Popular Culture; Sacred Time: Christmas, Easter, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Vacations

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## GENERATION X

The term “Generation X” attempts to describe those in the United States born between the mid-1960s and the late 1970s. The members of this group have a shared cultural symbol system that has mediated a generational spiritual maturation marked by common themes. This generation grew up in an age of the implosion of the nuclear middle-class family, the explosion of the influence of popular media culture over everyday life, an increasing American pluralism, an economically unstable middle class, the expansion of market logic over everyday life, and in the immediate wake of the decline and general suspicion of institutions created by the crises of the 1960s. Thus, the spiritual identities of many in this generation are strongly influenced by the relationship that individuals and groups adopt toward pluralism, media culture, individualism, and contemporary capitalism. The result is the emergence of common themes that constitute a “generational spirituality.” These themes include the importance of personal experience in defining one’s spirituality, the complex negotiation of a relationship to religious institutions, and a search for spiritual answers to the questions posed by the ambiguity that seems to mark all identity in recent decades, whether religious, familial, vocational, or sexual.

### Cultural Influences

Certain fundamental and widespread cultural experiences, symbols, ideas, and events, though not limited to this generation, seem characteristic. These became the basic data informing the options for spiritual identity. Among these cultural data are the following:

*Divorce:* Nearly half of this generation grew up in divorced families, and most grew up exposed to a larger American culture of divorce. These experiences often manifest themselves in intensified religious questions about permanence, fidelity, and commitment.

*Early and untutored adulthood:* Many describe growing up parenting their parents or parenting themselves, a childhood sometimes complicated by an overemphasis on concern with money, solitary exposure to adult themes in popular culture, and attempts to deal with adult psychological struggles in the home. Many in this generation experienced what David Elkind

(1981) has called a “hurried childhood” that presaged an early and relatively untutored adulthood.

*Privatization of youth culture:* This generation grew up in a milieu characterized by increasingly sophisticated targeting of popular media culture to ever more finely differentiated segments of youth, not only uniting but also dividing youth from each other and particularly from adults. This development has often encouraged individuals and subcultures to take the attitude that the popular media cultures most meaningful to them are relatively autonomous from or even independent of the influence of and meaningful interpretation by religious traditions or institutions.

*Technological literacy:* During adolescence and young adulthood, this generation witnessed the advent of the personal computer and the rise of the Internet. Most are skilled in basic to advanced computer literacy and Internet navigation, which for them constitute a performative “second language.” These technologies form an important mode of relationship for many.

*Mobility:* The members of this generation are expected to have not one career but several “mini-careers” throughout their lifetimes. But such vocational mobility is only one expression of a larger generational mobility: Many find employment as temporary workers, live at some physical distance from their immediate family, and, owing to alienated blood relationships, affiliate with ad hoc families composed of friends with common vocations or avocations, interests, or convictions.

*Extended adolescence:* Aided by the contemporary fusion of youth and adult popular culture, many in this generation seem to be living an extended adolescence, continuing long into adulthood the practices of adolescent years, such as maintaining popular musical tastes, playing video games, and engaging in sports-related physical activity.

*Delayed marriage:* Many Gen Xers delayed first marriage until their mid- to late twenties. Related to this phenomenon is the reality of cohabitation, or living together instead of or prior to marrying. Perhaps half of this generation has cohabited.

*Lived pluralism:* This is a diverse generation, approximately 14 percent black, 12 percent Hispanic, and 4 percent Asian. Many have adopted cultural diversity



Members of the Christian punk-rock band MXPX (Karen Mason Blair/Corbis)

as a personal value and are conscious of the limits that are placed on them by their cultures, families, or religion—in short, the partiality of each person’s perspective. Even those in this generation who deny such partiality must still formulate their attitudes in relation to it.

*The “post” generation:* Generation X came of age post-Watergate, post-Vietnam, and (for Roman Catholics) post-Vatican II. They do not draw upon the felt sense of hope or regret about the 1960s that often animates their mentors and parents, have never known an extended moment of national trust in the political process, and have never been exposed to an authentically liberal national politics, having formed their political opinions during the twelve years of Reagan-Bush political leadership in the United States from 1981 to 1993.

*Materialism:* Perhaps most in this generation are witting and unwitting participants in consumer capitalism. This participation takes at least three forms: uncritical (purchasing an identity by purchasing prod-

ucts), ironic (which participates in materialistic logic when it reappropriates outmoded fashions by patronizing large corporate clothing chains), and downsized (regular consumption of expensive “toys” or luxuries, such as gourmet coffee, cell phones, stereos, pagers, mountain bikes, computers, and musical accessories).

*Political paralysis and volunteerism:* Many churches, campuses, and secular groups find Gen Xers interested in serving others through volunteer projects. At the same time, they share a widespread suspicion about the efficacy of traditional political participation or activism. Thus, their volunteerism is largely local, is focused on attaining empirically observable results, requires only short-term commitments, and is unlinked to a larger political identity or long-term national political movement.

*Immersion in popular media culture:* Many in this generation have a small but substantial universe of popular culture references at hand and have been formed in significant spiritual ways by interaction with popular culture. Affordable computers and video game sys-

tems during childhood, easy access to network and cable television, access to disposable income, living under an expanding corporate presence over everyday life, as well as an explosion of universal, interactive, and affordable technologies, combined to make young adults likely to be relatively immersed in popular media culture. It provides, for many, a set of fundamental colors for the palette of the religious imagination.

### Religious Indicators

Intermingled with these cultural phenomena are more explicitly “spiritual” signs of the times for this generation. These data include:

*Religious illiteracy:* For various reasons, many Gen Xers have a minimal command, at best, of the conceptual and spiritual resources of the religious traditions, even the one(s) in which they were raised. The most basic prayers and doctrines, for example, are often marginal to their de facto literacy. Someone from this generation is more likely to be well versed in a secular body of knowledge, including media culture, hobbies, and occupations, than in an explicitly religious content of faith.

*Tolerance as fundamental ethic:* A basic ethical commitment among many Gen Xers is expressed in the language of “tolerance” or “inclusivity.” On the one hand, this theme may be interpreted as a form of relativism adopted from the larger culture. On the other, it may be the hard-won result of concrete experiences of intolerance in one’s life. It is frequently expressed in the rhetorical question “Who am I to judge?”

*Distinguishing “being spiritual” from “being religious”:* In this common distinction, “spirituality” is lived as a phenomenon that is interior, private, expressed as one’s own “journey,” experiential, individual, freeing, free of serious distortion or sin, and fundamentally trustworthy. “Religion,” in this distinction, is exterior, doctrinal, paternalistic, guilty of serious distortion or sin, and essentially limiting. Even where “religion” and “spirituality” are not separated, they are commonly distinguished.

*Bricolage:* Many members of the generation engage consciously in a cutting and pasting of spiritual identity from materials at hand (symbols, musical styles, images, gestures, commitments, and practices), relatively irrespective of religious or ethnic tradition.

*Relative lack of sanction for ecclesial identity:* Many Gen

Xers from Christian backgrounds grew up and now live in an ecclesial-cultural milieu in which they experience very few sanctions, positive or negative, for practicing or not practicing an explicit church affiliation.

Evidence seems to suggest that the general religious consciousness of this generation is oriented by at least four distinct yet overlapping themes: (1) a relationship to institutions that is either indifferent, suspicious, or embracing, and sometimes a mix of these; (2) the centrality of personal experience (as the ultimate criterion of truth); (3) the significance of psychological-spiritual suffering (often expressed in religious terms in popular culture); (4) the experience of ambiguity about identity (whether religious, familial, vocational, or sexual).

Every aspect of this “generational spirituality” is deeply implicated in the larger matrix of American culture and religion. What may be most distinctive about this generation is not the particularity of its identity or even its constellation of spiritual themes, but rather the unique ways in which religion and culture were constellated for and by them at this particular moment in American history. This constellation, heavily influenced by culture, continues to orient the spiritual questions of this generation.

—Tom Beaudoin

### SEE ALSO

Popular Culture: Cultural Saints; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion; Sacred Space: Cyberspace; Science: Technology; Sexuality: Sexual Identities

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MATERIAL  
CULTURE



Scholars who study material culture seek to understand what it means to live in a world made up not only of ideas but also of things. They argue that the objects used in everyday life, the landscapes people build and live in, the art they look at, the clothing they wear, and the technological innovations with which they surround themselves are important. In addition to having practical and perhaps even artistic dimensions, the material world reflects beliefs and values. Material culture shapes attitudes, social needs, and behaviors. Those who study material culture pay attention to form, distribution, function, and change in order to find meanings in artifacts, landscapes, architectures, and arts. Every religious community in the United States has its own material culture. People learn the ideals and habits of their religion through interaction with the material dimension of their faith. The symbol systems of a particular religious language are not merely handed down, they must be learned through doing, seeing, and touching. Experiencing the physical dimension of religion helps bring about religious values, norms, behaviors, and attitudes. As with all elements of religious culture, the material dimension continuously changes.

### Historical Trends

Every religious community in the United States has its own material culture that articulates a specific set of beliefs and reflects a unique historical development. Within American history, however, certain cultural, economic, and social trends have influenced the development of religious material culture throughout the nation. As the United States began to industrialize in the nineteenth century, religious goods were produced more cheaply and so more people could purchase and display them in their homes. The transportation revolution—from the canal system to the transcontinental railroads to the national highway network—made moving goods to every part of the nation quicker and more economical. After the American Revolution, the United States became a nation filled with people from different countries and differ-

ent social classes. Building churches and synagogues, cemeteries, and fraternal halls became one way that groups of people could announce their presence on the American landscape. As social classes became rigidly defined, religious goods and spaces helped Americans learn where they—and others—fit into the social order. By the end of the nineteenth century, the home was established as *the* place of moral instruction and the site of the cultivation of good citizens. Within American society, women—Protestants, Catholics, and Jews—were perceived as being more pious than men, and domesticity came to be associated with spirituality. The home became a sacred space, and women made, bought, and displayed religious objects.

After World War I, domestic design styles began to change. Many upper- and middle-class Americans began to follow European trends in interior design that limited the display of objects in the home. These Americans modernized their homes and eliminated many religious symbols. American cultural expressions—in literature, art, and social reform—stressed realism. By the 1930s, the cultural elite still held quaint, old-fashioned, romantic notions about pious mothers who created sacred homes, and rural Americans and recent immigrants continued to decorate their homes with signs of their religious affiliation. Many middle-class Americans, however, preferred not to display their faith in their material culture.

The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) and the rise of evangelical culture in the early 1970s, signaled a shift in Protestant and Catholic attitudes toward material culture. Conservative Protestants began to develop and market a vast array of goods that “witnessed” to their religious convictions. They opened bookstores that sold explicitly religious literature and a vast array of Christian merchandise, including T-shirts with pious sayings and images of Jesus, biblical video games, and the like. They created new religious landscapes: Evangelicals could take their children to Christian theme parks, attend Christian rock concerts, and support and send their children to Christian schools. Again the home became a place for the display of religious material culture. Catholics, in contrast, saw their material world constricting. Liturgical

changes after the Second Vatican Council initiated the removal of statues and religious pictures from church sanctuaries. Clerical leaders encouraged Catholics to modify their reliance on devotional objects. Modern church architecture and ecclesiastical design stressed simplicity and focused on the celebration of the Eucharist, not the cult of the saints. Not all Catholics turned from their historical material culture. For many, the home continued to visually reflect pre-Vatican II religious sentiments. However, when new churches, schools, or cemeteries were built, symbols were kept to a minimum.

Although America has always been a nation of immigrants, during the mid-1960s immigrants from Asia and Latin America introduced a whole new set of religious artifacts, landscapes, architectures, and arts into the country. Hindus garlanded statues of Shiva in their temples, Muslims hung calligraphed verses from the Qur'an in their taxicabs, and Tibetan Buddhists placed portraits of the Dalai Lama in their restaurants. Immigrant families brought religious objects from their native lands, and they established their own places of worship, burial grounds, schools, summer camps, and American pilgrimage sites. The more diverse the nation became, the more people used physical expressions to assert their religious identities. In the 1980s, a conservative pope who promoted Marian devotions and an influx of Spanish-speaking Catholics who had a developed cult of the saints reinvigorated the Catholic religious goods market. Catholic theologians reinterpreted the power of material culture to embody and articulate belief. The success that evangelical Protestants had in marketing their goods spread to other religious communities. The Latter-day Saints, for instance, who historically did not have a developed religious material culture, began to market dolls based on Book of Mormon characters, prints of the various temples and church leaders, and rings with the initials "CTR" (Choose The Right). More and more Americans traveled overseas and brought religious souvenirs back with them. American Jews, in particular, have used the arts and crafts of Israeli Jews to express their religious feelings.

Many Americans now feel that no one religious tradition fully expresses their spiritual lives and so they freely use the material culture from the many religions of the world. Even people who are not members of faith communities may use religious objects or

arts to express personal, political, or artistic sentiments.

### Institutional Authority

What meanings do religious artifacts, landscapes, architectures, and art have for people? How do things and places become holy, special, powerful, or sacred? How do people activate or enliven objects so that an object's influence can be felt? One way that material culture becomes special or sacred is via the authority of powerful institutions that decree it so. Through writing and preaching, storytelling and ritual dramatization, a religious elite may designate some objects and spaces as sacred. These religious leaders tell their followers how a specific set of objects or spaces should be used. For instance, Catholic sacramental theology contends that there are certain ritual gestures, called sacraments, established by Christ that sanctify people and their religious communities. Evolving out of the concept of the sacrament is the notion of a *sacramental*, something that is more than a sign or symbol but less than a sacrament. Many sacramentals involve material objects. Saying the rosary, for instance, entails reciting a series of prayers while touching a set of beads. Catholic traditions explain which prayers should be said, what effect will happen when they are said, and how the rosary should be designed so as to have those effects. In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, consecrated oil is used for healing and ritual purposes. In Mormon practice, the oil achieves its unique power through the blessings of a special class of Latter-day Saint men. Currently, only members of the Melchizedek priesthood may consecrate and use the oil. Women might have used the oil in past times to bless and heal, but contemporary Latter-day Saint theology stipulates that the power of the oil is transferred through the blessings of only one specific group of men. Mormons, like Catholics, are asked to accept the idea that the authority invested in their leaders is real and that it can be used to channel power into rosaries, oil, bread, clothing, statues, or any word, gesture, or object. God may be understood as the origin of the power, but individuals perceive power as residing in one object and not in another.

At other times, objects become special because they are closely associated with a set of religious rituals. In

Judaism, for example, on Friday evening women light Shabbat candles to welcome the day of rest and religious reflection. They say prayers that Jewish women have said for hundreds of years. For many families, the candlesticks that hold the candles become important objects because of their association with the Shabbat ritual. Since important Jewish rituals are conducted in the home, common household objects, such as plates or glasses, can become ceremonial religious goods. Unlike Catholics, whose religious objects may be blessed and spaces consecrated by their priests, Jewish religious goods become respected because of their association with specific religious rituals. Jewish law and custom dictate the proper use of the plate or glass or candlestick within the ritual.

### **Personal Relationships and Memory**

The kind of power objects and spaces achieve through contact with religious authority is formal and impersonal. Material culture becomes sacred because of its place in a culture's history and theology. Objects and places also become special when they are embedded in a system of personal relationships that people establish between themselves and supernatural characters. Pictures of Jesus, for instance, find their way into many American homes. Although few people would forget that these are merely representations of Jesus, many people imaginatively create relationships with Jesus via the image. During difficult times, they might look at the object, or they might carry it from place to place when they move. People may receive pictures of Jesus or other religious figures for gifts, and they might connect the positive feelings of the gift with the image. Trust and affection are connected with spirituality through gift giving. Through constant, long-term, personal interaction with both an image and a spiritual concept, people enliven the material world.

Although religious clergy and theologians may attempt to control the proper use of an object or a space, people use material culture in ways that make sense to them. People learn the basic grammar of their religious community, but then they connect traditional images and languages with the language of other symbol systems—from the commercial economy, from their families, from their fears, from their nightmares. For instance, depending on their sense of

aesthetics, people may create eclectic shrines made up of both explicitly religious and nonreligious materials. Shrines are sacred spaces that may be inside of a home or business, built in a front yard, or even spontaneously made on the street. Many religious communities make and maintain shrines. People arrange together pictures of holy characters, photographs of family members, and small “collectibles.” The household altar illustrates the connection between the people on earth and the people in the “other” world. Just as shrines symbolically connect the human and supernatural worlds, removing family pictures or statues of holy people from the shrine may function to disconnect those worlds. People use material culture to exclude as well as include. Women, in particular, often build and maintain domestic altars. Shrines are creative and innovative constructions of collective religious history and the personal stories of individuals.

Religious objects and spaces may also act as a source of memory. They frequently serve as the material reminders of significant events, people, moods, and activities by condensing and compressing memory. Jewish families hold Shabbat candlesticks as special because of their connection to Jewish rituals but, perhaps even more important, because of their connection to a family's history. The capacity of material culture to act as a perpetual source of recollection is particularly the case when the memory triggered is of a friend or family member who has died. The giving of memorials to commemorate the dead and the setting aside of space for the dead have a long history in many religious traditions. The living seek to re-create the dead through memory activated by objects and landscapes. Religious souvenirs may serve this same purpose. Through its power to evoke memory, the souvenir begins to replace the event as the focus of attention. Religious material culture serves to connect the past with the future by encouraging the continued participation in the power of the original experience.

### **Community Identity**

Closely aligned with the ability of religious material culture to activate memory is its ability to communicate group identity. People use religious goods and landscapes in order to tell the world around them who they are. Religious material culture signals who is in the group and who is not. It is apparent that if a





The interior of a Mexican-American home in San Antonio, Texas, with a shrine to the Blessed Virgin  
(Stephanie Maze/Corbis)

Thai restaurant displays a statue of the Buddha surrounded by fruit and incense, the owners are not Orthodox Jews. Likewise, a taxicab driver wearing a turban probably is not an evangelical Protestant. His clothing is a clue to his ethnic and religious identity. Religious communities that hope to increase their membership through conversion often use material culture to attract attention. They might use contemporary pop culture slogans, for instance. Moreover, toys with religious themes are given to children to socialize them into their faith communities and to allow them imaginatively to integrate religion into their play worlds. In early America, Puritan children were not permitted to play on the Sabbath. They could, however, enjoy games that taught them biblical principles. Families carved or purchased wooden Noah's ark sets so children could play with the boat and animals. Contemporary Jewish goods catalogs sell soft puzzles of Hebrew letters to help children learn their

"alphabet." Such toys teach people how to think and act in a certain way.

In contemporary America, people use the material culture of religion in complicated ways. They may decide to take the forms of one community and adapt them to another community. Liberal Catholics, for instance, have used the style of Greek Orthodox icons in holy cards of modern "saints" such as Archbishop Oscar Romero, Dorothy Day, or Martin Luther King, Jr. Proponents of the New Age movement have adopted Native American animal "fetishes," and Jews for Jesus wear gold Star of David necklaces. A similar trend can be seen in sacred spaces. Presbyterian tourists in New Mexico travel to the Catholic shrine of Chimayo to collect healing mud. Catholics photograph New England churches and meditate in Zen monasteries. Although a certain amount of superficial "religious tourism" exists in contemporary society, many Americans have a sincere desire to experience

the special power of not only their own religious heritage but that of others.

### Decoration, Fashion, and Art

There is not always a straightforward relationship between material culture and traditional religious communities. Looks can be deceiving. Religious objects function within complicated networks of belief, values, myths, and social structures. Clerical elites articulate the proper use of objects and spaces based on their understanding of sacred stories and traditions. People relate to objects in innovative ways that speak to their own needs and desires. Religious material culture may function as a tool: It helps people acknowledge common commitments, delineate differences, express affection, or socialize children. In all of these cases, seriousness and sincerity are taken for granted. The user of the object is embedded, at least to a certain extent, in the same system of meaning that produced the object. However, religious objects can also be used for other purposes. Religious objects and spaces can help communicate the taste and status of the person or family, irrespective of their personal beliefs and commitments. For many people, piety, style, and family cannot be easily separated. Faith and fashion come together in the physical world. In other cases, an individual may use a religious symbol to look “cool” rather than pious. Hip boutiques sell T-shirts with the pictures of Catholic saints on them, and Shaker-style furniture commands a high price in the market. People may also collect the religious objects of faith communities—or commercial copies—because the artifacts are artistically beautiful, historically significant, or cleverly “campy.” Artists use the material culture of faith communities to speak to their own individual spiritualities. They may use a culture’s religious symbols in ways that seek to challenge or subvert values that the artist feels are improper

within the faith or larger society. It is the very visual and tactile nature of religious material culture that makes it an important part of the repertoire of many contemporary artists. To understand religious material culture, one must acknowledge its complicated role in expressing and defining an array of religious and secular beliefs and values.

—Colleen McDannell

### SEE ALSO

Catholicism in America: Vatican II; Judaism in America; New Religious Traditions: Mormonism; The Body: Clothing; Death: AIDS Quilt, Days of the Dead (Días de los Muertos), Roadside Shrines; Generations: Children and Young People, The Family; Popular Culture: Film; Sacred Space: Shopping Malls, Shrines, The Suburban Home; Sacred Time: Christmas

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## CHRISTIAN RETAILING

Christian retailing—the selling of Christian goods and services to a buyer for personal or household use—is a significant aspect of contemporary religious life in America. By the early 1990s, the sales of Christian products in bookstores had exceeded \$3 billion annually. Such stores sold not only books but also jewelry, music CDs, stationery, posters, T-shirts, Bibles and Bible paraphernalia, and toys. For the segment of the population variously termed born-again Christians, evangelicals, Pentecostals, fundamentalists, or just plain Christian, the Christian retailing industry is an institution like the church, Sunday school, or missionary society. Its purpose is to minister to those who have developed a personal relationship with Christ and to witness to those who have not. For some Americans, Christian retailing reflects the positive intersection of faith, profit, and material culture.

The proliferation of goods within Protestant households began in the nineteenth century when inexpensive production and distribution made it possible for even modest families to buy religious objects. Women purchased cheap materials and constructed a variety of goods for their home. They embroidered mottos, built crosses out of wax, wove jewelry out of the hair of dead loved ones, and even carved prayer book holders out of wood. Making things displayed their feminine artistic accomplishments and their piety. Families could also buy goods, and by the second half of the nineteenth century, religious objects were sold along with nonreligious merchandise. Religious images were not perceived as being too sacred to market. Companies sold religious goods as long as they were fashionable. By the 1920s, however, the eclectic and cluttered Victorian style was giving way to more simple and abstract styles. Consequently, many middle- and upper-class families put away their Victorian religious decorations.

Not all Americans were so attuned to changing fashions. Rural people and many working-class Protestants continued to put religious prints in their homes. After World War I, denominational publishing houses, rather than secular companies, responded to their material needs. In addition to making books, these Protestant companies made prints, stationery, and wall mottoes. Religious postcards were particu-

larly popular. The companies hired men and women to sell this merchandise door-to-door. Church groups also sold merchandise to support their activities. Families put on their walls church calendars or inexpensive prints of Jesus. By the early 1930s, companies such as Gospel Trumpet from Anderson, Indiana, were not only selling prints and wall mottoes but putting religious images on thermometers, heat-resisting mats, lamps, pencils, rulers, and the backs of mirrors.

Protestant companies during the period before the 1970s used only a limited number of images on their merchandise. They established a small set of Protestant representations as a type of “brand name” for Christianity. Images by Christian artists Bernard Plockhorst, Henrich Hofmann, and Warner Sallaman were familiar to most Protestants. Close-up portraits of the face of Jesus, images of guardian angels, and biblical phrases were also popular. Since Protestants did not use halos or other Catholic symbols to signify saints or deities, they had to find other ways of efficiently conveying the message that a character was sacred. Through repeated exposure to a select group of illustrations, consumers quickly came to learn that particular images were intended to represent Jesus.

Protestant merchandise was used for teaching, spiritual uplifting, and cementing bonds between people. Sunday schools were an important place for the production and distribution of Protestant material culture. Most denominational presses not only sold Sunday school written materials but also made clever toys for children. Students, for instance, could receive cards with biblical scenes on them when they correctly memorized a Bible verse. Teachers could buy cradle rolls (for enrolling babies), maps, art equipment, record books, diplomas, wall rolls of biblical scenes, and puzzles to help them socialize children into a religious world. During the first half of the twentieth century, the Sunday school was the main conduit for the movement of Protestant material culture into the home. Consequently, the visual world that many Protestants were exposed to prior to the 1970s had a childlike feel to it.

After World War II, social changes in the structure of American life made the door-to-door agent who sold religious merchandise obsolete. The number of



A costumed employee sells T-shirts at the “Holy Land Experience” theme park, Orlando, Florida, 2001  
(R. Scott Martin/Corbis)

people who lived on farms continued to decline and new subdivisions of affordable housing appeared around most cities. As the population shifted, churches focused on the family living in the suburbs rather than in the city or on the farm. Enterprising Christians decided to set up their own stores to sell Bibles, books, stationery, and other merchandise to a growing middle class with more disposable income. Christian bookstores might have remained a minor aspect of American Protestant life if it had not been for the Jesus movement of the early 1970s. The Christian trinkets and pious wall mottoes that were sold to rural Americans would have had a limited influence on the development of Protestantism had it not been for the efforts of “Jesus freaks” to create a Christian lifestyle.

Influenced by the counterculture spirit of the 1960s, the Jesus movement combined Protestant piety with an antiestablishment sense of style. The Jesus freaks sought to experience the reality of Christ outside of an institutionalized church structure. For them, it was the intense personal relationship they had with Christ

that motivated them to redirect their lives. Turning from drugs and a meaningless existence, they sought lives where every action would be shaped by faith and every question answered by the Bible. Like other counterculture people, they idealized a rural religious past, hoped to separate from mainstream society, and were suspicious of the claims made for science and technology. Music became one way in which they experienced and expressed their newfound religious consciousness. For the youthful enthusiasts of the early 1970s, Christianity was not merely a private set of beliefs orchestrated by an institution church. They understood their conversions to entail the total realignment of their lives. Following a general trend in postwar evangelism, these Protestants stressed the importance of living a holy life in accord with spiritual principles.

Many of the people involved in the Jesus movement began to look for ways to experience their religious commitments outside of the mainstream Protestant churches. They wanted to find new, creative

ways of being religious—something different from becoming a minister or a religious education teacher. Some got involved with the burgeoning religious publication industry. Books like *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey (1970) were selling millions of copies. In 1975, Marabel Morgan's *Total Woman*—a book that mixed evangelical Protestantism with advice on sexual attractiveness—was selling at a rate of between 10,000 and 20,000 copies *per week*. Christian bookstores discovered that they no longer were just selling Bibles but that the religious books industry was booming. People were coming into bookstores looking to buy.

People excited about their new religious feelings did not merely want to buy books. Some people wanted to make their own unique contribution to spreading the Word. They began to make and market arts and handmade merchandise. Young people wanted to wear Christian symbols in order to publicize their religious beliefs. New companies and older publishing houses began to sell posters, bumper stickers, and T-shirts with Christian slogans. Some of these slogans played off of the fashionable styles of the time. The “One Way” sign echoed the “Peace Sign” of the 1960s. Plain wooden crosses and fish symbols were put on key chains and necklaces. The dove appeared with the slogan “Jesus = Peace.” During the 1970s, the market for Protestant material culture shifted from the Sunday school classroom and rural housewife to the under-thirty age group of evangelicals. Producers proclaimed that a new era in Christian merchandising had begun because the cheap trinkets of the earlier time were being replaced with quality goods. Jesus movement artists and producers intended to establish a viable Christian alternative to the secular marketplace.

Christian evangelical zeal, not profit or professional pride, motivated those involved in the various aspects of Christian retailing. They made a variety of goods, some that would appeal to young people and others to more established Christians. Although many of the companies did not last through the recession of the 1980s, a few continued and were quite successful. Christian rock music, in particular, is now well estab-

lished in contemporary Protestantism. Contemporary Christian music ranges from light pop to heavy metal. People listen to it at home and over Christian radio stations in their cars and sing it in their churches. Book publishing also continues to be profitable, with a large variety of books offered to the consumer. Larger firms have bought smaller publishing houses and Christian bookstores. Just as a few large companies dominate secular retailing, so is it with Christian retailing. Frequently, secular companies buy up successful Christian companies, and so it is no longer clear what the missions of the companies are. The people who participate in Christian retailing, however, still understand that Christian merchandise helps to solidify their beliefs and spread the message of Christianity to others. Advertising and witnessing have become interchangeable. By buying and displaying Christian art in their homes, giving gifts with biblical sayings, or wearing T-shirts, Protestants translate their beliefs into visible messages. Christian retailing began as an attempt to create a conservative religious culture parallel to that of secular America. Now, however, many people with a variety of beliefs buy and display Christian material culture.

—Colleen McDannell

#### SEE ALSO

Protestantism in America: Christian Growth Movement, Evangelicalism and Gender; Generations: The Family; Popular Culture; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Fundamentalism

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## MODERN CATHOLIC CHURCH DECORATIONS

As early as 1863, a Catholic congress in Belgium castigated the outpourings of French companies producing what would become known as *l'art Saint-Sulpice*. A small neighborhood in Paris had become famous for producing the material culture of Victorian Catholicism—holy water fonts, medals, statues, crucifixes, rosaries, holy cards, ex-votos, religious jewelry, candles, scapulars, lace pictures, and novena cards. The congress theologians believed that such goods distracted Catholics from the Mass and were tasteless examples of bad art. These objects were used in the myriad Catholic devotions that had flourished since the eighteenth century in Europe and the United States. The production of small, domestic goods accompanied the sale of liturgical arts (chalices, vestments, and monstrances) and sacred arts (stained-glass windows, statues, and church murals). Some of the ecclesiastical art was made out of expensive metals and gems, fine silks, and golden thread, but the less expensive arts were mass-produced and sold through catalogs. A similar retail area had grown up in the United States in downtown Manhattan on Barclay Street. Both places lent their names to a style of Catholic decorative arts that were mass-produced, colorful, and sentimental. “Barclay Street Art” or *l'art Saint-Sulpice* was decorative art that made its way into many Catholic churches and homes up until the 1950s.

Most nineteenth-century Catholics did not deride their mass-produced art but rather saw it as modern and technologically sophisticated. Religious goods bought from catalogs of mass producers in Paris or New York reflected standard Catholic iconography and were assured of being free from heresies. Imported art and statuary, ornate altars, fine wooden pews, and grand organs were purchased whenever a congregation could afford it. Statues took their place on and around altars laden with candles, flowers, potted plants, lace linens, paintings, and brass-works. In the United States, by the turn of the century, Catholics had firmly established themselves and constructed large churches in a variety of revival styles. Neo-Gothic churches, churches in Renaissance re-

vival styles, and massive Romanesque revival cathedrals began to dominate the American landscape. Catholics gave their time, money, and energy to build palaces where God would dwell. The church functioned as a palace where God and His sacred entourage were treated as royalty. Such huge churches also functioned to demonstrate the power of the parish’s clergy and the aspirations of the diocese’s bishops.

The proliferation of art and objects within the church paralleled the growing number of Catholic paraliturgical devotions. Catholics not only heard Mass, they recited the rosary, made novenas to various saints, went to “missions” at church to hear charismatic preachers, attended Benediction and Forty Hours devotions to the Eucharist, and became members of religious societies. The church was more than a place to hear Mass. With each new devotion, the symbols of that devotion were made into statuary, medals, pendants, and pictures. The Catholic cult of the saints, the set of rituals devoted to praise and petition to the holy ones who had died and gone to heaven, had an elaborate material culture. For at least a hundred years, from 1840 to 1940, Catholic devotionism and Catholic devotional objects were closely aligned.

Catholic bishops and clergy in Europe and the United States were initially skeptical of contemporary, “modern” art after World War I. By the late 1940s, however, the mood had changed and authorities in Rome started to listen to the Catholic artistic avant-garde. In 1947, Pope Pius XII issued an encyclical “On Sacred Liturgy” that commented on style and taste in religious arts. It also stressed the importance of focusing on the sacrament of the Eucharist, the point of the Catholic Mass. In 1952, the Vatican specifically directed criticism at *l'art Saint-Sulpice*, and bishops were told to forbid art in their churches that was second-rate. They also were told that stuffing churches with statues and pictures was unacceptable. Theologians emphasized that while the cult of the saints was important, it was the Mass that should be foremost in Catholic devotional life. Devotions to

Mary and the saints that distracted the congregation from the centrality of the liturgy should be eliminated.

Consequently, progressive priests and theologians across the United States began to reevaluate the ways that their churches were decorated. Where decoration and artifice were once acceptable as aids in devotions to promote the power of the sacred, now simplicity was preferred. Catholic art critics followed the conventions promoted by modernist architects such as Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and Adolf Loos—who stressed the importance of authenticity, functionalism, simplicity, honesty, and essentialism in design. Many of the new Catholic churches that were built in America in the late 1950s and 1960s followed the trends established by modernist architects. These churches had simple lines and very few decorations. They broke sharply with the elaborate designs of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and instead evoked the American Puritan past of colonial churches. There were few statues in the sanctuary, and those that were there were often-times carved out of wood and not painted. Altars were made out of slabs of stone or wood in order to look more like a basic table. Stained-glass windows were made in abstract, colorful designs rather than as realistic depictions of the saints.

The close connection between changed theological notions and artistic design reached a peak in the late 1960s after the end of the Second Vatican Council. Vatican II had ended in 1965, and throughout the world Catholics were seeing changes in the ways that they worshiped and how their churches looked. The altar in the sanctuary, once tucked up close to the wall of the church, was moved forward to be closer to the people. The priest faced the congregation when he said Mass. Instead of speaking in Latin, he spoke the language of the community. Previously the faithful were taught to keep a prayerful demeanor and attitude, but now they were welcomed as active participants who might even be asked to play the guitar and sing folk songs by the altar. The people were no longer silent observers; they were asked to create a spiritual dialogue with the priest. *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* emphasized the importance of the Scripture and of the sermon as an exposition of biblical themes. Although the saints were still important, a new stress was placed on the Bible. The *Constitution* cautioned that although images should still be placed

in churches, “nevertheless, their number should be moderate and their relative location should reflect right order” (no. 125). Art should be nobly beautiful, not sumptuous. Nothing should distract the people from the central celebration of the eucharistic liturgy.

Throughout the United States, priests and laypeople responded to the liturgical changes in a variety of ways. Some priests enthusiastically embraced the notion that the churches had become far too cluttered with sentimental statues of the saints, Stations of the Cross, and pictures of the Virgin Mary. They gathered up church decorations and destroyed all but a few. Ceiling murals were covered over with stark white paint. Elaborate marble altars were detached from the walls and replaced by tables. Some congregants complained, but they were told that the church was changing and that the new styles were more in keeping with current Catholic theology. Other people were relieved to see the beautiful lines of their church revealed and a more contemporary style expressed in worship. They were excited about the modernizing trends in their religion that seemed to reflect more “American” notions of progress, honesty, and authenticity. Priests who were reluctant to initiate radical changes found ways around some of the more severe alterations. They kept the high altar but added a smaller one closer to the people. The statues of the saints were collected and put in a side chapel but not destroyed. Parishes with high proportions of recent immigrants were especially slow to remove their church decorations. They felt that the warmth and sensuality of their religion were being exchanged for something cold and barren. Many people continued to have their favorite saints at home in spaces that they controlled. The church renovations that went on in the 1960s and 1970s were complicated processes that mixed aesthetics with theology and taste with devotion.

By the 1980s, some of the changes of the 1970s had already been reversed. A conservative pope, Pope John Paul II, and a more conservative American population demanded a reevaluation of traditional Catholic activities. Some Catholic thinkers urged people to reinvigorate Catholic devotions such as saying the rosary. After 1965, immigration opened up and a large number of Spanish-speaking Catholics began to demand a more visually sensual worship space. They brought with them patron saints from their native

lands. Shifts in theology recognized the importance of local religious customs to the spirit of the people, and some of those traditions were accompanied by a developed material culture. For both clergy and laypeople, church decoration is not merely the physical expression of personal taste. Artistic reorientations speak to their tradition's history and theology. To change one's visual culture is a difficult task that comes slowly and is not always predictable.

—Colleen McDannell

#### SEE ALSO

Catholicism in America: Our Lady of Guadalupe, Public Catholicism, Vatican II; Sacred Space

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## VICTORIAN BIBLES

Since even before the Protestant Reformation, the Bible was understood as a source of Christian salvation to those who would “search the Scriptures.” By the late eighteenth century, few English Protestant households lacked a Bible. Clergy and laypeople used both the Geneva Bible (1560) and the King James Bible (1611). Bible making was not simple. Each individual letter of a book of almost 800,000 words had to be separately laid out. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, Bible making became much easier. Not only did paper and leather become more readily available with industrialization, but printing innovations made it simpler to produce error-free Bibles quickly and cheaply. Bible publishing followed the same commercial patterns as general book publishing. Moreover, the development of the canal system and the intercontinental railroad network benefited Bible distribution. By the 1860s, Bibles were made almost exclusively in New York and Philadelphia and shipped throughout the nation. Stores in large cities carried Bibles, and traveling salesmen peddled the Scriptures to families in rural areas. Bible societies also promoted Bible reading and printed their own Bibles. These books were distributed throughout the world. In 1896, American Bible societies alone sent an estimated 630,000 Bibles overseas.

Bible-society Bibles were small, simple, and had no biblical commentary. Other publishers, however,

found that Americans would buy very elaborate Bibles. As early as 1791, American printer Isaiah Thomas included additional religious material to help laypeople better understand the biblical text. In 1846, Harper Brothers published their lavishly illustrated *Illuminated and New Pictorial Bible*, which grossed more than \$1.5 million during its first twelve years of publication. Following the Civil War, publishers increased the number of additional features in family Bibles. Along with family records, they added photograph albums, temperance pledges, wedding certificates, and copious color illustrations. The actual text of the Scriptures became almost secondary to the illustrated Bible dictionaries, treatises on ancient coins (and gems, trees, plants, flowers, manners, and customs), illuminated parables and the Lord's Prayer, and chronologies of biblical events. American printers also included family record pages in their Bibles to chronicle the births and deaths of family members. In 1882, A. J. Holman's *The Holy Bible* could boast an overwhelming 190 supplemental entries.

The Victorian family Bible performed many functions for the household. Although elaborate Catholic Bibles were also produced, Protestants had more developed church and domestic rituals revolving around Bible reading. By the mid-nineteenth century, a domestic Protestantism had developed that emphasized disciplined moral instruction in the home. The family





Young woman reading the Bible. Lithograph, c. 1848  
(Library of Congress)

was seen as a little church where children were reared secure from the snares of the world. For many Protestants, salvation no longer required a radical, emotional experience of God as Calvinism had taught. A true Christian could slowly be made over the course of an individual lifetime. Clergy, women writers, and lay male leaders all told fathers to act as ministers in their homes, assembling their domestic congregation to listen to the Bible being read. The children and the mother might take turns reading from the Bible, singing hymns, and praying out loud, but advice books told the father to provide the spiritual leadership for his family. Domestic worship—with the Bible as focus—was a reduced and condensed version of Protestant church services.

Mothers also used the Bible in the home but they were encouraged to be less formal in their approach to biblical reading. The Cult of True Womanhood promoted the association between domesticity and Christianity to the extent that mothers were considered to

hold the key to the salvation of their children. Women were perceived as being innately pious and pure, the perfect exponents of morality. As seen from the perspective of Victorian culture, the relationship a child had with his or her mother was based less on authority and more on love. Mothers understood their children's psychology and could adapt moral and religious concepts to a child's personality. Consequently, Bible reading by mothers was described as being intimate, emotional, and creative. Mothers should gather one or two children (rather than the whole household made up of relatives and servants) for quiet reading. Family Bibles achieved importance in the Victorian home because they were a critical element in domestic worship and maternal instruction. As the home became a place for religious nurture, Bibles increasingly were seen as the cornerstone of the Christian home.

It would be incorrect to assume that the promotion of the family Bible as a source of religious instruction and pious sentiments for Victorian Protestants was the only way that Bibles became endowed with special meaning. Ministers, artists, hymnists, and writers most likely would have been perfectly happy if each family had owned one large family Bible and passed it down from generation to generation. However, in spite of such anticommercial sentiments, Bibles were commodities in the nineteenth century. They were designed and marketed by secular, for-profit companies whose owners knew that Americans wanted nostalgia and fashion, the old and the new. The "use" value of the Bible as a religious book had to be augmented, and publishers accomplished this by moving the Bible out of the supposedly unchanging realm of religion and into the supposedly ever-new realm of fashion. Printers and publishers designed installment plans to help families pay for increasingly expensive Bibles. They promoted the large Victorian Bible's ability to convey the taste of the family. Publishers advertised the enduring and durable quality of the materials, implying that their Bible would be long-lived. Illustrations within the Bible reflected current artistic fashions and technical printing innovations. The Victorian Bible became a powerful symbol because it combined American faith and fashion. Sitting on a special table or place in the parlor, the Bible evoked domesticity, piety, social propriety, wealth, learning, and refined sensuality.

—Colleen McDannell

**SEE ALSO**

Protestantism in America: Emotion, Evangelicalism and Gender; Generations: The Family

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# POPULAR CULTURE



Religion is not an isolated activity in American life but engaged with popular culture at every level—in work and in play, in regular rituals and in social relations. Although religion is a separate and distinct social institution dealing with the supernatural and anchored in the church, synagogue, mosque, or temple, it has assumed complex and ambivalent relations with the popular media as well as with other aspects of the culture industry. Religious themes are consistently represented in media such as radio, recordings, television, film, and the Internet, technologies that in turn have been adopted by religious groups. In this exchange, tensions often arise between religious interests and the popular cultural formations of the larger society. For example, on June 18, 1996, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) passed a resolution to boycott the Walt Disney Company. Arguing that the company had abandoned its former commitment to providing healthy family entertainment, the SBC accused Disney of promoting immorality, homosexuality, and adultery. In launching a crusade against Disney, the Southern Baptist Convention argued that the company was a cultural force working against conservative Christian beliefs, values, and sexual ethics. In addition, the SBC suggested that Disney was actually promoting an alternative religion, an earth-based, pagan, and pantheistic religiosity celebrated in animated features such as *The Lion King* (1994) and *Pocahontas* (1995), films that, in the view of the SBC, constituted a threat to Christianity.

As this religious crusade against Disney suggests, popular culture can appear from different perspectives as religion. If religion refers to a symbolic system of beliefs and practices, experiences, and social relations revolving around a sacred focus, a focus of attention that is set apart from the ordinary, then many forms of popular culture seem to have a religious character. Disney animation invokes supernatural themes, and Disney theme parks—in Anaheim and Orlando, in Tokyo and outside Paris—have become both tourist destinations and pilgrimage sites in a popular cultural religion. Many other sacred sites of religious pilgrimage in American popular culture could be identified: National parks maintain the “sacred ground” of

American battlefields, for example (Linenthal 1991); the shrine of Graceland in Memphis, Tennessee, preserves the sacred memory of Elvis Presley (Doss 1999); the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, stands as the “Mecca of Baseball” and has been described by Hall of Fame pitcher Don Sutton as a “sacred place” that holds the “Holy Grail of baseball” (*Los Angeles Times*, January 6, 1998); the World of Coca-Cola in Atlanta, Georgia, is a “temple to the great American soft drink” that celebrates the Coca-Cola religion of a world in perfect harmony (Pendergrast 1993, 401); and even McDonald’s fast-food restaurants, with their ordinary efficiency but extraordinary golden arches, advertising imagery, and popular appeal, have been identified by sociologist George Ritzer as an American “sacred institution” (Ritzer 2000, 7). In all of these locations of popular culture, religious symbols, myths, and rituals seem to be at work; indeed, a kind of religious work seems to be taking place in and through popular culture.

### The Popular

According to a quantitative definition, popular culture is popular because it is mass-produced, widely distributed, and regularly consumed by large numbers of people. Demographically, the popular might be simply understood as a measure of popularity. A cultural form is popular, in this sense, because many people like it. Implicit in this quantitative definition of the popular is a distinction between “high” culture, maintained by a numerically small social elite, and the “low” culture of the majority of people in a society. As a result, the popular, whether in popular culture or popular religion, has tended to be located among the laity rather than the clergy, among rural folk rather than city dwellers, and among urban lower classes rather than urban elites (Long 1987; see Hulsther 1995). In cultural studies, however, the popular has come to refer to a much more complex range of social positions within the production and consumption of culture.

On the production side, the mass production of popular culture calls attention to what critical theorist

Theodor Adorno called the “culture industry,” the machinery of mass cultural production in a capitalist economy. Instead of assuming that popular culture is mass-produced because many people like it, Adorno argued that people like it because they basically have no choice. Effectively, the culture industry beats them into submission. Readily available and immediately accessible, mass-produced popular culture emerges as the only option within capitalist relations of production. As cultural production becomes an industry, the artwork is transformed into a commodity that is created and exchanged for profit. In the process, the distinction between high culture and popular culture dissolves, since both “bear the stigmata of capitalism.” The culture industry produces two basic effects in popular culture, uniformity and utility. Rather than meeting the diversity of popular desires for leisure or entertainment, the culture industry creates a new uniformity of desire. “Culture now impresses the same stamp on everything,” Adorno and his colleague Max Horkheimer complained. “Films, radio and magazines make up a system which is uniform as a whole and in every part” (Adorno and Horkheimer 1973, 120).

Within the capitalist system of cultural production, leisure is integrated into the cycle of productive labor. Leisure, entertainment, and amusement are extensions of work, employments of “free” time that are organized by the same principle of utility that governs the capitalist system of production. As an integral part of the capitalist economy, the culture industry provides popular cultural diversions that the masses seek “as an escape from the mechanized work process, and to recruit strength in order to be able to cope with it again” (Adorno and Horkheimer 1973, 137). In this production-oriented model, therefore, popular culture serves the interests of capital—profitability, uniformity, and utility—by entangling people in a culture industry in which a character like “Donald Duck in the cartoons . . . gets his beating so that the viewers can get used to the same treatment” (Adorno and Horkheimer 1973, 138).

On the consumption side, the popular reception of cultural forms, styles, and content calls attention to the many different ways people actually find to make mass-produced culture their own. Following the critical theorist Walter Benjamin, many cultural analysts have argued that the reception of popular culture in-

volves not passive submission but creative activity. Recognizing the capitalist control of mass-produced culture, Benjamin nevertheless found that people develop new perceptual and interpretive capacities that enable them to transform private hopes and fears into “figures of the collective dream such as the globe-orbiting Mickey Mouse” (Hansen 1993, 31). Where Adorno insisted that the productions of the culture industry were oppressive, Benjamin looked for the therapeutic effects, such as the healing potential of collective laughter, and even the redemptive possibilities in the reception of popular culture. In the case of Mickey Mouse, for example, Benjamin suggested that audiences were able to think through basic cultural categories—machines, animals, and humans—by participating in a popular form of entertainment that scrambles them up. As Benjamin observed, Mickey Mouse cartoons are “full of miracles that not only surpass those of technology but make fun of them.” Against the laws of nature and technology, these “miracles” of transformation—changing shape, defying gravity—occur spontaneously “from the body of Mickey Mouse, his partisans and pursuers.” For an audience “grown tired of the endless complications of the everyday,” Benjamin concluded, these “miracles” promise a kind of “redemption” in an extraordinary world (Hansen 1993, 41–42). Without necessarily subscribing to the therapeutic capacity or redemptive potential of popular culture, cultural analysts adopting the reception-oriented model have concentrated on the creative activity of interpretation as itself a means of cultural production that takes place in the process of cultural consumption. As people actively decode cultural content through interpretation, they also participate in rituals of consumption, rituals of exchange, ownership, and care through which the arts and artifacts of popular culture are personalized (McCracken 1988, 84–88).

In between cultural production and consumption, the space of popular culture is a contested terrain. Popular culture is a landscape in which people occupy vastly different and often multiple subject positions, subjectivities grounded in race, ethnicity, social class, occupation, region, gender, sexual orientation, and so on. As the cultural theorist Stuart Hall has established, popular culture is a site of struggle in which various alternative cultural projects contend against the hegemony of the dominant culture. While sub-

cultures develop oppositional positions, perhaps even methods of cultural resistance, social elites work to appropriate and assimilate the creativity of alternative cultural formations with the larger society. Not a stable system of production and consumption, popular culture is a battlefield of contending strategies, tactics, and maneuvers in struggles over the legitimate ownership of highly charged cultural symbols of meaning and power. At stake in these struggles is the question of human authenticity: What is it to be a human being in a human society?

### Popular Culture and Religion

Three basic relationships have been established between religion and popular culture: Religion appears in popular culture; popular culture is integrated into religion; and religion is sometimes in conflict with the production and consumption of popular culture.

First, representations of religion and religions are expressed in the productions of popular culture. During the twentieth century, the explosion of electronic media expanded the scope of religious representations through radio, film, television, and the Internet. On December 24, 1906, the first wireless radio broadcast in the United States consisted of a religious program of devotional music and Bible reading. Although electronic media have certainly been exploited by religious groups for their own interests, the culture industry has also been actively involved in representing religious themes. In American popular culture, the secular and commercial productions of Hollywood films have played a powerful role in shaping public perceptions of religion and religions. On the one hand, representations of religion can be explicit. Popular films depict recognizable religious characters—priests and nuns, evangelists and rabbis, gurus and lamas—in their narratives. They draw story lines from religious traditions, especially from the Bible, in producing popular films. On the other hand, according to many cultural analysts, representations of religion in film are often implicit. Basic religious motifs of sin, sacrifice, and redemption, for example, can structure the plots of ostensibly secular films.

Second, the practices of conventional religions incorporate aspects of popular culture. Successful religious groups generally adopt the material culture, the visual media, the musical styles, and other features of

popular culture. In American culture, the prominence of religious broadcasting on television has demonstrated the success of Christian evangelicals in appropriating an advanced communications technology in the service of the “great mandate” to preach their gospel to all nations. More recently, religious groups have established their presence on the Internet, exploring the potential of cyberspace for religious mobilization. Drawn into the service of transmitting religion, the media of popular culture present both new possibilities and new limits for the practice of religion. In the entire range of electronic media, the transmission of religion is exclusively visual and auditory, offering new forms of visual piety and new styles of preaching, praying, and singing. But the religion of electronic media is devoid of all the smells, tastes, and physical contacts that feature in conventional religious ritual and religious life. While converting popular culture to religious purposes, religious groups are also converted by the pervasive culture of consumerism in American society. As a prominent if not defining feature of American popular culture, consumerism has resulted in “selling God” (Moore 1994), transforming religious holy days into “consumer rites” (Schmidt 1995), and even fostering “religio-economic corporations,” such as Amway, Herbalife, and Mary Kay Cosmetics, that merge business, family, and a Christian gospel of prosperity into a “charismatic capitalism” (Biggart 1989).

Third, tensions often develop between religious groups and the productions of popular culture. Frequently, conservative Christians complain about the moral relativism and spiritual corruption of American popular culture in general. With particular intensity, they single out rock 'n' roll, rap, and other forms of popular recorded music as being dangerously immoral, antisocial, and antireligious. Like the Baptist boycott of the Walt Disney Company, religious campaigns to censor, label, or influence popular music are periodically waged by conservative Christian activists and organizations. Going beyond the music and lyrics, these critics attack the imagery, values, and lifestyles associated with these popular art forms. In this cultural conflict over popular music, evangelical Christians have created a successful commercial industry in Christian rock music—or contemporary Christian music—that is unified less by musical style, rhythm, or performance than by the explicitly reli-



gious content of the lyrics. As a result of conflict between a particular religious grouping and the productions of popular culture, therefore, alternative cultural movements can emerge and even establish a place within the culture industry.

As conventional religious groups interact with popular culture in these ways—by being represented in its media, by adopting its techniques, or by rejecting its productions—the dividing line between religion and popular culture blurs. While popular media are telling religious stories and religious groups are appropriating popular media, culture wars engage intense religious interests. The very term “religion” becomes part of the contested terrain of popular culture. Although representatives of conventional religious groups tend to reserve the term for themselves, relegating popular culture to the realm of the secular, they will occasionally designate the production or consumption of popular culture as “religion” in order to intensify the cultural contest. As noted, the Southern Baptist Convention boycotted Disney not only because it was a secular alternative to religion but also because the corporation was allegedly advancing an alternative religion in competition with Christianity. Likewise, religious critics occasionally attack rock music for promoting the alternative religions of Satanism or pantheism. In these exchanges, it is hard to tell where religion leaves off and popular culture begins. Participants in popular culture often report that religious interests are at stake. Does it make sense, however, to say that popular culture can operate as religion?

### Popular Culture as Religion

In any analysis of popular culture as religion, everything depends, of course, on what one means by “religion.” The academic study of religion draws upon an intellectual legacy of competing definitions. For example, E. B. Tylor, the founder of the anthropology of religion, defined religion as beliefs and practices relating to the supernatural; Emile Durkheim, the founder of the sociology of religion, defined it as beliefs and practices relating to a sacred focus that unify people as a community. These academic definitions share a common interest in setting religion apart from ordinary, everyday, or mundane aspects of human life. Religion is cast as superhuman and sacred, as transcendent and ultimate, as highly charged and extraor-

dinary. Looking at popular culture, however, we find ordinary, everyday cultural production and consumption. How could such ordinary activity be regarded as extraordinary?

Participants in popular culture make claims about its religious character. Reflecting on baseball after a lifetime devoted to the sport, Buck O’Neil asserted, “It is a religion.” On behalf of the Coca-Cola Company, advertising director Delony Sledge declared, “Our work is a religion rather than a business.” Responding to the extraordinary popularity of his rock ’n’ roll band, John Lennon observed that popular music seemed to be replacing Christianity in the field of religion because the Beatles were “more popular than Jesus.” Many participants in the popular culture of rock ’n’ roll would probably subscribe to rock critic Dan Graham’s statement of faith, “Rock, My Religion” (Chidester 2000). Still, the problem remains: What do people mean when they use the term “religion”? Although all of these participants in popular culture use the term, they are using it in different ways.

Baseball is a religion because it defines a community of allegiance, the “Church of Baseball.” Uniform in the present and continuous with the past, baseball operates like a religious tradition in preserving the symbols, myths, and rituals of a sacred collectivity. Certainly, other sports provide a similar basis for sacred allegiance. As one wrestling journalist observed, a television exposé of the alleged fakery in the World Wrestling Federation (WWF) was contemptible because it tried to reveal “the ‘secrets’ of our sacred ‘sport’” (Brenner 1998). Although this journalist put the term “sport” within quotation marks, he did not similarly bracket the term “sacred.” Although staged, contrived, and faked as if it were a sport, WWF wrestling might still be regarded as sacred because it enacted a popular American contest of good against evil. As ritual rather than sport, WWF wrestling can be regarded as religion because it reinforces a certain kind of sacred solidarity in American popular culture.

Like sports fans, the fans of Hollywood films, television shows, and popular music can participate in similar kinds of sacred solidarity, especially when that community of allegiance is focused upon the extraordinary personality of a celebrity. Elvis, the King, of course, has emerged as the preeminent superhuman person in American popular culture. He is celebrated



A baseball game at Yankee Stadium, 1946 (Library of Congress)

posthumously throughout America, from the official sanctuary of Graceland to the unofficial Web site of the First Presbyterian Church on the Internet, as an extraordinary being. Devotees of Elvis Presley, who collect, arrange, and display Elvis memorabilia; participate in the annual rituals of Elvis week; and go on pilgrimage to his shrine at Graceland, find in the King not only a religious focus of attention but also a focal point for mobilizing an ongoing community of sacred allegiance. Similarly, fans of the *Star Trek* television series and movies have created a community of sacred solidarity with its own myths and rituals, its own special language, and regular pilgrimages. The series has thus assumed the proportions of a popular religion. In all of these cases, the term “religion” seems appropriate because it evokes a sacred solidarity.

Coca-Cola is a religion because it revolves around a sacred object, the fetish of Coca-Cola. As a consumer product that no one needs but everyone desires, Coca-Cola is also an icon of the American way of life. Although that way of life is celebrated at the pilgrimage site of the World of Coca-Cola in Atlanta, Georgia, it has also been diffused throughout the world. Coca-Cola is a sacred object at the center of a cultural religion that is both American and global, within arm’s reach of desire, according to former Coca-Cola president Robert Guizueta, all over the world. In its materiality, the religion of Coca-Cola recalls the importance of icons, relics, and other sacred objects in the history of religions. Certainly, American popular culture enjoys a rich diversity of sacred icons, such as Disney’s Mouse, McDonald’s Arches, or Nike’s

Swoosh. As many cultural analysts have observed, these icons have been established by an advertising industry that has functioned like a religion, a religious enterprise that one critic has called *Adcult USA* (Twitchell 1995). The sacred materiality of these icons, however, reflects the importance of material culture in religion. In the production and consumption of popular culture, even ordinary, everyday objects can be transformed into icons, extraordinary magnets of meaning with a religious cast. For these objects of popular culture, the term “religion” seems appropriate because it captures a certain quality of attention, desire, and even reverence for sacred materiality.

Rock ‘n’ roll is a religion because it enacts an intense, ritualized performance, the “collective effervescence,” as Durkheim put it, which is generated by the interaction between ritual specialists and congregants, or, in this case, between artists and audiences. Recent research on religious ritual has focused on the dynamics of performance. From this perspective, ritual is sacred drama. In performance, ritual is also an interactive exchange, a dynamic process of giving and receiving. According to rock critic Dave Marsh, rock ‘n’ roll is religious because it is precisely such a sacred ritual of exchange, a ritual of giving and receiving perhaps best exemplified by the break in the archetypal rock song, “Louie, Louie,” when the singer screeches, “Let’s give it to ‘em, right now!” (Chidester 2000, 230). This gift, as a pure gift, transcends the prevailing American value system that is based on maximizing profits and minimizing losses within an overarching system of capitalist market relations. American popular culture valorizes gift giving—at birthdays, weddings, and other ritual occasions—in ways that the market cannot value. In such rituals of giving and receiving, where value in the exchange is not determined solely by the market, popular culture preserves important aspects of traditional religious life. For these ritualized occasions of gift giving, the term “religion” seems appropriate to identify performances, practices, or events of sacred exchange.

### A Popular Cultural Religion

In practice, all of these aspects of religion—the mobilization of a community of sacred allegiance, the focus on a sacred object, and the ritualization of sacred exchange—might come together in the same cultural for-

mation within American popular culture. Around 1942, Earl Silas Tupper took the black industrial waste product of polyethylene slag and transformed it into what he called “Poly-T: Material of the Future,” the basic material for a range of household products he created as Tupperware. “Through an act of genius and alchemy,” according to historian Alison J. Clarke, “Earl Tupper summoned forth a divine creation to benefit humanity” (Clarke 1999, 41). Envisioning the total Tupperization of the American home, Earl Tupper was frustrated by the lack of popular interest in his products. In department stores, catalogs, and direct marketing, Tupperware did not sell. Although he was the originator of a “divine creation,” Earl Tupper found no devotees for the products of Tupperization. In the early 1950s, however, an unemployed, divorced housewife, Brownie Wise, initiated the Tupperware party, an invention more important than the production of Poly-T in the history of Tupperware because it created a community of sacred allegiance. The Tupperware party was a radical innovation in direct marketing. By contrast to the traveling salesman, who was generally distrusted, as Clarke observed, because of “his dislocation from the most sacred of all American institutions—the home” (Clarke 1999, 89), the housewife who hosted a Tupperware party was able to reinforce the sanctity of the home. In this domestic ritual, chairs were arranged so “guests face the product as if on an altar.” Hosts presented the product with “religious zeal,” trying to “invest their bowls with qualities demanding ‘reverence,’ ‘awe,’ and ‘respect.’” Accordingly, the Tupperware party created small-scale, local communities of sacred allegiance through these “religious-like rituals” (Clarke 1999, 150).

Once those “religious-like” communities had been formed, the sacred object, Poly-T, could become a focal point for religious attention. As the mediologist Régis Debray has observed, the material organization of a community always precedes the organization of the matter that enables the transmission of its culture (Debray 2000). Following the formation of a social network for Tupperware, Brownie Wise reported in 1954 that she had preserved the original black polyethylene slag, which she affectionately referred to as Poly, and insured it for \$50,000. Taking this black lump of plastic to Tupperware sales rallies, Brownie Wise invited dealers “to shut their eyes, rub their hands on Poly, wish, and work like the devil, then

they're bound to succeed" (Clarke 1999, 3). In this promise, Wise echoed the widespread belief in the power of positive thinking, especially as exemplified by Norman Vincent Peale's maxim, "Faith Made Them Champions," which pervaded the worldview of American popular culture. Self-realization, however, demanded being of service to others. Focusing on Poly as a sacred object, Tupperware dealers could imagine that they were engaged in both personal fulfillment and public service. As one journalist reported, "Seeing every day the results of their work in other people's happiness, they find in their activity a kind of religion" (Clarke 1999, 136).

Like any religion, Tupperware had to locate itself within a broader religious sense of territory, identifying its sacred center. Built in 1954 on 1,000 acres in Orlando, Florida, that sacred center, the Tupperware Mecca, became a pilgrimage site for Tupperware dealers. Reinforcing the importance of the sacred object, Wise sanctified Poly Pond by throwing a handful of polyethylene pellets into the water. Dealers came to be baptized by touching the water of the "sacred Poly Pond" at Tupperware headquarters. As Wise declared in 1955, "the very ground here is consecrated to a program of furthering the interests of you in the Tupperware family" (Clarke 1999, 137). By casting plastic upon the waters, Wise had ceremoniously consecrated that sacred ground in Orlando through the ritual deployment of a sacred object.

Of course, Tupperware was a commercial enterprise, a business venture committed to maximizing profit and minimizing loss. Clearly committed to making money, Tupperware also incorporated traditional forms of gift giving. Although the Tupperware party in private homes regularly featured gifts, the small tokens of appreciation given to guests, the hosts of those parties, the Tupperware dealers, could go on pilgrimage once a year to Tupperware headquarters to participate in a gift-giving ritual. At the Tupperware Mecca in 1954, for example, Brownie Wise gathered her dealers to "Dig for Gold." With symbols of wealth buried in the consecrated grounds, she urged the dealers to dig for their gifts. As a journalist reported, "Six hundred erect shovels, set in the sacred Tupperware grounds, awaited the eager gold diggers" (Clarke 1999, 142). In such a ritualized display and extravagant expenditure, Wise reinforced the power of Tupperware, not according to conventional eco-

nomic indicators, but through symbols, myths, and rituals of religion. As Alison Clarke observed, Tupperware developed a corporate culture "which bolstered concepts of religiosity, ritual, love, kinship, and informal economy," relying "on systems of barter, reciprocity, and displays of ritual, mysticism, and gift giving" (Clarke 1999, 157, 165). A crucial ingredient in Tupperware's success, therefore, was the company's incorporation of rituals of sacred exchange into its business practice.

### American Popular Culture

"Tupperware—Everywhere," was Brownie Wise's slogan for her network of home parties. By the end of the 1950s, however, the inventor Earl Tupper had forced Tupperware's organizational, cultural, inspirational, and religious mobilizer out of the business, reportedly because he was outraged by her proposal that the company should open up a new product line by producing a Tupperware dog dish. Regarding this suggestion as a heresy, a blasphemous denigration of his gift to humanity, Tupper effectively excommunicated Wise, only to sell the Tupperware enterprise a few months later to the Rexall Drug Company. In these transactions, from the universal claims of Tupperware executives to their local conflicts, Tupperware operated exactly like a religion.

By the end of the twentieth century, American popular culture was global. In the case of Tupperware, for example, a company that has been described as "all-American as the stars and stripes," 85 percent of its sales came from outside of the United States. Similarly, major transnational corporations—Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Disney, and others—carried American popular culture around the globe. As Arjun Appadurai has proposed, "globalization" is a term in the intellectual armory that might advance ongoing struggles to analyze the shifting terrains of a changing world. At the very least, "globalization" signals a growing awareness that things have changed in the world's landscapes of human, technological, financial, ideological, and media geography. This new global geography, without fixed borders, calls attention to global fluidity, fluctuations, circulations, and dispersions of people, machinery, capital, ideas, and images, the global flows that Appadurai has identified as the fluid movement of people through new ethnoscaapes, of



A Tupperware party, c. 1950 (Hulton/Archive)

machinery through new technoscapes, of capital through new financescapes, of ideas of political solidarity through new ideoscapes, and of mass media-generated images of human possibility through new mediascapes (Appadurai 1996). All of this global fluidity, of course, seems entirely too fluid, divorced from any political economy, but also divorced from the intractable problems posed by the translation, rationalization, and imagination of matter. Materiality might flow, but it might not flow quite so fluidly.

Looking back at the twentieth century, historians in the future could very well find that the entire world was living in the Age of Plastic. In the early decades of the century, plastic was still a metaphor, a figure of speech that signified the opposite of the fixed, the permanent, or the rigid. In the academic work of the pioneering American sociologist Edward Alsworth Ross, for example, everything in human society could be classified as either rigid or plastic. Every social institution—religious, scientific, legal, and so on—had its rigid and plastic sides. As Ross maintained in his classic text *Social Psychology*, originally published in 1908,

the rigid aspects of a society are always at risk, only waiting for destruction, because the rigid “admits only of the replacement of the old by the new.” By contrast, the plastic features of social institutions are able to survive change. “Advance on the plastic side,” Ross explained, “is much easier than on the rigid side.” Instead of risking the fate of being entirely replaced by the new, the plastic side of any social institution “admits of accumulation by the union of the new with the old” (Ross [1908] 1919, 331, 335). While this American sociologist was calculating the stress relations between the rigid and the plastic, the French philosopher Henri Bergson undertook an investigation of laughter, which he also conducted as a sociological study. He was interested in the ways in which laughter worked “to readapt the individual into the whole” and employed a similar structural opposition between the rigid and the plastic in finding that the function of laughter “is to convert rigidity into plasticity” (Bergson 1911, 35).

During the Age of Plastic, plasticity might have remained a mere metaphor, a figurative, rhetorical op-

position to rigidity in cultural analysis, if not for the dramatic transformations in the imagination of matter that attended the chemical engineering of polyethylene. Through this breakthrough in scientific imagination, intervention, and ingenuity, plasticity was transformed into plastic, the polyethylene substance of material plasticity. In the Age of Plastic, one must forgive any historian the rhetorical extravagance of invoking divinity or alchemy when talking about a development in plasticity as important as Tupperware. During the Age of Plastic, one of the leading scholars of signs, the semiologist Roland Barthes, realized that plasticity signified everything important in the imagination of matter in the twentieth century. According to Barthes, the production of plastic was an alchemical transformation that mediated exchanges not only between base matter and gold but also between human beings and God. As Barthes described these alchemical transactions, "At one end, raw, telluric matter, at the other, the finished human object; and between these two extremes, nothing; nothing but a transit, hardly watched over by an attendant in a cloth cap, half-god, half-robot" (Barthes 1988, 97). Half God, half robot; part divine, part machine; something superhuman, but also something subhuman—the scientist overseeing the alchemical transformation of earth into plastic was positioned, according to Barthes, at the intersection of these supreme, absolute extremes—divinity above, machines below—that framed the meaning and power of the modern world.

In this way of imagining matter, therefore, plastic seemed to represent a midpoint, a nexus, or an *axis mundi* in creative exchanges, in the sudden, unobserved, and perhaps imperceptible transitions conducted among the more than human, the human, and the less than human. In a plastic age celebrating its alchemy, plasticity seemed to define the contours of a religious world. Plasticity, however, was not only fluid. Plastic signified not only the alchemical transactions between different levels of reality, but also a basic, underlying uniformity. Plastic signified a substantial uniformity of materiality. After all, however it might be produced, plastic was always plastic. Recognizing that homogeneity of plastic, Barthes declared, "The hierarchy of substances is abolished: a single one replaces them all: the whole world *can* be plasticized, and even life itself, we are told, they are beginning to make plastic aortas" (Barthes 1988, 99). Re-

placed, in principle, by plastic, human life and all other values became equivalent. In this plastic imagination of matter, with the abolition of any differentiation of material substances, everything is plastic, even life itself.

Between the same and the different, all over the world, religious groupings seek to mold the plasticity of American popular culture in the service of their own religious interests. At the same time, in those negotiations local cultural formations are also molded, American-style, but not necessarily in ways that are controlled by corporate headquarters in the United States. Within the United States, as well, new forces and discourses have shaped cultural formations on frontiers, in the borderlands, or through processes of creolization that are beyond any centralized control, while much of what is regarded as distinctively "American" culture can be traced to Africa, Asia, Europe, or elsewhere. In all of these cultural exchanges, the term "religion" identifies a layer, dimension, strand, or thread of culture that bestows a certain degree of urgency upon questions of human identity, location, and media. In the constellation of discourses and forces shaping American religion at the beginning of the twenty-first century, popular culture operates at the intersection of new technologies of cultural production, new modes of cultural consumption, and new strategies for imagining human possibility that have made a dramatic difference in the ways in which religion intersects with popular cultural formations, not only in the United States but also in the rest of the world.

—David Chidester

#### SEE ALSO

Material Culture; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Fundamentalism; Ritual and Performance: Sports, Tourism; Sacred Space: Cyberspace, Shrines; Sacred Time: Vacations; Science: Science Fiction, Technology

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## ADVERTISING

Advertisements bombard Americans incessantly with images of power and the “good life.” Since the Industrial Revolution, advertising has reflected the desires of a society that needed more than just facts; it needed hope, love, and security. Many social critics, employing religious language, have described advertising as a kind of “salvific experience,” a “system of magical inducements” that replaced the declining institutions at the beginning of the twentieth century (Lears 1983, 4). This critique demands that we not view the role of advertising in a cultural vacuum; there are various economic, sociological, and religious changes that have contributed to the emerging role of advertising in the culture of consumer capitalism.

Historian Jackson Lears pointed to the late nineteenth century as the era in which feelings of unrest were precipitated by the rise of industrialized modernity (Lears 1983, 6). The result was a picture of the self that had no substance. As the days of simplicity and honesty passed away, individuals found themselves surrounded by fragmentation and deceit. What emerged from this culture was “a new type of personality and ‘social self’ based on individuality” (Lears 1983, 6). With the transformation of America from an agrarian to an industrial society, people were introduced to unfettered mass consumption. The goods that used to be produced at home were now produced in settings that were unfamiliar and whose benefits could not be ascertained by an uneducated shopper. As Americans moved into the twentieth century, the old way of life faded into urbanization as cultural relativism, the erosion of the extended economic family, and the advent of a new leisure time all entered public and private life. The Victorian code of morals grew blurred alongside the metaphorical Christianity of liberal Protestantism as people sought refuge from the bourgeoisie culture in the popular culture of the day (Lears 1983). As traditional institutions—community, religion, school, art, and family—lost their influence, they also left a void for absolutes. The need for meaning grew, and advertisers developed ways in which their products could fill that desire.

The outcome was a dawning culture of selfishness, or what Christopher Lasch has called “the culture of narcissism.” Advertising, Lasch asserted, played into

this feeling of euphoric consumer denial by promoting consumption as a way of life (Lasch 1979, 72). Early advertisements called attention to the product, but with the advent of department stores and service industries, advertising detected the yearnings for a better life and capitalized upon these feelings.

The type of advertising that has developed from the 1950s to the present is image production. Jib Fowles noted that there are two types of advertisements: *simple* (text and information oriented) and *compound* (symbol driven) (Fowles 1996, 11). Most of the advertising today is of the compound type. That is, a symbolic aspect from popular culture is attached to the object in order to increase sales (for example, independence and freedom for women are linked with Virginia Slims cigarettes). Through a system of magical transformation, products cajole consumers to believe, trust, or fall in love with them. One technique advertisers employ to accomplish this consumer suasion is the use of ultimate language and emotional appeal (“Toyota, I love what you do for me!” or “I’m looking for a meaningful relationship and I found it at Saks Fifth Avenue”). A second technique is lighting. Advertising uses lighting and position to produce an otherworldly effect. “Radiant beams” suggest the significance of an object. Advertisers will often display the object alone, usually enlarged or towering over an adoring person or group. Along with such devices, advertising relies on what is familiar or valued, on the one hand, or shocking in the culture, on the other, to help sell the product. Thus, when a consumer purchases an object, he or she is often referencing the meaning or image that has been created by the culture of advertising. Most anthropologists would agree that people have always used objects to convey meaning and create order in the world. Individuals have a symbolic aspect to their interactions, especially in religious life. Advertising, which seeks to penetrate every domain of need and satisfaction, requires that one should seek diligently among the object world to satisfy one’s needs and that one should be dissatisfied with one’s present possessions (Leiss et al. 1997, 70).

Advertising rarely constructs situations out of nothing; rather, it mirrors back to its audience forms of the culture that will be easily recognized. One cultural



form that it uses is religion. For example, in a recent advertisement, three shiny new cars are lined up on a grassy plain. Out of the sun-filled, partly cloudy sky, a gigantic white, male hand points to one of them, indicating to the consumer his preferred choice. This hand, one surmises, is none other than the divine hand of God aiding the consumer with a purchase decision. This advertisement is relying on the traditional understanding of God as white, male, and “up there” in the heavens. Indeed, even if one is not a religious believer, this representation of a deity is easily recognizable by nearly everyone in American culture. Advertising depends on this aspect of recognition, and also juxtaposition, in order to convey its message and sell products. Through a manipulation of symbols and cultural forms, advertising fills an object with a meaning that “speaks” to the consumer and provides a cultural context for the consumer that makes him or her likely to listen to the advertisement’s message. In this manner, advertising is a part of culture and at the same time creates and maintains culture.

Advertising is a multibillion-dollar industry, yet there is no conclusive proof either way that it helps to sell a product (Schudson 1986, xiii). The great debate concerning advertising is regarding its cultural function. Some scholars assert that advertising is an institution that expresses and aids a laissez-faire capitalism (Kirkpatrick 1994, 153–154); others believe that it creates a hedonistic milieu in which people are led to desire what they do not need or crave objects merely for their symbolic connotation. Advertising has even been accused of being a functional god, or “a gospel based upon the commodity form” (Kavanaugh 1991, 226). In this critique, a person is said to construct his or her identity from the objects that he or she consumes. That is, a person’s social being is not known by who he or she is, but by the ownership of transformed material objects as symbols of a consumer culture created by advertising. And yet advertising does not force anyone to buy anything. It merely seeks to give product information to consumers so they may

make an informed purchasing decision. The ultimate claim is that humans are rational beings able to make choices based on their own volition. Perhaps it is better not to ask whether advertising helps to increase product sales, but to inquire about the form and nature of culture articulated and expressed by advertising in society (Jhally 1998). This line of investigation may help scholars determine the nature of reason, free will, and personality for an individual and the effects of conscious or unwitting consumption of advertising for his or her cultural and religious identity.

—Tricia Sheffield

#### SEE ALSO

The Body; Material Culture: Christian Retailing; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion; Sacred Time: Christmas, Easter

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## CULTURAL SAINTS

Today's most recognized, adored, and emulated cultural figures are not saints of any institutional religion, but rather saints of music, cinema, television, and sports. These cultural saints are molded, displayed, and disseminated by mass media. The term "cultural saints" functions as a shorthand to indicate a constellation of factors, including individual talent, real and constructed personas, media and consumer response, and lifestyle effects in both saint and followers. Historically, the term best fits the post-1960s shift from an ideologically Christian American culture that positioned celebrity achievements within a secular public arena, such as film or sports, to an American culture in which civil religion was declining at the same time that popular culture was becoming subject to deification, or at least spiritualization. In some cases, the achievements were largely self-propelled (Madonna); in others, they were industry-propelled (NSYNC). Either way, consumers are wooed for conversion to "fandom" and exhorted to remain loyal with both their time and their money. This "star system" produces an "aura" that Marxist philosopher Walter Benjamin has described as uniquely religious. In response to a cultural saint's aura, fans form loose or structured communities (what Durkheim would call a "church") complete with special dress, texts, rituals, and pilgrimages. Some stars try to resist the role of cultural saint. Regardless, the recent leverage wielded by music, cinema, and sports stars with respect to social causes (such as support for Tibetan freedom, midwestern farms, or the "Rock the Vote" campaign) and cultural debates (for example, Islam and the freedom of religion, or depression as a serious mental illness) demonstrates the close interweaving of celebrity status and ethical obligation appropriate to sainthood.

In the 1920s, Walter Benjamin praised mass (popular) culture for stripping the religious aura from works of art and thus opening the possibility that popular culture could mediate real political struggle. For him, a piece of art such as the *Mona Lisa* elicited an aura of presence, genius, authenticity, and uniqueness that evoked feelings of awe and submission similar to what believers feel before religious icons. Benjamin thought that popular culture's mode of easy

mechanical reproduction made such religious feelings impossible and resulted in a democratized art. What Benjamin did not predict was the almost complete dominance of the image during the twentieth century and thus the infusion of aura (a sense of presence, genius, authenticity, and uniqueness) into film, TV, and music videos. If, as Rudolf Otto claimed, the "holy" is that which both attracts and fascinates people, then the images of popular culture are the principle conveyors of the holy today. Religious aura—far from being absent or "overcome" (as Marxists hoped)—streams constantly from TV, video, and cinema screens. Most captivating of all, in terms of image and aura, are the faces of media stars (including sports figures).

Understanding the role of media stars as cultural saints requires understanding the changing role of popular culture since the 1960s. Even early in the twentieth century, aura was not absent from popular culture. Consider, for example, early movie stars such as Lilian Gish, Charlie Chaplin, and later, Humphrey Bogart, Audrey Hepburn, and Marilyn Monroe; sports stars such as Hank Aaron and Babe Ruth; and music stars such as Harry Belafonte, the early Beatles, and Elvis. These stars did evoke a fandom, but only in the context of professed (ideological) cultural homogeneity. Sociologist Robert Bellah famously named this cultural homogeneity "civil religion." According to Bellah (1967), civil religion presumes a Judeo-Christian dominance and focuses national unity on and in the political realm and history of the United States. Thus, until the late 1960s, religion was set firmly in the private sphere, except to the extent that "America" itself formed the object of worship, in which case the government acted as sanctuary, priesthood, and religious court. After the 1960s, public cynicism (exacerbated by factors such as the war in Vietnam and the Watergate scandal) and an increasing awareness of cultural diversity (stemming from the Civil Rights Movement as well as immigration) severely damaged the efficacy of America's civil religion. The need for national unity did not evaporate but was gradually transferred to popular culture. The 1970s thus saw the mediatization and spiritualization of Super Bowls (see Schrank 1977), rock concerts (see

the film *Almost Famous*, Cameron Crowe, 2000), and what film historians Gerald Mast and Bruce F. Kawain (1996) have called Hollywood's "return of the myths" (*Godfather*, Francis Ford Coppola, 1972; *Jaws*, Steven Spielberg, 1975; *Star Wars*, George Lucas, 1977).

Today's media stars are our cultural saints. But what distinguishes a cultural saint from a hero? *Heroes* are admired mainly for their actions; *saints* are admired for their actions, too, but they are also admired for something more—their attitudes, their personal charm and grace, and other qualities that are difficult to define. Such added expectations and/or media-driven and intense scrutiny distinguish the cultural hero from the cultural saint. In one Nike ad, for example, commercial basketball player Charles Barkley insists he is *not* a role model; but his very refusal underscores the fact that he *is* a role model, regardless of his acceptance or support of that mantle (Boyd 1997). A star's choices, motivations, or intentions do not make him or her a cultural saint so much as how the media portray the star's talent and image and how fans receive this coverage. Robert Miklitsch (1998) called this situation the star commodity-body-sign system; that is, the body of the star is something on sale, something that sells a product, and a sign of prevailing (or subcultural) values and attitudes. Gilbert B. Rodman (1996), however, argued against theorizing fandom as a religion, except for the case of Elvis. The exception is enabled by Rodman's quite strict boundaries between what is and what is not appropriately labeled "religious." Clearly, one's understanding of "religion" demarcates where and how one will find "saints." Rodman insisted on clear definitions of religion; in contrast, Bruce David Forbes and Jeffrey H. Mahan (2000) suggested forcefully that what counts as "religion"—and by extension, "saint"—is fluid and context-dependent.

To be a cultural saint requires a combination of *presentation*, *reception*, and *pragmatic effects*. A cultural saint must exude aura, or what Max Weber theorized as "charisma." But if such charismatic *presentation* is too eccentric (as with Prince, perhaps), then fans will not form significant communities ("churches") around it. Moreover, fan *reception* can be so overwhelming (Madonna in the 1980s, or Elvis after his death) that it becomes or is labeled a "cult of person-

ality," a pejorative term indicating an unthinking and potentially dangerous allegiance to someone based solely on his or her charisma. Recently, the rise of celebrity-sponsored social causes circumvents and ameliorates the dangerous tendencies of charisma by positioning cultural saints as persons who dictate, finance, and motivate support for an array of social, political, and economic causes. Through special concerts, advertisements, and lobbying campaigns, the stars and their promoters use these causes to create and sustain *pragmatic effects* that function, as do all community ("church") rituals, to both constitute and solidify community identity and belief.

—M. Gail Hammer

#### SEE ALSO

The Body: Clothing; Death; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion; Ritual and Performance: Sports

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## FAITH

What does “faith” mean? What are the various constructions of faith in popular culture? For centuries associated with specific knowledge or a set of beliefs, the understanding of “faith” as a word and concept has changed. In popular culture, faith primarily refers to the act of believing and not the content of belief. An attentive ear to participants in popular culture no longer hears descriptions of faith as religious knowledge, but rather tunes in to descriptions of faith as general religious sentiment or individual subjective feelings.

Faith is conventionally defined as belief in the value or trustworthiness of someone or something. Common synonyms for faith are creed, doctrine, confidence, dogma, tenet, persuasion, belief, and religion. In regard to religion, faith is a confident and certain knowledge of the divine. Although faith lacks undeniable evidence to prove itself, it claims to have the same kind of certainty that science has.

The movie *Dogma* (1999) directed by Keven Smith critiques this understanding of faith. The latest battle in the war between good and evil has come to New Jersey in the late twentieth century. Two renegade fallen angels attempt to jerry-rig the entire cosmological system—unless Bethany, the heroine, can stop them. Along the way she meets an angelic messenger, an apostle, a hotheaded demon, a heavenly muse, and two modern-day prophets as they each discuss the topic of individual faith. In response to a question about whether or not beliefs are good, Rufus, the thirteenth apostle, responds: “I think it’s better to have ideas. You can change an idea. Changing a belief is trickier. Life should be malleable and progressive; working from idea to idea permits that. Beliefs anchor you to certain points and limit growth. . . . Life becomes stagnant.” In many expressions of contemporary popular culture, faith is not articulated as belief but more often as personal experience, hope in the face of overwhelming odds, spirituality, or general religious sentiment. In popular culture, faith is commonly understood as individual subjective feeling or as a general religious sentiment that focuses on a basic, underlying, and substantial uniformity.

When faith is understood as individual subjective feelings, the central concern of faith is the activity of

believing or having faith, not what is believed or the object of faith. The object of faith is rarely specified; it can be love, hope, fate, the unknown, oneself, someone else, or God. In an episode of *The Simpsons*, for example, Marge Simpson, speaking to her daughter Lisa, says faith means that there is something “more to life than what we see.” It is important to “make a leap of faith now and then” because “everyone needs something to believe in.” The focus is the individual benefit of having faith; faith is malleable to the specific needs of the one who has it.

Other examples of this notion are found in popular music. Whether the genre is hip-hop, country, pop, or rock, “faith” is synonymous with “hope” and usually in reference to love or relationships. George Michael’s “Faith” and Limp Bizkit’s remake of the song remind us that having faith (“I gotta have faith!”) does not mean holding certain religious teachings to be true, but hoping that it is worth the risk to end a relationship in order to “wait for something more.” In “If I Ever Lose My Faith in You,” Sting tells us that he lost his faith in science, technological progress, politicians, and the church, but there is still hope that love will not let him down. He proclaims, “If I ever lose my faith in you, there’d be nothing left for me to do.” Jessica Simpson’s song “Your Faith in Me” is an inspirational celebration of faith, understood as reliability, strength, and the foundation of love: “Your faith in me. It pulls me through when there’s nothing around to hold on to. When I fall, when I’m weak, all the strength that I need is your faith, baby.”

Faith is also used in the sense of hoping against all odds in times of trouble. In the movie *John Q* (2001), directed by Nick Cassavetes, John Q. Archibald comforts his wife during their son’s hopeless medical situation by encouraging her to “have faith,” which is “believing what you don’t want to believe.” Faith, in this case, is acknowledging that their son’s situation is hopeless and that nothing can be done except to hope for a miracle of fate.

For many years, if talk of faith took place it was only privately, for faith had little currency on the open market (Ward 2000). Now, it is a significant theme of entertainment and a topic of popular culture (Moore 1994). Faith has become a commodity. As a

consequence, it is tailored to the consumer's needs and taken to be a matter of personal interest, feelings, and individual convictions.

When faith refers to a basic, underlying, and substantial unity, the focus is not on any particular belief system but on general religious sentiment or spirituality. Religious pluralism has influenced contemporary popular culture to focus on the uniformity of different religions. In the midst of this pluralism, popular culture seems to view different faiths as species of one generic religion ultimately grounded in and expressive of the existential reality. The movie *Dogma* provides an example of this move away from faith as specific religious beliefs. When asked what is the right religion, Serendipity, a muse, answers, "It's not about right or wrong—it's a question of faith. It doesn't matter what you believe in—just that you believe."

Creedal ambiguity is central to faith as expressed in popular culture. Although this theme initially seems to reflect an irreligious American culture, it may instead reveal a deep cultural religiosity or spirituality. It belies a familiarity with many faiths, and these ways of expressing faith, though understood as spirituality, not belief, permeate contemporary popular culture (Beaudoin 1998).

—Justin S. Holcomb

#### SEE ALSO

Generations: Generation X; Science

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## FILM

The Hollywood film industry, characterized by glamour and illusion, seems an unlikely context for Americans to engage ideas about and images of religion. Nevertheless, since the turn of the twentieth century, filmmaking and moviegoing have been powerful forces contributing to shaping Americans' attitudes toward religion. Hollywood has also had influence beyond the United States as consumers of American film around the world have encountered images of religion presented on the silver screen. At various moments in the first half of the twentieth century, films with explicitly religious content and sometimes goals—especially Bible films and Christian and Jewish religious epics—dominated at the box office despite serious questions among some religious Americans

about the propriety of commercial film taking up subjects they considered sacred.

Religious leaders responded to the emerging industry in a variety of ways, primarily through attempts to reform or control the content of motion pictures, focusing both on representations of religion and on subject matter they took to be immoral, especially sex, crime, consumption of alcohol, and drug use. Catholic and Protestant leaders participated actively in the production of the censorship codes that would regulate the content of Hollywood films from the late 1920s through the 1960s. At the same time, some Protestant and Catholic leaders advocated the use of religiously themed movies as a way of enhancing and modernizing worship or of supplementing traditional

religious education. Some even produced their own films for religious audiences. From the 1960s on, the range of religions represented has broadened and it has become possible to produce films that take a more critical or humorous approach to American religion. Despite changes in the film industry and in the shape of American religions, the controversial issues of the moral content of movies, as well as their portrayal of a variety of religions, have remained at the center of the interactions between the two arenas of religion and film in America.

### Religious Themes in Films

From the earliest years of filmmaking in America, the wide range of films that audiences attended included films that told Bible stories. *The Life of Moses* (Vitagraph, 1909), *The Deluge* (Vitagraph, 1911), and *From the Manger to the Cross* (Kalem, 1912) were among the first Bible films made for release in the United States. Almost twenty others followed in the silent film period and into the sound years of the late 1920s. In addition, Americans had access to religious films produced in Europe, and these were widely exhibited in theaters, synagogues, and churches. By the early 1920s, the Hollywood studio system had come to dominate American film production. Moviemakers and exhibitors attempted to elevate movies from their working-class nickelodeon origins and make them more respectable and acceptable to middle-class Americans. To accomplish this goal, they sometimes turned to the production of films that told Bible stories or that used other religious themes. Director Cecil B. DeMille emerged at the center of a cycle of large-scale Bible epics that were extremely popular with audiences. *The Ten Commandments* (Paramount/Famous Players-Lasky, 1923), *The Sign of the Cross* (Paramount, 1923), and *The King of Kings* (Paramount, 1927) joined at least five other Bible films by major studios and more by smaller motion picture companies in the 1920s. In the 1930s, there were relatively few epics, but *The Green Pastures*, a 1936 film produced by Warner Brothers based on Marc Connelly's 1931 Broadway hit, took the unusual approach of setting stories from the Hebrew Scriptures in an all-black southern context.

Although audiences generally responded well to these religious movies—which often contained impres-



Charlton Heston as Moses in a still from Cecil B. DeMille's film *The Ten Commandments*, 1956 (Hulton/Archive)

sive special effects and salacious scenes of the wicked engaged in sinning, in addition to more reverently presented spiritual subject matter—some religious leaders expressed concern about the possibility that the use of special effects to simulate miracles would demean the power of the divine. The representation of Jesus in movies also proved controversial at times as Christians worried about the commercialization of what they believed to be a sacred story and the implications of casting professional actors to play Jesus. Jewish audiences often found these films' presentations of Jews as responsible for Jesus' death objectionable. As a result, stories from the Hebrew Scriptures and narrative films focusing on characters around Jesus, rather than on Jesus himself, became more common among Hollywood Bible and religious epics. The 1970s saw two significant attempts to modernize the Passion story through musical presentations in David Greene's *Godspell* (Columbia, 1973) and Norman Jewison's *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Universal, 1973). In 1988, Martin Scorsese adapted Nikos Kazantzakis's novel, *The Last Temptation of Christ* (Universal, 1988), to much critical acclaim but to very negative responses from many Roman Catholics and evangelicals who objected to the suggestion that Jesus might



Scene from *Jesus Christ Superstar*, 1973 (The Kobal Collection/Universal/Robert Stigwood)

have considered choosing a carnal life with Mary Magdalene over sacrificing himself for humanity.

Religious epics were popular from the late 1940s through the late 1950s and were consistently among the top box-office grossing releases. As television brought about decreasing attendance at motion picture shows, Hollywood studios turned to a combination of religious epics and new or newly improved production technology, such as Cinemascope wide-screen format and Technicolor, to bring audiences back to theaters. Cecil B. DeMille contributed two such films with *Samson and Delilah* (Paramount, 1949) and *The Ten Commandments* (Paramount, 1956). Henry Koster's *The Robe* (20th Century Fox, 1953) and its sequel, Delmer Daves's *Demetrius and the Gladiators* (20th Century Fox, 1954), were extraordinarily popular. Later in the decade, a number of Hollywood's most prestigious directors contributed to the genre, including Frank Borzage with *The Big Fisherman* (Buena Vista/Centurion Films, 1959), King Vidor with *Solomon and Sheba* (United Artists, 1959), and William

Wyler with *Ben Hur* (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1959). Although not successful at the box office, Fox's 1960 *The Story of Ruth* stands out as the only film among these religious epics that focuses on female characters. Many of these Bible and religious epics of the 1950s used religious themes to comment on the Cold War and to argue for biblical religion as the core of American democracy. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments* is the most forceful in this regard but other 1950s Bible epics also placed an opposition between godless tyranny and divinely ordained democracy at the center of their meditations on the Cold War.

Hollywood studios have produced many other films that do not rely on the Bible for their stories but still contain religious characters, themes, and images across a range of genres. Many films have focused on clergy and other religious leaders, including *Angels with Dirty Faces* (Warner Brothers, 1938), *Brigham Young: Frontiersman* (20th Century Fox, 1940), *The Keys of the Kingdom* (20th Century Fox, 1944), *The Bells of St. Mary's* (RKO, 1945), *A Man Called Peter* (20th Century

Fox, 1955), *The Nun's Story* (Warner Brothers, 1959), *Sister Act* (Buena Vista, 1992), and *Dead Man Walking* (Polygram, 1995). Others, such as *Gentleman's Agreement* (20th Century Fox, 1947), *Inherit the Wind* (United Artists, 1960), *The Crucible* (20th Century Fox, 1996), *Contact* (Warner Brothers, 1997), and Darren Aronofsky's independent film *Pi* (Harvest Filmworks, 1998) have placed issues such as religious discrimination, the conflict between individual conscience and religious conformity, and the relationship between religion and science at the center of their stories. From the late 1960s through the late 1970s, a number of films used the horror genre to explore modern religion. *Rosemary's Baby* (Paramount, 1968), *The Exorcist* (Warner Brothers, 1973), and *The Omen* (20th Century Fox, 1976) were all extremely successful at the box office.

In addition to films made in Hollywood, religious institutions and individuals have produced movies with the goal of presenting their particular confessional perspective to believers or persuading people outside their traditions to convert. There are many early examples of biographical films about religious figures, tours of the Holy Land, and travel films about world religions that were exhibited in churches, synagogues, and theaters as part of religious education programs. More recently, evangelical filmmakers have been successful with apocalyptic films such as Donald W. Thompson's *A Thief in the Night* (Mark IV Pictures, 1972), Robert Marcarelli's *The Omega Code* (TBN Films, 1999), and Victor Sarin's *Left Behind: The Movie* (Cloud Ten Pictures, 2000).

### Censorship

The powerful lure of the movies since the earliest years of the twentieth century has motivated religious leaders to concern themselves with content they have deemed unsuitable for young audiences. Catholic and Protestant leaders, in such organizations as the Catholic Legion of Decency and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, were instrumental in motivating Hollywood studios to establish a mechanism of self-regulation. In 1922, fearing government-imposed censorship, the studios formed the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association (MPPDA) under the direction of Will H. Hays and later Joseph I. Breen, Presbyterian and Catholic lay-

men, respectively. Dissatisfaction with the enforcement of the MPPDA's regulations—particularly the “Don'ts and Be Carefuls” adopted in 1927—motivated additional attacks on the studios by reformers.

In 1930, the MPPDA adopted the Motion Picture Production Code to guide industry self-regulation. This set of rules, effective through the late 1950s, required that studios receive an MPPDA seal before releasing any film. Concerned primarily with representations of sex and crime, the code also stipulated that representations of religion be accurate and dignified. It established the principle of “compensating moral values” as one of the criteria of the Production Code Administration (PCA) for evaluating films—that is, sympathy was not to rest with the “sinning” characters, who instead should be punished and denounced in the film for their actions. The PCA generally insisted on consultation with clergy or other religious leaders to ensure authenticity. The PCA revised the code in 1956 in an attempt to modernize it and offset emerging criticism of motion picture censorship, largely in response to a number of successful lawsuits by studios and exhibitors wanting to release films that did not meet code standards. In 1968, with the U.S. Supreme Court finally protecting movies as free speech under the First Amendment, the studios abandoned the code for a ratings system that indicates the appropriate age range for each film released.

### Religious Diversity

Although early American filmmakers sometimes used religious traditions other than Christianity as subject matter, representations of white Protestants and Catholics have dominated in American film. Notable examples of non-Christian religious films include D. W. Griffith's *Broken Blossoms* (D. W. Griffith, 1919), which featured a Chinese Buddhist character; Raoul Walsh's *The Thief of Baghdad* (United Artists, 1924); and Alan Crosland's *The Jazz Singer* (Warner Brothers, 1927), about a Jewish man who goes against his father's wish for him to follow in his footsteps as the local synagogue's cantor. Some films exploring religions other than Christianity have fetishized or demeaned these traditions. Images of “the Orient,” of “savage” African religions, and of “dangerous” Afro-Caribbean religions have been common in American film.

Other traditions of representation have worked



against the stereotyping found in many Hollywood films. In the early twentieth century, independent African American filmmakers such as Oscar Micheaux and Spencer Williams made films for black audiences that often featured religious themes. Since the 1960s, Hollywood and independent directors have produced a number of films that take a respectful approach to exploring the impact of the religions of recent immigrants on religious cultures in the United States or to bringing world religions to the American screen. Martin Scorsese's *Kundun* (Touchstone, 1997) presents events in the life of the Dalai Lama, and Jean-Jacques Annaud's *Seven Years in Tibet* (Mandalay, 1997) revolves around a European's encounter with Tibetan Buddhism. Joan Micklin Silver's *Hester Street* (Midwest Films, 1975), Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala* (Black River Productions, 1991), and Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* (Geechee Girls, 1991) all explore relationships between gender, ethnicity, and religion in complex and challenging ways.

### Critiquing Religion

With the demise of the Motion Picture Production Code, which prohibited representing religion in a negative light, filmmakers have found the room to approach religion in a humorous or critical manner or to present religious leaders as complex individuals facing serious moral challenges. Film critiques of religious hypocrisy and unscrupulous religious leaders did make their way into earlier film, with Lois Weber's *Hypocrites* (Paramount, 1915), Oscar Micheaux's *Body and Soul* (Micheaux Film Corp., 1925), Frank Capra's *The Miracle Woman* (Columbia, 1931), and Richard Brooks's *Elmer Gantry* (United Artists, 1960) standing out as significant examples. In the 1990s, Alexander Payne's satirical *Citizen Ruth* (Miramax, 1996) pitted goddess-worshipping pro-choice feminists against pro-life evangelical Christians, and Kevin Smith's controversial comedy *Dogma* (View Askew Productions, 1999) presented God as female and told the story of two fallen angels attempting to return to heaven by exploiting a loophole in Catholic teaching. Robert Duvall's complex portrayal of the moral struggles of

preacher Sonny Dewey in *The Apostle* (Butcher's Run Films, 1998) could not gain the support of a mainstream studio; Duvall spent fourteen years raising money for the project. Audiences did respond favorably when he was finally able to complete and release the film.

Despite the controversies that attended some of these critical or humorous explorations of religious life, the interactions between the arenas of religion and film in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have been characterized by an increasing openness to a broader range of religions and to more critical examinations of American religion.

—Judith Weisenfeld

### SEE ALSO

Buddhism in America: Tibetan Buddhism; Catholicism in America: Nuns and Priests; Judaism in America: Assimilation and Jewish Ethnicity; Protestantism in America; Sexuality

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## RELIGION IN THE NEWS

Although religious subject matter can be found in American newspapers from their first appearance in the seventeenth century, religion coverage as we know it dates from the 1830s, when a truly mass medium was created in the form of the penny press. The person responsible was James Gordon Bennett, founding editor of the *New York Herald* and the most creative and hard driving of the penny press pioneers. A Scotsman by birth and a lifelong if idiosyncratic Roman Catholic, Bennett believed that religion was fair game for news coverage, whether that meant stories on clerical immorality, new doctrine, conflict over the ownership of church property, or the entanglements of church and state. He was the first editor of a secular newspaper to cover the yearly meetings (“anniversaries”) held in New York by denominational bodies and parachurch groups devoted to such causes as women’s rights, temperance, and the abolition of slavery. He sent reporters out to report what the city’s preachers were preaching to their congregations. Most notoriously, he assailed editorially any religious activity or pronouncement that did not meet his standards—including the Episcopalians’ lavish Christmas decorations, the antiliberal pronouncements of the Vatican, and the histrionics of itinerant evangelists.

Bennett’s irreverent approach to religion—along with the *Herald’s* day-in-day-out sensationalism and muckraking—provoked a right-thinking alliance of Protestants, Catholics, and rival publishers into proclaiming a Moral War to drive him out of business. The committee in charge of the campaign threatened advertisers with a boycott if they didn’t stop advertising in the *Herald* and asked hotels to close their doors to anyone carrying a copy of the paper. Although the Moral War was an abject failure, it created the standard critique of the American mass media for all time as an immoral force in which people pursued their own agenda of scandal and conflict in order to make more money for themselves.

If Bennett established the subject matter of subsequent religion coverage, few news executives since have assumed his gadfly role in provoking the religious powers that be. On the contrary, religious sensibilities have generally been considered something to cultivate, not unsettle. In the nineteenth century, ur-

ban revivals, notable public events that promised widespread moral and social reform, became a staple of generally approving religion reporting. Leading clergy were invited to make their own contributions to the daily press, and some wrote syndicated columns that circulated all over the country. The Sunday newspaper, though at first criticized by leading Protestant clergy as a desecration of the Lord’s Day, became a place for edifying religious prose. In the first decades of the twentieth century, for example, the *Atlanta Journal* featured facing Sunday columns by the Methodist bishop of Georgia and the pastor of Atlanta’s First Baptist Church.

With the urbanization of American society, major metropolitan dailies grew increasingly sensitive to the religious diversity of their diverse readership, and more reluctant to involve themselves in religious controversy. Free listing of religious services gave way to paid advertising, often adjacent to a “church page,” which typically included listings of church activities and friendly articles on ecclesiastical affairs. Although efforts were made to enhance the professionalization of religion editors and reporters, religion became marginalized as a backwater beat—a service for readers but hardly a news priority. Stories with significant religious dimensions—the civil rights struggle, for example—typically fell outside the purview of religion reporters.

The situation began to change in the early 1990s, in part because of commercial concerns. The recession of the late 1980s turned the attention of the American newspaper industry toward seeking ways to address the long-standing decline in circulation. Beefing up religion coverage seemed to hold out promise of attracting more readers. Some editors also thought it was good public relations—likely to persuade the large churchgoing public that the newspaper was not out of step with its values. At the same time, journalists did not fail to recognize that religion, far from fading away as a force in public life, seemed to be playing a more important role than ever, both in the United States and around the world. Since 1980, political Islam and the American Religious Right have proved to be phenomena of considerable staying power. In addition, a heightened sense of the impor-

tance of “values” in society and a concern with the way religious institutions contribute to social welfare led the American news media to devote more time and energy to religious subject matter. Dozens of newspapers expanded their church and religion pages, often into freestanding “faith and values” sections. Religion came to be routinely featured on the covers of American newsweeklies. Public Broadcasting began producing a weekly religion news show, *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*, that aired on 200 stations around the country. By the turn of the millennium, religion coverage was enjoying unprecedented popularity in the American news media.

The news media share with American society at large certain moral attitudes that govern how religion stories tend to be formulated. These attitudes, or “topoi,” embodying basic ideas about the nature of religion that have been derived from the Western religious tradition, result in stories that “make sense” in American culture. Although the following set of topoi is not exhaustive, it marks out the conceptual territory within which most religion coverage takes place. Each topos should be understood in terms of one or another anti-topos—a moral opposite that is also capable of generating news stories.

### Good Works

Helping others is a basic characteristic of religion as it is understood in Western religion. Religion coverage has always been replete with stories of religious people and institutions feeding the hungry, ministering to the sick, and offering relief to those who have suffered natural disasters. Although there are important American Christian traditions—notably within evangelical Protestantism—that have emphasized saving souls over good works—the news media tend to embrace an attitude more associated with the Social Gospel. Anti-topoi of good works include religiously inspired evil-doing, hypocrisy, and false prophecy (see below), and simply doing nothing for the least among us.

### Tolerance

Stories relating to the First Amendment’s ban on religious establishment and protection of religious free exercise are too varied and legally complex to be treated journalistically within the context of “separa-

tion of church and state.” Instead, church-state issues tend to be handled in terms of the topoi of tolerance and intolerance. Tolerance is always good and intolerance bad; the debate is likely to be over who is truly tolerant or intolerant, not over which attitude is better. Conservative Christian activists may be portrayed as religiously intolerant, for example, yet they seek to have themselves portrayed as the object of secularist intolerance.

### Hypocrisy

The news media warmly embrace the special antagonism shown by the Western prophetic tradition toward those who fail to practice what they preach. The televangelist scandals of the late 1980s and cases of pedophilia by Catholic priests in the early twenty-first century prompted an extraordinary amount of news coverage. In the pedophile cases, the violations of law were generally serious, but such was not the case when it came to the activities of Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart. The latter should serve as a reminder that hypocrisy is not in itself a crime, but rather a moral defect the news media feels impelled to expose as a matter of cultural tradition.

### False Prophecy

If hypocrisy has to do with failing to adhere to one’s professed moral standards, the topos of false prophecy concerns those whose professed norms are themselves considered wrong. News coverage of the Mormons in the nineteenth century was preoccupied with polygamy and its alleged evils. Similarly, much coverage of new religious movements (cults) has proceeded under this topos of false prophecy. True prophecy, the anti-topos, governs the treatment of exemplary religious leaders such as the evangelist Billy Graham, the Catholic nun Mother Teresa, and the Dalai Lama.

### Inclusion

Inclusion is a topos related to tolerance but specifically concerned with the recognition of unfamiliar or previously disfavored religious groups. Typically, the news media will demonstrate inclusion with a story on a religious holiday practiced by members of an un-

familiar faith, such as Ramadan for Islam. Since inclusion is primarily a topos of domestic applicability, complications may occur when the religious group in question includes significant numbers of coreligionists abroad. For example, Muslims in America have taken offense at how their religion is characterized in foreign reporting. In response, the American news media have taken special pains to provide “positive” (inclusive) coverage of Muslim communities in the United States when there are “negative” (exclusionary) stories of violence perpetrated by Muslims abroad—or, as in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, *from* abroad.

### Supernatural Belief

It is sometimes claimed that the news media have a difficult time with religion because journalism is about proving facts and religion is about faith beyond proof. This is especially likely to be the case when it comes to the miraculous or supernatural. Yet just as religious traditions may be interested in empirical demonstration—witness the Roman Catholic Church’s insistence on proof of miracles for canonizing a saint—so journalism often contents itself with informants prepared to assert that something happened rather than hard evidence. For this reason, the topos that governs coverage of supernatural events is the faith of the believers; belief is the story, whether it has to do with a miraculous healing or an apparition of the Virgin Mary. The contrary topos is disproof—showing the alleged miracle to be a fraud or a delusion. The latter, however, generally requires a good deal of careful investigation, and it offends believers. Thus, it is much rarer in the media.

### Declension

The decline of religion has been a theme in Western religion since the Israelites built the Golden Calf, and in America almost since the Puritans landed on Plymouth Rock. New (or allegedly new) religious phenomena, from cults and megachurches to New Age practices and “cafeteria-style” religion, are commonly seen as evidence of spiritual decline from an earlier age of traditional—“old-time”—faith and practice. To be sure, the opposite topos of religious revival periodically comes to the fore. But the prevailing cultural inclination is to look for decline.

—Mark Silk

### SEE ALSO

Islam in America; Popular Culture: Advertising; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion; Sacred Time: Christmas, Easter

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POPULAR  
THEODICIES



*Theodicy* is the technical term for the effort to explain, and, most important, to justify, the existence of evil, suffering, and death in a world held by religious practitioners to have been created by and still to be presided over by an omnipotent and good god or gods. The term is derived from the Greek words for god—*theos*—and justice—*dike*. The problem of theodicy is necessarily constituted by a particular set of assumptions about god or the gods and about the nature of the world: If god or the gods were not all good, or not all powerful, or if god or the gods were not understood to rule over the whole world, or if creation were not thought to be good and the cosmos orderly, there would be no problems of theodicy. Sociologists of religion Max Weber (1963) and Peter Berger (1967) understood the problem of theodicy to be fundamental to all religious cultures, and, indeed, to culture itself. In Berger's terms, "reality"—by which he meant the worlds constituted, inherited, inhabited, and maintained by humans in their ongoing, everyday existence together—"is established over and over again, against the threat of its destruction" by forces of chaos and meaninglessness "endemic to the human condition" (Berger 1967, 53). Because religion plays a key role in maintaining and authorizing particular worlds of meaning, religious language and practice are crucial in responding to the shattering of these worlds. Theodicy may be seen, therefore, in this broader sense, as an essential component of the ongoing work of culture generally, the necessary attempt—not always successful, or at least not often completely so—among religious practitioners to put the world back together again after it has broken apart into pieces.

This religious work takes a different shape in different cultures: What specific questions are provoked by which sorts of tragic or disorienting events and how individuals and communities approach these questions are matters of culture and history. There is a perennial dimension to the issues taken up by theodicy: All humans must confront the limits of their bodies, for example, or the loss of loved ones, or the tensions of aging, and all societies have known danger, war, violence, and hate. But how distress is construed,

where the limits of understanding and experience are set, who is authorized to address these matters, how innocence and culpability are defined, and so on, depend on the religious and cultural settings within which such shared human dilemmas arise. So theodicy-making is always a local, historically situated, culturally specific practice, not an ahistorical, transcultural theological enterprise.

To enter the cultural, social, intellectual, and religious space within which the challenge of theodicy has become necessary and urgent, then, is to have come into circumstances in which the "givenness" of a cultural universe has been thrown into question by an especially shocking encounter with the contingencies of human experience. Humans make and sustain their worlds in the ongoing processes of everyday life, but they experience these worlds as forever given and real, objectively so, outside their creative activities. What summons forth the work of theodicy-making is the disclosure by dreadful events of the fragility and fictive nature of what has been taken for granted as really real. The dark shadow of doubt, uncertainty, and, most of all, abandonment falls across everyday experience, and the normal routines of life, by which culture is made and sustained, are disrupted.

Not every death, however, or every encounter with ordinary immorality, or every illness presents the problem of theodicy, but rather those that violate a person's or a community's sense of the rightness and order of the world and of their connectedness to it, as these are variously defined and maintained in different social contexts. When a tornado hit a church in Piedmont, Alabama, in the summer of 1994 during a worship service, killing twenty people, including six children—among them the minister's little daughter—it was not simply the fact of death that challenged surviving congregants, but the fact that these deaths had occurred at this precise moment, while people were addressing themselves to their god. Of the deaths on that day, the most distressing were the children's; the loss of innocent life and promise was seen as especially unjust and incomprehensible. Members of the congregation found themselves asking, in the days after the tragedy, if what they had once held to be absolutely



real and true was not, in fact, empty and unreal, and whether they had been betrayed. "We are trained from birth not to question God," a young woman in the congregation commented to a visitor, and then added, "but why? Why a church? Why those little children? Why? Why? Why?" (Bragg 1994).

What is heard in these sorrowful questions is not only a lament for lost life, sad as this is, but a protest against cosmic injustice, unreasonableness, and unfairness. Theodicy-making is occasioned by suffering that confounds, evil triumphant, and death out of season. What was held as certain is uncertain; the notion that the world is morally comprehensible has been, perhaps irrevocably, thrown into doubt. The horizon toward which one had oriented oneself is gone.

The task of making theodicies—of understanding and responding to the exigencies of human existence in the idioms of a particular religious imaginary—does not belong exclusively to officially designated intellectuals within a religious world. Theodicy-making is a broadly shared cultural practice. As Berger put it, "The illiterate peasant who comments upon the death of a child by referring to the will of God is engaging in theodicy as much as the learned theologian who writes a treatise to demonstrate that the suffering of the innocent does not negate the conception of a God both all-good and all-powerful" (Berger 1967, 53). The theodicies offered by theologians may not be satisfying to religious practitioners, although the former may claim, or be institutionally endowed with, the authority to speak definitively on troubling questions. The stakes for organized religious bodies at such moments are very high, precisely because the status and power of religious worlds are jeopardized by such profound doubts and uncertainties. The tolling of the young woman's questions in Piedmont signaled, at least potentially, the end of the authority of her Christianity and that of the town. But however much religious elites may work to claim this genre of religious discourse, to contain and control it, theodicy-making remains a challenge to and a prerogative of all religious practitioners. As people struggle to comprehend disturbing and humbling events, they often enough find themselves in conflict with the official responses of their religious leaders, whose agendas in such moments, consciously or not, may have more to do with the restoration of authority and legitimacy than with engaging people's distress.

The neologism *theodicy-making* underscores a number of important features of this cultural work that are obscured or occluded by the singular noun *theodicy*. The latter implies authority, closure, and finality, masking the complexity, indeterminacy, and contradictions that characterize the lived experience of social and personal distress and of the responses to it. Theodicy-making is a process, first of all, a searching for understanding, or, less cognitively, for a way of going on with life after tragedy; it unfolds over time in response to crisis and undergoes revision and reformulation as the details of a particular tragedy are discovered, discussed, and absorbed. What is said and felt during, immediately after, and then many years past a tragic and disorienting event will all be different, but all constitute the theodicy. Theodicy is not a frozen moment of religious reintegration, in other words, but an enterprise with uneven emotional and intellectual rhythms that may never come completely to an end and that enfolds uneasily within itself the successive stages of its efforts.

Second, theodicy-making is capacious and porous: Just as very sick people will try any healing medium, so people who find themselves in circumstances in which theodicy-making has become necessary draw on many different idioms, religious and other, as they struggle in the face of evil and suffering. What people call on in such moments is not always consistent or coherent. The unfolding theodicy/theodicies bear the marks of pain, distress, and disorientation, rendering this discourse itself often enough unstable, fissured, and even destabilizing.

Third, theodicy-making is constitutive of the various moments of the engagement, not merely reactive: The meanings of evil, pain, and death, the encounters with and responses to them, are not automatically or naturally given by culture or circumstance but made and remade in the very process of theodicy-making. To refer back to the Piedmont example, it was not the case that a singular, stable, coherent, and authoritative Christianity encountered a clearly bounded and identified crisis that raised self-evident questions, and out of this meeting came theodicy. Rather, everything was in flux—it was a Christianity shattered, humbled, and unmoored by the crisis that it was seeking to understand that came to reflect on the crisis, and Christians did so as the dimensions and horrors of the crisis itself shifted and grew in circles of conversation

among the bereaved and in the presence of death. The ground on which theodicy-making occurs is eruptive and convulsive.

Finally, theodicy-making emphasizes the creativity and open-endedness of this cultural work: In the encounter with evil, pain, suffering, and death, humans hold the world in their hands as they struggle to remake it, and out of this experience may come unexpected and unheralded visions, new ways of seeing the world and of living in it.

Theodicy-making is not primarily a cognitive enterprise, furthermore, that is, not a matter narrowly speaking of understanding in the mind; it is the work of the body, too, and of bodies in relation to each other. The processes of theodicy-making allow for the expression of, as they contribute to the constitution of, a range of emotional responses to tragedy, from rage to despair. Theodicies may be enacted, rather than spoken, such as when people respond to tragedy by coming together, touching each other, or undertaking some common activity. In mid-twentieth-century American Catholic communities, for example, it was common for people to gather around the open coffin of a loved one, on the last night of a wake, to say a rosary together. Theodicy-making may involve the marking of the landscape, as when the bereaved put little crosses beside highways at the sites where family members or friends died in accidents, thus linking that death on the road to the Christian story of death and resurrection, or of cases when people tattoo their skin with images of what they have lost, or, again, with the cross.

How the problem of theodicy works within different religious cultures at particular moments in history depends on the intersection of various factors. These include: distinctive theological formulations (whether pain is taken as morally significant, for example, or simply as a fact of existence, or how pain and evil are understood in relation to each other); the arrangements of social power, the available justifications of these arrangements, and the state of relationships among different groups on the social field; the peculiar nature of the event or circumstance that occasioned the rupture in people's experience of the coherence of their world; the quality of individuals' or communities' expectations, hopes, and fears; the fate of the body at any moment in a society's history, including the state of healing practices and normative

understandings of the different destinies of male and female bodies; and the existence of systems of explanation and understanding other than—and perhaps in competition with—religious language and practice that might be implicated in a particular instance of social or personal distress, including legal, medical, and political discourses. Theodicy-making is always situated in specific social and intellectual contexts. There is not a single theodicy within any religious tradition and social world for all times and all places (although different theodicies within particular religious worlds may share common features). Rather, there are competing theodicies that tell different stories about the nature of the world and the meanings of suffering.

The broad and general contours of theodicy-making in Christian and Jewish contexts are shaped by a set of theological assumptions that are more or less shared across both cultures. These include the belief that God is an agent who acts in history, that there is a moral order to the universe that protects the good and punishes the evil, that if the people whom God has chosen as His own behave as God wishes, keeping their side of the covenant promise, then God will reward them accordingly, and that God's intentions, desires, and displeasure can be discerned from events in history and nature. The practice of theodicy-making in this theological context becomes, among other things, an anxious scanning of history and contemporary life for signs of God's purposes, allowing Christians and Jews to claim that God is teaching some particular lesson or communicating an intention by means of some instance of pain, suffering, or tragedy.

Occurring within this universe of religious assumptions, the Holocaust posed a profound, indeed intractable, problem of theodicy. In his autobiographical sketch of the death camps, *Night*, Elie Wiesel described his main character's response to a Rosh Hashanah service among prisoners. "Blessed be the Name of the Eternal!" the men in the camp pray. But the main character, a young man who had been devout and faithful, refuses to join them in their worship and supplication. "Why, but why should I bless Him? In every fiber I rebelled." He realizes, "This day I had ceased to plead. I was the accuser, God the accused" (Wiesel [1958] 1982, 64–65). God had not kept God's promise to take care of the faithful, even though they had kept their part. What could be the reason for this? The Holocaust marked the end of the project of

theodicy for many, the end of theodicy-making as a meaningful form of religious inquiry, for it was inconceivable that God was acting in history in these deaths, or that God could have had any intention for this slaughter, and scandalous to think of justifying the ways of God in response to this horror. Rather, it had become impossible now for many once-religious people to sustain any belief in the old order or in the God who had presided over it. This God, they said, died in the camps. “Where is God now?” the protagonist of *Night* wonders as he looks on the hanged body of a child, and then hears “a voice within” himself answer, “Where is He? Here He is—He is hanging here on this gallows” (Wiesel [1958] 1982, 61–62).

Individuals and communities often come to the conclusion that they are morally responsible themselves for a tragedy that has befallen them, thus sparing the gods or god any culpability and reestablishing the orderliness and goodness of the world. A person whose livelihood is lost to fire or flood may decide that this was an appropriate punishment by god or the gods for his or her worldliness, that god was teaching a needed lesson. In such cases, theodicy-making adds a further burden of moral or cosmic distress to the suffering already caused by war, disease, economic hardship, or death. Theodicy-making is thus not primarily about consolation or comfort, or not in any simple sense; if there is comfort in this cultural work, it is the comfort of knowing that things happen for a reason and that chaos does not rule. But it is not the solace of being reassured that nothing bad will ever happen. Theodicy-making does not make life any easier, although it may make it more comprehensible, and as such—in anthropologist Clifford Geertz’s famous formulation—may render it endurable. “The effort is not to deny the undeniable,” Geertz wrote in “Religion as a Cultural System,” “that there are unexplained events, that life hurts, or that rain falls upon the just—but to deny that there are inexplicable events, that life is unendurable, and that justice is a mirage” (Geertz 1973, 108). The human desire to understand, Geertz said, has the force of an instinct, and theodicy is one expression of this impulse.

Religious explanations of suffering and evil always exist alongside, and sometimes in tension with, nonreligious accounts (although the line between the two is not absolute, and each inflects and shapes the other). Different theodicies, moreover, in particular social his-

torical circumstances, are socially and politically consequential in different ways and may be aligned with available political ideologies. Over the years, for example, competing discourses of distress have emerged in American culture to explain evil and suffering in a nation supposedly favored by God, by nature, or by an abundant economy, and destined to triumph. How can one account for poverty and violence in a prosperous, orderly, capitalist society in which the market is believed to work effectively and efficiently for the good of all? Or for pain and sickness in a society that promises, and in many ways mandates, freedom from the vicissitudes of the body and is impatient with, even contemptuous of, physical ailments?

The dominant response to the first dilemma, the endurance of poverty, offered by conservative Christian evangelicals since the early nineteenth century, in the company of other apologists for capitalism, has been that the poor are morally culpable for their distress and that poverty is the consequence of personal sinfulness and a judgment. Equipped with this theodicy, evangelical Christians for the most part left broader questions of institutional injustice and structural change unattended for much of the history of American industrial capitalism. Confronted with the medically unprecedented AIDS crisis in the 1980s, many conservative Christians, among them the nationally prominent televangelist, Southern Baptist pastor, and founder of the Moral Majority, the Reverend Jerry Falwell of Lynchburg, Virginia, declared the virus to be God’s punishment of homosexuality. Such theodicies become instruments of social and political intervention when they form the basis for broad pronouncements and actions. For example, visiting evangelists in the late nineteenth century distributed tracts that made the case for the moral culpability of the poor in working-class neighborhoods amid the vast distress and dispossession of industrial capitalism, and Christian television has repeatedly broadcast denunciations of homosexuality, often as a way of encouraging donations from viewers.

Theodicies such as these work to reauthorize powerful and dominant-culture discourses in circumstances of social tension. They can be especially powerful media of cultural authorization because they borrow the considerable power that clings to disaster, to bodies in pain, or to death in the service of social discipline. Theodicy-making at the borders of cul-



Three men grieve at the AIDS Memorial Quilt, displayed on the Mall in Washington, D.C., 1996  
(Ellis Richard/Corbis Sygma)

tures, ways of life, or races may be implicated in the construction of stories that work to deepen oppression and alienation and to encourage violence. In the first case cited earlier, theodicy-making asserted the fairness and inevitability of class distinctions and inequalities within an economic system presented and sanctioned as inherently untroubled; in the second example, it authorized normative heterosexuality and the virtues of monogamy.

As the world shattered by crisis is put back together, different categories of people are put back into their places, too. In the history of American racism, religious justifications of slavery before the Civil War, and of racially motivated violence such as lynching afterward, contributed to the justification and tolerance of racist terror. Theodicy-making is not a socially innocent enterprise; it is not a religious project

somehow distinct from surrounding social structures and ideologies. To put this another way, someone (or some class or category of persons) usually wins in the process of making theodicies and someone else loses. Thus, among the analytical questions to ask of different theodicies are those investigating how these efforts reposition individuals and groups on the social landscape; how power is denied, occluded, and reaffirmed by strategies of theodicy-making; and at whose expense the shattered or endangered world is remade. From this perspective, theodicy-making can be the business of defending the ontological reality of particular social worlds and hierarchies in religious idioms and by religious practices.

Theodicy-making as a cultural practice, however, is also the venue for contesting accounts of social and personal distress. Stories about the religious meanings of disaster are not simply imposed on those suffering; rather, those who are suffering participate in the processes of telling and retelling them. Individuals and social groups not at the center of social power may resist accounts of evil, suffering, and pain that hold them liable, appropriate them to their own ends and reframe them, or ignore them. Such resistance to officially authorized theodicy-making may, in turn, become part of, or even the source of, a wider social refusal. The Christian Social Gospel movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the United States and England offered an alternative theodicy that redirected attention to unjust social structures and oppressive circumstances to account for the pain and upheaval of the industrial economy. Working-class Christians, drawing on millennial traditions, recast their dire circumstances either as a sign of impending judgment on an unjust economy or as a divinely mandated summons to action. The great Italian American working-class novel *Christ in Concrete* (1937), by Pietro DiDonato, makes a connection between workers killed on unsafe jobs and Jesus' death on the cross in a powerful, politically charged revisioning of the core image of Christian theodicies. Likewise, denying the reality of a god that sent dreadful physical distress as a punishment for love and pleasure, other Christians have sought to recapture the AIDS crisis as a call for religiously grounded compassion and social activism. Theodicy-making thus becomes the grounds for the most intense, conflicted engagement among social groups over the limits and

nature of the boundaries and norms of the social world.

The work of making theodicies may unite social worlds as people struggle together to make sense of a tragic event or instance of evil; on such occasions, theodicy-making may become an occasion for the discovery or rearticulation of shared moral values and religious visions and for the representation of an ideal image of the community to itself. Even in those instances when a community understands itself to be morally culpable for a tragedy—such as the belief among American Puritans that a deadly outbreak of throat distemper was punishment for what the clergy identified as the community's betrayal of its divine commission to create a godly society—theodicy-making may contribute to reorganizing a distressed and fractured social world. But the processes of theodicy-making may also exacerbate social conflicts, heighten tensions between classes and races, and reestablish, with renewed religious sanction, the very authority of social divisions.

Theodicy-making sometimes takes place at the level of city or town, and even nation, as communities struggle, with some combination of religious and secular idioms, to construct and understand the meaning of disasters. The practice of theodicy-making in American history, indeed, has been crucial to the rhetorics of nationalism. Rituals associated with particular theodicies—such as gatherings of penance and prayer in times of tragedies that are interpreted as divine punishment—have served as important vehicles of national reintegration. Theodicies at the national level may contribute to controlling popular perceptions of and responses to great public traumas, such as the loss of life in military enterprises of uncertain or questionable purpose. Nationalizing theodicies in U.S. history begin with the foundational assumption of American exceptionalism—that is, the notion, originating with the first European colonists, that this land has a special, providential destiny, that God has chosen it to lead the nations, promising it great prosperity with the expectation that, in turn, Americans will create a society premised on God's law. National distress, in this ideological context, has been regularly read as divine chastisement, as a summons to recommitment, or as a warning of further suffering in the absence of change and reform.

Theodicies often sound ridiculous, cruel, inane, or beside the point to those who do not accept them. Perhaps it is the incommensurability of the immense sorrows and dislocations occasioned by death and by loss of all sorts—violence, social catastrophes, and natural disasters—on the one hand, and the language humans use to understand and contain them, on the other, that makes them sound so hollow. Would the Lord God, creator of the universe, really enact His (as God was gendered in Puritan theology) will by sending a fatal illness to a little baby in Boston? The absurdity of this familiar theodicy claim, however, clarifies how high the stakes are in the work of theodicy-making: There are distresses so profound in human experience that the universe becomes unhinged and the solidity of the world dissolves; at such times, it becomes not unreasonable to see a connection between a death in one place and the nature of the world itself. Theodicy-making takes place in circumstances of great risk, danger, and vulnerability, on many different levels—national, personal, local, domestic—and at the intersections of these domains of experience.

One of the most popular theodicies in American history is Rabbi Harold S. Kushner's *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, first published in 1981. The book sold millions of copies and soon became available in a special edition suitable as a gift to people in distress. In this national bestseller, Rabbi Kushner wrote about his attempt to understand the meaning of his son's death from progeria at the age of fourteen. Why did God do this, when the Kushner family had been faithful? Did God do this? Kushner's response to these questions, which came out of the traditions of liberal American Judaism, clearly spoke to the concerns of many. His conclusion was revealing: Unable to bear the idea that a good *and* omnipotent God willed his son's death, he concluded that God is good, but not omnipotent. In other words, in order to endure a terrible personal sorrow, Kushner was compelled to reimagine the world itself, calling into question and rethinking the nature of God and of the connections between God and human beings. This is the ground of the extraordinary risk and power of theodicy-making as a cultural practice and of its social and political implications. The world itself is in play.

—Robert Orsi

## SEE ALSO

Judaism in America: Holocaust and Israel; The Body: Pain, Wounding; Death: AIDS Quilt, Roadside Shrines; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion; Ritual and Performance: Civil and Political Ritual Performances; Violence: Lynching, War

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## ANTEBELLUM AMERICA

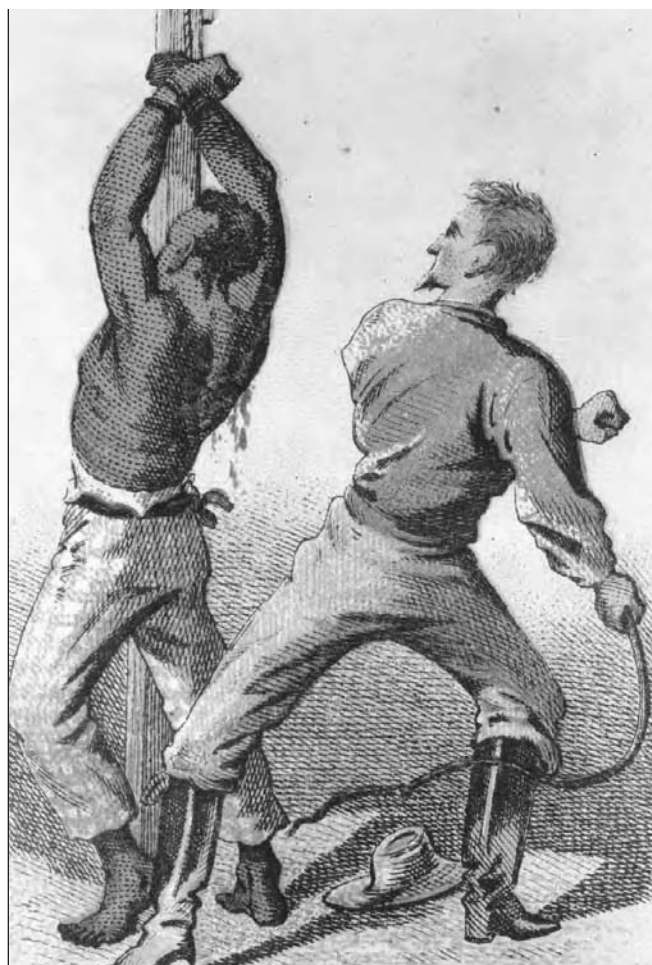
The Antebellum, or “Middle,” period (1812–1861) of U.S. history encompasses the largest phase of the country’s geographic expansion and the maturation of early conceptions of national identity. In a mere half a century, the young nation was transformed from a small collection of former colonies along the Atlantic seaboard into a continent-spanning giant with an eye toward the global stage and empire-building. This remarkable era saw the first great waves of immigration, a vast increase in the population, remarkable technological advances such as the railroad (forever changing conceptions of time and distance), the conquest and annexation of foreign lands and peoples in the West, and the popularization of notions of American exceptionalism. National growth, however, also fostered a number of evils that demanded explanations and responses. Among these were the stresses brought on by increasing social and religious pluralism, industrialization, and urbanization; the horrors of slavery; and, for newly freed, newly naturalized, or Native Americans, the traumas of cultural loss and dispossession. These issues and others threatened to unmake or destroy the worlds of many Americans. In response, people creatively engaged in wide-ranging forms of theodicy-making.

During the decades following Independence, evangelical Protestantism flourished and transformed the ways that many Americans understood their place in the world. By the 1830s, the revivals of the Second Great Awakening had popularized conservative (and often millennial) Christian responses to the rapid changes of the nineteenth century. These evangelical Christians emphasized the instrumentality of the human will, both in causing and facing up to evil. This new piety marked a change from the strict Calvinism of the previous century, which had emphasized predestination, original sin, and the inherent depravity of human nature. Where the older, harsher Augustinian piety had seen humans as powerless against evil and salvation as entirely in the hands of God, this new religious expression elevated the notion of a free human will that could resist evil. As popular explanations for the presence of evil in the world came to rely less on a severe and arbitrary god, in some ways they became more complex.

By the 1840s, revivalism had begun to wane but the moral fervor and expectations of final judgment that it had fostered gave rise to a dizzying array of social reform movements. Of these, the ones perhaps most directly concerned with the presence of evil in the world were Communitarian movements. Each communitarian group came up with its own mixture of utopian socialism and Christianity in a philosophy supported by the contemporary emphasis on human culpability and agency. From the Owenites of New Harmony and Mother Ann’s Shakers to rural societies that espoused “Biblical Communism” and offshoots of established groups such as the Moravians and Quakers, thousands of Communitarians hoped to mitigate human suffering by creating more perfect model societies. With its emphasis on reform and moral perfectionism, Communitarianism became a powerful tool for explaining and attempting to work against evil in the world. Moreover, the westward expansion that took place just as the movement was growing in popularity provided Communitarians with ample ground to establish new communities and have a great impact on the cultural landscape of the newly settled territories.

But not all Antebellum reformers turned away from the American mainstream. Many Americans saw their country as already the best possible model for sustaining an enlightened society. They understood America as a nation that could, in its finest moments, equitably protect its citizens and promote the common good better than any other society in history. For many of these people, the project of reforming their nation, of addressing social ills and transforming ethics and norms, became intimately tied to a nativist sense of chosenness. If America could live up to its moral potential, it would be a nation that could redeem the world.

As immigration rose sharply after the 1830s (mostly from Ireland and Germany), nativists demonized immigrants for allegedly importing crime and disease, stealing jobs, and practicing a long list of imagined moral depravities. Given that the overwhelming majority of these new Americans were Roman Catholics, they were often denounced as “Papist” adherents of a religion that was antithetical to



*The Lash*: an illustration showing a bound African American slave being whipped (Library of Congress)

American democracy. The rites of the Catholic Church were seen as dangerous idolatry—Catholic rituals and iconography were caricatured as sensuous earthly distractions that weakened the will and would ultimately erode America’s moral fabric and invite catastrophe. For nativists, Catholicism symbolized all of the evils of the Old World. By mid-century, they had created a popular theodicy, articulated perhaps most clearly by Lyman Beecher and Samuel Morse, in which immigrants and unchecked immigration became culpable for a good number of the evils that threatened “orderly and godly” Americans. In time, many immigrants would themselves come to adopt and perpetuate this nativist theodicy as other ethnic and religious groups arrived after them.

Some newcomers to the United States were not willing travelers away from their homelands—most

notably those of African descent. Although the legal importation of slaves ended in 1808, Antebellum African Americans (both slave and free) faced the problem of making sense of the ordeal of slavery. Theodicies addressing slavery were articulated in sermons, work songs, common folklore, and also within the African American autobiographical tradition. Explanations for and responses to slavery ranged widely; autobiographical narratives very often supported these theodicies by diminishing differences between individual and community experiences. The sufferings of the one often came to stand for the sufferings of the many, allowing the author to make broad claims about the nature of the evil that they and others faced.

Many African American theodicies employed the trope of chosenness and made frequent use of biblical themes of exodus to make sense of the trials they faced. Just as the ordeal of slavery had marked the painful birth of God’s chosen people in the Hebrew Bible, so, too, in Antebellum America. In an inversion of the vision of the nativists, many African American Christians saw the slaveholding American nation as a new Egypt holding the people of God in bondage. Although this theodicy found its most extreme expression in Nat Turner’s revolt, it was also popular among more peaceable Christians. At its base, this common theodicy held that the fact that white Christians could institute and/or abide slavery was proof that they were accountable for the evils they had produced and in need of redemption.

—Roberto R. Lint Sagarena

#### SEE ALSO

African American Religions; Catholicism in America; New Religious Movements; Communitarian Movements; Protestantism in America

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## CIVIL WAR AND THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Perhaps no event in the history of the United States has stirred more speculation about the necessity and meaning of human suffering than the Civil War. Scholars interested in popular theodicy have long observed that attitudes toward time and history are a distinctive feature of the modern Western consciousness, and this was particularly true among nineteenth-century Americans. The war pitted sectional loyalties against religious identities while calling into question foundational assumptions about an omnipotent and righteous God who acted in human history. This mix of social and theoretical frameworks brought to the fore what one historian has identified as “the primary apocalyptic question,” namely, “Who are God’s people?” (Pagels 1995, 51). During a four-year span, Americans killed one another at a nearly unfathomable rate trying to determine the answer. In the end, this question, coupled with speculation about the origin and meanings of war, could not easily be answered by a Civil War generation whose rationalistic conceptions of a loving God quaked beneath the butchery of the war and the unfulfilled hopes of a Christian civilization.

For many of the nation’s faithful, events preceding the war seemed to confirm suspicions about the ominous character and cosmic significance of the times. In the aftermath of John Brown’s raid at Harpers Ferry, the outspoken abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison situated the raid in the larger drama of human history, stating, “Brown has merely told what time of day it is. It is high noon, thank God.” In response, Frederick Douglass, in a work entitled “To My American Readers and Friends,” directly alluded to the story of Cain and Abel, suggesting that Brown’s own “Christian blood . . . [would] not cease to cry from the ground” (Finkelman 1995, 41–66). Other popular

voices in the North equated Brown’s efforts and subsequent death on the gallows to the work of Jesus Christ. Southerners bristled at such comparisons. The *Mobile Register* asserted that with Brown’s raid and butchery of Virginians, “the ark of the covenant” had been “desecrated.” A song entitled “Old John Brown, a Song for Every Southern Man,” addressing the popular eschatological themes and the significance of Brown’s actions, declared, “Now they all are dead and gone to heaven some say, the angels standing at the gate to drive them right away; The devil no standing below, them for to come, it’s no use now old John Brown, you can’t get a chance to run” (Finkelman 1995, 157–159). In little more than a year from the day of Brown’s execution, many northerners and southerners would take up arms against their brethren, convinced that they, too, were instruments in an unfolding drama of divine judgment.

So resonant was the idea of war as an act of divine judgment among Americans that President Abraham Lincoln addressed the subject in his second inaugural address. Speaking to both northerners and southerners, the newly reelected president bridged the topic of theodicy by pointing out a supreme irony of the nation’s war: “Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. . . . The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully” (Appelbaum 1991, 106–108). Then, in language reminiscent of the latter prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures, Lincoln asserted that the war had been brought upon the Union for a multitude of internal offenses—slavery being foremost in his mind. The miseries of a warring people, Lincoln declared, were an inescapable judgment from God, who had “His own purposes.” And although vast numbers of Lincoln’s contemporaries

agreed with him that “the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether,” in later years many of the same people would disagree not only over the precise object of God’s wrath but also over God’s role in the entire affair.

Politics was but one arena for such speculation. Noted abolitionist and suffragette Julia Ward Howe, a Boston Brahmin and an unlikely candidate to directly appeal to apocalyptic imagery, captured northern sentiments when she penned the “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” First published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1862, the song evoked agrarian imagery and themes from the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, echoing the Hebrew prophets (for example, the fifth vision of the Book of Amos 9:1–13) and the apocalyptic literature of the Book of Revelation (such as the three visions found in Revelation 14:1–20). It counseled a biblically conversant nation about the inevitability of God’s judgment against sinful kingdoms. “Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord: He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored,” wrote Howe. For America generally, and the South in particular, the Day of Judgment was at hand. Concluding the opening stanza, the songsmith crafted her message in a manner reminiscent of Puritan jeremiads of another era, “He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword, His truth is marching on.”

Other media expressed similar ideas. Throughout the duration of the war, special envelopes featuring patriotic illustrations were produced in the North in order to generate support for the cause. Religious themes were often employed in these works, sometimes in terms of death and days of judgment. One such envelope showed the goddess Liberty and a female harvesting wheat. The caption below recalled John the Baptist’s decree at the baptism of Jesus: “And the wheat shall be gathered from the chaff and the chaff destroyed.” Lest the audience was uncertain as to the meaning of the message, further clarification was supplied beneath the quotation: “Wheat: Unionism, Chaff: Secessionism.” The convergence of sacred history with the Civil War was also depicted in popular lithographs of the day. One piece, entitled “Our Heaven Born Banner,” shows an armed soldier in the foreground standing at attention on a mountain bluff overlooking a valley. The background displays a

starry moonlight in which the natural elements—clouds, shadows, light, and stars—form the Stars and Stripes. The convergence of natural elements in an expression of Union sentiment left no ambiguity for the audience as to whom God favored in the struggle.

Southerners, too, expressed ideas about the war in a framework of popular theodicy. Upon secession, countless numbers of southerners formulated a typology that asserted the Confederacy as the true “Israel” seeking deliverance from the hands of the unrighteous. In his 1861 piece “A Prayer for Our Army,” distributed throughout Confederate ranks, Bishop William Green of Mississippi put pen in hand in an effort to capture this popular sentiment. “Thou hast, in Thy wisdom, permitted the many evils of an unnatural and destructive war to come upon us,” Green wrote. His petition continued in a tone reflective of the Book of Exodus. He pled, “Save us, we beseech Thee, from the hands of our enemies” (Harwell 1989, 55–56). Nor was such a perspective the sole property of southern clerics. Mary Boykin Chesnut, daughter of a well-to-do South Carolinian family and the wife of Confederate politician and officer James Chesnut, expressed this popular belief at the close of the first year’s military campaign. In her now-famous diary, she wrote, “No sooner is Israel’s thirst slaked than God has an Amalekite ready to assault them. The Almighty hath choice of rods to whip us—and will not be satisfied with one trial” (Woodward 1981, 252). Religious sentiments of this kind seemed to resonant all the more with northerners and southerners as the destructive forces of war invaded the lives of more and more families.

In the years following Lee’s surrender at Appomattox, varying religious interpretations of the war’s meaning and necessity were aired publicly and privately as Americans sought to negotiate their futures while making sense of the devastating losses of their past. Concurrently with this dialogue took place some of the most profound challenges to traditional religious thinking since the time of the Protestant Reformation. Perhaps not surprisingly, Spiritualism, whose distinctive doctrine was communication with the dead, gained a widespread appeal during these years. Other religious groups began to question traditional doctrinal claims as well, and a formidable subculture of religious and philosophical ideas, assumptions, and

values emerged. This undercurrent of religious expression battered away at the foundations of traditional religious thinking in America, making it plausible, as one historian of the epoch has observed, for a substantial group of Americans to assert their “inability to accept the reality of God” (Turner 1985, 171). Although the vast majority of the nation was unwilling to entertain such a theory, these voices of dissent, coupled with a growing acceptance of higher criticism and the alarming cost of the Civil War in human terms, began to make inroads. Increasingly, Americans were exposed to sublime evidence suggesting the long-assumed rationally created order of a benevolent and just God was, in fact, a chaotic universe composed of sporadic events.

Such ideas deeply affected religious views of the origin and meaning of human suffering and, in turn, shaped how the nation and its religious faithful remembered the war. Few contemporaries wrestled publicly with the complicated questions such ideas entailed about the war: If humans, once the centerpiece of God’s created order, were in fact nothing more than a warring species in an ever-changing world, then what was the necessity, meaning, and origins of the war? And what of the price? Although earlier theodicean speculation remained popular among certain circles of the nation’s faithful, its widespread appeal waned as the efforts of Reconstruction gave way to an era of southern redemption. As theological uncertainties churned beneath the surface, Americans began to remember the war not as an act of divine judgment in the course of sacred history, but rather as a litmus test for common people, former soldiers in particular, sanctifying the social values and institutions of Victorian America. Thus an alternative model to traditional theodicean speculation was born. The new conceptual framework explained the war by limiting orthodox beliefs about God’s sovereignty to egalitarian ideals espoused by the dominant voices of society and demonizing those who did not share such core values.

This conceptual adjustment accommodated a broad spectrum of interests. It enabled northerners such as poet Walt Whitman to castigate Antebellum politicians, who, it was said, fueled the nearly extinct embers of abolitionism and secession by their repeal of the Missouri Compromise. For southerners, the de-

velopment of a new theodicy was soon wedded to a Lost Cause mentality that “became a tonic against fear of social change, preventative ideological medicine for the sick souls of the Gilded Age” (Blight 2001, 266). Those still espousing traditional religion found solace in the emergent model as well. It enabled them to avoid the theological conundrums the war had imposed upon their foundational epistemology and instead redirect their attention to spreading Christian democracy throughout the world. Lost in the mix, however, were African Americans, whose wartime sacrifices were little acknowledged by white America. When ideas of sacrifice and loss were entertained, vast numbers of Americans seemed to echo the sentiments of Herman Melville, who pondered, “Can Africa pay back this blood, spilt on Potomac’s shore?” (Aaron 1973, 77).

Nearly forty years after Lincoln’s second inaugural address, President Theodore Roosevelt attended a commemoration event of Civil War veterans and locals at the now-hallowed fields of Antietam. The passage of time had worn away at the old hatreds, despite the tangible reminders of the dead dotting the Maryland landscape. Like his predecessor, Roosevelt characterized the meaning of the war in universal terms, only this time, God’s sovereign aims were subtly replaced with those of the nation. Gone was any understanding of war as a price for the remission of human sin. Now the once-veiled purpose of a divine plan had been revealed, and they were the objects of “national greatness” and “individual liberty.” The sanctified sacrifices of Union forces had beckoned subsequent generations of Americans to a “steadfast adherence to the immutable laws of righteousness.” Although the course of human history remained uncertain, Roosevelt counseled his audience, the war had demonstrably shown the centrality of human character—namely, manhood—in shaping its course thus far. The president concluded, “There was no patent device for securing victory by force of arms forty years ago; and there is no patent device for securing victory for the forces of righteousness in civil life now. In each case,” he suggested, “the all-important factor was and is the character of the individual man” (Roosevelt 1903, 1–20). In forwarding these claims, Roosevelt reflected the thinking of his generation—a generation that, at least publicly, had removed

the theological uncertainties of an earlier era and turned unspeakable suffering, hatred, and death into the entire nation's gallant loss.

—Kent A. McConnell

#### SEE ALSO

Protestantism in America; Protestantism in America: Puritanism; Death: Spiritualism; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion; Violence: Apocalypticism, Sacrifice, War

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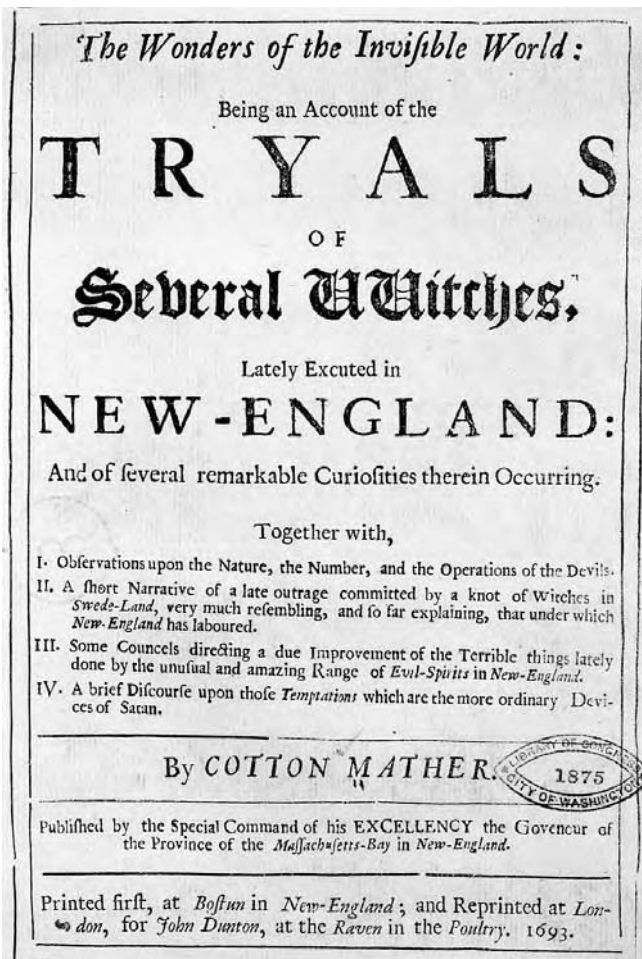
## COLONIAL PERIOD

For seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British Americans, mostly Protestants, explanations of evil and suffering were based on a shared worldview that included teachings about humanity's total depravity and the existence of a spiritual world that intersected the natural world. Through the lenses of these shared assumptions, colonists saw spiritual meanings and lessons in events and life experiences. Illness could be a warning from God to reform or a "trial" of faith. Natural occurrences carried similar messages from God that colonists laboriously strove to discern. The reality and pervasiveness of crime were meliorated by the belief that criminals could be revealed by supernatural means. One of the grossest crimes, witchcraft, represented for this society the work of invisible Satanic forces made real through "covenants" with humans. Discovering and executing witches were therefore the duty of the godly, who became part of the cosmic battle of good versus evil. Through these and other means, colonial Americans could help to make some sense of the inexplicable, relieve distress and doubt, express joy and thankfulness, and resign themselves to the will of God by finding solace and meaning in personal acts of piety and in the support and company of their neighbors.

### The Visible and Invisible Worlds

When American colonists expressed a theodicy, they based their explanations on two basic concepts that are largely foreign to the twenty-first century. First is the religious teaching—particularly stressed in the Puritan churches of New England but taught elsewhere as well—of total depravity, which stated that, as a result of the original sin of Adam and Eve, all humanity was utterly sinful. The final remedy to the Fall would only come with the Last Judgment, when justice and peace would be established in a heavenly state. Until then, to believers and nonbelievers alike, this was a "dark world" that offered no hope except through faith in the final redemptive power of God.

Along with this view of a depraved humanity was a belief in an "invisible world" of spirits and angels that permeated the visible world. These spiritual beings and forces were powerful and able to influence human actions. Human will was not free because of its sinfulness and because forces outside of the will could control it. Satan, for colonials, was a real, historical being who forcibly acted to cause evil. So, for example, a person who committed "self-murder," or suicide, was often described as "under Satan's influ-



Title page of *Wonders of the Invisible World*:  
*Being an account of the trials of several witches, lately executed  
 in New England . . . by Cotton Mather, 1693*  
 (Library of Congress)

ence.” Similarly, the belief that Satan or demons could possess and physically manipulate the wills and bodies of individuals was taken for granted. These assumptions about the invisible world only enforced teachings about the thoroughgoing corruption of humanity and framed colonists’ expectations of, and reactions to, events around them.

### Illness and Death

Colonists saw spiritual implications in seemingly natural occurrences. A prime example was illness, which carried with it a double meaning. On the one hand, God may allow an affliction in order to get someone to change his or her sinful ways. Colonists frequently took this lesson to heart, declaring that God “shook

me over the pit of hell” with a life-threatening disease. On the other hand, God might use sickness to “try” those whom He loved. Through suffering, therefore, holy persons could be made even more holy; they learned to place their lives in the hands of God and conform their wills to His. In this way, individuals were “weaned from the world,” or made to see the vanity of worldly things and the true value of heavenly things.

Epidemics—smallpox, diphtheria, and other horrible diseases—were regular occurrences in colonial America to an extent that modern Americans, with the benefits of modern science and hygiene, can hardly imagine. Individuals therefore always had to be prepared spiritually to die, because the next episode could be their last. Having the proper attitude, however, did not rule out seeking a cure. As today, doctors were called in to diagnose and provide a treatment. But that was not the end of it. Since God was the ultimate source of all things, prayer was believed to be effective. Individuals and families would submit “prayer bids”—written petitions given to the minister or posted in front of the church—through which the religious community could offer up intercession for healing. Yet another avenue was to consult a healer or some “cunning folk” who were armed with traditional lore, recipes, and herbology, a practice that established physicians frowned upon.

Saints who were put on trial with an illness were also expected to provide models of resignation and faith for those who tended and visited them. This was especially true when the illness was fatal. We have all heard the saying, “Famous last words.” This notion has its origins in the deathbed watch that was so central to colonial American, not to mention earlier European, religious culture. Dying persons were believed to be between two worlds, a position from which they could impart messages and advice from the supernatural realm. Those attending the dying person often recorded last utterances, not only for evidence that the victim was a true saint but for spiritual wisdom that they, the watchers, could take with them and apply to their own lives.

### “Remarkable Providences”

Just as personal experience was imbued with meaning, so, too, were the world and the heavens. Ameri-

can colonists believed that natural phenomena may have “natural” or “secondary” sources, but their ultimate cause was God, who ordered and ordained things to happen in particular places, at particular times, for particular reasons. “Providence,” or God’s will, intended a lesson in everything that occurred and in all that creation presented to our senses. The most striking events, such as comets, eclipses, earthquakes, and wars, were, to the early American way of seeing things, “wonders” that had portents of judgment or blessing. All reality was fraught with awesome power and hidden messages about “divine things.”

People often turned to their ministers for interpretation of these wonders. In special sermons preached on days of fasting and humiliation, clergymen would lay out the lessons that a catastrophe or happy occurrence brought. Signs in the sky usually meant that God was warning his people to reform their ways before more severe judgments came, though they could also be prophetic of a variety of other things. Victory or defeat in war, too, had not just political ramifications but spiritual ones as well—victory demonstrating God’s favor, defeat showing His disfavor.

Just as frequently, however, colonists would consult with other, less orthodox interpreters for the meaning of events or to predict the future. Here they drew on ancient traditions such as astrology. Astrological charts were printed in almanacs, which represented a brisk business for printers in colonies such as Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. Besides printed sources, individuals could consult local seers, conjurers, or wise men and women. These seers often drew on a mixture of pagan and Christian rituals and teachings.

Colonists attached great significance to visions, dreams, and apparitions as a means of understanding and coping with life experiences. Visions and dreams could include seeing Christ or a departed loved one who brought a consoling word. Relevant verses of the Bible could be “darted” into the mind. Remedies for a grave illness might be given by a “little gray man.” Apparitions could include angelic visitations or, more ominously, the likenesses of witches or their familiar spirits.

### **Crime and Punishment**

Within a worldview that leaned heavily on signs and portents, criminals and their crimes could be exposed

in mysterious ways. It was thought that a person who stole something, for example, might develop a withered hand, and in this way his or her offense would be made plain to the perpetrator and to the community—a deformed body implied a deformed character. Those who committed homicide were haunted by the popular belief that “murder will out,” or that somehow or other the guilty party would be revealed. Whether guilty of misdemeanors, felonies, or capital crimes, convicted persons were obliged to deliver a public confession either before their church or, most dramatically, on the gallows on execution day, an event that always attracted large crowds. In these confessions, individuals were expected to show a proper degree of remorse, even to the point of tears, and to warn others not to follow in their footsteps. Confessors of lesser crimes, such as stealing fruit out of a neighbor’s orchard or uttering slanderous words, were admitted back into the good graces of the church and community. But confession did not always mean pardon. In the case of those condemned of murder, sodomy, “buggery” (copulating with animals), and other “unclean” acts, the execution inevitably proceeded.

The processes of detecting offenders and making them confess provided a deterrent for people and a way for the properly contrite sinner to be reintegrated into the community. They also reinforced the lesson that crimes would inevitably be exposed through supernatural intervention. In this way, the world of criminal activity was subsumed within the larger framework of God’s ultimate justice and retribution.

### **Witchcraft**

Another capital crime was practicing witchcraft, and in all the New World colonies of England, Spain, and France, witches were hunted and executed—most infamously at Salem, Massachusetts, where nineteen men and women were hung or pressed to death in 1692. For people of the medieval and early modern worlds, witchcraft was a very real and particularly heinous crime because it involved a voluntary “covenant” or association with the devil in exchange for supernatural powers with which to wreak evil upon the bodies, souls, and possessions of others. Thus, when all natural explanations for an illness, a poor crop, a lame cow, or other mishaps were expended, colonists began

to look for witches as the culprits. Belief in diabolical powers went hand in hand with belief in divine powers. Earthly life, the battleground for the forces of good and evil, was an extension of the battle for heaven that had resulted in the expulsion of Satan and his minions before the creation of the world. The struggle prefigured the final, apocalyptic conflict that would result in the victory of God and the saints at the end of the world. As agents of the Almighty, the saints on earth were believed to be carrying out the dictates of God when they discovered and killed witches. Identifying witchcraft was a means of explaining inexplicable occurrences; eradicating witches gave colonists a way to fight the diabolical sources of these occurrences. Dealing with spiritual sources of evil such as found in witchcraft, and with human sources of evil as found in crime, and discerning the divine lessons of illness, death, and natural occurrences, gave early Americans a means of exerting some control over their own lives in a mental, physical, and social world in which they felt largely powerless.

—Kenneth P. Minkema

#### SEE ALSO

African American Religions: African American Christianity; Protestantism in America: Puritanism;

The Body; Death; Ritual and Performance: Funerals; Sacred Space: Nature; Science: Healing; Violence: Apocalypticism

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## EVIL IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

“The demise of Blackbeard marked the end of piracy in American waters and again proved that Goodwill triumphs over evil.” These words, found in a pirate-themed miniature golf attraction built on Hilton Head Island in the late twentieth century, convey an especially popular view on the meaning and teleology of evil in the American experience. It is a simple, easily apprehended lesson drawn primarily from biblical sources about a transformative 1,000-year period at the end of time but applied to the destiny of the United States: Although it may take time and come at great costs, good will ultimately triumph over evil.

Evil took many forms in the twentieth-century American imagination—from the political threats of Nazi monsters annihilating millions of Jews in World War II, and of Communists imperiling sacred demo-

cratic principles, to the entertaining visions of Darth Vader’s imperial stormtroopers in George Lucas’s films about a “galaxy far, far away,” or imagined dead pirates from long ago off coastal waters, teaching privileged children and adults cosmic lessons about morality. Whatever the form, the stories twentieth-century Americans told put evil in its place and reassured citizens about the victory of deeply held national values generally associated with democracy, individualism, capitalism, and Christianity.

Historically, Americans have relied on a fairly conventional imaginative strategy to make sense of evil. Historian of religions Catherine L. Albanese (1999) identified millennialism as a crucial element of American religious history and culture. In her analysis, millennialism can refer specifically and literally to the



Starving inmates in a Nazi concentration camp, Amphing, Germany, 1945 (Library of Congress)

Book of Revelation in the New Testament, which describes in graphic detail the final battles between God and Satan. According to this narrative, Satan will be enchained for 1,000 years (one millennium), leaving righteous Christians free from the threat of evil until one last war in which Satan is defeated for good. Millennialism can also refer to a broader, more diffuse set of perceptions about the growing presence of suffering and wickedness in the world, the increasing likelihood that the world will soon be coming to an end, and the compelling anticipation that a new era will emerge out of the ruins of the old world.

From the 1700s to the present, Americans have oriented themselves and understood their experiences in terms of this deeply religious and reliable perspective—religious because of its assumption that an eternal sacred order exists in the cosmos, reliable because it speaks directly to American myths about being a chosen nation with a special role to play in world history. Americans have overcome distressing, inevitable realities associated with human suffering, violence, injustice, and death by optimistically believing that, in

the end, good will prevail and the sacred order will be restored.

One of many examples of this popular narrative tendency in twentieth-century American culture can be found in the early animated films of Walt Disney. It is often the case that in Disney films the threat of evil is framed in millennial terms—that is, powerful forces in the cosmos that bring death and destruction are overcome with virtuous heroic action, unyielding optimism in a better world, or miraculous intervention. Snow White is saved from the evil witch by the handsome prince; Bambi survives the evil presence of “Man” in the forest; and at the end of *Fantasia*, the mountain demon succumbs to the power of the rising sun. According to Robert Feild, who wrote a tribute to the artist in 1942, Disney made the following unpretentious comments about the setting for the “Night on Bald Mountain” sequence in the film *Fantasia*: “It sort of symbolizes something. The forces of good on one side and of evil on the other is what I’m trying to see in the thing. What other reason can there be for it?” (Feild 1942, 122). Disney films do not attempt to address the problem of theodicy with complex, confusing, theological perspectives. Instead, they depict a simplistic, millennial vision of the universe where absolute good battles with absolute evil. Despite the fear and dread inspired by the presence of evil—ripe conditions to transmit instructive lessons about morality—a happy ending ensures the redemption of the future.

Theodicy-making depends on the unique conditions and experiences of any given community, however, and the dominant, millennial view was not the only version available to Americans during the twentieth century. The symbolic, textual, and practical resources for explaining suffering and hardship in the life of a community vary across American cultures.

Native Americans, who must live with the consequences of forced removal, religious persecution, and economic injustice, continue to search for ways to adequately and appropriately respond to the presence of evil in their lives and history. In John D. Loftin’s study of religion and Hopi life in twentieth-century America (1991), prophecies predicting the end of this world are directly tied to the coming of whites. Although there are different versions of this prophecy, they all end with the older brother of the Hopi returning to the community at a transformative moment that includes the purification of evil from the cosmos.



African Americans have also struggled with evil in their lives, primarily, though not exclusively, because of slavery. Jon Michael Spencer, in his book *Blues and Evil* (1993), explored the problem of theodicy in this community. Rather than understanding blues in the conventional way that it has been perceived by whites, as “the devil’s music,” Spencer examined how this musical style became a vehicle for profound reflection on the problem of suffering in black communities and a form of resistance to the dominant religious responses to this suffering in local churches.

—Gary Laderman

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African American Religions; Judaism in America; Holocaust and Israel; Native American Religions and Politics; Protestantism in America; Popular Culture: Film

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PUBLIC THEOLOGIES  
AND POLITICAL  
CULTURE



Public theology, civil religion, and political ideology intersect in American political culture through the shifting social arrangements of American public institutions. By reference to Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons, the sociologist Robert Bellah identified civil religion in America as a “collection of beliefs, symbols, and ritual with respect to sacred things and institutionalized in a collectivity” (Bellah [1967] 1970, 175). Existing alongside yet distinct from churches, synagogues, and temples as well as political ideologies, civil religion defines a religion-like dimension of culturally constitutive depth in the public realm of every modern society, no matter how secular it may seem, and suggests that the United States as “a nation with the soul of a church” is not so exceptional after all.

Indeed, Durkheim defined religion as “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them” (Durkheim [1912] 1995, 44). As such, religion forms the womb of all civilization and gives birth to the moral order and unity of every society. It does so in symbolic and practical forms that both underlie and overarch the differentiation of religious, political, and familial institutions in the historical course of social and cultural evolution. Bellah conceived this process along lines that intertwined the thinking of Emile Durkheim and Max Weber with Karl Marx and extended back through Jean-Jacques Rousseau to Plato, Mencius, and Confucius.

Rousseau’s civil religion echoed Plato’s in Book X of *The Laws*, the first morally functionalist sociology of religion in the West, and anticipated those of Alexis de Tocqueville and Durkheim. Conceiving *Democracy in America* in conceptual terms taken from Rousseau, Tocqueville identified religion as the primary force shaping Americans’ civic consciousness, calling it “the first of their political institutions” (Tocqueville [1835] 1969, 292). Referring to Rousseau and Tocqueville and reflecting on the French Revolution’s “cult of reason,” Durkheim grounded his hopes for the moral reintegration of modern society in a state-centered

civil religion to celebrate “the cult of the sacred individual.” He combined this notion with advocacy for a national program of moral education in the public schools and the development of syndicalist guilds to promote corporate morality by tying the specialized activity and relationships of workers within the modern division of labor to their moral responsibility as democratic citizens for the society as a whole. An increasingly international kind of social life, gradually developing through the global expansion of the division of labor in the world’s economy, and its political-legal regulation, would universalize forms of religious belief, Durkheim judged. If a genuinely transnational sovereignty emerged with the attainment of some kind of coherent world order, Bellah likewise concluded, it would precipitate new symbolic forms of civil religion, whether they were to grow from the United Nations or from the subsequent spread of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as the civil rights, nuclear disarmament, and environmentalist movements (Bellah [1967] 1970, 186).

The idea of public theology may be construed narrowly to refer to denominational statements on public policy, or broadly to take in the social teaching of the Christian churches and their counterparts among the world religions. In either sense, it offers an instructive counterpoint to conceiving religion and politics in terms of a unitary civil religion or public philosophy. In doing so, it derives from insights long shared by the social study of religion and the cultural history of theology into the dialectical process by which religion enters into the cultural constitution of all social institutions, particularly the polity, even as social differences imprint the structures of religious community and belief. History and theology grow out of each other. This process diversifies publics in both politics and religion, yet makes for coherence of conversation among them.

Public theology is “an effort to interpret the life of a people in the light of a transcendent reference,” wrote the historian Martin Marty (1981, 16), an effort focused less on any saving faith than on the ordering faith that helps constitute civic, political, and social life from a theological point of view. Marty distin-

guished the pluralism of peoples such theologies engage in the larger context of American public culture from “the public church” as a specifically Christian polity, people, and witness. In Marty’s usage, drawn from Benjamin Franklin ([1749] 1987) on education instead of Jean-Jacques Rousseau ([1762] 1954) on civil religion, such a church is a partial Christian embodiment within a public religion that overarches rather than displaces the pluralist particularities of traditional faiths and their continuing contributions to public virtue and the commonweal.

American Christianity counterposes diverse forms of public theology in this account, beginning with the Constantinian ethos of Catholic colonies and the Calvinist covenant of Puritan New England. It incorporates the antitheocratic, critical theology of the dissenting Roger Williams; the transcendent backdrop to civil affairs lit by religious affections in Jonathan Edwards; and the immanence of the holy republic arising from redemption and liberal legislation as envisioned by Horace Bushnell and revised by the Social Gospel. Varieties of public theology have multiplied in twentieth-century America with the cultural disestablishment of Anglo-Protestantism amid broader recognition of Roman Catholic and Jewish social teaching, for example, the American bishops’ pastoral letters on peace in 1983 and the economy in 1986 and the development of “Jewish social ethics” (Novak 1992). The distinctive social witness of the African American churches has also emerged nationally, and religious pluralism has grown to include communities of Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and members of other faiths. Moreover, academic communities have nurtured liberationist, feminist, black womanist, ecological, and related theologies among religious leaders and encouraged them to tackle the task of constructing a public theology.

From the beginning, public theologies have coexisted with various forms of public philosophy in America, predicated on traditions of civic republicanism, Lockean democracy, natural law, and constitutionalism. These philosophies extend from the Enlightenment faith in “the laws of Nature” held by such deist founders as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, through ideals advanced by Walter Lippmann and John Courtney Murray of a *consensus juris* capable of sustaining civil debate over public goods, to current controversies around the world over reli-

gion in the public sphere, multiculturalism, and the politics of recognition.

### Public Theology and Civil Religion

Varieties of public theology, refracted through the prisms of particular communities of faith, serve in Martin Marty’s view (1981) to complement and clarify the sociological construct of a generalized civil religion, understood as an overarching, undergirding, institutionalized ideology for a whole national society. In its diversity, public theology lends conceptual leverage to Marty’s (1987) attempt to discern “two kinds of two kinds of civil religion,” featuring priestly and prophetic versions of alternative national visions, one of the nation under God and the other of national self-transcendence, with liberty and justice for all. It likewise figures in his (1997) rehearsal of a rich repertory of diverse national narratives and rites, conversationally commingled across group boundaries, to “re-story” and restore the bodies politic of the American republic into an “association of associations” through cohesive sentiments and symbols. These sentiments stem less from veneration of the Constitution than from family reunions, civic volunteering, and Labor Day weekend baseball games. Their mutuality of affection owes more to Jonathan Edwards and the Scottish Enlightenment than to the solidary sentiments of Rousseau or Durkheim.

Conversely, in “Religion and the Legitimation of the American Republic” (1980), the sociologist Robert Bellah elaborated the idea of civil religion in terms that clarify the meaning of public theology. Lacking both an established church and a classic civil religion on the model of Plato’s *Laws* or Rousseau’s *Social Contract*, the American republic institutionalized the free exercise of religion in ways that mediate tensions in its ambiguous political identity. It is a democratic republic that depends on the participation of public-spirited citizens for its shared self-government, and a liberal constitutional state that pledges to secure the individual rights of self-interested citizens who pursue wealth and wisdom through free markets for economic and intellectual exchange.

The liberal tradition of public philosophy in America conceives persons as independent selves unencumbered by moral or civic ties they have not chosen. Freedom consists in the very capacity of such persons

to choose their own values and ends. The rival republican tradition conceives freedom as the fruit of sharing in a more interdependent form of self-government that cultivates a public-spirited character by its very practices of deliberating together over common goods and sharing responsibility for the destiny of the political community.

Each tradition poses key questions of public life within a distinctive logic of moral argument. How can citizens become capable of self-government? asks the republican, who then seeks the social conditions and political arrangements needed to promote the civic virtue that self-government requires and the liberty it breeds. The liberal first asks how government should treat its citizens, then seeks the principles and procedures of justice needed to treat persons fairly and equally as they pursue their own ends and interests. Fair procedures take priority over particular moral ends posed as public goods. Individual rights function as moral trump cards, played to ensure the state's neutrality among competing conceptions of the good life, in order to respect persons as selves free to choose their own ends.

Religion mediates this tension, first by fixing a "super-structural" locus of moral sovereignty above the sovereignty of the state and the people. Thus the Declaration of Independence begins by reference to "the laws of Nature and of Nature's God" that stand above the laws of humankind and judge them. Solemn reference to a distinctly though not entirely biblical God who stands above the nation and ordains moral standards to judge its conduct becomes a permanent feature of American public life. But civil-religious ideals are thin if securely institutionalized *within* American government without explicit legal sanction or support in the Constitution or the liberal side of the American cultural heritage it expresses. It follows, argued Bellah, that the religious needs of a genuine republic would hardly be met by the formal and marginal civil religion that has been institutionalized in the American republic. "The religious superstructure of the American republic has been provided only partially by the civil religion," he wrote (Bellah 1980, 13). It has been provided mainly by the religious community entirely outside any formal political structures.

To refer to this symbolization of the national moral community that frames the civic virtues and values of a republic, stated Bellah, "we can speak of public the-

ology, as Martin Marty has called it, in distinction to civil religion. The civil millennialism of the revolutionary period was such a public theology and we have never lacked one since" (Bellah 1980, 14). From the beginnings of the American nation, the diversity and range of its public theology have been significant morally as well as analytically, Bellah reflected, since "most of what is good and most of what is bad in our history is rooted in our public theology." Every movement to make America more fully realize its professed values has "grown out of some form of public theology, from the abolitionists to the social gospel and the early socialist party to the civil rights movement under Martin Luther King and the farm workers' movement under Cesar Chavez." But so has "every expansionist war and every form of oppression of racial minorities and immigrant groups" (Bellah 1980, 15).

The "infrastructural" role of religion in the American republic likewise combines civil religion and public theology, according to Bellah (1980). Although the liberal state is constitutionally incapable of inculcating civic virtue in its independent citizens, federalism permitted the nation to foster schools of republican virtue in the institutions of state and local government, in the public schools, and most of all, in religious congregations and denominational bodies. In addition to teaching republican values, religious communities nurtured the mores of their self-governing members through offering them practical lessons in public participation. It was because religion contributed so centrally to creating the character and conscience of American citizens and the moral order of the life they shared that Tocqueville concluded that it should be considered the first of their political institutions.

Current research confirms that religious communities continue to provide a cradle for democratic citizenship and civic aptitude, one of particular importance for Americans who are otherwise institutionally disadvantaged or excluded. Those most active in religious institutions, notably churchgoing African Americans and lower-middle-class white evangelicals, offer the only striking exceptions to the rule of class-bound declines in political participation and civic voluntarism in American society since the 1970s, with greater fall-offs found the further down the social ladder one goes. With the sole exception of labor unions, now shrunk to less than one-half their share of the U.S. workforce forty years ago, religious institutions

provide the single most democratic counterweight to the cumulative process that favors those with more education, income, occupational clout, and connections when they take part in public life.

Recent studies of public theology *within* specific religious institutions shift conceptual focus from the religious dimension of the public realm in the society as a whole to the public dimension of religious denominations and congregations, for example, the National Baptist Convention and its Women's Convention (Higginbotham 1993). Studies of the African American church in particular as a "church with the soul of a nation," by contrast to civil-religious visions of the "nation with the soul of a church," tend to close the distance between civil religion and "church religion" and expand the institutional range of public theology (Mead 1974). They also point up the value of theoretical efforts to pluralize the public sphere, understood as a society-wide realm of rational critical communication surrounding the state in which citizens settle social questions on the merits of reason-giving argument. These efforts yield a picture of multiple publics. These publics are sometimes overlapping subsidiaries or concentrically nested circles, but often they are oppositional alternatives, or "counter-publics" of special significance for those barred by racial caste, class, or gender from full standing in the public at large—or the church at large—and betrayed by ostensibly universal representation of the meaning of such membership.

Other studies, meanwhile, have stressed the integrity of "the black Christian tradition," rooted in the biblical vision of the parenthood of God and the kinship of all peoples, as a culturally encompassing framework for the social teaching of the black churches (Paris 1985) and a globally inclusive matrix for "conjuring culture" (Smith 1994). These works have underscored the prophetic authority of figures such as Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther King, Jr., no less than Abraham Lincoln and Reinhold Niebuhr, to recast public theology from sources across the whole of American life and culture, sacred and secular, to call upon the nation and its people to practice what they preach.

Public theology, in sum, has always unfolded as an argument and a conversation within communities of faith as well as among them to yield the multivocal part they play in public dialogue in the polity, including the Social Gospel and the Gospel of Wealth, for

example, or the movements to abolish slavery and alcohol or to outlaw abortion or nuclear arms. Specific social issues and religious traditions describe dimensions of diversity and change in the history of public theology in America, marking shifts in its relationship to political ideology on one side and church religion on the other. So, too, do the institutional forms and settings of public theology, particularly those situated in between communities of faith and the national community.

### Public Theology and Political Ideology

In 1960, there were barely thirty nondenominational religious organizations devoted to governmental and public affairs on the U.S. national scene. A generation later, there are more than 300, including the Christian Coalition and The Interfaith Alliance. The tenfold growth of these politically oriented parachurch groups has far outpaced the growth of denominational churches themselves (Wuthnow 1988). But its yield is dwarfed in turn by the concurrent mushrooming of some 2,000 nonreligious national political associations, from Common Cause to the American Enterprise Institute. They stand formally free of political parties yet often couple public-interest advocacy, policy research, and civic education with political lobbying backed by direct electoral mobilization and organizing.

The recent rise of such freestanding political associations, religious and nonreligious alike, represents one element in a system of increased interpenetration between an expanded state and other sectors of society. This development changes how other institutions work and how they think and communicate. Not only commerce, defense contracting, and agribusiness, but also churches, schools, and families are growing more legalized and politicized. Meanwhile, the polity itself is growing more crowded and densely organized, structuring a more nationally integrated yet more contested and multivocal argument about how people ought to live together (Bellah et al. 1991).

A decade's sociological evidence indicates that the members of politically oriented parachurch groups tend to divide into two contrasting social clusters (Wuthnow 1988). Typically, older, less educated cultural "conservatives" fill the ranks of groups that fight abortion and pornography and champion creation-



An anti-nuclear power rally on Boston Common (Trip/S. Grant)

ism, school prayer, and family values. Younger, more educated cultural “liberals” belong to groups dedicated to nuclear disarmament, racial and gender equality, environmental protection, and economic justice. Armed with such evidence, some observers warn against the social-class divisions and “culture wars” they see parachurch groups declaring. Little evidence has emerged of more polarized or ideologized social opinions among Americans generally, or among religious liberals and conservatives in particular, with the exception of attitudes on abortion and differences between Republican and Democratic party identifiers. Within religious institutions, however, major denominations and some congregations show “caucus-church” signs of growing more politicized, if not polarized, along the lines of identity politics (Bellah et al. 1991). In media wars waged by direct-mail and e-mail campaigns, fax blitzes, and televised sound-bites, religious lobbies turn public theology in the direction of political ideology insofar as they bypass the unified demands of congregational religious practice and

teachings in strategic efforts to manage public opinion, mobilize partisan constituencies, and play group-interest politics with public officials.

Some commentators on these trends believe that Americans now face a dangerous dichotomizing of civil religion into “separate and competing moral galax(ies),” or an uncivil war of orthodox and progressive believers with worldviews that are “worlds apart” (Hunter 1991, 128). To balance this view, it is also worth weighing the notion that America is in the midst of a fertile, if painful, broadening of public theology’s contested ambit among a larger, more educated, and urbanized middle class. Into this nonetheless coherent argument over how Americans ought to order their lives together have come culturally conservative Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and religious “others” in sufficient numbers, and with sufficient eloquence, as well as clout, to make their voices heard. If Americans are willing to keep listening to one another and trying to persuade one another by example and critical, conciliar dialogue alike, then this broadening of public



theology promises to deepen and enrich the moral argument of public life as a whole. In a sense, it has already done so, particularly for those problems such as abortion, gender and the family, peace, and the poor that have no neat solutions within the one-dimensional moral universe of individual interests, rights, and entitlements crowned by the national interest.

The counterposed ideologies of free-market capitalism and welfare-state liberalism at the core of American party politics today are equally mortgaged to individualist axioms that leave citizens blinded to their interdependence and unmoved by their need to share responsibility for the commonweal. Free-market capitalism begins with self-interested individuals, whose personal preferences and free choices are best served by markets. Market dynamics in turn are determined by immutable laws of human nature and rationality. This admixture of market determinism with absolute freedom of individual choice excuses the indifference of citizens toward exercising freedom of conscience to make good institutional choices in shaping the social order, since “the market decides” and private charity takes up whatever social slack remains. Welfare liberalism no less paradoxically conceives politics to be the instrument of human desire, aimed at pleasures that individuals need not share, if indeed they can. It turns on promises to deliver the material prerequisites of these individual satisfactions in the form of social services and security to needful persons who qualify as its clients by virtue of their individual rights-claims and entitlements. Insofar as it fails to maximize the happiness of all its client-citizens, the liberal welfare state is always illegitimate. To the extent it succeeds, the liberal state and its interest-group politics both wither away into purely administrative agencies and their beneficiaries, now free to leave behind the instrumental world of politics for the intrinsically fulfilling privacy of home and business, prayer and play. For welfare liberalism, as Michael Walzer has observed, “Happiness begins and ends at home” (Walzer 1980, 29).

Public theologies proclaim countervailing themes of civic interdependence and responsibility for the commonweal within an ongoing cultural conversation that embraces multiple moral traditions and languages that are inseparable from the social practices and institutional settings that embody them. So Americans often disagree, and understand one an-

other when they do. Even as philosophical liberals and their communitarian critics debate the role of religion in forging or fragmenting political consensus, the moral argument of public life continues comprehensibly within each citizen and among them all. Americans are held together by the coherence of their disagreement, not by some comprehensive cultural agreement conceived as a value consensus or a value-neutral set of procedural rules and individual rights, because all Americans share a common culture woven of traditions that themselves embody continuities of conflict over how human beings ought to live. And all Americans lead lives that span the different social institutions and practices to which moral traditions and public theologies ring true—more or less arguably true—including a polity that is at once a religious republic and a liberal constitutional democracy.

—Steven M. Tipton

#### SEE ALSO

African American Religions: African American Religious Leaders; Catholicism in America: Public Catholicism; Judaism in America; Protestantism in America; Generations; Sexuality: Abortion; Ritual and Performance: Civic and Political Ritual Performances

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## CIVIL RELIGION

A *civil religion* is a set of beliefs and rituals, related to the past, present, and/or future of a people (“nation”), that is understood to have not only political but also transcendent meaning.

### The General Case

Social philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau described civil religion in the eighteenth century as the solution to a problem that he believed would become increasingly common. The problem arose as the pattern of Caesaropapism declined. That is to say, as long as the ruler (the “Caesar”) of a territory could stipulate that territory’s religion (name the “pope”), tension between “church” and “state” was unlikely to occur. As religion and politics claimed different spheres of authority, however, enough overlap of interests existed that some tension between them was inevitable. Rousseau said civil religion—a religion that “all” might accept—was an answer to this dilemma.

He outlined a few simple tenets that he called “positive dogmas” of civil religion: “The existence of a powerful, wise, and benevolent Divinity, who foresees and provides the life to come, the happiness of the just, the punishment of the wicked, the sanctity of the social contract and the laws.” The only “negative dogma,” he said, was “intolerance” (Rousseau [1762] 1968, Book IV, 150).

It seems that Rousseau’s proposal never came into being, at least not in the manner he suggested—as an ideology self-consciously offered to a population that voluntarily accepted and believed it. Rather, the phenomenon Rousseau identified has more often emerged in specific ethnic groups, that is, groups of people who believe they have a common origin shared through accident of birth, especially when their common culture is expressed in transcendent terms, as in Ireland and Poland.

These two countries provide an important clue about civil religions. Ireland and Poland, although both homogeneously Roman Catholic, never saw Catholicism “established,” that is, given government sponsorship. In most of the Western world, for centuries following the spread of Christianity nations did have established churches, but the government spon-

sorship of religion tended to foster competition between church and state, not harmony, as Rousseau had imagined. The Protestant Reformation, from this standpoint, merely added to the number of competitors for government largesse without changing the fundamental church-state relationship.

Civil religion is also sometimes called *political religion*, a term that helps to clarify why the ideology has been rare in world history. For a political (civil) religion to emerge and exist over time, it must be a “religion” that persons who are *religiously* different can accept. And it must be a “politics” that persons who are *politically* different can accept. This condition, while present temporarily—for example, at times of war—is unlikely to persist over time. Persons who for a brief period concur in both aspects of a civil religion tend, when the emergency ends, to reemphasize both their religious and political differences.

Of course, even in societies with apparently stable civil religions, the invocation of the doctrines of those civil religions, the display of their symbols, and the frequency of their rituals will wax and wane. A civil religion, even in its most vibrant state, will never gain the allegiance of everyone in a society, just as a civil religion at its lowest ebb will retain some followers. The test is not the constancy of a civil religious public opinion, but the constancy of the ideological elements that can be rallied. Are the national myths told and retold? Are the holidays remembering the lives of national heroes occasions for rejoicing? Are “sacrifices” made on behalf of the nation in the belief that they are *sacred* obligations? Societies where the answer to these questions is yes are societies with a civil religion.

### The American Case

A brief examination of the American civil religion is instructive. The thirteen colonies were religiously pluralistic, which meant that at its founding the United States gave no thought to “establishing” one denomination out of the many. The Founding Fathers wanted government to have no involvement in religion, neither aiding nor interfering in religion’s free exercise. The controlling voices in writing the Constitution, especially those of Thomas Jefferson and James Madi-



A march to the United Nations, led by Dr. Benjamin Spock, to demand a cease-fire in Vietnam, 1965  
(Library of Congress)

son, however, were Deists. They believed in a Creator, to be honored in whatever way individual citizens chose. A democracy depended on a moral citizenry, which depended in turn on religious training.

It was therefore common in the colonies to give moral instruction, generally by clergy of the majority religion in each town. This practice continued in most of the new states but faded away by 1833. What changed after that was not so much the instruction but the instructor. Public schools replaced churches, but training in citizenship continued.

Public schools no doubt remain the chief purveyors of American civil religion, with not only formal training in civics classes but also such features as student governments, athletics, and other competitive activi-

ties played under rules designed to guarantee “fair play.” In this way, the two reigning values of American culture—individual achievement and equality of opportunity—are communicated and given transcendent meaning.

Public schools are not the only means of communicating the American civil religion. Consider the political process, from campaigns and elections to inaugurations. God is frequently invoked on these occasions, though it is noticeably not a Christian God, but a God, theoretically, of “all.” Holidays such as Presidents’ Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Veterans Day, and especially Thanksgiving are events with clear civil religious overtones. On these occasions, patriotic symbols often appear—flags, parades, and

the like—and these, too, communicate the American civil religion, with references not just to the nation but also to the transcendent.

—Phillip Hammond

#### SEE ALSO

Death; Popular Culture: Cultural Saints; Sacred Space; Sacred Time; Sacred Time: Easter, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Vacations; Violence: Sacrifice

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## CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

During the 1990s, scholars moved away from the assumption that the Civil Rights Movement began with the Montgomery Bus Boycott and concluded with the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. In fact, in order to appreciate the gains won in the 1960s and the role religion played in civil rights victories, one needs to explore the African American struggle for full equality as it unfolded a full century before. From the moments enslaved blacks were emancipated, both black and white religious organizations and individuals worked to establish an institutional infrastructure that would support black integration into American society. This effort was divided into two major areas: politics and education.

With the 1870 ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, blacks in the South gained the right to vote and began to win elections to serve at every level of government. In selecting leaders, African Americans often turned to clergymen in their communities. Black ministers had the trust of the community, so there was little question as to whether they would adequately represent the interests of their constituents. Moreover, they were usually among the literate or educated elite, and their social status commanded respect among their peers. Black ministers held a wide array of elected and appointed positions in local, state, and federal government during Reconstruction. Bishop Henry McNeal Turner of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church was probably the most outspoken black clergyman to hold public office during the period. In 1867, Turner was a delegate from Bibb County, Georgia, to the state constitutional convention, and a year later he

was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives. Racial discrimination, however, prevented Turner and other black members of the House from being seated. Turner led a protest movement against their exclusion, stating, "I am here to demand my rights, and to hurl thunderbolts at the men who dare to cross the threshold of my manhood" (Litwack and Meier 1988, 255). After three years of protest and demonstration, it finally took an act of Congress to seat Turner and the other duly elected black representatives.

As northern abolitionists lost their political nerve, the movement to reconstruct southern culture gave way to the resurgence of an indignant political and social climate that longed for the ways of the old South. Although slavery would never rise again, the "separate but equal" ethos of Jim Crow culture reinforced the racist assumptions of white supremacy that were at the core of southern society. As states erected laws to prevent blacks and whites from sharing social worlds, religious organizations responded to the crisis by developing parallel institutions to serve black communities. One of the most important and enduring symbols of both segregation and African American resilience was the all-black school. From Morehouse College in Atlanta to Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, Toogaloo College in Mississippi, and Arkansas Baptist College in Little Rock, American denominations built an educational system that provided instruction to black children and adults. And it was their religious commitment and dedication to a liberal understanding of Christianity's social function that fueled their efforts.



The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., speaking at a meeting at the Holt Street Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama, 1956 (Library of Congress)

Nearly a century after the emancipation of African American slaves, religious organizations were once again at the forefront of the black liberation struggle. Some scholars have called the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s the “Second Reconstruction”; others have labeled it the “Second Civil War.” Although they may differ in their interpretation, most students of the period agree that religion played an important part in the overall success of the movement. Indeed, the public face of movements in Birmingham, Selma, Montgomery, Nashville, and Albany, Georgia, was ministerial. Black clergymen assumed leadership roles for several reasons. First, ministers already were trusted by their local black communities.

Women and men who made up the rank-and-file foot soldiers of the protests had confidence in their pastors’ ability and willingness to make sound decisions in the best interest of the entire community. Also, their position as spiritual leaders gave them a moral authority that allowed them to speak with the knowledge that God stood with them as they nonviolently combated evil and oppression. Moreover, particularly in small towns and rural areas, clergymen were often the most articulate members of the community. Since public speaking was a major part of their profession, it made sense to have them address rallies, negotiate with representatives of the white power structure, and give moral guidance to participants in the movement.

Most important, there was the sense that black ministers were only accountable to God and the black community. Because their livelihood did not come from white purse strings, there was less of a chance the ministers would feel beholden to whites.

In addition to the leadership of clergymen, the black churches themselves were important catalysts in the Civil Rights Movement. Church buildings served as meeting places and information clearinghouses for movement participants. In some communities in the South, the church was the only truly independent black organization that existed, and as such, it was not subject to the dictates of whites. Nevertheless, independence did not come without a price. As the most visible sign of the black community's resistance to white oppression, church buildings were frequently vandalized, looted, and burned by whites who saw the black church as a threat to their way of life. Between January 1957 and May 1958, there were forty-six recorded hate bombings alone in southern cities. This figure included seven bombings of black ministers' homes and ten explosions at black churches. On May 3, 1958, officials from twenty-nine southern cities met in Jacksonville, Florida, to address the hate-bombing issue and develop a regional strategy for combating the problem. Needless to say, as long as churches played such a crucial role in the Civil Rights Movement, they remained the target of white hostility and attacks.

Organizationally, churches were an important component in the Civil Rights Movement because they prevented the unnecessary duplication of institutional infrastructure. When the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) decided to launch a protest movement in a particular community, for example, it did not have to start from scratch by recruiting members door-to-door, creating information networks, or developing local leadership. Instead, it plugged into the existing structures of its affiliate member organizations, black churches. Once the SCLC leadership decided to issue a call for a rally or a protest, it did not need to exhaust its financial and human resources by tracking down individuals on a membership roster. Instead, leaders contacted local pastors, who then issued calls to their entire congregations, either at Sunday service or through the church's own network of deacons, trustees, church mothers, and club leaders.

Hence, the broad-based focus of the movement was supported by the organizational framework of African American churches.

Although impossible to measure adequately, the role of religious faith in the Civil Rights Movement must not be underestimated. Time and again, civil rights activists reported that only their faith in God gave them the strength to endure the psychological and physical strain of the extended boycotts and beatings often associated with nonviolent direct action. The belief that their cause was right and that God was on their side buoyed the spirits of countless church women and men who walked picket lines and were attacked by police dogs. They saw their actions in line with those of Jesus Christ, and they were comforted by their conviction that to suffer for the sake of righteousness was to gain favor with God. Indeed, some scholars have suggested that one might interpret the Civil Rights Movement as an attempt "to redeem the soul of America." They reasoned that the pain and sufferings of movement participants worked toward a larger good of purging America of the sins of racial hatred and bigotry and brought the nation closer to God's will for humanity. Whether or not redemptive suffering stood at the core of the movement, one cannot deny that thousands of women and men joined the struggle for African American civil rights as a result of their religious convictions.

Religiosity and spirituality in the Civil Rights Movement were most prevalent in the freedom songs. Standard evangelical hymns and contemporary gospel tunes that had been used in African American worship for generations served as the foundation for the songs, but the lyrics were modified to fit the contemporary situation. Songs such as "We Shall Overcome" and "Eyes on the Prize" provided the spiritual sustenance required to maintain the movement's vitality while serving as a rallying cry that galvanized participants into a unified voice of freedom. "I'll Overcome Someday" was a hymn written by African American preacher and composer Charles Albert Tindley. The original lyrics were: "I'll overcome / I'll overcome / I'll overcome someday / If in my heart, I do not yield / I'll overcome someday." During the Civil Rights Movement, when the tune was transformed into "We Shall Overcome," the last line became "Deep in my heart, I do believe / We shall overcome someday." In effect,

freedom singers turned a hymn about individual salvation and one's ability to resist evil into a song about the community's effort to resist racial oppression. Whether black or white, Jew or Gentile, Protestant or Catholic, young or old, protesters took from these songs common themes through which they could make sense of the absurdity they faced and have faith that change in the future was not far away.

Religion has always played a vital role in African American movements for civil rights. In some cases, the religious dimension was overtly political; at other times, it could be seen as a subtle ideology undergirding the organizational and theoretical structure of the movement. At all times, it provided a foundation of faith and hope that sustained those working toward the future of African American equality in U.S. society.

—*Quinton Hosford Dixie*

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African American Religions: African American Christianity, African American Religious Leaders

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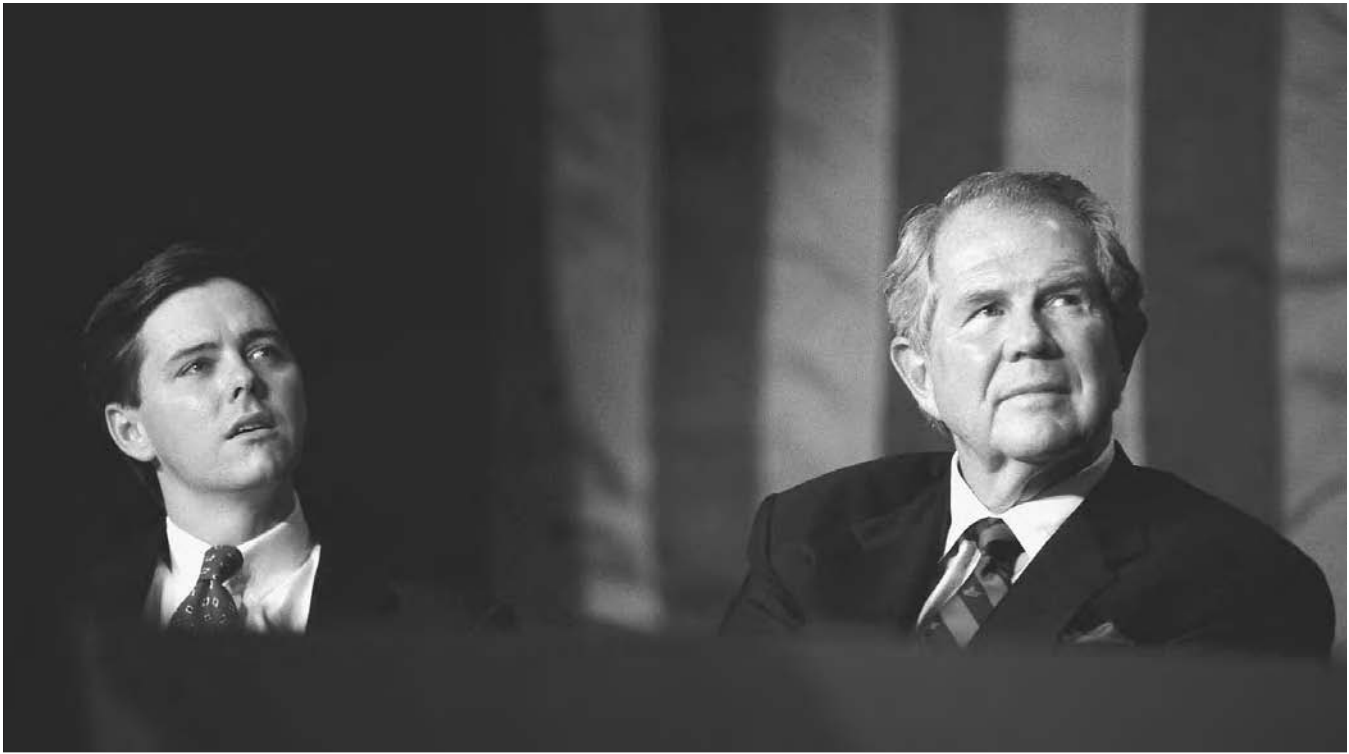
## CONSERVATISM

One of two polar political impulses in the United States, conservatism is an enduring feature of American religion that has recently assumed public prominence and reshaped the political arena. Conservatism is part of a diverse spectrum of religious involvement in politics but has found expression among religious traditions, communities, and organizations in which participants seek to defend what they believe are permanent religious truths against what they see as a threatening and unstable social order. Conservative voices have grown in strength and number since the early twentieth century, owing to both increased social change and deepening ideological divisions within American religions.

### Themes and Concerns

The conservative impulse is not reducible to a single religious tradition or community, though there are groups, such as Southern Baptists, that are almost wholly conservative. Conservatism is generally rooted in particular understandings of the moral subject and of the modern world. Conservatives generally prize the freedom and sanctity of the individual, for example. They assert that there is an unchanging human nature and an objective moral order that should be reflected in society, and that religious tradition provides a guide to both. Conservatives insist that these constants should orient individuals and





Ralph Reed and Pat Robertson at a Christian Coalition convention, 1994 (Wally McNamee/Corbis)

communities in ethical and political matters. Religious authority—in the form of Scripture, hierarchy, or doctrine—is privileged as a rock of certitude in the flux of the modern world. Tradition both reflects group identity and provides specific teachings on moral or political problems.

Despite religious variations in different traditions, conservative critics of modern culture share the belief that America is exceptional among nations and that religion is essential to the maintenance and defense of liberty. They likewise share the broad concern that the government has wrested power from families, traditions, and communities. Conservatives have acted on these convictions, becoming politically engaged around specific issues in which they believe culture and tradition are at stake. What appears on the surface to be political ideology is largely the outgrowth of particular religious convictions as these have taken shape in response to social change.

### Traditions

The stereotypical portrayal of conservatives as anti-intellectual, superstitious, and separatist is not entirely accurate. Many religious conservatives are middle-

class, educated citizens from mainstream traditions. Tending toward greater numbers in the South and the West, most conservatives identify as evangelical Protestants, Catholics, or Jews, with a growing Islamic presence. Conservative values certainly extend to separatist communities as well as to the white supremacist militias, but it is in mainstream traditions that political activism has been greatest.

Although many social and political concerns are shared among all conservatives, each tradition's specific history shapes its unique understanding of these issues. For example, Catholics are largely uninterested in apocalyptic speculation and are not obsessed with evolutionary theory or scriptural inerrancy. The Nation of Islam may share evangelical concerns about male headship, but for entirely different reasons. Orthodox Jews and neoconservatives champion Zionism along with evangelicals, but their ultimate view of Israel's future is different.

### Sources and History

The evangelical Christian lineage, with its legacy of revivalism and reform, has partly shaped conservatism through a concern for the moral regeneration

of both individual and society. Evangelicals, particularly since the Second Great Awakening (the revivals in the decades around the turn of the nineteenth century), have often identified moral and social decay as signs of either a religious crisis or of the Second Coming. Republican traditions valuing small-scale social organization have influenced conservative wariness of “foreign” powers and cultures. Nineteenth-century populism, with its opposition to centralized power and rapid social change, strengthened this tendency. More recently, some Protestant conservatives have been energized by revitalized apocalyptic speculation along with Reconstructionism, an evangelical social theory that urges evangelization of institutions and societies. These sources are cobbled together into a protean but recognizable tradition.

Religious conservatism has a long history in the United States, yet it became explicitly politicized during the modern era. Many of the political battle lines now taken for granted in American religions were staked out in the decades following the Civil War, when American religionists divided in their reaction to the manifold changes of modernity. From the 1890s to the 1920s, conservative Protestants (some of whom became known as *fundamentalists* for their allegiance to the “fundamentals” of Christianity over the lures of modernity) solidified their identity through opposition to modern movements that advocated liberal social reforms or religious ecumenism. The liberal-conservative divide was dramatically publicized during the Scopes trial of 1925–1926, which served as a public forum for evaluating evolutionary theory.

Only in the 1930s was the liberal-conservative opposition truly sharpened. Older conservative concerns were exacerbated by the New Deal, which seemed to embody the very elitism, encroaching federal bureaucracy, and secularism long feared. Thereafter, conservatives focused on network building, sometimes through national organizations such as the American Council of Christian Churches (1941) or the National Association of Evangelicals (1942), and sometimes underground through the revival circuit and mass media. Since the end of World War II, American culture has drifted further toward the right in ways that have energized religious conservatives. The 1950s were dominated by a conservative mood as anticommunism played into popular fears of “mass culture.” Even during the 1960s, religious conserva-

tives were mobilizing, media networks were under development, and evangelical schools were proliferating.

During the 1970s, particularly following the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision guaranteeing women legal access to abortions, coalitions of conservative religionists formed in opposition to the growing “crisis” in American culture. Along with veteran political strategists, prominent figures such as Jerry Falwell and Ed McAteer formed national organizations (the Moral Majority and the Religious Roundtable, respectively, in these cases) that aimed to unite conservative Protestants with Jews and Catholics to influence national politics. This resurgence of the Religious Right did not so much signal a new movement as it did a renewal within the older tradition of conservatism.

Throughout the 1980s, these organizations, along with the Religious Right’s extensive network of television and radio stations, linked conservatives from various traditions in the effort to influence government policy. This drive for representation peaked with Pat Robertson’s failed presidential candidacy in 1988. In the aftermath of his campaign, Robertson and young strategist Ralph Reed formed the Christian Coalition, a networking organization, and shifted their focus to the grassroots and the local arena. It is this constellation of traditions and organizations whose presence is most acutely felt in the present era.

### Issues and Organizations

Conservatives often focus on specific issues that reflect the broader concerns noted above. Further, these specific critiques are often developed and articulated by large organizations. The goals of these groups are not always shared by the “everyday” practitioners they claim to represent, and conservative religions cannot therefore be seen as monolithic. Nonetheless, generally recognizable themes emerge from a number of specific areas of concern.

In foreign policy, support for a strong military has generally accompanied the notion that the United States is religiously and politically unique. This was especially so during the Cold War, when Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish conservatives urged containment of “godless” communism. Of particular importance for many conservatives is the status of Israel, a nation central to the apocalyptic speculation that has

once again become popular as conservatives adapt eschatological theory to modern times.

Changing patterns of culture and the growth of the women's movement since the 1960s have restructured gender relations and also catalyzed religious conservatives. Public figures such as Phyllis Schlafly and Beverly LaHaye have voiced conservative support for "natural" gender roles and the patriarchal "nuclear family" while denouncing abortion rights, homosexuality, and the women's movement as a collective "attack on the family." LaHaye's Concerned Women for America led conservative opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s. Mainstream conservative groups have also opposed abortion rights, though not as vocally as more militant groups such as Operation Rescue or the Lambs for Christ. An evangelical men's movement, Promise Keepers, has defended conservative conceptions of gender and the family since the early 1990s, receiving unexpected support from the culturally conservative Nation of Islam.

Religious conservatives are unambiguous proponents of free-market capitalism, favoring little to no government influence in the economy. Most believe that the market allows individuals to maximize their unique abilities, that it provides a measure of social control, and that it can ensure equality for all. Philanthropy provides adequate maintenance of the poor, according to this view. The Religious Right is less sanguine about global capitalism, however, worrying that it could jeopardize American interests.

Conservative evangelicals are also concerned about public education, which they criticize for introducing their children to immoral influences, for promoting the "religion" of secular humanism, and for failing to give proper moral guidance to students. They have often sued local school districts for violating their constitutional rights and have increasingly resorted to either parochial schooling or home-schooling as alternatives to public education. The Home School Legal

Defense Association has aided many conservative families in these pursuits.

Religious conservatism in the new century shows no signs of flagging. A presence that can speak in a singular voice but is also quite diverse, it will continue to have a role in American politics for the foreseeable future.

—Jason C. Bivins

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African American Religions: African Americans and Islam; Catholicism in America: Public Catholicism; Judaism in America: Politics and the Identity of American Jews; Protestantism in America: Evangelicalism and Gender; Ritual and Performance: Civic and Political Ritual Performance; Science: Evolution; Sexuality: Abortion, Sexual Identities; Violence: Apocalypticism

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## FEMINISMS

Feminisms play a significant, contradictory, and surprisingly complex role within U.S. religious cultures. Feminist scholars and activists have convincingly critiqued the role of organized religion in supporting and perpetuating restrictive gender roles for women, making norms of male dominance and female submission seem “natural” and divinely ordained. Most U.S. religions limit women’s participation and bar women from leadership, even while depending on them for a substantial portion of religious work. As a result, feminists argue, the biases of the predominantly male leadership have been inextricably woven into the very fabric of religious doctrine and ritual. At the same time, feminist forays into religion and religious feminisms have empowered women to seek change within their lives and within their religious tradition—meaning not just the religious temple, mosque, or church, but the history and culture surrounding it. Religious feminisms have shown that whether religion is oppressive or liberatory depends on the particular circumstances, social location, and historical context in which it exists.

Feminisms encompass a range of struggles against gender inequality emerging at various points in U.S. history across all religious cultures; these critiques may or may not be connected to overt political organizing, and usually they interact with other struggles of race, class, sexuality, or nation. *Religious* feminisms are not necessarily synonymous with women in religion, or even with women leaders in religion. Indeed, religious women have often played significant roles in resisting feminist innovations. Since the initial colonization of North American lands in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Christianity has maintained a dominant role in American history and ideology; accordingly, feminist critiques have tended to focus on the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Native American women’s religions have proven least adequately served by feminist theories. As both practitioners of Christianity and survivors of a genocidal Christian evangelism, Native American women bring a complex history to feminist theorizing in religion. They continue to live a range of religious traditions—from adopted Catholicism or Protestantism to indigenous tribal cosmologies and rituals or a syn-

cretic mix of both—based on particular tribal history and location. Native spiritualities have most successfully resisted the imposition of the Euro-American religious dichotomies and hierarchies that permeate the dominant Christian tradition. Indigenous religions offer origin stories of creative and powerful female spirits—Ts’its’i’nako, or Thought Woman, of the Keres Pueblo; Hard Beings Woman of the Hopi; ‘Isanaklesh of the Apache, for example—and woman-centered ancestries (matrilineages) that mediate gender stratification for native women. Religious struggles for Native American feminists remain embedded within the struggle for individual and tribal well-being.

Within the Judeo-Christian tradition, feminists have made pointed critiques of religious histories, texts, doctrine, and leadership—including the biblical interpretation of Eve as temptress and betrayer of mankind, Christian church father Tertullian’s description of women as “the devil’s gateway,” and the Orthodox Jewish daily blessing thanking God “who did not make me a woman.” In the nineteenth century, only a few denominations, such as the Congregationalists (United Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ), the Universalists, and the Pentecostal Holiness church, ordained women (as early as 1853). By the mid-twentieth century, women were fully authorized to minister within the Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal (AME), Methodist, Presbyterian, Church of God, and Reform/Reconstructionist Jewish traditions. In the present day, numerous religions still restrict women’s participation and bar them from leadership roles, including Catholicism, Islam, Greek Orthodoxy, Southern Baptist groups, Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Orthodox Judaism, and many branches of Pentecostalism.

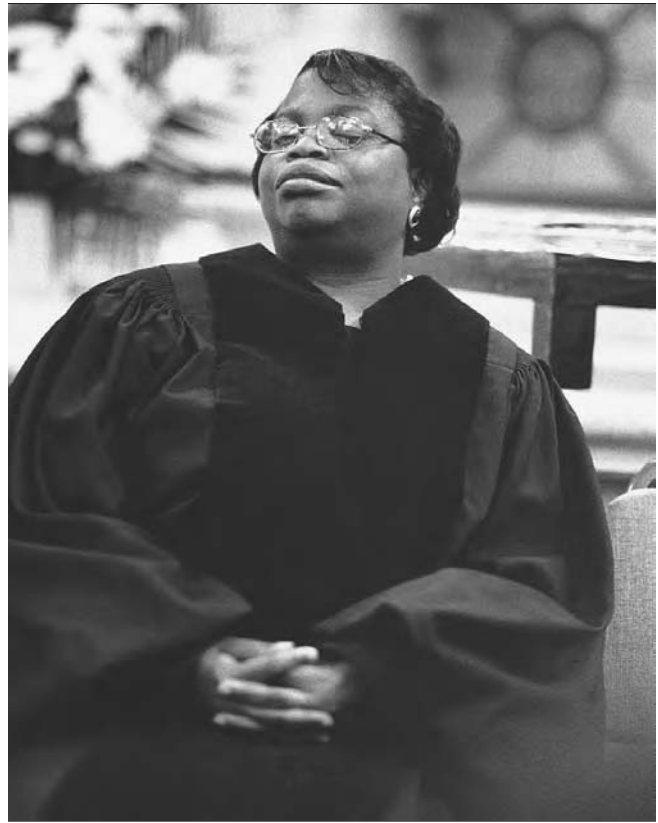
Yet there have always been individual women in American history who conceived and developed their own feminist arguments by drawing upon their respective religious traditions. Seventeenth-century nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, for example, is often called “the first feminist of the Americas” for insisting upon Catholic women’s right to higher education and theological studies. In the early nineteenth century, African American Methodist Jarena Lee waged a protracted battle with her church for her right to preach,

arguing, “Did not Mary *first* preach the risen Saviour, and is not the doctrine of the resurrection the very climax of Christianity?” (Lee 1988, 12). In the late nineteenth century, well-known white feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton attacked Christianity as a central purveyor of women’s subordination. She chose to fight fire with fire, commissioning a committee of scholars and activists to conduct a revised reading of the biblical texts. This effort resulted in the publication of *The Woman’s Bible* in 1892. And in 1921, Martha Neumark argued (unsuccessfully) for her right to ordination after completing her rabbinical degree at Cincinnati’s Hebrew Union College.

A handful of women leaders in marginal religious traditions succeeded in launching more inclusive denominations, however, such as Quaker cofounder Margaret Fell and Shaker founder Ann Lee. Nevertheless, seventeenth-century Puritan Anne Hutchinson was excommunicated for preaching the earthly and spiritual equality of men and women. Hutchinson was relatively fortunate—other women of her time who challenged ministerial authority were executed as heretics or witches. Most of these innovative women worked in isolation at great personal cost, ignored, if not silenced, by their respective denominations.

Institutional religious structures have not produced much in the way of feminist analyses, despite the fact, according to historian Ann Braude, that women constitute “the backbone of the vast majority of well-established religious groups whose values constitute the status quo of American morality” (Braude, 1997, 90). Braude found that despite the consistent support for these “mainstream” institutions among women, women’s innovations are more likely to be considered a fundamental threat rather than a boon to the patriarchal institution. Thus, women’s roles are less likely to be documented or even acknowledged, and they are many—women serve as teachers, educators, social workers, charity workers, administrators, cooks, and cleaning staff.

It is at the margins of major religious traditions in the United States that we more often see women actively participating in leadership roles. In the nineteenth century, for example, Spiritualists were a uniquely feminist crowd who believed that men and women were equal in authority. Female spiritual mediums directly channeled the spirit world with their bodies and voices, superficially conforming with



The Rev. Deborah Henry during services, Harlem, New York, 1999 (Bob Gore/Corbis)

dominant gender norms as the “weaker sex” while assuming a religious role that gave them a significant public voice and encouraged them to assert control over other arenas of their life (Braude 1989). Contemporary female practitioners of Haitian voodoo assume a central leadership role when they are possessed by African spirits, according to religious studies scholar Elizabeth McAlister. In this syncretic system of Catholicism and voodoo, Haitian women hold great authority.

Many feminists have chosen to work within their institutional traditions for reform or for some mitigation of women’s exclusion. Women’s organizations in the black Baptist church played significant roles at several crucial moments in African American history. Meetings gave African American women a regular forum in which they could organize as black women, developing critiques of white domination as well as predominantly male leadership. They built an extensive grassroots network that made the church a powerful institution of racial organizing (Higginbotham 1993). Roman Catholic nuns have also long been un-

acknowledged “institution-builders” of the Catholic Church, running schools, hospitals, parishes, and social service organizations. Las Hermanas, a Latina/Latino feminist group, has worked since the early 1970s to address ethnic, gender, and class discrimination in the church (Medina 1998). Sister Joan Chittister, a Benedictine activist, works in ecofeminism, human rights, women’s ordination, and global feminism; Sister Jeannine Gramick, cofounder of New Ways Ministry in Washington, D.C., was “silenced” by the church in 1999 for her work ministering to gay and lesbian communities.

In all of these cases, women have made feminist critiques of religion from different social locations, circumstances, and historical moments. In the history of the U.S. feminist movement, there have been consistent linkages between religion and feminist gains.

Feminist historians date the political birth of feminism in the United States to the nineteenth-century antislavery movement, when black women and white abolitionist women developed a tentative coalition. During this “first wave” of organizing, individual women’s critiques began to develop into a more broad-based political movement. Some feminists were able to draw on their religious background to support their case. African American Maria Stewart directly invoked her biblical predecessors—Deborah and Mary Magdalene, among others—as she justified her right to speak publicly against slavery. White feminists Sarah and Angelina Grimke also drew on biblical principles and a Quaker faith as they argued for universal human rights and the fundamental moral inconsistency of slaveholding. The arguments later provided a crucial link to women’s rights. Angelina wrote, “I know nothing of men’s rights and women’s rights. For in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female” (Kirkpatrick 1985, 437).

With the “second wave” of the women’s movement since the 1960s, feminist work in religion flourished as women entered theological schools and seminaries in increasingly significant numbers and encountered male bias throughout various levels of their religious denominations. Most feminists enacted a variety of responses depending on their situation. Radical feminists, largely rejected from patriarchal religious institutions, often turned to paganism, Wicca, or various forms of secular humanism. More conservative feminists tended to work within their institutions for grad-

ual change while affirming the sacred mission of the tradition. And some feminists simply accepted their tradition as flawed, choosing to honor its faith and history despite patriarchal imperfections.

Some women, such as Starhawk, turned to Wiccan practices of female-centered Goddess Spirituality, drawing from Celtic and Mediterranean history and myth. Catholic theologian Mary Daly launched a major critique of the Catholic Church with her 1968 book, *The Church and the Second Sex*. She later left the church altogether to create a radical feminist spirituality. Islamic feminists turned to history to study the example set by the Prophet Muhammad and his first convert—his wife A’isha—and by Fatemeh al-Zahra, daughter of the Prophet, who lectured and taught women and men in mosques and schools. Fatima Mernissi found that male Muslim leaders had used legal texts to sacralize gender differences to exclude women from the exercise of religious power.

Feminist theories of interpretation (hermeneutics) became increasingly important as scholars brought new intellectual rigor to religious texts. Feminist biblical scholars offered new readings of the Hebrew Bible creation story and reconstructed the historical context of the New Testament. Rosemary Radford Ruether critiqued “sexism and god-talk” in Catholicism but remained within the church. She went on to produce an important series of volumes on women in religious history. Judith Plaskow theorized the reconstruction of Jewish life through new midrash and prayers as well as through new rituals such as Rosh Hodesh, a women’s “new moon” holiday. Finally, Protestant theologian Letty Russell reexamined biblical texts, identifying a “prophetic principle” that could be used to read the Bible against itself.

Feminist theologians and ministers also developed new methods and theologies and reconfigured doctrine and ritual. Historian Bernadette Brooten found persuasive evidence of ancient women leaders in Jewish synagogues. Catholic scholar Mary Hunt founded a feminist liturgy group that offered innovative “Women-Church” rituals. Rita Nakashima Brock wrote a female-centered Christian “theology” that drew creatively from her own Christian and Japanese Buddhist background. Christian evangelicals Letha Dawson Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty defined themselves as biblical feminists, founding the Evangelical Women’s Caucus and developing a “women’s lib for

Christian women.” Radical feminists and Wiccans also developed rituals and prayers that affirmed the sacredness of women’s lives at particular moments—a celebration for first menstruation, “Be-Friending” to acknowledge women’s deep friendships, and a “crone” ceremony to celebrate the wisdom and experience of old age.

Feminists looked beyond institutional structures to find new sources of religious meaning within the entirety of women’s lives and experiences. For feminists, art, literature, and myth all became sites of innovation with which women could reclaim a feminist history of religion. Extensive traditions of gospel and blues music among African American and white southern communities offer rich insight into southern religious cultures. Jean Humez has studied women’s quilts and sewing for a feminist reconstruction of Southern Baptist theology. Studies of home altars among Mexican American and Italian Catholics offer insight into women’s active mediation of their own, and their families’, spiritual welfare, refuting stereotypes of women’s religious passivity within the patriarchal Catholic Church. Also common among Buddhist and Hindu Asian-American women in the United States, the altar is a uniquely female space in which women performed their daily and seasonal rites.

The move to look beyond institutional structures has been particularly important for religious feminists of color, who have historically had less access to institutional resources. Women of color launched a series of critiques challenging the assumptions of the predominantly white Christian feminists of the second wave. African American feminists offered rereadings of the biblical story of Sarah and her maid Hagar, the rejected slave who carried God’s favor. Chicana feminist Cherrie Moraga critiqued Mexican-American Catholicism as a primary collaborator in Chicana/Chicano sexism. And Nam-Soon Kang identified a heritage of Confucian attitudes embedded in Korean Christianity that inhibited the development of women’s religious lives.

At the same time, white lesbians and lesbians of color have also begun articulating feminist theologies that acknowledge and affirm women as sexual beings. Ignored, if not condemned, by virtually every major religious tradition, religious lesbians faced extraordinary conflicts when they sought to maintain their religious affiliations. Their struggle for recognition

within various traditions raised new questions about marriage, relationships, gender, and family, not only for homosexuals, but for heterosexuals as well. White feminist Carter Hayward articulated the struggle well in her book’s title: *Our Passion for Justice: Images of Power, Sexuality, and Liberation* (1994). She theorized a connection between spiritual passion and sexual passion—a human state of “yearning” that epitomized the relationship with the divine. African American lesbian feminist Audre Lorde made a similar point when she reclaimed the “erotic” as the power of joy, a spiritual resource, affirmation of self, and a divine connection. Chicana lesbian feminist Gloria Anzaldúa reconceptualized her ethnic and religious identity. By grounding her identity within an Indian women’s history of resistance, she directly linked the indigenous Mesoamerican goddess Coatlicue to the Catholic Virgin of Guadalupe and to herself, “the Godwoman in me, the divine within” (Anzaldúa 1987).

Issues of gender, race, sexuality, and nation continue to shape religious feminisms into the new century. Some of the work is painful, reconciling patterns of injustice and the need for healing. New pastoral training guides, for instance, incorporate issues once silenced—sexual assault, domestic violence, marital rape, sexual abuse, and clerical abuse. Religious feminists work on multicultural liturgies, antiracism workshops, community organizing, ordination struggles, and inclusive language, among other issues. Meanwhile, new waves of feminists, among both whites and women of color, continue to develop feminist theories and spiritualities across lines of difference.

—Susana L. Gallardo

#### SEE ALSO

African American Religions; African American Christianity; Catholicism in America: Our Lady of Guadalupe, Vatican II; Judaism in America: Politics and the Identity of American Jews; Latina/o Religious Communities; Material Culture; Native American Religions and Politics; New Age: Goddess Spirituality, Wicca; Generations: The Family; Sacred Space: The Suburban Home; Sexuality: Sexual Identities

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## FUNDAMENTALISM

Fundamentalism is the activist affirmation of specific beliefs and practices that define a religion in an absolutist and literalist manner. Fundamentalism involves an effort to reform the doctrines and behaviors of religious persons in accordance with what the fundamentalists themselves believe to be the essentials of their religion. Typically, fundamentalists attempt to formulate these ideals and then apply them to themselves and to others within their religion. As fundamentalists interpret texts, they do so with a desire to avoid compromise or thoroughgoing academic scrutiny of those texts and the other foundations of their ideas. In a number of cases, one salient component of religious fundamentalism involves fundamentalists taking active political roles in their efforts to shape society in accordance with their visions. Fundamentalism usually entails a number of features, including great religious passion, a defiance against secular and/or colonialist cultures, and a return to traditional sources of religious authority. American forms of fundamentalism exist within a number of religious communities, including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism and play significant roles in American culture. In the cases of Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism, the interrela-

tionships between forms of fundamentalism in the United States and their correlates in non-Western countries are varied and complex.

Originally, fundamentalism designated a distinct movement within Christianity that constituted a response to the development of Christian modernism or liberalism. One of the foundations of Christian liberalism was an acceptance of biblical criticism, a method of investigating the Bible that operated on the notion that it could be subjected to scholarly analysis just like any other historical document. Biblical criticism (which began to develop among scholars in nineteenth-century Europe) created a situation where those who accepted some or all of its conclusions (that is, liberals, or modernists) came to reformulate their Christian perspectives in light of this approach. Christian fundamentalism was, in part, a reaction against this kind of scholarship and the doctrines it entailed. Fundamentalists affirmed a whole set of traditional Christian teachings in the face of biblical criticism, new scientific theories, and other dramatic changes in twentieth-century American life.

The Christian fundamentalist position was initially articulated in a series of booklets published between



1909 and 1915 called *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, in which a group of conservative Christians defined what they believed to be the most essential beliefs of Christianity. These beliefs included the idea that: (1) The Bible is the inerrant word of God; as such, it is a fully accurate historical document and contains all the teachings necessary for the Christian life; (2) the entire Bible is scientifically and rationally verifiable and wholly without error; (3) Jesus was really born of a virgin; (4) Jesus' miracles were historically true as set forth in the New Testament; (5) those who have faith that Jesus died for their sins and that he actually was resurrected from the dead will be granted eternal life; (6) "True Christians" are to condemn various modern "heresies," such as those represented by Christian liberals or modernists, Mormons, Christian Scientists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Spiritualists; (7) it is incumbent on all Christians to preach the gospel to non-Christians so that none will spend an eternity in hell.

In the 1920s, Christian fundamentalism became the foundation for "creation science," which articulated the fundamentalist understanding that the world was created in six days, exactly as stated in the Book of Genesis. This belief was at the center of the so-called Scopes Monkey Trial in Dayton, Tennessee, in July 1925. Fundamentalist creationists took John T. Scopes, a young high school teacher, to court on charges that he had defied Tennessee's antievolution law. William Jennings Bryan, a well-known populist politician of the day, argued a theological and religious defense of creationism while Clarence Darrow, the attorney on the opposing side, attempted to use modern biology and a more liberal biblical interpretation to defend his client. Scopes was judged guilty. One reason that this trial is significant in the history of American Christian fundamentalism is that it was one early event that placed the movement on the national stage and exhibited the influence that fundamentalism could have on American law and society.

Throughout much of the twentieth century, Christian fundamentalism grew both as an independent movement (with the rise of nondenominational fundamentalist churches) and as a theological perspective. It had a noticeable impact on segments of major Christian denominations such as Presbyterianism, Methodism, and the Baptist tradition. Christian fundamentalism has been prominent in the public sphere

from the 1970s until the present as fundamentalists such as Jerry Falwell and members of groups such as his Moral Majority began articulating their positions with respect to a number of social and political issues. These stances have included their opposition to abortion, premarital sex, gay and lesbian rights, pornography, and the "welfare state" and their advocacy of prayer in public schools, the teaching of creationism, capital punishment, and U.S. support of Israel. Christian fundamentalism continues to have a substantial influence on the doctrines of numerous American churches, and fundamentalist Christian voices are often heard in the media. News reports about their public demonstrations, such as the public protests they often stage against abortion, appear frequently.

For many years, people utilized the term "fundamentalism" as a way of referring only to this particular type of Christianity. Beginning in the 1970s, as Americans and other Westerners became cognizant of religious and political resurgence among adherents to religions other than Christianity, they started to apply the term "fundamentalism" to religious activism in non-Western countries and to non-Christian religious resurgence in such places as the United States.

Some scholars and journalists have applied the term to certain movements within Islam. The antecedents of contemporary Islamic fundamentalism are rooted in a whole series of Islamic reforms among a renewal movement called the Wahhabis who initially were most active in the eighteenth-century Arabian Peninsula. Additionally, during the nineteenth century, various Islamic reform movements in North Africa, the Middle East, and India set the patterns for Islamic fundamentalist structures and ideologies. Various twentieth- and twenty-first-century Islamic fundamentalist groups (such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas in the Middle East and Jama'at-i Islami in South Asia) share certain commonalities in their worldviews: (1) They are ardently anti-Western in many respects because they believe that Western countries have introduced a host of corrupt influences into majority Muslim countries; (2) they advocate a return to what they have described as all the basic principles of the Qur'an and the hadith, the sacred texts of Islam; (3) they believe that Islamic law, or *shari'a*, must constitute the basis for Islamic governments everywhere and that Muslims must overthrow secular governments in their countries and replace



Jerry Falwell speaking in front of an American flag, 1980  
(Bettmann/Corbis)

them with Islamic ones; (4) they typically have strong empathies with the Palestinians and believe in the creation of an autonomous Palestinian state; (5) they hold fast to the notion that Islam dictates the basic notions of personal morality; consistent with this idea, they believe that Islam provides very specific injunctions for all aspects of life. These include strict rules governing gender relations, dress codes, divorce and marriage law, and absolute prohibitions against such things as alcohol consumption, gambling, music, and dancing.

Islamic fundamentalism has its roots in Islamic countries. In some respects, applying the term to Muslim communities in America is problematic because their circumstances are so different from Muslims living in majority Muslim nations. Yet, it seems that in the writings of a number of Muslims living in the United States and other Western countries, there have emerged ideas that in many ways overlap with those of numerous Islamic fundamentalists in the ma-

majority Muslim world. The Islamic fundamentalist literature that is specifically geared toward Muslim audiences in America and the West is sold through a variety of Muslim bookstores, the Muslim Student Association, the Islamic Society of North America, and American Trust Publications, among other venues. A number of the writings that are produced or made available by these sources in the United States are similar to Islamic fundamentalist literature in the majority Muslim world in that both encourage a literalist reading of the Qur'an; they have a tendency to idealize the early Islamic communities of the seventh and eighth centuries; they stress specific Islamic dress codes; and they reject Western-style critical and scholarly approaches to the Qur'an. One of the significant differences between Islamic fundamentalist ideas in the majority Muslim world and those found in the United States is that among most American Muslim immigrant communities, there is usually little emphasis on the idea of overthrowing the U.S. government and replacing it with an Islamic one. According to recent estimates, there could be as many as 4.1 million Muslims living in the United States. As the power of American Muslims increases, it is likely that their perspectives on a number of issues—particularly with respect to civil rights and the free exercise of their religion—could transform and reinvigorate certain key aspects of American culture.

Applying the term “fundamentalism” to certain aspects of Judaism may well be as controversial as applying it to specific movements in Islam. For scholars who use this term with respect to strands within Judaism, they commonly apply it to a collection of groups, which are often referred to as the ultra-orthodox or *haredim*. One such ultra-orthodox Jewish “fundamentalist” group that has had a substantial impact on Israeli political life and has ties to some Jewish supporters in the United States is the Gush Emunim (or the “bloc of the faithful”). This group was established by and continues to receive large amounts of support from a small number American Jews living inside and outside of Israel as well as other Jewish Israelis. Similar in some ways to other ultra-orthodox Jewish fundamentalist groups, Gush Emunim believes that: (1) all Israelis should become Orthodox Jews, a branch of Judaism that, among other things, demands observance of 613 religious laws from the Torah that regulate every aspect of Jewish life; (2) the period of King

David's rule (in the tenth century B.C.E.) constituted Israel's "Golden Age" and it is the task of all contemporary Israelis to reinstitute the pride, power, and glory of the Davidic period; (3) Israel's borders should be expanded to include the region encompassing contemporary Israel, Gaza, the Golan Heights, and the West Bank, which members of the Gush refer to as Judea and Samaria, the biblical names for those regions; (4) in order to claim the land that God promised to the Jewish people, Israelis must aggressively settle all the lands that the Israeli army occupies and forcibly expel Palestinians and Arabs from this land whenever necessary; (5) negotiated peace agreements with the Palestinians and other peoples must have a lower priority than Israeli efforts to repossess all the land that God promised them in the Bible.

The religious and political endeavors of American rabbi and activist Meir Kahane, who was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1932, coincided in many respects with those of the Gush. Rabbi Kahane founded the Jewish Defense League (JDL) in 1968 to combat anti-Semitism in the United States and other parts of the world. He led efforts to combat attacks against Jews in Brooklyn (some of these actions resulted in his arrest), and he raised Americans' awareness regarding the plight of millions of Jews in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Kahane succeeded in opening the doors for thousands of Russian Jews to depart from the former Soviet Union to Israel and the United States. In 1971, Kahane immigrated to Jerusalem and, in addition to advocating a number of other Jewish fundamentalist principles, supported the continued spread of Orthodox Judaism among Israelis and the ongoing immigration of Russian Jews to that country. In 1984, Kahane founded the small but powerful "ultra-orthodox" Kach Party in Israel, which backed the expansion of Jewish settlements in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza. He was assassinated by an Egyptian American in 1990.

Although applying the term "fundamentalism" to Hinduism can also be a problematic endeavor, it is typically used to refer to so-called Hindu nationalist groups such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, or National Volunteer Corps), the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, or Indian People's Party), and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP, World Hindu Council). These groups, founded at various times during the twentieth century, oppose, among other things,

the decline of Hindu influence and political power in Indian society.

One of the main principles in the Hindu nationalist worldview is the concept of *Hindutva*, which involves the idea that virtually everyone who has ancestral roots in India is a Hindu and that collectively all Hindus, no matter their differences, constitute one nation. Hindu nationalist groups typically call on all Hindus to eradicate their differences and to realize the greatness of their past in the regeneration of Hindu society. This form of Hindu nationalism is typically directed against secularist political ideologies and other political movements in India, which, in the view of the nationalists, give excessive power to non-Hindu groups. Hindu nationalist groups, in their political pronouncements and advertising, commonly quote passages from Hindu sacred texts, encourage the reestablishment of true "Hindu morality," promote the continued adherence of Hindus to their beliefs and practices, and, while shunning Western cultural influences, welcome Indian economic cooperation with Western countries.

In the United States, those Indians who identify themselves as Hindu nationalists typically contribute financially to the BJP, the most powerful Hindu nationalist party in India. Hindu nationalists in the United States are often the ones who support such organizations as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America, which publishes literature on the "Hindu way of life," arranges seminars and lecture tours for visiting Hindu religious leaders, provides family counseling with a "Hindu outlook" on life, and operates social service projects, mostly in India. The VHP's activities are often interwoven with messages that extol the glories of Hinduism itself, religion in India's past, Hindu sacred texts and myths, and the obligations that American Hindus have to "mother India." Hindu nationalists in America provided substantial financial and political support to the successful 1998 campaign of BJP Indian prime minister candidate Atal Bihari Vajpayee. It seems that the effects of Hindu nationalism on Indian politics and quite possibly American politics and social existence are just beginning to be felt.

—Jon Armajani

#### SEE ALSO

Hinduism in America; Islam in America; Judaism in America; Protestantism in America; Ritual and

Performance: Civic and Political Ritual Performances;  
 Science: Evolution; Sexuality: Abortion, Reproduction;  
 Violence; Violence: Terrorism

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## LAW

The law has been a double-edged sword to religion. Even though legal rules at times serve to protect religious traditions, at other times they have been designed to abolish them altogether. To understand the jurisprudence of religious freedom, a definition of what counts as a religion would be useful. Unfortunately, courts have not provided a uniform legal interpretation of religion; although judges originally required a theistic belief, eventually they relaxed the requirement, insisting only on a worldview based on ethical values significant to an individual, at least in some cases involving conscientious objectors to military service. A major question in the latter part of the twentieth century was whether new religions, or “cults,” deserved legal protection under the rubric of religious freedom.

The meaning of religious freedom has been tied to two clauses in the First Amendment to the Constitution, to state constitutional provisions, and to judicial interpretations of all of these. The scope and meaning of these formulations have been subject to divergent interpretations over time. After the U.S. Supreme Court incorporated the Free Exercise Clause, making it applicable to the states in 1940, it became the main formulation in American litigation on religious liberty.

### Church-State Relations

The extent to which religion influences the law in different cultures varies according to the type of political

system in which it exists. In a theocracy, religious principles usually shape the public policies enforced by the state. By contrast, in political systems in which there is a separation of church and state, secular governmental authorities are discouraged from basing their decisions on religious values. The difficulties associated with a “neutral” governmental stance are reflected in many public policy controversies.

In the United States, the proper relationship between church and state is governed by the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution, which says that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion.” The analysis of what degree of separation is required has been debated for many years. Courts have relied on “tests” as analytic devices to answer this question. According to the important *Lemon* test, devised in *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971), a case involving government financial aid to parochial schools, the U.S. Supreme Court set forth three criteria for assessing the constitutionality of a statute: (1) it has a secular purpose, (2) its principal or primary effect neither advances nor inhibits religion, and (3) it does not foster excessive governmental entanglement with religion. If a policy proved to be inconsistent with any one of these, it violated the Establishment Clause.

Throughout American history, Establishment Clause litigation has focused on placing religious symbols on public property. For instance, much con-

troversty has raged in metropolitan areas over displaying Nativity scenes, the cross, and plaques with the Ten Commandments. Concerns have also arisen over the constitutionality of school prayer, chaplains in legislatures, and state funding for parochial schools, whether for textbooks, teachers' salaries, or transportation. Some policies that are seemingly neutral, such as moments of silence and policies requiring equal time for creation science when evolution is taught, have been subject to challenge as well. In 2002, a controversy raged when a federal appellate court invalidated the Pledge of Allegiance as a violation of the Establishment Clause in the *Newdow* case. There is also the lesser-known question of whether local governments should permit Orthodox Jews to put string on public property to create an *eruv*, that is, a symbolic space within which they can "carry," an activity otherwise prohibited on the Sabbath (*Dundes* 2002, 45–50).

At times, religious minorities request an exemption from public policy because compliance would violate their belief system. Some argue that such exemptions run afoul of the Establishment Clause as interpreted by the Supreme Court. This type of argument is found in the debate over allowing Native Americans to use peyote in their religious ceremonies. When President Clinton issued an executive order to federal agencies stipulating that they take steps to protect sacred sites, critics raised this same objection. Of course, failure to grant exemptions arguably violates the right to religious freedom. The tension between the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses has endured as a constitutional conundrum.

### Religious Freedom

Although Americans have traditionally taken great pride in their constitutional order, that order has afforded relatively little protection to minorities. Cases involving the Mormons—for example, *U.S. v. Reynolds* (1878) and *Davis v. Beason* (1890)—have demonstrated the fragile status of religious freedom. During the late nineteenth century, the Supreme Court drew a sharp distinction between beliefs and actions, noting that although religious beliefs are absolutely protected under the Free Exercise Clause, religiously motivated actions are not. On a few occasions, however, the Court has ruled that actions are protected. For in-

stance, in *Sherbert v. Verner* (1963), a Seventh-day Adventist won a challenge to a denial of unemployment compensation; she had been denied benefits because she declined a position that required working on Saturdays. Justice William Brennan wrote: "Conditions upon public benefits cannot be sustained if they so operate, whatever their purpose, as to inhibit or deter the exercise of First Amendment freedoms. . . . To condition the availability of benefits upon this appellant's willingness to violate a cardinal principle of her religious faith effectively penalizes the free exercise of her constitutional liberties." In *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972), the Amish won an exemption from the state compulsory education law. After decades of litigation for the right to take their children out of public schools because they believed exposure to worldly values would undermine their way of life, they finally succeeded in securing an exemption. The Supreme Court's reasoning was that unless the state could demonstrate that the government interest in the regulation was of the highest order, when it impinged upon religious liberty, the statute would fail.

For many decades Native Americans were allowed to use peyote in religious ceremonies because of a congressional law authorizing the practice. However, individuals were accorded this right only if they were part of a federally registered tribe and official members of the Native American Church. A dramatic change in the law occurred in *Smith v. Oregon* (1990), a case involving Native American drug rehabilitation counselors who used peyote in the Native American Church. When they lost their jobs, they were denied unemployment benefits because Oregon prohibited payment to individuals using "controlled substances." Justice Antonin Scalia wrote the opinion that changed the standard for analyzing religious freedom under the Free Exercise Clause, thereby narrowing its scope. Instead of requiring courts to use the standard giving the most protection to religious liberty, Scalia lowered the "compelling state interest" test to the mere "rational basis test." As long as the law was not designed to target a religious group or burden the group merely as an incidental effect, it was not to be held unconstitutional.

In the aftermath of the *Smith* decision, a coalition of liberals and conservatives banded together to lobby Congress for the passage of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). Although the successful en-

actment of RFRA reestablished the more protective standard, it was only temporary, as the Supreme Court struck it down in *Boerne v. Flores* (1997) as a violation of separation of powers. The Court, not Congress, has the power to interpret the meaning of constitutional principles such as the free exercise of religion. All was not lost, though, as many states passed their own RFRA (Durham 1999).

Religious minorities have generally been prohibited from following traditions that endanger children. For instance, snake-handling groups have had to refrain from this custom (*Swann v. Pack*, Tennessee Supreme Court, 1986). Courts have routinely ordered blood transfusions for the children of Jehovah's Witnesses over their parents' religious objections. Christian Scientists are an exception: Statutory exceptions in all but a few states shield them from prosecution if they rely on faith healing and their children die.

Despite the challenges that religious minorities face in the United States, some defend it as the only country that offers religious communities serious protection. The leading religious scholar, John Noonan, praised the American system of justice as an exemplar for safeguarding religion: "Free exercise has added a luster to American democracy. The light has been reflected round the world" (Noonan 1998, 8).

### International Law

As the United States is a party to key human rights treaties, it is bound by global interpretations of religious freedom. Although there is no specific treaty on religious freedom, religion plays a central role in international human rights law. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) provides for "the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion" for all; it defines this right as the freedom of every individual "to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, and worship and observance."

The formulation in the declaration is thus broader than the U.S. interpretation of religious freedom inasmuch as it protects both beliefs and actions; it also protects the rights of atheists. Nevertheless, international law also accepts the proposition that religious practices may be subject to limits. Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

(ICCPR) contains a statement of religious freedom very similar to that in the UDHR, but in its third clause it includes a restriction limiting the right if it poses a threat to public health, morals, or safety. Thus, even though international law, at first glance, seems to afford greater protection to religion because it includes beliefs as well as practices, the restrictions provision calls that notion into question.

Article 18 in the UDHR, in perhaps its most controversial provision, explicitly mentions the right to change one's religion as an aspect of religious freedom. During the drafting of the UDHR, Islamic states objected to this clause. Saudi Arabia is said to have voted against the UDHR because the article condoned missionary activities and proselytizing. Consequently, when states drafted the human rights covenant, they decided to drop the right of an individual "to change his religion or belief" proposed by the UDHR and instead use wording ensuring the right of an individual "to have or adopt a religion or belief of his choice." The Human Rights Committee, the treaty body that enforces the ICCPR, has elaborated on its view of Article 18 in a policy statement disseminated as General Comment 22.

In the international arena, controversies have also centered on such issues as religious garb. Sikhs have challenged, unsuccessfully, employers' dress and grooming policies, which prohibit them from wearing symbols required by their religious beliefs—for example, turbans and beards. The Human Rights Committee, in *Bhinder v. Canada* (1995), decided that although the Canadian National Railway policy impinged upon Mr. Bhinder's religious belief that he had to wear a turban, the hard-hat regulation was justified by public safety considerations. The question of whether the right to religious freedom includes the right to proselytize has also arisen in international law. In *Kokkinakis v. Greece* (1993), a Jehovah's Witness, arrested more than sixty times for proselytism, and incarcerated several times as well, succeeded in persuading the European Court of Human Rights that the Greek law making proselytizing a criminal offense violated Article 9, the religious freedom provision of the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

With increasing migration in the early twenty-first century, political systems will have to come to grips with conflicts between the religious law of new ar-

rivals and the established state law. As the reality of legal pluralism, that is, the coexistence of multiple legal orders within the same geographical area, is acknowledged, the challenge will be to determine how much space to allow religious minorities. If the right to religious freedom is a fundamental human right, it cannot be limited simply because individuals migrate from one national political system to another. By the same token, if religious doctrine is used to legitimize violence, the state will have to impose limits.

—Alison Dundes Renteln

#### SEE ALSO

Native American Religions and Politics: Repatriation;  
New Religious Traditions: Christian Science, Mormonism;  
Death: Autopsies; Ritual and Performance: Prayer

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## LIBERALISM

Liberalism is so pervasive in U.S. history and can mean so many things—some of them in tension or contradiction—that at best it is possible to clarify a few of these meanings and map patterns of interaction between religious people and forms of liberalism that interest them. Broadly speaking, religious people are more likely to be associated with the term "liberalism" the more they rely on Enlightenment reason rather than communal traditions, stress individualist approaches to legal rights and cultural identities, advocate tolerance toward cultural pluralism and sexual difference, and stress either free-market or New Deal approaches to economics. This set of characteristics, however, is not a straightforward definition in its own right but a starting point for classifying different forms of liberal religious thought.

First, the classical liberalism of the emerging eight-

teenth- and nineteenth-century middle class must be distinguished from the reform liberalism of twentieth-century Progressivism, democratic socialism, and the New Deal. Classical liberals championed reason and various rights discourses (especially property rights and the freedom of conscience) against the traditions and prerogatives of the European feudal aristocracy. In the English-speaking world, they drew on the philosophy of John Locke and the economic theories of Adam Smith. Those who carry forward this banner promote free-market values and vilify reform liberalisms that use the state to regulate property rights and redistribute wealth toward the goal of a healthier community. They are now commonly described as laissez-faire conservatives. A historical logic unites classic and reform liberalisms, since reform liberalism arose largely from efforts to extend the logic of democracy

and reason championed by classical liberalism beyond traditional limits—for example, by extending voting rights beyond propertied white males or regulating the market more rationally. They are also united by a broad commitment to Enlightenment values and civil rights—a common ground easier to see in comparisons between liberal societies and the aristocracies they supplanted, thicker forms of socialism and communitarianism, or Islamist approaches to religion and law. Nevertheless, in common usage in the United States today, “liberalism” refers to New Deal liberalism, classical liberalism is now generally described as “conservatism,” and the two ideologies are considered polar opposites on the political spectrum.

Historians disagree about whether to describe the United States as predominantly or distinctively liberal. During the Cold War era, scholars such as Louis Hartz (1955) pointed out that the United States—unlike Europe—had lacked a strong feudal aristocracy. The bourgeoisie therefore did not have to struggle to defeat a privileged class, and instead, small farmers, shopkeepers, and writers, such as Benjamin Franklin and Horatio Alger, played significant roles in U.S. history. The resulting national character stressed freedom and individual economic opportunity, attitudes that stood in contrast to those of the Soviet bloc and the Old World that immigrants left behind. This tradition of identifying a liberal national character continues in books such as *Habits of Heart* (1985) by Robert Bellah and his associates, as well as in perceptions of civilizational conflict between a liberal West and the Islamic world. However, scholars have come to present liberalism less as consensual and more as a dominant culture—or perhaps just one thread within a dominant culture—in tension with alternative communities (such as enslaved African Americans, who hardly enjoyed liberal freedoms) and republican traditions more attuned to the common good. Cultural pluralism has largely displaced liberal hegemony as an organizing paradigm. Insofar as scholars still focus on the liberalism of the United States compared with other nations—as opposed to factors that cut across national boundaries such as race, sexuality, and empire—they pay less attention to comparisons with Europe and more to exploring how liberal nations of the North Atlantic (the United States and Europe together) relate to their colonies and neocolonial spheres of influence.

Comparisons between the United States and Europe remain interesting even after such reframing, and insofar as the fortunes of religion are part of such comparisons, it remains useful to describe the United States as distinctly liberal in the following sense. Building on religious pluralism that existed from the beginning of European conquest, the U.S. Constitution instituted what at the time was a sort of vanguard experiment with a free market in religious entrepreneurship—albeit one with sharp limits for people outside a white male Christian dominant culture. Some feared that it might also be a vanguard experiment in secularization, but in practice it created a framework in which U.S. religions tended to thrive, in comparison with European religions, in denominational forms and as ways to structure ethnic pluralism. One might describe this as a liberal framework, though it excluded many groups, notably Native Americans, and some groups that thrived within it wore the label “liberal” rather awkwardly—for example, Amish communities, conservative Roman Catholicism, and Orthodox Judaism. Questions about who is excluded and whether every political party, union, or social movement is internally liberal are legitimate concerns. Nevertheless, one might say that liberal pluralism in U.S. religion, like liberal interest-group politics, has in general distinguished the United States from theocracies and dictatorships around the world.

Associated with, yet distinguishable from, political liberalism are liberal philosophical arguments articulated by thinkers such as Immanuel Kant and John Rawls. These arguments imagine selfhood in terms of autonomous individuals and philosophy and law in terms of Enlightenment reason and civil rights. There is a broad fit between such arguments, on one side, and both classical liberal appeals to freedom of conscience and a “value-free” market, and reform liberal efforts to extend the realm of reason and democracy, on the other. Reform liberals often appeal to Rawls’s thought experiment for determining what rules should regulate political and economic competition. He imagined a set of individuals deliberating from a standpoint in which they did not know whether they would be born rich or poor and argued that they would recommend rules congruent with New Deal liberalism.

Notwithstanding the range of liberalisms and the rough fit among its meanings, many scholars distance



themselves from liberalism by using rhetorical wedges to widen fault lines among meanings of the term, then deploying the term in reference to the meanings they dislike. Reform liberals are equally prone to attacking liberal philosophy and self-consciously embracing the term. Those informed by postmodern cultural theory perceive universal truth claims and metanarratives about liberal progress as illusory and pernicious; they suggest greater attention to the standpoints of particular interpretive communities. Some see liberal conceptions of selfhood fomenting ideologies of self-reliance, which lead victims of injustice to blame themselves for their problems and reduce human rights discourse to the equal rights of rich and poor people to sleep under bridges. The left wing of reform liberalism vilifies “corporate liberalism” as a synonym for late capitalism and uses terms such as “the bourgeois family” and “bourgeois culture” as terms of abuse. Meanwhile, conservatives committed to classical liberal economics complain that liberal approaches to selfhood and authority undermine traditions and justify individualism run amok, offering only the impoverished resources of a naked public square to counter-veil against these problems.

Discourses building on Locke, Kant, and Rawls typically embrace some form of *secularism*—another term that refers to various things, from a minimal commitment to separating church and state while encouraging religion, through claims that the only surviving religions in modern societies are privatized, to a strong claim that religion is disappearing in both public and private forms. People who emphasize drawbacks that may result if religions embrace aspects of secularism—for example, an erosion of social consensus associated with religious toleration, unhealthy individualism arising from privatization, and a collapse of biblical authority from appealing to reason to settle religious disputes—often associate such drawbacks with liberalism while positing a zero-sum choice between authentic religions and liberal religions. For example, some evangelicals do not characterize liberal Protestantism as a valid form of Christianity but as a mere transitional stage on a slippery slope of secularization that leads from normative Christianity through religious privatization to institutional death.

Groups characterized in such ways—which may also include liberal Catholics, Reform Jews, parts of the New Age movement, and so on—typically object

that they are being judged according to definitions of religion that they do not share and that are inappropriate for modern people. They stress the fittingness of liberal religious forms for societies in which pluralism and gender equality seem important, in which the scientific method has proven its value, and so on. Often they counter by labeling their critics “fundamentalists” incompatible with liberalism—both irrational by Enlightenment standards and resistant to pluralism and religious freedom. Such labels have not always presented fundamentalists in their strongest possible light. This stance, in turn, has led conservatives to use “liberalism” as a term that connotes a “politically correct” elitism that fails to practice what it preaches about open public spheres for debate. The upshot is a discourse in which principled appeals to liberal values may be discounted as illiberal elitism, while conservatives appeal to liberal toleration to defend their own illiberal forms of political correctness.

Obviously, liberalism and U.S. religion intersect in many places. Classic loci include the Unitarian revolt against Calvinist conceptions of human selfhood and its potentialities, Reform Judaism, the Social Gospel and Civil Rights Movement, the modernist side of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, and spiritual explorations such as those that Bellah labeled “Sheilaism”—a term that refers to an interviewee who spoke about her own personal religion. In addition, there have been innumerable religious actors in wars and political movements with liberal dimensions, including the Civil War, the labor movement, and feminism. At a higher level of abstraction, evangelicals of many stripes may also be called “liberal” because of their emphasis on the individual’s relationship with Jesus and their tendency toward an individualist approach to the capitalist marketplace. This use of the term may seem counterintuitive because evangelical self-perceptions stress their distance from the New Deal, from liberal theological methods, and from some aspects of consumerism. Nevertheless, seen from a classical liberal viewpoint, the term fits.

Many scholars use “liberalism” as a term of abuse for approaches to social conflict and pragmatic policymaking that they consider sentimental and idealistic rather than tough-minded and realistic. The classic example is Reinhold Niebuhr’s attack on the Social Gospel and secular progressivism. Yet Niebuhr’s realism, which he claimed to attain through superseding

his naïve, youthful liberalism, featured a liberal conception of the self indebted to William James and passionate commitments to New Deal liberalism. It dovetailed with Hartz's liberal consensus approach to U.S. history—an approach that has come under sharp attack. Niebuhr was influential enough that an important locus for this attack, especially among scholars of U.S. religion, was a challenge to Niebuhr's authority. This challenge came from many directions, each with a different spin on liberalism: Conservative Protestants found him too liberal, feminists and other radicalizing voices in Protestantism found him too conservative, and a range of critics sought to decenter the discussion by moving beyond Niebuhr's liberal Protestant frame of reference.

The ambiguous status of the term "liberalism" in discourses about Niebuhr is just one example among many others of the pervasive morass of imprecision toward which the conflicting meanings of liberalism may lead, unless one vigilantly clarifies what senses of this word are being used in specific cases. The problem is compounded by a widespread sense that "liberal" is a term of abuse and/or self-loathing, even when it is used by people who might plausibly be characterized as liberals. Since liberalism remains a key dimension of U.S. culture even after all due qualification of consensus models, it is difficult to avoid becoming embroiled in such ambiguities. One can only hope to become wary and agile enough to thrive amidst the resulting complexities.

—Mark Hulsether

#### SEE ALSO

Catholicism in America: Public Catholicism; Judaism in America: Assimilation and Jewish Ethnicity; Generations: Baby Boomers; Material Culture: Christian Retailing; New Age; Protestantism in America; Science

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RITUAL AND  
PERFORMANCE



An older definitional strategy, both in academe and in popular parlance, was to cor- don off ritual from its supposed opposite, everyday life: Whatever else ritual was, it was not ordinary behavior; ritual was extraordinary, circumscribed, beyond the mundane. A more recent tendency is to define ritual relationally rather than oppositionally. Thus, ritual is akin to performance in general, to theater, dance, music, and other performing arts as well. In several disciplines—for instance, anthropology, religious studies, and performance studies—the word “performance” is enjoying a moment in the limelight. Scholars are speaking of ritual, even of religion, as performed. Moreover, they are looking at sporting events, academic conferences, business meetings, political rallies, and the like as modes of ritual and performance in American culture.

A few critics are already bent on nipping in the bud the tendency to speak so boldly and loosely. It is, after all, obvious, they say, that religion is one thing and performance another. They further argue that scholars who imply that ritual *is* performance or that religion *is* theater are employing sloppy analogies and creating a conceptual mess. Nervousness about too closely associating ritual with performance has a long history. European Christendom was nervous about both dance and theater. Actors, like prostitutes, were sometimes excluded from early church membership. The medieval church, which for a time tolerated and even nurtured plays, eventually put players back out on the streets. Theater was unruly, and dance was the essence of other peoples’ rites.

However secularized and pluralistic the contemporary Euro-American West may be, it is heir to this expulsion. As a result, Americans habitually segregate ritual and performance into separate camps. Because different social institutions are involved (the synagogue and the theater, for instance), Western scholars stash ritual and performance in different mental drawers and tend to ignore any connections that may exist.

But neither the dualistic strategy (ritual is *not* everyday life or theater) nor the equating strategy (ritual *is* performance) is very useful. It is more fruitful to articulate both the similarities and the differences between

ritual and performance and to eschew the martial acts of either forcing the one into subservience to the other or identifying the one with the other. In short, ritual and performance, though not identical, are similar. They are both ways of “acting,” and they are both closely related to other “actions,” such as play, sports, dance, healing, and music.

The use of the terms “acting” and “action” is deliberate. The gerund “acting” not only emphasizes the process over the static qualities of ritual and performance but also has two connotations: that of pretending, or playing a role (“She was *acting* the part of Queen Elizabeth”), and that of doing (“He was *acting* in good faith”). The first sentence carries the theatrical sense of the term; the second uses it as a synonym for “behaving.” Unlike the gerund “acting,” the noun “action” does not work both ways. One may say, “Her action was done in good faith,” but may not use the word to mean “pretending” or “playing the part of.”

The verb “perform” has a duality similar to that of “acting”: One might say, “She *performed* in *Aida*,” for example, or “He *performed* his jury duties with great integrity.” Of course, a single act can be performative in both senses, as when a doctor performs surgery in front of observing interns. When either term in its theatrical sense is applied to ritual, especially to religious rites, conceptual confusion is likely. Practitioners hear such usage as impugning the integrity of ritualists (participants in rites), as if speakers were saying: “He was *merely* performing the Mass” or “She was *only* acting the part of a *loa* (a Haitian spirit in voodoo).”

Theorist and theater director Richard Schechner (1977) tried to avoid this dilemma by defining performance as the “showing of a doing.” By his definition, both ritual and theater qualify as kinds of performance, although for him ritual performance emphasizes efficacy, whereas theatrical performance highlights entertainment. Thus, he theorized two types of performance (“showings of doings”): ritual (emphasizing efficacy) and theater (emphasizing entertainment).

Schechner’s conceptual move was helpful but insufficiently nuanced. For one thing, not many ritualists

would say their primary intention was to “show their doings.” More likely, they would claim they were *doing*, and that their doings may, incidentally, be seen. For another, if one uses the terms “showing” and “doing” carefully, some kinds of ritual—sequestered rites, for instance—would not be performances at all. To show such rites would be to violate them. Some kinds of performance are mere showing; they would not really constitute doings, if by this term one means social transformations. And some kinds of performance—for instance, voguing balls performed by African American and Hispanic American homosexual men—might be more accurately labeled “showings which are doings.” In short, when both terms are handled loosely, rendering *all* human activity as both showing and doing, the definition loses its utility. When both are handled strictly, not all rites are showings, and not all plays are doings.

Schechner’s conceptual move was similar to that of Erving Goffman, for whom performance was “all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some effect on the observers” (Goffman 1959, 22). Both Schechner and Goffman implied that *the* criterion for performance is action in front of others, a showing before an audience. Since human beings internalize the expectations of others (in effect carrying expectant audiences around in their heads), performance, by this definition, can occur even without the presence of a literal other.

Such a definition is useful in bringing out the performative dimension of all human activity, but it is not very useful in making distinctions among various genres of human activity. In the final analysis, any analytical tool consisting of a single polarity, such as the efficacy/entertainment dyad, may be a handy device for a quick discussion, but it is too blunt for extended or precise use.

Schechner also identified four performative genres—*aesthetic theater, sacred ritual, secular ritual, and social drama*—and compared and contrasted the differing ways in which they deploy space and time (Schechner and Appel 1990, 20–21). The resulting chart, replete with examples from around the globe, is a tour de force, hence his hyperbolic reference to it as “a figure for all genres.” Implicitly, the chart’s way of distinguishing aesthetic theater from sacred ritual

went beyond his earlier, simpler entertainment/efficacy dyad. Nevertheless, it still used only two components, space and time.

It is less confusing, perhaps, to use “action” rather than “performance” as a parent term and to use a distinctive verb for what ritualists do: They “enact” rather than “perform.” One can still hear in “enact” the kinship with “acting,” but the term’s main connotation, “putting into force,” serves as a reminder that there are distinctions between ritual and performance that ought not be occluded. Thus, in speaking precisely, we would distinguish two kinds of action or ways of acting: ritual enactment and dramatic performance.

A systematic comparison among several kinds of performance, such as those described in the other articles in this section, would be useful in bringing out their differences and similarities. Because of space constraints, however, two genres will have to do. The accompanying chart uses eleven components shared by ritual and drama, enactment and performance and points out some of their salient differences.

Rites and plays do not exist in the abstract but in particular forms in specific cultures and eras, so any theoretical comparison is bound to reflect examples in the back of the theorist’s mind. No one can take into account all kinds of ritual and all kinds of performance. So, for the sake of public intelligibility, the examples below are taken mainly from the Roman Catholic liturgy (an example of a dominant Western ritual), and mainstream proscenium theater (an example of a dominant Western performance mode). If one were to use, say, a California Buddhist liturgy and a Quebec folk dance performance as the determinative examples, the resulting typology would be different.

Another caveat: The more concrete categories, “Catholic” and “proscenium,” gloss over variations, so even this more precise way of naming them risks overgeneralization. The chart glosses over differences between periods of liturgical and theatrical history and minimizes continuities between ritual and drama for the sake of charting their respective differences. Likely, a specific Mass or play would only partly fit either column.

The chart’s list of eleven axes of comparison is not sacrosanct. These components do not represent all the facets of ritual and performance, and this way of slicing the pie bespeaks a specific cultural and histori-

Components	Performance (for example, Western proscenium theater)	Ritual (for example, the Roman Catholic Mass)
1. Actions	1.1a. Performance narratively organized into a plot animated by characters; 1.1b. preceded by actor-training and rehearsal; 1.1c. ultimate acts are imaginative.	1.2a. Enactment seldom narratively organized; action circular and redundant: a bricolage or collage of acts; 1.2b. preceded by spiritual preparation; 1.2c. ultimate acts are metaphysical.
2. Actors (Primary Participants)	2.1a. Actors pretending—playing roles as if they were real; 2.1b. costume conveys character; 2.1c. body trained and regarded as crucial.	2.2a. Participants, clergy and laity, expressing beliefs and denying role-playing; 2.2b. costume conveys office; 2.2c. body largely ignored and regarded as secondary.
3. Witnesses (Secondary Participants)	3.1a. Audience acting as spectators by virtue of paid admission and not integrally related to actors; 3.1b. favorable reception indicated by applause or standing ovation.	3.2a. Ritualists participating by virtue of shared values and tradition and functioning as congregation and/or community; 3.2b. favorable reception indicated by silence and compliments after the event.
4. Sources	4.1. Named artists such as playwrights, actors, and directors employed on the basis of skill and training and transforming everyday theatricalization into theater.	4.2. Anonymous sources such as the divine, tradition, or liturgical councils, as well as named sources such as founders or reformers, selected on the basis of calling and ordination, and transforming everyday ritualization into rites.
5. Scripts, Texts, & Scenarios	5.1. Plays transformed into scripts, sometimes with considerable improvisation and with maximal acculturation.	5.2. Liturgical texts enacted with little improvisation and with minimal acculturation.
6. Purposes & Functions	6.1a. Entertainment, increased cultural awareness, aesthetic appreciation, educating, social criticism; 6.1b. high purpose and social consensus eventuate in a classic.	6.2a. Attunement (praise and thanksgiving), transformation, facilitating salvation, affecting the cosmos, enhancing group survival, forming ethical values, inspiring moral action. 6.2b high purpose, venerable origin, and ecclesiastical consensus eventuate in a canon.
7. Criticism & Interpretation	7.1a. Theater: moderate need for interpretation; high susceptibility to criticism; 7.1b. drama critics writing criticism in newspapers to inform potential ticket-buyers; 7.1c. literary scholars writing interpretations of plays, playwrights, and theater history to inform students.	7.2a. Liturgy: high need for interpretation, low susceptibility to criticism; 7.2b. clergy offering homiletical interpretations of rites; 7.2c. theologians writing apologetic or dogmatic theology books and serving religious traditions by teaching in educational institutions.
8. Time-Space Orientation	8.1a. Stage or other performing space; 8.1b. set in chronological-social time.	8.2a. Sanctuary or other sacred space; 8.2b. set in mythic-seasonal or mythic-historical time.
9. Objects	9.1. Sets frame dramatic actions in space and time. Properties enhance characters.	9.2. Sacred artifacts used to attract and focus sacred power.
10. Language	10.1. Dialogical language used to express plot and character.	10.2. Formulaic language used to invoke, praise, or proclaim.
11. Institutional & Social Contexts	11.1. Star system inspired by the myth of stardom and driven by commodification of personae.	11.2. Hierarchical system inspired by the myth of apostolic succession and driven by the desire to save souls.





The Archbishop of Philadelphia celebrating Communion (James L. Amos/Corbis)

cal location. Even so, they usefully illustrate some of the central ways of analyzing ritual and performance. The differences and similarities between ritual and performance for each axis of comparison are noted below.

1. ACTIONS, physical and overt, are the *sine qua non* of ritual and performance. Both rites and plays depend on actions, but actors and ritualists “act” in different ways. Actors “perform” and ritualists “enact.” In performance, postures and gestures express the whole repertoire of human activity. By contrast, the postures and gestures of liturgical enactment are usually more limited. Liturgical rites select and elevate a very thin slice of the whole of human activity.

1.1a and 1.2a. Ordinarily, the action of mainline proscenium theater in the West proceeds narratively. A play has a plot that runs in basically linear fashion from the beginning, through the middle, to the end. Each phase is integral to the other, and the overall effect is cumulative. Sometimes the action is subdivided

into acts and scenes. If the action contains flashbacks or recollections, the audience follows the artists’ clues to piece the action together into the proper order to construct the whole story. Temporality, manifest as acts in sequence, is essential to mainstream Western drama.

Although ritual actions may refer to a narrative or enact fragments of one, rites are not necessarily or even typically narrative in form. Though rites, too, begin, persist for a while, perhaps reach a climax, and then end, their repetitiousness, redundancy, and circularity do not often make a good story. Even rites that are narratively structured lose their capacity to evoke suspense because they are usually repeated again and again—perhaps weekly or annually—by the participants who enact them. A rite may be dramatic by virtue of its grandeur or aspiration, but seldom by virtue of the suspensefulness of its “plot.” A game may have suspense, but strictly speaking, it does not have a plot. A dance may or may not have a plot.

1.1b and 1.2b. Actors prepare to act through actor training, which is long-range and general, and also by rehearsal, which is short-range and specific to the parts about to be performed. In rehearsal, tracks for performance are laid down: Lines are practiced, movements choreographed, techniques refined. Rehearsed actions have “brackets” or “quotation marks” around them; they are not the real thing. They are preparation, practice. Even though actors may get into real fights with their directors during rehearsals, rehearsal is “unreal” when compared with actual performance. (And performance, of course, is “unreal,” fictional, made up, in comparison with ordinary life.)

Although lack of spiritual preparation is not always thought to invalidate a liturgical enactment, spiritual preparation, the cultivation of proper intentions, is expected to precede enactment. Rites are less often rehearsed than theater. Even though weddings regularly are rehearsed and funerals seldom are, liturgical worship typically is not. Rather, one is trained to conduct it. The emphasis in liturgical rites is on spiritual rather than technical preparation, not because the execution of details is unimportant, but because those details are presumed to be known by virtue of training and repetition. Ritual preparation itself may be ritualized, as when officiants purify themselves by hand-washing or confessing before entering the arena of the main rite itself.

1.1c and 1.2c. The power of theatrical performance lies in its “brackets,” the fictionality with which dramatic acts are framed. Since dramatic actions are complete onstage, audiences are free to contemplate them without worrying that they will spill over their boundaries. Audience members can contemplate onstage murder without feeling obliged to call the police or suffer guilt because of their complicity with a violent deed. Audience members, by reflecting on or acting on the basis of plays, can continue in some imaginative sense the action begun onstage.

Whereas the ultimate acts of plays are imaginative, the ultimate acts of liturgies are metaphysical. The difference between the imaginative and the metaphysical leads some to consider onstage activity as penultimate rather than ultimate; thus, it can be confusing when dramatic actions are spoken of as ends in themselves or when liturgical acts are said to point elsewhere.

By contrast with drama, ritual action claims to be more rather than less than it appears. Liturgy, that is,

religious ritual, is said to mean etymologically “the work of the people.” When rites “work,” they effect things; they transform. Liturgical action is not completed in sacred space but elsewhere—in the face of the divine, in heaven, in everyday life, on the last day, and so on. Thus it reflects or effects divine action. We usually think of games in the same way as theater, namely, as detached from ends, but not always. Cherokee stickball games, for example, had an ultimate purpose, thus a liturgical function: to solidify connections with the powers of fertility.

When the actions of dramatic performances become predictable, theater has begun to move in the direction of ritual. The action of a play becomes predictable if it achieves the status of a classic that people see many times over (though by different actors and companies). Plays also become predictable, thus ritualized, by resorting to stock plots or character types that everybody recognizes.

Plays move in the direction of ritual in another way: when they threaten to spill over their boundaries, as was the case with Jean Genet’s *The Blacks: A Clown Show* when it was performed in the 1960s at St. Mark’s in the Bowery. Not only did the actors suggest that their play was merely a cover-up for the real actions going on out in the wings, but the black actors threatened to come offstage and confront the white audience.

When in theater the emphasis begins to shift away from rehearsal to actor training, something like “holy theater” (Jerzy Grotowski’s term) becomes possible. Such theater becomes ritualistic. Actor training, unlike rehearsal, is not preparation for a specific production but is generalized preparation of oneself. Theater begins the move toward ritual by attending to the mental, spiritual, and bodily conditions of actors, the processes that lie beneath and condition their abilities in rehearsal and performance.

Ritual action can move in the direction of theater in a variety of ways, as well. For example, a rite sufficiently improvised may be experienced as dramatic simply because participants are in suspense about what will occur next. Or a rite sufficiently embellished with pomp, color, and grandeur of scale may seem theatrical and, as such, may be judged as phony. When liturgists pay more attention to details of presentation and less to their own spiritual preparedness or that of their congregation, they have begun to

theatricalize liturgy. Liturgy can become theatricalized in many ways: It may seem to become merely a form of entertainment, work hard to attract the attention of the state or the media, or express a grand aesthetic sensibility. A theatricalizing move is also made by ritualists when they offer purely formal, noninstrumental interpretations of ritual activity. If liturgy is not magical, changing the behavior of the gods or protecting combatants from slaughter, it can seem playlike, noninstrumental. The harder it is to locate offstage effects—and transcendent ones are notoriously hard to locate—the more a liturgy can seem like play or a mere formality.

2. ACTORS are those who perform the most prominent or most important actions. The division of participants into primary and secondary is, of course, oversimplified. In both liturgies and plays, there may be other kinds of doers and spectators, so the point here is simply that there are degrees of active involvement as well as of expertise and prestige.

2.1a and 2.2a. The primary participants in a theatrical event are the actors, who initiate the dramatic action. Even among actors, there are often distinctions. Some are stars, while others are extras. Actors of both sorts pretend to be characters. Onstage, they act as if they are those characters. Offstage, however, they slip out of character to become themselves. Although actors may strongly identify with their characters, an actor is not the character whom she or he plays. Actors sometimes get stuck in a role, however, and are type-cast or become one-character actors. Great actors avoid such traps.

Liturgical celebrants are not supposed to “act” in the sense of “pretend.” Rather, they “act” in the sense of “do.” Even though they play roles in the sociological sense, they are not assigned roles in the theatrical sense. Ritual acts are supposed to express, or at least be consistent with, beliefs. If priests begin self-consciously to play roles, they may be headed for trouble. They are supposed to be chosen, called, and not entirely in command of their identity. In the parish, as opposed to the theater, theatricalized priestly role-playing would likely be interpreted as a moral violation or desecration.

Priestly roles are comparatively unchangeable, not options, much less positions held in an “as-if” mode. The role of priest is a calling divinely and ecclesiastically sanctioned. Liturgical roles are singular; some

would even say indelible, which gives them a status different from the roles assumed by an actor. An actor’s role, even if it is a “great” one, is subjunctive; it may be memorable, but it is far from indelible. For the sake of this model, priests are cast as primary participants; however, Vatican II redefined the primary liturgical actor as the community rather than the priest. In some cases, this may actually be the case; in others, it is perhaps a theological aspiration or pious wish.

2.1b and 2.2b. “A character” is not the same as “having character.” The former is a theatrical term; the latter, a moral one. An actor conveys *the* character of *a* character in many ways. One such way is costume, the externals of character. Costume is a mode of self-presentation, an external display of character, which Western audiences imagine as “moral fiber,” something constitutive of personhood. One can sometimes identify the “seams” in a rite by noticing its costume changes. In current Japanese weddings, kimonos are worn during the traditional sake rite, then brides and grooms change into contemporary dress for the meal, the cutting of the cake, and speeches.

Liturgical garb conveys office rather than character. It is not supposed to be a display of personal virtue, much less facilitate acting like another person, that is, playing a character. Though liturgical garments make their wearer “other,” such otherness is supposed to be ontological, not imaginative; they represent the function of office, not the result of personal charisma, ambition, or performative prowess.

Even after a priest is ceremonially ordained, he may not feel “priestly” until he *plays* priest by donning the externals of the calling. Having played priest, he may feel he is really a priest, even though his priesthood was already official before. On rare occasions, priests confess that they do not feel like priests without their collars or robes; at these times, they are recognizing the necessity of theatrics to their profession and to their own self-definition.

Actors who feel obligated to “dress the part” offstage or to otherwise play their stage parts in their normal social lives border on transforming a profession into a calling. When roles stick, identity begins to follow suit. Role-sticking amounts to a ritualization of acting.

2.1c and 2.2c. The central “tool” for portraying a character is an actor’s body. If a character is not skill-

fully embodied, no costume will create the illusion that the character is really present onstage. For this reason, Western actor-training is primarily, though not exclusively, training for the body. It concentrates on voice, posture, and gesture. Though such training may be attitudinal or psychological, the end product must be displayed in the body of the actor; the body is the primary theatrical “instrument.”

In some ritual traditions, the body is every bit as important as it is in theater, but in Roman Catholic liturgical tradition, the priestly body is considered secondary, if not irrelevant (except, of course, when it comes to the body’s gender). In traditions where spirituality is conceived as the opposite of bodiliness, then the body becomes, at worst, an obstacle, or, at best, a symbol of things transpiring on some plane other than the biological one.

Movie actors who attain the status of stars sometimes become “priests” of popular culture. The social dynamics of stardom can trap actors, or at least make their role definitions brittle; if allowed to grow unchecked, this tendency may begin to determine their identity. To *become* either what one plays or what one’s fans expect is to ritualize one’s life.

When actors begin to regard the body as a medium that can become “transparent,” thereby expressing “deep” psychological or even spiritual forces, they have begun to behave ritually. By contrast, when liturgists place increasing emphasis on choreographed posture and gesture as means of good communication, they have begun to import performative concerns that transform liturgical enactment into theatricalized display.

3. WITNESSES are typically located on the circumference or near the back of both theater and ritual; they are the masses, the recipients or consumers, of the primary actions. Without them, neither ritual enactment nor dramatic performance lasts long. Sometimes, there are reversals. Secondary ritual witnesses become primary ritual actors when a bride is kidnapped by friends, kin, or the groom’s family, for example.

As individuals, secondary participants are usually less trained and less knowledgeable than are primary participants. Secondary participants have sometimes been considered unnecessary to liturgical enactment. Prior to Vatican II, a priest did not require a congregation to celebrate Mass.

3.1a and 3.2a. Performance happens in the presence of an audience. Dramatic action assumes someone to perform “in front of.” Audience members, in this sense, are participants in the theatrical event. On one hand, they are primary: If they do not buy tickets and attend, actors will be forced to quit performing. On the other hand, during the theatrical event itself, audience members are secondary; the limelight is not on them. Comparatively speaking, the actors are active; the audience is passive. Actors “move,” whereas audience members “are moved.” Actors “give of themselves”; audience members “receive with appreciation.”

Whereas spectators and actors are accidentally related, liturgical officiants and congregations are integrally related. It is assumed that they share a common faith and practice. A congregation ought not be an audience attending in order to be entertained. Officiants ought not have as their primary aim pleasing congregants. In actual practice, a congregation may not be integral rather than accidental; it may be less than a community. The members may not be any more substantially related than a group of theatergoers (who sometimes share class, economic status, and cultural values). When a congregation is not a community but an audience, the tendency toward theatricalizing is strong: Congregants attend in order to watch what is going on or to hear what is being said. They become spectators, “audients.” In contrast, inhabitants of a small village who repeatedly attend some dramatic pageant or melodrama—neighbor sitting with neighbor, relative with relative, friend with friend—may be more of a congregation than the members of a church in a mobile, urban society.

3.1b and 3.2b. The most obvious social signal that witnesses constitute an audience rather than a congregation is the presence of applause, the usual way of showing appreciation. In contrast, silence and a choral response such as “Amen” are the conventional ways of displaying faith, as distinct from appreciation. Especially revealing are crossover situations, such as Leonard Bernstein’s *Mass*, a stage performance in the form of a Mass. After the conclusion of certain deeply moving numbers, many audience members clapped, while others crossed themselves.

4. SOURCES are the means of producing rites and plays. “Production” itself is an industrial metaphor, not an entirely appropriate label for either dramatic

or ritualistic processes. Plays and rites are variously said to be “created,” “inspired,” “written,” “crafted,” “invented,” or “given.”

4.1. Westerners traditionally attribute creativity to individual genius, attaching it to “big names.” Having a big name is one of the rewards (or curses) of exceptional creativity. Creativity in standard proscenium theater in the West is exercised by many kinds of artists, from playwrights and actors to directors, who are conventionally billed as the primary creator. Typically, those who write and direct plays do not perform in them as central actors. Directors mediate between the texts of plays and the players. They tell actors what to do, or they create the conditions in which actors can do what they do best. Nevertheless, they, too, are artists selected on the basis of their skills. Talent and resulting performances are the espoused reasons for attaining stardom, becoming “big.” But sometimes there are other, less romanticized factors, such as personal influence or financial backing.

4.2. Whereas the generative sources of plays and films are typically named, the purveyors of rites are generally anonymous. Participants attribute “authorship” of a rite to deities, ancestors, and other religious functionaries. Scholars sometimes ascribe it to a whole people reified into an agent labeled “tradition” or “culture.” Ritual creativity and generativity are not usually considered liturgical virtues. The notion of a liturgical virtuoso is, in the European Christian West, oxymoronic. Exceptional ability in liturgical “performance” is more akin to authorization or even expertise than to artistic creativity.

To mythologize creative genius in the theater as “inspiration” is to press performance in the direction of ritual. The notion of inspiration assumes that the ultimate generative agent is elsewhere. On the surface, the claim of inspiration can sound like a disclaimer for credit, but below the surface it may, in fact, constitute a claim for superordinate credit.

Finally, liturgy becomes dramatized when named agents invent rites by trial and error, critics weigh a liturgy’s merits, or congregations attribute liturgical success to virtuoso performances by specially talented priests and preachers.

5. SCRIPTS, TEXTS, AND SCENARIOS. In the Western mainstream, both liturgies and plays transpire on the basis of written texts. Sometimes the writings are kept offstage, as is the convention in theater. Sometimes

they are onstage, as is the convention in liturgy. In liturgical settings, Mass is said, often book in hand. There is a pronounced tendency in the West to identify a rite with its words more than its action; thus, we hear a wedding referred to as “the saying of vows.”

5.1. Playwrights typically write the words of a play with only minimal stage directions prescribing the actions. This practice leaves directors and actors free to infer actions from words rather than vice versa. Before it is performed onstage, a playwright’s play is marked up and transposed into a director’s script. Directors modify, edit, and amplify plays to suit their purposes and the abilities of actors. Sometimes considerable improvisation characterizes the transition from the text of a play, especially a dated classic, to its actual performance. In experimental theater, plays sometimes begin not with scripts but with actors’ lives; these are the raw material from which a scenario, a bare-bones scheme of actions, is constructed.

5.2. Liturgical texts, like dramatic scripts, are largely compilations of words to be said. In other traditions, there may be no texts, only orally transmitted knowledge. Western liturgical texts prescribe actions by using rubrics, writing in red ink. Some of the prescribed actions, like some words, are optional or variable. Others are canonical, that is, prescribed and subject to minimal variation.

Liturgies are typically enacted with little, or highly circumscribed, improvisation. The cultural adaptation, the enculturation, of liturgy is usually permitted only in matters considered secondary, not in central words or actions.

6. PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS are not identical. Functions are observed or inferred. Purposes are in the minds of actors, so one cannot always infer them from material remains. It is essential not to confuse the two, since functions inferred by observers may differ considerably from intentions articulated by actors. Observers can only guess, for example, the purposes of ritualized ball games at Chichén Itzá in Yucatán.

For performances and enactments to have functions, they must exercise social force. Performances can move and inspire and thus exercise influence; they can evoke appreciation, increase awareness, teach lessons, or entertain and delight.

6.1a and 6.2a. Much of the theatergoing public would say that the aim of theater is to entertain. Theater people themselves sometimes articulate loftier

aims: to educate, to exercise social leadership, or to provide models and heroes, for example. But it is considered bad form to treat an art as if it were the handmaiden of a social agenda. A play written to educate would amount to propaganda; hence, there arises the counter-agenda, “art for art’s sake.” Even in this purist view, however, drama is still saddled with the expectation that it increase cultural awareness or cultivate aesthetic sensitivity. In the contemporary, “First World” West, with the exception of so-called experimental or ritual theater, the intention to have revolutionary social effect has largely been abandoned, although it is generally recognized that plays ennoble emotions and educate sentiments.

The standard primary goals of liturgy are praise and thanksgiving. But the liturgy also facilitates (although it does not cause) salvation. Liturgy is said to have cosmic effect whether or not it has social consequences. Of course, there may also be social consequences, such as the formation of values and the consolidation of the religious institution.

It is easier to judge whether a play entertains than to tell whether a rite adequately praises or gives thanks. Almost by definition, the primary intentions of liturgy and the goals of liturgists cannot be assessed by analyzing effects. Contemporary scholars often say that the aim of ritual is transformation, but in reality, this is an aim of only certain kinds of ritual, such as rites of passage, certain kinds of magic, or healing rites. And even then, that aim may or may not be achieved. Perhaps “attunement” is a more accurate way of describing the most widespread aim of ritual, especially of liturgical rites. If we ask, To what are participants attuned? the answers vary: God, the cosmos, nature, the group, and so on. Another frequently articulated aim is that of moral formation. Rites exist not only to venerate the divine but also to inculcate values.

6.1b and 6.2b. Paradigmatic force is the capacity of a performance or enactment to determine, and continue to determine, behavior outside its own boundaries. In the West, such power is often assumed to be concentrated in the texts of plays and rites, though occasionally a performance assumes such force, especially if the performance marks a critical historic juncture. Paradigmatic force is not a function of the textualization of rites and plays. Rather, textualization is one way of lending paradigmatic force to enactment.

When theatrical performances show exceptional artistry and durability, they may become classics. Classics mold traditions and shape whole peoples. They become common, valued currency. It is assumed that everyone ought to know them in order to be a full member of the culture.

To count, liturgical rites must be canonical, that is, sanctioned and duly authorized. When liturgical enactments can claim divine origins and garner ecclesiastical consensus, they become canonical. Canonical rites and canonical portions of rites are the least subject to change and debate. They express or respond to superordinate forces: divine will, authoritative texts, the requirements of the liturgical seasons, or the implications of theological writings, for instance. Some religious rites, regarded as more canonical than others because of their divine institution, have the status of sacraments.

Whereas a play becomes a classic by virtue of its enduring effect, a canonical rite attains its status largely by virtue of its origin and pedigree. Arguing against it on the basis of alleged lack of efficaciousness would count for little, because it operates *ex opere operato*, that is, by virtue of the sheer doing of it. Canonical liturgies operate on the basis of revealed authority, not demonstrated efficacy. Canons and classics are tools for shaping consciousness and culture. Both canons and classics resist change. Both are bastions of defense, hard to displace or modify. Insofar as a canon remains open or begins to open up, it starts to function more like a classic.

Theater liturgizes by positing transcendent effects or spiritual origins. Thanksgiving and praise are seldom among the liturgical aspirations of theater, but “magic” sometimes is; so is the cultivation of sacredly held social values. Some theater, like most liturgy, overtly aspires to influence social actions and human values, thereby becoming liturgy-like in its function. When a list of classics begins to shut down, admitting no further authors to the club of the leather-bound, “the classics” have begun to operate canonically.

7. CRITICISM AND INTERPRETATION are ways of naming a feedback loop, a process, formal and informal, whereby dramatic or ritualistic actions are evaluated. Such a loop exists in both ecclesiastical and theatrical institutions but is more commonly recognized in theaters than in churches. People are more keenly aware of aesthetic criticism than of ritual criticism.

Whereas critique is typically defined *into* the theatrical process, it is often defined *out of* the liturgical one. Criticism of drama is considered a normal part of its life, as is the case with both literature and art.

Drama is highly susceptible to critique. Plays and theatrical styles go in and out of fashion rather rapidly. Liturgies, too, come into fashion and go out of it, but at a much slower rate. Their susceptibility to criticism is low. It is widely assumed by participants, sometimes even by scholars, that liturgy is beyond criticism. Liturgy, it is supposed, operates on a logic that is beyond falsification. But in fact, the history of liturgy is full of debate, assessment, and change.

Criticism, in either performance or ritual, may be formal or informal, explicit or tacit. When it is formal and explicit, it tends to result in specialized roles: drama critics writing for the newspaper-reading public, literary scholars writing for students and other scholars, clergy offering interpretations to parishioners, and theologians writing for clergy, participants, or other theologians.

7.1a. and 7.2a. Theater displays a moderate need for interpretation (thus, “the play speaks for itself”) but is subject to a high degree of public criticism, especially in the news media. In contrast, the liturgy, because it has ancient and foreign roots, has a high need for creative interpretation, often lodged in homilies or in catechism, but also shows low susceptibility to criticism. It is untoward publicly to castigate the liturgy or its celebrants.

7.1b and 7.2b. The exercise of critical judgment goes on throughout the whole dramatic process. Authors exercise judgment about this sentence or that. Directors decide between better and worse portrayals. Actors discriminate among more and less effective ways of portraying characters. But critique is formally focused in a subcategory of audience, namely, the critic. Drama critics usually do not think of themselves as special kinds of actors or as directly serving dramatic artists and the improvement of their craft. Rather, they are a special kind of audience member, often feared or dreaded, who make public their evaluation of a production. Potential audience members read or listen to critics and decide to buy or not buy tickets on the basis of published or broadcast theater criticism. Theater people, typically vulnerable to critique, buy newspapers soon after first runs; a negative review can destroy a production in its initial stages.

Since actors aspire to make a living by acting, and since audience members pay for the right to sit and watch, actors are obliged to please audience members. Some audience members attend in order to be pleased; others attend to be challenged. Critics sometimes pan plays if they merely pander to the baser tastes of an audience.

7.1c and 7.2c. Clergy seldom evaluate rites in front of congregations, although they more often criticize them in front of other clergy, especially those who are not their superiors. Lay critics may serve on worship committees and thus exert critical influence, or they may simply refuse to attend as a way of expressing negative judgment.

Whereas clergy are largely advocates, practitioners, and interpreters, theologians sometimes play the role of critic. But theologians, especially when speaking of liturgy, rarely address the public. Instead, they address either clergy or laity. Theologians are ascribed the role of in-house, professional critic, but they do not often focus their critical attention on liturgical enactment. They attend more typically to liturgical theology. Often it is assumed or proclaimed that the relation between liturgy and culture is that of critic to criticized; sometimes this kind of relation is called “prophetic.” Typically, critique is one-way: Liturgy implies values that are the standards to which cultures should aspire.

8. TIME-SPACE ORIENTATION. Ritual enactment and theatrical performance are commonly regarded as happening outside of ordinary space and time. There are many ways of putting this: They are “specially framed”; they create “virtual worlds”; they are “heterocosms” (other worlds).

8.1a and 8.2a. Dramatic action happens in a theater, often, though not necessarily, at night. Typically, it occurs at the front of an interior space on a raised platform, the stage. The stage is not only raised but typically framed by an arch, or curtains, or both. Stage space is special, set off by these markers from audience space, which is ordinary (although in comparison with street space, audience space is special, partly because it is reserved and paid for).

Stage space is extraordinary because what happens there is “not really happening.” Audience members do not call the police after witnessing an onstage murder. Even though what transpires there does not really happen, audience members may *really* weep or *re-*

*ally* laugh at what happens there. Since theater can be efficacious, audience members may exit this set-aside space and act differently in street space because of their experience.

Liturgical space is ritually sanctified space, typically indoors, and typically, though not necessarily, utilized on a Sunday morning. Such space is often hierarchically defined; some places are more special than others, and who acts where is determined by office. Important spaces are often made visible by architectural means. The higher, the more central, and the more frontal, the more important. Even cleared-out space may encode ritual and performative meaning, as it does, for example, in sparsely furnished Amish funerals.

Liturgical space is theatricalized when, for instance, officiants are elevated, making them both more imposing and easier to see. The concomitant move is for congregants to become spectators, those gathered to witness a spectacle but remaining unimplicated by it. Theatrical space is liturgized when, for example, the proscenium frame is breached and actors mingle among audience members or even lead them onstage. At such events, audience members become a nascent congregation.

8.1b and 8.2b. Dramatic time can be any time: the past, the present, or the future. A play can even be set in no time, mythical time, internal time, or imaginary time. The length of action depends partly on what an audience will tolerate and on social conventions that govern the theater. In standard proscenium theater, one and a half to two and a half hours is conventional. Plays that last four hours are too long; plays that last half an hour are too short. Although these are conventions, not rules or laws, there is often a predictable repercussion when they are violated.

There are other time considerations in theater, such as performance seasons and performance runs, for example. Performance runs depend largely on popularity. Performance seasons sometimes mark off summer theater from the rest of the theatrical year.

Liturgical time has been viewed and experienced in radically different, sometimes conflicting ways. For some, an enactment of the Lord's Supper in the present is a "remembrance of things past," to use Proust's phrase. For others, it is the representing of the original event; there is "real presence," not just the semblance of it. For some, the Eucharist is an eschatologi-

cal banquet anticipating, if not actualizing, the divinely initiated future.

Liturgical seasons are essential to Catholic liturgy. They are determined not only by the dying-rising life cycle of Jesus but by other rhythms, such as agricultural turning points and civil events. The Gregorian calendar, upon which Catholic liturgy is predicated, is a complex compromise with, and appropriation of, pagan seasons. The choice of Sunday, rather than Friday evening through Saturday evening, as the Christian sabbath was partly an attempt to compete with non-Christian traditions of utilizing time.

Often, liturgies change slowly through time. They are not only repetitive but also long-standing. Thus, onetime protests such as the Million Man March of 1995 or the Harmonic Convergence of 1987 seem theatrical even though they were driven by the ultimate values of gender and race or spiritual unity. When liturgies become occasional, responding to current events, they may be seen as moving in the direction of the theatrical. When plays are performed again and again or set to correspond with defined seasons, they may be interpreted as becoming more ritualistic.

9. OBJECTS, although theoretically unnecessary to either performance or ritual, are regularly used in both.

9.1 and 9.2. Things onstage are "props" if they are small and someone uses them, "scenery" if they are larger and they frame the actions. The role of properties is to facilitate, focus, or frame the action, to situate it in time and space. Sets frame dramatic actions in space and time. Some dramatic objects are real; some are not. Onstage there may be a real chair, a real couch, even a real gun—just no real bullets. Things are not put onstage randomly, even though they may be put there deliberately to suggest randomness. They are supposed to "say" something about the action, which they serve and support. The set reflects the action; it does not usually determine it. The job of props and sets is to enhance and extend character. Directors could, if they wished, do without props and scenery. Actors can make audience members "see" guns, chairs, or flower pots by miming them. Thus, actors' capacity to act takes precedence over the inert presence of objects.

Theologically speaking, objects are not usually considered sacred in themselves. They nevertheless may



be necessary in order for the ritual to proceed. Those that are considered sacred, such as the bread and wine, once they are blessed, and the Holy Book, are especially essential. Many other objects, though not essential, are typical: vestments, seats, crosses, statues, and other written matter. At one time in liturgical history, the elevation of the Host constituted a popular high point in the Eucharistic celebration. Veneration of objects such as statues, books, and paintings continues; these and other such items are blessed and thus become repositories attracting and focusing sacred power. Eagle feathers and ears of corn are considered sacred in Jicarilla Apache relay races, but they also *become* sacred by virtue of being ritually carried in the race.

As their dispensability increases, sacred objects become props. As their indispensability increases, props become sacred objects. When tools or props are enshrined in museums, they tend to become liturgical objects. On the one hand, Elvis Presley's guitar at Graceland is a focus of pilgrimage. On the other, one can buy relics, once ensconced in Catholic churches, at a shop in Santa Fe and use them for decorative purposes. Their holy history does not prevent their use as props.

10. LANGUAGE is almost inescapable in both ritual and performance, although moments of silence may characterize either, and although mime is a kind of theater that uses no words. At one time in liturgical history priests did not "celebrate" Mass; rather, they "said" it. Speech acts were constitutive of liturgy.

10.1. Stage-talk is dialogue, conversation refined so every word counts. Other sorts of language may appear onstage, depending on what is being enacted. There may be sermons, poems, chants, choruses, or songs, but these are usually embedded in talk, even though the talk may be stylized or elevated. In opera, talk is embedded in song. In mainline theater, oral speech is grounded in a written script, so the writing is in service of the talking. There are exceptions, of course, such as Italian popular comedy, which works with scenarios prescribing a sequence of actions around which actors improvise words.

10.2. Liturgical language is only one aspect of religious language. Religious language includes theological and ethical as well as ritual language. Ritual language, especially in the Catholic liturgy, is largely prescribed. It is written in a book and then chanted or

read. Very little of it is spontaneous; some of it expresses choices exercised by liturgists. But these options are circumscribed and limited. Liturgical language is not uttered "in character," but it does sometimes reflect priestly office. Who can say what, and when they say it, are prescribed. Liturgical language is formulaic and often archaic, even when modern phraseology and translations are used. Such language is used to invoke, praise, proclaim, or narrate.

11. INSTITUTIONAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS are inescapable. Neither rites nor plays float above their social environment. One cannot understand worldwide trends in wedding rites apart from the specific wedding of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in 1840, for example. Nor can one make sense of current funeral practices apart from the Civil War or the consumer rights movement. Too tight a focus on performance and enactment, with no attention to the institutions that maintain them and the social processes that condition them, leads to considerable distortion. The opposite distortion is that of reducing rites and plays to their contexts, as when Durheimians treat ritual merely as the divinization of society.

11.1. The social processes that shape Western theater constitute a system inspired by the myth of stardom and driven by the commodification of personae. The system is largely competitive and market driven. In short, theater is sold. And sales largely, though not exclusively, determine who becomes a star. The result is a large cohort of underpaid, comparatively poor actors and a very small group of elite, highly paid performers.

11.2. The social processes surrounding Catholic liturgy are rooted in an international hierarchical system inspired by the myth of apostolic succession and supported by offerings, gifts, and volunteer labor. Although rites are not often directly sold, offerings, gifts, and honoraria are expected. The reciprocity, although informal rather than formal, is weighty.

This abstract model based on Western proscenium theater and Roman Catholic liturgical rites is limited. It would not be difficult to name plays or rites that deviate from the model. It is, after all, a composite and an abstraction. Since it is an oversimplification, it should not be regarded as an adequate description, much less as having prescriptive force. It is not meant to dictate how rites should be enacted or plays performed. These are not criteria for what good theater



A mystery play is performed outdoors on a cart, 1950s  
(Hulton/Archive)

is or what liturgy ought to be, only a summary of some persistent tendencies. Neither characterization is a “model for” anything, rather only a rough “model of” something.

A chart such as this can create the illusion that the two strands, ritual enactment and dramatic performance, are easily separable. Although they may be in theory, they are not always in practice. Much bleeding of boundaries between dramatic and ritualistic domains characterizes certain periods in history, such as the theater of classical Greece, the mystery and morality plays of the Middle Ages, and experimental theater of the 1960s in North America. These were times of ritualized drama and dramatized ritual.

One way to discover the limits of this typology would be to apply it to instances of cross-cultural performance such as voodoo in nightclubs in Port-au-

Prince or Tibetan Buddhist rites performed in North American venues for fundraising purposes. In Haiti, similar, or even the same, actions may be performed as entertainment for tourists in the city and as religious practice in the villages. Thus, one cannot always tell from the form or content of a performance whether it is ritualistic or dramatic; it may be necessary to consider function and cultural setting as well. The purpose here has been to engender a perspective capable of grounding a theory and method for studying ritual that attends simultaneously to its connections with and differences from other domains. But that job is not finished until the scheme is played off actual rites and actual performances in actual places and real times.

—Ronald L. Grimes

#### SEE ALSO

Catholicism in America; New Age; The Body: Asian Body Practices; Death: Days of the Dead (Días de los Muertos); Popular Culture: Cultural Saints; Sacred Space; Sacred Time; Science: Healing

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## CHILDBIRTH

Human childbirth is rarely a purely natural event. All known human societies channel the physiological process of giving birth into pathways—better known as rites of passage—imprinted with their cultural worldview. It is commonly held that the deritualization of birth—its liberation from ancient superstition and taboo—accompanied its movement into the hospital. But in fact this movement resulted in the most elaborate proliferation of birth rituals ever developed in the human cultural world.

A ritual is a patterned, repetitive, symbolic, and transformative enactment of a cultural belief or value. Its primary purpose is to align the individual's belief system with that of society. Rituals are most commonly thought of as religious, but they can enact secular beliefs and values equally as effectively as religious ones. A rite of passage conveys individuals from one social status to another (for example, from girlhood to womanhood, boyhood to manhood), thereby transforming both society's definition of the individual and the individual's self-perception. The most important feature of initiatory rites of passage is that they place their participants in a transitional realm that has few of the attributes of the past or coming state (Turner 1979), facilitating the gradual psychological opening of the initiates to profound interior change. The rite of passage, then, restructures their belief and value systems in accordance with the dominant beliefs and values of the society or group into which they are being initiated. By making the naturally transformative process of birth into a cultural rite of passage for the mother, a society can ensure that its basic values will be transmitted to the next generation, as she is generally the one primarily responsible for instilling these values in the minds of her children—society's new members and the guarantors of its future.

The core value and belief system of American society, a *technocracy*, centers around science and technology and the institutions that control and disseminate them. Ritual is the most powerful communication tool available for perpetuating these—or any society's—values. Its effectiveness results from some of its primary characteristics, which are springboards for understanding ritual's role in hospital birth.

### The Characteristics of Ritual and Its Role in Hospital Birth

1. *Symbolism.* Ritual sends its messages through symbols. (A symbol, most simply, is an object, idea, or action loaded with cultural meaning.) Unlike symbols, straightforward verbal messages may be intellectually analyzed by the left hemisphere of the human brain, enabling the recipient to consciously accept or reject their content. Symbols, in contrast, are received through the right hemisphere of the brain as a gestalt. They are felt in the body and the emotions; their meanings are often internalized without conscious awareness. Objects or procedures may function powerfully as symbols even if the conscious intent of their performers is instrumental, not symbolic. A blood pressure cuff both records blood pressure and symbolizes Western technocratic medicine, specifically the value it places on objective information; the stethoscope a physician wears around her neck both enables her to listen to a patient's breathing and symbolizes her authoritative status.

In addition to their instrumental functions, routine obstetrical procedures—the rituals of hospital birth—convey symbolic messages to birthing women (and their partners, and the hospital personnel who attend them). For example, to be seated in a wheelchair, as many laboring women are, is to receive through their bodies the symbolic message that they are disabled; to be put to bed is to receive the symbolic message that they are sick. The intravenous drips commonly attached to the hands and arms of birthing women make an especially powerful symbolic statement: They are umbilical cords to the hospital. The long cord connecting her body to the fluid-filled bag places the woman in the same relation to the hospital as the baby in her womb is to her. By making her dependent on the institution for her life, the IV conveys to her one of the most profound messages of her initiation experience: We are all dependent on institutions for our lives.

2. *A cognitive matrix.* Rituals are not arbitrary; they come from within the belief system of a group. Their primary purpose is to enact and transmit that belief system into the emotions, minds, and bodies of their participants. The belief system enacted by the rituals

of hospital birth is the technocratic model of reality (Davis-Floyd 1987, 1992), which forms the philosophical basis of both Western medicine and American society. This model assumes a mechanistic universe available for exploitation by those who can figure out its laws through science and manipulate them through technology (Merchant 1983). Under this model, the human body came to be viewed as a machine that can be taken apart and put back together. The male body was held to be the prototype of the properly functioning body-machine, and the female body, insofar as it deviated from the male, was regarded as inherently defective—a metaphor that eventually formed the philosophical basis of modern obstetrics (Rothman 1982). This view led to the development of tools and technologies for the manipulation and improvement of what came to be seen as the inherently defective mechanical process of birth.

3. *Repetition and redundancy.* For maximum effectiveness, a ritual concentrates on sending one set of messages that it will repeat over and over again in different forms. Such redundancy facilitates the neural entrainment of the individual with the messages the ritual sends. Many routine obstetrical procedures (such as using electronic monitoring, performing frequent cervical exams, administering medications to speed labor or reduce pain, and cutting episiotomies) convey in different forms the same basic message: that the woman's birthing machine is defective and she is therefore dependent on the institution and its technology. An additional message is that technologically obtained information and institutional schedules are much more important than the woman's internal rhythms and personal experience of labor. As in much of technocratic life, the individual is subordinated to the institution.

4. *Use of tools and technologies.* All rituals employ specific tools and technologies to achieve their purposes: altars and candles, the shaman's drum and rattle, the priest's robes and Communion cup, the diviner's tea leaves and Tarot cards. From the Navajo hogan to the Internet, ritual technologies both construct the spaces within which ritual happens and assist in effecting the external and internal transformations it achieves. As noted above, the technologies of ritual often fulfill both utilitarian and symbolic functions. The candle both sheds light and opens the doorway between dimensions; the Communion cup both holds liquid and



A mother with newborn twins (Trip/S. Grant)

evokes the Last Supper. In healing rituals, the healer often perceives the patient through the medium of the technology (herbs, smudging, rattling, sandpainting in traditional cultures; X rays, EEG printouts, vital sign monitors in modern hospitals). As with much of everyday social life, humans mediate their experience through the technologies they create. This technological mediation influences participants' perceptions of reality in myriad ways. That is, the technologies employed in ritual play a particularly significant role in altering and mediating perception and experience; their use in the heightened, set-apart, and formalized structures of ritual make them especially effective at achieving the neural entrainment of the participants, *en face* or at a distance, with the rhythms of the ritual and with the symbolic messages it sends.

Of the multiple technologies employed in hospital birth, the most salient is the electronic fetal monitor, a machine that records both the baby's heartbeat and the strength and length of the mother's contractions.

This machine becomes a focal point of attention during birth. The whooshing sound it makes, and the rhythmic tracing of the needle, combine to give both parents and practitioners the illusion that the machine is not only tracking the baby's heart but also actively keeping it beating. Thus, in spite of numerous studies showing that routine use of these machines does not improve outcomes but does significantly raise cesarean rates, the psychological sense of dependence they generate makes it extremely difficult for practitioners to minimize their use.

5. *Framing, order, and inviolability.* Rituals are framed, set apart from everyday life, often in spaces reserved solely for their performance. This ritual framing works to ensure that participants will keep their attention focused on a limited stimulus field, a practice that facilitates their entrainment with the ritual's symbolic messages. In the virtual world of the hospital, the limited stimulus field framed by the hospital room consists of the mother, her support persons, medical practitioners, and the machines and technologies that surround and penetrate her. Order and formality—the careful sequencing of ritual performances—enhance the strength of this stimulus field and further work to set rituals apart from other modes of social interaction. In this way, rituals establish an atmosphere that feels both inevitable and inviolate (Moore and Myerhoff 1977)—it must proceed to its conclusion through a preestablished sequence of events. To perform a series of rituals is to seek to induce a particular outcome; the rituals thus create a sense of safety in the presence of danger. Just as the Trobriand sea fisherman hopes that, if he performs prescribed rituals in precise order, the gods of the sea will do their part to bring him safely home, so the obstetrician hopes that if he precisely follows procedure, a healthy baby will result. In both cases, the rituals provide a sense of control that gives individuals the courage to act in the face of the challenge and caprice of nature. But the inevitability of ritual can be a double-edged sword when applied as an overlay on a natural process such as birth: One obstetrical procedure often appears to necessitate the next, and the next—a process often referred to as the “cascade of interventions.”

The order and precision of ritual, combined with its repetitious nature, can be highly effective at habituating individuals to doing things one way only. The obstetricians I have interviewed described how their

learning process was channeled into what one described as a “narrow riverbank” in which the water can flow only one way. Another said, “You do it, and you do it, and you do it again, until you forget there was ever any other way of doing it.” Habituation to this one way works to preclude the likelihood that physicians will be open to evidence that contradicts their deeply internalized manner of practice.

6. *Performance: Acting, stylization, and staging.* Like a play, ritual is performed, and thus it often has an element of high drama. As Ron Grimes noted in the introduction to this section, although ritual enactment and dramatic performance are separable in theory, they are not in practice. As the climax of birth approaches, the number of ritual procedures performed upon the woman intensifies. These procedures heighten the emotional affect that birth already carries and focus the attention of the ritual actors on the physician as protagonist. The lithotomy position, still commonly used for birth in the United States in spite of thirty years of evidence demonstrating its dysfunctionality (among other things, it decreases the flow of blood and oxygen to the baby by compressing major veins and arteries and compresses the pelvic bones, making the birth outlet narrower and pushing more difficult), turns the lower part of the woman's body into the stage upon which the doctor performs the drama of birth. The episiotomy performed upon most first-time mothers both speeds the birth, enhancing hospital efficiency, and reiterates the message that the mother could not give birth without the help of a technical expert; forceps and vacuum extraction intensify this message and display once again the importance of technology for successful birth.

### Effects of Ritual

When rituals work, they can achieve the cognitive transformation of their participants. This kind of cognitive transformation is the goal of most initiatory rites of passage. It occurs when the belief system enacted in the rite and the belief system of the initiate become one. Of the 100 women I interviewed about their birth experiences, about 70 entered the hospital already believing fully in the technocratic model; for them, the rituals of hospital birth served not to transform but rather to intensify a preexisting belief system. But about one-quarter of those women entered

the hospital believing deeply in natural childbirth and in their ability to give birth without drugs or interventions. About half of them succeeded in this goal—they were able to maintain their beliefs in the face of their technocratic socialization, often because their labors proceeded rapidly and/or because they were supported by a doula or a nurse-midwife. In contrast, the other half of the women who started out wanting natural childbirth experienced a gradual process of conceptual fusion with the messages sent by the rituals of hospital birth.

The first step in this process is the breakdown of the initiate's prior belief system through techniques such as *strange-making* (making the commonplace appear strange by juxtaposing it with the unfamiliar) and *symbolic inversion*—turning things upside down and inside out (Babcock 1978). Birthing women are made strange to themselves through hospital gowns, ID bracelets, and being hooked up to machines. Frequent cervical checks symbolically invert their most private and intimate parts into public property. Throughout labor, routine obstetrical procedures cumulatively work to map the technocratic model of birth onto the birthing woman's perceptions of her labor experience. If they are successful in a cognitive sense, she will begin to experience her own body as a defective machine incapable of birthing without technology and the institution. One woman said: "As soon as I got hooked up to the monitor, all everyone did was stare at it. The nurses didn't even look at me anymore when they came into the room—they went straight to the monitor. I got the weirdest feeling that *it* was having the baby, not me."

The women in my study who started out wanting natural childbirth were psychologically traumatized when their births were heavily technocratized instead. But they do not represent the majority of American women. It is important to understand that most American women do not object to the technocratic ritualization of birth. As noted above, rituals often enhance courage. The rituals of hospital birth give practitioners a sense of confidence in the face of the unknowns of birth; they often do the same for birthing women. As full participants in the postmodern technocracy, most contemporary mothers place a great deal of faith in high technology and believe that its application to their labor processes will ensure a positive outcome. Thus, in spite of a great deal of scien-

tific evidence showing that the overuse of obstetrical procedures often does more harm than good, women associate them with an increased chance of a good outcome and thus find them reassuring. The rituals of hospital birth generate the feeling that it is the rituals that ensure the birth of a live baby, not the woman, and not the natural process of birth.

Other important effects of ritual include preservation of the status quo and, paradoxically, social change. Through explicit enactment of a culture's belief system, ritual both preserves and transmits that belief system, and so becomes an important force in the preservation of the status quo in any society. The status quo in the postmodern technocracy heavily involves the supervaluation of high technologies and the sense of control over nature that they provide. American society is deeply invested in what I have called "the myth of technocratic transcendence"—the idea that through our technologies, we will eventually transcend the limits of nature and free ourselves from its vagaries and whims. Our multiple successes in this endeavor, from air conditioning to space flight beyond Earth's bounds, are intensifying in the reproductive arena. The new reproductive technologies hold out the promise of giving children to the infertile, preventing the births of defective babies through prenatal diagnostic testing, and enabling parents to choose the sex of their children. The rituals of a technocratic hospital birth constitute but one slice of the "transcendence through technology" pie. They promise the outcome everyone is hoping for, a live and healthy child. In fact, other countries that are less interventionist have better birth outcomes (DeVries et al. 2001); medical authorities in the United States ignore the evidence, however, and continue to intensify the technocratic ritualization of hospital birth, introducing untested new drugs and technologies into the birth process at a rapid pace. In this way, America has transformed the natural process of birth into a cultural process of the reproduction and perpetuation of cultural values and notions of "progress."

Paradoxically, in spite of its effectiveness at preserving the status quo, ritual can also be an important factor in social change (Turner 1974). New belief and value systems are most effectively spread through new rituals designed to enact and transmit them; conversely, entrenched belief and value systems are most effectively altered through changes in the rituals en-

acted in a culture. In the cultural arena of birth, some of American society's most visible battles over core values are being waged. Medical personnel, pressured by the threat of malpractice suits, are attempting to develop increasing control over the birth process and placing an ever greater reliance on technology. Meanwhile, many women are demanding more natural options in hospital birth (such as nurse-midwifery care) and seeking greater autonomy and self-responsibility. About 1 percent of American women reject technocratic socialization and choose to give birth at home or in a freestanding birth center. These women often embrace an alternative, holistic paradigm that stresses the organic integrity and inherent trustworthiness of the female body, communication and oneness between mother and child, and self-responsibility. Home birthers enact this model and send its messages to themselves and their families and friends through rituals such as singing, visualizations, ceremonies, and the preparation of special foods. They tend to regard birth as deeply spiritual (Klassen 2001); in most home births, a sense of the sacred pervades the birth experience, and specific rituals that enact the religious or individual values of the family are often adapted or invented for the occasion. The persecution that home-birth mothers and midwives occasionally experience from physicians and police is a reflection of the degree to which their alternative model differs from and challenges the hegemony of the dominant technocratic model.

—Robbie Davis-Floyd

#### SEE ALSO

The Body; Sacred Space: The Suburban Home; Sacred Time; Science: Evolution, Healing, Technology

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## CIVIC AND POLITICAL RITUAL PERFORMANCES

Religious groups seeking to assert civic or political control perform elaborate public rituals ranging from direct-action protests to rallies and parades. Civic performances are always political, because in public ritual a group asserts its own definitions of the proper modes and boundaries of ethical action and societal norms for a city or nation. In particular, outdoor performances lay moral claim to geographical territory. Ritual enclosure of a particular locale also symbolizes

religion's wider goal of nationwide renewal and reform. Civic and political ritual performances both publicize the ideas and goals of the sponsoring groups and serve to break down U.S. religious boundaries by forging alliances between like-minded people of differing religious affiliations and denominations. To examine the nature and extent of civic and political ritual performance, it is useful to contrast disparate ritual strategies and religious ideologies. The direct-





Twenty-seven thousand people from thirty-six states attended the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom, Washington, D.C., 1957 (Library of Congress)

action tactics of radical Catholic antinuclear vandalism and Operation Rescue antiabortion clinic blockades will illustrate the dynamics of ritual protest. The Salvation Army's urban parades and the New Age Harmonic Convergence will highlight the cosmic implications of ritual action. The Promise Keepers rally and Million Man March will demonstrate the role of ritual performance in the maintenance of patriarchy through moral reform.

Civic and political protest rituals are often staged at sites of egregious moral turpitude. In 1980, Catholic priests Daniel and Philip Berrigan led the "Plowshares Eight," a left-wing Catholic anti-nuclear war group, into the General Electric nuclear armament

plant in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. In a scene of ritualized violence, they hammered nuclear warhead cones and spilled vials of human blood on armament project paperwork. When arrested, they publicly burned their indictments and anointed one another with the ashes in a mock Ash Wednesday service. Media publicity transformed this local protest into a national event. Through ritual, the Berrigans dramatized the moral consequences of nuclear warheads (they spill human blood) and ritually enacted the political solution (destroying and dismantling nuclear weapons). The ash-marking ritual became a prototype for their ultimate goal of collective, national penitence as the first step toward an end to the dangerous

nuclear arms race. Initially a radical Catholic movement, the Berrigans' protests attracted antinuclear activists of many faiths.

Ritual protest was embodied in a different way in Operation Rescue, a direct-action antiabortion organization. Founded in 1986 by evangelical lay missionary Randall Terry and other members of the politically conservative "Religious Right," it included many pro-life Catholics as well. Operation Rescue's modus operandi was to first target a major U.S. city as the protest site. Then, over a course of days or weeks, members would engage in simultaneous "blockades" at abortion clinics throughout that city. Major campaigns included the one in Atlanta, Georgia (held in part to protest the 1988 Democratic National Convention meeting there), and the forty-six-day "siege" at Wichita, Kansas, in 1991, both resulting in thousands of arrests. Waging ideological "street war," Operation Rescue denied entrance to abortion clinics, which they called "mills, killing centers, and abortuaries." Tactics included picketing with signs emblazoned with images of fetuses, offering sidewalk antiabortion counseling, forming human corridors (where protesters linked arms to form an impenetrable human wall blocking both front and back entrances to the clinic), shouting advice and warnings to potential patients, and raucously singing gospel hymns and, ironically, civil rights protest songs. Here the rituals marked out clinics as sites of murder: The protesters' bodies became human shields for the unborn. City streets were made into battlefields. Pro-choicers, pregnant patients, and clinic staff were the "enemies." Through use of political ritual, these urban protests effected small-scale realizations of Operation Rescue's larger moral and political agenda of stopping abortions and shutting down abortion clinics all across the United States.

Another group that converted city streets into spiritual battlegrounds and used military metaphor to good advantage was the Salvation Army, a sectarian, evangelical, international Christian organization that emphasizes urban mission. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, uniformed Salvation Army missionaries paraded through city streets accompanied by brass bands. Each procession ended with an open-air worship service. Such street ritual transformed the city into a "Cathedral of the Open Air." The ritualized military takeover of the city streets constituted a spiri-

tual *junta* that would, they hoped, eventually lead to their larger goals of "spiritualizing the world" and "sanctifying the commonplace." The Salvation Army saw itself as the last bulwark against the disease of irreligion and profligacy infecting U.S. cities, which, if left unchecked, would prove fatal to American Christianity.

In a similar impulse to forestall disaster, hundreds of thousands of New Age religionists linked hands, recited mantras, and sang 1960s counterculture lyrics on August 16, 1987, in an attempt to summon a collective spiritual "will" that would forestall impending geological catastrophe. The event, called "Harmonic Convergence," was orchestrated in part by art historian Jose Arguelles, who utilized Mayan prophecy and Aztec numerology to mobilize a wide range of New Age practitioners and spiritual sympathizers to gather at sacred sites around the world. These twenty "power points" included the Great Pyramids of Egypt, Mt. Olympus in Greece, the Ganges River in India, the Black Hills of South Dakota, and Mt. Shasta, California. If at least 144,000 people gathered to link hands in vibrational harmony, Arguelles said, the collective ritual would heal Mother Earth, avert the prophesied Mayan Armageddon, and prepare the world for encounters with extraterrestrial intelligence. In Harmonic Convergence, the cosmic implications of public ritual were made explicit and overt. Only through ritual activity could an enlightened few actually save the world (and the universe) for the many.

Averting divine retribution for society's sins was a primary motive as well behind the October 4, 1997, Promise Keepers outdoor rally at the national Mall in Washington, D.C. Promise Keepers is an ecumenical Christian men's movement founded in 1990 by one-time football coach Bill McCartney. "Stand in the Gap"—the rally's theme—referred to an ominous passage in Ezekiel 22:30 where God sought a righteous man to build a wall and "stand in the gap" as a surety against divine destruction. Atonement was the order of the day, which began with the ceremonial blowing of the shofar by Messianic Jews. This act was a Christian ritual appropriation of the ram's horn that marks the Jewish Day of Atonement. A collection of multiracial speakers exhorted the 500,000 mostly white, middle-class, married males at the rally to build strong marriages and families through assertive leadership. At the speakers' calls to confession and repentance,

many men fell to their knees in prayer, and some even to full ritual prostration on the ground. Hoisting aloft their Bibles, raising their arms in charismatic prayer, singing, confessing, and weeping, the men vowed to keep their promises by practicing spiritual, moral, and sexual purity.

This so-called unabashedly Christian public ritual of atonement mirrored the first national men's atonement rally held two years earlier at the Washington, D.C., Mall: the Million Man March of October 16, 1995. Million Man March organizer Louis Farrakhan, the leader of the sectarian Muslim Nation of Islam, acting seemingly in contradiction to his earlier anti-Semitism, was the first to co-opt the Jewish Day of Atonement as a fitting ritual framework for a men's rally. The Million Man March was designed as a mass gathering of African American men to experience the "therapeutic power" of public rituals of atonement and reconciliation. Forging African American unity amidst religious diversity was accomplished by an ecumenical opening rite that included Islamic prayers in Arabic, a Christian call to worship, a libation poured out to honor the ancestors, African drum invocations, and a moment of meditative silence. Both of these mass gatherings used ritual to endorse the primacy of men as divinely sanctioned spiritual leaders of the nation's families. Whereas the nineteenth century enshrined women as the saviors of the American family, the public rituals of the late twentieth century placed men on that pedestal by ritually

enacting and promoting a neoconservative ethic of responsible fatherhood and godly manhood.

—Madeline Duntley

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African American Religions: African American Religious Leaders; Catholicism: Public Catholicism; New Age; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Conservatism, Fundamentalism; Sexuality: Abortion

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## DANCE

That dancing rarely occurs as a religious action is distinctive to American culture and the West in general. This separation of dance and religion contrasts sharply with much of the rest of the world, where dancing is often almost synonymous with religious action. In American culture, dance is considered art or self-expression, and perhaps of all the arts and forms of experience it is the one most suspect by Christianity. Although dancing undoubtedly occurred in the early Christian church, it was largely banned during the early centuries of Christian history. Dancing did not cease to exist in Christian cultures but

continued outside the church. In Europe, and to a lesser extent in America, these are the dances we now identify as "folk" dances. In Europe and America, dance has been more broadly appreciated as a secular form of art and entertainment.

Dance in the modern West has been powerfully influenced by the aristocratic origins of ballet in the court of King Louis XIV, where training in dance, along with the military arts, was required of the members of the court. From these origins, ballet became a high art, and it has set the standard for dance to the present day in terms of movement terminology, dance



A dance class, Hackensack, New Jersey (Trip/J. Greenberg)

classification, and principles of dance aesthetics. In contrast, the dances of tribal cultures, especially African, are classified as “primitive”; dances with strong identities to specific cultures, such as Indian or Balinese, become “ethnic”; the dances of nonprofessionals—hip-hop, tap, and swing, for example—are termed “popular”; and dances of the masses distinctive to specific communities are considered “folk.” Because of the secularity of dance in the West, the very idea of combining dance with religion is alien to many. Many in the West see dancing from a narrow perspective that denigrates the many non-ballet forms of dancing.

Ballet, too, however, arose in the context of a particular ethnic and historical culture, something that is not often recognized. What also remains unacknowledged is the powerful correspondence between the values carried and forged by ballet and those of Euro-American Christianity. Both emphasize elevation, hierarchy, transcendence, the struggle between good and evil, definitions of gender roles, and a dualistic basis for distinction of values. Even the attitude of

ballet toward the body is, through discipline and training, to transcend anything like quotidian abilities and limitations. In ballet, the body transcends itself. Thus, while ballet rarely occurs in religious settings and is not often considered religious in character, certainly not a Christian form of dance, it nonetheless remains surprisingly compatible with Christian values. Thus, it should be no surprise that in American culture ballet has been widely recognized as an important part of the proper training for cultural roles and values. Even the emphasis in ballet on females is instrumental in creating the broad cultural impression that dancing is an activity appropriate for females and effeminate males.

In America, dance has remained outside the Christian church—both Protestant and Catholic—with few exceptions. The African influence has led to the incorporation of dancelike elements in African American Christianity, such as the “ring shout” and aspects of gospel music. Certainly, late twentieth-century liturgical dance movements have attempted to introduce

dancing to the established church. This innovation, however, rarely embraced, remains little more than a somewhat lively procession or an interlude in worship of modern dance-based interpretive and celebratory movement.

It remains an important area for research to comprehend how Christianity, so centered in the body as to be distinguished by a bodily crucifixion and resurrection and the sacrament of the Eucharist, could develop to the point of being so opposed to the bodily. Most likely, the Greek influence of early Christianity, as well as the broad emphasis on intellect and mind (and the correlate emphasis on spirit and soul), stimulated by the development of print media, contributed to a centering on male, mind, and spirit.

Dancing occurs commonly in Wiccan, New Age, and non-Christian religious movements in America, but the dances have not been codified as distinctive styles, nor have they entered the broader awareness as identifiable dances of American culture. Instead they remain general forms of improvised spiritual expression. Dancing is also common among many individuals who use it as a form of individual spiritual expression, rejecting institutionalized religion. Movement suggesting dancing also occurs in Shaker reli-

gion, some ecstatic snake-handling movements in Appalachia, and other charismatic movements.

There are possible religious aspects of some distinctively American dance forms, such as modern, post-modern, and even hip-hop and tap, but these are evident only as the result of creative interpretation based on a liberal understanding of religion. The general American public would find such associations surprising and inappropriate.

—Sam Gill

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African American Religions; New Age; Wicca; Protestantism in America; The Body

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## FEMINIST THEATER

In the 1980s, when Augusto Boal spoke of theater as a “rehearsal for revolution,” he pointed to the potential power of theater to affect individual consciousness and behavior as well as social structures. A decade earlier, on the tails of the second wave of feminism, feminist theater companies, playwrights, actors, and directors spontaneously appeared in cities across the United States, creating plays that would challenge women and men to question and unmask patriarchal hegemony. These women had been part of the civil rights and New Left movements but were at odds with the sexual double standards and hierarchy in these revolutionary struggles. Their initial theater work was influenced by the social critique of Bertolt Brecht’s plays as well as experimental theater forms of the 1960s seen in the Living Theater, Open Theater, and Performance Garage (Dolan 1988).

Feminist theaters and playwrights addressed long-neglected issues in traditional theater: the sexualization of women onstage, the omission of women’s narratives (particularly plays by women), the scarcity of strong roles for women, the invisibility of lesbians and women of color onstage, the repression of women’s ancient ceremonial traditions, the economic issues of wage inequities, and patriarchal hiring practices and union representation (Chinoy et al. 1987). These groups of women applied the social critique of the feminist movement to both the organization of theater, its process of creation, playwrighting, and the analytical perception of the art.

Feminist theologies have a close relationship with feminist theater in their genesis. Feminist theologies were born when religions and their attendant spiritualities began to resound with the real stories and im-

ages of those who have been the majority of pew sitters, synagogue members, and temple believers—but never the priests. Feminist theater grew out of women's voices, as women playwrights, directors, designers, and actors broke the hegemony of a patriarchal viewpoint that purported to speak for all. Feminist theologians and practitioners of feminist theater have also shared common ground in their examination of the impact of religion, gender, race, and class on women's lives.

In this essay, I have chosen to use the first-person perspective as a signature for a feminist process that celebrates subjectivity and experience. In what follows, I will focus on eight characteristics of feminist theater because they have most closely affected my own work as a feminist playwright, director, and theologian whose work emerged during the early 1970s: (1) the breaking of the patriarchal canon; (2) women's experience as the source for making theater; (3) the reclamation of women's history; (4) the unmasking of what is meant by reality; (5) the use of multiplicity, meaning multiple realities and methods, as strategy; (6) powersharing and mutuality as a source for making theater; (7) the celebration of the body in joy and suffering; and (8) the creation of community.

### Canonical Breakup

Until the 1970s, contemporary theater in the United States was judged against an accepted "canon" consisting of works by Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Eugene O'Neill, and Clifford Odets. In the latter half of the twentieth century, women playwrights burst onto the theatrical scene in numbers equal to the entire history of their dramatic foremothers.

African American women played an especially crucial role in this transformation of American theater. Black women playwrights exposed the historical conflagration of misogyny and racism and its use of the arts. Black women have been depicted by white male playwrights as the "domineering mammy," the oversexed floozy, and the witless servant. Black women playwrights broke through the stereotypes of this "racist canon," which has passed as entertainment for over a century (Wilkerson 1986).

Black, Chicana, and Asian women playwrights also dismantled the idea of a generic universal theater. Their stories insist on cultural, linguistic, economic,

spiritual, and political specificity. Their stories are necessary parts of a vital and urgent feminist theater that approaches traditional canons not as definitive, ultimate texts, but rather as examples of a visible past against which we must imagine and articulate a different future.

### Women's Experience

Plays personalize the political. Feminist theater portrays women's experience by emphasizing everyday life and its symbols. In plays at the Women's Experimental Theatre in New York City, scenes presenting dialogues between mothers, daughters, and sisters took place as they were doing the dishes or the laundry, preparing food, cleaning, or relaxing together.

At the same time, feminist theater is accountable to the women whose experiences they reflect. In preparing a play on battered women, for example, the Rhode Island Feminist Theatre sent its members to work in women's shelters. Both theater companies and playwrights do primary research as part of the creative process. In creating the play *CancerBodies: Women Speaking the Unspeakable*, I interviewed some thirty women with cancer, gave the tapes to actresses to create characters, and invited those whom I had interviewed to come to rehearsals to keep us on track.

### History, Time, and Space

Feminist theater celebrates its eclipsed historical foremothers. These include the playwrights Rachel Crothers (*Myself Bettina*, 1908), Susan Glaspell (*The Verge*, 1921), and Lillian Hellman (*The Children's Hour*, 1934; *The Little Foxes*, 1939; *Regina*, 1949), women who challenged with their very existence the male hegemonic "canon." In addition, feminist theater insists on seeing history as a process to be confronted critically. Different points of view exist about any given moment of history. Beah Richards, in her play *A Black Woman Speaks* (1975), offered a different view not only of the racial history of the South but also of the historical complicity of white women in the oppression of black women and men.

Less political, but no less clarifying, is the deconstruction of the idea of time. Alexis Deveaux, in her play *Tapestry* (1976), showed a young African American woman washing her face in her bathroom sink

while her church choir sings in her tub and her parents witness her baptism as a young girl. The past collides with the present, while enhancing the complexity of a single moment. In Caryl Churchill's *Cloud 9* (1979), time leaps 100 years between Act I and Act II. In her play *Top Girls* (1982), historical characters such as Pope Joan and Joan of Arc gather in a contemporary restaurant in Act I and become contemporary characters in Act II. Feminist theater works to reveal the complex historical present.

Maria Irene Fornes, one of the most prolific of feminist playwrights, re-visioned space with her play *Fefu and Her Friends* (1977). The structure and foundations of the play work kinesthetically. Not mired in plot but more enmeshed with relationships, the play is both existential and spiritual. The audience is pulled into the play by literally moving to the characters' spaces as well as by perceiving them visually and aurally.

### The Unmasking of Reality

Realism has been described as a mirror that "truthfully records an objective social portrait" (Dolan 1990, 42). Addressing a hegemonic heterosexual "reality," the lesbian theater group Split Britches adapted Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) in 1991 using techniques of butch/femme theater to parody male/female stereotypes. The lesbian femme masquerades, flaunting "femininity." The butch lesbian masquerades, flaunting "macho/manliness." Although both the butch and femme lesbians are role-playing, the actresses also reflected how lesbian culture mirrors macho/femme stereotypes. The representation of heterosexual reality mirrored in *Streetcar* is abandoned with great humor and playfulness and replaced by sexual complexity and difference (Dolan 1990).

Caryl Churchill's farce *Cloud 9* and Lorraine Hansberry's unfinished *Touissant* (published posthumously in 1986) foreground the connections between colonialism, misogyny, and racism. In Hansberry's play, the effects of colonialism in Haiti are characterized by a mixed-race couple—he is white, she is Creole. One scene shows forty servants setting up a table for four people.

Feminist theater works to deconstruct a monolithic representation of all women, instead bringing out the diversity and uniqueness of women in American culture.

### The Use of Multiplicity

Dualism, or bifurcation, negates multiplicity; that is, it is an attempt to control differences. Feminist plays deconstruct the Western legacy of Christianity's dualism such as good/bad, active/passive, and subject/object as cultural constructions. Chicana feminist theater, which began in the 1970s, largely as a reaction to the overriding male subject matter of Teatro Campesino, has challenged the dualism of *La Malinche* and *La Virgen* (the prostitute and the virgin) (Yarbro-Bejarano 1990). Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of the Negro* (1961) shows the main female character, Sarah, split into four selves representing roles imposed on her as a black woman living in a society dominated by white middle-class culture.

### Powersharing and Mutuality

When a univocal artistic approach is relinquished, new power dynamics based on exchange can result. The traditional theater director and the traditional Roman Catholic priest have much in common. Like parishioners, actors have had little to say in a play's interpretation; they are expected to respond to the directives of the priest (director). But feminist theater companies created different ways of working that honor relationship and group process. Often in collectives, members take turns as directors, playwrights, technical directors, business managers, and performers (Curb 1980, 64). And there can be tension between the degree of actual consensus building and the role of playwrights and directors. When I directed a dance theater piece about Frieda Kahlo, for instance, the choreographer, Priscilla Regalado, worked well with the dancers because she was constantly encouraging their ideas. Direction and inclusivity can coexist in the creative process.

Feminist theater created collaboratively reveals a deep level of trust and mutuality. Women feel free to improvise and write from the fabric of their own lives. The result is that each woman realizes the efficacy of her own experience through being heard and hears her own life resonate with others. But it is through the enactment of their stories in rehearsal and performance that the process of empowerment is fully realized. The joining of action to a feeling releases the energy wrapped in silence.

## Women's Bodies in Celebration and Suffering

The theater's medium for storytelling is the physical body. The text becomes corporeal, embodied in the actress. The word is made flesh. But how the female enfleshed body is represented and who is gazing is a complex issue for women in the arts. Holly Hughes, a lesbian feminist playwright and performer, in her *Clit Notes* (1996) described, or "languaged," the lesbian sex act with explicit stories about her lover. In sculpting the lesbian sex act with words, both men and women laughed at their common sexual foibles.

But what is held in common about the body must be questioned by the interrogation of what role classism, racism, religion, and nationalism (to name only a few) play in constructing perceptions of our bodies (Martin 1987). Martha Boesing's *My Other Heart* explored the danger of embodied friendship between a Native American slave and her Spanish Jewish mistress in fifteenth-century anti-Semitic Spain. Cherrie Moraga's *Heroes and Saints* (1994) depicted a Chicana's body as only a head, attributing the birth deformity to pesticides encountered by her mother picking in the fields. In *Grapes and Figs Are in Season: A Palestinian Woman's Story* (1999), a work I coauthored with Emily Shihadeh, Emily says: "My sister had breast cancer. She needed chemotherapy. She was living in Ramallah, which is just north of Jerusalem. This was during the Seven Years War. She went into Jerusalem and received the chemo from Jewish doctors at the same time as the Israelis were killing us!"

### Community

Feminist theater-making can build community whether the play is written by a woman playwright and then rehearsed with a company or created through a collaborative process. Perhaps the community's life span is brief, lasting just during the run of the performance. *My CancerBodies: Women Speaking the Unspeakable* includes a liturgy that offers the audience a chance to name their loved ones who have had cancer. This moment collapses the space between audience and actor and invites those who have been weeping in the dark to enter the grieving community. The play expands to the seen and unseen, and—for a moment—the audience becomes a congregation. This

conversation in feminist theater often continues in audience discussions following the play.

In the performance-audience dynamic, several stages of community building are possible: (1) A community forms out of identification with the play's themes; (2) a community forms through discussion; (3) a community slowly gathers momentum around a series of plays presented by a feminist theater. In any case, community, for feminist theater, is its most important challenge and creation.

Although all of these characteristics of feminist theater point to its vital contributions to women's lives and the practice of theater-making, there have been pitfalls, too. Feeling free from the structural, artistic, and personality problems that traditional theater exhibits, feminist collaborators can run the danger of self-righteousness. Resulting problems can be fissure of the ensemble by power grabbing, a demand for univocality, or humorless productions.

The plethora of feminist theater companies that existed in the 1970s and 1980s answered a need that women had to create plays about their lives. But feminist theater companies are no longer spread out across the United States, primarily because there have not been enough producing houses willing to fund work by feminists and lesbian artists. Thus, in the late twentieth century, colleges and universities have become important sites for their support.

Perhaps, as Jill Dolan has suggested, the most vital contribution of feminist theater has been that it is "a critical social tool, an embodied moment of theory and practice, not just the commodified trope that 'performativity' has become in critical theory" (Dolan 1996, 5).

—Victoria Rue

### SEE ALSO

African American Religions; Latina/Latino Religious Communities; The Body; Generations; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Rights Movement, Feminisms; Sexuality: Sexual Identities

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## FUNERALS

Funeral rituals have long served society's need both to respond to the deaths of its members and to help the survivors move ahead with their own lives. Specific funeral practices have varied greatly, however, throughout history and across cultures. Nomadic peoples, for example, have often resorted to brief ceremonies and temporary burials soon after the death, later conducting more elaborate rituals for all who have died during the year. Many tribal societies throughout the world, fearing dangerous spirits, have tended to conduct funerals as quickly as possible, taking precautions to ward off the forces of evil. Moreover, decontamination rituals may follow the funeral itself to keep the aura of death from clinging to the survivors. In many traditional societies, especially in the Middle East, purifying and preparing the body for the funeral may require intense family involvement. Funerals in these cultures are primarily the responsibility of the extended family or clan.

Throughout the world, men and women often have been assigned different roles in the funeral process and have been expected to express their grief in gender-specific ways. Funerals have clearly expressed the perceived social worth of the deceased person in many societies. The tenth-century Viking king and the twentieth-century English princess, for example, received elaborate and prolonged funerary rites, whereas the deaths of "commoners" were marked with much simpler observations. The inability of a so-

ciety to conduct funerals in accordance with its established beliefs and practices usually occurs only under the stress of an overwhelming catastrophe, such as the Black Death (plague) that raged across Europe, Central Asia, and northern Africa in the fourteenth century.

### American Funerals: The Early Years

The North American continent was sparsely populated when European settlers arrived with their various forms of Christian belief and practice. Each of the Native societies also had its own distinctive worldview and rituals. Variations from tribe to tribe suggest caution in speaking of *the* Native American funeral. Nevertheless, two characteristics were common among Amerindian funeral practices, as can be seen, for example, among the Santee Sioux of North Dakota. First, funeral rites were part of a much larger pattern of ceremonial and worship activity. The people strove for frequent contact with their ancestors and their gods and held the land itself to be sacred. Although funerals were important occasions, they were only one facet of a continuing dialogue with the spiritual forces of creation and destruction. Second, the Santee Sioux believed that although one soul left the body at death, another remained in the vicinity. It was considered vital, therefore, to conduct the proper ceremonies and express sufficient grief, both to assist the traveling



Family mourners at a Korean funeral, Los Angeles, 1992 (Peter Turnley/Corbis)

soul on its journey and to persuade the lingering spirit that it had no reason to harm the surviving people.

Native ways of life were disrupted and their very existence endangered by the relentless incursion of white settlers and their armies. The Oglala Sioux, for example, were forced to relocate eight times, and the Nez Perce were ousted from their homelands during the California gold rush. Funerals became even more important as an attempt to maintain group solidarity and tradition. The Ghost Dance, which became prominent after the massacre at Wounded Knee (1890), had its origins in preexisting funeral and invocation rites.

Colonial America was also rife with hardships for the early settlers. Epidemics and deprivations kept the mortality rate high, so funerals were a salient part of everyday life—as were admonishments from the pulpit to prepare one’s soul for the next life and not to become too attached to this one. Additionally, there was a long period of ambiguity and conflict as the settlers had to choose between keeping the European models of funeral behavior and developing their own. This

dilemma was part of the larger issue of what role religion should play in the life of the community and whether more than one type of belief and observation was to be tolerated.

America was primarily a rural and agricultural land from the colonial period until well into the nineteenth century. Most people lived and died in small communities and depended largely on family and neighbors in times of special need. In Appalachian tradition, as James Crissman observed, “familism” and self-sufficiency were the basis for survival. Neighbors and kin participated in the deathwatch and used the funeral process as a rare opportunity for socialization and mutual support: “Most mountaineers wore black and truly demonstrated their mourning by weeping and wailing during the hellfire-and-brimstone service” (Crissman 1994, 201). Often it was not possible to conduct a formal funeral immediately after the death, so “funeralizing” would be delayed, sometimes for years, until satisfactory arrangements were possible.

As immigrant peoples became more diverse, so did



The Tuxedo Brass Band leads a traditional jazzman's funeral in New Orleans, 1969 (Bettmann/Corbis)

funeral practices. The Amish, for example, escaped severe persecution in Europe during two major waves of immigration in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Their religious and family-oriented life rejected the devices and blandishments of an industrializing society. The Amish way of death even today remains consistent with their traditional way of life: "The funeral and burial are strictly 'plain.' There is no modern lowering device, artificial grass, carpet or tent at the grave, nor are there flowers. . . . Great respect is shown for the dead. . . . The burial garments are made by the family. Members dress the body and comb the hair" (Hostetler 1993, 202–203).

The Civil War led to major changes in how Americans took leave of their dead. Thousands of young men died far from their homes, their bodies often severely mutilated as a result of battle. Demand increased for skillful cosmetic restoration of the disfigured bodies as well as for embalming. The American funeral industry responded to this challenge with all its available resources, and from that time forward the

"undertaker," "funeral director," or "mortician" became a more professional and salient member of the community. Closed caskets also became more of an option for those situations in which little could be done to restore the features of the deceased.

### American Funerals Today

There are traditional, new, and emerging characteristics of American funerals today. Religious faith and the performance of traditional rituals still provide comfort to many families. The nation has proved fairly receptive to a wide variety of customs, though people with distinctive and elaborate traditions, such as the Hmong, often find it difficult to make the necessary arrangements in a culture so different from their homeland. Memorial societies, with their emphasis on inexpensive burial, remain available for those who also prefer simple and private funeral services.

Current trends in the American funeral industry include centralization. Questions have been raised

about possible changes in quality of service to the public as large corporations take over family-owned operations. Increased professionalization and regulation of the funeral industry continue. Personnel are expected to be well informed on medical issues related to their practice and to meet a high standard for health and safety matters. The AIDS epidemic, for example, has led to heightened precautions to prevent infection from needle injuries and other sources. Moreover, geographical mobility in the American population has resulted in a wide dispersal of family members, therefore requiring more complex arrangements for funeral planning.

The consumer rights movement and other societal changes have encouraged more families to come up with their own ideas for the most appropriate funerals and memorial services. Some in the funeral industry have welcomed this increased participation, but others have resisted this change. Finally, the Internet has opened new possibilities for family interaction, mutual support, and memorialization. It seems unlikely that distant and disembodied communication will take the place of people coming together to pay their last respects, but emerging technologies could have

many subtle effects on funeral practice in years to come.

—Robert Kastenbaum

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Native American Religions and Politics; Protestantism in America: Puritanism; Death: Days of the Dead (Días de los Muertos), Mourning Rituals

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## GENDER SHOWS

Gender shows (also known as drag balls, voguing balls, or simply “the ballroom scene”) are arenas where young African American, Hispanic, and a few white gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered men and women, often shamed and rejected by families and religious institutions, create a safe space in which to play with gender and other constricting social roles. The balls are high-energy affairs characterized by driving rhythms, aesthetic excess, ingenious imitative performances, subtle humor, and raw competition. The ballroom scene evolved from La-Cage-aux-Folles-type clubs, where femme queens (feminine gay men), wearing glamorous gowns, lip-synched the hottest romantic songs of popular female vocalists. The fashion-show runway was later introduced into these clubs and it is currently the centerpiece of the balls.

Contemporary balls offer a rich variety of runway events that involve imitating social and gender roles.

Contestants at these balls are organized into family-like structures called *houses*. House “mothers” and “fathers” (both positions are filled by males, many in their late twenties or thirties) seek to provide parental guidance for their “children.” The “children,” the principal ones who “walk the balls,” are even younger black and Hispanic gay men, many saved from the city streets by membership in a house. The houses came to the attention of the larger public with Jennie Livingston’s 1987 documentary film *Paris Is Burning*.

Throughout the United States, the ballroom scene has been greatly affected by the AIDS epidemic. The historical roots of this social institution, however, are much older. The houses are best understood as recent incarnations of the family-like, grassroots communities and organizations, mostly religious in nature, that have helped sustain Africans and African Americans on this side of the Atlantic for the past 300 years.

### Runway Events

Balls consist of a potentially limitless series of runway events. Voguing, the old or the new way, is among the most competitive events. There are always at least two performers on the runway at a time. “Voguing the Old Way” is based on the poses of fashion models such as those found in *Vogue* magazine. As the contestant walks the runway, each pose is held for only a second or two. There is a staccato quality to the movements that evokes the exciting, erotically charged interaction between a model and the rapidly clicking camera of a fashion photographer. “Voguing the New Way” is quite different. It is highly acrobatic and involves a much greater range of movement. New-way voguing resembles break dancing and appears related to ritualized martial arts such as Brazilian Capoeira.

Most other runway categories explore either gender roles (e.g., woman, butch queen, femme queen) or social roles (e.g., student, business executive, soldier). Each gender category has a variety of different events. For example, butch queens might be invited to walk the runway in drag, and femme queens in the latest “foot and eyewear.” A panel of judges awards trophies for each event.

### The Ballroom Scene and Its Functions

The ballroom has many functions. One of its most important roles is modeling society. On the runways, the performances, and especially the imitative talents, of gay men of color, as well as of a few lesbian and straight women, are engaged in play with the so-called real world, the context in which these same people must live and move every day. On the runways, the children of the houses explore, adulate, caricature, and exaggerate society’s roles while progressively undermining the rigidity of its rules.

Many feminists have criticized the balls as sexist because they perpetuate male dominance. It is true that Butch queens run the balls and occupy most of the runway space. The critics also voice their concern about the stereotypic femininity modeled by femme queens. There are different ways of looking at these critiques. On one hand, it looks as if the balls are transgressive and liberating in their gay dimension, but socially stagnant, perhaps even regressive, in their male-dominant mode. On the other hand, it can be

argued that, if the ballroom scene is all about playing with the rules and regulations of society, then the rules have to be in play, there on the runway, and they even have to be open to caricature in order for the game to work.

The ballroom scene helps young members of the houses avoid destructive feelings. Highly competitive voguing events at the balls have been likened to “throwing shade” or “getting over” on someone, that is, getting the best of them through verbal insults that draw both blood from the target (figuratively speaking) and praise from the audience. Thus voguing may be thought of as performative anger. Whatever else the balls are—and they are *many* things—they are also ways of strengthening and protecting a vulnerable community by ritualizing, and thereby containing and redirecting, a range of potentially negative energies such as anger, fear, frustration, competition, and conflict.

Rejection by families and religious institutions, two of the social bodies most centrally involved in the shaping of identity, can lead to feelings of low self-esteem, even invisibility. The ballroom scene, a response to this situation, is primarily about being seen. For the time a person is on the runway, he or she is the center of attention. The team spirit created within the houses, the wild applause of the crowd, and the plentiful trophies all contribute, if only in that moment, to a more solid sense of self.

### The Houses

As a rule, members of the same house do not live together, but they do self-consciously configure themselves as family. For example, they usually celebrate major holidays together, and they often go together on summer vacations. Mirroring gender arrangements in the larger society, the “mothers” of the houses frequently find themselves in the role of single parents, and even when a “father” is in the picture, the “mother” is always the more active and involved parental figure. At the height of the AIDS epidemic, it was often the houses that provided food and care (even hospice care) for ailing members. The balls are extravagant, colorful, and entertaining events, but it is important to realize that their context is always the daily experience of being gay (or uncomfortable in one’s assigned gender category) in a society that shuns such persons and sometimes violently punishes

them. It is gender and “the life” that are being explored and transformed on the runways. The anchoring, family-like structure of the houses that stage the balls exists in tension with the violence, racism, and homophobia of the larger city around them. House mothers and fathers provide activities and parental guidance for young black and Hispanic gay and otherwise gender-troubled men, and a smaller number of women, rejected by their blood families, the religious institutions of their childhood, and society at large.

Fictive kinship networks found throughout African American history took shape under slavery and still function today. Among the obviously religious ones are Haitian voodoo, Cuban Santería, and Brazilian Candomblé, where leaders are referred to as “mother” and “father,” while members are “children of the house.” “House” is a freighted word in virtually all traditional African American religions. The larger group of African American “families” once included burial societies, or *cabildos*, Catholic saint societies, and a wide range of other brotherhoods and sisterhoods. All of these groups, including the houses associated with the ballroom scene, share a majority of the following characteristics: (1) the tendency to engage in imitative play with social roles and identities, and thus to reproduce and critique the social world in safe ritual space; (2) a high tolerance for difference within the membership of the group; (3) the dominance of the family metaphor for describing in-group relations; (4) the simultaneous emphasis on both the communal

good and individual self-respect and self-assurance; and (5) the tendency to function as a substitute for missing or inadequate social-welfare systems.

—Karen McCarthy Brown

#### SEE ALSO

African American Religions; Native American Religions and Politics: Two-Spirit People; The Body; Death: AIDS Quilt; Generations: The Family; Popular Culture; Sexuality: The Bible and Sodom in America, Sexual Dissidence, Sexual Identities

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## PRAYER

Prayer describes communication between human beings and divine powers, including deities, spirits, angels, saints, and ancestors. The point of prayer is to cultivate a relationship with the supernatural or suprahuman domain. If it is defined broadly to include meditation, then it is a universal feature of religion. However, the word “prayer” emerged out of Judeo-Christian practice and discourse and therefore only imperfectly describes the religious practices of other traditions. (Many Buddhists, for example, do not recognize supernatural agencies yet meditate upon the nature of reality.) Thus defined, prayer in

America includes a broad range of activities, including Native American chanting, American Orthodox Jewish davening, Islamic Salat (five daily prayers), New Age channeling, charismatic Catholic and Protestant speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*), and Buddhist “sitting” in quiet meditation.

#### Praying in America

Prayer is ubiquitous in American society. Madonna’s song, “Like a Prayer,” as much as Pat Robertson’s daily supplications on the *700 Club* television show,

and the best-selling book *The Prayer of Jabez* by Bruce Wilkinson (2000), indicate that Americans are passionate about prayer. A 1999 Gallup poll found that nine out of ten Americans engage in prayer of some form—a finding that has not changed significantly over the past fifty years. Gallup reported that three of every four Americans say they pray regularly, with over 90 percent praying at least once a week. Most of those who pray—99 percent—reported praying to a personal God rather than an impersonal force. Respondents said that praying had a noticeably positive effect on their lives: 86 percent of those who pray believe that prayer makes them better people and improves the quality of their lives. Recent studies in medicine have indicated a link between prayer and both mental and physical health, and so praying has become a part of healthy living for many otherwise nonreligious people.

### Prayer as a Cultural Practice

Though often described as a deeply personal practice, praying in fact is a deeply cultural activity involving the use of particular words, metaphors, and governing concepts. Learning to pray involves taking on certain patterns of speech and behavior that are conveyed through cultural traditions. By instructing their members how to pray, religious institutions teach them who they are and how they should feel about things. Prayers of thanksgiving can cultivate gratitude. Prayers of lament express and manage grief and anger. Silent meditation seeks to generate nonattachment. Communal prayer produces and expresses group solidarity. So prayer involves the use of particular terms and bodily practices that over time can come to shape the inner dispositions of the persons who pray, forming their moral sensibilities.

There are many approaches to prayer and great diversity of practice in America, from praying the rosary to praying in tongues or standing together and reciting a communal prayer. Despite the diversity of religious practice in contemporary America, however, it is also possible to describe a characteristically “American” approach to prayer. William James perhaps offered the best description of the “American” understanding of prayer: “Religion is nothing if it be not the vital act by which the entire mind seeks to save itself by clinging to the principle from which it



Prayer to the Great Mystery, c. 1907  
(Library of Congress)

draws its life. This act is prayer, by which term I understand no vain exercise of words, no mere repetition of certain sacred formulae, but the very movement itself of the soul, putting itself in a personal relation of contact with the mysterious power of which it feels the presence” (James [1902] 1990, 352).

James insisted that prayer is an activity of an individual in relation to the transcendent. This understanding reveals James’s own religious heritage—one that is characteristic of American religious sentiments more broadly. Forged in the furnace of American pietism, James’s religious imagination focused on an experiential relationship with God and demonstrates the influence of the Great Awakening upon subsequent religious thought and practice. This understanding of prayer expresses the religious individualism that was a part of the Protestant Reformation. True prayer, James suggested, is a private and intimate exchange between the believer and his or her God. No religious institutions are required to mediate this communion. This understanding of prayer con-

tinues to dominate down to the present. Gallup reported in 1999 that 80 percent of Americans agreed that “an individual should arrive at his or her own religious beliefs independent of any churches or synagogues.” As a consequence of this understanding, in the American imagination education in prayer is not the purview of religious institutions alone: Contemporary Americans learn about praying from Oprah Winfrey and from a variety of popular books as well as from explicitly religious authorities.

The prevailing American style of prayer, then, can be described as personalist, emotive, and extemporaneous. Although this style emerged out of a particularly Protestant history, it has penetrated other non-Protestant forms of religion as they have become part of the American mainstream. As in so many other areas of religious life, America’s Protestant heritage, though no longer enjoying the hegemony it once had, remains the center of gravity of American religious practice, pulling others toward its center. Protestantism remains the default religion of America.

### Prayer and Politics

Prayer has held an important if contested place in America’s political sphere, providing opportunity for debate about the relationship of religion and the state. The place of prayer in political discourse has been most noticeable in recent years in the debate over school prayer. The issue was first brought to national attention when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Engel v. Vitale* (1962) that it was a violation of the First Amendment for public schools to sponsor prayer in the classroom. And in *Wallace v. Jaffree* (1985), the Court ruled that even a moment of silence at the start of the school day, during which students could pray silently if they so desired, was unconstitutional.

Conservatives have railed against this decision; liberals have lauded and defended it. The vehemence of this debate has many factors, including differences of interpretation for the First Amendment. Conservatives have focused on the right of religious expression

and liberals on the freedom from religious oppression. But prayer is a mode of religious and moral formation; thus, the school prayer debate is part of a struggle over the moral education of America’s youth as well as over the religious meaning of the “American Experiment” more generally.

The debate over prayer in public schools is a reminder that prayer—that seemingly private practice of discrete individuals—is a socially contested practice imbued with moral significance and religious conviction about the nature of self, society, and the transcendent. Although the tendency of many Americans to focus on private prayer is continuous with the Protestant religious tradition going back to the Great Awakening and before, it is not the only understanding of prayer in America today. In some religious traditions, it is only religious leaders who pray to the divine on behalf of the community. In others, solitary prayer is replaced by communal prayer, and in still others, prayers are constituted by the recitation of sacred texts or by wordless silence rather than by emotive outpourings to a personal God. In America today, prayer comes in many forms. Yet, in all its diversity, prayer still has this in common—by it, Americans continue to cultivate their relationships with the divine.

—Graham Reside

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Protestantism in America; The Body: Christian Spiritual Practices; Popular Culture; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Law; Sacred Time

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## SPORTS

More often than not, pre-Columbian adults associated sports with religious ritual. The ball games of Mesoamerica, the relay races of the Southwest, and the stickball games of the Southeast exemplify this tradition.

Athletes in Mesoamerica played ritual ball games on ball courts located within temple complexes, the most important of which was at Chichén Itzá in Yucatán. The game itself was under the protection of the goddess Xochiquetzal, but the stone rings through which the rubber ball was propelled were carved with the symbols of Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent. The purpose and the rules of the game are obscure, but visual evidence strongly suggests that priests sacrificed the losers to the gods. Each of the six reliefs at the great ball court of Chichén Itzá shows the decapitation of a player.

The relay races of the Jicarilla Apaches of the Southwest, which took place as part of a fertility rite, were considerably less bloody. The young men raced on a track called "The Milky Way" (a reference to the heavenly path on which, according to Jicarilla myth, the sun and the moon had originally raced). The track connected the circle of the sun and the circle of the moon. Around the circumference of each circle, ritual participants dropped pollen into small holes to plant trees. The race took place on the third day of the festival, when, as fires burned in each of the circles, two young girls led the boys to their starting places. The boys were painted, pollened, and adorned with feathers; the girls each carried an eagle feather in one hand and an ear of corn in the other (symbolizing animal and vegetable sources of food). The outcome of the relay race was less important than the elaborate ceremony within which the contest was embedded.

Among the Cherokee of the Southeast, the most popular sport was a stickball game similar to modern lacrosse. After twenty-eight days of sexual abstinence, the men who played the game spent a night sequestered in a sacred precinct under the supervision of shamans who scarified them with a seven-toothed comb made from the leg bone of a turkey. Sets of twenty-eight scratches each were made on the players' arms, legs, backs, and chests. By the time the shaman was done, each player would be bleeding from nearly

300 gashes. The game itself, which was quite violent, took place upon a field with no strictly defined boundaries. The goals might be 100 feet or several miles apart. There were no sidelines, and teams varied in size from as few as twenty to several hundred. Some games lasted for only a few hours; others went on for several days. Serious injuries were common. The purpose of the game seems to have been to ensure the fertility of plants and animals.

The rituals associated with modern sports are very different from those of pre-Columbian America. The collective rituals enacted before and during a ball game are commonly statements of patriotism. It is customary for the president to throw the first pitch of each season of Major League Baseball. It is also common, before the start of many sporting events, for the spectators to stand and sing "The Star-Spangled Banner." Demonstrations of academic allegiance are also common. During football games, students chant traditional catcalls and sing soulful anthems. Half-time music performed by a marching band is also a widespread custom. At the University of Illinois, in a controversial ritual that dates from 1926, half-time shows are enlivened by the antics of an undergraduate known as "Chief Illiniwek," who performs while dressed in inauthentic Indian regalia.

If one defines the concept of ritual to include individual as well as collective behavior, there are countless examples of sports-related rituals. John Wooden, UCLA's legendary basketball coach, performed an invariant pregame ritual. Before every contest he turned to wink at his wife (who attended every game and always sat behind him), patted the knee of his assistant coach, tugged his socks, and leaned down to tap the floor. Innumerable baseball players have sought to extend a hitting streak by not changing their shirts or their socks.

The difference between the sports rituals of pre-Columbian cultures and those of the contemporary world is clear. The Jicarilla Apache relay race was an integral and necessary part of a religious ceremony. Modern sports are secular, and the collective and individual rituals associated with them are ancillary and unnecessary. Without the scarification performed by the shaman, there is no Cherokee stickball game, but

a game of basketball remains a game of basketball even if no one sings the national anthem and every player wears a clean jersey.

—Allen Guttman

#### SEE ALSO

Latina/Latino Religious Communities; Native American Religions and Politics; Popular Culture: Cultural Saints

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## THERAPY AND HEALING

Falling ill and being healed are ritualized and performative modes of behavior; the interactions between patient, healer, family, community, and, in some cases, spirits, demons, or the sacred, are decisively symbolic. Given that the healing rites of the world's religions variously make use of dance, music, song, chants, stylized movement, utterances, and dramatic action, they are readily regarded as performances, particularly by cultural anthropologists (see Laderman and Roseman 1996). Used in this way, "performance" refers to a genre or type of event. "Healing as performance" is no mere verbal metaphor but connects two domains of action—healing and theatrical performance—by virtue of shared characteristics. A performative approach draws attention to the processual, aesthetic, sensory, and dramatic features of healing rites.

Secular healing practices, such as biomedicine and psychotherapy, are not usually thought of as rites or performances, even though the language of performance—"the doctor performed surgery"—is sometimes used in describing them. Drawing on Erving Goffman's studies of the ritualized and performative basis of everyday life, however, scholars have extended the notion of performance to secular healing practices as well. Used in this way, "performance" is an analytical tool for studying the roles, staging, acts, scenes, and scripts that accompany any social interaction. These two understandings of performance—as a type of special event and as a tool for studying everyday social interaction—are not mutually exclusive: Theatrical performance and ritual enactment draw on, elevate, invert, and stylize the performativity of everyday life.

Healing is a complex and diverse phenomenon. Meredith B. McGuire (1988) listed more than seventy different "alternative" healing practices (such as yoga, T'ai-chi, Reiki, and psychic healing) that have become common in middle-class, suburban America. Many religious rites—pilgrimage, meditation, prayer, funerals, and fasting, for instance—are fundamentally connected to healing. Services or rites of healing are central to the religious practice of some traditions, such as voodoo, Navajo traditions, and Christian Science. Other traditions incorporate healing into their ritual system and worldview—for example, the Christian practice of anointing the sick with oil, or the Buddhist use of medicinal metaphors in explicating the dharma. Biomedicine, so named because its focus is the treatment of biological disease, and psychotherapy both compete with and complement religious and alternative healing.

A ritual and performance approach to healing generally distinguishes between important terms that are similar in meaning. The terms "sickness" and "illness," for example, have different connotations. "Sickness" refers to biological disease—for example, cancer—while "illness" refers to the psychological, social, and spiritual experience and meaning of disease—for example, the "war against cancer." Likewise, the terms "curing" and "healing" each have a different focus. The etymology of the English verb "to heal" includes such meanings as "to make sound or whole" and "to restore to original purity or integrity." "Healing" is more comprehensive than "curing"; the latter is directed to bodily disease, but the former, to use a Western image, involves body, mind, and spirit.



Faith healer Olga Worrall lays her hands upon a man's head, at a church in Baltimore, Maryland, 1981  
(Roger Ressmeyer/Corbis)

Thus, in a precise manner of speaking, it is possible to be “healed” of cancer, yet die from the disease. Ritual and performance studies generally focus on the role of symbolic processes in illness and healing, leaving sickness and their cures to the province of biomedicine. Although distinctions between “scientific” and “symbolic” healing are useful (Sandner 1979), they belong to the paradigm of biomedicine and suggest that biomedicine does not involve symbolic healing. But biomedicine is itself a cultural system, and as such its symbolic, ritual, and performative basis can be studied.

Healing emphasizes efficacy: Patient, healer, and the wider community all expect results. But how does healing work (or fail)? Structuralist approaches conceive symbolic healing “as a matter of assimilating a problematic situation (illness) to a ritual form whose inner text or logical structure provides a kind of program for its resolution” (Schieffelin 1996, 81). Medical doctors, for example, see large numbers of pa-

tients with nonspecific complaints. The “logical structure” behind the “visit” to the doctor’s office—examination, diagnosis, treatment, prognosis, the physician’s authority, the patient’s trust, the use of technology—is often enough to affect “cure.” The focus of such study is occasionally performative utterance, the ways in which language is used to generate or activate bodily and social meanings.

Many cultures hold that illness is the result of disorder in social relations. Victor Turner, in his study of the Ndembu, wrote: “The sickness of the patient is mainly a sign that ‘something is rotten’ in the corporate body. The patient will not get better until all the tensions and aggressions in the group’s interrelations have been brought to light and exposed to ritual treatment” (Turner 1967, 392). Performance approaches to healing often emphasize the importance of process, embodiment, enactment, the senses, and aesthetics in creating or evoking “presence.” The Navajo Blessingway ceremony, for example, invokes and restores the

presence of Hozho, usually translated as “harmony” or “beauty.”

The healing potential of theatrical performance has long been recognized. Aristotle introduced the notion of *catharsis* in his discussion of Greek tragedy. Through tragedy, he said, the “emotions that strongly affect some souls” can be given “pleasurable relief,” and they “calm down as if they had been medically treated and purged [*katharseos*]” (*Politics* VIII: 7.4). Modern psychotherapy has made ample use of the notion that experiencing traumatic emotions may cleanse or purify those emotions. That performance genres can be especially powerful means for triggering the release of feeling and emotion explains the fusion of psychotherapy and performance in drama, music, and dance therapies. The use of theater and performance for purposes of healing is increasingly common in war-torn areas such as Bosnia and the West Bank, and in community development and reconciliation projects.

Studies of the performance of healing will need to move beyond distinctions to look for connections. Ultimately, physiological disease and cultural illness are not separate. Cancer, as a disease, is not simply “out there” as a bare fact waiting to “invade” the body. Rather, there are complex interrelationships between biology and culture that give rise to cancer. If bad backs and carpal tunnel syndrome are related to cultural, ritualized bodily activities (sitting in chairs and typing for extended periods of time), so, too, may organic diseases fit particular bodily and cultural styles. The psychiatrist Gotthard Booth proposed that diseases have consistent relationships to specific lifestyles and that the disease types of locomotor, cardiovascular, tubercular, and cancer can be historically correlated, respectively, with hunting-shamanic culture, planting-priestly culture, the preindustrial era, and the modern, technological era (see Grimes 1995, 123–136). Biogenetic structuralism, combining evolutionary biology, neurophysiology, and anthropology, has much to offer future studies of the performance of

healing, since it endeavors to cut through the body-culture dualism (Laughlin and d’Aquili 1974; Rappaport 1999). Performance theory, which allies itself with the arts, and biogenetic theory, which allies itself with the biological and social sciences, may find in the study of disease, illness, and healing a fruitful point of contact.

—Barry Stephenson

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Native American Religions and Politics: Shamanism; New Age; New Religious Traditions: Christian Science; The Body: Asian Body Practices; Sacred Time; Science: Healing

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## TOURISM

Tourism, pervasive among Americans of all socioeconomic classes, is related to ritual in two ways. First, many aspects of tourism are ritualized. Tourists have special clothes, actions, objects, spaces, times, and roles peculiar to tourism. The act of being a tourist encourages special actions that signal to others that one is being a tourist. Second, tourism is both a ritual itself and facilitates other related rituals of which tourism is a necessary part. Through tourism, people replay a myth of social identity and practice their place within that myth. But tourism also participates in a variety of other rituals that do such things as finalize a marriage, memorialize the dead, change a person's status, garner the benefits of sacred sites, and other performative acts.

### The Ritualization of Tourism

Tourism encourages ritualized performance. Implied in tourism is that one leaves one's usual surroundings to journey to another destination. This leaving is more than spatial. As in ritual, one leaves one's usual pattern of being, one's daily routine or activities, and engages in behavior that is required by the mode of travel, the destination, and the tourist experience.

The road trip is a good example of this ritualization. Institutionalized in the postwar boom and made possible by the highway system, inexpensive gasoline, and the family car, the road trip along the likes of Route 66 provided an experience of America. For early twentieth-century tourists, the road trip meant simple meals cooked beside the road, camping, and close quarters. For postwar Baby Boomers, it signaled crowded station wagons, pecan logs, cheap casinos, and a two-week flurry of scenic wonders.

A casual attire has developed that signals tourists to native residents. Likewise, the acts of photographing landmarks, shopping for regional artifacts, and attending cultural events of little interest to local residents are behaviors that mark the ritualization of tourism.

These ritualized acts vary by place and mode of travel. Air travel, for example, has necessitated particular clothes, luggage, and repetitive behaviors to ac-

commodate the peculiarities of riding in a plane, negotiating airport hubs, and hotel lodging.

### Tourism as Ritual

American tourism has several historical antecedents. These different modes of travel reflected varying intentions on the part of the traveler. Religious pilgrimage on the European continent saw thousands make arduous journeys to holy sites for the spiritual benefits offered there. By the late seventeenth century, the European elite undertook "grand tours" as part of an Enlightenment project to understand the world. With the rise of industrialism in America, middle-class America discovered leisure travel that promised renewal in resorts with access to the benefits of nature, culture, and religion. The late nineteenth- and twentieth-century advances in transportation have helped to prompt a flourishing of the tourist industry. Today, small town and city alike, featuring both theme parks and natural wonders, are prepackaged and easily accessible.

Just as rituals model life through a presentation of an idealized reality, tourism provides a ritual model of American identity. It works through roadside attractions, historical reconstructions, world's fairs, memorials, and the ubiquitous souvenir shops, with their larger-than-life caricatures of regional culture. American tourism is a ritual act by which tourists construct a picture of social reality through an experience of these carefully selected parts. It allows people to piece together the elements of a fractured postmodern America. It is also a ritual mechanism people employ to span cultural difference. Times Square, Chinatown, Oktoberfest, Yellowstone, and the Super Bowl are ritual displays in which the complexities of American experience are replaced by easily comprehensible models. The firsthand experience of these environments counts ritually for an experience of the whole. The objects collected in this exchange—postcards, souvenirs, photographs—are the relics of a ritual experience that continues to authenticate the tourist's place in the web of society. Tourism in this sense is a means by which tourists become more fully American.



Tourists on a ferryboat approaching the Statue of Liberty (Trip/S. Grant)

The destination orients tourism. Whether multiple or single, significant sites provide meaning and determine the actions of tourism. Americans have proven extremely proficient at packaging landscapes, history, culture, race, art, architecture, sports, and commerce as tourist sites. Dona Brown has traced the “invention” of the White Mountains, Martha’s Vineyard, and other New England landscapes as tourist sites. Successful marketing provided people with a justification for visiting them and the physical means for interacting with the sites. In the case of the White Mountains, staying at a luxury hotel in the mountains with all the comforts of the city counted as a wilderness experience (Brown 1995, 41ff.).

The twentieth century saw the rise of self-contained historical reconstructions of whole communities. Sites such as Plimoth Plantation, Old Sturbridge Village, and Colonial Williamsburg encourage tourists to perform themselves in another time or place. Living for a day at Plimoth or in a colonial village offers visitors

an opportunity to deepen their sense of citizenship by locating themselves within pivotal moments of the nation’s history.

Other tourist destinations, such as museums and fairs, take an opposite approach. Rather than bringing the tourist to the site of the thing itself, these destinations consist of collections of representative elements extracted from the context of origin and displayed with intention in a new location. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argued that the process of removal, classification, and display creates the artifact. In their original context, these artifacts are often the tools of life. But as objects of display, they become icons of culture by which the observer may access another place and people (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 2ff.).

The world’s fairs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries demonstrate the extent to which promoters sought to display all aspects of life. These fairs not only presented examples of industry and art but had living exhibits of Native Americans, Jews,

and other peoples. The people were displayed as if going about the routines of their lives. Here, as with reconstructed villages, observing the display counted as access to another place and people.

The same mechanics of display are evident, though on a smaller scale, in many tourist sites. Small towns, for example, actively create images for themselves and then perform that construction of place for visitors. Historic buildings are preserved and interpreted. Major museums draw thousands of visitors to collections containing masterworks from across the world.

Important to every destination is that it is not simply a destination, but a performance venue. Tourists do not simply observe. They interact with places and people. Though tourists often purchase objects to recall the experience, the act of tourism is the collection of experience. The new, the exotic, the never before seen, felt, or heard; the familiar, home; an imagined past or hoped-for future—these are the sites of tourism. Through these experiences tourists ritually perform an identity of themselves in relationship with others, past, present, and future.

### **Tourism for Ritual**

Tourism is also a component of a variety of other rituals. The following rituals are representative, though not exhaustive, of the diversity of ritual practice in which tourism is a necessary constituent ritual element.

#### ***Memorial***

Across the country are sites that memorialize victims of war and accident. In town squares, on college campuses, near seats of government, and in museums dedicated to memories of atrocities, these memorials provide a place to ritualize the life and death of the victims. John Lennon and Malcom Foley have labeled the recent tourist interest in death as “dark tourism.” Immediately following great tragedies, tourists flock to the site of the event. There they frequently offer simple altars of flowers, candles, and paper. Later, these sites are often memorialized in permanent structures and given a layer of interpretation by official representatives of the site (Lennon and Foley 2000).

Experiencing the site of tragedy with one’s body often activates grieving for people who are numb to the event when experiencing it via media. Thousands

came to New York City in the wake of the September 11, 2001, attack on the World Trade Center to view the site from an observation deck overlooking the recovery and cleanup. The many cross-country trips to the site by bikers, walkers, motorcyclists, emergency service workers, and others testify to the need for ritual space and a gathered community to assist pilgrims grieving tragedies of such enormity.

Other deaths are memorialized at sites apart from the place of their occurrence. Many of these memorials create ritual space when it is not possible for people to visit the site of death. Perhaps most notable of these are the memorials that line the Mall in Washington, D.C. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, in particular, a simple black marble wall of names lining a gash in the earth, has been a place of healing for many Vietnam veterans and their families. Likewise, Holocaust museums provide not only a place of grieving for those who suffered personal loss but also a permanent witness to successive generations.

Memorials, however, depend upon tourism and the commodification of place. It is possible to visit the grave of Jesse James in Fort Sumner, New Mexico, and the federal book depository in Dallas from which John F. Kennedy was shot because these sites are advertised and made accessible by the tourist industry.

#### ***Rites of Passage***

Particular moments in life often occasion travel. In these instances, tourism and the behavior associated with it become rites of passage for individuals and groups. For college students, the spring break trip to Daytona Beach or another resort marks a passage to adulthood. Binge drinking, all-night parties, and multiple sex partners are some of the ritual acts by which these young people mark their status as adults. Though these acts do occur on college campuses, the spring break trip provides a forum in which these acts are ritually acceptable means for acting out the status change from youth to adult.

High school and college reunions also may serve as rites of passage into mature adulthood. They signal that one has been a success in life and accomplished something. The ritual acts of reunions are almost exactly opposite those of spring break. At reunions, people travel toward homes, schools, clubs, or other associations rather than away from them. Behavior that

emphasizes identification with the mainstream establishment is rewarded.

### ***Honeymoons***

In the twentieth century, the honeymoon trip became an almost universally practiced concluding act to the wedding ritual. Prior to 1800, newlyweds typically set up their new home and immediately began their everyday routine. By the mid-nineteenth century, etiquette books promoted a private wedding trip in which the couple could visit scenic destinations. Access to a pristine natural environment and a time of leisure quickly became the accepted norms by which a couple could ensure the successful beginning of matrimony.

The newlyweds at a “romantic” resort seek an immediate, idealized experience of marital bliss. Destinations such as Niagara Falls facilitated the creation of the honeymoon ritual. Visited as early as the 1840s, Niagara Falls was mass-marketed as a honeymoon destination in the 1920s. Here, as in the Poconos or seaside destinations, the awe-inspiring beauty of the environment symbolically represented and ritually enabled the experience of romance.

So fixed are the parameters of a honeymoon getaway that even if a couple cannot afford to travel to a secluded resort, they are able to achieve the ritual equivalent through mass-marketed substitutes. If the tropics are too far, there is always the tropical room at the motel, simulated beaches at the water park, and the Caribbean restaurant.

The ritual function of honeymoons has changed over time. The honeymoon promised Victorian newlyweds the opportunity for sexual initiation and adjustment to their partner. Now, in a time when it is more typical that individuals might live with several mates before marriage, the honeymoon ritually validates the choice of one’s spouse. It completes a wedding narrative, providing the happy ending of a romantic escape in an exotic location with the ideal mate. The couple may recall the honeymoon or visit the same sites throughout their marriage as a means to evoke the sentiments they experienced right after their wedding.

### ***Family Holiday***

Families often travel great distances to be together for holidays. Many family members make the same jour-

neys year after year to the same destinations to celebrate religious holidays such as Passover and Christmas or secular holidays such as Thanksgiving and New Year’s.

In the case of religious holidays, a layer of sacred action often interweaves with family and secular customs. Easter, for example, is the most sacred day in the Christian calendar. Families that gather for Easter attend church services, but the holiday is often experienced more as a day for marking spring with new clothes, Easter egg hunts, and a large family meal.

Families may also gather to observe birthdays, anniversaries, or other days particular to them. In each case, travel and gathering at a location common to all the participants are important prerequisites to the ritual action that follows. “Going home” literally and metaphorically signals the affirmation of familial ties. Once gathered, the family ritually constitutes itself through the repetition of such actions as storytelling and eating.

—Troy W. Messenger

### **SEE ALSO**

Death: AIDS Quilt, Roadside Shrines; Generations: The Family; Sports; Sacred Space: Nature, Shrines; Sacred Time: Christmas, Easter, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Vacations

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## WEDDINGS

Weddings are one of the few remaining rites in Western civilization recognizing an individual's transition from one life stage to another (e.g., from being unmarried to becoming a spouse). In most societies, weddings include special garments, food, drinks, music, and liturgies. Usually, a religious ceremony is not required in order for a couple to be considered married. Often, however, a civil license is. In most Westernized societies, church weddings have become the most popular variant because of their association with the "white wedding." These ceremonies feature the bride dressed in a long white gown, the groom in formal wear, a white multitiered cake, attendants in matching outfits, and gold rings. A formal reception and honeymoon are also considered part of the standard package of the white wedding. Almost two-thirds of weddings in the United States are held in churches, with a minister (or ministers, sometimes of different faiths) performing the ceremony.

### Development of the White Wedding

The popularization of the white wedding can be traced to the marriage of Queen Victoria of Great Britain and Prince Albert in 1840. Prior to that time, weddings were simple ceremonies, often held in the bride's home, with the bride wearing a suit or her best dress. Until the 1930s in the United States, it was considered gauche to participate in a ceremony that was beyond one's financial means. The growth in popularity of the white wedding is attributable to the increasing pervasiveness and persuasiveness of many aspects of consumer culture, including specialized media such as bridal magazines, the propagation of wedding imagery by advertisers and filmmakers, the popularity of wedding story lines in radio and television series, the creation of wedding dolls, and the coverage of celebrity events such as the wedding of Prince

Charles and Lady Diana Spencer in 1981. Over 750 million people around the world watched this event. In addition, attitudes toward credit and loans in the contemporary capitalist cultures have also fueled the growth of the white wedding.

In addition, the Western ethic of romance, which dictates that men and women should marry for love rather than for convenience or financial gain, permeates most of Western culture. The link between romantic love and weddings has been bolstered through such enterprises as the Walt Disney Company, whose films stress the ability of anyone, no matter how humble their beginnings, to simultaneously find romance and material comfort. Indeed, Hollywood's interest in the wedding has paralleled that of Western societies as a whole. Its portrayals of these events are typically elaborate and feature middle- or upper-class white heterosexual couples.

### Weddings around the World

Global advertising campaigns, Hollywood's international box-office hits, and an increase in foreign travel have fueled interest in the white wedding across the globe. In some countries, such as Japan, wedding participants have simply supplemented their more traditional ceremonies with traditions found in the white wedding. In that country, the bride and groom spend part of the ceremony in native kimonos and drink the traditional sake (wine) to signify their union. They then change into more contemporary bridal gowns and tuxedos. In many countries, the white wedding has almost totally supplanted native or subcultural traditions. Yet often, some element of ethnicity is retained in the ceremony, either through music, food, or a special performative rite—such as "jumping the broom" in an African American ceremony, where the newlyweds sweep an area of the floor with their



A couple lights the wedding candle, San Juan Capistrano, California (Trip/S. Grant)

guests encircling them, then place the broom on the floor and jump over it together holding hands to symbolize their union into a new household.

In countries where marriages are still arranged, the bride and groom may actually see each other for the first time at their weddings. In India, the bride's sari is red, the color of celebration. Most trappings of the white wedding have not worked their way into Indian ceremonies because white is the color reserved for funerals. Brides are veiled in many cultures, traditionally as a symbol of modesty. In some countries in Asia and the Middle East, weddings cannot take place until the bride's family negotiates a "bride-price," or dowry, with the groom. The bride's family pays the groom in livestock, cash, or other valuable commodities, and the couple typically uses this dowry to establish their household. The families may also exchange gifts in the weeks or months preceding the wedding. A tradition that seems to have almost died out is that of "kidnapping" the bride before the wedding, a prac-

tice where the groom and his friends literally take a woman away from her parents' house and hold her hostage until the parents pay her dowry, thus enabling the wedding to take place.

### Shared Elements of Religious Ceremonies

Although wedding ceremonies differ across religions, many share similar elements. Brides and grooms often repeat vows spoken by the religious official and engage in prayer with the guests. The vows used in many Christian ceremonies originated in the 1500s in Britain. The bride and groom may take Communion if the ceremony is Christian, drink sacred wine from the same cup, or light a special unity candle as a symbol of their newly married state. In Jewish weddings, the couple often stands under a *chuppah*, or floral arch, during the ceremony. In many cultures, the groom usually gives a ring to the bride, a custom that dates from Roman times when rings were woven of rush, a

marsh plant. Iron and gold rings became more popular in the fifteenth century. The “double-ring” ceremony, which is popular in capitalist cultures, dates from the 1920s and was invented by jewelers as a way to increase their profits. Likewise, diamond engagement rings, which are now standard in many Westernized cultures, increased in popularity beyond the upper class in the 1930s, driven largely by a successful advertising campaign (“Diamonds Are Forever”) funded by the De Beers cartel.

Not all religious weddings take place in a church; there have always been people who have planned alternative weddings that have been held in special places in nature or in venues that have personal meaning to the couple. Such ceremonies are often officiated by religious leaders and incorporate aspects of the white wedding. Often, one or both members of the couple have been married before, although it is now considered acceptable for brides and grooms who are remarrying to have elaborate white weddings as well.

### Wedding-Related Activities

Weddings are often followed by receptions, which feature feasting, music, and dancing. Prior to World War II, receptions in the United States were often held at the bride’s home or in the church basement. The elaborate reception became increasingly popular in the 1980s as people embraced more consumption-driven lifestyles. Cake and punch receptions and buffets were replaced by full-course dinners that often included alcoholic beverages. The standard activities at receptions are toasts made in honor of the bride and groom, a set order of dances by family members in the wedding party, staged photographs, and more dancing. The bride may toss her bouquet to any unmarried woman at the reception; traditionally, the woman who catches it will be the next to marry. Likewise, the groom may throw the bride’s garter to any bachelor at the reception, theoretically for the same purpose.

### Symbols and Gifts

Many of the other elements of the wedding have special symbolic significance. The orange blossoms that were traditional for brides to wear in their hair were thought to be symbols of fertility, as was the rice

thrown on the couple as they departed the reception. White itself was considered a symbol of purity, and the white gown has its roots in the First Communion dresses in Europe in the 1400s. White no longer represents the virginal status of the bride but still highlights the singular nature of the wedding day, which requires a special costume to be worn only once.

It is traditional for the wedding guests to present gifts to the couple. In parts of Asia, this is accomplished through the “red-envelope” ceremony, where guests present gifts of money in envelopes at the reception. In the United States and other Western countries, guests can select gifts through computerized bridal registry systems offered by department stores and other retail outlets. The standards for wedding gifts in America were established prior to World War II. Pieces of the bride’s china patterns, crystal, silver, or silver plate and other household goods are all common. With the growth of the Internet, many couples register online with department stores or create Web sites that feature their wish lists.

### Gay and Lesbian Weddings

Weddings have typically marked the union of a heterosexual couple. However, in the past few decades, many gay couples have declared their desire for laws that would enable them to marry. The State of Vermont recognized same-sex unions in 2000; however, the Defense of Marriage Act that was passed by Congress that same year ruled that individual states did not have to recognize marriages between same-sex couples. The first same-sex marriage recognized as legal was performed in Holland in 2001 for a lesbian couple. Many same-sex couples have found liberal ministers in various denominations who will perform “commitment ceremonies.” These events often include the trappings of weddings, even though they do not carry legal sanction. The issue of same-sex weddings is causing controversy among some mainstream Protestant denominations in the United States as well as in Catholic and Jewish circles.

—*Cele Otnes*

### SEE ALSO

Popular Culture: Cultural Saints, Film; Sexuality: Sexual Identities

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# SACRED SPACE



**S**acred space has always played an integral part in religious life. When a service or ceremony begins, the community feels itself enfolded in an unusual but distinctive emotional state. The place where people are gathered itself takes on a sense of unity, creating, for the moment, a space qualitatively different from all others. This transcendent occasion overcomes secular time and space as a congregation communes with the divine. Recitation of legends, histories, and accounts of previous sacred events structure the service or ceremony so that people find themselves participating as a community with those who have gone before them in their religious tradition. History and the site become linked.

Sacred space is an essential element of devotional life. Specific sites where physical features encourage and enhance spiritual experience become imbued with special significance. Different traditions experience the sacredness of space in radically different ways. There is the religious building, be it church, temple, mosque, or sweat lodge, in which or through which people traditionally practice ceremonies and services. Some lands or features of lands are recognized as being sacred in themselves. Communities may consecrate or set aside sites as sacred. Finally, in mystical and revelatory events, people have reported finding themselves taken to a strange place where space and time contract or expand as the sacredness of the experience dictated.

These various ways of experiencing sacred space can be distinguished by their ability to invoke emotional intensity and clarify life issues. Although the intensity of the experience depends upon the substance of faith and beliefs, there are nonetheless manifestations of the sacred that seem beyond human abilities to perceive or understand. Groups or individuals who experience a sudden surge of divine energy in a particular place thereafter may regard the site as sacred. When this sacredness pervades their lives at these locations, they often take great care to preserve the site and perform rituals seeking guidance and expressing thanksgiving there.

### **Sacred Lands Given by God**

Some societies have believed that God has given them their country as an exclusive possession. Foremost in this respect would be the Jews, descendants of the ancient Hebrews, who believe that God gave them, through a promise to their ancestors from Abraham through Moses, a land of milk and honey—the land of Israel. The Japanese believe a divine pair, Izanagi and Izanama, created their islands out of chaos at the beginning of time specifically for them. The city of Tenochtitlán was founded at a location where, according to prophecy, an eagle was sitting on a blooming cactus flower. Many tribal groups understand their lands in this sense. The Crow Indians of North America, for example, say their country was created in the most favorable location with the best conditions for living. The Hopis of Arizona believe that deities finally told them where to live in North America after centuries in which they wandered from place to place.

This idea of possessing a land originally inhabited by others as a result of divine intervention or by a divine historical promise is a belief tenaciously held but not always in accord with historical realities. Many Americans, for example, believe God willed that they settle and possess most of the North American continent; history, however, shows their occupation to have been a matter of military and economic conquest. The early Hebrews unquestionably dispossessed the inhabitants of the Holy Land as recorded in the Old Testament. Part of the justification for the Israeli occupation of their lands today is in reference to this early promise of God. The Ainu originally occupied Japan but were driven to isolated areas in the northern parts of the islands. The rise of the great nation-states of Europe in the past half millennium involved gathering together the smaller areas and provinces with their religious institutions and merging them into much larger empires with one general religion. Later apologists justified their existence by the theory of the divine right of kings. The king then



represented the lands and peoples of the empire, and people believed that the nation was guided and sustained by God. Early Mormon settlers in the American West saw Utah as a reversed mirror image of the Holy Land and believed God intended them to settle there.

### Sacred Space We Set Aside

Temples, churches, mosques, sweat lodges, and even the spaces covered by sandpaintings change secular locations for ceremonial purposes. In building such structures, people create spaces distinct from all secular locations, at least for the duration of the ceremony or rite that takes place there, hoping for a relationship with the divine or seeking to enhance a continuing participation in the blessings they have been receiving. Having constructed a place of worship according to particular traditions, they may seek to enhance its ability to evoke a positive spiritual response. Thus, for many religious traditions, the architecture of the building has a definite role in preparing participants for the presence of the sacred. Buildings are aligned to maximize the appearance of the rising sun or capture the phases of the moon. Some buildings are created so that lines drawn to prominent stars are obvious. Many temples and churches are built on a true north-south alignment so that they are in tune with the larger cosmic rhythms.

Many buildings have an inner and outer design—the outer area for the mass of people to exercise their devotional rituals, the inner space where the sacraments are held. These inner areas are sometimes available to the priests and spiritual leaders but not, except on unusual occasions, to the ordinary believer. Solomon's Temple was said to have a Holy of Holies that only the High Priest could enter, and then only on special occasions. The Ark of the Covenant, Israel's holiest object, occupied a special place at the center of the temple, where it became the focus of religious activities. In some Christian churches, the Communion rail separates the priests from the congregation, marking out the altar as a particularly sacred location where the body and blood of Christ are consecrated.

Crypts containing the relics of a saint are sometimes found in special locations in Christian churches, areas set aside for worshipers to appeal directly to the

saint. These remains become the object of intense devotional rituals, and healings have been reported as the assistance of the saint has been invoked on behalf of the worshipers. Even sandpaintings have inner and outer areas to distinguish how the spiritual powers are distributed. Sweat lodges have the outside covering and the inside hole containing rocks, each representing the cosmos but in much different ways.

Almost without exception, the earliest buildings erected for religious purposes were efforts to duplicate the cosmos on a smaller scale. It was believed that by reproducing a cosmic scheme the builders could concentrate the spiritual powers for ritual purposes. Although modern societies do not have that concern, an argument can still be made that the design of religious buildings does represent larger cosmic realities. Many Christian churches, especially the Gothic cathedrals of the Middle Ages, were built as architectural versions of the body of Christ. Some Hindu temples are built as models representing the human body and the larger cosmos. Other indigenous temples had seven levels that represented the seven heavens of the cosmos. Tribal sweat lodges and saunas, too, are built to represent the cosmos and are believed to extend an equal distance into the earth to complete the heaven-earth circle. Shinto shrines are designed to blend perfectly with the surrounding landscape, and Chinese temples were made consonant with the "dragon forces" of the earth.

With the exception of Islam, which forbids representations of the human figure, many religious buildings are filled with statues or paintings symbolizing the life of the founder or events in his or her life. The Stations of the Cross are often designated in Christian churches as special places within an already sacred building. The Eastern Orthodox Church has the twelve major events of Christ's life represented by statues and devotional altars. Sweat lodges often feature special symbols on the covering robes or in the lodge itself. Sandpaintings are filled with representations of spiritual forces. Often, smaller spaces and chapels are attached to the larger building or incorporated in its architecture so that private worship may be conducted or smaller groups may gather for special purposes. In the ziggurats and temples of ancient Sumer, it was believed that a god visited the rooms on the top from time to time. The sacrifices and burnt offerings were a means of feeding the god and offering



A Sun Dance lodge with Cheyenne people standing inside, c. 1910 (Library of Congress)

the fruits of a good harvest in thanksgiving for his or her help.

### Secular Sacred Space

Most societies have set aside monuments and cemeteries as sacred places that commemorate the secular history of the people. Citizens steeped in the knowledge of their country's historical journey experience and sense the sacred when visiting these sites. The Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, said to be the last remnants of Solomon's Temple, has become both a religious shrine and a political symbol of the renewed existence of the State of Israel. The many pyramids, temples, and statuary of Egypt record both the religion and the political accomplishments of that ancient people. Arlington National Cemetery and Gettysburg are two of the prominent locations that the United States has designated as sacred ground. Some sites, such as Stonehenge, mutely testify to the devotion

and political and economic organization of an ancient people. Ceremonies attempting to recapture the original perception of the sacred are held there from time to time, although it is doubtful that anyone can experience today what these original people must have felt.

Americans often set aside unusual natural features and treat them with respect bordering on reverence. The Grand Canyon, Bryce Canyon, Yosemite, Monument Valley, Niagara Falls—the list of designated places is long and varied. Millions of people visit these locations every year, and though their feelings may be primarily aesthetic, many report experiencing a sense of awe bordering on the religious during their visit. Many of these sites are also sacred to Indian tribes on an entirely different basis. The Chinese located their cities and shrines according to the principles of geomancy—feng-shui—which tapped into the dragon energies that ran through the earth. They sculpted the landscape so they could obtain the maxi-

mum benefits from the natural rhythms of the earth and located cities to form a linkage of energy spots throughout the country.

Westerners are generally content to describe their experiences of the sacred by reference to religious buildings, memorials, and natural features. These sites inspire patriotism and other emotions for them. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, for example, commemorating those who died in the military conflict, has achieved status as a major shrine for American civil religion. Westminster Abbey has special significance for the English people above and beyond its religious connotations and represents a civil religion. The sacredness of such sites transcends the religious significance of the place. In a more secular mode, the passion people feel for preserving old buildings, football stadiums, and other secular locations testifies to the propensity of people to endow locations with their own feelings and set them aside as part of their emotional lives.

### Places That Become Sacred over Time

Perhaps it is the vastness of the landscape or the power of natural cycles that compels people to set apart sacred space. People tend to remember landmarks and unusual natural features they have visited, understanding them as constituting the familiar boundaries of their lives. Lakes, mountains, and rivers dominating a geographical area may become deeply ingrained in the worldview and stories of the people who live there. Many Indian tribes looked at the sky and created their own constellations, which, as a rule, were considerably larger than the constellations of Western civilization. They believed that whatever patterns they could find in the sky were duplicated on earth. The reverse was also true. Believing that earth and sky acted as a harmonious couple, they evaluated the features of the earth and sought an explanation in the movement of heavenly bodies. A drought or exceptionally rainy or windy weather might be reflected in star patterns that had changed mysteriously. Thus, by establishing sets of relationships among stars and tracing these relationships on earth, the Indians believed they could identify where ceremonies should take place to ensure the success of their efforts.

The Sioux Indians had four different ceremonies that were performed in the springtime leading up to the summer solstice. They would begin where the

North and South Platte Rivers meet and perform ceremonies to welcome back plant and animal life after the long winter. The fourth ceremony was the Sun Dance, which was usually performed on June 21 in or near the Black Hills. During this ceremonial season, it was said, different sites became part of a larger religious landscape. The Black Hills themselves became a giant buffalo, with its horns at Devil's Tower and Inyan Kara and its nose at Bear Butte in South Dakota. Although these locations were generally revered, during the course of springtime ceremonies they took on added significance. The time of year often determined the sacredness of locations because the site participated in the activities of larger spiritual forces.

The world religions tend to use a ceremonial calendar marking out the great events in their history. Special festivals invoke a sense of additional reverence when time and space are coordinated in these events. Yom Kippur, Easter, and Ramadan are typical ceremonial events that add a special sense of the sacred, though they are conducted in churches, temples, and mosques that already have a rich ceremonial life. Sacred time enhances sacred space, and pilgrimages to specific locations become a regular part of the devotional life of the people. For Muslims, Jerusalem is sacred because it is the place from which they believe Muhammad ascended into heaven, leaving marks of his journey in stone.

### Temporal Enhancement of Sacred Space

Religious traditions focusing on the growth, death, and renewal of life attributed sacred power to particular locations at certain times of the year. Agricultural societies planted fields in a ceremonial fashion by conducting special rituals to ensure their fertility. For European cultures, activities and celebrations on the first of May marked the coming of spring. Some Indian tribes celebrated the return of the salmon by conducting a First Salmon ceremony at the location where the diurnal salmon runs began. Many peoples presented offerings at various shrines during the growing season to ensure a proper harvest or successful hunting. In these examples, the sacred becomes a manifestation of a larger life process.

Often, nomadic hunting societies simply created small cairns to mark their passage over familiar landscape. As the decades passed and the piles of stone

grew higher, people began to attribute religious significance to them; they eventually became shrines thought to have inherent powers. Moses, at the foot of Mount Sinai, erected twelve pillars of stone to represent the organization of the Hebrews into tribes according to their genealogical histories. Joshua, upon crossing the Jordan River, instructed the Hebrews to build a large pile of stones so that decades or even centuries later, whenever people saw the pile, they would remember the Exodus and the subsequent entrance of the Israelites into the Holy Land.

Creation and migration stories are a major feature of many religious traditions. People remember sites where they believe they were created or saved from an impending disaster. Places of emergence from an underground world are usually identified as sacred and treated in a special manner. Where it is possible to locate places along ancient migration trails, people seek to find evidence of their journeys and see sacredness in them. Unusual landmarks often mark the borders for nations or peoples who believe that they have received their land as a divine gift. Over time, these sites evolve from simple boundary markers, taking on sacredness dependent for the most part on the passage of time. Eventually, shrines are located in favorable places. The Navajos have identified four peaks in Arizona within which, including the sky dome above them, religious ceremonials must be held. Often these sites are also scenes of renewal ceremonies to ensure the continuation of life.

### Places Sacred in Themselves

Tribal peoples have always maintained that there are places that are sacred in themselves and have no need for human use or approval. These places are unusual landmarks that stand out among features equally impressive. Mount Fuji in Japan, perhaps the best example of a perfect volcanic cone, speaks of its sacredness to everyone who visits it. Devil's Tower, or Bear's Lodge, as the American Indians would call it, in eastern Wyoming is one of those sacred sites. All the traditions describing the unique features of a place sacred in itself testify that when it was first discovered, a sense of awe came over the people who found it. Eventually, spiritual leaders, anxious to preserve the sacredness of their ceremonies, began to speak in stories and parables about sacred places to prevent peo-



Devil's Tower, Wyoming (Library of Congress)

ple who could not engage in the rituals from profaning them. Thus, some stories about the Bear's Lodge talk of seven children chased by a gigantic bear who scratched the sides of the mountain. In a ritual sense, the Bear's Lodge stories relate to the Pleiades (Seven Sisters) as well as to the mysterious lake that exists inside the mountain.

Often, fresh water or mineral springs have been held to be sacred. They are credited with possessing healing powers, or their vapors are thought to assist people in conducting quests for help from higher powers. The oracle at Delphi was said to have these qualities and originally had vapors rising from its crevices. The Greeks used it extensively for healing and prophecy. Jacob's well was sought out for its healing powers. Lourdes in southern France has become a major shrine for its healing waters in modern times. One might also include the waters of the Ganges at Benares in India, which are believed to have special powers guaranteeing salvation for those whose ashes are delivered to the river. In India, rivers and their tributaries are believed to be sacred in themselves, especially in specific places where cures reportedly

occurred. In North America, lakes are frequently regarded as sacred, particularly Blue Lake of the Taos Indians and Crater Lake of the Klamath Indians.

An argument could be made that specific sites do not have any continuing special powers, but the fact remains that in many places in the world where shrines have been built, upon later inspection it has been discovered that the site was used by many different cultures over a prolonged period of time. It is no mistake, according to this understanding, that many of the cathedrals of Europe and shrines of the Middle East and Asia were built on the site of previous religious shrines that were thousands of years old. Sacredness is thus apprehended by several societies that have neither doctrines nor rituals in common. Some people believe that the earth has many locations, all related to each other by a planetary network of energy fields, that are sacred in themselves. These locations are thought to manifest religious activities of an unusual and higher order of which only a few people have knowledge. Stonehenge and the Medicine Wheel in Wyoming are said to be the portals where people can move back and forth between worlds. Some traditions hold that the earth has a network of sacred places, and if these could be accurately marked, the resulting earth map would somewhat resemble Buckminster Fuller's geodesic dome.

A related aspect of sites that are sacred in themselves is the practice of *sanctuary*. If more than one religious tradition had a relationship with a sacred place and the site was recognized as being holy, access was usually given to other people who wished to use the place for their own ceremonies. Visitors were not to be molested or deterred in pilgrimages to and from the site, during rituals after arriving, while they were using the site, or upon their departure. The higher powers of the place were believed to be too powerful to antagonize, so no conflict was tolerated. Wrongdoers of different groups might come near the site, but only for explaining their misdeeds or seeking forgiveness from the spirits themselves.

Jerusalem is a location sacred to three major religions: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Conflicting interests there have caused political and cultural turmoil. In the United States, such locations as Devil's Tower, the Pipestone Quarry, Black Mountain, Mount Graham, and Mount Shasta all serve as sacred places for a number of American Indian tribes. Buddhism

and Hinduism also share sacred places, as did Buddhism and the Chinese religions in the past. With the revival of ancient European religions, multiple uses of shrines now Christian but also having pre-Christian roots may become more widespread.

Whether a site is considered intrinsically sacred or sacred by tradition seems to depend upon the earliest human encounters with the location. Moses' hesitant exploration of the Burning Bush on Mount Sinai has no doubt been duplicated in substance by many other religious figures in other locations. Mount Sinai, however, was already called the "mountain of God" by the desert tribes who lived in the vicinity. The cave where Muhammad told of receiving his teachings must also have been immediately perceived as having extraordinary importance. In sites sacred in themselves, people have intensely religious experiences of divine energies reaching out to them. In most cases, the site functions to provide a revelation that substantially expands the religious understanding of the visitor.

### The Center of the World

Many religious traditions have designated their place of worship as the center of the world. The early ziggurats in the Middle East were understood as centers of the world representing the world mountain that joined heaven and earth. In Asia, the creation of mandalas to represent the cosmos is an integral part of religious activity, and the mandala represents the center of the universe. Whether the mandala is made a permanent part of the devotion of temples or created and destroyed as part of religious training, it is always treated with great respect. The Plains Indians, when using their Sacred Pipe, point to the four geographical directions, then to the sky and earth, creating a representation of the cosmos by invoking the powers of these directions. Navajo sandpaintings are usually formed in a square or rectangle, which, for the duration of the ceremony, represents the cosmos. The sandpaintings are usually destroyed after the ceremony is completed to prevent profane use of the sacred site that has been created.

### Sacred Space in Religious Experience

An unusual experience reported by prophets, mystics, and shamans is the apparent flexibility of ordinary

space during a religious encounter. Many have reported that through fasting and intense prayer, they were able to call the higher powers to them. They have later recalled that the arrival of the spirit was marked by a great distortion of time and space; the distortion of space particularly is remembered vividly. There are a variety of anecdotal stories that give something of the flavor of this experience. Isaiah had a vision in which he was transported to another place where he saw the Almighty in a Middle Eastern court setting. The secular world disappeared, and Isaiah participated in a unique event while maintaining his ordinary objective powers of understanding. This phenomenon is paralleled by Black Elk's story of meeting the Six Powers of the universe in a large tepee in an undisclosed location. In these kinds of experiences, sacred powers create special spaces that will be familiar to the person encountering the divine.

More common, perhaps, is an expansion or contraction of ordinary space to accommodate a particular sacred event. Mystics may find themselves floating somewhere in space, where they view the world as a small ball comparable, in their descriptions, to the pictures of the earth photographed by astronauts. Immanuel Swedenborg was said to have glimpsed events hundreds of miles away as secular space collapsed and he was able to see at a distance. Many Indian medicine men report this phenomenon also. One Sioux medicine man reported that he had traveled a long distance and found himself in a tepee that contained a great number of elk. He remarked that the tepee could not possibly have held as many elks as he experienced. Space itself changed to accommodate the event.

Shamans also report that they can go into a spirit form and travel to many lands and participate in activities there. Or they can go into the future and find themselves at the place and age where they will be after the passage of many years. A Crow medicine man reported that he found himself in a forest watching an old man and discovered that it was himself many years later. These locations have an existence all their own within the larger cosmos, giving rise to metaphysical questions regarding the nature of the physical universe. The Hopi and Pueblo people say they can go into other worlds through the *sipapu*, the axis of the physical world. Mount Fuji, named after the Buddhist goddess Fuchi, is believed to be the gateway

to another world. German mystics reported that at a certain stage of their experience they were looking into an abyss that sometimes seemed to have physical characteristics. Other mystics have said they have been to the edge of the earth. Carl Jung, suffering from a serious illness, found himself floating far out in space, an experience that changed his perception of the soul.

People with no religious bent, and not in a situation where any religious feeling would be expected, often find themselves participating in a *déjà vu* event. They may encounter themselves in another time or space, like Goethe meeting himself riding horseback. Most people tend to think of these experiences as simply psychological but forget that they happen in a peculiar reorientation of space itself in which people find themselves confronting two different time dimensions. The reverse phenomenon is called *bilocation*, a phenomenon in which individuals can be seen at two locations at the same time.

Sioux and Cheyenne medicine men report the presence of a cave at both Devil's Tower and Bear Butte in South Dakota. In the earliest revelations given to these tribes a chosen individual, Sweet Medicine in the case of the Cheyenne, finds and enters a cave where the higher powers give him instructions and prophecies. Devil's Tower is said to have a mountain meadow site with a lake somewhere within it that could be visited by a few select spiritual leaders. Enough people reported the experience of going into the mountain to cause the experience to be remembered.

Caves have been almost archetypal in their status as sacred locations where revelatory events occur. Elijah had a special cave in which he encountered great power located somewhere on Mount Sinai. Muhammad had his greatest revelations in a cave. Some Christians believe that the original site of the birth of Jesus was a cave, which may have served as the manger, and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem is built over a cave. Zeus, too, was allegedly born in a cave. Many shamans regard the cave as the womb of Mother Earth and attempt to duplicate the original cave that gave birth to the world. Paintings and carved symbols in caves around the world suggest that caves might have been the physical location for the earliest religions.

Contemporary people have begun to rediscover the sacred power of special spaces. Some people set aside

rooms that they designate as sacred and do meditations or perform ceremonies in them. Architects are often encouraged to design houses to maximize the uniqueness of a location so that the dwellings enhance the setting. Shinto temples in Japan have enhancement of the natural setting as a guiding principle in locating temple rites. People discuss various ideas about the sacredness of space on the Internet, making information about sacred sites common and popular knowledge. Though hardly having the power or intensity of other kinds of sacred spaces, cyberspace needs to be taken seriously by scholars attempting to understand sacred space.

The sacred reveals the many ways of understanding human experience through the medium of space. Indeed, it would be difficult to conceive of religion without the idea of the place or location where it can be practiced and experienced. Taken in all its aspects, sacred space is the primary and essential element for having any kind of religious experiences or devotional life at all. The secular space of measurable dimensions has always been understood as a place where spiritual powers may enter the human realm. Wherever the world of humanity meets with the worlds of the divine, there people find their sacred spaces.

—Vine Deloria, Jr.

#### SEE ALSO

Hinduism in America: Hindu Temples; Islam in America; Judaism in America; Native American Religions and Politics: Shamanism; New Age; Death; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion; Ritual and Performance: Tourism; Violence: War

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## CYBERSPACE

*Cyberspace* is an intrapsychic idea of place that orients people in a virtual environment. Introduced in 1984 in the science fiction novel *Neuromancer* by author William Gibson, the term originally described the dimension that skilled computer users entered when they bodily jacked into computer networks. By the close of the twentieth century, Gibson's term was a key component in the lexicon of Internet etiquette. It described the *where* or *when* in which those involved in computer-mediated communication thought and behaved.

Cyberspace is a late development in the history of computer communication, which itself spans scarcely a few decades. The first computer network, ARPANET, was brought online in September 1969 through a collaboration of university and military researchers in the United States. Electronic mail followed in 1972. TCP/IP protocols facilitating the interconnection of disparate computer networks became standard in 1983. By 1985, the Internet was functioning and publicly available. The latest major component of computer-mediated communication, the World Wide Web, came online half a decade later, in late 1990, with Web files available by late spring of 1991.

As with all public areas, cyberspace reflects a combination of material and ideal components. Materially, it relies upon electricity, computer hardware (either stand-alone or embedded in a communication device such as a television or cell phone), computer software protocols, and telephone or cable lines. These commingled constitutive elements make cyberspace at once monolithic and diverse. Its binary core of computerization and integrated software protocols gives it structural homogeneity. Yet the sensual experience of cyberspace can vary considerably depending upon the quality of hardware, software, and infrastructure used to access it.

That those engaged in computer-mediated communication came to think of themselves as inhabiting cyberspace when online was, to a degree, a whimsical innovation on their part. But they were not left to invent cyberspace freely on their own. The two computer industry leaders, Microsoft and Apple, along with innumerable dot.com companies, spent billions in the 1980s and 1990s to publicize the existence of

cyberspace, most notably as a credible arena in which to spend money. Fleshing out cyberspace became a recurrent theme of mass-mediated entertainment as well. In films such as *The Matrix* (1999) as well as in television series such as *Voyager*, cyberspace was a vehicle used to articulate cultural dreams and nightmares over the impact of a thoroughly computerized environment.

The recognition accorded cyberspace at the turn of the millennium gave this semi-imaginary locale more symbolic weight than countless actual places. Believed in by billions, cyberspace became real in its consequences if not in its geography. It generated a new genre of business, e-commerce, and attracted a huge wave of investment dollars. It also became an extremely popular dimension for religious expression. By the end of the twentieth century, every major religious tradition in the world, along with a plethora of new religious movements, had established some form of online presence.

According to Brenda Brasher (2001), the appeal of cyberspace for religious practice and expression can, in part, be attributed to the emotional and psychological congruities between going online and entering a religious building. Brasher contended that one of the main goals of religious architecture is to draw or thrust sensitive, interested people into an encounter with the transcendent through altering their sense of time and place, and that cyberspace similarly provides countless people with an experience of timelessness and even placelessness when they go online.

Thus, for some, cyberspace is sacred space, as Stephen O'Leary (1996) has put it. It is omnipresent, endlessly accessible, and invisible, but reachable via the symbolic window of a computer or television monitor. An eternal present without sunrise, sunset, seasons, or years, cyberspace is the closest humanity has come to actualizing heaven. The fact that people endow cyberspace with such transcendent qualities leaves it open to serious criticism. Theorists such as Robert Markley have claimed that the language of territory and colonization often associated with cyberspace is a clue to the trap inside the illusion. For N. Katherine Hayles (1993), the seduction of cyberspace is precisely that it is a site where real-world privileges





Person using a computer (Trip/T. Why)

are readily reinscribed, even while denied. Quite the contrary to being sacred space, these critics say, cyberspace is literally utopia, no place, as potentially mesmerizing an idea as Thomas Mann's but even more dangerous. It siphons off desire and energy from real-world geography and from real-life relationships, neighborhoods, and even congregational com-

munities. Philosophically, it poses serious challenges to the concept of sacrality. The category of the sacred, set off from the profane, proposes to distinguish between the ultimately real and the transient, and cyberspace inherently destabilizes the established balance of these opposing forces. A dimension constituted of multiple representations, it undermines the notion of the authentic, the unique, or even the real.

—Brenda E. Brasher

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Generations: Generation X; Popular Culture; Science: Science Fiction, Technology

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## LAS VEGAS

Las Vegas is sacred space on the American landscape, space sanctified by the authority of mythic narratives, invested with multiple systems of meaning, and organized according to unique religious rituals. As sacred space, it is also contested space, with perspectives on its moral character evoking responses that range from righteous outrage ("sin city") to joyous celebration ("the city of dreams").

As with other sacred cities around the world, such as Jerusalem, Banaras, or Lourdes, pilgrims are drawn to Las Vegas because they want to encounter the holy and be transformed by the miraculous powers to be found there. Unlike other sacred cities whose histories are tied to major world religious traditions such as Judaism, Hinduism, or Catholicism, Las Vegas is first and foremost a testament to America's



Woman gambling at the slot machines in Las Vegas (Richard Cummins/Corbis)



Neon signs at Las Vegas (Alan Schein Photography/Corbis)

most cherished national values, an expression of a thriving religious culture that cannot be reduced to any particular religious tradition.

The religious realities of Las Vegas can be identified with multiple layers of meaning that give life to its mystique in the American imagination. To many, it is a hotbed of sin and temptation, transgression and excess, and therefore a prime candidate for fearsome missionary activity. To others, it is a fun-loving family vacation spot where intimate bonds of domestic affection are reinvigorated through the temporary escape from mundane, ordinary time and space. It is also a city intimately associated with one of America's most fundamental, indeed sacrosanct, rites of passage: marriage.

Spiritual sojourners come from far and wide to the streets of Las Vegas for a variety of complex, contradictory reasons, though most want the same things as kindred religious spirits around the world: community, transcendence, and liberation. But the kind of community, transcendence, and liberation on the

mind of Vegas-bound pilgrims is tied to a distinctive and transparent kind of religious power that emanates from the *sine qua non* of this sacred city: money.

Compared with other sacred cities, Las Vegas has a rather brief history. But what it lacks in historical time it more than makes up for in mythic narratives, usually compiled in tour books that devote a page or two to local history, but also embodied in songs, films, music, and other imaginative spaces on the American cultural landscape. The tourist manuals may begin with "ancient roots," referring to long-lost native groups such as the Anasazi. Most, however, immediately get to the point and narrate a remarkable American success story: An isolated tent town in a corner of the Mojave Desert becomes one of the most famous cities in the world in less than a century. Its storied past is symbolically and literally anchored in the *axis mundi* of the city, the Las Vegas Strip. Its myths are peopled by an assortment of larger-than-life American icons with reverential status in popular culture, such as early resort owner and mobster Benjamin

“Bugsy” Siegel, eccentric billionaire Howard Hughes, and popular entertainers Liberace and Elvis Presley.

These myths locate the city in a larger cosmic frame of reference and produce concrete effects in time, space, and ritual life. In other words, they authorize and sacralize certain forms of human behavior—in this case, gambling—and certain kinds of expectations about the future—such as “Today’s my lucky day.” The promise of striking it rich, and the perceived transformative power of winning a jackpot—for the father out gambling late, the hard-core slot-machine addict, or the executive on a business trip—strike a deep, resonate chord in the souls of many Americans, who flock to the city year-round to fulfill their destinies and indulge their fantasies. In Las Vegas casinos, money flows like manna from heaven; it possesses extraordinary power that has the potential to heal, rejuvenate, and inspire individuals who want to leave with more power than they came in with. And the only way to achieve this statistically unlikely feat is to gamble, the sacred ritual that fuels the billion-dollar economy generated in this particular American space.

The religious poetics of the space, which encompasses myth, ritual, morality, bodies, buildings, performance, spectatorship, and imagination, make Las Vegas a unique place on the American landscape. Its location in the desert, the enormity of the newer hotels and resorts—such as the 3,049-room Mirage Hotel—that line its streets, the dance of neon lights sparkling

in the night sky, the celebratory atmosphere that cultivates a peculiar kind of effervescence—for these and many other reasons, the experience of gambling in Las Vegas is unmatched: Casino resorts and complexes in other parts of the country will not automatically conjure up the same presence of the sacred. Las Vegas has the right combination of religious ingredients to make it one of America’s most sacred cities.

—Gary Laderman

#### SEE ALSO

Popular Culture: Cultural Saints; Ritual and Performance: Tourism; Sacred Time: Vacations

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## NATURE

As clergy have begun to turn their attention toward the problems of environmental degradation and laypeople have increasingly become drawn to more “nature-based” spiritual expressions, American religious institutions have responded by engaging in environmental politics, launching institutional environmental impact audits, raising questions of environmental ethics, and experimenting with new “green” liturgies. From ecumenical rituals to heal the oceans to “Redwood Rabbis” who campaign on behalf of old-growth forests and from St. Francis Day animal blessings to Gaian masses, “Green Congregation”

hotlines, “Earth Sabbaths,” creation prayer groups, and “eco-kosher” campaigns, the give-and-take between a growing environmental concern and a renewed interest in spiritual experience has proved to be a powerful force in shaping contemporary religious life in America.

### Nature Religion in America

Nature has historically constituted a powerful and pervasive symbol in the ethos and cultural mythos of America. American religious historian Catherine

Albanese (1990) has even argued for the existence of a kind of “nature religion” that permeates American culture, a phenomenon in which nature serves as a symbolic center for a certain cluster of beliefs, behaviors, and values. At different cultural moments in American history, nature has taken on radically varied meanings: nature as garden and paradise, desert and wasteland, moral testing ground, moral guide, place of purification and spiritual renewal, place of corruption and evil, place of access to God, place of access to the devil, and sanctuary or retreat. Nature has also at various times been morally and culturally viewed as a defective and hostile prison, curative and commodity, teacher and healer, feminine force to be raped, feminine force to be sentimentalized, safety valve for the woes of civilization, muse, victim, enemy, and ally.

From Puritan minister Michael Wigglesworth’s “howling wilderness” to William Penn’s “sylvania,” colonial rhetoric reflected tensions between, on one hand, anxieties toward a dark, untamed land of devils eager to corrupt the innocent and, on the other, a sanctuary and “New World garden” filled with promise. In the 1780s, Thomas Jefferson extolled the virtues of the “yeoman farmer” and celebrated a pastoral vision of America as “Nature’s Nation.” Republican sentiment, however, also celebrated America’s rugged, wild, and wholesome landscape in contrast to the effete, cramped, and domesticated landscapes of Europe. America’s wild spaces were credited with giving birth to a nation of stronger character and instinctive democracy.

Henry David Thoreau, a prophetic icon in American nature writing, espoused a similar kind of “cult of wilderness” in his classic essay “The Value of Wilderness.” Invoking the story of Romulus and Remus, founders of the Roman Empire who were suckled by a wolf, Thoreau argued that the founders of every great state had sucked nourishment and vigor from a similar wild source (Thoreau [1851] 1990). “In Wilderness,” claimed Thoreau in another essay, “is the preservation of the World” (Thoreau [1851] 1893). Ralph Waldo Emerson, a Thoreau contemporary, also spoke of the salubrious effects of nature on mental faculty and moral constitution: “In the woods we return to reason and faith” (Emerson [1836] 1957, 24). However, analysis of nature and symbol in the

nineteenth century reveals complex and conflicted cultural attitudes toward nature. The earlier part of the century was characterized by Romantic poets and landscape painters; the mid and latter part by Transcendentalists and outdoor recreation clubs, the birth of conservation, and the public parks movement. This romantic view of nature, however, was coupled with narratives of unlimited progress and profit, structural dynamics of rapid urbanization and industrialization, increased mobilization and the conquest of the “Frontier,” faster and more efficient commercial deforestation and mining—all cast within the framework of America’s landscape as “God’s factory.”

In the twentieth century, scouting, outdoor sports, gardening clubs, and flower shows emerged (along with the inception of the modern ecology movement) out of the foundation laid in the nineteenth century by figures such as John Muir. Popularly dubbed “the redwood druid,” it was Muir who founded the Sierra Club in 1892 and lobbied for the protection of America’s wild lands as the nation’s crucial sanctuaries and “natural cathedrals.” By the 1930s, the “back-to-the-land” movement was promoting more self-sufficient lifestyles lived closer to nature, but for vastly different reasons. According to its proponents, returning to the land to homestead and farm would free the urban working poor from industrial alienation and the devastating effects of the Great Depression while allowing them to secure a more physically and morally healthful life.

The ideal of “Arcadian bliss,” which in the nineteenth century first popularized summer homes and country retreats among the well-to-do as much-needed urban “safety valves,” resurfaced in the marketing and advertising of new suburban developments in the 1950s. Billboards depicted scenes of millennial perfection—a “slice of heaven” in the form of neatly ordered houses and streets with friendly neighbors and uniform lawns. In the 1960s, real estate developers further marketed to the middle class the suburban dream as a sanctuary from the problems of urban poverty and racial tensions.

### **Back to the Land**

The “back-to-the-land” impetus that spurred urban “dropouts” and homesteaders in the 1930s found new life in the countercultural movement of the

1960s. Helen and Scott Nearing's 1954 classic *Living the Good Life*, which chronicled their conversion from Marxist labor activists in the 1930s to New England homesteaders, became a how-to bible for a new generation of hippies seeking alternative postcapitalistic lifestyles. Experiments in land-based communes, organic farming, and "off-the-grid" self-sufficiency gave rise to a variety of intentional communities. One such community was "The Farm" in Tennessee, one of America's most successful and longest-lived spiritual communitarian experiments.

Albanese wrote that, by the 1970s, "Nature had become a central symbol by which Americans oriented themselves, expressed in everything from preference for cereals advertised as 'natural' to the use of earth tones for room decoration and practice of yoga and jogging for health" (Albanese 1999, 493). The founding of Greenpeace in 1971 followed the successful demonstrations of the first international "Earth Day" in 1970. In 1980, after a decade of working to reform legislation to protect wildlife habitat and ecosystems, some disillusioned environmentalists broke off from mainstream organizations and formed "Earth First!," a radical environmental group that engaged in "ecotage" and adopted "No Compromise in the Defense of Mother Earth!" as its motto. Based upon his ethnographic work within the Earth First! movement in the 1980s and 1990s, ethicist Bron Taylor has argued that the "dark green spirituality" found within the movement constitutes a new religious movement of "pagan environmentalism."

### "Looking for Nature at the Mall"

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the most recent zeal for nature in American culture met with full force the "spirit of capitalism" that sociologist Max Weber first identified with Puritan ethos. In contemporary American culture, nature has become marketed in ways that might well have filled nineteenth-century peddlers of Yosemite tours and "fresh air cures" with awe. From the sales of organic food, which saw a 300 percent increase from 1995 to 1999, to the popularity of herbal remedies and ecotourism to exotic locales, tapping into the powerful symbol and cultural mythos of nature in America translated into big profits. Cultural historian Jennifer Price's essay "Looking for Na-

ture at the Mall" deconstructs the packaging of nature for consumers by a popular chain store called The Nature Company. Price contended that, in contemporary American culture, nature cannot *just be nature*; there must instead be a nature *company* to broker and distribute nature's goods. She argues that "in modern America, harvesting nature for a psychic yield has become a defining middle-class pastime. We graft meanings onto nature to make sense out of modern middle-class life, and then define ourselves by what we think nature means. Authenticity, simplicity, reality, uniqueness, purity, health, beauty, the primitive, the autochthonous, adventure, the exotic, innocence, solitude, freedom, leisure, peace" (Price 1996, 190).

### "What Would Jesus Drive?"

At a 2001 Boston-area rally, protesters from church and environmental groups marched together with placards asking, "What Would Jesus Drive?," invoking the popular nineteenth-century morality standard that asked, "What Would Jesus Do?" which has enjoyed renewed popularity in recent years, appearing on everything from bumper stickers to bracelets in the abbreviated form "WWJD." This rally against the increasing demand for "gas-guzzling" SUVs (sport utility vehicles), so popular with Americans in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, marked the growing interpenetration of religious and environmental concerns. But even as clergy and laypeople alike joined together to raise this question, advertisements for sport utility vehicles sent a very different message: If Jesus were traveling into the desert to do battle with Satan, he would almost certainly need four-wheel drive and traction control. SUV marketing promised Americans unlimited access to nature, carrying adventurous-sounding names such as "Tahoe," "Pathfinder," "Mountaineer," "Explorer," "Excursion," and "X-Terra." Capitalizing on the mythos of America as "Nature's Nation," automobile manufacturers struck a familiar chord, positioning SUVs not only as salvific vehicles of escape from domesticated urban confinement but also as the preferred means of access to the kind of spirit-invigorating wilderness that built American character and secured American freedom.

—Sarah McFarland Taylor

## SEE ALSO

Native American Religions and Politics; New Age; Goddess Spirituality, Wicca; New Religious Traditions; Protestantism in America: Puritanism; Ritual and Performance: Tourism

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## SHOPPING MALLS

Throughout history, cultures have created festival marketplaces that have also served as ceremonial sites. In the United States, since roughly 1950 and the ascendancy of the automobile, interstate highways, and television, this conjunction of market and religion has been manifest in the burgeoning number of enclosed shopping malls. According to William Kowinski (1985), as of the mid-1980s the number of enclosed shopping malls in the United States had grown to exceed the number of four-year colleges, school districts, hotels, or hospitals. Ira Zepp (1986) contended further that this expansion of a particular style of shopping center cannot be explained by economics alone. Malls serve symbolic functions in American culture beyond their utilitarian purpose as places for market exchange. Indeed, if a "religion of the market" exists in the United States, then surely the mall is its sacred place (Loy 1996). And if malls are sacred spaces, then the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota, is

the place where the particular values of this religion are present in the most concentrated form.

The religious functions of malls as sacred places in American culture can be analyzed in at least four distinct categories. First, malls function as symbolic festival places. At shopping malls can be observed the presentation and acquisition of objects held to be icons or fulfillments of the most ideal desires among certain segments of American culture. Malls bring people into contact with pleasure, beauty, and other festive values as these are defined in American popular cultures (generally speaking, among the middle classes). Second, malls function—especially in their architecture—to focus the attention of visitors upon particular symbolic patterns that represent vestiges of the dominant Christian cultures of the United States. Malls thus offer visitors "experiences" of cleansing, transcendence, and eternal life through their symbolic motifs.

Third, malls present visitors with a nostalgic view of American history stressing innocence; they mask the crasser aspects of capitalist exchange while also naming themselves as “centers” in ways that reinforce the hegemony of American market capitalism. Malls work this magic by disorienting and reorienting visitors through labyrinthine organizational patterns and through more overt strategies associated with particular stores and attractions. Finally, malls function as places to motivate and engage segments of the population in particular social interactions. Malls provide visitors, for instance, with opportunities for what might be called “anonymous intimacy” or “selective benevolence.” Such paradoxes represent well the voluntary and individualistic character of religion in the United States. These developments were long in coming to fruition, and most malls were not built without controversy. There are, as of 2003, however, more than 20,000 malls at sites across the United States, and enclosed malls are increasingly becoming a global phenomenon. In the services and products they offer to visitors, and in the behavior of visitors, can be seen patterns that clearly mark them as “sacred places.”

As symbolic, festival places, shopping malls display objects for consumers to acquire that serve as symbols of realized desires. People make “pilgrimages” to malls, often as part of a tour group. They do so in part because, as geographer Jon Goss has contended, malls, in this case the Mall of America in Bloomington, function as “dreamhouses of the collectivity” where desires are displaced onto commodities that take on the quality of “enchantment.” More specifically, Goss saw “archetypes” of important American values, such as “nature,” “childhood,” and “heritage,” articulated in malls in ways designed to draw visitors. At the mall, these values are attached through advertising to particular commodities or attractions that “carry” them as “fetishes” that visitors to the mall can acquire. This process of creating enchanted fetishes out of commodities, Goss wrote, works through themes of “transport” and “memory” at the Mall of America. Images become mobile, and memory is remade within the confines of the mall. Indeed, his argument could be extended with modification to any mall (Goss 1999).

Each of Goss’s themes is open to argument, but his theoretically sophisticated analysis extended considerably the earlier observations of Kowinski and Zepp. It

is also borne out by the booming success of the Mall of America, which hosts annually some 40 million visitors—more than the Grand Canyon, Disneyland, and Graceland combined. In the ten years since its opening in 1992, the mall has welcomed more than 350 million guests to its 520 stores, 22 sit-down restaurants, 27 fast-food restaurants, 34 specialty food stores, 8 nightclubs, and 14 theater screens. The mall boasted a 99 percent occupancy rate in 2001. Along with stores featuring commodities such as clothes, shoes, appliances, and artifacts, the mall also commodifies “experience” through attractions such as “Camp Snoopy”—an indoor amusement park complete with roller coaster, Ferris wheel, and log ride—and “Underwater Adventures”—an aquarium with sharks, stingrays, and other aquatic creatures. The mall even has its own chapel—the “Chapel of Love,” where, as of 2002, more than 3,000 couples had exchanged marital or partnership vows, according to the mall Web site. Through such a range of attractions, the Mall of America, like other malls, offers visitors in exchange for their time and cash “experiences” of festive “pleasure,” “beauty,” and other values held in high esteem by particular segments of American culture.

The meanings of the symbolic patterns dominating the architecture and internal features at malls are of course open to interpretation by the visitors. It is clear, however, that flowing water, found in nearly every mall, recalls the initiation rite of Christianity—baptism. Whether shoppers are conscious of the symbolism or not, the water functions to subsume the process of economic exchange at the heart of the mall’s enterprise under the religious associations of water and cleanliness common to many religious traditions. Malls are also always “squeaky” clean, providing an image of purity that enables visitors to ignore the danger implicit in any economic exchange (for instance, one might get cheated). Similarly, malls almost universally feature skylights and abundant natural light. In Christian cultures, the sky and light are the abode of the divine and heaven—an association that is utilized by mall designers through the inclusion of escalators, glass elevators, and other symbolic or literal vehicles of ascent. Finally, malls are evergreen. Underneath the 1.2 miles of skylights over Camp Snoopy at the Mall of America, for instance, is the “largest indoor planting” in history—more than 300,000 plants and 400 trees (as tall as 35 feet). The trees in any mall



never die, of course, and while trees bear many meanings in the history of religions, most represent life, and in Christianity, especially, life eternal.

The chief architectural feature of malls, of course, is that they are enclosed—they seldom have windows opening to the outside world. Once inside, visitors frequently feel disoriented. Malls universally eschew the grid pattern commonly imposed upon the landscape across the United States, and guests wander in and out of corridors, and up and down levels, through a labyrinth-like structure. This disorienting design is intentional, of course; spatial disorientation can lead visitors to purchase items on impulse. And it is successful: Although 40 percent of guests to malls do not intend to make a purchase, only 10 percent leave without doing so.

The disorientation also serves a more profound cultural function: to transform the processes of market exchange into an apparently nonrationalized, “natural” act. In other words, malls mask the global hegemony of American market capitalism under disorienting messages of nature, nostalgia, and innocence, among others. The Mall of America, for instance, features “nature-centered” stores common to other malls such as “Natural Wonders,” the “Rainforest Café,” “Endangered Species,” and “The Museum Company,” along with stores suited to the Minnesota venue, such as “Northwoods,” “Hunters Paradise,” “Minnesot-ah,” and more. All of these stores, needless to say, package and contain nature within the walls of the mall for the consumption of shoppers. Similarly, stores such as “A Simpler Time,” “Lake Wobegon USA,” and “Things Remembered” sell a nostalgic view of America. Even technology is innocently represented in “Crazy About Cars,” the “Runkel Brothers American Garage,” and others. This domesticating and masking function is, of course, characteristic of many religious traditions, where “second-order” discourse and behavior such as myth and ritual replaces or sublimates under symbolic forms actual economic or social interchanges of production or consumption.

Finally, malls clearly function to orient visitors to particular forms of social interaction. Most notably, of

course, they encourage market consumption, but they also create spaces for certain types of devotion that may be characteristic of late modernity or what some scholars have called “postmodernity.” For instance, malls allow what might be called “anonymous intimacy,” where strangers gather face-to-face but under socially circumscribed boundaries in a “safe” place. Malls routinely advertise their “safe” character, and many visitors comment upon feeling a safety in malls that they do not feel on the streets in cities or towns. Within the confines of such safety, even the most intimate social exchanges—such as marriage—are possible, and a degree of intimacy is allowed and expected with other guests: People go to the mall to see and be seen.

Similarly, malls selectively expand their enclosed character to outside benevolent agencies. Walking clubs for senior citizens, nonprofit child-care centers, and even university extension centers have taken up residence within malls across the United States. Other social services are often welcomed into the “public” spaces of malls to solicit the affiliation of visitors. As institutions, malls thus provide many of the functions of sacred places across American culture.

—Jon Pahl

#### SEE ALSO

Generations: The Family; Material Culture: Christian Retailing; Popular Culture: Advertising

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## SHRINES

The word “shrine” comes from *scri*, which in Old English meant a cabinet for storing books and other valuable objects. In a religious context, a shrine is a place that adherents to a tradition understand to contain a sacred presence. In the “Old World” cultures of Europe, shrines were often associated with the remains of the bodies of saints and martyrs. They were sometimes places thought to have inherit healing power. Shrines often attract pilgrims who visit them for personal reasons or on special holidays.

In North America, called a “New World” by European immigrants, there were no traditional shrines. Indeed, for the predominantly Protestant early immigrants, the very idea of shrines carried associations with superstition. Hence, over time, shrines took on a particularly American character not explicitly tied to forms of Protestantism. They may be classified within three broad categories: (1) traditional shrines, locations associated with religious presence fabricated out of the experience and history of the immigrants, who linked sacred places with pivotal events in the memory of their communities; (2) natural shrines, sites on the landscape of the United States that came to take on special status within a diffuse civil religious sensibility not specifically grounded in any mainstream religious community, especially during the twentieth century; and (3) popular, semi-secular shrines, places associated with secular political and cultural figures that are almost like museums, which have become popular in more recent times.

### A Traditional Shrine:

#### El Santuario de Chimayo, New Mexico

Shortly after the turn of the nineteenth century, in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains eighty miles north of Albuquerque, a Spanish peasant named Bernardo Abeyta—some versions of the story say he was a friar—came across a Tewa Indian site that was used for healing ceremonies. It consisted of a hole located in a rock surface that was filled with dirt. As he passed by he saw a blinding white light come out of the hole and a crucifix that resembled the form of Christ that was venerated in Esquipula, Guatemala. Abeyta took the crucifix to the nearest church ten

miles away. On three subsequent occasions, the crucifix returned to the site where Abeyta found it, was taken back to the church, and returned again. Abeyta and other pious Catholic laymen of the Brotherhood of the Penitentes established the Santuario and installed the crucifix above an altar constructed near the site of the sacred dirt, now named El Posito, from the Spanish word for a small well or hole.

For the past two centuries thousands of mostly Hispanic and Native American Catholics have made the pilgrimage from the town of Hispanola thirty miles away to the Santuario during Holy Week. Pilgrims take handfuls of the sacred dirt and use it for healing and general well-being. Many devotees make vows that if some suffering is lifted from them, they will make the pilgrimage; others visit the shrine annually as a gift to the suffering Christ. In a room next to the sanctuary is a display of prosthetic devices, photographs, letters, and works of folk art given by pilgrims upon their visit. As with pilgrimages generally, the visitors to the Santuario experience a sense of belonging to one another. The site combines Native American traditions, especially the notion of the earth as a nourishing substance, with Iberian Catholic traditions of veneration and pilgrimage transplanted by immigrants. The shrine is both a site for engendering faith for visitors and a repository of the faith that the visitors bring with them.

The shrine requires no special preparations or achievements other than the visit itself. Hence, it is a site that brings out the radical equality of all believers. Wealth, status, and education make no difference there. Even though the Santuario is a functional diocesan church, the Roman Catholic hierarchy remains at a respectful distance. For the pilgrims who make their way there, kneeling before the crucifix, receiving the priest’s blessing and the sacred sacrament, collecting sacred dirt, and offering up one’s deformity together link centuries-old practices and attitudes from the “Old” and “New” Worlds.

There are relatively few such shrines in the United States. There are, however, places that are closely related and that offer similar benefits to visitors, such as the miniature Holy Land sites across the South where pilgrim/tourists can vicariously and virtually



A shrine outside a house in Salinas, California (Stephanie Maze/Corbis)

visit Jerusalem during the time of Jesus. These sites appeal particularly to many Catholic and evangelical Protestants.

### **A Natural Shrine: Niagara Falls**

In the early nineteenth century, as westward expansion of European migrants was pushing beyond the Hudson River toward Ohio, Niagara Falls came to take on a kind of sacred meaning. As the surging water of the Niagara River poured over the falls, the extraordinary power and grandeur of the site came to represent the exceptional and seemingly endless power and openness of the frontier. In the later nineteenth century, with the development of technologies to produce electrical power, Niagara Falls was tapped as a source of energy to drive the emerging industrial manufacturing economy. With the emergence of mass travel made possible by the networks of railroads and then highways and automobiles, Niagara Falls be-

came a pilgrimage place for tourists, especially newlyweds. For a few extreme sports enthusiasts, going over the falls in homemade containers and surviving the experience became a marker of both heroism and folly.

By the end of the century, with the completion of the geological survey of the landscape of the United States, areas of exceptional natural distinction, such as the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Yosemite, the Blue Ridge Mountains, and other more regional sites came under the protection of the federal government as locales that inspired a natural awe in their visitors. The National Park Service took on the role of supervision, the secular equivalent of ecclesiastical oversight, of these sacred sites on behalf of the citizens. Many National Parks contain nondenominational chapels with vistas that open up to the landscape outside. The visitor's gaze at nature as framed by the chapel windows became a secular analogue to the devotee's gaze at the icon of the deity.

### Popular Semi-Secular Shrines: Graceland

In recent years the home of Elvis Presley has taken on shrinelike status. Presley (1935–1977) emerged in the late 1950s as an immensely popular rock-and-roll star. Eclectic in his musical instincts, Presley drew upon African American blues, gospel, and folk musical traditions, added the new technologies of electronically amplified instruments, and popularized a performing style that emphasized a more spontaneously erotic presence. As his career progressed, he increasingly inhabited a mythological identity as a spontaneously free person, a loyal citizen, and an embodiment of the rags-to-riches American archetype. Within his lifetime he came to be known simply as “the King.”

With his sudden death at the age of forty-two, Presley quickly took his place as a quasi-divine figure. His home was transformed into a tourist attraction, complete with his gravesite and a wedding chapel. Each year thousands of visitors, often with tearful eyes, walk through his home as a way of getting closer to the remnants of his earthly life. Graceland’s official Web site archives e-mail correspondence from fans/devotees who speak of their personal experiences of Elvis’s presence and, in some cases, report his appearances as a resurrected being.

As part of an effort to construct a national narrative for the United States, the National Park Service supports other sites commemorating the lives of certain individuals, groups, or events. These sites have shrinelike characteristics. For example, The Martin Luther King, Jr., Birth Home in Atlanta; the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and other sites on the National Mall and elsewhere in Washington; Independence Hall in Philadelphia; Gettysburg Cemetery in Pennsylvania; and Wounded Knee in South Dakota each contribute to a sense of national collective identity woven into a narrative that calls attention to the core ideals of liberty and sacrifice. Shrines such as these share many characteristics of tourist attractions but

also carry an atmosphere of awe and reverence that one does not find at theme parks or museums.

As locales of religious significance, shrines anchor and embody conjunctions of meaning for their visitors. Their power operates at the intersection of the expectations of the visitor and something taken to be inherent within the place itself, whether it is substances with reputed healing power, the relics of a venerated figure, or an experience of aesthetic rapture that resembles the spiritual. In all these cases, the experience of moving toward, within, and from the shrine, individually or collectively, produces a super-added value for the visitor. For these reasons and perhaps many more, getting there, being there, and having been seem to be worth the effort for those who make the journey.

—Paul Courtright

#### SEE ALSO

Catholicism in America; Death: Roadside Shrines; Popular Culture: Cultural Saints; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion; Ritual and Performance: Tourism, Weddings

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## THE SUBURBAN HOME

Places of human habitation have often been sanctified. In many religions, notably some of the traditions of India, the home is a site of religious rituals and a location of family shrines. Even the generally iconoclastic Protestant cultures of mid-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America developed a “parlor piety,” as Colleen McDannell (1986) has shown. This spatial element within American Protestantism understood the home as “the church of childhood,” identified the home as a proper location for rituals such as family prayer, and nurtured a fashion for particular icons—such as a family Bible—that signified the holiness of home.

More recently, as the public influence of Protestant Christianity has diffused in the United States, a more generalized variant of the home as sacred space has emerged to coincide with what Peter Gardella has called “American domestic religion” (1999). According to Gardella, a set of systemic and coherent, albeit nonrational, commitments have emerged in American cultural history that deserve to be called, collectively, American “domestic religion.” Success, work, food, sports, entertainment, and other aspects of life are expressed in “explicit rituals and values” that order the lives and pattern the activities of millions of ordinary people across the United States. Within this American domestic religion, perhaps the preeminent sacred place is the suburban home, the main component of “the American Dream” since the end of World War II.

The sanctification of the home within American domestic religion has roots in the Victorian parlor piety unearthed by McDannell. Most notably, the strict conventions regarding gender roles in the Victorian American middle classes have carried over in vestigial ways into the images of an ideal home and the activities of its owners as expressed through the media of popular culture. Periodicals such as *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Ladies Home Journal*, television shows such as *Ozzie and Harriet* and *The Brady Bunch*, and films as diverse as *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?* (1967) and *American Beauty* (1999) demonstrate the central place of the home and suburban life in American culture. Through these media, the Victorian gender ideology

and its parlor piety were critiqued, transformed, and preserved.

Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, the single-family home in a suburban context came to replace the Victorian home in the city as a sacred place—“more sacred to the [middle classes] than any place of worship,” according to Robert Fishman (1987, 4). Within the home, specific obligations held for each gender. The woman was responsible for the inside of the home and the man for the outside; children somehow were to learn from both American “values.” Such heterosexual conventions, family values, and domestic expectations were reinforced by overt and covert community sanctions, government policies, and the tacit approval of religious communities throughout the twentieth century until they were transformed into particular myths and rituals by millions across the United States. The myth of the suburban home as a haven was enacted through rituals of purity, control, competition, and display and centered especially on kitchens and front lawns.

Prior to 1945, most Americans lived in cities, rural areas, or small towns. By 2002, the vast majority of homes purchased—70 percent by one accounting—were in suburbs. The definition of a suburb is a disputed matter, but Kenneth T. Jackson (1985) has generalized that a suburb can be defined as a municipality in which most residents own their homes, travel long distances to work, are generally middle-class or above, and live in single-family residences with ornamental yards. Given this definition, the central role of the home and lawn in suburban life is readily apparent. It is thus not surprising that explicit ritual behavior and particular values would emerge to reinforce the central place of the home and lawn in suburban identity.

Anthropologist Mary Douglas (1966) observed that an emphasis on purity marked many religious phenomena and, generally in human development, arose in reaction to real or perceived danger. Consequently, it is also not surprising that in the wake of World War II, and during the threatening global phenomenon of the Cold War, a domestic religion focused on rituals of interior sanitation through a technologically so-



A housing development, 1992 (Ed Wheeler/Corbis)

phisticated kitchen, and rituals of exterior control through an immaculate lawn, would emerge. In the American context of religious pluralism and freedom, in which citizens may choose to devote themselves to whatever practices they like, it is also not surprising that novel rituals focusing on domestic life would appear. Through these rituals, suburban homeowners competed with one another to display both their patriotism and their piety.

The role of the kitchen in the practice of pious purity is evident in the burgeoning number of products designed to assist the devotee of the home. For instance, advertisements in publications such as *Good Housekeeping* offered throughout the twentieth century an increasing array of technological gadgets and chemical solutions to help women (almost universally the targets of the ads) conquer dirt, disease, and death through purity. Testimonials in the same publications—also almost universally from women—documented the satisfaction achieved when a household

product solved a particular dilemma within the struggle against the evils of dirt. The emergence of television added striking visual images to reinforce the associations between dangerous soil and pious purity. Such a symbolic valuation of purity—beyond anything necessary for health or well-being—was consciously created by advertisers to motivate consumers to buy various products that reinforced the image of the sacred home. Millions of Americans internalized the message and put into practice weekday or weekend cleaning devotions. The rituals varied widely, but most suburban families had them or paid a “professional” to practice the rites that produced the ideal image of home.

The lawn has served similar symbolic functions for men that the kitchen served for women in the history of twentieth-century American culture. Turfgrass is not native to North America, but chemical companies, seeking a buffer from unstable agricultural markets for fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides, created

the image of the perfect lawn that has become all but unquestioned in many American suburbs. As Virginia Scott Jenkins (1994) has shown, the “industrial lawn,” which she calls “an American obsession,” also has Victorian roots. If the “parlor piety” of women inside the home focused on purity, the public piety of men related to the lawn was communicated in idioms of control and competition.

Throughout the twentieth century, the cultivation of the lawn was communicated as part of “man’s” conquest of and superiority to “nature.” Weeds were examples of “wildness” that needed to be tamed, as advertisements suggested. Corporate and product names such as the “Savage Lawnmower Company” and “Turf-Builder Weed Control” also reflected this assumption. Along with rhetorics of control came rhetorics of competition. Advertisers invited suburban homeowners to compete with their neighbors. Being “the envy of the neighborhood” for the uniform character of the blades of grass in one’s lawn was one way for suburban males to demonstrate their control over nature and compete with others in conquests that could be readily recognized as symbols of success in American domestic religion. That suburban dwellers took this advertising to heart can be confirmed by a drive through any suburb in the United States today.

Of course, along with the emergence of the kitchen and lawn as ritual arenas came the sheer templelike size of the average suburban home over the course of the twentieth century. According to the National Association of Home Builders, in 1950 the average new home built in the United States featured 983 square feet of finished area. In 2000, that number had jumped to 2,265. Only 14 percent of homes built in 1950 were more than a single story; 52 percent of

new homes in 2000 were two stories or more. Size matters when it comes to the suburban home, for size is the one feature of a home that can clearly be displayed for all to see. Through emphasis on themes and practices of purity, control, competition, and display, the suburban home has truly become “the American Dream,” or at least an American sacred place, to be defended by security systems, gated communities, and, if necessary, a gun.

—Jon Pahl

#### SEE ALSO

Protestantism in America; Generations: The Family; Material Culture; Public Theologies and Political Culture; Civil Religion

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# SACRED TIME





In the United States it is not uncommon to hear that “time is money.” This traditional proverb suggests the power that the commercial marketplace has over American national consciousness, but it also says something important about the nature of time. Time, it says, has value. And that value, according to this formula, is monetary. “Sacred time” is another way of measuring time’s value. In the history of religions, the classification of time with reference to sacred events, powers, and beings constitutes a powerful and important way that human beings both express and orient themselves to what is most significant, most powerful, and most authentic in their worlds. To speak of sacred time, then, is to speak of the organization and classification of time into religiously and culturally significant structures.

There are as many “sacred times” in the United States as there are different religious traditions, and more. If sacred time is time that is sacred, or that references the sacred, then, like the sacred itself, it is sometimes shared, sometimes contested, and always subject to reinterpretation. The sacred is always located within a dynamic social, historical, and material context. It only appears in history through the expressions of human beings who identify it, argue over it, worship it, reject it, perform rites and gestures in reference to it, symbolize it, and otherwise mark it as distinctly significant and powerful. Just what constitutes the “sacred” in “sacred time” must therefore remain an open question. One might begin to trace the shape of sacred time in America by observing the claims that people make for it and the behaviors that they perform in relation to it.

### Newness

In 1503, Amerigo Vespucci called the continents that later bore his name *Novus Mundus*, or “New World.” More than a century later, English settlers on the East Coast of what was to become the United States understood this New World to be wholly unlike the Old World they had left behind in Europe. For the Puritans of Massachusetts, especially, it was full of sacred purpose and potential; they were certain that their ar-

rival would usher in the coming millennium and that on this new land Christ would establish his kingdom on earth. The sacred drama in which Puritans played the central role was already scripted in the Bible, where they identified themselves with the Israelites whom God led out of the wilderness to Jerusalem. Furthermore, they saw themselves fulfilling the Book of Revelation’s prophecy that the *New Jerusalem* would soon be established. The Puritan world was oriented by this past and future that came together in the living present, myth made history in the New World setting.

Although the Puritan experiment ultimately failed as a model for political and social organization, the Puritans’ symbolic world had a long-lasting effect on American culture. The American Revolution was fought with similar millennial expectation, promising the birth of a new society with a unique purpose in the world. Indeed, the United States chose as its motto *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, or “A New Order of the Ages.” The transformative notion of new beginnings has profoundly shaped American culture in surprisingly varied areas.

The United States has a reputation, both internally and among the millions of immigrants who have left their original homes to come to American shores, as a place where one might begin with a fresh start, a clean slate, and the opportunity to make something of oneself. Horatio Alger rags-to-riches stories are an example of one pervasive version of the “American Dream,” which proclaims that hard work and dedication will pay off with both social and material rewards, regardless of one’s origins. Origins can thus be overcome or negated, according to this view, as one strives for betterment and leaves the past behind. As a temporal orientation of the self, this American Dream has much in common with the “born-again” conversion experience of evangelical Christians. This doctrine, prominent among American religions, says that repentance and conversion negate a sinner’s previous life as he or she begins again, newly innocent for having been cleansed by grace or the Holy Spirit. The intensive individualism of the born-again experience, moreover, has the effect of minimizing the need for the traditions of orga-



Colonists praying for deliverance from an imminent Indian attack (Library of Congress)

nized institutional religion. Not only could people start fresh, but so could churches. New sects, denominations, and religious movements have sprung forth from American soil at the slightest provocation.

Temporal orientation toward newness has also been spatialized in the image of the frontier. In nineteenth-century America, the western frontier opened the door to the continuous possibility that a person or a family—or even a community—could physically leave their past behind and begin again someplace else. The pioneers, as they were known, set out into the unknown wilderness in search of new beginnings. They carried with them hopes and dreams and millennial expectations that gave the future significant purpose. For some, the expansion of the U.S. population across the continent from coast to coast was the fulfillment of Manifest Destiny. History was sacralized for these pioneers as their movements across space fulfilled a divine plan that gave history sacred meaning. For others, however, the westward drive was simply an attempt to escape the past. In reinvent-

ing themselves by shucking off the past in favor of the present and a potentially better future, these pioneers were also enacting a particular orientation toward time that can be traced to Puritan imagination.

The land that Euro-Americans settled as they moved westward was not really “new,” of course. Nor was it without history. Hundreds of different Native American tribes and nations experienced a different form of “newness” as pioneers removed them from ancestral sacred lands and, in most cases, forcibly converted native peoples to Christianity. All across the continent new religious movements emerged that cast interaction with Western culture as the end of the world. They called for intense new rituals to revitalize the people, renew the world, and begin time again. From Handsome Lake’s moral teachings, which transformed Iroquois life, to the performance of the Ghost Dance at Wounded Knee, where hundreds of participants were massacred by a nervous U.S. military, Native Americans have experienced U.S. history as a crisis of sacred time.

Although the western frontier closed more than 100 years ago, *frontier* has remained active as an orienting image in American culture. In 1960, President John F. Kennedy called upon the image and symbol of the frontier in an overtly temporal framework, naming the future as the “New Frontier” that was full of both possibilities and threats. The Cold War was in full swing, but technology was also developing quickly and promising to bring about a whole new world. Americans were already imagining, in comic books and film, their next frontier, or, as the popular television show *Star Trek* named it, the “final frontier.” Projecting into the future and into new, uncharted space, outer space became (and remains) a powerful source and repository of the American frontier imagination.

The focus on new beginnings has been matched in American culture by a fascination with end times. Apocalyptic images of the end of the world appear in sermons designed to scare their audiences into repentance. They pack American popular culture in movies, novels, and political rhetoric. Environmentalists envision an apocalyptic end if Americans continue their use of fossil fuels, polluting chemicals, and genetic manipulation of foods. The possibility of a nuclear apocalypse has been a regular part of American popular culture since the beginning of the Cold War. The language of apocalypse has found its way into the stock market, professional sports, and popular music.

Speculating on what the end of time holds also structures interpretations of the state of American society and current events. There are those who see the world running down, getting worse as history moves further from an initial paradise. Others see the world getting better, progressing toward a wonderful future. Both of these trajectories can be called “millennialist” when they understand the end toward which time is moving in terms that derive from the biblical Book of Revelation. There, the millennium refers to the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth. *Premillennialists* expect that Christ will return once the world has reached its lowest point. This group includes authors such as Hal Lindsey and Jack Van Impe who read the social and cultural landscape as signs of that imminent Second Coming and find apocalyptic meaning in the nightly news. *Postmillennialists*, in contrast, feel that Christ’s millennial reign is already upon us. Technological advances, developments in science and medicine, and

social changes are all indications to postmillennialists that paradise is at hand and that the world will only improve.

As temporal orientations, pre- and postmillennialisms have moved away from their biblical roots and can be found throughout American culture. America’s faith in progress, for instance, has stretched beyond any specifically Christian referent to become a significant orientation in time on its own. Premillennialism finds a counterpart in a deep nostalgia for “the good old days,” when, it is imagined, life was simpler, there was a greater sense of community, and ethical choices were easier to make. Although these may appear to be opposing perspectives, they ambivalently coexist and find expression throughout American culture.

### Holidays and Celebrations

Americans regularly participate in holidays and celebrations that are set apart from the ordinary flow of events and marked as significant or sacred. These may be specific to a religious tradition—for example, voodoo initiates honor Orishas and ancestors on particular days throughout the year, Muslims celebrate Ramadan, and Jews gather together to commemorate Passover. Other celebrations or holidays may be related to seasons, such as the fall harvest or the summer solstice. Or, like Memorial Day and the Fourth of July, they may be related to the history of the nation and, at least theoretically, involve the national body as a whole.

In holidays and celebrations, members of a community join together to affirm their shared orientation to what is sacred. According to historian of religion Mircea Eliade, periodic celebrations of sacred time renew and restore the community by taking it out of the normal temporal flow and reconnecting it to the eternal. Rituals associated with sacred time assert the core myths and symbols of the community, bringing community members into contact with what they consider to be their enduring essence. Indeed, according to Eliade, such rituals are reenactments of and participation in mythical time itself. Mythical time—sacred time—in this perspective is eternal and eternally available through ritual actions. The creation of the cosmos, related in cosmogonic myths, is therefore the quintessential sacred time and the archetypal creation when time itself came into being. All subsequent creations



*The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*  
(Library of Congress)

are replications of that original creation. Human celebrations of sacred time, then, are also replications of mythical events and creations. By participating in ritual, human communities take part in the creation of the world and symbolically re-create it.

From a less ontological standpoint, celebrations of sacred time can be said to tie a community to a sacralizing and legitimating myth through acts of ritualization. Periodic celebrations, then, are occasions for structuring shared time around an event or series of events that the community has defined as *essentially* significant and constitutive of their self-identity. These events may have occurred in the atemporal prehistory of cosmogonic myth, or they may have occurred in historical time. In either case, ceremonial observances associated with these events are symbolically charged and heavily scripted. Their ritualization marks these

occasions as significantly different from ordinary events and thus produces a sacred aura of power around them. Observances of sacred time may require specialized gestures and disciplines of the body (bowing, genuflecting, kneeling, walking in a prescribed manner, moving the hands in certain ways), special dress (designated types of clothing, body coverings, particular colors, shoes or no shoes), dietary restrictions (including certain foods that cannot be eaten, certain foods that must be eaten, particular ways of eating), bodily markings (tattoos, scars, brands, circumcision, particular hair styling), specialized or designated language (or restrictions on use of certain words or ways of talking), sounds (sacred music or song, silence, chanting, clapping, drumming, the use of noisemaking devices), symbols, and images. They may restrict participation by gender, age, race, training, initiation, affiliation, or otherwise. Or, in some cases, observances of sacred time may ask very little of the members of a community other than that they show up. Still, regular and periodic celebration of specific times and events focuses attention on their nonordinariness and connects a community through time by means of shared symbols, a regular pattern of periodic observances, and mythical or historical references.

As all of this suggests, celebrations of sacred time bind communities together. But for just that reason, they may also be contested sites in struggles over definition, recognition, or participation. By binding through shared participation in rituals that work to differentiate the ordinary from the nonordinary, observances of sacred time necessarily designate particular events, peoples, or activities as *other*. Holidays are therefore important acts of negotiation as communities both assert and question their boundaries and identities from within.

As public observances, some holidays and celebrations in the United States are legislated by federal or state governments. For instance, federal facilities and banks are closed on the Fourth of July and Memorial Day. These days are literally nonordinary days in that the ordinary flow of time and activities associated with it are brought to a halt. Whether or not one chooses to participate in the ceremonial or ritual observances of such episodes of sacred time, one is affected by them. As the sacralized events that give le-

gitimacy to governmental authority, all Americans have some stake in them. Therefore, national holidays, which are built in large part on the commemoration and memorialization of the dead who sacrificed their lives for the endurance of the national body, are commonly sites of contestation and critical reflection.

Other federally legislated sacred times, however, appear to sanction one religious tradition over others. Christmas, for instance, is a Christian holiday that is also federally legislated as nonordinary time. The effects of this conflation of observances of sacred time are ambivalent. On the one hand, non-Christians complain that Christianity gets special recognition by the federal government despite the constitutional separation of church and state. Christian holidays regularly structure the profane calendar, but Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, or members of other faiths must struggle to fit their sacred times into the temporal patterns of dominant Christianity. On the other hand, many non-Christians have come to participate in the Christmas holiday—not as sacred time defined by the Christian story, but as a seasonal rite of gift exchange, family reunion, and vacation time. In the pluralistic American setting, then, the meaning of Christmas has been renegotiated. For some, Christian and non-Christian alike, the Christmas season appears to be a celebration of commerce itself, the ultimate sacred time of the religion of capitalism.

So Christmas has been successfully resignified by some, allowing them to participate in the holiday observances without necessarily confounding their own orientation to sacred time. But Christian temporal structures do lie at the base of the organization of seemingly profane temporal structures in the United States in ways that seem to be invisible until they are made apparent when they conflict with other organizations of time. For instance, Muslim daily time is structured around five sacred moments of prayer. At five specific times each day, all Muslims are obligated to pray. These prayers are not silent internal thoughts, but are rather performed through the whole body as the participant genuflects in the direction of the holy site of Mecca. In cultures oriented by Islamic patterns of sacred time, all activities stop as the call to prayer goes out across the landscape. Practicing Muslims stop their work, their conversation, and their play to pray. In the United States, many Muslims have found

it difficult to find the time and the space to fulfill this sacred obligation, since the American workplace is not designed along Muslim rhythms of time. In religiously diverse America, ordinary time is revealed to conform to Protestant Christian temporal structures. Non-Christians must negotiate with these patterns, changing or finding creative ways to make do.

### Life Cycle

Although holidays and celebrations are performances of sacred time orienting a community to history and myth, individual lives are also filled with significant transitions and passages. Biologically, socially, and spiritually, a human life is constantly developing and changing in ways that tie individuals to larger patterns of time. Life-cycle markers celebrate an individual's passage through these moments and simultaneously tie an individual's life to his or her community through ritual action and shared experience. They therefore constitute sacred time, structuring a community's conceptions of self, normative developmental stages, and common experiences.

These rituals associated with stages in the life cycle may serve three purposes. First, they may simply enable the community to make note of and to socially celebrate a point of transformation in a person's life involving a passage from one stage to another. The particular stages or moments celebrated may be different for each culture depending upon what has been determined to be meaningful to the community. Second, such rites may actually be the occasion themselves for the passage from one stage to another. For instance, the Jewish Bar Mitzvah recognizes the transition from boyhood to manhood at the same time that it is a significant passage itself. Marriage goes even further in this direction. The ritual transforms the participants' social, legal, and spiritual status from autonomous individuals to married partners. Third, in some cases, transitions from one stage of life to another are considered to harbor potential dangers. Transitions are powerful moments, and they open an individual and a community to the harm associated with power gone awry or malevolent power. In these cases, rituals are required to control and direct sacred power. For instance, many Native American religions recognize a girl's first menstruation as a spiritually sig-

nificant event filled with power. This occasion is surrounded by taboos and ritual behaviors designed to keep the power of life and death in check.

In the United States, some common passages in an individual's life are not formally recognized by rites or by the sanction of religious tradition, yet they effectively insert individual lives into a system of shared referents and experiences. Birthdays, graduation from high school or college, and retirement are easily identifiable moments that mark common stages of American lives. But so are other events, such as passing one's driving test, a first kiss, or turning twenty-one (and being of legal drinking age). Each of these experiences is common to most Americans as they go through life. Other significant passages bear a similarity to initiations into specific communities of experience. Joining a gang, graduating from graduate school, and having a child are examples. A road trip or driving across the country may be one of these because it connects individuals symbolically with American myths of the frontier, discovery, and physical freedom. To some, such trips have invited comparison with initiation rites such as the Lakota vision quest. Each of these activities figures as a significant moment in personal narratives and plays an important role in the construction of identity. Because they are common episodes in the life cycles of Americans, they tie individuals to shared cultural experiences. For that reason, they are also pervasive plot devices in American film and literature, and these depictions in turn make them even more recognizable as shared markers of life's stages.

Among life's experiences, illness and healing stand out as being intimately connected with sacred time. For Navajo traditionalists, for instance, illness indicates an imbalance between the patient and his or her world in its social, material, and spiritual aspects. Healing, then, requires that the patient and the world be rebalanced by the ritual entrance of patient and healer into the sacred time of origins, when the world was originally balanced. By reciting the story of a particular cosmogonic event and placing the patient within the story through interaction with a sandpainting, the healer re-creates the patient by re-creating the world.

Illness, especially serious illness, reveals the limits of human existence. In modern hospitals, patients regularly turn to prayer when they are sick. Religious

groups maintain prayer circles and regularly pray for the health of loved ones. In cases of extreme illness, individuals have been known to have profound religious experiences that change them forever. Some have said that they died and visited heaven, seeing their deceased loved ones before returning to their bodies and their health.

Birth and death, as the entrance and exit from life, are especially important moments in the life cycle. They both involve transition, transformation, and danger. They also both raise questions about the nature of human existence. Are we more than our bodies? Do we have souls that continue to exist once our bodies die? If so, what is the nature of the soul and its relationship to the body? Do we reincarnate for another life? Can we remember previous lives? Do we go on to eternal joy or eternal damnation?

In America today, most births take place in hospitals, largely absent of religious ritual. The birthing process is framed primarily as a medical issue, prompting midwives and other reformers to push for the recovery of sacred meanings of childbirth through alternative birthing practices. Options such as natural childbirth, meditation, attention to the physical setting, chanting, and incorporation of music are just some of the ways that birth practices are being re-framed in America today.

Death has been more successful at retaining its symbolic power and ritual practices in modern America. As the limit of physical human existence, death marks the ultimate boundary between the ordinary and the extraordinary, the particular and the universal, and the temporal and the eternal. Of all the aspects of human existence, death is perhaps the most mysterious and the most symbolically charged. The living community constructs and maintains its identity through the memory of the dead, who form a continuity across time from the past to the present. As a nation, Americans memorialize the deaths of soldiers and those who died in service to the country. Families remember and mourn relatives and ancestors who have died. In many cases, sacred times are set apart for their recognition. Nevertheless, attitudes toward and behaviors around death have undergone profound changes throughout American history. Medical science has influenced ideas about death and has prolonged life, suggesting to some that death may eventually be overcome by technology. An entire in-

dustry has grown up around the treatment of bodies and the memorialization of the deceased.

### The Market and Sacred Time

The commodity marketplace has had a profound influence on both practices and conceptions of sacred time in America. The market has affected sacred time in three basic ways. First, the market has become the primary structuring agent of time in the United States. Sociologist Max Weber argued that the Calvinism of the Puritans played a seemingly paradoxical role in the success of American capitalism. The Puritans, who dedicated all of their activities to the glory of God, were strict observers of the Sabbath as a day of rest. During the remainder of the week, however, they worked with discipline and efficiency, taking care never to let idleness get in the way of productivity. Material success that came from dedicated labor was indication of God's pleasure, they thought, and possibly a sign of election. Here lie the roots of the Protestant work ethic that has haunted Americans ever since with feelings of guilt that accompany idleness and "wasted time." The Puritans were so successful in business, Weber suggested, that soon hard work and material reward became ends in themselves. The market successfully superseded Christianity as the deep structuring force in American life.

As capitalism expanded across the growing nation it also altered the way that people kept track of and related to time. A national market meant that time had to be coordinated across wide areas of space. Time had to be regulated and routinized. The new demands of the workweek cut into traditional ways of life and threatened to overwhelm sacred time as well. The history of labor struggle is filled with battles fought over the issue of work on Sundays as workers revolted when bosses tried to increase profits by forcing employees to work on the Sabbath. Some have argued that those workers were more interested in the prospect of a day off than in observing sacred time. According to the Genesis story, however, the Sabbath was intended to be a day of rest from labor: By refusing to work on Sundays, protesting workers were strategically negotiating the meaning of sacred time itself, suggesting that in the context of capitalist labor, time away from work was in some way sacred.

Second, sacred time is increasingly marketed and

has become a commodity itself. The commodification of Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and other holidays, both major and minor, is inescapable. Observances of sacred time have become spectacles, opportunities for increased sales, and consumer events. Moreover, it is common today to hear scholars and journalists talk about America's "religious marketplace," where churches, faith traditions, and religious organizations compete for "customers" on the open market. Since the mid-nineteenth century, churches have vied for participants by producing styles and locations of worship designed to compete not only with other places of worship, but also with other forms of entertainment. As the workplace and the market came to dominate structures of time, leisure time became a scarce resource. Religious organizations created such marketable forms of worship as Chautauqua, vacation Bible school, and camp meeting spots in Martha's Vineyard and the New Jersey shore. The advent of radio and television produced new forms of sacred time as worshipers shared time and religious observances, from the privacy of their own homes, with a distant "community." Reform and Conservative Judaism—both of which might be understood as forms of Judaism profoundly influenced by changing understandings of sacred time—have designed worship activities and observances of sacred time to meet the desires of modern American Jews and the demands of their work schedules. More recently, some evangelical Christian churches have molded their forms of worship to include the use of rock and heavy metal music, light shows, and gourmet coffee bars to better compete in the marketplace of popular culture. Beyond the sacred time of worship, the forces of the marketplace are felt on contemporary sacred time through the packaging of pilgrimage travel into ready-made tours and the commodification of pilgrimage sites and other sacred locations (that are usually connected to observances of sacred time) as tourist attractions.

Finally, as the market's time has come to dominate Americans' experience of time's rhythms, notions of what constitutes the self, the sacred, and sacred time reflect that experience. Scholars have argued that the Protestant revivals of the 1830s created a new sense of self as an autonomous, free-willed individual who was molded to the free-market economy, suggesting that the rise of commodity capitalism also created a new religious self. This self was destined to find sacred



time modeled on market structures that oriented the individual both internally and externally. Whether or not this analysis is correct, in today's "postmodern" America there is much evidence that, for many, the sacred is understood as deeply personalized and privatized. Sacred time in this context is time to explore and renew the self. It is therefore a break from the stresses and obligations of work life, the expectations of society, and the constant demands of the commercial marketplace.

If, in America, time is money, then sacred time might be considered time that is not commodified, time that is valued for something other than its monetary value alone. Activities that make time sacred today are those that remind Americans that money is not the final measure of value. People talk about quality time spent with family or loved ones as "sacred time." Walks in the forest or on the beach, travel unrelated to business, personal retreats, meditation, and exercise have all been called sacred time. Yet, ironically, the perceived scarcity of such times and experiences has made them the perfect commodity. The market for sacred time in the form of retreats, meditation centers, pilgrimage packages, massages, healing arts, and more continues to grow.

—Richard J. Callahan, Jr.

#### SEE ALSO

Islam in America; Judaism in America; Native American Religions and Politics; Protestantism in America: Church Growth Movement, Emotion, Puritanism; The Body; Death; Generations: The Family; Public Theologies and

Political Culture: Civil Religion; Ritual and Performance: Childbirth, Prayer, Therapy and Healing; Science: Healing

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## ANCIENT COMMUNITIES OF TIME

The consistent use of a standardized calendric system is one of the key features that define the culture of Mesoamerica. Of the several civilizations that make up what we call Mesoamerica (Olmec, Teotihuacano, Zapotec, Toltec, Aztec, etc.), the Classic Maya most embellished this standard for characterizing time. In doing so, they have opened a portal into the subtleties of their religion and cosmology.

Classic Maya imagery demonstrates how Maya religion heavily emphasized the oracular. Scenes carved into stone tablets, narrated with hieroglyphic texts and housed within elite residences and temples, depict kings and their elite cohort consulting gods and ancestors who have been brought forth from the Underworld. The texts themselves explicitly record this calling forth with the verb *tzak*—"to conjure." That this conjuring was no easy task is apparent in the logograph used to represent this verb: that of a hand grasping a fish. The elusive quality of the gods is beautifully depicted in a tablet from the Classic Maya city of Siyanchan. Here the king is lying on the ground wrestling with the supernatural entity whom he has conjured.

An oracular perspective of the cosmos is also explicitly evidenced in colonial records of the Postclassic period. In the Books of Chilam Balam, for example, we read of oracle consultations by Postclassic kings that have become less intimate than the wrestling matches of their predecessors, some performed even by proxy. The Chumayel manuscript, for instance, records the consultation of an oracle in which people were thrown into a natural well while the king stood by, listening for the oracle's response.

The oracular character of elite religious activity, however, stands in stark contrast to modern academic conceptualizations of other ancient Maya religious pursuits, such as astronomy. Ancient Maya astronomy, as it has been recovered since the last half of the nineteenth century, relies almost exclusively on the mathematical capacity of the calendric system. Specifically, in Maya calendrics, several counts are intercalated to produce a mechanical regularity in the progression of time. This apparent monotony allowed for the precise capturing of regularly occurring celestial phenomena. But the proto-scientific accuracy com-

monly attributed to Maya astronomy appears completely unrelated to an animate universe accessed through oracular consultation. To resolve this apparent incongruence, one must take a closer look at Maya calendrics *and* how they were used.

Following the mechanical impression of the calendric system, modern scholarship often has cast Mesoamerican time as completely cyclical. That is, scholars have suggested that the Maya believed in the recurrence of historical events according to the dictates of an ever-repeating calendar. This they have contrasted with a "linear" version, wherein there is a beginning and an end to time, with a strict progression between them. The Mesoamerican cyclicity hypothesis was generated by heavy reliance on two specific calendric constructs. The first is that of the Aztec 52-year "century." The second is the Maya *k'atun* cycle. Each of these is based on the same uniquely Mesoamerican calendric system.

Like most civilizations of the ancient world, Mesoamericans maintained an approximation to the solar year; in Maya it was termed the *ja'ab*. This 365-day count (which did not account for leap years) consisted of 18 months of 20 days each and one 5-day period at the end of the year. Joined to the *ja'ab* was the 260-day count known by the Maya as the *chol k'ij* ("the ordering of days"). This count worked with the coefficients 1–13 affixed to 20 distinct "day signs." Any date combination of a *chol k'ij* and *ja'ab* recurs only once every 52 years, hence the "Mesoamerican century."

The Maya *k'atun* derived from a classic-period construct known as the *Long Count*. Each *k'atun* was comprised of 20 *tuns*, or 20 periods of 360 days. Since the number 13 is not a factor of 360 (or of 20 x 360), each *k'atun* ended on the same day sign, but with a different coefficient. The day sign was always the twentieth, with a classic-period name of *ajaw*. The numerical coefficients followed a pattern: 9, 5, 1, 10, 6, 2, 11, 7, 3, 12, 8, 4, 13 ( $n-4 \pmod{13}$ ).

These two repetitive cycles were recorded in colonial-period ethno-histories, but when we turn to ancient times, the situation is decidedly different. Aztec priests counted solar "ages" as accumulations of 52-year "centuries." The Aztecs held that four such ages



An ancient Mayan monument, Quirigua, Guatemala  
(Library of Congress)

had transpired before the contemporary sun, and although there were some parallels between the different ages, they were in no way strictly repetitive. Moreover, the Maya explicitly did not hold to a cyclical view, as their entire period of florescence was predicated on the Long Count, which functioned as a cosmic odometer of days. Generally, representations of this odometer counted days within five groupings. Days, *k'in*, were grouped in periods of 20 to make up one *winal*. Eighteen *winal* made up one *tun*. Twenty *tun* made up one *k'atun*, and twenty *k'atun* one *bak'tun*. Each *bak'tun*, therefore, represented 144,000 days. Therefore, the combination of the Calendar Round and the Long Count prevented a strictly cyclical progression of time.

So, Mesoamerican time was neither cyclical nor linear; in fact, even a combination of the two cannot do justice to indigenous conceptualizations, for all of these presuppose a mechanical basis of time. And herein lies the greatest discontinuity between ancient

and postcontact Mesoamerican visions of time: *Ancient time was alive.*

On the most blatant level, this perspective is clear in the very representation of time within Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions. Stela D at the southernmost Classic Maya city of Copán, for example, depicts the elements of a calendric date as living entities interacting with each other. Hence, the *chol k'ij* component of the date 10 Ajaw is represented as a man with a skeletal face, the god of the number 10, carrying the elder Hero Twin, the supernatural Ajaw, in his day-sign cartouche.

This living *chol k'ij* worked together with the *ja'ab* and the Long Count to capture the character of the Sun on a daily basis. But the other celestial bodies also played roles in the progression of time. In many textual records, for instance, yet another count was intercalated with the Long Count, *chol k'ij*, and *ja'ab*—the lunar count.

Moons also were imbued with personality. Each lunar period of 29 or 30 days was located within an 18-moon progression. These 18 moons were made up of 6 moons each for the tenure of 3 different supernatural patrons. Each patron corresponded to a phase of the moon: the primordial Mother Goddess held the first 6 moons, the Jaguar God of the Underworld took the middle 6 moons, and the Death God kept the last 6. A given lunar record, then, might have read: “26 days ago began the second month of the Jaguar God of the Underworld.”

Yet the most telling consideration of time comes from the Postclassic manuscript known as the Dresden Codex. Herein, the reader confronts a treatment of the planet Venus, known to the Maya as *Chak Ek'*. Pages 46 through 50 of the codex contain a table of dates that track the phases of the planet over 104 years; thus, scholars have considered it to be an ancient Maya ephemeris. Over the long term, the table has been shown to be quite accurate, maintaining observational consistency to two days per century. What has gained less attention, however, is the fact that over the short term, the table was not nearly so accurate. Rather, each predicted first appearance of *Chak Ek'* might have been off by as much as a few days.

This short-term bounded unpredictability combined with long-term accuracy imbues Maya calendrics with an oracular utility. Specifically, the Maya priest was interested in knowing when *Chak Ek'*

*should have made* his first appearance (according to computational expectation) and correlating that to the planetary god's *observed* first appearance. The difference (or lack thereof) was attributable to the will of the planet. That is, if, on the one hand, the Venus god were content to passively interact with his celestial and terrestrial cohort, he could follow his mathematically prescribed motion. If, on the other hand, he were interested in acting out, this would result in a deviation from prescription, and the difference would show up for the priest in the Maya calendar as oracle.

Time, then, was the oracular construct that, when placed onto the living celestial beings, revealed their volition. Such a view is consistent across celestial bodies and amongst their interactions. The interpretation of a solar eclipse, for example, would have to take into account both the lunar patron under which it occurred and the day in the Calendar Round. Similarly, when Chak Ek' made his first appearance in the morning sky, he did so of his own will, and the calendrically savvy were able to understand that will by noting the date of this appearance.

Therefore, the complete calendar captured specific aspects of the *community* of time and communicated them to the Maya priest. In modern terminology, then, the Maya priest might be understood as a soci-

ologist of temporal deities more than a precursor of modern astronomers. Furthermore, it is this supernatural conceptualization of time that defines Maya calendrics not as a proto-scientific endeavor but as an integral part of elite Maya oracular religion.

—Gerardo Aldana

#### SEE ALSO

Latina/Latino Religious Communities; Native American Religions and Politics

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## CHRISTMAS

Christmas is by far the most widely celebrated holiday in American popular culture. It is also a major holy day in Christianity, ranking second only to Easter in religious significance. Celebrated on December 25, Christmas commemorates the birth/incarnation of Jesus. The date was established during the reign of the Roman Emperor Constantine (r. 311–337), who legalized the religion in 313. By the fifth century, the December 25 date for Christmas had become generally accepted throughout the Christian world. The holy day itself is prefaced by a four-week period of penance called Advent, which is not unlike the Lenten period prior to Easter. It is followed twelve days later (January 6) by another important religious celebration, Epiphany. In Western Christianity, Epiphany commemorates the visit of the Magi to

the baby Jesus, and in the East it commemorates his baptism.

Prior to its appropriation by Christianity, December 25 had been the date of a major pagan festival in honor of the birth of Mithra, also known as *Sol Invictus*, "the Invincible Sun." The date also coincided with the Saturnalia festival of ancient Rome and various other winter solstice celebrations in the cosmological religions of antiquity. Rituals associated with these celebrations continued even after Christianity became culturally dominant, and with some modifications, several are still practiced in contemporary American culture. These include the exchange of gifts, tree decorating, the hanging of evergreen boughs, and general merrymaking.

In addition to these pre-Christian solstice rituals,



Thomas Nast's illustration of Santa Claus waiting for the children to go to sleep, 1890s (Library of Congress)

the American Christmas includes a considerable number of other more recent traditions. The post-modern American Christmas celebration begins well in advance of the holiday, even before the Christian season of Advent. The first notable event occurs on November 1, the day after another significant post-modern holiday, Halloween. This is when most shopping malls begin putting up their Christmas decorations. Throughout November, there is a steady increase in Christmas-related advertising, and on the weekend before Thanksgiving, newspapers bulge with Christmas advertising inserts. This weekend is also when Santa Claus, the presiding deity of the American Christmas, arrives at most shopping malls.

The pre-Thanksgiving ads are followed by an even larger spate of ads on Thanksgiving Day. The ads are a foreshadowing of the first major spending event of the season, which occurs on the Friday after Thanks-

giving and is one of the ten busiest shopping days of the year. The other nine also occur in the weeks leading up to December 25. In this regard, shopping is one of the primary rituals associated with American Christmas celebrations. An enormous volume of retail spending occurs during the month of December, which annually accounts for more than 20 percent of yearly totals in general merchandise sales. Retail venues of all varieties throng with customers, with major department stores and malls being the most preferred sites.

Christmas is not just about buying material goods, however; Americans also do other things at Christmastime. Among the most widely observed of all Christmas traditions is domicile decorating. From the most modest of human habitations to the grand mansions of the cultural elite, homes across America are adorned with festive embellishments shortly after Thanksgiving to usher in the Christmas season.

The centerpiece of most domestic environments during the holidays is a lavishly decorated evergreen tree—usually a fir or pine about five to seven feet tall. The custom of decorating trees extends at least as far back as ancient Rome and its Saturnalia festival. It has been part of the American holiday since the 1850s, when holiday trees were first sold commercially. Today, the Christmas tree tradition accounts for the annual acquisition of more than 30 million “live trees” and millions of artificial ones (most imported from the People’s Republic of China).

Trees are the largest and often the most costly of the Christmas decorations, but they are only one of a vast collection of commodities acquired to decorate homes for the season. Other popular products include glass and plastic ornaments, strings of small (indoor/outdoor) electrical lights, synthetic icicles, garlands, Santa mugs (often in the shape of his head), natural and artificial wreaths, electric candles and candelabra, electrically illuminated blow-mold lawn figures (usually Santas and snowpersons), and artificial snow in aerosol cans. Flowers are also popular decorations, and flower sales are highest during the Christmas season, surpassing even Mother’s Day. Acquisition of this wide array of Christmas-specific items is seamlessly integrated with Christmas shopping rituals.

Another seasonal tradition is out-of-town travel. Here, again, Christmas is the leading holiday. In the

2000 season, for example, more than 60 million Americans (more than 20 percent of the population) went on trips to destinations more than 100 miles from their place of residence. At Thanksgiving, by comparison, slightly fewer than 40 million people took extended journeys. Once at their destinations, relatives and friends join in the Christmas activities with their hosts. They may help decorate the tree, wrap gifts, assist with holiday food preparation, and share in the Christmas Day gift exchange. Needless to say, they also join their hosts on shopping expeditions.

For many Americans, movies are a regular part of the Christmas celebration. Annually, theater attendance soars in December, and Hollywood studios slate blockbuster films for release during the holiday season. The roots of this phenomenon can be traced to the 1942 classic *Holiday Inn*, which included the now-traditional Christmas song “White Christmas,” sung by Bing Crosby. In addition to going to see the new releases, watching classic Christmas films is a common practice. Like the seasonal return of well-known carols on the radio, classic Christmas movies return to television screens in December. If one misses them on the commercial airwaves, they can be rented or purchased in video or DVD formats. For many, Christmas would not be quite the same if they did not see *Miracle on 34th Street*, the 1947 masterpiece, Jimmy Stewart in the role of George Bailey in the 1946 classic *It’s a Wonderful Life*, or one of the several movie versions of Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*, including the postmodern version, *Scrooged*, starring Bill Murray. For younger persons, films such as *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and the 2000 hit *Dr. Seuss’ How the Grinch Stole Christmas* may be the representative Christmas movies.

One of the most widely observed holiday rituals is sending Christmas cards. Americans purchase more than 2 billion Christmas cards annually. Typically, they send them to relatives and friends sometime after Thanksgiving and before the middle of December, which marks the (always widely reported) deadline for mailing cards that will “arrive before Christmas.” In the spirit of the season, the Post Office produces special holiday stamps. These come in two varieties, one with a Christian religious image, the other with a generic holiday image. The Post Office refers to the Christian stamps as “traditional” and to the generic stamps as “contemporary.” The first Christmas

stamps were issued in the United States in 1962 and have had press runs as high as 3.3 billion (1995). Notably, for the first time since the Post Office began issuing Christmas stamps, the 2000 edition was postponed, due to high inventories of unsold 1999 stamps—perhaps due to increasing use of e-mail.

Nocturnal driving tours to view holiday decorations are yet another feature of contemporary Christmas celebrations. In many cities, municipal governments and/or private-sector groups sponsor large outdoor Christmas displays in parks or along major thoroughfares. The most popular items in these displays are cards and trees—for example, Christmas card parks and Christmas tree boulevards. Other themes may include Santa’s workshops, gigantic Christmas trees (like the National Tree in Washington, D.C.), and Christmas wonderlands. The wonderlands are particularly striking and usually consist of enormous versions of various seasonal objects such as reindeer, wrapped presents, menorahs, Santas, and (again) Christmas cards and trees.

On driving tours, people visit countless smaller sites in addition to the monumental displays. The most popular are the “Christmas houses” of individual communities. These are private homes transformed by their owners into public spectacles. There are so many lights on these houses that adjacent residential streets look dim by comparison; lawns are filled with a multitude of Christmas blow-mold figures; hedges and shrubs are festooned with even more lights. Christmas music may be blasting from loudspeakers, and reindeer-pulled sleighs can be seen on the rooftops. Invariably, Christmas houses receive significant media coverage.

At the mythic center of the American Christmas celebration is Santa Claus. The cultural lineage of this postmodern icon and presiding deity of the holiday season can be traced to a fourth-century Catholic saint, Nicholas (280–342), the Bishop of Myra, an ancient city in Asia Minor. St. Nicholas is still venerated as the patron of young unmarried women, seafarers, and children, to name a few; and the date of his death (December 6) is recognized as a feast day in the Catholic Church.

The immediate precursor of the contemporary American Santa Claus was the Dutch version of St. Nicholas, *Sint Nikolaas*, or *Sinterklass*, who may have arrived in New Amsterdam with the first Dutch set-

tlers. By this time, Nicholas, as Sinterklass, had become a gift bearer for Dutch children, usually visiting homes on December 5, the eve of his feast day. Other European Christmas figures who became subsumed into the American Santa Claus were Père Noël from France, Father Christmas from England, and Christkindel (later Kriss Kringle) and the ominous Belsnickle from Germany.

The transformation of Sinterklass and his European cohorts into the Santa Claus of today is largely the result of the work of Clement Moore and Thomas Nast. It was Moore who fashioned the foundational myth of Santa Claus in his 1823 poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas" (better known as "The Night Before Christmas"), and it was Nast's paintings and drawings of Santa (from the 1860s through the 1880s) that supplied the basis for all subsequent Santa iconography.

The final phase in the evolution of the contemporary Santa began in the late 1880s when the first Santa "shrines" began to appear in department stores. This development coincided with the large-scale commercialization of Christmas in America's emerging consumer culture. The shrines were elaborate environments with a "live Santa" in the center. This Santa invariably resembled Nast's images and conformed to the established mythology. Designed not only to attract children but also to appeal to their parents, the shrines and living Santas were enormously successful and quickly became holiday fixtures at department stores throughout America. By the turn of the century, the Moore-Nast Santa was firmly established in the American consciousness.

He remains so today. A mature yet energetic figure, Santa Claus embodies affluence and generosity, the spirit of giving and the spirit of buying as well. Today, the greatest Santa shrines are found in indoor shopping malls, which are also where the bulk of Christmas spending occurs. All told, on average more than 7,000 children visit Santa at each mall in America during the Christmas season, and the average American spends around \$800 a year on Christmas gifts.

—Dell deChant

#### SEE ALSO

Generations: The Family; Material Culture; Popular Culture; Sacred Space: Shopping Malls, The Suburban Home

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## EASTER

Easter is the greatest holy day in Christianity, marking the resurrection from death of the Christian savior and incarnation of God, Jesus Christ. The name of the holy day is derived from the name of a Northern European fertility deity (Eastre or Eostre) whose festival occurred in the spring. It has affinities with the Jewish celebration of Passover, which occurs at approximately the same time of the year. The word "Pasch" and the adjectival "Paschal" in reference to

Easter are derived from the Hebrew word for Passover, "Pessah."

As established by the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325, Easter occurs on the Sunday after the first full moon of spring. Because it is linked to a variable celestial event, the celebration of Easter occurs on different dates—as early as March 21 and as late as April 25. For this reason, it is called a "movable feast." The date is different in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, which

uses the Julian calendar to date the spring equinox. In spiritual preparation for Easter, Christians observe a forty-day period of fasting and penance, called Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday. The week leading up to Easter Sunday (Holy Week) is an especially sacred time, marked by distinct observances on certain days. Palm Sunday (the Sunday prior to Easter) celebrates Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem for the last time; Maundy Thursday marks the Last Supper, Jesus' last meal with his disciples, when he instituted the Communion ritual; and Good Friday commemorates his death, which Christians believe to be the atoning sacrifice for the sins of humanity.

In America, approximately 100 million people attend church services on Easter Sunday. The holiday is also marked by a variety of nonreligious springtime celebrations and ritual activities in American popular culture. The best-known Easter celebration in American civil religion is the annual Easter Egg Roll, which occurs on the Monday after Easter Sunday on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, D.C. The roots of the tradition date back to the administration of James Madison, and for many years it was held on the grounds of the Capitol building. In 1878, during the presidency of Rutherford B. Hayes, the location was changed to the White House, when Hayes allowed children to roll their eggs on the White House lawn after they had been banned from the Capitol grounds due to the toll the celebration was taking on the landscaping. It has remained an annual White House tradition ever since and is today more popular than at any time in its history.

Eggs also play a prominent role in domestic celebrations of Easter. The association of eggs with Easter can be traced to pre-Christian Europe, where decorated eggs (as symbols of rebirth and regeneration) were given as springtime gifts. Christianity appropriated the tradition and subsequent modifications took place in American culture. In contemporary practice, families dye hard-boiled eggs, usually in pastel hues. The adults later hide the colored eggs for the children to find in an Easter Egg Hunt. The rolling of eggs, once a regular part of Easter activities and still included in the White House celebration, is less widely practiced today than it was in previous times.

A related ritual involves placing eggs in baskets (typically plastic) lined with synthetic fibers meant to resemble grass. These Easter baskets may be hidden

so that children can hunt for them (as with the eggs), or they may be simply given as gifts on Easter Sunday. Many people prepare the baskets at home, but commercially produced Easter baskets are available at most retailers. Whether created in the home or purchased preassembled, Easter baskets typically contain various types of candy, including chocolate eggs, which are often cream filled; pastel-colored "Peeps" (bird-shaped marshmallows); chocolate rabbits; and an assortment of small egg-shaped candies known as "jelly beans." The popularity of candy at Easter celebrations accounts for Easter ranking second only to Halloween in holiday candy sales.

The major symbol of the season in contemporary popular culture, the rabbit (typically called "the Easter Bunny") also has its origins in pre-Christian Europe, where it served as a symbol of fertility due to its incredible reproductive abilities. As the functional totem figure of the American Easter celebration, Easter bunnies come in all shapes and sizes, from small edible candy representations to large plush toys. Classically, the candy bunnies are molded chocolate shells, with hollow interiors, about four to eight inches high, and positioned in an alert sitting posture. Plush bunnies are typically pastel in color and range in size from handheld doll-sized figures to others that may be as large as a small child. An increasingly common phenomenon is the appearance of human impersonators of the Easter Bunny. These shaman-like figures are often found in larger stores, malls, and at holiday parties. Although decried by humane societies and animal protection groups, the purchase of live, young rabbits from pet stores remains a common practice.

Easter has become a major commercial event. It occupies an important position in the liturgical year of contemporary consumer culture as well as in the Christian calendar. The roots of the commercialization of Easter can be traced to the latter part of the nineteenth century, when retailers in major urban centers (especially New York City) began to develop advertising and promotional campaigns featuring seasonal items, which were then beginning to be mass-produced. Among the first Easter commodities were candy, decorated eggs, toy rabbits, cards, and especially apparel items—the Easter bonnet, special Easter dresses or suits, and the like.

Besides generating a high volume of candy sales, Easter accounts for the third-highest total of holiday



flower sales and the fourth-highest total of greeting-card sales. Its impact on overall retail sales activity is even more stunning, with the weeks leading up to the holiday being marked by enormous increases in advertising geared to the holiday and the spring shopping season, which it initiates. Sales in nearly all areas of retail spending increase dramatically in advance of the holiday, with particularly notable increases occurring in apparel, appliance, and automotive sales. The months of March and April, when Easter occurs, annually register the highest totals of the year until that point in retail spending. As the holiday signaling the annual renewal of commercial economic activity, Easter, in contemporary consumer culture, functions much like the springtime festivals of ancient cosmological cultures and the annual celebration of the resurrection of Jesus in the Christian liturgical year.

—Dell deChant

#### SEE ALSO

Orthodox Christianity; Generations: The Family; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion; Sacred Space: Shopping Malls

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## END TIMES

The belief in end times characterizes many American religions and is seen most frequently at the inception of a new religious movement. This is particularly the case with religions that are an innovative version of mainstream Protestant belief, since the focus on biblical literalness requires that believers attend to the apocalypses of the Books of Daniel and Revelation. In a Christian context, the expectation that the world, history, and time itself are coming to a close is intimately connected with the anticipation of Jesus' return and reign on earth for 1,000 years; this phenomenon is called "millennialism." As new religions attempt to rectify perceived lacks in the established ones, they naturally reorder believers' relationship to time and space in ways that offer new forms of explanatory power. Rather than something to be feared and dreaded, the end of the world provides believers with a satisfactory explanation for the current state of the world—often seen as irretrievably corrupt—and promises the faithful that their trials and suffering will be rewarded.

Millennialism is generally characterized as a relentlessly linear understanding of time: Time began at point *A*, is currently passing through the period of be-

lievers' lives at point *B*, and is rushing toward apocalyptic (or utopian) closure at point *C*. As a rule of thumb, if point *C* is heavenly, the movement will have an apocalyptic cast; if it is earthly, the movement will have a utopian leaning. This manner of constructing time is essentially a narrative understanding of history: History is endowed with a clear beginning, middle, and end, and all of time is accounted for in God's plan. Thus, time itself is imbued with sacrality and therefore can be trusted. Random or absurd events are eliminated: Although the meaning of certain events may be inscrutable at the moment, they are an integral aspect of the divine unfolding of time and will someday become clear. Moreover, any setbacks or suffering on the part of believers also have religious meaning. Suffering is seen as a necessary part of the end days. Adherents' suffering will be swiftly ended and vindicated; often their persecutors will be punished.

The belief in the end times is thus a manner of taming the vagaries of history. Adherents interpret historical events in a religious schema as each new generation sees in its recent past evidence of the coming apocalypse. For the nineteenth century, signs such as

the fall of the Ottoman Empire or unusual meteorological or astronomical events were culturally “read” as the breaking of the seven seals of Revelation. Today’s believers in the end times see the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and the collapse of the Berlin Wall as signs of the end. Biblical writings appear to be infinitely flexible and events prophesied therein are taken as allegorical, such that each generation of interpreters may recognize its contemporary situation in the ancient texts.

With time constructed as a narrative under God’s control, stories of the origins of the world and humanity play an important role in end times. Because the end of time recapitulates the beginning of time, that beginning serves as a template for the new society to be established. In mainstream Christianity, the world is generally understood to have once been perfect. Adam and Eve’s sin brought about “the Fall,” and the history of humankind proceeded in this “fallen” state. In the future millennium, however, Jesus is expected to restore the original perfection.

The location of the original state of purity varies from group to group, particularly among those outside of mainstream Protestantism and Catholicism. Some groups, rather than citing the original purity in Eden, before the Fall, locate purity in the period of the apostles and seek to reinstate the immediacy of being in the Messiah’s presence. This is the case for such diverse end-times groups as the Shakers, the Oneida Community, and the Branch Davidians. In different ways, each was committed to re-creating an environment of apostolic holiness. For the Shakers and the Branch Davidians, this meant the return of the messiah in a new person, Mother Ann Lee or David Koresh, respectively. Others locate the moment of original purity in the time of the Hebrew patriarchs; such was the case for the Mormons, who understood Brigham Young as the second Moses leading the new Israelites on an exodus to Utah, the new Zion. Still others locate original purity in the times of the American Revolution and have the Founding Fathers as their template for behavior; this is often the case with paramilitary groups or white militia movements. In any case, the fantasy of origins contributes to the daily behaviors of believers, and the events of the latter days will reiterate those that have gone before, but in a different time and space and with a different conclusion, the apocalypse.

This focus on the purity of bygone days and the coming end of history leads to a sense of being outside of the normal rules of society. If a particular group believes that it is witnessing or ushering in the final days, it often feels exempt from the usual run of things and experiments with different social, sexual, and labor patterns. Those who believe in an imminent end of days may neglect the chores of living, such as paying bills, tending to the crops, or voting for elected officials. Those with a keener view of the immediacy of the end frequently believe that God has granted them a “dispensation,” the right to live outside of normal social constraints in order to prepare for end times. Here the choice of origins becomes important: For example, the early Mormons understood themselves as replaying the trials and successes of the ancient Israelites. Thus God granted them the right to live as the Israelites had, which included establishing an independent theocracy and implementing polygamy, or “plural marriage.” Many examples of this sort of experimentation with issues of sex and gender are based on ideas of perfection. The Shakers believed that the millennium had already arrived; thus, they remained celibate, since that is how they read the New Testament to describe relations of the sexes in times of perfection. The Oneida Community also believed that the millennium had already arrived, but they practiced “group marriage.” In a perfected community, all would be loved equally, they reasoned, without exclusive physical or emotional attachments.

The belief in end times varies in both its immediacy and its nature. For those groups that see the end as right around the corner, innovations are required to account for either a failed prophecy (usually specific cases of date-setting) or the relaxation of millennial fervor as a religion becomes more established. Some religious movements simply do not survive their own end-times predictions; many of the Millerites, who expected the end in 1843, dropped away or joined alternative millennialist groups such as the Shakers. Others, such as the Mormons, had built-in requirements for bringing about the end, such as gathering the Jews in Jerusalem. The failure of the apocalypse can be accounted for by the inability to accomplish certain earthly goals. As religions take hold—or fail to—the focus on end times generally diminishes. New tenets become established ones and believers no longer require divine justification for suffering. In all cases, however,

the expectation of end times serves as a sense-making position, a temporal orientation to the world and to history, assuring the faithful that the trajectory of time is firmly within the divine plan.

—Cathy Gutierrez

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New Religious Traditions: Christian Science, Communitarian Movements, Mormonism, Seventh-day Adventism; Protestantism in America; Violence: Apocalypticism

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## FOURTH OF JULY

In the calendar of American civil religion, the Fourth of July is the most hallowed of days. On this day, also called Independence Day, Americans celebrate the signing of the Declaration of Independence by the Continental Congress in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776, the gesture that symbolically marked the birth of the nation. Communities across the United States traditionally commemorate this event with parades, musical performances, picnics, and fireworks displays. But more than the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the Fourth of July celebrates the idea and myth of America itself. In spectacles and speeches, Americans re-create events that were formative and symbolically central in American civil religion; celebrate the ideas of liberty, freedom, and independence as fundamental to the meaning and identity of the United States; and link local history and civic institutions to the nation's narrative. Because of its mythically and symbolically charged status as sacred time, the Fourth of July has also sometimes been a time to ask critical questions of the nation, calling upon the United States to take stock of itself in light of the ideals it celebrates.

Although it was on July 2, 1776, that the Second Continental Congress resolved that the colonies formerly under the control of Britain were now free and independent, it was the actual signing of the formal

declaration and justification of this independence on July 4 that the United States celebrates as its originating event. That document, now treated as a sacred text and displayed under high-tech conditions of preservation and strict security in Washington, D.C., laid the foundation for the meaning of the new nation as a union built on liberty and freedom from oppression. It quickly became the symbol of America's self-defined millennial role in world history, just as the act of its signing signified to Americans the triumph of good over evil and freedom over tyranny.

Shortly after it was signed, copies of the Declaration of Independence were sent to American troops and read publicly in cities and churches throughout the thirteen original colonies. Many of the activities familiar to present-day Fourth of July celebrations were already in place at these early readings. On July 25, 1776, for example, Williamsburg, Virginia, celebrated with military parades and the firing of cannons. The following year on July 4, Philadelphia celebrated with fireworks; parades; musical performances; flag waving; decorations in red, white, and blue; and thirteen rounds of cannon fire. The first "official" Fourth of July holiday created by an act of the legislature was in Massachusetts in 1781. By the early nineteenth century, the Fourth of July was solidly in place as the ori-



Independence Day fireworks over the Capitol, Washington, D.C. (Royalty-Free/Corbis)

enting anchor of American sacred time. The fiftieth, one hundredth (Centennial), and two hundredth (Bicentennial) anniversaries of the signing were occasions for special celebration.

The spectacles and performances that traditionally make up Fourth of July activities illustrate several modes of sacred time that are common not only to American civil religion but also to many religious cultures. The day is framed as extraordinary by the disruption of the everyday flow of events that constitute ordinary days: Governmental and financial institutions are closed, many people have the day off from work, those businesses that remain open often have special sales, parades necessitate rerouting of normal traffic patterns, and families and communities join together to eat and play. All of the senses are drawn into the celebration through patriotic music, the sounds and sights of fireworks, grand parade floats, American flag displays, and the smells and tastes of foods traditional to local and regional Fourth of July festivities. In many communities, the Fourth of July has a

carnival atmosphere, including traditions of costumed play acting, practical joke playing, and games. Popular activities in this vein include catching a greased pig or watermelon, throwing water balloons, and dressing as legendary characters. The presence of more hazardous aspects of carnivals, including drinking, brawling, and extensive use of fireworks, has led to periodic movements for more family-oriented, controlled festivities.

The carnival mood is only one theme of Fourth of July celebrations, however. Another is the merging of past and present, and the local and national, into the time of myth that resides outside of history. In a common ritual use of sacred time, the community is brought into the presence of the primordial time of origins through the reenactment and recollection of events from the Revolutionary period. Costumed volunteers reenact important events such as the battle of Lexington and Concord, for instance, in period dress. But it is not only the eighteenth century that is resurrected; parades and stories also celebrate key persons

and events from throughout the history of the United States. Presidents, major wars, landmarks of the country's expansion and transformations, and other elements from throughout American history are compressed into one dense display of national identity and myth.

Fourth of July parades bring together local civic groups, police and fire departments, sports teams, church groups, schools, marching bands, and others who represent the values, identity, and history of communities. They therefore display communities to themselves, granting authority and legitimacy to particular aspects of the community over others. Likewise, parades link local communities and regions to the narrative and civil religion of the United States. In so doing, they selectively recite the story of America. Therefore, Fourth of July parades should be understood as sites of cultural production in which the stories and values of both local communities and the nation are potentially created, maintained, or protested.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Fourth of July has served as a time of reckoning and contention as well as a time of celebration. For instance, before a meeting sponsored by the Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Association in New York in 1852, abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass used the symbolic and mythically charged date to ask, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" Recalling the American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence as main components in the narrative of the country's deliverance from oppression and bondage, and highlighting the principles of liberty and morality, Douglass's address turned polemical as he paralleled the Patriots' plight against England to that of slaves struggling for their freedom. Similarly, the Centennial celebration of the Fourth of July occasioned a call to consciousness by the National Woman Suffrage Association. Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and other leaders of the movement for women's rights signed the "Declaration of Rights for Women," a document listing a series of grievances against the United States government for refusing to grant women the rights accorded to "all men" in the Declaration of Independence. Like Frederick Douglass, the National Woman Suffrage Association recognized the Declaration of Independence as a cornerstone of human rights and of the United States' foundation upon those rights. For them, the Fourth of

July served as the ceremonial time to return the nation to its origins for judgment and the hope of regeneration.

By the Bicentennial in 1976, on the heels of the Vietnam War, Watergate, the Civil Rights Movement, and the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr., America had much to celebrate and yet much to struggle with. A shadow lingered over Bicentennial events even as the country celebrated its foundation in freedom. In the late twentieth century, it became increasingly difficult to assert a single narrative of American history, a single civil religion, or a shared American myth. It remains to be seen what significance the Fourth of July will hold as the United States moves into new and more complicated self-consciousness. Perhaps the growing interest in Juneteenth celebrations among African Americans offers a clue. Juneteenth, celebrated on June 19, marks an alternative sacred time of independence: the day that slaves in Galveston, Texas, heard that President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation had set all slaves free. Although Lincoln issued the proclamation in September 1862 and declared that slaves would be free as of January 1, 1863, word did not reach Texas until June 19, 1865. Today, many African American communities recognize that date as the day that the last slaves in America were freed. It therefore signifies what the Fourth of July signifies to the nation as a whole—freedom.

—Richard J. Callahan, Jr.

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Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion;  
Ritual and Performance: Civic and Political Ritual  
Performances

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## THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving is one of America's favorite holidays, requiring only food, family, and gratitude. Its very simplicity has made it a flexible and absorptive festival, from its first Puritan expression in New England to its Asian American, Latino, and interfaith manifestations today.

Thanksgiving is, in part, a harvest festival and partakes of a long history of harvesttime celebration. As recorded in Deuteronomy, Moses proclaimed the Feast of Tabernacles, still celebrated in the Jewish community as Sukkoth, in gratitude for the harvest and for God's blessing. The ancient Greeks brought sheaves of grain to Demeter at Eleusis, and the Romans celebrated Ceres, the goddess of corn. The Pilgrim settlers at Plymouth would have been familiar with the Harvest Home festival of Britain, celebrated with merriment after the last sheaves of the harvest were in.

The archetypal American Thanksgiving of the Pilgrims in Plymouth was observed in the fall of 1621, less than a year after the band of a hundred settlers had landed. Only half survived the first winter. The summer and fall brought new life, crops, fruit, fish, and game. A treaty had been established with Massasoit and the nearby Wampanoag Indians. As famously told by Edward Winslow: "Our harvest being gotten in, our Governor [William Bradford] sent four men on fowling so that we might, after a more special manner rejoice together, after we had gathered the fruit of our labours." According to the story, Massasoit was invited to join in the feasting, and he arrived with an unexpected ninety men, and five deer for the feast. The cooking, eating, and games went on for three days.

The second Pilgrim thanksgiving was observed on July 30, 1623. It was a day devoted to thanksgiving and prayer, not for a harvest completed, but for a harvest saved by timely rains at the end of a long drought. In subsequent years, the harvest celebration was amplified with more general themes of thanksgiving and gratitude. President George Washington proclaimed the first national Thanksgiving Day in 1789 "a day of Public Thanksgiving and Prayer." He emphasized, above all, gratitude for the new nation and "for the peaceful and rational manner in which we

have been enabled to establish Constitutions of Government for our safety and happiness."

Not until the presidency of Abraham Lincoln, however, did Thanksgiving Day become an official annual holiday, even though it was widely celebrated throughout the land. Its official recognition was due largely to the energies of Mrs. Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of the Philadelphia magazine *Godey's Lady's Book*. She made this her project and passion, finally appealing directly to President Lincoln in the 1860s. In 1863, in the middle of the Civil War, Lincoln issued a National Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, the first since that of George Washington and the first of a series that continues to this day. He named the fourth Thursday in November as Thanksgiving Day, a custom that was affirmed by a joint resolution of Congress in 1941.

Plymouth, Massachusetts, the home of the Pilgrims, is sometimes called "America's hometown." There, Thanksgiving Day begins with the "Pilgrim Progress" as fifty-one Plymouth residents in seventeenth-century dress, bearing their muskets and Bibles, march solemnly up to the top of Burial Hill for a brief service of prayer. These symbolic descendants of the Pilgrims sing antiphonal psalms of praise in the style known to their Puritan forebears. The crowd gathered for the service looks down over the town of Plymouth, the harbor, and out to sea.

Below, on the hillside just above Plymouth Rock, native peoples from New England and across America gather for an alternative event, the National Day of Mourning. The native people resist this traditional Plymouth Thanksgiving, which many see as "a Disneyland version of our history." Although giving thanks for God's bounty is important to them, they emphasize that they bring a different perspective to the day. One speaker proclaimed, "Every day we thank the creator for this beautiful earth and for our survival. But we will not give thanks for the invasion of our country; we will not celebrate the theft of our lands and the genocide of our people."

This counter-Thanksgiving began in 1970 when Frank James, a Wampanoag, was asked to speak at the 350th anniversary of the coming of the Pilgrims. His prepared remarks were too strong for the organiz-



Family saying grace before carving the turkey, Neffsville, Pennsylvania, 1942 (Library of Congress)

ers and he was asked to moderate his critical tone. He ended up delivering his speech to a protest rally on Coles Hill above Plymouth Rock. Since then, the United American Indians of New England (UAINE) have held the annual National Day of Mourning to create space for the expression of the perspectives and aspirations of native peoples.

Today, American Thanksgiving is observed by new generations of American immigrants. In Chicago, a family gathering of new Americans of South Asian origin may include tandoori turkey, salmon curry, vegetable rice pilaf, spicy sweet potato curry, cranberry chutney, curried cauliflower, and matar paneer. Pumpkin pie vies with homemade gulab jamun for dessert. Meanwhile, in New York City, a large Chinese American family may gather in a Chinese restau-

rant, and in Hartford, a Muslim family may begin its traditional turkey dinner with a recitation of the Surah al-Fatiha, the opening verse of the Qur'an. In Miami, a Hispanic congregation may put on a Thanksgiving pageant with the children of Latino immigrants dressed up as Pilgrims and Indians.

Thanksgiving has also become a time for interfaith community services. It is one of two major occasions during the year, the other being Martin Luther King Day, when America's new religious diversity is expressed in worship. Interfaith councils are growing rapidly across America, with Christians and Jews, Buddhists and Baha'is, Hindus and Muslims all participating. In cities as widely dispersed as San Diego, Buffalo, Columbus, and Kansas City, these councils are now the sponsors of community interfaith

Thanksgiving services. Even in America's hometown, the Thanksgiving Day service is now sponsored by the Plymouth Area Interfaith Clergy Association.

Thanksgiving Square in Dallas, Texas, is a modern interfaith chapel right in the heart of the city. It is part of a worldwide movement dedicated to creating links among people of all religious faiths around the theme of thanksgiving. Its annual Thanksgiving proclamation is signed by religious leaders from many traditions of faith. The conviction expressed is simple: that gratitude for one's life and the blessings of the world is universal. More than any other virtue, it is gratitude that brings people together.

—Diana L. Eck

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Protestantism in America: Puritanism; Generations: The Family; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion

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## VACATIONS

Vacations are time off. They are also often time away. They mark a disruption of everyday routines of work and living and therefore constitute nonordinary time during which people participate in activities that are effectively different from those of their everyday lives. These activities often involve travel. By nature transgressive of the boundaries constituting ordinary and expected daily behavior, vacations may also be times for carnivalesque behavior, excess, or idleness. They have therefore been a constant concern in the religious history of the United States, ambivalently promising rest and recreation while also threatening chaos. As sacred time, vacations regularly include such features as liminality, pilgrimage, ritual, transgression, cultural exchange, and encounters with new worlds.

The yearly calendar includes vacation times that are shared by people throughout the United States. Some of these are related to religious traditions, especially Christianity. Christmas, for instance, is traditionally a time off for many Americans, whether they practice Christianity or not. During the "Christmas season," people shop, give gifts, visit their families

and friends, and often take extended leave from daily work. Other regularly scheduled and shared vacation times relate to seasons. For instance, schools regularly break for several months during the summer; although in a more rural America this break had more to do with seasonal work in farming communities, it now provides a time for students and their families to take vacations. Spring Break plays a similar role. Other vacation times are related to national historical events or commemorations, such as Memorial Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Presidents' Day, and so forth. These holidays are usually scheduled to fall on Mondays, making the three-day weekend a popular opportunity for vacationing. Vacations need not be taken during nationally shared time off, however. People also schedule their own time off from work, and many businesses allow employees to take a certain number of days off per year. Many employees thus create their own vacation times.

Vacation usually involves travel. It is time out from ordinary time, and therefore an opportunity to journey to out-of-the-ordinary locations and to participate in nonordinary events. Vacationers might travel to



popular amusement spots, to historical landmarks, or to national parks. The sites selected for vacation travel indicate the wide variety of purposes that vacations are put to. In some cases, the selection of a vacation site is driven primarily by market forces of advertising. In other cases, the destination appears to have more in common with pilgrimage to a sacred site of history or memory. Yet other vacation sites appear to be chosen to reconnect the vacationer with nature and the rhythms of the natural world. In each case, vacationers take the opportunity of extraordinary time to partake in extraordinary experiences—something *other* than the patterns and routines of profane daily life.

Vacations also offer opportunities to experience places, people, and ways of life that one does not encounter during everyday life. The history of vacations in America is therefore inevitably bound to the history of tourism, which is a history of desire, anxiety, and representations of otherness. Vacation sites and activities in the tourist mode are densely connected to the desire to see and touch life beyond the boundaries of the ordinary.

The history of vacation travel in the United States is tightly interwoven with issues of class, work, economy, and morality. Before the Civil War, it was mainly the rich and wealthy who took time off to travel to spas and retreats or to vacation homes for the purpose of restoring their health and spirits. Vacationers and their popular destinations were condemned by some for their decadence, in part owing to the perception of wealthy idleness and in part to the addition of amusements designed to entice more visitors to vacation sites. To counter those enticements and their threats of idleness and decadence, religious and social organizations established vacation spots designed for self-improvement, Bible study, and moral uplift. The Chautauqua and the Bible school camps are examples of this sort of vacation destination.

Railroads and the growth of the middle class after 1865 made the possibility of vacation travel easier for a wider demographic group. At the same time, the developing National Park Service and a renewed national identity oriented to the American landscape combined with the increasingly routinized temporal

rhythms of the industrial marketplace to make vacationing a regular part of American behavior. The vacation industry itself grew along with the structures of time that instituted vacationing as normalized transgression of ordinary time. By the early twentieth century, factories and workplaces were giving employees at every level paid vacations, believing that this practice would boost morale and productivity.

Today, the vacation industry plays an enormous role in the global economy. Playing upon fantasies and desires to inhabit (or try on) a life other than one's own mundane or profane existence, the vacation industry plays an intimate role in structuring a political economy of the sacred in a "global village." At the same time, traditional religious institutions themselves participate in the vacation industry by marketing religious vacation camps, theme parks, tours, and learning centers. As a result, the meaning and practice of vacations blur with those of pilgrimages, creating a modern mode of sacred journey and transformation.

The boundary between beneficial time away from everyday work, on the one hand, and idleness, on the other, has continued to be blurry. Vacations occupy an essential yet morally ambivalent place in American culture. Their liminal aspects, set apart as they are from the rules and structures of daily life, open vacations to all of the possibilities for transformation or transgression associated with sacred time. They will therefore continue to be an important aspect of American religious culture in traditional and new forms.

—Richard J. Callahan, Jr.

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Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion; Ritual and Performance: Tourism, Weddings; Sacred Space: Shrines

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# SCIENCE



The interaction between religion and science has been one of the fundamental markers of American civilization, both in the past and in contemporary society. Although the ongoing nature of the relationship has shifted dramatically as religion and science have developed and evolved, the intensity of the relationship in the modern period remains especially striking. There are many complexities that affect this relationship but none of these can obscure the dramatic fact that American civilization is committed at every level to exploring science and implementing new technologies at the same time as its religious fervor shows no sign of diminishing. This despite innumerable areas where science and religion might be thought to conflict with serious implications. Further complicating this story is the parallel interaction, at a more practical level, between technology and social ethics. Taken together, science and religion along with technology and ethics have provided a site of ongoing debate and reconciliation.

Neither science nor religion can be described as an unchanging category of knowledge. Since the nineteenth century, science has undergone dramatic revolutions in almost every field, from physics and biology to geology and astronomy, as scientists have replaced older theories and developed starkly different explanations for natural phenomena. In addition, since the end of the nineteenth century, the social sciences and psychology have often used models of research and verification based upon the mathematical manipulation of findings similar to procedures in the purer sciences.

American religions have also expanded and changed with the frequent appearance of splits, new sects, and denominations. Though Protestants dominated intellectual life in the colonies during the seventeenth century, and the relationship of science and religion early on in American history was primarily their story, by the nineteenth century this situation had changed abruptly. With the proliferation of Protestant sects and the massive immigration of Catholics and Jews from Eastern and Southern Europe, by 1900 American religion was approaching its contemporary diversity and difference.

This situation was characterized by two key developments in American Protestantism that had an immense effect on organization and theology. The first was modernism, which accepted science and the implications of geology and evolutionary biology, and the second was the new “science” of biblical philology, called the “higher criticism,” which explored ancient religious texts using philology and linguistics. This accommodation was opposed by a growing fundamentalism, which in the second decade of the twentieth century reasserted biblical inerrancy and rejected selected elements of modern science.

Unlike other societies with more unified cultures and long histories of established religion, America has been characterized by diversity and the incessant proliferation of differing beliefs. This means, inevitably, that the relationship of religion and science in American culture must be formulated to account for this diversity. It is therefore necessary to speak of connections between science and religions in the plural.

The final, large, complicating factor in the relationship between religion and science is that there are so many levels of American society and diverse modes of cultural expression. For example, when scientists and theologians discuss cosmology and the origins of the universe, their debates are very different from popular-culture cosmology in the guise of science fiction, where technology and ethics conflict or reinforce each other in scenarios of space travel and imaginary worlds, civilizations, and social systems. And yet the issues are linked through a similar concern to bring science and religion to bear upon the origins of life and the place of humans in the universe.

American colonial society inherited British attitudes toward science and religion, which meant the general assumptions of Sir Isaac Newton and Sir Francis Bacon and their commitment to observation and inductive reasoning. Unlike the Catholic Church, which denied the Copernican Revolution in astronomy and proscribed the works of Galileo for several centuries, the Protestants (and Puritans) of England were, for the most part, comfortable with the new description of the revolution of the earth and planets around the sun. Scientists and theologians saw no

fundamental contradiction between the newly discovered laws of gravity and celestial motion and the words of the Bible. Both the Book of Nature (science) and the Book of God (the Bible), if interpreted correctly, would reveal a coherent biblical story of creation supported by the laws and mechanisms of earthly science.

The Puritans of New England were particularly interested in science, and even their theology by the mid-eighteenth century was deeply influenced by modern English philosophy, in particular the writings of John Locke. Locke's philosophic method encouraged the empirical and experimental basis of thinking and consciousness. Several early Puritan leaders revealed an abiding interest in science, although perhaps this attention was more for the sake of proving a kind of natural theology than in pure research. In the early eighteenth century, the leading Calvinist theologian, Jonathan Edwards, wrote careful and noteworthy observations of the spider in addition to important philosophical works on the freedom of the will. Moreover, the Puritans and the settlers in the middle colonies quickly adopted European inventions and technology. In 1743, the American Philosophic Society, devoted to the advancement of American technology as well as scientific knowledge, was founded under the leadership of Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia.

Simultaneous advances in practical and theoretical sciences and philosophy flowered toward the end of the eighteenth century and for several years beyond the American Revolution in the American version of the Enlightenment. Major intellectual figures such as Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, Ethan Allen, and many others developed a secularized version of Christianity called Deism, which defined God and the universe in terms of mechanical laws and removed the supernatural from intervention in contemporary life. As part of an international movement of science and philosophy, these Americans absorbed many of the contemporary European notions about the relationship between religion and science. The fruit of their labor was the First Amendment to the Constitution prohibiting the establishment of religion or state interference with religious belief and practice. This profound separation of church and state became the template according to which the relationship between

science and religion developed thereafter, although its implications were not immediately apparent.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, on the eve of the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), the relationship between religion and science remained largely untroubled. Invention and the application of technology proceeded apace with the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution. At the same time, most American scientists believed that the Bible and scientific laws reflected and reinforced each other. Many subscribed to the calculations of the seventeenth-century English Calvinist James Usher, who, in his book *The Annals of the World Deduced from the Origin of Time . . .* (1650), calculated that God created the world 4,004 years before the Christian era (B.C.E.). The English theologian William Paley, in his *Natural Theology* (1802), provided a favorite image depicting God as a divine watchmaker who designed and set the world into motion according to regular, mechanical laws.

Alongside these works of theology and science there existed a rich popular culture of superstition and magic that stressed the bizarre, the incredible, and the miraculous. On occasion this mix of science and religion became the pretext for commercial spectacles. For example, in the mid-nineteenth century, the impresario P. T. Barnum proved himself a master at displaying such incongruities as a facsimile of the Benjamin West painting *Christ Healing the Sick in the Temple* alongside the *Albino Lady* and other curiosities of nature.

The publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* inaugurated a century and a half of very troubled relations between religion and science for both Protestants and, for a briefer time, Roman Catholics. Two observations and one conclusion in this work (made explicit in 1871 with his publication of the *Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*) assaulted and confounded the Enlightenment compromise. First of all, Darwin described an old and constantly changing environment and an earth of very ancient origins. Second, he proposed that "natural selection," by which those species best suited to the developing environment were more successful in reproducing themselves, drove the process of species differentiation. Although Darwin could not explain the mechanics of organic evolution, his description of the facts underlying the



Clarence Darrow at the Scopes evolution trial, Tennessee, 1925 (Library of Congress)

theory of evolution was immensely persuasive as well as troubling. In both the British and American scientific establishments, there were heated debates about Darwin's ideas, particularly because they excluded an active God and contradicted the biblical story of creation. In the United States, the well-known and respected Harvard biologist Louis Agassiz crusaded against the theory of evolution.

From mid-century onward, there existed a developing wedge between theoretical science and popular religion. This conflict was based in part upon the growing complexity and inaccessibility of modern science and in part upon the apparent challenges some of the scientific theories presented for the validity of the

Bible. The outlines of this disagreement were vividly sketched by Cornell University president Andrew Dickson White in his *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, published in 1896. White recounted the struggle of modern science to emerge from under the intellectual authority of religious organizations. He was himself a Protestant, but still he hoped to separate science from religion. Although he probably saw the contradictions between religion and science too starkly, his writings signaled a very important direction in American education: the secularization of denominational schools and colleges and the predominance of a secular science curriculum in higher education. This attitude would not necessarily

prevail, however, in the nation's elementary and high schools.

If there appeared to be obstacles between religion and science and a growing separation between the two at the end of the nineteenth century, there were also efforts of reconciliation and some interesting achievements at this time. In the philosophic works of William James, in particular, among other philosophers of the Pragmatic school, uncertainty in the wake of modern science and modernism in religion received a brilliant reinterpretation. James's pragmatism fused science and religion, and, in such works as *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), he sought, through the new science of psychology, to understand the mental process of religious belief and to validate religious experience in scientific terms. James's writings achieved a remarkable degree of popularity despite their complex philosophical and psychological arguments, but they did not resolve the growing dispute around Darwinian science and its challenge to religion.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Darwin's theories, translated into theories of natural and social change, enjoyed considerable prestige, and notions of evolution generated immense interest for the men and women who were engaged in developing the modern social sciences. Although those social sciences were not specifically Protestant, many of the founders were deeply religious persons who hoped to use new forms of science-based understanding and social intervention to create a more ethical, Christian society. It should also be noted that the Catholic Church, with its well-established institutions of charity and social aid, did not participate enthusiastically at first in the development of secular social science. Only much later would the church organize social science institutions and journals. It is also true that throughout the next century, up to the final decades, Americans of Catholic origin were somewhat less likely than Protestants to become scientists and engineers.

Many mainline Protestant churches, particularly older denominations such as Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Quakers, accepted the theory of evolution as well as the emerging science of biblical criticism, which historicized the original meanings, texts, and history of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. Yet all this was deeply troubling to a different group of Protestant leaders. Al-

though the famed evangelical Dwight L. Moody did not aggressively reject Darwinism in the late nineteenth century, many of his followers and allies would eventually subscribe to the theological propositions of fundamentalism, developed over several years after 1912 and acutely hostile to Darwinism, modern geology, and cosmology. Among the most important propositions of fundamentalism was its formulation of biblical inerrancy, which described the words of the Bible as literally true. This meant that the Genesis story of creation provided the only dependable description of the origins of the world and humankind; Darwin was, therefore, simply wrong.

Fundamentalism was not a specific unified sect but rather a theological orientation that swept through established Protestant groups, energizing their membership and sometimes precipitating splits in congregations and larger bodies themselves. By the mid-1920s, fundamentalism was solidly established in many regions of the United States, particularly the South and the Midwest. Many of its leaders were determined to prevent the teaching of evolution in the public schools because the scientific explanations of Darwin directly contradicted the biblical story of the origins and development of life. After World War I, William Jennings Bryan, former Democratic Party presidential candidate and secretary of state under Woodrow Wilson, emerged as a fundamentalist leader and crusader against evolution. Touring southern and midwestern states, he spoke fervently for the passage of anti-evolutionary laws, and two states, Florida (1924) and Tennessee (1925), passed statutes prohibiting the teaching of Darwinism. The Tennessee law (the Butler Act, which proscribed teaching evolutionary theory in any state-supported educational institution) provided the pretext for the famous trial in Dayton, Tennessee, during the summer of 1925. The American Civil Liberties Union provoked the case to test the law in the Supreme Court.

The trial itself garnered a huge amount of attention and notoriety, and Bryan attracted both criticism and mockery for his rambling testimony as an expert prosecution witness on the Bible. The defendant, John Scopes, a local biology teacher, was convicted and fined. The case was later thrown out on appeal to the Tennessee Supreme Court because of a technicality, and the law remained in force. Indeed, throughout the nation, despite vociferous urban attacks on

“naive” rural religion, the teaching of evolutionary biology diminished in the public schools. Few textbooks published before the 1960s even bothered to mention the ideas of Darwin.

Following World War II, there were two significant developments in the relationship between American religion and science. In 1950, Pope Pius XII issued an edict, *Humani Generis*, which carefully distinguished the inspired ideas of the Bible from modern science and rejected any compulsory belief in the literal story of creation. For many Protestant fundamentalists, however, the challenge of science was more threatening than ever; therefore, their strategy became more assertive. In fact, science was seen as so important—it had so captured the claim of truth—that a movement began among some Protestant evangelicals to develop their own scientific explanation for the divine origins of life. The result was creation science.

Based upon earlier works by George McCredy Price and others, creation science was codified in its modern form in 1961 in the work of Henry M. Morris and John C. Whitcomb, *The Genesis Flood*. This counter-narrative to evolutionary science proposed that the biblical chronicle of Noah’s flood could account for many of the observations upon which Darwinian science was based (fossils, extinct animals, and so on). Opponents of evolution began to press for equal time in biology classes to present the principles of creation science. Despite a 1987 Supreme Court decision in *Edwards v. Aguillard* describing creation science as religion and therefore inadmissible in the curricula of public schools in violation of church-state separation, agitation against evolutionary theory has continued. The educational issue has by no means been completely settled. For example, in 1999 the Kansas State Board of Education voted to drop any mention of evolution from its science curriculum standards, ruling that evolutionary science could be taught in schools but would not be a mandatory element in statewide testing. Overturned the following year, the prohibition suggests that the argument will continue.

More practical issues of growing importance related to technical applications of science. In this realm, technology has sometimes clashed with ethics and moral precepts derived from religion. Technology and ethics represent the practical applications of science and religion, respectively, and are central to the large philo-

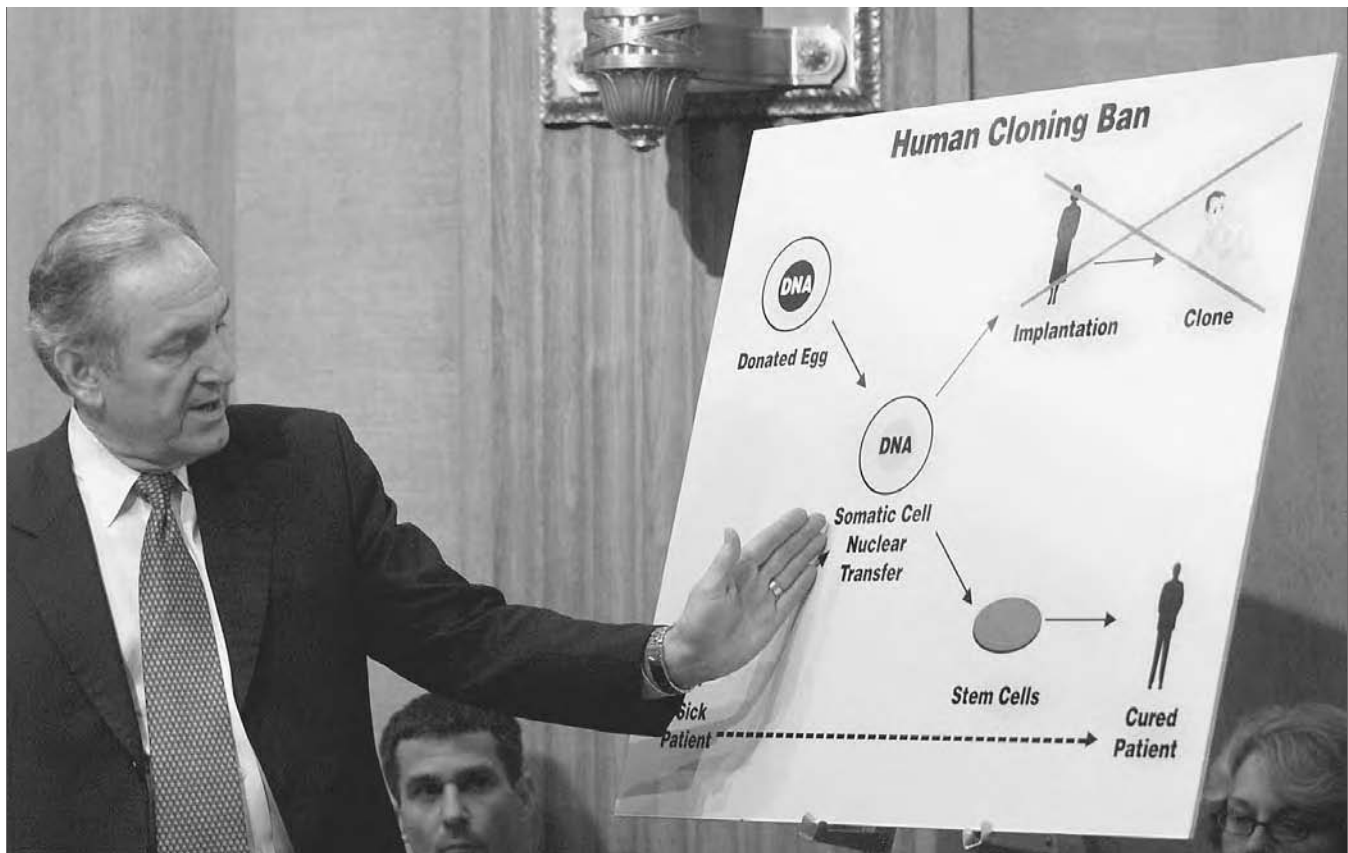
sophical issues at contention between religion and science. Three areas in particular have attracted considerable debate: the environment, society, and human life.

With ideas shaped by a long history of nineteenth-century pantheism and the celebration of God’s presence in nature, many twentieth-century Americans developed an environmentalism that rejected unregulated human intervention into nature—a kind of holism that mingled religious insights with notions of biological interrelatedness and connection. A popular-culture expression of these ideas pervaded science-fiction films of the mid-1950s that fused stories of the wanton use of atomic energy, and of the perverted evolution of monsters (usually from harmless insects), into narratives of the apocalypse. Much more serious versions of holism stressed the sanctity of nature and the subordinate place of humankind within a larger, interrelated scheme of life, and this belief gave rise to a spiritualized version of environmentalism.

The most acrimonious issue between science, religion, technology, and ethics has reflected the continuing struggle to define the nature of human life—when, where, and how it begins and ends. For example, the development of modern contraceptive devices and safe and efficient abortion procedures has made possible the prevention and easy termination of pregnancy. The Catholic Church has remained unalterably opposed to both contraception and abortion based upon its contention that the existence of the soul begins with the inception of human life. Many Protestant Fundamentalists have agreed with this interpretation, at least as far as abortion is concerned, and working together, both groups have made the issue an immensely significant and divisive political one. Other religious groups reject the stringency of this definition of life. And many scientists and doctors define life in other terms entirely, such as the viability of the fetus outside the womb. In this respect, modern medicine and science have exacerbated divisions among American religious groups and between religion and science.

Other crucial issues revolve around the definition of human life. As science, and, in particular, genetics, discover more about each stage in the development of human life, it becomes possible to intervene and change the natural course of events in new ways. Two important, related issues have developed that demand





U.S. Senator Tom Harkin points to a graph showing the two directions cloning a human tissue can go, during a hearing on Capitol Hill, 2001 (AFP/Corbis)

the commentary and cooperation of religion and science. These are cloning and the use of fetal tissue in research. Although the cloning of human beings has been rejected so far, one company, Clonaid, associated with a new religious movement called the Raëlians, claims to have successfully cloned humans outside of the United States. Most scientists, ethicists, and spokespeople from traditional religious groups have denounced Clonaid's experiments because of the high rate of birth defects among cloned animals. However, the prohibition against cloning in the United States may not always remain in force, particularly if it becomes possible to easily grow "spare parts" of the body in other animals. Related to this controversy is the increasing likelihood of genetic testing and genetic manipulation in the human fertilization process. The use of fetal tissue in experiments is particularly controversial because of conflicting definitions of life. If the fetus, in whatever stage, is considered a human being, then any form of experimentation breaks the conventional prohibition against

experimenting on living humans. If not, then it can be construed as acceptable.

During the twentieth century in America, despite the Scopes trial and acrimonious disputes over abortion, the relationship between science and religion in other areas has been largely uncontroversial and even cooperative. Although a lower percentage of scientists practice religion when compared to the general population, there have been important organizations developed to link these two segments of human endeavor. Among the most important of these was the ongoing Conference on Science, Philosophy, and Religion, founded in 1939 and continuing until 1968. Other organizations, such as the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science, founded in 1954, are devoted to reconciling science and religion at a theoretical level.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century there has also been an important and growing dialogue between social science and religion, resulting in the establishment of specifically Protestant and Catholic organizations devoted to bringing the insights of reli-

gion into sociology and psychology—and vice versa: for example, the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (1949), the Religious Research Association (1952), and the American Catholic Psychological Association (1948).

Cooperative efforts have also led to an important and growing literature dealing with the science of cosmology and the exploration of the origins of the universe and life. In this field, the works of Catholic theologian Teilhard de Chardin are particularly significant, but there are also important contributions from Protestant theologians and scientists, such as Ian Barbour. All of these works aim to reconcile the modern science of the origins of the universe with some form of theistic intent.

The long, complex, and sometimes contentious relationship between religion and science shows no signs of diminishing in importance, nor has the energy applied to issues that continue between the two diminished. What has changed, however, is the growing historical literature describing this relationship, and with this increased awareness and understanding there has developed a revision of stereotypes. Careful exploration of what scientists and religious thinkers said and believed has revealed a complex and fascinating cultural exchange for the most part, and not a long, protracted warfare.

Within the framework established in the colonial period, guided by the constitutional separation of church and state, this ongoing relationship has been a central element of American thought. It could probably not be otherwise in a civilization that has commit-

ted itself so thoroughly to scientific progress and yet has held tenaciously to religious belief.

—James Gilbert

#### SEE ALSO

Catholicism in America: Public Catholicism; New Age: Raëlian Movement; Protestantism in America; Protestantism in America: Puritanism; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Conservatism, Fundamentalism, Liberalism; Ritual and Performance: Childbirth; Sexuality: Abortion, Reproduction

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## EVOLUTION

The theory of biological evolution—itsself a theory in flux—is probably the single most influential paradigm change of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, having important consequences for our understanding of God, providence, culture, and human purpose. In Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*, first published in 1859, careful observation and convincing theoretical reflection combined to give enormous credence to ideas about evolution already suggested by other Victorian thinkers, especially Alfred Russel Wallace. In America, thinking about evolution has produced ongoing conflict in church, schools, and politics as well as dialogue with religious understandings of the world. But 150 years after Darwin first proposed natural selection, a large minority of the American public quietly dissents from belief in one of the central scientific theories of the age.

### Charles Darwin

Charles Darwin, born into English middle-class comfort and a distinguished family, had been educated in science, medicine, theology, and politics, and possessed skills and experience in the arts of observation and collection of specimens, when he was chosen serendipitously to be the gentleman companion—and later naturalist—to Captain Fitzroy on the around-the-world voyage of the *Beagle*. Darwin used the term “natural selection” to refer to the biological law by which species are formed and change. Morphological variation is introduced into a population from a combination of novelty resulting from sexual reproduction together with competition for survival in a sometimes rapidly changing natural environment. Isolation of a portion of the population then prevents genetic flow and brings about speciation. Gregor Mendel's genetics explained sexual reproduction and added substantially to the power and precision of evolutionary theory. Carbon dating and astronomy point to the billions of years in which slow changes have occurred. This neo-Darwinian synthesis, together with ongoing minor adjustments—sexual selection, group selection, and genetic drift—has become the reigning paradigm in biological science for much of the twentieth century.

### Social and Religious Implications

This paradigm shift has had far-reaching effects on social and religious life in America and around the world. It was difficult for the English of the Victorian middle class—as it is for many Americans today—to imagine they had descended from apelike creatures. Thus a huge psychological and sociological transformation has occurred and is still occurring in humanity's self-image. Social Darwinism, encapsulated in Herbert Spencer's term “survival of the fittest,” has been used not just as a description of how life and complexity emerged but to justify eugenics programs in many developed parts of the world throughout the



A caricature showing Charles Darwin as a monkey hanging from the Tree of Science, 1871  
(Library of Congress)

twentieth century. The values of eugenics and those of Christianity are very easily seen to be in conflict, and this, among many other reasons, has brought evolutionary theory and religious belief into conflict.

But evolutionary theory has been most controversial in its apparent challenge of the Genesis account of meaning and origins. Although many ancient theological voices, such as St. Augustine, spoke in vaguely evolutionary terms, the nineteenth century had developed an uncommonly literalist understanding of Genesis. Early on, religious and scientific thinkers reacted to this conflict in several different ways.

### Theistic Evolution

Some nineteenth-century thinkers, ignoring problems of origins and the mechanisms of evolution, saw the potential for merging evolutionary and religious ideas into a new and inspiring evolutionary synthesis. In America, the eminent biologist Asa Gray and theologians Benjamin B. Warfield and A. H. Strong were among those who embraced Darwinian ideas. This synthesis, often known as theistic evolution, came most easily in the twentieth century to liberals or modernist Roman Catholics, for whom the expressive and affective aspects of Christian faith were predominant. Jesuit paleontologist Teilhard de Chardin, an important mid-twentieth-century thinker, anticipated later process models of evolutionary progression.

### Conflict

For those in the reformed/evangelical tradition, scriptural authority has at times been the primary article of faith. Thus, how to reconcile evolutionary theory with God's goodness and intentionality, as portrayed by Genesis, was problematic even for nonliteralists.

Conflict escalated in the 1920s when states began to legislate against the new evolutionary school curriculum, and to this day the battle lines have been drawn in American public schools. Underlying these battles is the assumption that evolution and religion are in conflict. The Scopes trial, memorialized in the movie *Inherit the Wind* (1960), in which the American Civil Liberties Union provoked a case by co-opting John Scopes to admit he had once taught evolution, brought two colorful and charismatic legal advocates—Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan—to the

small town of Dayton, Tennessee, to participate in one of the most infamous of all trials in history.

Adding to this conflict were those scientists and free thinkers who could see clearly that an alternative explanation for origins emancipated them from a religious foundation for meaning or existence. By the end of the twentieth century, other well-known Darwinians, such as Stephen J. Gould, Michael Ruse, and Richard Dawkins, among others, had publicly aired their biologically informed religious skepticism, deeply influencing American culture.

### Creation Science

Creation science, a widespread movement, has its roots in Seventh-day Adventism but underwent a revival in the 1960s and 1970s under Henry M. Morris, a Baptist engineer and cofounder of the Institute for Creation Science. This institute and other creation-science organizations are dedicated to proving that the earth is very young, that evolution is no more than a conjecture, and that, far from evolving from lower creatures, humans have “fallen” from the higher perfection of the Garden of Eden as portrayed in Genesis. Today, many fundamentalist Christians in the United States are opting out of the conflict by homeschooling their children, in large part so they can teach them science and other subjects in ways that do not conflict with their own religious beliefs. They are typically especially opposed to the teaching of evolutionary biology in the public schools.

### Process Theology

Another movement, equally quintessentially American, has more quietly led in quite the opposite direction. Its foremost proponents have been Charles Birch (1918– ), an Australian biologist, and Charles Hartshorne (1897–2000), a philosopher at Chicago University, who adapted the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947), a British philosopher. In this paradigm, divine and human elements are portrayed as connected in an evolutionary pantheistic manner. Biologists who could not accept natural selection as a sufficient explanation of all that was going on in evolution, but who nevertheless accepted the overall evolutionary paradigm, embraced process philosophy because it accommodated well the

new biological, quantum, and astronomical models of reality in which flux, interconnection, and uncertainty had replaced the Newtonian mechanistic models of the real world.

The Center for Process Studies in Claremont, California, is leading one of the most fruitful movements in American theology today. Biologists, feminists, and ecologists find in it a paradigm that embraces contemporary cosmology as well as the urgent theodicy problems the twentieth century has realized, emphasizing, as it does, a less than radical transcendence of God, a future that is open to God as it is to the creation, and a God who lures but does not coerce sentient life of all levels and forms. Even reformed evangelical Christians such as Clark Pinnock of Canada have been engaging process theology and embracing, to some extent, its primary intuition, that some vitality imbues the whole evolutionary/creative natural world and that God's sovereignty is played out in weakness and self-giving.

### Non-Darwinian Models of Evolution

Although theology has changed forever under the influence of Darwin, the late twentieth century has also seen increasing changes in the theory of evolution itself, partly resulting from scientists' new understanding of the genome. In Stephen J. Gould's well-known theory of punctuated equilibrium, evolution happens in spurts, not incrementally, as Darwin suggested. Thus, evolution may not be an inevitable necessary process but one that reacts to changes in environment, such as those brought about by ice ages or extinctions. Other thinkers, such as the molecular biologist Francois Jacob, have argued that genes in themselves shape the environment in which they emerge. Thus, theorists are carefully acknowledging the "creative" force in evolution while attempting to deny the obvious vitalistic repercussions of such an idea. Non-Darwinian evolution is in some measure a movement away from the materialism inherent in Darwinism. These theories have little impact, however, on a culture that is partly in denial over evolution itself.

### Intelligent Design Movement

At the same time, intelligent design theory, a new critique of Darwinism, has been on the American scene

since the mid-1980s, though its proponents may be engaged in battle with older, more mechanistic forms of evolution than are now emerging. This theory—explicated by such authors as Michael Behe, who wrote *Darwin's Black Box* (1997), and William Dembski, with *Intelligent Design* (1999)—has emphasized levels of interlocking or "irreducible" complexity in the biochemistry of living organisms in mechanisms such as the clotting of blood. Scientists have discredited some of the claims made by intelligent design theorists—that complexity could not have evolved by slow mechanisms, for example—but they have not removed the suspicion that evolution, and in fact life itself, are a vital and teleological force with a character somewhat different from that envisaged by traditional neo-Darwinian mechanisms. Intelligent design raises many important issues that are not easily answered, and in the early years of the new millennium it has become a political movement fighting for space in the American school curriculum, thus obscuring somewhat whatever intellectual validity it may have.

—Nicola Hoggard Creegan

### SEE ALSO

New Religious Traditions: Seventh-Day Adventism; Protestantism in America; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Conservatism, Feminism, Liberalism

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## HEALING

Healing is a process of restoring a person and/or group to wholeness and well-being and relates to the experience and outcome of that effort and its effects. Healing permeates virtually every religious culture and can occur within and outside of conventional religious boundaries. In some cases, it means “curing,” the elimination of symptoms; it can also refer to other kinds of meaningful change.

### A Brief History

Throughout the history of the United States, multiple approaches to healing have coexisted. Their relationship to each other has often been conflictual, with each approach asserting its superiority over the others. Some practices, such as the medical use of mercury, have disappeared; others have faded from view to resurface at a later date, such as the therapeutic application of magnets. Although medical histories often suggest that biomedicine won out over other systems, in reality pluralism has always characterized healing in the United States.

Healing was integral to Native American religious cultures prior to the arrival of European immigrants. Europeans brought herbal medicine, surgery, astrology, alchemy, and other versions of religious healing. It was not uncommon for Christian ministers to practice medicine or to write medical manuals. Under the influence of the Enlightenment, the divide between “medicine” and “religion” became more pronounced, with the two represented as distinct domains. During the nineteenth century, however, reform movements often intersected with healing movements aimed not only at the individual but also at the social body (for example, in Spiritualism, Seventh-day Adventism, the New Thought movement, and Christian Science). Each successive immigrant group has brought its own approaches to healing with it.

During the last third of the twentieth century, twelve-step programs based on Alcoholics Anonymous contributed to a generic understanding of personal “spirituality” and healing, albeit in a group context. During the 1970s, other factors converged: a growing dissatisfaction with biomedical resources; feminist and patients’ rights movements that chal-

lenged biomedical authority; the questioning and sometimes rejection of mainline religious traditions; exposure to other religious cultures; the questioning of the role of the United States in the world; the presence of new immigrant groups, some of whose traditional healers were now present in the United States; the flourishing of the New Age, with its emphasis on “body, mind, and spirit”; and life-threatening diseases such as HIV/AIDS that have not lent themselves to biomedical cure.

### Religious Cultures and Healing

The subject of healing may be explored within particular religious cultures or cross-culturally through the selection of different themes. For example, from the beginnings of the Buddhist community, medicine has been a key practice of compassion. The Buddha himself was the medicine against suffering, sometimes represented as “the Medicine Buddha.” The best-known version of this tradition in the United States is Tibetan medicine, which combines the use of herbs with ritual practice.

In Roman Catholicism, Christ is the physician who heals the effects of human sin. Church rituals include anointing the sick with oil and, on some occasions, exorcising demons, based on the example of Jesus in the Christian Gospels. Saints—the holy dead—are considered intercessors to whom the faithful can appeal for healing. Older Italian immigrant communities in Boston celebrate saints’ feast days with processions in the streets—honoring Saint Lucia for her help with eye afflictions and Saints Cosmos and Damian for their intercession regarding more general health problems. New Orleans has a shrine to Saint Roch, protector from plagues, erected by the German community in the nineteenth century, and St. Jude’s mortuary chapel, with its grotto dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Voodoo practitioners often draw from the tank of holy water at this site for use at their own altars. In New Mexico, the church at Chimayo has grown up around a small well of dirt where a figure of the infant Jesus was found. The dirt is thought to have healing powers. Plaques and objects testifying to particular healings crowd the walls in each of these shrines.



An Indian patient in a sweat bath, with healers, 1904 (Library of Congress)

For Orthodox Christians, icons can heal. The icon of the Virgin in Chicago, for example, is said to weep oil possessing therapeutic properties. For Protestant Christians, the transmission of healing power may be associated with the charismatic infusion of the Holy Spirit, whether transmitted through prayer services or by individual faith healers. New religious traditions such as Christian Science are predicated on the conviction that anyone can be healed through right understanding of divine Mind.

Some Jewish congregations have dedicated renewed attention to the Mishabarik section of the weekly Torah service, offering prayers for those who are ill. Visiting the sick is a religious obligation in Judaism, and Halakhah, the laws of religious observance, have long governed medical practice among some Jewish physicians. More recently, groups of Jewish women have developed new healing services.

The practice of medicine and the founding of hospitals represent ongoing aspects in the greater Muslim

tradition, just as scientific investigation has been interpreted as the study of God's creation. The healing practices of American Muslims depend on the individual group's cultural roots, whether African American, Bosnian, Middle Eastern, Somali, South Asian, or one of the other Muslim communities. The Ayurvedic tradition that emerged within Hinduism has come to the United States, as has the Hindu practice of pilgrimage to holy sites. The landscape of the country is now punctuated with Hindu shrines, some visited in the pursuit of healing.

Other racial and ethnic groups have enriched American society with their shamanic traditions. Many Native American tribes have kept alive their traditions of giving important and active roles to medicine men and women. More recent versions of shamanism have entered the country with groups like the Hmong. African diaspora communities include healing practices related to Christian churches, Islam, Vodou Santería, Candomblé, and other African tradi-

tions, such as Ifá. Some of these traditions intersect those of African-descended Latino communities from Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Santo Domingo. Other Latino communities, including Mexican Americans and Central and South American groups, may turn, instead, to healing practices representing intersections between Christianity and Native American traditions, including *curanderismo* and shamanism.

The Chinese American community has introduced techniques associated with cultivation of longevity (*qi gong* and *tai ji*); practices to protect a city from harmful influences through the annual Lion Dance; *feng-shui*, originally related to the correct alignment of graves to ensure the peaceful state of the dead; and the use of herbs and acupuncture growing out of an understanding of the body as a complex of *qi*, or energy.

Many of these traditions recognize that the dead can cause illness if not properly acknowledged. The maintenance of right relationship may include the ancestor veneration historically a part of Chinese tradition as well as the Mexican Days of the Dead.

### Biomedicine

“Science” is a fluid term, whose meaning shifts over time. In the United States, it has been employed to legitimize different healing practices, as in the term “Christian Science.” The medicine now most widely recognized as “scientific,” however, is biomedicine, the biologically based medicine related to the anatomical understanding of the body. A cultural form in its own right, biomedicine currently exists in six key relationships with versions of healing in religious cultures.

First, religious healing may be seen as a domain to be excluded from biomedical interventions. This view sees religion, prayer, and faith as largely irrelevant to medicine. Second, religion may govern patient choices for or against biomedical therapies. Jehovah’s Witnesses, for example, reject blood transfusions, and Christian Scientists often refuse biomedical interventions.

Third, New Age influences have contributed to popular interest in mind/body medicine. Some physicians have measured the effects of prayer and meditation on the brain and other physical systems. Others have applied the biomedical gold standard—the randomized, double-blind, controlled clinical trial—to study health outcomes claimed to result from prayer.

Based on their data, some have supported physicians praying with patients or suggesting prayer. Other physicians and chaplains have questioned the scientific validity of the studies and the lack of physician training in spiritual counseling.

Fourth, approximately one-third of the U.S. population uses complementary or alternative medicine (CAM) in addition to or instead of biomedicine. The biomedical community has grown increasingly interested in understanding the epidemiology and efficacy of these therapies. CAM often incorporates prayer or spiritual healing into the medical process.

Fifth, the biomedical community has also become aware of the effects of cultural pluralism in the United States and the need for caregivers to respond to diverse patient populations. Under the heading of “cultural competence,” biomedical clinicians are starting to learn about different cultural communities’ approaches to healing. The greatest challenge lies in developing an integrative understanding that joins issues of cultural difference, religious worldviews, and culturally and religiously grounded versions of CAM. The specific relationship between these variables can shape how a patient or family responds to biomedical options.

Sixth, because biomedicine is the dominant system in America today, all other healing traditions are under pressure to define themselves in relation to it. This influence has led some traditions to try to appear more “scientific.” The version of “traditional Chinese medicine” promoted in the People’s Republic of China, and exported to the United States, is one example. Practitioners of Tibetan medicine in the United States are beginning to follow suit. In each case, tensions arise regarding the integrity of the tradition and what it must do to be taken seriously in the healing landscape of America.

—Linda L. Barnes

### SEE ALSO

African American Religions: African-Derived American Religions; Asian American Religious Communities: Chinese American Religious Communities; Buddhism in America; Hinduism in America; Islam in America; Judaism in America; Native American Religions and Politics: Shamanism; New Religious Traditions: Christian Science; Orthodox Christianity; Protestantism in America; The Body: Asian Body Practices; Death; Ritual and Performance: Therapy and Healing; Sacred Space: Shrines



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## HUMAN GENOME PROJECT

The Human Genome Project refers to the international project to determine and analyze the sequence of the approximately 3 billion DNA base-pairs and tens of thousands of genes in the human genome. The DNA sequence was completed in 2001; the analysis will continue for decades. The implications of the Human Genome Project (HGP) analysis raise vital philosophical, social, ethical, legal, and religious issues. Who owns genetic information, and who should have access to it? What are the implications of knowing someone's "genetic future"? When is the line crossed between healing and "playing God"? Genes have taken on cultural meaning beyond that in science and health, and the HGP has made and will continue to make a significant contribution to this meaning. Are behavior, diseases, and fate determined merely by our genes? Questions and implications of the HGP resonate at every level of society. The answers that scientists, theologians, ethicists, politicians, and others develop to these questions will affect all Americans as well as future generations around the world.

A genome is the total genetic material of an organism. Each cell in every organism contains the entire genome of that organism. In a complex and coordinated manner, different genes of the genome are turned on or off at different times in the organism's lifetime, resulting in maturing, functioning organisms of all types. Most of the DNA of the human genome does not encode genes but serves as yet unknown functions—which it is hoped the HGP will help scientists to understand. The complete list of human DNA sequences is a tool that is helping to lay a foundation

for exploration. It is analogous to a book listing the names and addresses of every person in China. Although an impressive feat, it would tell us little about the nation of China.

Having a full list of the genes in the human genome does make it easier to find and analyze genes, however. Ideally, once a gene has been identified, scientists can (1) determine the altered version(s) of that gene that can result in an abnormality or disease, (2) design tests to see if one carries that mutation, (3) offer counseling and prevention strategies, (4) treat or cure the disease. This ideal has rarely been fulfilled because of the complexity of the biology and ethical considerations involved.

This process is more complex than many people realize. Most diseases do not result from changes in only one gene. Those that do, such as sickle cell anemia, the first genetically based disease to be identified, are the exception rather than the rule. Even in the few cases involving just one gene, different changes in the same gene may result in varying degrees of the disease. Biological complexity is especially evident in behavioral genetics. One or even a few genes rarely determine a behavior. Despite early hopes and claims to the contrary, there is no such thing as a "depression gene" or a "homosexuality gene." Even if a behavior or trait can be related to one or more genes, the crucial role of the environment acting in concert with these genes must be considered. The seductive but incorrect idea that life is reducible to genes, that the genes hold all the answers and are somehow sacred, is reinforced by such comments as those made by Nobel Laureate James Watson—"Our fate is in our genes"—



A technician inspects part of the library of human DNA amassed by the Human Genome Mapping Project, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1994 (Roger Ressemeyer/Corbis)

and President Clinton upon the completion of the HGP—“Today, we are learning the language in which God created life.” Shades of this view of “the omnipotent gene” and associated social implications are also seen in the controversies surrounding the role of genes in determining race, intelligence, athleticism, and criminal behavior.

An example of the intimate collaboration between genes and the environment is found in our brains, which were once thought to be “hard-wired.” Instead, although genes do encode the nerves and other “supplies” that brains need to develop, the environment in large part determines which and how many neural connections are made. If a baby does not use one eye during a certain window of development, for example, nerve connections are not made between that eye and the brain. The more environmental stimulation humans (or even rats) get as they mature, the

“smarter” they become. Molding of these gene-encoded supplies by the environment does not stop in adulthood. Stroke victims often lose movement or speech, but after a time, they can at least partially recover those faculties because preexisting nerves re-portion their connections. In one case, a blind woman, whose job involved translating written words into Braille, suffered a stroke. The only brain damage was in the part of her brain responsible for vision; therefore, it was assumed she would have no significant additional deficits. Upon returning to work, however, she was unable to type Braille—she had lost her sense of touch. Growing up as a blind person, her nervous system had recruited the nerves and brain space usually used for seeing to use instead for touch. Such complexity and environment-dependent flexibility in behavior, disease, and other traits mean that often there is not a direct link between what the DNA says and what we experience. Thus, molecular diagnosis often can only determine *the chance* that having a certain gene type will have a particular result.

The ideal of finding a gene and eventually using that discovery to develop a cure is also greatly complicated by ethical and religious considerations. When the HGP was organized, a percentage of funding was allocated for discussion and scholarship in the ethical, legal, and social implications (ELSI) of the project. Many of the questions raised by ELSI and others apply to vastly different diseases and other genetic problems.

Huntington’s Disease (HD) is a good example of a disease that raises many of the issues common in genetic research. The nervous system of someone with HD slowly degenerates, leading to madness and death. Symptoms are usually not apparent until mid-life after the childbearing years. HD is unusual in that having even one copy of the mutant gene (we have two copies of every gene, one from each of our parents) results in disease. After a heroic effort involving many years and millions of dollars (this was before the days of the HGP, which now facilitates such searches), the “HD gene” was discovered. Nancy Wexler, who has the disease in her family, led the drive to discover the gene; however, when it was found, the immensity of the achievement and the problematic questions it raised hit her. Should she herself have the diagnostic test that her research had made possible? What if she found she had the mutant

gene? How would this knowledge affect her and her family? Who should pay for her diagnostic test and genetic counseling (a nonexistent field at the time)? Would insurance continue to cover her if the test was positive? Should her children be tested (if she had the mutant gene, there would be a 50 percent chance for each child to have it)? Should she consult her children before taking the test? Were the resources required to identify the gene worth it? Dr. Wexler told the story of one young man who, thinking he had the disease, lived a life of risk-taking and short-term relationships. After taking the test and discovering he did not have the mutant gene, he lost a main foundation of his identity (Wexler 1996).

Societal, ethical, and religious questions do not stop there. Most religious traditions stress the healing of body and soul as central tenets. But when does healing become interfering with God's plan? If the HD gene is in someone's family, whether or not that individual decides to get tested for it, should he have children? Should he get tested if he is going to have children? Should he and his wife have the fetus tested? What if the fetus carries HD? To avoid the issue of abortion, and if the parents have the significant funds required, it is possible to have in-vitro fertilization (combining sperm and egg in a test tube) performed, followed by selection of fertilized eggs that do not contain the HD gene. Such eggs can then be implanted in the mother, virtually guaranteeing that the child will not have the disease. Should couples invest in this procedure?

Perhaps a cure will be found in the forty years before a child with HD will have symptoms. Although gene therapy has not yet been effective, it is a best hope to cure such diseases. Gene therapy involves replacing the "bad" gene with a normal version. In addition to the ethical questions this possibility raises, biological complexity again comes into play. Although adding or changing genes may cure a disease, what will be the effect of introducing a new version of a gene on other traits? Does gene therapy step over the line from healing to playing God? If not, who

pays for this extremely expensive procedure? Should such a cure be employed only for fatal diseases? Adding or altering genes to cure diseases opens the door to changing genes for other reasons—besides, different cultures at different times in history define various traits as "abnormal" or "diseased" in different ways. Eugenics, using genetics to "improve" humans, was generally looked upon favorably until the rise of Adolf Hitler.

The Human Genome Project has woven religious, ethical, and scientific threads into the evolving fabric of how genes and genetics are understood in American culture. This is only the tip of the iceberg—the coming years hold unimaginable discoveries, possibilities, and implications.

—Arri Eisen

#### SEE ALSO

Death: Euthanasia; Sexuality: Abortion

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## SCIENCE FICTION

Science fiction is a genre of literature and popular culture that features scientific concepts, advanced technology, and radical displacement from the “present ordinary.” Most works employ some imaginative extrapolation or enhancement of the scientific ideas and technologies that exist at the time of their composition. Typical motifs include space exploration, time travel, alien life-forms, utopian/dystopian societies, monsters, and robots. Significant precursors to science fiction can be found in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writings of European intellectuals such as Johannes Kepler, Cyrano de Bergerac, and Voltaire, who imagined fictional journeys to the moon and other planets. In the nineteenth century, novels such as Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1817), Jules Verne’s *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1864) and *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* (1870), Mark Twain’s *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* (1889), and most especially, H. G. Wells’s *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), *The Invisible Man* (1896), and *The War of the Worlds* (1898) did much to establish the viability of the genre.

The term “science fiction” itself, however, only came into widespread usage during the 1920s and 1930s in association with various short-form fiction “pulp” magazines such as *Amazing Stories* (founded 1926) and *Astounding Science Fiction* (founded 1930) and films such as Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927). In spite of early critical disdain as escapist fantasy, science fiction grew steadily in popularity over the course of the twentieth century. Since the 1930s, it has gained a measure of intellectual prestige as more sophisticated authors, including Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, Ursula Le Guin, Frank Herbert, and Philip K. Dick, as well as filmmakers such as Stanley Kubrick, have used the genre to address broader social, political, and psychological topics. Today, science fiction is an extremely diversified staple of popular culture that encompasses novels, short stories, films, television programs, the visual arts, and interactive computer games.

### Reading Science Fiction: Secularization and Religious Creativity

Many critics of science fiction regard it as a thoroughly secularized form of popular entertainment. By and large, its production and consumption have no necessary connections to organized religion. It tends to de-emphasize supernaturalism, magic, and the miraculous in favor of scientific know-how and technological ability. Even the fantastic elements that are included tend to be rendered in naturalistic ways—for example, motifs such as monsters, intelligent robots, or space travel are often “explained” by invoking advanced or unknown forms of science. Finally, many prominent authors, notably Wells and Asimov, pointedly criticized conventional religion in their works.

Read selectively, however, science fiction can be understood as an artistic and literary genre that draws inspiration from religious sources. For example, many science-fiction works seem to be modeled on earlier forms of religious narrative—especially the epic, the messianic, the apocalyptic, and the morality tale. At a more “nuts and bolts” level, many authors, filmmakers, artists, and game designers freely use sacred symbols, heroic models, archetypes, ritual forms, and other motifs derived from traditional religions in their works. Typically, they adapt and transform these religious elements by placing them into futuristic, otherworldly, or otherwise fantastic contexts. Furthermore, over time science fiction has generated its own set of familiar motifs and conventions (the laboratory, the mad inventor, the spaceship, the city of the future, and so on) that are used to explore the cultural meaning and ambivalent social role of science and technology.

Thus, science fiction might be compared to religion at the level of narrative structures and symbolic forms that are used by “insiders” to interpret and otherwise negotiate with the world at large. As with traditional religion, science fiction can be a source of cosmological interpretation, moral guidance, prophetic urgency, and pointed social criticism. Likewise, many of the

critical perspectives that have been developed to analyze religion—as ideology, as the collective representation of basic values, as an agent of personal or social change, as an expression of unconscious fears and desires, and the like—may be brought to bear on the analysis of science fiction.

### Key Genres: The Messianic and the Apocalyptic

Charismatic messianic heroes and catastrophic end-of-the-world scenarios have figured prominently in science-fiction novels and films for much of the twentieth century. Arguably, many of these works are patterned on biblical traditions, even though the characters, plots, and settings are far removed from those found in the scriptural traditions. For example, in the film *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), the alien “Klaatu” performs many of the activities associated with Jesus in the Gospels. He visits earth from “on high” (arriving in a flying saucer), delivers a prophetic message of peace and cooperation, encounters widespread misunderstanding and resistance, performs miraculous deeds, and, finally, dies unjustly only to be resurrected (by advanced technology). Throughout, Klaatu is assisted not by angels or disciples but by a robot named “Gort.” At the end of the film, Klaatu reveals that Gort will totally annihilate humanity if it does not develop nonviolent forms of conflict resolution. The film thus serves as a modernized apocalyptic story—an extraordinary “outsider” reveals to an anxious society the possibility of its own imminent destruction if its present course is not changed.

*The Day the Earth Stood Still* serves as an example of religious creativity within the science-fiction genre in at least two ways. First, its creators revamped elements of an established religion (Christianity) using scientific themes (both real and imagined) to address one of the central political issues of their era—international cooperation in the midst of atomic weaponry. Second, in Gort, the film presents a compelling symbol of the postwar ambivalence about technology that resonates with many of the classic attributes of the “sacred” or “holy.” In some scenes, the robot is depicted as fascinating, awe-inspiring, powerful, indestructible, and capable of astounding feats. In others, he is eerily silent, inhuman, terrifying, intimidating, and capable of swift and horrible retaliation. Viewed as a religious allegory, ultimately Gort assumes the

role of a God that transcends and judges an unruly humanity. Viewed as geopolitical allegory, Gort prophetically anticipates the policy of “mutually assured destruction” that would emerge during the Cold War.

Other works of science fiction are notable for their incorporation of eclectic religious and intellectual source materials. For example, Frank Herbert’s novel *Dune* (1963) traces the adventures of a young nobleman, Paul Atreides, on a fictional planet reminiscent of the Middle East in terms of its harsh arid climate and varied religion. Paul eventually fulfills messianic expectations by conquering a corrupt emperor, along the way mastering religious traditions ranging from witchcraft to prophetic monotheism.

Similarly, the film *The Matrix* (1999) is a classic messianic narrative wherein a reluctant hero goes through various trials before “waking up” to his true destiny as a world-redeemer. The creators of the film wove together a loose Christian allegory (with characters representing Jesus, Mary Magdalene, John the Baptist, and Judas) with elements from classic Greek religion (the Delphic oracle), Eastern traditions (the phenomenal world as illusion, martial arts), and postmodern philosophy (Jean Baudrillard).

Apocalyptic and postapocalyptic works of science fiction have been among the most popular in recent decades. Numerous films, novels, and computer games explore the possibility that natural disasters, technological breakdowns, nuclear war, and worldwide epidemics might end history as we know it. Many of these works have strong thematic connections with biblical apocalyptic literature (Daniel, Revelation) in that they emphasize prophecy, large-scale catastrophes, social and political strife, messianic figures, and various forms of dualism (moral, cosmological, historical). Among the widely admired novels of the postapocalyptic subgenre is Walter Miller’s *A Canticle for Liebowitz* (1960). The story recounts the struggles of the “Monks of the Holy Order of Saint Liebowitz,” who live in a world that has been largely destroyed by a nuclear war. In hopes of sparking a spiritual and intellectual renewal, the monks labor to retrieve and preserve the few scraps of literature, science, and technological know-how that survive. Later works, such as the popular *Mad Max* and *Terminator* films, are less explicitly religious but share a similar interest in making critical commentary on the mis-

direction of the present day by showing a future gone awry.

Many works of apocalyptic science fiction depart from the fatalism of biblical tradition in that they stress that the imminent disaster might be tempered or even averted by human initiative. These works remain apocalyptic in a formal sense in that they include a revelatory component. Usually the main character is spurred to action by a message that comes from outside of his or her present circumstances (from aliens, through time travel or visions, and the like). Also, akin to biblical patterns, authorities usually ignore, reject, or resist the “prophecy” and inhibit the spread of saving knowledge. Thus the task of salvation falls to the hero or heroine, typically with the assistance of colorful compatriots and sophisticated high-tech gadgetry. Numerous films fall into this category, including *War Games* (1983), *12 Monkeys* (1995), and *Armageddon* (1998).

### Fandom as Religious Phenomenon

A few prominent works of science fiction have themselves become “religions” in that they serve as the basis for the collective expression of the ideals and hopes of dedicated fans. For these “faithful,” science fiction takes on social and ideological functions typically associated with religious activity—for example, the endorsement of novel forms of social organization or the legitimization of activities that require substantial social resources and commitment. Probably the best example of this phenomenon is the enormously successful *Star Trek* television series. To date, this franchise has generated hundreds of episodes and thousands of characters, rivaling the content of great religious epics. Furthermore, in spite of the professed humanism of its creator, Gene Roddenberry, *Star Trek* has generated fan support that resembles a religious movement. Loyal “Trekkies” can cite “chapter and verse” of the various episodes (sacred text), have regular conventions (mass ritual), trade in memorabilia (relics), form local chapters to “talk Trek” (discursive communities), and model their conduct on prominent characters (ethical code). With its emergence during the Apollo era and major revivals in the 1980s and 1990s, anecdotal evidence suggests that *Star Trek* has helped sustain public interest and political support for the American space program.

### Conclusion

The secularizing tendencies of science fiction, although certainly influential, must be weighed against the abundance of works where religious concerns are prominent. The explicit use of religious symbols and beliefs, and the more subtle imitation of religious characters and narrative forms, continue to be viable strategies for creative artists in the genre. Moreover, religiously informed science fiction is by no means marginal. Steven Spielberg’s *E.T.: The Extraterrestrial* (1982, rereleased 2002), among the most popular films in the history of cinema, echoes *The Day the Earth Stood Still* in its emphasis on messianic themes. Likewise, some of the most acclaimed science-fiction writing in recent decades, including Orson Scott Card’s *Ender* novels and Lois McMaster Bujold’s *Vorkosigan* novels, treat the religious dimensions of postapocalyptic and alternative universes. The success of these works demonstrates that science fiction remains a significant arena for the contemporary exploration of religious meaning and the extension of the mythic imagination. It also suggests that at the level of popular culture, the boundaries between the religious and the scientific—the sacred and the secular—remain unsettled.

—Lisle W. Dalton

#### SEE ALSO

Popular Culture: Film; Sacred Time: End Times; Violence: Apocalypticism

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## TECHNOLOGY

In the most general sense, technology is the making and using of artifacts, as Carl Mitcham has shown (1997). It is often understood as the practical application of scientific principles. Metaphorically, both religion and technology evoke emotions of awe, devotion, and omnipotence. Historically, religious faith, religious practices, and modern technologies evolved together. It is certainly important to consider the theological and ethical implications of specific technologies, especially in the realms of nuclear energy, weapons, and waste; in genetic engineering; and in biomedicine more generally, including reproductive technologies, abortion, and euthanasia. In addition, since the early twentieth century, information and communication technologies have functioned as a conduit for the dispersal of religion through radio, television, and the computer. Examination of these forms of technology helps in understanding the development of contemporary American and global cultures. From a more broadly philosophical view, the study of technology may be best described as a branch of moral philosophy. Technology in general and specific technologies in particular may be subjected to three types of philosophical analysis: (1) New technologies affect how people know, and thus, an epistemological analysis is useful; (2) they affect the understanding of selfhood and community, and an ontological analysis is vital for interpreting this process; and (3) technology affects the values on which social and religious life is based, and therefore, an axiological analysis is crucial.

Epistemology is the most fundamental of philosophical discourses. How do we know? What does it mean to know? Knowing is both a cognitive process linked to thinking and a visual process dependent upon thinking about what we see. Knowing is also intimately linked to sound, to silence and speech, to listening, and to physical embodiment. What does it mean to know when the technologies that produce information and knowledge are transformed? How does *information* differ from *ideas*? What are the differences between *data* and *information*, or between *knowledge* and *wisdom*? Which of these constitutes authentic knowing?

One might claim exultantly that because of the new

possibilities of interactivity and interactive media, the world is in a unique historical moment for wrestling with these questions. At their best, interactive media present opportunities for the viewer and user to make choices that alter their experience with the material and in the world. Where radio and television are essentially one-way conduits for religious expression, CD-ROMs offer minimally interactive choices that are analogous to reading from an anthology. Various forms of menu-driven hypermedia such as the World Wide Web offer more choices among links, but the viewer frequently remains a viewer and consumer, not a creator. Cyber-religion or online religion both challenges traditional definitions of religious practice and thought and offers another sphere for human creativity and interaction.

Regardless of the potential strengths of interactivity, one must ask whether new technologies actually offer viewers true opportunities for participation in creative processes or are merely new, highly touted forms of consumerism. Consumer values shape and even shroud engagement with technologies. Although television and the computer are becoming mildly interactive, they are also perhaps the most effective mode of managing attention that has yet been devised. The screen controls less through its visual content—although this is certainly significant—than through the medium itself. If television and computers have not yet become a mode of surveillance, they are already techniques of subjection for the new docile body who lives his or her life behind and through the screen. Sedentary anti-nomadic bodies are easier to control than peripatetic ones; sitting in front of television and computer monitors, people risk losing their autonomy. Viewers “interact” but do not actively engage.

In the contemporary world, where everything seems to be simultaneously interconnected and in flux, is it possible that the saturation of the senses with information and data not only cripples but also actually *cauterizes* the imagination? The image of cauterizing is vivid. Tissue is burned, seared, sealed off. If information saturation cauterizes the imagination, then religious people, and citizens in general, must pay attention to the dangers of data overload and the pleasures of electronic data manipulation.

Ontology raises questions about the nature of the self and the world. What is real? What is the relationship of actual phenomenological reality to virtual worlds? What is the nature of being itself in cyberspace? What is the self and what is it becoming? How are new technologies reshaping individual and communal identity? What does it mean to be embodied in the era of bionics, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality?

Electronic technologies challenge basic assumptions about the world, the self, and community. Some people worship and live their lives increasingly online. What happens to actual phenomenological reality—"nature"—when greater value, emphasis, and resources are placed on virtual life in cyberspace? In answering this question, we might heed the suggestion of early twentieth-century philosopher Herbert Read, who said that only those serving an apprenticeship to nature should be trusted with machines.

Just as the nature of "reality" is undergoing a shift, so traditional notions of selfhood and community are being challenged by electronic technologies. The self does not have a center but exists in different worlds and plays different roles simultaneously. In some cases, self boundaries are erased. The term "cyborg" is often used to name the ways in which the computer has transformed patterns of work and play as well as the bodily and social realities that shape human identity. From the most optimistic perspective, this model of the flexible self, characterized by open lines of communication among its parts, leads to a growing respect for diversity within the larger cultural milieu. Whether this theory is actually true remains to be seen.

Similarly, the nature of community is changing. Certainly, selves can exist in isolation; monastic solitude has played a profound role in the development of various religious traditions. This kind of isolation, however, was and is usually supported by a strong shared community ethos. Most selves do not thrive in isolation. Virtual communities may offer new avenues for understanding identity where the truly flexible and multiple self is called to new forms of moral interaction. But cyberspace is also, paradoxically, about separation. The mind is separated from the body. Participants in cyber-religion are physically separated from one another and are, in the end, separated from the nontechnological "natural" world. What, then,

does it mean to be connected to others? What are the ground rules that apply to these new relationships? Interactions in virtual communities are definitely significant, their consequences much greater than simply meaningless diversion or escape. Unfortunately, such virtual interactions may also satisfy the urge for connection without requiring the hard work of direct confrontation and action with or on behalf of others. Commonality of interests may substitute for shared long-term goals.

Axiology is the study and theory of values. In its most general sense, it addresses a range of questions. What action is right? How does obligation govern relationships among people? What is good? How does beauty intersect rightness and truth(s)? What is the role of the ugly? Where do we find or constitute the holy? What kind of ethical analysis will articulate the basis for both informed resistance to and informed engagement with new technologies? The technological imperative urges exploration of an idea or arena simply because it is possible, whereas the ethical imperative demands examination of whether the means and ends involved are ethically acceptable.

An axiological analysis of the present should include consideration of concepts such as industrialism, industrial and postindustrial capitalism, globalism and globalization, militarism, patriarchy, and anthropocentrism. Besides understanding what such concepts mean as they unfold in the world, a religious and ethical perspective demands answers to questions about their rightness, obligation, virtue, beauty/ugliness, truth(s), and holiness. For instance, to what and to whom is postindustrial multinational capitalism obligated? What virtues are implied in the broad category of globalism, which is both an economic and military strategy? Are they selfish? Altruistic? What truths are affirmed through militarism? Further, how might one measure the relative beauty or ugliness of industrial or info-tech centers? Anthropocentrism, placing the human at the center of all investigation and value, is opposed to a wider spiritual identification with all of life.

Contemporary writers and critics have begun to use the term "posthuman" to designate profound changes in the relationship of new technologies, moral values, and religions. Considering ourselves as posthuman suggests the possibility that pervasive anthropocentrism might be replaced by something else:



not the human being as the sine qua non, but a view that human life exists in a complex matrix upon which we depend for survival.

—Deborah J. Haynes

#### SEE ALSO

The Body; Public Theologies and Political Culture; Feminisms; Sacred Space; Cyberspace

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# SEXUALITY



Religious convictions would seem to lie at the very heart of sexual attitudes and practices. Religion, after all, seems uniquely related to human and social values. And sometimes it is. But the situation is also clearly more complex than this; there is no direct, one-to-one correspondence between religion and sexuality. Persons of similar religious confessions may have widely divergent sexual attitudes, and persons with vastly different religious identities can be astonishingly similar in their sexual beliefs and practices. Clearly, there is more involved in the formation of sexuality and sexual attitudes than religion alone. So it is that several recognizable *cultural* resources contribute to the construction of contemporary sexual attitudes in North America.

The very notion that “sexuality” is an independent entity, separable from the rest of a human life and worth talking about in its own specialized terms, may be a fairly recent one. One hundred or even 200 years ago, it would have been unthinkable for an encyclopedia to include an essay on “Sexuality.” This omission would not have been due, as might be thought, to the prurience or repression of nineteenth-century Victorians. Rather, it would simply have been due to the fact that “sexuality” was not thought of as a “topic,” certainly not as an independent and essential component of a person’s “identity,” until quite recently. Sexuality was adverbial, involving things one did; it became adjectival in the twentieth century, involving what one is or aspires to be.

Several factors contributed to this enormous change in twentieth-century North America. First, and probably foremost, was the influence of Freudian psychoanalysis and its suggestion of the manner in which sexuality drove the engine of identity formation, even in early childhood. Freud contributed a crucial frankness to the culture’s sex-talk; he also admitted a wild libidinousness into his account of the human psyche. His theories probably contributed, at times, to the culture’s nearly obsessive fascination with sex. A second factor involves the changing immigration patterns in the United States after the 1890s. As the culture became increasingly aware of its own diversity as a nation of immigrants, the assumption of

a common set of cultural (or sexual) mainstream values became harder to imagine. That movement has not yet come to rest.

Thus, the decidedly modern topic of “sexuality in the United States” is one where summary descriptions and conclusive judgments are difficult to imagine. The very notion of a cultural “mainstream” has come into question in recent years. Given the dramatic shift in the dominant rhetorical image with which the nation now represents itself to itself—from melting pot to multiculturalism—it would be surprising indeed if one were able to speak in simple and generalized terms about something as complex as a culture’s sexual attitudes.

That descriptive task is complicated further by the historic role played by religion in the United States. It is important to acknowledge the lingering descriptive truth of Will Herberg’s ([1955] 1983) thesis—namely, that North American culture is best described as a curious amalgam of Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic values, albeit dominated by the Protestant ones. This synthesis seems especially clear in the sexual arena, where that significant fiction called “Judeo-Christianity” has had such an enormous impact (although a confusing one, from the constitutional perspective) on the culture. For the scriptural monotheisms have always been distinguished by the degree to which they underline the importance of regulating sexual practices. The Abrahamic covenant is one that highlights the importance of maintaining a certain separateness from the ambient culture and its values. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have all traditionally highlighted the importance of carefully regulating sexual activity. They have consistently considered sexual prohibitions in tandem with those mitigating against idolatry, apostasy, and murder. At a fairly early date, rabbinic authorities concluded that a Jew could do anything to save human life, up to and including the violation of certain fundamental covenantal obligations, *excepting* those involving murder, idolatry, and adultery or incest. Better to forsake human life than violate a certain kind of sexual purity.

The two premier Abrahamic offshoots—Christianity and Islam—have traditionally shared that same reli-

gious interest in defending the purity of sexual practice. North American culture, to the degree that it was ever capable of generalization, developed under the aegis of a characteristic and long-standing concern with bodily eroticism and sexual temptation, evident in such New England classics as Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850). One must look outside of the Abrahamic/Protestant mainstream to find more celebratory, less restrictive accounts of human sexuality. The New Age, or Neopagan, religious movements of the twentieth century all focus quite knowingly on their divergence from the sexual mainstream and its alleged repressions. Whether they draw their inspiration from "Eastern" sources (primarily Hindu and Tantric), from ancient ones (primarily Greek and Celtic), or from indigenous American traditions, the point they consistently emphasize is that these religions are neither scriptural nor monotheistic. And that is alleged to account for their greater erotic fluidity and tolerance of sexual diversity. More recently, a number of technical innovations have made the culture's fundamental taxonomies of gender and sex still more fluid.

### Law Courts and Popular Culture

Sexuality, much like religion, is everywhere, but two institutions in which the culture's dominant sexual attitudes are most visible are popular films and courts of law. These two institutions embody an important paradox: Courts are normative institutions, whereas the film industry is quite deliberately *unregulated* to protect constitutional rights. And this tension, between the normalizing impulse and the spirit of tolerant *disengagement*, is the premier issue characterizing most of the current debate about sexuality in North America. In both arenas, it is evident that the significant changes in mainstream North American culture are strictly twentieth-century changes and that World War II marked an essential cultural turning point. Court decisions and popular culture tell the same basic story, sexually speaking. In both, what is considered thinkable, sayable, and therefore tolerable, especially after the comparatively seismic cultural transformations of the 1960s and 1970s, has included ever more previously taboo and restricted subjects.

Popular visual culture is itself an essentially twentieth-century phenomenon, for the simple reason that

the technology upon which it relies was not previously available. The moving picture was invented in 1895 and rapidly became a staple of North American culture. The first permanent motion picture theater opened on Broadway in 1913. Just three years later, still prior to U.S. involvement in World War I, there were some 21,000 movie theaters operating in the country. In 1915, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that media images, moving *visual* images, were not protected by the same free-speech standards as the other print media (*Mutual Film Corporation v. Industrial Commission of Ohio*, 236 US 230 [1915]). This decision was not effectively overturned until 1952. The feeling was that visual media images had special power and that additional regulation of this new industry was therefore warranted (a new version of this old debate is now being revived in relation to the various computer technologies and the images they disperse). But the checkered history of attempts, both within and outside of the film industry, to regulate its moral—that is, its religious and sexual—content is a complicated one, and it should be traced with careful attention to visible shifts in cultural attitudes, very often from one decade to the next.

### Before the World Wars

In 1910, most of the nascent U.S. film industry moved to an uninhabited part of Southern California that later became "Hollywood." The attractions of the area were its consistent light and filming conditions and its essential remove from the pressures of daily, urban life. "Hollywood," both as a real industrial park and as an increasingly fictionalized piece of the North American brainscape, was destined to have an enormous impact on the evolving sexual and moral standards of the cultural mainstream. By 1920, Hollywood's essential studio system had developed. Several large collectives assembled a veritable army of directors, producers, equipment, actors, and actresses. They created an industry that could churn out films with astonishing speed. The spirit of postwar films was wildly experimental, preferring the erotic thriller to any other genre, fully consonant with the "roaring twenties" ethos of the Jazz Age.

Jazz, that preeminently North American art form, was associated in the popular mind with drink and drugs as well as with their almost inevitable social

companion, sex. Jazz celebrated the more disruptive side of the erotic life, even and especially in its more extracurricular and extramarital manifestations. Popular as it was, it also generated a heated reaction, most eloquently voiced in the churches. It is doubtless significant that sound was introduced into feature film in 1927, in *The Jazz Singer*, and that Hollywood announced the formal end of the silent era just three years later.

The Hollywood culture immediately surrounding World War I was rocked regularly enough by scandal, both on and off screen. Partially in response to the perception of artistic irresponsibility, the fledgling Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA), an organization that would inherit the Herculean task of regulating film's moral content, was established in 1922, with Will H. Hays as its president. A preliminary Production Code, which sought to define and militate against the representation of what it called "impure love," was first drawn up by two Catholics: Father Daniel Lord, a Jesuit priest, and Martin Quigley, a prominent Catholic layman. For a variety of reasons peculiar to the industry, real enforcement was not built into the Hays Code until 1934, when Joseph T. Breen, another prominent Catholic layman, was appointed to take the helm at the MPPDA. Curiously enough, from March 1930 until July 1934, a small window of maximal transgressiveness occurred in Hollywood film representation. A surprising range of divisive social and sexual topics were addressed with surprising candor.

But this was hardly the first time such themes had been expressed. In fact, the careers of such decisive figures as D. W. Griffith and Cecil B. DeMille make one thing abundantly clear: Films that traded loosely on biblical themes demanded the filmic representation of an imaginary "pagan" world. That world was regularly, and scandalously, sexualized. "Pagan" was read as nearly synonymous with "sexual license," and pagan antiquity was regularly represented as very nearly pansexual in its practices and proclivities. The New Age religions are thus heir to a very repressive self-caricature. Still, filmic developments in the early 1930s took this concept to a new level. And it was arguably this very period of frankly sexual exploration—of topics ranging from rape, sexual violence, and adultery to a flirtation with themes of "miscegenation" (interracial relationships), and even a whiff

of same-sex eroticism—that contributed to the culture of regulation, then as now. Amazingly, interracial erotic relations were prohibited by law in Virginia until 1967, when the U.S. Supreme Court declared conclusively that all such legislation was unconstitutional (*Loving v. Virginia*, 388 U.S. 1 [1967]).

Much of this concern for the moral and sexual content of North American film was fueled by loosely religious sensibilities—especially among the Catholic hierarchy. These mediators of Catholic morality were especially sensitive to the power of visual images and evinced a singular horror at their manipulation and vulnerability to defacement. Others within the Protestant mainstream were also uneasy, for historical reasons, about iconic representation, on screen and off. Less concerned were North American Jews, many of whom figured quite prominently in the nascent film industry.

In addition to these traditional religious forms, there were new religious movements in the offing. The Social Gospel of Walter Rauschenbusch focused attention on a number of allegedly "modern" social ills, from the exigencies of industrial labor and the social dysfunctions of the inner city to the alcoholism and drug use that have traditionally been the twin plagues of urban poverty. Prohibition was the law of the land from 1919 until 1933; in its defense, the advocates of Social Gospel had made common cause with Protestant fundamentalists and evangelicals who were altogether opposed to the corrosive forces of what they called "liberalism" and "modernism." The concern over sexual license was never far from the surface of such social critique.

All of these movements placed a heavy emphasis on *personal* transformation as a means of *social* renewal—the nuclear family, after all, was thought to be the basis of all human society. Love was the buzzword—a love both socialized and desexualized. And thus sexual strictures—the defense of the character of the monogamous and sexually restrictive nuclear family—seemed always to be one significant litmus test. Sex—the way one does or does not "have" it—has traditionally been viewed as an essential marker of religious identity in the United States, an easy way to render it more public. And, to the degree that Hollywood persisted in its candid representations of illicit sexual liaison, it prompted an almost inevitable response.

Of course, the film moguls of the pre-World War II era kept an eye carefully trained on the bottom line. The fact of the matter was that the North American viewing public—surprisingly enough, the majority of whom were women, throughout the 1920s and 1930s—paid dearly (especially in the era of the Great Depression) for what they wanted to see. And what they wanted to see *was* a certain kind of erotic turmoil, chaos married to glamour and high fashion. Transgression, of a particular sort, has always sold well in North American culture. What has changed is merely the mainstream definition of what constitutes authentic—and tolerable—transgression.

### The War Years and After

With the presidential inauguration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1933, a new kind of statism became popular. Perhaps no greater symbol of this is needed than the conspicuous commissioning of the first independent U.S. Supreme Court building, built in Washington, D.C., between 1929 and 1935. Roosevelt understood the power of the Court (well enough to try to “pack” it in 1935); he was also arguably the first U.S. president who understood the power of radio, television, and film media. He cultivated his relationship with these media in order to sell his version of the New Deal. The Production Code Administration, under the stewardship of Joseph Breen, inherited the task of enforcing the Hays Code, and did so with an iron hand for fully twenty years. Richly symbolic of this new film ethos was Shirley Temple, who made her film debut in 1934. In some ways, Shirley Temple displaced Mae West, whose heavily sexualized (and emphatically adult) filmic persona could not survive the sexual strictures of the Hays Office. Sex was to be taken off screen, at least until 1952, when the U.S. Supreme Court overturned its own 1915 ruling and granted “free speech” protection to film media, thereby making the enforcement of moral and sexual standards there far more complicated. Clearly, in the move from Mae West to Shirley Temple, one era had passed and another was in the birthing.

The essential television technologies were invented as early as 1928 and 1929. But television sets were prohibitively expensive and there were precious few broadcasters prior to World War II. The quite limited television programming in the 1930s was devoted al-

most exclusively to sports. The increasing sexualization of the modern athlete was itself a postwar phenomenon (Joe DiMaggio and Marilyn Monroe married in 1954), with the notable exception of Olympic swimmers, men *and* women, who landed lucrative careers in a series of *Tarzan* films in the 1930s. *Tarzan and His Mate* (1934) contained the first example of full frontal nudity in any feature-length Hollywood film (of Olympian Josephine McKim, swimming alongside Johnny Weismuller); this scene was one of the first to be cut by Breen’s MPPDA in April 1934.

### The 1950s: A Time of Transition

Television would become a significant *cultural* force at roughly the same time that psychoanalysis and certain New Age spiritualities came onto the scene. (J. D. Salinger is the author who perhaps best represents the relationship of the three.) In the 1950s, the story becomes very complex. The manner in which gender and sexuality have been linked in the popular media since World War II is a story that lends itself especially well to decade-by-decade analysis. Moreover, the dramatic shifts in sexual mores in the postwar era are linked in significant ways to the women’s liberation movement and the changing perception of gender equality in North America.

It was arguably that war, with its unprecedented total mobilization, that injected women into new social situations, especially into the workforce, in a way that would forever transform the nation’s economy and the place it made for women. Nevertheless, when the so-called Kinsey Report was released in 1948 (its scientific-sounding title was *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*), it contented itself with the study of *male* sexuality. Indebted to the reigning therapeutic value of frankly clinical erotic speech, Dr. Alfred Kinsey told a surprising tale of non-normal sexual behavior and the astonishing diversity of North American men’s sexual practices: Masturbation, adultery, homosexuality, and bestiality were especially noteworthy. Of course, there was much that did not register on the Kinsey radar screen—sodomasochism, incest, underage sex—but what *was* represented was enough to demonstrate the shocking disconnect between the story Americans were telling themselves about themselves (namely, a story about the priority of monogamous marriage) and the facts of a far more dispersed and wide-



A couple holding hands (Helen Norman/Corbis)

ranging set of sexual practices, both before marriage and outside of it.

Today, the 1950s are portrayed as the postwar reassertion of traditional family values; supposedly, during these years American society consisted of monogamous, single-worker households with stay-at-home mothers. It was this cultural value that arguably forced women out of the workplace and back into the home in order to accommodate several million returning war veterans. There is doubtless much to this analysis, but there is much that it misses. It would be closer to the truth to read the 1950s as the ironic crucible in which a strange brew was concocted—which erupted in the culture wars of the 1960s and 1970s. The Supreme Court made regulation of film and television media a more difficult First Amendment issue in 1952 (*Joseph Burstyn, Inc., v. Wilson*, 343 U.S. 495 [1952]); the Hays Office was closed in 1958. The Supreme Court overruled the long-standing tradition of racially segregated public schooling in 1954 (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 [1954]); and a full-blown Civil Rights Movement was well in place by 1960.

But there was more. In December 1953, Hugh Hefner created a new cultural icon, *Playboy* magazine, and its trademark “bunny.” With its frank celebration of female eroticism—viewed, admittedly, from the strictly male gaze of the would-be “playboy,” who intended to avoid marital commitments at all costs—and for all of its arguable sexism, *Playboy* nevertheless marked several significant changes in the sexual landscape. First, it made clear that the Beat generation had no intention of returning to the monogamous model of the nuclear family; second, sex was no longer primarily a matter of marital unions; and third, women’s sexuality was now a matter of public discussion and public display, in a way it had not been since the late 1920s. Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita* was immediately successful when first released in 1955; Helen Gurley Brown’s *Sex and the Single Girl* remained on the best-seller list for seven months in 1962. The new media were to make these changes determinative. These various synergies coalesced in rock ’n’ roll, from the first tentative gyrations of Elvis Presley on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in 1956, to the astonishing (and astonishingly frank) anticipation of premarital sexual liaison by the Shirelles (“Will You Love Me Tomorrow?”) in 1960, to the explosively sexual and curiously androgynous phenomenon of the mop-topped Beatles, also showcased by Ed Sullivan, in 1962.

### The Culture Wars

The forces of cultural transformation that had been unleashed in the 1950s exploded in the later 1960s. Protest against the war in Vietnam and in favor of civil rights activism at home galvanized the nation’s college campuses, as well as campuses worldwide—from Paris to Mexico City to Prague—in the spring of 1968. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy were both assassinated, and the summer turned increasingly violent. The killings at Kent State followed in 1970. Media images, which had floated free of moral regulation since 1958, floated freer still. In one of those notable historical convergences, Joseph T. Breen died in 1965, the same year that saw the release of David Lean’s *Doctor Zhivago*, with its sympathetic portrayal of at best morally ambiguous romantic attachments. The Protestant Film Office closed in 1966; the Catholic League of Decency followed suit in 1968.



Hollywood was now a fully self-regulating, letter-grading institution, as it has been ever since. It would eventually develop its own rating system in 1968—self-regulation was the buzzword now—and this system continues to regulate the sexual content of most film and television productions today. In fact, it is precisely the industry's heavy reliance on *self*-regulation that makes collective definitions of pornography so difficult in court settings. There is an inescapable dimension of subjectivity to moral and sexual attitudes, something that makes generalizable standards difficult to achieve in an authentically, and increasingly, multicultural and religiously diverse society.

In 1965, the Supreme Court turned its attention to the changing sexual economy of the nation (*Griswold v. Connecticut*, 381 U.S. 479 [1965]). In this case, the Court overturned a Connecticut law that forbade the dispensing of information about birth control to married couples. In 1972, the Court would extend these same information rights to unmarried single persons (*Eisenstadt v. Baird*, 405 U.S. 438 [1972]), invoking a "right to privacy," which has contributed dramatically to the nation's sexual jurisprudence. In fact, the landmark 1973 abortion decision, *Roe v. Wade* (410 U.S. 113 [1973]), relied on this same right in order to overturn Texas and Georgia statutes that prohibited the procurement of a clinical abortion under any circumstances.

It is easy to miss the real importance of these decisions. In any culture where "free" sexuality is openly celebrated and where sex is frankly admitted as a fact of nonmarital and extramarital life, a heavier burden falls upon women. That burden is pregnancy. Women bear the biological brunt of sexual license in a way that men cannot. Courts have only recently made men financially responsible for the children they help to conceive out of wedlock. Heterosexual liberation, for women, is not simply liberating, since it always carries within itself the possibility of a loss of freedom, conceived as autonomy, through pregnancy. This is the proverbial double-bind of women's sexuality, and it marks the crucial point at which gender considerations impact inescapably on sexual attitudes. As women gained access to new birth-control technologies (the Pill became available in 1960) and to clinical abortion (ironically, a very old technology), they gained more control over their sexuality and their reproductive choices as well as the means to assert their

sexual freedom *as* a freedom. These court decisions in the 1960s and 1970s must be read not merely as deregulating nonmarital sexuality but also as an important piece of the women's liberation movement, itself the real hallmark of the 1970s. Birth-control technologies, which first became an issue in the post-Malthusian nineteenth century, arrived fairly early in the United States. The first birth-control clinic was created by Margaret Sanger in 1916—and was promptly closed. But the organization Sanger founded, the Birth Control League, still exists, refashioned as the Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

If racial equality had been the major preoccupation of 1960s activism, then gender equality became the reigning preoccupation of the 1970s. An expanding series of publications spoke to women's issues, and specifically to female sexuality. *MS* magazine, established in 1971, took over the niche carved out by *Cosmopolitan* (which had a new lease on publishing life under the forward-looking editorial control of Helen Gurley Brown in the mid-1960s), and *Playgirl* magazine, which first appeared in 1979, represented yet another feminist answer to Hefner's "playboy" manifesto. Another decisive cultural landmark was the 1971 publication of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, an extraordinarily popular project undertaken by the Boston Women's Health Collective. This book has gone through many subsequent editions because of the way in which it delivers on its primary goal: to put women's reproductive health more thoroughly into the hands of women, both as doctors and as patients. Indicative of things to come, just one year after the publication of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* came the first popular defense of alternative lifestyles—specifically, a lesbian manifesto entitled *Sappho Was a Right-On Woman* (1972). These trends were finally summarized and codified in the 1976 Hite Report, feminism's belated answer to Alfred Kinsey.

### The Religious Reaction

If the 1950s were a time for question-posing, if the 1960s were committed to the domestic politics of race and the global politics of the Cold War, if the 1970s were dominated culturally by feminism, then the 1980s are best characterized as a period of simultaneous backlash against, and extension of, this feminist-inspired cultural-sexual revolution. The Equal Rights

Amendment (“Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex”) became a major point of feminist and antifeminist contention, pitting Gloria Steinem against Phyllis Shlafly in the mid- to late 1970s. The ERA failed to generate significant support and was finally abandoned in 1982. Ronald Reagan’s landslide presidential victory in 1980 was touted as a return to the more traditional family values of the 1950s (though the 1950s were not all that “traditional”). With the politicization of several fundamentalist and evangelical coalitions in America, under the aegis of Jerry Falwell and others, a more systematic assault on sexual freedoms and the question of the limits of privacy returned to the courts. The Supreme Court’s abortion decisions were subjected to repeated scrutiny and constitutional challenge. The Court met a series of challenges to *Roe v. Wade* in the 1980s and 1990s; although it affirmed the fundamental principle of a woman’s right to choose to terminate an unwanted pregnancy, the Court was forced to admit the procedural complexity of the cases.

Without question, the single most significant landmark on the sexual horizon in the 1980s was the AIDS epidemic. AIDS served as the tragic means for bringing a frank discussion of gay (though still primarily male) sexuality into the cultural mainstream. The disease appears to have mutated in the later 1950s in a Central African monkey population. Assuming a ten-year incubation period, infections were likely occurring in the early 1970s. It was 1983, however, before the disease was finally identified as such by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The HIV virus was simultaneously identified in 1985 in the United States and France. Americans today, especially the younger generations, seldom realize just how recently AIDS has entered the popular mind, and just how transformative the risks that it poses to sexual liberation have been. Here again, liberation created new forms of repression and constraint.

In 1986, the U.S. Supreme Court (*Bowers v. Hardwick*, 478 U.S. 186 [1986]) upheld a Georgia law that criminalized gay sexual practices, among other things, as forms of sodomy (this “sodomy statute” was eliminated by the Georgia State Legislature in 1999). Just ten years later, however (*Romer v. Evans*, 116 U.S. 1620 [1996]), the Supreme Court overturned an anti-gay ballot initiative in Colorado, one that specifically

took away gay, lesbian, and bisexual rights to appeal for relief in the face of discrimination. This decision turned on one of the more complex areas of Fourteenth Amendment jurisprudence. As early as 1923 (*Moore v. Dempsey*, 261 U.S. 86 [1923]), the Court had warned that it might subject state actions directed against “discrete and insular minorities” to “searching judicial review.” The law makes distinctions, inevitably, but they are always subject to some form of judicial scrutiny. Here, too, confusion over the legitimacy of notions of sexual identity persists.

### Current Trends

The new media of the 1990s—in particular, the growing market for home video programming, cable television networks, and the ever more expansive technologies of the Internet—have facilitated the distribution of graphic sexual images involving an increasing diversity of identities, preferences, and choices. These technologies allow for the dissemination of images with great ease; they also allow for their consumption in greater anonymity. Same-sex sexuality (lesbianism, in particular) is now virtually a mainstream value, at least in the culture of pornography. Debates about pornography, media regulation, the commercialization of sex, and sexual commerce will doubtless continue in coming years. The images that are dispensed via these news technologies do not represent a significant challenge to the mindset of many Americans; they are actually fairly predictable and mainstream, in and of themselves. Rather, the dilemma that is posed is one of ease of access. And that is a matter that inevitably brings children’s sexuality into the foreground, an outgrowth of Freud’s pathbreaking work.

It is also conceivable that prostitution—doubtless carefully regulated and geographically limited—might be legalized (or at least decriminalized) on the Dutch model. It would be especially interesting if the recent explosion of religion case law in the 1990s were to contribute to this change. In 1990 (*Employment Division, Department of Human Resources of Oregon v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872 [1990]), the Supreme Court admitted the states’ rights to prohibit drug use, even in certain well-defined Native American ritual contexts. The Oregon State Legislature immediately responded to this decision by rewriting the law to make an exception in the name of “the free exercise of religion.” In contrast, a

Miami suburb passed a law explicitly targeting the Santería practice of animal sacrifice. In this instance (*Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye v. City of Hialeah*, 508 U.S. 520 [1993]), the Supreme Court held that this Afro-Cuban religion was indeed a legitimate form of religious expression and that “free exercise rights” potentially extended to the practice of animal sacrifice, which could not be legislatively targeted as they had been in Hialeah. Given the veritable explosion of neopagan movements in the urban centers of the nation, it is not difficult to envision a subtle constitutional challenge presented by the creation of sanctuaries and institutions housing ritual forms of sexual instruction qua prostitution. Legislating against such institutions may prove more difficult than would appear at first glance.

We meet, once again, the paradox built into contemporary North American sexual attitudes, one several theorists have repeatedly stressed: Our very liberation ironically serves to create other forms of repression. There is the impulse to moral evaluation and normative analysis, on the one hand, and a democratic commitment to tolerance of diversity, on the other. The flash points in contemporary debate tend still to be located where the Kinsey Report located them: same-sex sexuality, pornography, rape, and incest. To that list of crucial matters of contemporary discussion one must add the enduring debates about abortion and gender identity. The manner in which abortion especially links debates about sexuality to debates about women’s liberation and political equality makes it a central and especially divisive part of the North American moral landscape. Resolving these matters will never be simple.

Finally, any number of technical developments, especially some surgical ones, have further complicated long-standing conceptions of gender itself as well as mainstream representations of the female body. Sex-change operations—made a matter of public record and debate already in 1979, when Rene Richards, a male who was surgically and hormonally altered, sought permission to play professional tennis as a woman—are now discussed more openly in the national media. Breast augmentation, liposuction, and cosmetic surgeries are quite commonplace, subject to advertising tactics and traditional market forces. This trend led to the conception of an alternative to *Playboy* magazine in 1997; created by Dr. Norm Zadeh of

Stanford University, *Perfect10* boasts that it “will bring you the world’s most beautiful natural women. NO IMPLANTS and almost no retouching.” Given the almost comic impossibility of substantiating such a claim, the demand for such a magazine is all the more illuminating.

Other new technologies, such as artificial insemination, and new institutional arrangements, such as surrogate motherhood, have contributed to some volatile redefinitions of parenting and the nuclear family. Genetic testing is now a regular part of the modern Olympic protocol; it is no longer immediately apparent who is a woman and who is a man, and these taxonomic confusions further complicate an already fluid sexual terrain.

At the same time, the millennium concluded with a presidential impeachment proceeding in the United States, one grounded in a remarkably retrograde case. President Bill Clinton, an older man in a position of power and privilege, responded to (rather than initiated) the sexual advances of Monica Lewinsky, a subordinate in the workplace who was attracted precisely to his power. The two then lied about the affair. An important feature of this case hinged on formal definitions of “sex”—who had had it, who had not, and what legal definitions of “sex” were operative in deciding such questions. All of this required a careful parsing of oral-genital and genital-genital contact. Oral sex, once a taboo subject counted as a piece of “sodomy” in more than half of the nation’s sexual statutes, had now entered the congressional record. Statistical surveys suggest that the nation’s increasingly active teen population (well over half are now believed to have become sexually active by the age of sixteen) participate in this confusion, referring to themselves as virgin so long as they do not engage in genital intercourse.

This new sexual landscape has not erased more traditional issues and concerns, the ones most North Americans face on a fairly regular basis. Increasing diversity does not erase the mainstream. One need look no further than to the first Academy Awards ceremony of the new millennium to see this point made quite elegantly. The film that garnered the most attention, as well as the Award for Best Picture, *American Beauty*—despite its retrogressive theme of suburban boredom and midlife crisis—depicts a variety of sexual events that were unthinkable under the Hays

Code: adulterous liaisons sympathetically and even comically portrayed, underage sex, closeted homosexuality, and responses of murderous rage. Two other films that were also highly visible, by contrast, exposed some of the society's deepest sexual disagreements: *Boys Don't Cry* presented the vagaries of transgendered identity, and *The Cider House Rules* offered a frank portrayal of abortion and its aftermath as well as a nuanced representation of interracial relationships.

In a word, the culture continues to argue about a wide range of new, and not-so-new, sexual matters. This debate will doubtless evolve, even if the age at which citizens confront such challenges continues to decrease. The "discovery" of infantile sexuality lay at the very heart of the Freudian revolution. An increasingly therapeutic culture heightens the confusion. Indeed, the erasure of the premier rite of passage in a modern industrial culture—adolescence itself—may prove to be the single most significant inheritance, sexually speaking, that the new century will owe to its predecessor.

—Louis A. Ruprecht, Jr.

#### SEE ALSO

Buddhism in America; Hinduism in America; Latina/Latino Religious Communities; Cuban American Religious Communities; Native American Religions and Politics; Shamanism; New Age: Goddess Spirituality, Wicca; Protestantism in America; The Body; Generations: The Family; Popular Culture: Film; Popular Theologies and Political Culture: Feminisms, Law; Science, Technology

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## ABORTION

On an early Saturday morning in February 2001 in the Southern Baptist bedrock of Shreveport, Louisiana, an interesting spectacle took place. Directly across the street from a small, liberal arts college, a group of some thirty-five protesters lined up in front of a reproductive health service, waving banners and flagging down drivers. The center, which offers, among other things, pregnancy tests and reproductive counseling, is, in the common parlance, an abortion clinic, although in all likelihood only counseling about the procedure is available at this location.

There are elaborate laws in place—drafted in the wake of several assassinations of clinic doctors and staff by self-styled antiabortion terrorists—determining precisely how far from a facility like this such protesters may stand. But no one monitored this event and the protesters who milled about on the lawn did so pretty much at will. The reason, one suspects, is that they would be gone two hours later, when the facility opened its doors at 10:00 A.M. This, it would seem, is the compromise that has been achieved by abortion opponents and providers. The protesters are free to demonstrate and dissent, but the doctors are also free to perform abortions—so long as neither side intrudes on the other's practices. Much to the amazement of some, the consternation of others, and the palpable relief of a silent social majority, this is the accommodation that has been achieved regarding clinical abortion in this country. It is entirely possible that the mainstream culture, to the degree that there is one, has grown *tired* of the debate over abortion. But it has taken twenty arduous and sometimes bloody years to get there.

Abortion, the intentional termination of a pregnancy by medical means, is not new. Various abortive potions and other remedies were already well-known and attested to in Mediterranean antiquity. Hellenistic and Roman gynecological textbooks discussed these practices in some detail, whereas the Hippocratic Oath expressly forbids them. Although evidence is sketchy, the Christian churches in the first two centuries seem to have shared this blanket prohibition. But there is also evidence to suggest that the formal theology that emerged later, and the Christian practices that derived from it, took the view that the fetus

was “ensouled” forty days after conception (eighty days, in the case of females). Abortion may have been tolerated, however episodically, up to the point of “quickening” (conceived as the independent movement of the fetus, beginning roughly five months after conception). This is not to say that various Christian authorities ever approved of the practice; in all likelihood they did not. Still, most of the formal antiabortion legislation in the West is a product of the nineteenth century. This history coincides with the gradual transfer of birthing duties from midwives to medical doctors, who, in the vast majority of cases, were men. The American Medical Association announced its formal opposition to the practice of abortion in 1850. Appealing to the historical continuity of Christian attitudes, Pope Pius IX forbade the practice among Roman Catholics in 1869. (That mandate has been consistently maintained, even after the most far-reaching Catholic liberal reform movement of the twentieth century, the Second Vatican Council, presided over by Pope Paul VI in 1963–1965.) By 1910, most states in the United States had outlawed abortion.

What is new about abortion in the modern world is not the practice of it, but rather the technology applied to it. New medical procedures have brought about a sexual revolution, allowing greater access to clinical abortion and greater sexual autonomy for women. It is precisely this transformation of the institutions of reproductive health that brought the issue of abortion to the attention of a wider public and eventually forced this issue, inevitably, into the federal courts.

The most common forms of abortion in the industrialized world are fourfold, and the most common way of distinguishing among them utilizes a framework dividing the term of human pregnancy into three three-month periods, or trimesters. All of the available procedures are confined to the first two trimesters. Abortions after fetal viability has been established are rare and in some cases may actually be prohibited. The earliest procedure, which may be conducted up to six weeks after the last menstrual period (or LMP), is also the most common. Endometrial aspiration, also known as “preemptive abortion,”



Antiabortionists praying at a clinic rally in California (Trip/S. Grant)

involves the insertion of a flexible suction hose through an undilated cervix so that the lining of the uterine wall may be removed along with any fetal tissue attached to it. Later in the first trimester, and occasionally up to the fifteenth week, two related procedures are more common. Dilation and Evacuation (D & E) involves the insertion of a nonflexible suction tube through a dilated cervix and the removal of all placental and fetal tissue. Dilation and Curettage (D & C) involves the dilation of the cervix and the manual scraping of the uterine wall, with targeted detachment of fetal tissue from the wall. Finally, and more rarely, in the second trimester the saline, or prostaglandin, method may be preferred. In this procedure, an abortion-inducing fluid is injected into the amniotic sac. The fluid combines a saline solution, which kills the fetus, and a hormone to induce labor so as to expel the aborted fetus. More recent technological developments include hysterotomy, a kind of late second-trimester cesarean procedure, a related “partial-birth abortion” procedure, as well as the “morning-after pill” and the “abortion pill” (RU-486). The legal status of the latter has remained unclear until quite recently.

Abortion first became a matter of serious legal challenge, not surprisingly, in the 1960s. In 1965, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Connecticut law that criminalized any form of birth control (*Griswold v. Connecticut*, 381 U.S. 479 [1965]). The Court made a great deal of the fact that the couples receiving information about such reproductive technologies were *married*, and that their *marital* decisions were both “protected” and “private.” In the early 1970s, that presumption of marital unions began to break down. In 1972, the Court extended these same reproductive rights to unmarried persons (*Eisenstadt v. Baird*, 405 U.S. 438 [1972]). This precedent set in motion the mechanism for deciding the landmark decision in *Roe v. Wade* (410 U.S. 113 [1973]).

A pseudonymous unmarried woman named “Jane Roe” discovered herself to be pregnant in late 1969 or early 1970. She brought suit against the Attorney General of the State of Texas in March, then appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court in May. Roe questioned the constitutionality of a Texas law that prohibited abortion under *any* circumstance, save where the life of the mother was clearly in danger. (That law had been on the books in roughly this form since 1854.) A Texas physician named James Hubert Hallford joined

Roe’s suit, since he had already been arrested and tried twice under this law. Another pseudonymous married couple, the Does, joined the suit on the theory that they might inadvertently become pregnant one day and would be prohibited by the state from procuring an abortion for medical and/or personal reasons.

The Supreme Court denied the rights of Dr. Hallford and the Does to join this lawsuit but did grant Roe’s petition to be heard. In 1973, the Supreme Court struck down the Texas statute as too inflexible and thus as an unconstitutional violation of Roe’s rights both to privacy and to reproductive choice. The case thus seemed to be about “privacy” and the “right to choose.” But there was far more to the decision than that. Justice Harry Blackmun, who wrote the majority decision, spent the summer of 1972 conducting research at the Mayo Clinic Library in Chicago. He was especially interested in the history of abortion practices. There is a long historical discussion (Section VI) in the decision, where the Court makes plain that the laws that were under review were all products of the nineteenth century, having little or no ancient parallel. So it is that the case turns in part on a subtle analysis of religious values and their appropriate place in the law. *Roe* suggested that the Greeks and Romans were largely untroubled by abortion, recognizing few, if any, rights among children and the unborn. The major exception to this attitude was the Hippocratic tradition, used to great effect by the early Christians. In a sense, *Roe* suggested that the imposition of antiabortion attitudes itself constituted the “establishment” of a religious attitude, as expressly forbidden by the U.S. Constitution. It also assumed that Greek and Roman attitudes were secular values, not religious ones. This has become a more difficult position to maintain in recent years.

Ironically, the most influential aspect of the majority decision in *Roe v. Wade* was the part that had the least to do with constitutional law. The decision introduced the trimester framework, arguing that the state’s interest in protecting the lives of the unborn changes over time. In the first trimester, women have virtually unlimited rights to procure clinical abortions. The state may begin to regulate, though not to deny, access to abortion in the second trimester. And the state may reasonably intervene to make abortion illegal in the third trimester, excepting those cases

where the life of the mother is indeed threatened. That framework, which seems intuitively valid to a majority of North Americans, derives from no legal or medical precedent. Yet it has survived repeated challenges in U.S. courts since 1973 and now seems to be fairly settled in the law.

None of this is said to deny the fierce and vocal opposition to abortion by any number of religious groups, especially evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics. But when such protest and resistance turned violent in the 1980s, then support for it waned in a way that made the “compromise” that has now been established both possible and inevitable.

The original *Roe* decision insisted, “We need not resolve the difficult decision of when life begins.” By taking that issue off the table, the Court effectively made it impossible to equate abortion with murder. Yet this is precisely how a great many abortion opponents, religious and otherwise, conceive of the practice. Notably, Judaism and Islam both provide legal resources for permitting abortion well into the second trimester, precisely because the legal and scriptural status of the fetus prior to that time is not clear.

Abortion became one of the premier litmus tests among conservative Christians shortly after the decision in *Roe v. Wade* was announced. Given their sudden visibility as a self-styled “Moral Majority” in Ronald Reagan’s initial campaign for the presidency in 1980, there was great hope among such groups that *Roe v. Wade* would be overturned. (It had only been seven years since the decision, after all.) The Reagan administration’s commitment to this cause was at best lukewarm, however; these hopes have repeatedly failed to materialize throughout other presidential administrations. Ironically enough, while pressure continues to be put on the courts to revisit this decision, the essential trimester framework laid out in *Roe* has not been seriously challenged. Most of the hard legal work now concerns what kinds of state regulation are permissible in the first, and especially in the second, trimesters of pregnancy.

States have tried to regulate abortion in many ways: by mandating parental or spousal notification of a woman’s desire to procure an abortion; instituting waiting periods of twenty-four to forty-eight hours between an initial consultation and the actual procedure; requiring physicians to present the risks involved in the procedure; mandating preabortion

counseling to explore alternative options, such as adoption or foster care; and limiting or eliminating the availability of government funds for abortion. What is noteworthy is how few of these regulations have survived review by successive justices at the U.S. Supreme Court. Ongoing debates about the limits of privacy in the public domain serve to highlight the complexity of this issue. Privacy is a difficult thing to establish in the sexual arena in this culture, where sex and sexuality are ever more public topics and concerns. So, too, has pregnancy become.

A variety of technological developments continue to complicate the moral terrain. The massive project of genetic mapping of the human genome raises the significant possibility of learning a great deal about the genetic makeup of the unborn, thereby presumably creating new reasons for parental decisions to abort a pregnancy for a variety of heretofore unanticipated reasons. The technique of “partial-birth abortion”—a method also known as Dilation and Extraction (D & X)—which involves dilating the cervix, drawing a late-term fetus part of the way into the birth canal, and suctioning out the brain to allow freer passage through the canal—has raised a firestorm of new controversy in legislatures across the country. With this method, abortion begins to resemble killing of a criminal kind. Although the states’ right to create a blanket prohibition of such a procedure has been successfully challenged, further regulation and even outright prohibition of the procedure seem possible. More controversial still has been the debate over human stem-cell research. These undifferentiated cells, harvested from embryos several days old, raise anew the age-old question of when human life is thought to begin and what sort of ethical status to assign to the embryo in various stages of its development.

The “abortion pill” (RU-486, or Mifepristone) was developed by a French physician, Etienne-Emile Baulieu, in 1980. A synthetic antagonist to the hormone progesterone, RU-486 effectively blocks the work of a hormone vital to early fetal attachment and subsequent development and causes the breakdown and shedding of the uterine wall. After taking the pill in a clinic, the patient returns forty-eight hours later to receive a dose of prostaglandin, which induces contractions and completes the abortion process. This nonsurgical form of abortion is much less intrusive than surgical methods, but it is only possible during



the first portion of the first trimester. It has been widely used in France since 1989, and it became available for use in the United States in 1998.

In addition, “the morning-after pill”—technically called “emergency contraception” and approved by the FDA in 1997—is actually a series of high-dosage hormone pills (primarily estrogen and progesterone, the chief components in normal birth-control pills). These pills are administered in two doses, separated by twelve hours, no later than seventy-two hours after unprotected sexual intercourse. This course of medication, unlike RU-486, has the potential to make much of the old-style abortion debate irrelevant. The treatment prevents the ovum from attaching to the uterine wall. As such, it technically *prevents* pregnancy, rather than *terminating* it (admittedly, antiabortion activists vigorously dispute this distinction, pointing out that no one knows how this treatment actually works). Available by prescription in the United States since 1998, this new technology is still one more reason why the decades-long argument about abortion may be driven significantly to the sidelines in the next decade. With these new methods becoming more standard, and the Court’s decisions now relatively settled matters, it is possible that the conflict once rife between pro-life and pro-choice advocates may continue to simply fizzle out as new issues become the focus of attention in the culture wars of the twenty-first century.

—Louis A. Ruprecht, Jr.

#### SEE ALSO

Public Theologies and Political Culture: Conservatism, Feminisms, Fundamentalism; Ritual and Performance: Civic and Political Ritual Performances

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## THE BIBLE AND SODOM IN AMERICA

Arguably the most cited biblical text in contemporary American public life and discourse, after perhaps the story of Adam and Eve, is the narrative of what happened at Sodom and its use as a justification for the continued practices of public (including judicial) and private homophobia in the United States.

The story from Genesis 19:1–29 can be summarized as follows. God, having become aware of the evil of the people of Sodom, has determined to destroy the city and sends two angels in the form of men to announce this plan to Lot, so that he and his family can be saved. In the evening, the people of Sodom

come to the door of the house and demand access to the strangers, desiring to “know them.” Lot offers instead his two virgin daughters. The people are very angry: “This one has come to dwell among us, and he is judging us. Now we will do more evil to you than to them.” At this point a miracle is produced. The men of Sodom are struck blind and give up their demands. The city is destroyed in the morning by fire and brimstone. Lot and his family escape, having been warned by the angels, but Lot’s wife is turned into a pillar of salt because she looked back despite the angels’ warnings not to do so.

Many writers have insisted that the Bible condemns homosexuality; others have argued against this proposition. Both, however, have operated under the assumption that if this story is indeed about homosexuality, then it provides strong support for the idea that the Bible violently condemns it. Typical is Eva Cantarella, who has argued against Robin Scroggs's claim that verses in Leviticus condemning homosexuality are totally isolated in biblical literature and probably late (Scroggs 1983, 73). Cantarella wrote, "The proof of how forced this interpretation is comes from the celebrated story of the people of Sodom" (Cantarella 1992, 195). Rightly dismissing interpretations that deny the sexual nature of the Sodomites' intentions, she concluded, "It seems very difficult to deny that the biblical account should be taken to mean that homosexuality is an execrable type of behaviour" (Cantarella 1992, 197). Difficult or no, there is enough historical and textual evidence to suggest a different conclusion.

The intention of the Sodomites was undoubtedly to rape the strangers. Commentators who attempt to interpret "know" here in a nonsexual sense are ignoring the simple and clear fact that Lot "offers" his daughters as sexual substitutes for the strangers. Does he do so because he condemns their "homosexuality" and is trying to convert them to "heterosexuality"? Some interpreters would have us believe this proposition, but the story makes absolutely clear why he is protecting the men. Lot says, "Only to these men do nothing, seeing that they have come under the protection of my roof." He offers his daughters in exchange simply because he has the right to do so, since they are his "property," whereas he is obligated to protect guests from all harm. Far from a rebuke, Lot is simply offering them an alternative to protect his honor, and one that he expects, moreover, that they will accept. (One could, of course, query why he offers his daughters and not himself, and two answers could be given. Either he expects the daughters to be more attractive to the men than he himself would be, or women are generally dispensable in his culture. This question will be further addressed below.) The rejection of his offer is not portrayed in terms of a homosexual preference on the part of the Sodomites but as a furious response to Lot's judgmental stance toward them. This is, after all, the stated reason for their anger: "This one has come to dwell among us, and he is judging us!" Any

"hermeneutics of suspicion" here that suggests some other reason for the fury runs the serious risk of anachronism, of simply filling in a gap where there is none and doing so, moreover, with our own cultural expectations. Their expressed intention, moreover, to do worse to him than they intended to do to the strangers is not at all erotic in its implications. There is, accordingly, no warrant whatsoever for Eva Cantarella's conclusion that "the Sodomites do not want Lot's daughters: they want the foreign visitors. This is their sin" (Cantarella 1992, 195). Had they taken Lot's daughters, they would have been equally sinful—a proposition that will be further verified from a parallel text immediately below.

The point has been made that in the myriad references to the Sodomites in later biblical writing, not once is their alleged "homosexuality" even mentioned. Scroggs has collected eleven such allusions (Scroggs 1983, 74). Whenever the nature of the Sodomite sin is mentioned, it is always violence that is at issue, not sexual immorality. Typical is Isaiah 1:10–17, where the "officers of Sodom" are addressed and their sin is described as "their hands being full of blood"; their atonement is to do justice with the orphan and the widow. Scroggs argued from these examples that the writers either did not know of or did not accept the "homosexual dimension of the story of Sodom." However, there is a parallel story in Judges 19—almost surely modeled on the Sodom narrative—in which the sexual aspect is clearly presupposed. Therefore, Scroggs wrote, "Contrary to later references, the homosexual dimension of the story of Sodom is accepted" (Scroggs 1983, 75). Scroggs, though tending in the right direction, missed another possible interpretation. There is no reason to assume that the prophetic writers did not know of the homosexual rape aspect of the Sodom story, but it was considered by them a synecdoche for the violence of the Sodomites, *not an issue of sexual immorality*.

The same point ought to be made about rabbinic interpretations of this story. As Scroggs correctly pointed out, there is nothing in the rabbinic readings of the Sodom story to indicate that the Sodomites' sin was "homosexuality." The emphasis is always on their violence and murderousness (Scroggs 1983, 80). Scroggs concluded, "The Palestinian Targum's clear statement of the sin as sexual does not, perhaps surprisingly, seem to have informed rabbinic midrash of

this time" (Scroggs 1983, 81). He was misled by the modern category of sexuality to assume that the rabbis would certainly have marked off sexual inclination as a separate and unequal determiner of human moral status. There is no reason whatsoever to assume that the rabbis, assiduous readers of the Bible with no reason to apologize for the Sodomites, denied the sexual nature of their intention toward the "men." They almost certainly did understand it this way, as did everyone else in the ancient world. They did not, however, understand homosexuality as being the essence of Sodomite sinfulness or the point of the story; nor did inner-biblical interpretation lead to any such conclusion. Indeed, judging from this Jewish interpretative tradition, the homosexual aspect of the Sodomites' violence was hardly worth remarking; it did not add to the heinousness of their brutality.

For the interpretative tradition that locates the sin of Sodom in their "unnatural" sexuality, we look neither to the inner-biblical allusions nor to rabbinic midrash, but to first-century Hellenistic (Greek-speaking) Jewish texts, whether Palestinian or otherwise. Not surprisingly, here as elsewhere, the New Testament is closest to these other Hellenistic Jewish traditions (Cantarella 1992, 200–201). The crucial element that enters, it seems, with Hellenistic culture is the notion of nature and the possibility of an act being *contra naturam*, as opposed to being merely forbidden. This is a peculiarly Greek idea, whether or not Greeks applied it in the same way—obviously they did not—as Hellenized Jews were to (Koester 1968, 520–521). For the ancient Near East, including ancient Israel, acts were taboo or permitted, abhorred or praiseworthy, but never consonant with or against nature itself. Consequently, the notion that a type of desire was "unnatural" and the people who possessed it were somehow monstrous had to wait for the grafting of Greek thinking onto biblical culture that took place among Hellenistic Jews. This story in the Bible and in rabbinical (Hebrew/Aramaic) interpretations is no more a condemnation of homoerotic desire than a story about a heterosexual rape would be a condemnation of heteroerotic desire, and the parallel text from Judges makes this clear.

The account in Judges 19 is similar to the Sodom story. It also features inhospitality and violence toward strangers. At the beginning of the story, a Levite, his concubine, and a servant are wandering

into the town of Gibeah at nightfall. Contrary to the customs of Israel regarding hospitality, none of the Israelites is willing to take them in for the night. An elderly foreigner who is not one of the natives of the place—like Lot—finally invites them into his home and exhibits the appropriate friendliness and generosity toward strangers. The wicked inhabitants of the place surround the house and make exactly the same demand that was made of Lot, that he bring out the stranger to be raped. Once more, the host pleads with them not to commit this evil act, "because this man has come into my house," and offers his virgin daughter and the concubine as "substitutes." The Levite pushes his concubine out, and she is gang-raped and abused all night. In the morning she is found dead with her hand on the doorstep, having died desperately trying to get in. This is an absolutely horrifying story of violence toward women. Although the men of Gibeah are punished terribly for their murder of the woman, the Levite who threw her to the dogs to save his skin is let off scot-free.

As Phyllis Tribble has remarked, "These two stories show that the rules of hospitality in Israel protect only males. Though Lot entertained men alone, the old man also has a female guest, and no hospitality safeguards her. She is chosen as the victim for male lust. Further, in neither of these stories does the male host offer himself in place of his guests" (Tribble 1984, 75). Tribble's further suggestion, however, that the woman was not dead, and the husband's dismemberment of her to call for revenge was a sacrifice of a living victim, is not supported by the text. Her claim (pressed at least as a question) is that "the cowardly betrayer [is] also the murderer" (Tribble 1984, 80). The concubine, however, is certainly already dead; this is why the Bible says that she did not answer him. The dismemberment—to be sure, engendered by his cowardice and callous domination of her—is pursued in a sort of extravagance of mourning and desire for revenge for the violence done her. He was willing for her to be sexually abused; the violence done her that causes her death appalls even him. A story of primitive male privilege of the most repulsive sort, this is not in any way, however, a discourse about homosexuality.

Indeed, here, the acceptance of a "heterosexual" substitute shows that the people of Gibeah are not being anathematized as "homosexuals." Their punish-

ment is explicitly due to their violence toward the woman and not to their supposed homoeroticism. Both of these stories, then, provide a representation, perhaps with some historical basis, of a tradition of aggression toward strangers, acted out as rape (and murder—the Levite expected that he was to be killed as well) (Dover 1989, 105). A more modern analogue can be found in James Dickey's *Deliverance*, where a group of "hillbillies" attack and rape one of a party of middle-class canoeists who have "invaded" their territory. For anal rape described as formalized or official aggression, see also Mekilta de Rabbi Ishmael (Amaleq 1), where a foreign conqueror punishes the king of Israel by "standing before him ruffians who had never known woman in their lives and they tortured him with anal intercourse." (Incidentally, this does not mean that they were "homosexuals," but that they were virgins and very randy.) (See also Richlin 1992.) These accounts have nothing whatever to do with either legal or discursive practices related to same-sex *desire*.

We should indeed be appalled by both of these narratives, but not for an alleged condemnation of homosexuality that they do not inscribe, but rather for the callous indifference to the fate of women that they do. There is no evidence in the Hebrew Bible for a category of homosexuals or homosexuality at all, and whatever explanation may be adopted for the prohibition of male anal intercourse, there is little reason to

believe that it extended to other forms of homoerotic practice. The hypothesis offered here, namely, that male anal intercourse was understood as a category violation, a kind of cross-dressing, while not provable, certainly seems plausible.

—Daniel Boyarin

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Public Theologies and Political Culture: Conservatism, Feminisms, Fundamentalism

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## MASTURBATION

In *Annie Hall*, Woody Allen says, "Don't knock masturbation. It's sex with someone I love." American attitudes toward masturbation have not always been so carefree. In fact, it was the Judeo-Christian Scriptures that first associated death with the practice.

Genesis 38:6–10 relates the story of Onan. It was Onan's duty to impregnate his brother's widow, Tamar, in order to produce a child for his brother. But knowing the child would not be his, Onan spilt his seed on the ground every time he had intercourse with Tamar. This displeased the Lord, so God killed Onan. Theologians were divided over whether this passage actually condemned self-pollution, or coitus interrup-

tus, which is what John Calvin surmised. In his *Commentaries on Genesis* (1554), Calvin claimed that the deliberate spilling of seed caused by withdrawal was "doubly monstrous. For this is to extinguish the hope of the race and to kill before he is born the hoped-for offspring" (Provan 1989, 68). However, these theological divisions did not spill into the popular vocabulary, which came to identify Onan's sin solely with masturbation. The sin of self-pollution had long been considered a moral evil. Medieval theologians contended that any nonvaginal ejaculation was a "vice against nature, and anyone who commits such an act is to be considered a Sodomite" (Jordan 1997, 102).

Self-pollution was first named after Onan in an anonymous tract published in London circa 1715 entitled *Onania, or the heinous sin of self-pollution, and all its frightful consequences in both sexes considered, with spiritual and physical advice to those who have already injured themselves by this abominable practice*. This slim tract grew with each succeeding edition and sold at an unprecedented rate, with sales of its first nineteen editions exceeding 38,000 copies by 1750. An edition was even published in Boston in 1724.

*Onania* introduced a new facet to the campaign against masturbation. The writer stressed not only the religious and morally corrupting effects of self-pollution but proclaimed its ruinous physical and mental consequences. Not only did onanism lead to lying, swearing, and even murder, but also to epilepsy, infertility, tuberculosis, and insanity. The root of these physical manifestations was circulatory: The blood became “so far vitiated and impaired . . . that it is wholly unable to perform its office of circulation with any regularity” (Stengers and Van Neck 2001, 43). Self-pollution supposedly resulted in physical degeneracy, stunted growth in boys and girls, and decreased life expectancy. With each successive edition, *Onania* contained further testimonies from readers detailing the physical ills of the evil vice, providing a comprehensive catalog of calamities thought to be caused by masturbation. *Onania* was a mixture of folk wisdom and superstition advertising a “strengthening tincture” and a “prolific powder” as remedies for the scourge of ailments caused by self-pollution. In this respect it was unremarkable for the literature of its day. It provided lurid symptoms for which it offered “snake oil” cures. It was a trend bearing a family resemblance to the contemporary obsession with quick-fix panaceas for weight loss.

Among the New England Puritans, masturbation was considered a “gateway” sin, that is, it inevitably led to other, more severe forms of uncleanness. The Puritans did not limit marital sex to procreation but thought that “to engage in behavior that involved ejaculation and yet deliberately avoided the possibility of conception seemed perverse and sacrilegious” (Godbeer 2002, 69). Cotton Mather decried the peril of self-pollution as a form of “self-murder.” He warned of the putrefying emaciation that awaited those under the spell of this foul disease. In masturba-

tion one did nothing less than sacrifice seed to the devil. In a natural science textbook used by Harvard in the late 1680s, a pastor at Charlestown, Charles Morton, contended that semen was a higher concoction than blood and contained “much spirit and little gross matter.” Thus, he argued that the misuse of this spiritual fluid was “consecrating the best of our bodies to the Devil” (Godbeer 2002, 70).

Prohibitions against the perils of masturbation had no real impact in the medical community until the publication of Samuel Tissot’s influential *Onania, or a Treatise upon the Disorders Produced by Masturbation*, in 1758. Tissot was a reputable Swiss physician, and his scientific treatise gave medical authority and legitimation to the claims of the popular tract. He organized and classified the various maladies of the anonymous English tract under six headings ranging from mental diseases to bowel disruptions. He theorized that the odious effects of onanism were due to an imbalance in the humors created by an excess of seminal discharge. The “humors” of the body were arrayed according to their degree of perfection. Sweat and milk, which were on one end of this spectrum, could be discharged from the body without consequence. On the other end were more essential humors, such as blood and sperm. Seminal fluid was the supreme humor; it was the “directing spirit” of the body and its dissipation rendered the entire body weak. Tissot claimed that the dire physical consequences of excessive seminal discharge were largely incurable. His diagnosis of *spermatorrhoeal ophthalmia* indicted masturbation as a cause of blindness. An edition of Tissot was published in the United States as recently as 1905. Tissot’s crusade against masturbation even had a significant influence on early editions of the Boy Scouts of America handbooks.

The antimasturbation campaigns of Europe attained new “heights of eloquence in nineteenth century America” (Stengers and Van Neck 2001, 106). American medical experts turned their attention to children. All kinds of preventative measures were suggested, from diets to chastity belts, spiked rings, and even castration. U.S. reform movements introduced the idiom of slavery to antimasturbation discourse. The crusades against this solitary vice described it as a form of slavery to oneself (Castronovo 2001, 153). Whether or not these crusades were effective in re-

ducing the practice of masturbation, they certainly led Americans to think obsessively about masturbation.

Judaism and Catholicism repudiated masturbation because it spent a precious resource that God had intended for procreation. A Jewish tradition taught that to avoid temptation one should avoid all contact with the penis, which was to occur for “the unmarried man never, and the married man only in connection with urination,” and young children were taught to urinate “without hands! Better a bad aim than a bad habit” (Gollaher 2000, 102). In 1860, a series of articles in the British medical journal *The Lancet* reported the infrequency of masturbation among Jewish youth. Several years later, Abraham Jacobi, the organizer of the American Pediatric Society, and M. J. Moses, the president of the Association of American Physicians, strongly recommended circumcision as a preventive measure against masturbation. In 1888, the surgeon John Harvey Kellogg wrote of the additional benefits of performing the surgery without anesthesia. He claimed that in small boys, “the pain attending the operation will have a salutary effect . . . especially if connected with the idea of punishment” (Gollaher 2000, 103). Kellogg also devised a special diet, which included cornflakes, that would prevent excitation. One of the purposes of the “Orificial Surgery Society,” formed in the United States in the 1890s, was to promote genital surgeries. As recently as 1936, the classic pediatrics textbook *Diseases of Infancy and Childhood*, by L. E. Holt, recommended circumcision as a treatment for masturbation for both sexes (Paige 1978, 43). Circumcision in the United States was so routine, however, that it eventually lost its *raison d’être* as a preventative for masturbation.

In the 1940s, Dr. Alfred Kinsey reported that close to 90 percent of men and 50 percent of women had masturbated in their teenage years. More recent studies have estimated that nearly 75 percent of girls masturbated by the time they reached adolescence and an additional 10 percent did so in their twenties. A recent national study reported that 37 percent of men and 58 percent of women had not masturbated at all in the previous year, but 27 percent of men and 8 percent of women indicated a frequency of once a week. Masturbation is unique among sexual practices in that it is both highly prevalent and remains strongly stigmatized.

A variant of masturbation that has become a matter of public concern is autoerotic asphyxiation. Known as *scarfing* in sexual subcultures, autoerotic asphyxiation is the attempt to simultaneously achieve sexual gratification and cerebral hypoxia, most commonly through self-strangulation. Its practitioners are in pursuit of what has been called the “white tunnel of light” orgasm. Cerebral hypoxia, a deficiency of oxygen in the brain, induces a light-headed exhilaration that is supposed to intensify the orgasm. The element of self-endangerment also intensifies the practice. It is most prevalent among young adult males, and accidental deaths from the practice are estimated at between 500 and 1,000 annually in the United States.

In 1994 at a United Nations conference on AIDS, U.S. Surgeon General Jocelyn Elders was asked what she thought about the possibility of preventing AIDS through a more explicit discussion of masturbation. She responded by saying that masturbation was a part of human sexuality and that we should provide a comprehensive sex education program for children that would include information about masturbation. This comment created a public controversy, and Dr. Elders was forced to resign. It seems ironic that something so widely practiced strongly resists any public discussion.

—Kevin Reilly

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Catholicism in America; Judaism in America; Protestantism in America: Puritanism; The Body

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## REPRODUCTION

Scientific understandings of the specific roles of the sperm and the egg in human reproduction were disputed until the late nineteenth century. It was only in 1876 that microscopic studies demonstrated that fertilization occurred when sperm penetrated the egg. Even the notion that human beings are divided into two sexes only gradually became the dominant scientific position in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For the previous 2,000 years, an Aristotelian one-sex model had prevailed over the two-sex model found within the Hippocratic traditions. Galen observed that males and females shared the same genitalia, except that in females they were internal, whereas in males they were external. This one-sex model advanced the homologous nature of the male and female genitalia but construed the female body as a lesser version of the male. It predominated until "the political, economic, and cultural transformations of the eighteenth century created the context in which the articulation of radical differences between the sexes became culturally imperative" (Laqueur 1987, 239). Because the model logically led to theories of reproduction that required both male and female seed, it was commonly believed that both the male and the female orgasm were necessary for conception to take place.

Two complementary notions of reproduction were among those competing for prominence following the introduction of the microscope in embryological studies in the early seventeenth century. Preformation, and the related concept of *emboîtement* ("encasement") advanced by the Catholic priest Nicolas Malebranche in France, held sway for most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These explanations of propagation, based on a belief in God's sovereignty, asserted that there really was no generation apart from God's

initial creation. Religious authorities rejected the mechanistic worldview of science, and with the onset of the scientific revolution, they saw the rise of science as an autonomous authority apart from revelation as a heretical concept. The physician Michael Servetus was executed in Geneva in 1553 for incorporating contemporary embryological notions into his explication of Christ's incarnation (Irwin 1978, 101). In 1651, William Harvey revived the Aristotelian theory of epigenesis when he proposed that the embryo developed gradually from a formless egg. Harvey summed up his work with the dictum *ex ovo omnia* ("out of the egg comes everything"). He postulated an *aura seminalis* in which semen vitalized the egg by emanating an invisible spiritual force. He also suggested that more primitive life-forms could spontaneously arise from inanimate matter. Spontaneous generation had a long history sustained by observations of maggots developing spontaneously out of spoiled meat and of frogs being generated by the rain. These notions undermined the belief that God was the active creator of all life.

In a 1674 work entitled *The Search for Truth*, Malebranche noted that with a microscope one could observe whole worlds the size of a grain of sand populated by otherwise invisible animals. He surmised that for these tiny animals, there might be, in turn, even smaller animals that "are to them as imperceptible as they themselves are to us." This observation led him to suggest that "perhaps all the bodies of men and animals born until the end of times were created at the creation of the world, which is to say that the females . . . have been created containing all of the animals of the same species that they have begotten and that are to be begotten in the future" (Pinto-Correia 1997, 19). The sexual act was necessary to initiate the growth of

the tiny children already preformed and harbored inside their mothers. He drew directly upon the microscopic observations of the anatomists Marcello Malpighi and Jan Swammerdam, who had both observed preformed embryos in their studies of frog eggs. Preformationists theorized that every life-form existed in minuscule germ form and simply increased in size under the proper conditions.

There were two opposing schools of preformation. Those in the first school, the ovists, believed that miniature, fully formed human beings existed in the egg. The male role in reproduction was to provide semen, which they believed to be the vivifying life force that initiated the growth of the child contained in the egg. The second school appeared slightly later, when Antoni van Leeuwenhoek thought he had microscopically observed tiny people, or animalcules, in semen. The spermists claimed that these animalcules were human larvae. They believed that the female provided the nutritional “soil” in which one of the animalcules could be nourished. Although the roots of preformation can be traced back through St. Augustine to Seneca, with Malebranche it became a coherent theory. Malebranche had not simply reiterated the anatomists’ observations; he took them a step further by positing a series of encased generations that had originated in the ovaries of Eve. This is the aspect of preformation that came to be known as *embôitement*.

The explanatory powers of preformation were rife for Calvinist theology. It provided a fruitful hermeneutical lens for scriptural interpretation. It now became clear how Levi could have paid tithes to Melchizedek long before he was born: He was literally residing in miniature in Abraham’s loins. Similarly, original sin gained a new clarity. Malebranche’s *The Search for Truth* was translated into English in 1694. It deeply influenced Jonathan Edwards, who incorporated ovist reproductive theories when he speculated “that the election of the man Jesus extended [not only] to the egg in Mary’s ovaries from which the divine fetus was formed . . . [but also] to the womb or ovary of Eve” (Chamberlain 2000, 289–290). Edwards further displayed familiarity with reproductive theories when he concluded that Mary must have experienced an orgasm when her female seed was vivified by the power of the Holy Spirit since the female orgasm was necessary for conception.

Another important Puritan responsible for the dis-

semination of reproductive theories in America was Cotton Mather, who wrote the first comprehensive treatise on the Enlightenment sciences. Mather’s 1721 work, *The Christian Philosopher*, introduced the theories of Malpighi, Swammerdam, and Leeuwenhoek to an American audience. Mather’s willingness to incorporate scientific knowledge set him apart from the earlier generations of Puritans, who tended to view nature as a part of fallen creation. The book, nevertheless, is largely a compendium with very little synthesis; Mather not only failed to take a position vis-à-vis Swammerdam’s ovism or Leeuwenhoek’s spermism, but he did not even seem to recognize the distinction.

It was neither the lofty theologizing of Edwards nor the preaching of Mather, however, that had the largest impact on popular understandings of reproduction. That honor went to *Aristotle’s Masterpiece*, the “most frequently reprinted medical work of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in America” (Beall 1963, 208). Largely a collection of reproductive folklore, *Aristotle’s Masterpiece* provided the only practical information on its subject for eighteenth-century Americans. Though it carried no weight in the medical community, it was a significant source for midwives. It stressed the necessity of both male and female pleasure for conception, stating directly that “without clitoral stimulation . . . the fair sex neither desire mutual embraces nor have pleasure in ’em, nor conceive by ’em” (McLaren 1984, 19). Thus, the Puritans believed that the purpose of conjugal union was twofold, that is, to produce offspring and to provide “due benevolence.” They held that both partners should experience delight during intercourse because conception could not occur apart from the female orgasm. In New England, “male inability to provide sexual satisfaction constituted grounds for divorce” (Godbeer 2002, 60). A wife past her childbearing years, in fact, could still take her husband to court for failing to provide “due benevolence.” Fifty-four-year-old Mary Drury described her spouse as nothing more than a “pretend husband” for this reason in a seventeenth-century Massachusetts court (Godbeer 2002, 60). The belief in the necessity of the female orgasm for conception did not only have such egalitarian consequences, however. The same colony that recognized Mary Drury’s nuptial rights to due benevolence also made it a law that a woman’s “consent must be inferred” in the case of an alleged rape if con-



ception had occurred (Hambleton 1998, 96). It was not until the nineteenth century that the courts recognized that pregnancy did not imply the acquiescence of the woman in cases of rape.

Another issue that came before the courts posed a far more dire threat. The fifth chapter of one edition of *Aristotle's Masterpiece* was entitled "Of Monsters and Monstrous Births." The fear of hybrid, soulless offspring resulted in severe punishments for bestiality. As it was thought that such unions could have reproductive consequences, colonists required the execution of the animal. In a case in Plymouth, the "court ordered a lineup of sheep at which [Thomas] Grazer identified his sexual partners, who were killed before his face and then he himself was executed" (D'Emilio and Freedman 1997, 17).

American controversies over reproduction not only concerned how reproduction occurred but who was reproducing. Birthrates among white Protestants began to gradually decline in the nineteenth century. This trend coincided with an influx of Catholic immigrants. One response to this dilemma was the Comstock Act of 1873, which defined contraceptives as obscene and thus criminalized the distribution "through the mail or across state lines of any . . . drug or medicine, or any article whatever for the prevention of conception" (Tone 2001, 4). Contraceptives retained this illicit status until the 1920s. President Theodore Roosevelt believed that "native-born middle-class women who practiced fertility control were forsaking their natural duties . . . by purging America's stock of its finest elements" (Tone 2001, 141). Another response to the increase in immigrant populations was the implementation of state-sponsored sterilizations. In 1927, the Supreme Court upheld their constitutionality, and by 1932 "twenty-six states had enacted laws permitting the forced sterilization of individuals considered unfit" (Tone 2001, 144). Within five years, nearly 28,000 Americans, both men and women, had been forcibly sterilized.

As white Protestants struggled to compete with the high birthrates of ethnic immigrant groups in the East, a new threat appeared in the West. The mid-nineteenth century saw the burgeoning of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). Reproductively speaking, Protestant America was no match for the Mormons. The Mormon practice of patriarchal or plural marriage, which was overwhelmingly polygy-

nous, had unmatched reproductive potential. Although the Protestant antipolygamy campaigns portrayed the Mormons as living in lascivious harems, they were actually "proponents of Victorian propriety and sexually conservative" (Iverson 1993, 123). It would be a mistake to characterize the desire for plural wives as simply one of sexual appetite. The basis of Mormon marriage and reproduction was atypical because of their distinctive theological framework. Although various combinations of political, economic, romantic, companionate, and sexual factors were certainly not absent from Mormon polygamous unions, reproduction played a more pivotal role. The divine command to multiply and replenish the earth was a religious obligation that ensured the highest rewards in the next life.

In Mormon theology, the sole purpose of sex was procreation. Plural wives maximized the male's reproductive capacity. Whereas Roman Catholics and Orthodox Jews conveniently increased the numbers of the faithful with large families, Mormon doctrine provided a compelling theological rationale for high birthrates. It was the duty of every righteous Mormon to prepare tabernacles for preexistent spirits to embody. Reproduction provided physical bodies to clothe the premortal spirits who waited in queue. Mormon doctrine asserted that all human beings preexisted as the spiritual offspring of the heavenly father and mother. Physical, mortal birth (the second birth) was a necessary precursor in the progression to personal godhood. If Mormons failed to provide physical bodies, the disembodied spirits were prevented from fulfilling this role. Ultimately, the faithful, who have entered into eternal marriage, will be resurrected to procreate their own spirit children for future worlds.

Although this account represents the principal Mormon tradition, it did not originate with founder Joseph Smith. Following Smith's death in June 1844, the Twelve Apostles, his successors, developed the notion that premortal spirits were the offspring of spiritual sexual union between the heavenly father and mother. The spirit birth doctrine was published in an official church publication as early as February 1845. Smith, in contrast, clearly taught that humans preexisted as coeternal spirits with God. Echoing the preformists, Smith taught that the human beings "had no beginning [and] can have no end. . . . The soul of

man, the spirit, had existed from eternity in the bosom of Divinity” (Hale 1989, 117). After Smith’s death, the notion of coeternal preexistence was further developed by Orson Pratt. In a series of short treatises published between 1849 and 1853, Pratt argued that “eternal particle entities [were] organized in the womb of the celestial female thereby creating an individual spirit body” (Ostler 1989, 134). Brigham Young eventually denounced Pratt’s views involving the human spirit’s coeternality and instead proposed the idea of “eternal regression of progenitors, the doctrine that all fathers had fathers *ad infinitum*” (Ostler 1989, 135). Smith, Pratt, and Young all shared a materialistic understanding of spiritual preexistence. God, they said, is an exalted man with a material body. A famous Mormon couplet puts it succinctly, “As man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may be.”

These Mormon notions of preexistence and divine materiality, coupled with an understanding of actual sexual intercourse between the heavenly father and mother producing spiritual offspring, had implications for the Mormon doctrine of the incarnation. The paternity of Jesus is taken literally. Mary is the mother of Jesus, and the heavenly father, God, is his actual father. In the official LDS guide to church doctrine, Elder Bruce McConkie wrote, “Christ was begotten by an Immortal Father in the same way that mortal men are begotten by mortal fathers” (McConkie 1979, 546). In case there was any doubt about the implications, he further clarified: “God the Father is a perfected, glorified, holy Man. . . . And Christ was born into the world as the literal Son of this Holy Being; he was born in the same personal, real and literal sense that any mortal son is born to a mortal father. There is nothing figurative about his paternity; he was begotten, conceived and born in the normal and natural course of events, for he is the Son of God and that designation means what it says” (McConkie 1979, 742). Although the official teaching stops short of explicitly saying that God engaged in sexual relations with Mary, the idea is not unknown in Mormon writings.

As one of the fastest-growing religious groups, Mormons have assimilated into mainstream American culture and can often be found aligned with conservative Protestants and Catholics on controversial social issues. Mormons, Protestants, and Catholics have all frequently opposed abortion; however, they

are not always in agreement on other matters. During recent debates on stem-cell research involving the issue of when human life begins, Mormon senator Orrin Hatch broke ranks with his conservative Catholic and Protestant colleagues and supported the research. He indicated that he did not believe that life simply began at conception. This opinion was in keeping with the Mormon understanding of preexistent spirits. Religious debates fraught with reproductive implications continue to rage over such diverse issues as the selling of eggs, surrogate mothering, and cloning.

—Kevin Reilly

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New Religious Traditions: Communitarian Movements, Mormonism; Protestantism in America: Puritanism; Ritual and Performance: Birth; Science: Technology

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## SEXUAL DISSIDENCE

*Sexual dissidence* is a label coined by anthropologist Gayle Rubin to refer to the public expression of unconventional sexual views. Sexual dissidents include supporters of homoeroticism, bisexuality or transgenderism, and other unorthodox practices such as non-monogamy, S/M (somasochism), and commercial sex involving uncoerced adults. Sexual dissidence is directly linked with religious freedom in that religious groups today are as divided over issues of sexuality as over matters of doctrine. Religious freedom and tolerance therefore have come to require a willingness to live with serious disagreements about sexuality. There is also a broad analogy between sexual dissent and religious freedom, even when sexual dissent is carried out under secular auspices. Religion and sexuality are both arenas in which people make profound decisions about the course and meaning of their lives. Politically, both religious freedom and the right to sexual dissent can be grounded in constitutional freedoms of conscience, speech, and association. Just as the American political system does not require religious uniformity of its citizens, so it need not require orthodoxy in matters of sexuality.

For many Americans, disagreements over sexuality are, in and of themselves, religious disagreements. Homosexuality is the most prominent area of such disagreement. A number of conservative religious groups in the United States, including the Roman Catholic Church and the Southern Baptist Convention, officially oppose same-sex marriage, gay civil rights laws, and other expressions of sexual dissidence. However, many progressive religious groups, including the United Church of Christ, the Unitarian Universalist Association, and Reconstructionist Ju-

daism, officially support gay rights. Moreover, many denominations are profoundly divided internally on issues of sexuality, some nearly to the point of schism.

The concept of sexual dissidence challenges religious conservatives, who readily claim religious freedom for themselves, to respect the religious and moral freedom of those who challenge sexual orthodoxies. This point applies to progressives as well. The concept of sexual dissidence implies that sexual politics across the political spectrum might do well to rely more on conscience and less on arguments about sexual identity. Finally, sexual dissidence entails a right to participate in public and political life, and this offers a way beyond the current impasse over the right to privacy. Each of these themes warrants some elaboration.

Conservatives often denounce unconventional sexualities as bald immorality. Progressives, in contrast, typically reduce sexual conservatism to irrational prejudice ("bigotry") or neurotic fear ("homophobia"). But if sexuality entails conscientious disagreements, then all parties owe their opponents a presumption of moral or religious seriousness. Even a person who does not believe in reincarnation can acknowledge that reincarnation, for those who believe in it, is a religious belief. The same is true for people who disagree about sexuality. Democratic dialogue is not advanced when a progressive insists that a conservative's moral opposition to homosexuality is a mere phobia. Nor can public discourse advance if conservatives dismiss conscientious sexual dissidence as nihilistic or demonic.

The concept of sexual dissidence offers an alternative or complement to identity-based arguments.



A gay couple in New Orleans, Louisiana (Trip/G. Fleming)

Debates about gay rights, in particular, often boil down to arguments about identity versus choice in sexual preference. Progressives typically claim that sexual orientation is a matter of identity, whereas conservatives argue that homosexual behavior, if not preference, is a choice and indeed a wrong choice. It is true that many gay men, transgendered persons, bisexuals, and lesbians think of their sexuality as a matter of identity, something that they did not choose. There is choice, however, when these persons speak or act in ways that publicly affirm these identities as socially acceptable, psychologically healthy, or morally good. This is the difficult choice that sexual minorities, and by extension others, call “coming out.” Moreover, many unconventional sexual choices, such as non-monogamy, do not involve identity claims at all. Progressive rhetoric about sexual identities may not capture the conscientious and voluntary character of these dangerous decisions. Conservative claims about moral choices, however, do not reckon adequately with the American political tradition, in which moral and religious choices are precisely the sorts of choices that must not be coerced.

The concept of sexual dissidence also offers an alternative to the controverted right of sexual privacy. In *Bowers v. Hardwick* (1986), the U.S. Supreme Court specifically denied that homosexual sex is entitled to the same privacy as heterosexual sex. Therefore, although sexual privacy remains a basic and enduring human value, at present it does not promise much legal support for sexual dissidents. Furthermore, sexual dissidence involves not just the private enactment of preferences but the public expression of conscience. Unless this right to public expression is firmly established, sexual minorities are constrained to live “closed” lives.

As many scholars have observed, the constitutional analogies between sexual dissent and religious freedom are strong. Religious freedom, the “first freedom” of Americans, was conceived by the framers themselves as freedom of conscience. The Supreme Court itself has acknowledged this principle in certain decisions involving the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. For example, the Court has granted conscientious-objector status to pacifists whose beliefs were based on conscience but not on religious affiliation or belief in God (*U.S. v. Seeger*, 1965; *Welsh v. U.S.*, 1970).

If religious freedom is essentially freedom of conscience, and if sexual dissidence is an expression of conscience, then it can be argued that sexual dissidence (like other conscientious convictions) should be protected under the Free Exercise Clause. Free Exercise is meant to ensure that citizens are free not only to believe but to act in accordance with their beliefs, unless a “compelling state interest” is in danger (*Sherbert v. Verner*, 1963). The scope of religious freedom, however, was diminished when the Supreme Court upheld a law prohibiting the sacramental use of peyote (*Smith v. Oregon*, 1990) and again when it struck down the religious Freedom Restoration Act (*City of Boerne v. Flores*, 1997). At present, the Free Exercise Clause cannot be invoked in support of religious or conscientious acts that violate “generally applicable law.”

This period in church-state jurisprudence is particularly relevant to those whose sexual acts, such as sodomy, remain in violation of “generally applicable laws.” Some gay advocates have responded by reasserting identity claims: That is, homosexuals retain their homosexual identities even when their acts have been criminalized and should not be ostracized for the identity alone. The concept of sexual dissidence suggests an alternative or complementary response to the criminalization of sexual difference. As legal scholars point out, the right to express a belief remains constitutionally sacrosanct, even when the enactment of a belief is illegal. Indeed, the right to freely express one’s objections to a law or policy is the very cornerstone of the right to political participation. The Supreme Court, at present, appears to agree. In 1996, it overturned Colorado’s Amendment Two, which would have invalidated not only existing but any future gay rights ordinances in that state (*Romer v. Evans*). Thus, notwithstanding its support for the criminalization of homosexual sex, the Court upheld the right of homosexuals to ongoing political participation. For some legal scholars, this also becomes an argument for civil rights laws to protect sexual dissidents (Halley 1994).

In addition to freedoms of conscience and speech, sexual dissidence can be linked to constitutional rights of association. The role of association corrects the tendency of American political thought to reduce religion to a sheerly individual and/or private freedom. Religious freedom would mean very little if it only entitled

citizens to hold their beliefs in silence. Believers must also be entitled publicly to express and also promote beliefs, and to associate with others who do so. It can be argued that the right to promote dissident sexual views, as well as other controversial views, deserves the same constitutional protections. By extension of the Free Exercise Clause, all citizens are entitled to vigorous public expression of their beliefs. By extension of the Establishment Clause, no religious or moral doctrine should be coercively established.

—Kathleen M. Sands

#### SEE ALSO

Native American Religions and Politics: Two-Spirit People; The Body; Generations: The Family; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Rights Movement, Conservatism, Feminisms, Liberalism

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## SEXUAL IDENTITIES

The essence of the Freudian revolution had everything to do with the placement of sexuality at the very heart of the construction of human personality, even in earliest childhood. The contemporary fixation on the concept of identity—and of sexual identity in particular—is one chief legacy of Freud and the Freudians. Persons today speak of their "sexual identity," labeling themselves as gay or lesbian, heterosexual or bisexual, in much the same way that persons of a previous generation labeled themselves as Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish. The language being used in these labels is so new, however, that the culture has not yet come to a consensus on what it means or how it may best be employed.

For many North Americans, disagreements over sexual identity (if not always sexuality as such) are, in and of themselves, seen as religious disagreements. Every human identity is composed of multiple elements, of course, and they exist in subtle hierarchies of value. It is just conceivable that a culture could exist in which the identity of individuals as right- or left-

handed would be a primary factor in both self-identification and identification by others. In the Baby Boom generation in North America, one's religious identity was still considered to be of primary significance. Since the cultural watershed of the 1960s, racial and ethnic—and now sexual—identities have replaced religious ones as the primary matters for discussion and debate in the wider culture.

In short, although the concept of "sexuality" is a decidedly modern concern, the notion of a "sexual identity" is a still more recent (perhaps a postmodern) one. In the 1970s and 1980s, as people began to realize just how recent this new way of talking about identity actually was, there arose an attempt to rethink assumptions about sexual identity. Michel Foucault's monumental *History of Sexuality*, in three volumes published between 1978 and 1986, represents one of the most important efforts in that direction. Foucault did not provide a *theory* of sexuality, whatever such a thing might look like. Rather, he attempted to write a *history* of the concepts of sexuality

and sexual identity, providing a critical analysis of the way people have learned to talk about sex and identity in the ways they do.

Already in the first volume, Foucault criticized what he called “the repressive hypothesis.” He called into question the premier story that North Americans (and, to a lesser degree, northern Europeans) tell themselves about themselves: namely, that they have all been profoundly repressed, sexually speaking, insofar as they are the product of a repressive culture and society. Foucault disagreed. He pointed out that this claim serves ironically to create a culture in which the willingness to speak candidly about sex begins to look like an act of courageous resistance. But in fact, Foucault argued, it is nothing of the kind. Speaking about sex—“turning it into discourse,” as he put it—has become a mainstream value. The never-ending sex-talk in the West gives the lie to the repressive hypothesis. Americans are not really repressed at all.

Viewed in one way, then, this essay can only be a piece of that problem, contributing to the very dilemma Foucault identified. By setting aside a sphere called “sexuality,” or “sexual identity,” and by asserting its centrality in the formation of identity, this essay itself is actually underwriting the very disciplines that Foucault criticized. Still, Foucault himself continued to write about sexuality—or rather, the history of the concept of sexuality—and most North Americans continue to represent themselves in terms of their sexual identity, an identity conceived in increasingly frank and diverse forms.

Sexuality was not always invoked as a crucial, or even an important, piece of one’s “identity”; that it is so now appears to be one of the chief cultural legacies of Freud. Whereas the scriptural monotheisms contented themselves with discussions of sexual *practices*, contemporary sex-talk focuses increasingly on a sexual *identity*. It is the very vagueness of that term that has generated so much talk and that has contributed to the confusion and volatility in many of this culture’s sexual debates.

Obviously, the primary debate raging in contemporary North American culture concerns the validity of what are commonly referred to as “alternative” sexual lifestyles and the question of whether homosexuality and bisexuality can be tolerated as acceptable points on the spectrum of human sexual practice. Other complex social debates grow out of this one—espe-

cially those concerning the validity of gay marriages, for example, or the rights of gay and lesbian couples (or individuals) to adopt children. Although Hawaii and Vermont have moved in the direction of recognizing and even sanctioning gay marriage, debates about adoption practices will likely require a national consensus, which does not yet exist despite the U.S. Supreme Court’s February 2002 nod in this direction. Here, as elsewhere, the law moves in stops and starts.

Religion, of course, can play an enormous role in helping to shape a person’s position on matters of sexual identity. Male homosexuality seems to be prohibited in the Hebrew Scriptures (Leviticus 18:22), and there are several Pauline epistles that also seem to condemn this alternative Greek lifestyle (Romans 1:23–24, 1 Corinthians 6:9, and 1 Timothy 1:10). The Qur’an is somewhat more ambiguous; male homosexuality appears as a relatively minor infraction at Sura 4:15, but Lot roundly condemns this practice in Sodom (at 7:80–81, 26:160–170, 27:55, and 29:29).

It is not at all clear, however, that these scriptural texts are condemning homosexuality as it is defined today. We say that homosexuality “seems” to be proscribed in these scriptural texts for several subtle but important reasons. First and foremost, it is not clear that there was a word in either Hebrew, Greek, or Arabic for what we call “homosexuality,” or for what medieval theologians called “sodomy.” In point of fact, both of these terms have complex histories. “Homosexual” was coined in the nineteenth century by the relatively new science of psychology, and it was a therapeutic name for what was commonly considered a disorder. Naturally, contemporary gays and lesbians reject the term because it implies that their “identity” may reasonably be thought of as a “disorder.”

This is the point with which Foucault grappled in an attempt to move beyond the way Freudian theory encourages people to conceive of sexual identity in the first place. Clearly, the Hebrews, Greeks, and Arabs recognized the existence of homoerotic practices among both men and women. All three groups seem to have wished to regulate such practices. But that is the point: They conceived of such matters as a question of practices rather than of identity. If sex is defined by what one does, not who one is, then all the law can regulate, in the final analysis, is behavior, not identity. The so-called sodomy laws—which prohibit all but genital intercourse between consenting adults

(male or female), a Georgian version of which was upheld as constitutionally viable by the U.S. Supreme Court (*Bowers v. Hardwick*, 478 U.S. 186 [1986]) prior to the state legislature's subsequent vacation of the statute—made it illegal for persons to engage in a variety of homoerotic practices. But it is obviously impossible for the law to regulate the manner in which a person understands his or her identity, sexually speaking. The U.S. Armed Services hierarchy understands this point well: Under its “don't ask, don't tell” policy, recruits may not be interrogated about their sexual identity, although their sexual practices may indeed be regulated.

An important and complex parting of the cultural ways is occurring in America. Jewish, Christian, and Muslim *scriptures*, much like contemporary constitutional law, speak of sexual practices as legitimate or not. But the current *psychological* vocabulary attempts to formulate sexuality as a crucial aspect of one's identity. This dilemma involves the age-old philosophical question of the relationship between doing and being, between what one does and who one is. This confusion was apparent already in the Kinsey Report on Male Sexuality published in 1948, incidentally, where it remained entirely unclear how many same-sex experiences a young man needed to have before he qualified as a homosexual.

The fact is that in modern Western society, people speak in two very different ways about sexual practices and sexual identity. To date, there has been no easy resolution of this problem. There has been no clear way to negotiate between the institutions of law, religion, and psychology. At the same time, those persons who identify themselves as gay or lesbian have rejected such institutions altogether in increasing numbers as they attempt to create alternative subcultures and ways of conceiving of their sexual selves.

The ongoing debate about the legitimacy of gay marriage has proven to be one important flash point for such recent developments. On the one hand, given that marriage is simply a social convention (even if, as many believe, it is a social convention mandated by God), it seems odd that gays and lesbians would wish to be recognized as “married.” Marriage, after all, is simply what this society calls the monogamous union between a man and a woman. It is heterosexual by design, and heterosexist in intention. Might not gays and lesbians come up with authentic *alternative* names, and

alternative institutions, to conceive of their own erotic unions? Those gays and lesbians who wish to have their unions recognized as marriages clearly want *recognition*, first and foremost. They are asking the larger society to recognize the legitimacy of their lifestyle, and at least implicitly, the legitimacy of their sexual identity and its associated practices. Since a cultural consensus has not yet emerged governing what the main question is here, resolving it will not be simple, nor will it happen soon.

—Louis A. Ruprecht, Jr.

#### SEE ALSO

The Body; Generations: Baby Boomers, The Family

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# VIOLENCE



Religion is popularly associated with exemplars of nonviolence and compassion—the Buddha, Jesus, Mahatma Gandhi, Henry David Thoreau, Rumi, and the Baal Shem Tov, to name a few. Yet the history of many religions includes periods when devotees committed violence or were violently persecuted. Joachim Wach (1951) posited that religion is the most intense of human experiences. In the name of religion, people may commit or suffer extraordinary violence to achieve or defend religious goals. Although most religion does teach peace and discourage or forbid violence, it has a lesser recognized violence-producing dimension. Schismatic religious groups may take specific doctrines from their “parent” religions and reinterpret them to justify or mandate violent acts.

Consider the testimony of Sam Bowers, “imperial wizard” of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, that God imparted to him the gift of “overwhelming grace” as he was contemplating suicide and called him to cut down the “prophets of Baal” by murdering three civil rights activists in the summer of 1964. Listen to the voice of Paul Hill in his “Letter to the White Rose Banquet,” which speaks chillingly of his divine call to assassinate a clinic doctor in order to combat the “holocaust” of abortions (Hill 1997). Bowers and Hill were not single actors or madmen. Religion is invariably a collective phenomenon; insanity seldom is. Bowers and Hill each killed designated evildoers on behalf of a cadre of fellow believers to achieve a goal conceived of and justified by their particular interpretations of Christianity.

In order to understand how violence can spring from the most cherished religious traditions, it helps to recognize that commonly listed features of religion—faith, mystical experience, congregational worship, belief in God—fall far short of encompassing “religion” as it actually appears in the world. Scholars have suggested that religion is primarily oriented toward, among other things, power, salvation, well-being, ultimate reality, and ultimate concern. Divine power inspires dread as well as reverence; salvation or well-being may be attained through benign or violent means; ultimacy may be couched in absolutes

that vilify those who stand outside the congregation. A religious conviction is qualitatively different from a political opinion or a philosophical tenet. It is experienced as an overriding command from a source of knowledge regarded as sacred. Religion may call devotees to transform themselves and the world in a variety of innovative ways. It is full of ambivalent symbolism, and the idea that religion is uniformly good or peaceful is untenable.

For the purpose of grappling with the convergence of religion and violence, religion may be considered a construction of ultimate reality by means of an elaborate, self-consistent system of interpretation that is regarded as absolute truth. Congregations express their version of ultimate reality in acts, words, spatial divisions, and social rules. They regard the source of absolute truth as a real power beyond the everyday world. The community regards itself as those to whom the truth is entrusted by that power. It believes it is called or chosen to live by and sometimes die for that truth. How it interprets the call probably determines whether it sanctifies violence.

Those like Sam Bowers and Paul Hill who commit crimes in the name of religion believe they are obeying a divine command to bring the ordinary world into line with the community’s conception of absolute truth. Unlike ordinary criminals, religious criminals may sacrifice their lives and freedom to achieve an ultimate goal or concern. An ultimate concern is a religion’s organizing principle. It is what members profess to live by and, if necessary, to die for. Because of their intense commitment to that ultimate goal, perpetrators of religious violence are likely to accept greater hardship and higher numbers of casualties than ordinary criminals. Criminal acts motivated by religious resolve may be more shocking or “spectacular” than ordinary crimes; they may even be intended to transform society by destroying it first.

Much about religion and violence may be gleaned from actual cases as they appear in their historical contexts. Such cases may be divided into at least three categories, although this typology is a “triage,” not a complete classification. Moreover, a religious group may exhibit features of more than one category and

may change from one category to another over time. With those caveats, the categories may be stated as follows:

1. Religious groups that initiate violence or revolution because they believe they are called or chosen to play an active role in the transformation of the social world.
2. Religious groups that commit suicide or homicide because, paradoxically, they believe it is the only way to achieve their collective goal of ultimate well-being.
3. Religious groups that are stigmatized and directly assaulted because they are believed to threaten society.

Not all religious groups that are believed to be violent or that express themselves in violent symbolism would actually commit violence. There are instructive cases where groups did not intend to commit violence but felt they had to defend themselves against outsiders or the state. Each group is distinct in its doctrines, symbolism, and practices. One cannot predict with certainty which groups will act violently, although there is a growing body of interdisciplinary scholarship on problematic religious groups.

### **Religious Groups That Initiate Violence or Revolution**

The good news is that religious groups that initiate violence or revolution are fewest in number and generally have difficulty attracting followers. Unfortunately, their practices may be chronically disruptive or socially destabilizing and catastrophic.

Conventional religions transmit violent myths of the world's beginning and end. Jesus said, for example, that the Rule of God would come "violently." Allah's earliest messages to Muhammad revealed a catastrophic end of days and judgment of mankind. Buddha was shocked into his journey toward enlightenment by the sight of sick, aging, and dying individuals. Iconography of the Indian goddess Kali displays her thirst for battle and blood.

Moreover, some religions include doctrines of salvation that emphasize sacrifice. Early Muslim warriors sacrificed themselves in battle against larger armies of unbelievers. Exemplary martyrdom was ex-

tolled by the Christian church as a means of converting the world. Buddhist tales of giving one's life to satisfy the hunger of tiger cubs or other suffering creatures teach new generations about the virtue of their forebears.

Dissenting groups that break away from conventional religions may appropriate their symbols and doctrines and reinterpret their content to justify violence. For example, first-century Jewish Zealots took Phineas the priest as their exemplar of resistance to cultural assimilation and foreign rule (Numbers 25:1-9). Phineas was an Israelite who averted God's plague by murdering a Jewish chieftain's son for cohabiting with a Midianite woman. Conversely, anti-Semitic Christian Identity believers, who justify white supremacy and claim that Anglo-Saxons are the "real" Jews, the chosen of God, consider Phineas as their model of violent resistance to the "sin" of "race-mixing."

The Jewish doctrine of the *rodef* (one who pursues other Jews with the intent to kill them) was speciously used by Yigal Amir in 1995 to justify his assassination of Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin. That same year, Japanese terrorists appropriated a Buddhist doctrine and reinterpreted it to justify "saving" other souls by killing them. In these and many other cases, schismatic groups took benign doctrines and reinterpreted them to justify violence within their self-consistent system of ultimate reality. Group documents may actually mention that those who kill are acting as "the hand of God." No major religion seems to be immune to schismatics who would twist its doctrines to promote war, mayhem, and terror.

For five days in April 1985, federal agents confronted a heavily armed religious settlement in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas that called itself The Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord (CSA). The group had originated eight years earlier as a peaceful Christian fellowship that called itself Zarephath, after the prophet Elijah's refuge in the wilderness. The change of names signaled the community's critical transformation from a congregation where women were prophets to a militant sect that stockpiled arms and conducted raids on targeted enemies outside the settlement. The change occurred after the group's leader adopted the Christian Identity doctrine. The CSA militants were preparing to overthrow the allegedly "Zionist Occupation Govern-

ment” of the United States. CSA members were the first to consider blowing up the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, an atrocity carried out ten years later by a fellow traveler named Timothy McVeigh.

Unconventional groups may elicit suspicion or ridicule because of their practices and doctrines. Maintaining secrecy is one way of thwarting unwanted attention, but secrecy may intensify suspicion and stimulate the scrutiny the group abhors. A stigmatized group that feels persecuted by unwanted media or police attention will be on guard. It may set a firm boundary between itself and the “evil” or “ignorant” outside world. The boundary is like a “skin” that, if crossed, will often provoke an aggressive defense of the group’s “body.”

The Montana Freemen were a small, revolutionary group of “common-law” activists who sought to drop out of society and replace U.S. institutions with their illicit shadow system of courts, judges, and county sheriffs. Their courtrooms served as their designated “churches” where biblical justice was dispensed. They claimed that the civil law did not apply to them, challenged judges, refused lawyers, and filed nuisance appeals couched in legalistic language taught in their own seminars and schools. Building on dissatisfaction with government latent in American society, the common-law activists spread their doctrines and practices throughout the United States.

Some Freemen retaliated against civil authorities who challenged their methods by sentencing them in their Freemen-style grand juries. Some local officials in the Pacific Northwest were harassed and attacked, but for the most part the Freemen were dubbed “paper terrorists” for clogging the courts with endless paperwork. By the mid-1990s, their parallel system of governance was on a collision course with civil society, and their doctrines and practices were spreading from Montana to more than thirty other states.

In 1996, federal agents cornered a core group of Freemen on a Montana wheat farm, arrested two leaders, and confined the rest of them behind a perimeter. Threatened with persecution by the “satanic” government, armed Freemen brandished guns to defend their sanctuary, which they called “Justice Township.” Only after they believed that their ultimate concern—their paper “case” against the government—would be protected by an agreement with the

FBI did the Freemen end their eighty-one-day stand-off—the longest in American history between the state and a religious movement. The Freemen incident was carefully managed by federal agents to avoid heightening the group’s sense of persecution, giving them time to work on a solution that allowed the Freemen’s precious legal papers to be handed over to a neutral intermediary.

American authorities are reluctant to identify problematic groups like the Freemen as “religious.” The First Amendment establishes a separation between church and state because of the country’s unique history as a refuge for nonconforming sects that fled Europe to escape persecution. Authorities feared that if they called the Freemen “religious,” the disruptive group might seek protection for their activities under the First Amendment. Ironically, because they rejected U.S. judicial institutions as “satanic,” the Freemen would have been highly unlikely to claim that protection.

Media reports regularly dismiss new religious groups by branding them “cults,” forgetting that most conventional religions began as illicit, stigmatized movements. The process of making new religions occurs at all times in nearly all places, but they are more visible, and, arguably, more unconventional, in the United States than in most other places because of the First Amendment shield.

Most recently, history was shaped by the “holy terror” of nineteen Jihadists from the Middle East who hijacked four U.S. airliners and crashed three of them into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Jihadism is espoused by schismatic Muslims who narrowly reinterpreted the traditional doctrine of jihad to mean only perpetual armed struggle against infidels, Jews, and apostates. Jihadists claim it is a “necessary duty” for all “true” Muslims to engage in this battle. Their aberrant doctrine mandates even the killing of civilians, which is forbidden by mainstream Islam.

### **Religious Groups That Commit Suicide or Homicide**

Some religious groups that do not promote violence as a religious duty may still harm themselves or others. Infrequently, “fragile” religious groups that believe they cannot achieve their most important goal because of perceived persecution or internal stresses



The aftermath of the mass suicide by members of Jim Jones's People's Temple cult, Jonestown, Guyana, 1978  
(Bettmann/Corbis)

may turn to suicide or homicide as an alternative means of realizing their ultimate concern.

Fragile religious groups are like time bombs: They may tick along without incident for years and then suddenly implode owing to reasons that become apparent only in the wake of disaster. Two of the best-known American cases are the People's Temple (Jonestown) and Heaven's Gate. Members of the People's Temple left the United States for Guyana in the late 1970s because they felt persecuted and constrained. Both fragile groups experienced a decline in the health of their leaders in the years preceding the events that brought them to the world's attention.

Jim Jones gathered a multiracial congregation of socially conscious followers under his wings during the 1960s and 1970s when cultural change swept the United States and opened up positions of status and power to minorities and women. During its first few decades, the People's Temple was "as American as cherry pie" in its context of heady social transforma-

tion, according to Rebecca Moore (Wessinger 2000, 122). But as Jim Jones's mental and physical health declined, the group became more internally repressive. It moved from its perceived racist and classist milieu in California to Guyana in the mid-1970s, but defectors and family members continued to issue reports of abuse of members and children. Finally, when a delegation led by Congressman Leo Ryan, accompanied by journalists and photographers, descended upon the remote settlement in 1978 and left with sixteen defectors, they were attacked by Jones's security personnel. Jones then gathered his flock and invited them to kill themselves in the ultimate act of protest against an "inhumane world" that would not leave them in peace. Those who refused to take poison were murdered. Nine hundred and eighteen people, including 294 children, died in the largest mass suicide in American history.

The doctrines and practices of Heaven's Gate combined an otherworldly gnosticism with obsessions

about outer space and cyberspace. Like Jones's followers, members of Heaven's Gate sought a place on earth where they could feel at home, but they could not find it in New Mexico, Oregon, or California, where the community finally settled in a mansion near San Diego. Led by a man named "Do" and a woman named "Ti," the community was comprised largely of young, technically gifted ascetics who sought to purify their material bodies and earthly existence in preparation for a final call to attain "the Level Above Human." One of them gave voice to the group's view of ultimate reality, testifying that "the Next Level, the Kingdom of Heaven, is a real physical place." In March 1997, about forty members committed a ritualized suicide that they believed would transfer them to a spaceship following the Hale-Bopp comet. A subsequent study of Heaven's Gate and its documents led to the conclusion that after Ti died and Do was convinced that his health was failing, the "crew" believed it was time to follow them to a heavenly place where they could shed their "human ways, ties, addictions, thinking, and gender behavior" (Smmody 1997).

It would be a mistake to conclude that members of religious sects that self-destruct are radically different from people outside the group. In fact, their membership may be as educated, wealthy, socially engaged, or mentally sound as their more conventional neighbors. Contemporary themes in popular culture—TV shows, social issues, rock music, technology, UFOs—all found expression in People's Temple or Heaven's Gate. For the latter, this meant eating a final meal at a fast-food restaurant before cheerfully lying down and "exiting" to the Kingdom of Heaven.

A Japanese sect, Aum Shinrikyo, or "Supreme Truth," was the first to use a chemical weapon against nonmembers. It is an exceptional case that exhibited features of both of the first two categories of violent religious groups. Elite members of Aum reinterpreted the salvation doctrine of *pao* from Tibetan Buddhism to justify murdering civilians by releasing sarin gas in a Tokyo subway in March 1995, killing twelve people and sickening 5,000. The *pao* doctrine concerned the transfer of dead souls to a higher realm, but Aum's leaders used it to justify the murder of spiritual "subordinates" by accomplished "masters." Aum had become increasingly fragile as it attracted the scrutiny of police and failed to meet its recruitment goals. Exter-

nal persecution and internal stress may have led elite members to intensify their violent deeds and assert a "heroic" role for themselves in their script for the "salvation" of humanity.

The Aum case has been seized upon as a paradigm of the anticipated use by terrorist groups of weapons of mass destruction. Since 1995, American policymakers have issued public warnings that biochemical, nuclear, and biological agents would "inevitably" be used in a domestic terrorist attack. After religious terrorists crashed commercial jetliners into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in September 2001, the United States began restructuring its foreign policy and domestic institutions in order to preemptively interdict—by force, if necessary—any organization or nation-state believed to be plotting a terrorist attack or amassing unconventional weapons.

### Religious Groups That Are Stigmatized and Assaulted

Religious groups that are directly assaulted by their neighbors or the state are qualitatively different from groups that practice violence to achieve their ultimate goal. Groups that are assaulted are first stigmatized. They may respond to stigmatization by retreating to a designated sanctuary that brings them closer to ultimate reality and their ultimate destiny. Despite severe persecution, such groups usually withstand a high number of casualties and degree of trauma because they believe they are chosen to participate in a divine plan that must play out. It is because they are primarily attuned to their ultimate reality and not to the everyday world that assaulted communities persist in doing what others find insupportable.

The most significant American example of a stigmatized and persecuted new religious movement is the Latter-day Saints, now one of the fastest-growing denominations in the world. Grant Underwood (in Wessinger 2000) has chronicled the tribulations of the early community between 1820 and 1896. The Saints were forced from one home after another from New York to Missouri and then to Illinois, where their prophet, Joseph Smith, was murdered in 1844, until they fled the United States altogether to find sanctuary in Utah territory. Mormons were stigmatized for practicing polygamy. They were also resented for their communalism, success in farming and business,



and active proselytizing. From the beginning, the Saints' positive theology attracted many converts. Thousands of newcomers made the arduous journey to Salt Lake City in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

In 1857, President James Buchanan dispatched troops to replace their leader, Brigham Young, but the Saints raided the army's supply lines, forcing them to retreat to the conference table. The Civil War and its aftermath granted the remote community a reprieve from persecution, allowing their unconventional movement the time and space to transform itself into a worldwide church. Underwood observed that "when a group is allowed to live unmolested by the world around them," they are unlikely to interpret their religious role in a violent manner (Wessinger 2000, 43). The Latter-day Saints proved able to accommodate themselves to mainstream society by slowly abandoning their stigmatized practice of plural marriage and toning down their rhetoric of God's vengeful punishment of their persecutors.

Accommodation was certainly not practiced by the "Bible-study group" of David Koresh, the leader of the multiethnic Branch Davidian community near Waco, Texas. The Davidian group split off from the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which itself originated as an American apocalyptic sect in the mid-1800s.

Born Vernon Howells, Koresh took the names of two biblical messiahs, David of Judah and Cyrus of Persia. He was a spellbinding interpreter of the violent Christian myth of the apocalypse. He was particularly intrigued with the seven seals prophecies in the Book of Revelation. Believing they had been chosen as witnesses to the secrets of the apocalypse unfolding in late twentieth-century events, the Branch Davidians named their communal property Mt. Carmel, after the place in Israel above the valley of Megiddo where, according to the Book of Revelation, the final battle between good and evil will take place. They believed Koresh was a messianic precursor of the battle and allowed him to cohabit with their wives and daughters to produce a generation of children destined for sainthood in the end times.

The community raised money by selling guns, a practice that led to intense scrutiny by federal authorities. On February 28, 1993, Treasury agents attempt-

ing to serve a warrant by "dynamic entry" into the Davidian sanctuary were met with gunfire. The Davidians believed that the forces of Satan were assailing them in fulfillment of their apocalyptic prophecy. During a six-week siege by federal agents and military forces, only a handful of Davidians chose to leave Mt. Carmel or to send out their children. On April 19, federal agents commanded the Davidians to exit Mt. Carmel, but they responded with gunfire. Government tanks lobbed canisters of CS gas into the buildings and tore down the walls. Unknown members of the community set three fires, and the majority of the inhabitants perished in the flames.

Many reasons have been advanced to explain the defensive intransigence of the Branch Davidians, but the chief reason may have been the group's strong "exemplary dualism"—its doctrine that the world was wracked by a cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil. The community believed it alone had correctly interpreted divine secrets and that it had been called to live in accordance with members' privileged knowledge of God's final plan. Had the Davidians chosen to leave Mt. Carmel, they would have had to abandon their living myth of the end times and reenter ordinary time. Davidian survivors continue to live at Mt. Carmel and still expect the return of their sinful messiah. Two other Davidian communities have never been persecuted and have never acted violently.

### Intensification of Religion and Violence

Throughout history, terrorist groups have engaged in extralegal violence that does not observe conventional rules of engagement. Many have viewed themselves as "the hand of God" called to fulfill a divine plan. Some have dedicated themselves to a utopian vision of a transformed world of ultimate justice and peace—achieved by the extermination of their designated enemies. Whether they are categorized as "secular" or "religious," all such groups are *ultimately concerned*. In that sense, they are acting religiously, not like ordinary criminals. To study and decipher them is to be forearmed against the violence they believe they must practice to bring the world into conformity with their version of absolute truth. In their doctrines, violence is glorified as a purifying agent that rids a corrupt world of polluting elements.

Some scholars detect an intensification of religious violence around certain symbolic dates, such as the end of a century or the turn of a millennium. Others argue that the propensity to act on a belief that society must be cleansed by violence and remade by the elect is found at all times in history, not only at times that mark the end and the beginning of eras. There are no reliable statistics, as yet, that support a finding that the number of violent groups increased around the year 2000, but the violence they practice seems to have intensified. The United States finds itself for the first time seriously challenged by an “asymmetrical” adversary that has no permanent address and observes no boundaries.

As noted earlier, on September 11, 2001, nineteen members of a transnational network of violent Muslim schismatics attacked the iconic centers of American power. The Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City collapsed after two hijacked jetliners crashed into their upper stories at full throttle. The Pentagon building in Washington, D.C., was severely damaged by another deliberately aimed jetliner. A fourth hijacked plane was allegedly intended to demolish the U.S. Capitol building, seat of the U.S. Congress, but its passengers wrestled it to the ground short of its target. Approximately 3,000 civilians died.

Islamic fundamentalism is an umbrella term for myriad movements that envision a society based on the *shari'a*, a body of law derived from Muslim religious texts and traditions. In Egypt, where fundamentalists were persecuted under the dictatorship of Gamal Abdul Nasser, a small number formed secret organizations that reinterpreted the Islamic doctrine of jihad to justify the assassination of President Anwar Sadat as an apostate Muslim in 1981. Jihad means “struggle” and can denote a spiritual or militant struggle against falsehood or injustice, but the Jihadists reinterpreted it as the “necessary duty” of armed struggle against apostate Muslims, infidels, and Jews. Jihadists believe that those who kill themselves in the act of jihad will be rewarded in heaven. Thus, they are not deterred by superior force or the threat of execution for their crimes. They envision a world liberated from ignorance and unbelief by a utopian caliphate, and they are willing to pursue this goal for as many generations as it takes to achieve it. Because they view the world as divided into a zone of

ignorance and evil identified with apostates and infidels and a zone of belief and purity identified with the Jihadi creed, they are empowered by their identification with the martyrdom of early Muslim warriors. Other Islamic fundamentalist groups may share the same dualistic worldview as the Jihadists, but they repudiate the heretical Jihadist doctrines of suicide and child-killing.

### The Ambivalent Power of Myth

Making myth real is a universal religious practice. Myths recount world-altering transformations in language splashed with hyperbole, miracles, prophecies, warnings, and astonishing events that *symbolically* convey an ultimate reality for which humans yearn. Kees Bolle (1968) has spoken of the “freedom of man in myth” to create, interpret, invent, and transcend the disappointment and limitations of everyday life. Myth symbolically expresses the ultimate truths of religions.

When new religious groups split off from orthodox religions, they may attempt to change their circumstances by making myth real—by bringing into being a transformed world in which they play pivotal, sacrificial, heroic roles. Religion is about ultimate power, ultimate freedom, ultimate truth, and ultimate salvation. Most of us understand these ultimacies as symbolic expressions of triumph over adversity and mortality. Those who feel they are called to save their world by ridding it of the unclean evildoers interpret symbolic myth literally and in doing so desecrate the “salvation” they seek to realize through violence.

The perplexing convergence of religion and violence may never be fully understood. It may express an ambivalent, fundamental truth about being human that we are not willing or able to confront. Scholars will continue to try to understand how and why groups justify violent acts, crimes, and terrorism in the name of religion. It is only by understanding the traumatic convergence of religion, persecution, ultimacy, chosenness, violence, and dualism that societies can anticipate and appropriately respond to the challenges that religious terrorists present. Conversely, only by deciphering the vision of ultimate reality of each suspect group can authorities avoid persecuting religions that are unconventional but nonviolent. As society transitioned from one millennium to another,

it saw the reawakening of all the hopes and fears stimulated by myths of the endings and beginnings contained in the world's oldest religious traditions. How people react to those possibilities will determine the shape of the world to come.

—Jean E. Rosenfeld

#### SEE ALSO

Buddhism in America; Catholicism in America; Islam in America; Judaism in America; New Religious Traditions: Mormonism, Seventh-day Adventism; Protestantism in America; Popular Theodicies (*all subentries*); Public Theologies and Political Culture: Fundamentalism; Sacred Time: End Times

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## APOCALYPTICISM

From the journal entries of Christopher Columbus to the sermons of David Koresh, apocalypticism—the imaginative rendering of the end of time and the world—has been important to American identity. Americans tell stories about cataclysmic destruction to define themselves in relation to the rest of the world. The apocalyptic myth describes a cosmic battle between forces of good and evil; ultimately, a righteous remnant is triumphant, the world as we know it comes to an end, and a new order is created. Apocalypticism, like all sacred narratives, explains the nature of the world and the meaning of human existence. Although it remains a vibrant theological component of many religious traditions in the United States, and the primary doctrine of a few newly formed “apocalyptic” religious groups, its explanatory appeal extends far beyond religious beliefs and practices into the realm of American popular culture.

The religious and secular narratives are not exactly the same, however. Within a religious worldview, apocalypticism follows a divine plan toward a transcendent goal, whereas in American culture, the end of the world is often imagined as the result of human action or natural disaster culminating in a meaningless, absurd end. Within American religions and culture, the apocalyptic myth does not simply describe but also defines the special role that Americans believe they have in the unfolding of their own sacred and national history. This history is determined by divine will, acted out by humans, and closely connected to the American landscape. To understand how this myth operates, one must examine both the apocalypticism that flourishes in American religions and the ways in which it has been expressed in American culture through social movements, political activism, and American national identity.

The term *apocalypse* (from the Greek *apokalypsis*) means to reveal or unveil. Apocalypticism in American religion and culture is grounded in Jewish and Christian Scriptures (such as the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation) that describe prophetic visions of sacred history moving toward a divinely predetermined goal, when its meaning and purpose will ultimately be revealed. Generally, the apocalyptic worldview provides for the redemption of a faithful

few, judgment of the wicked, and the institution of a new world order. As a literary genre, apocalypticism is a violent tale that employs contradictory images of order and chaos, hope and despair, endings and beginnings. What unites the various strands of apocalyptic literature is the foretelling of the end of the world by a central character who is able to interpret the signs of the end times through visions, scientific knowledge, or contact with divine beings. Apocalyptic beliefs can lead individuals in different directions, including radical social transformation, intense proletarianization, or complete withdrawal from the world.

The apocalyptic myth in the United States can be traced directly to Christian groups who justified colonization of the land and conquest of native peoples as furthering God’s redemptive plan. Since colonial times, American Christians have looked to Scripture to discern their special purpose in both biblical and national history, particularly as regards the millennial kingdom, 1,000 years of peace and harmony associated with the return of Christ. Christian apocalypticists divide broadly into two categories: premillennialists, who adhere to a more pessimistic view of human agency and believe that humans can do nothing to postpone or hasten the inevitable violent end of this world; and postmillennialists, whose more optimistic assessment of human nature is seen in their conviction that humans participate in the end times by transforming and perfecting themselves and the world.

Seventeenth-century New England Puritan writings were filled with apocalyptic expectations and understood fulfillment of biblical prophecy in contemporary political events and the natural world. The Puritans were convinced that they were divinely commissioned to settle in the New World in anticipation of the imminent return of Christ. Michael Wigglesworth’s poem “Day of Doom” (1662) exemplified the apocalyptic destruction that Puritans believed would accompany the Second Coming. Protestant religious revivals of the eighteenth century and the Revolutionary War proved to many Christians that scriptural accounts of the world being wiped clean and made over were being realized. These events prompted postmillennial speculation that focused less on cataclysmic ends and more on Americans ushering in a millennial age.



David Koresh, 1970  
(Waco Tribune Herald/Corbis Sygma)

Nationalism and apocalypticism merged in the new republic to forge a unique American identity in which citizens viewed themselves as part of a chosen nation that would redeem the world. In the nineteenth century, some Christians concerned themselves with dating the end of time. William Miller (1782–1849), for example, predicted that the Second Coming would occur in March 1843; his followers gathered at the appointed time, dressed in ascension robes, and waited in vain. Other groups, such as the Shakers (the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Coming) and the Oneida Perfectionists, maintained that they were already living in the end times and reorganized basic social structures, such as property, family, and sexuality, to reflect their theological beliefs. Apocalyptic belief spread by Christian missionaries to the Plains Indians in the late nineteenth century in the form of the Ghost Dance movement, which promised violent cleansing of the white population and the restoration of peace and harmony. This expectation culminated in the tragedy at Wounded Knee in 1890.

In the late twentieth century, apocalyptic religious

groups, most notably the Branch Davidians under the leadership of David Koresh, anticipated the year 2000 as the beginning of the end of time. Koresh preached that Christ would win the apocalyptic battle against the Antichrist and redeem the faithful; others, such as the Aetherians, a religious group with a focus on UFOs, believe that the imminent destruction of the world will be determined by Cosmic Masters and that only prayers to these higher beings can save humanity and the planet. Survivalist groups such as the Christian Identity Movement combine anti-Semitism, Christianity, and fears of governmental conspiracies in their predictions of the apocalyptic battles that they fear will soon occur on American soil. The Oklahoma City bombing involving Timothy McVeigh exemplifies the apocalyptic thread that runs through many of these groups. Fundamentalist Protestants, who also believed that the year 2000 held apocalyptic value, looked for signs as well. As days drew closer to January 1, 2000, televangelist Jack Van Impe of Troy, Michigan, exhorted the faithful to prepare for the end and sold videos and survival kits to be distributed among those who would not be taken in the Rapture, an end-times event in which, according to some biblical interpretations, Christians will be taken up into heaven to escape the final disastrous events of the last seven years of earth's history, which are called the Tribulation. Tim LaHaye wrote bestselling novels describing in detail the terror and torture in store for those "left behind."

Because apocalypticism is so embedded in American mythology in both pessimistic and optimistic terms, it transcends the traditionally defined religious arenas and appears in many aspects of American culture as fantasies of destruction that are balanced with hope for renewal. The apocalyptic myth has functioned to help Americans make sense of political, social, and environmental concerns such as nuclear war, health epidemics, and ecological disasters. In the 1950s, as Paul Boyer has noted, apocalyptic anxiety mounted among religious and nonreligious Americans as the fear of nuclear annihilation was realized through the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. One conservative religious response to this crisis came from Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970), a bestselling Christian book relating nuclear buildup and the Cold War to apocalyptic readings of Scripture. The secular version of apocalypticism in

American culture tells of humans' callous destruction of the world, their disregard for each other, and the absurdity of redemption at the end of time. Daniel Wojcik has shown the enduring appeal of the myth of apocalypticism expressed in popular films such as *Dr. Strangelove*, *The Road Warrior*, and *12 Monkeys*, which retell the myth of humans destroying themselves and the world with little hope for a redemptive future. Environmental activist groups such as Earth First! view their political actions to protect the environment as part of an apocalyptic battle between the forces to conserve life and the forces to destroy the planet. Drawing loosely on biblical apocalyptic themes, eco-martyrs such as Julia Butterfly Hill endure great deprivations to "witness" for the movement. More recently, the hip-hop music of Busta Rhymes and Bone Thugs-N-Harmony have employed scriptural images and racial identity politics to depict visions of urban apocalypticism. From catastrophic end-times scenarios, either divinely predetermined or the result of human agency or natural disaster, to a renewed paradise on earth, Americans have fantasized endlessly about their special role in the end of time.

—Amy DeRogatis

#### SEE ALSO

New Age; New Religious Traditions: Communitarian Movements; Protestantism in America: Puritanism; Popular Culture: Film; Popular Theologies: Antebellum America, Civil War and the Late Nineteenth Century, Colonial Period, Evil in the Twentieth Century; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Conservatism; Sacred Space: Nature; Sacred Time: End Times; Science: Science Fiction

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## LYNCHING

Lynching is a form of vigilante terrorism entailing the execution or violent punishment of alleged criminals outside of formal judicial processes. Lynching was never an overtly religious practice, but in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when southern white mobs tortured, hanged, and sometimes burned African Americans for alleged social and racial transgressions, lynching became a highly ritualistic and ceremonious event. At this time, it acted as a secular form of communal scapegoating for white communities wanting to restore social power and order amidst political and economic upheaval.

Lynching dates back to the American Revolution, when Colonel Charles Lynch of Virginia formed a vigilante group to punish Tories by flogging. Throughout the nineteenth century, lynching, or lynch-law, was practiced against suspected criminals,

particularly in frontier or sparsely populated areas that lacked solid judicial institutions. After the Civil War and Reconstruction, however, the social practice of lynching changed dramatically, becoming a predominantly southern phenomenon enacted by white mobs against African American men. Between 1880 and 1930, more than 3,000 African Americans were lynched in the South, compared to 723 whites. Outside the South, particularly in midwestern and western states, more than 700 lynchings were committed in this same period, mostly against white foreigners, Chicanos, Native Americans, and Asians. Over 95 percent of all victims were male. Lynch mobs, for the most part, consisted of native-born white men, and very few were ever prosecuted.

Lynching against African Americans in the South arose out of the economic instability and political

frustrations following the Civil War and Reconstruction. With the withdrawal of federal intervention in the South, white southerners sought to consolidate their social power through an intensive assault on any black advancement won in Reconstruction. Lynching emerged, along with Jim Crow segregation and other forms of racial oppression, as part of a pervasive ideology of white supremacy that cut across class lines. Racial violence was also more likely to occur in those areas of the South suffering from economic instability, where African Americans constituted both a political and an economic threat to white farmers recuperating from the devastations of war and struggling against the economic depressions of the 1890s. Mobs included, however, not only poor farmers or laborers, but tradesmen, white-collar workers, and professionals. Moreover, lynching could not have persisted unchecked without the tacit support of white elites, including judges, lawyers, politicians, and ministers.

Although lynching was rooted in economic and political instability, white southerners conceptualized the threat of African American equality in moral and sexual terms. Defenders of lynching claimed that African American men, now freed from the “civilizing” effects of slavery, were quickly regressing to their “savage” nature. In this view, lynching was a necessary defense to protect innocent whites against black criminality, particularly sexual assault against white women. The southern myth of the “black beast rapist” saw in black men a dire threat to the purity of white womanhood, and by extension, the moral integrity of the white South. Only 25 percent of lynching victims were actually lynched for rape, or attempted rape, but nevertheless the public justification of lynching focused on the black man’s alleged propensity for sexual aggression as a wholesale attack on white southern virtue.

Lynchings became highly ritualized ceremonies to punish racial transgression and expunge from the community the moral and social threat of the black criminal. Accounts of lynching describe similar kinds of violent methods and crowd behaviors that were repeated again and again across diverse areas of the South. Southern white mobs commonly inflicted elaborate tortures upon their black victims, including beatings and bodily mutilations, and they not only hanged their victims but would riddle their bodies with bullets or burn them alive. In quite a few cases, lynchings became public spectacles in which hun-

dreds, and sometimes thousands, of men, women, and children witnessed the event. Spectators collected body parts, bones, and pieces of rope or ash as souvenirs, and photographers snapped pictures, many of which were turned into postcards to be sold and sent to friends and family.

These rituals bore added meaning in the largely Christian South, where evangelical beliefs and practices dominated most aspects of life. In fact, the rise of church membership and attendance in the South rose 51 percent at the same time in which lynchings were increasing in intensity and frequency. This Christian influence helps explain how white southerners interpreted economic and social anxieties over race as a myth of white purity and black sinfulness, a sinfulness that sought to desecrate white purity through rape and miscegenation. The ritual of lynching thus resembled traditions of scapegoating, in which a community places the blame and punishment for communal disorder or sin onto one person. In lynching, white southerners exorcised the threat of disorder and impurity that the black man came to represent for them. Through the violent sacrifice of the black “criminal,” the racial purity and order of the white community were restored. White southerners expiated the sin in their midst through violent spectacle, ensuring white communal regeneration and redemption. Lynchings were thus symbolic performances that enacted communal beliefs in white supremacy and black desecration.

Local ministers, especially in small or rural communities, would often defend, or at least not outwardly condemn, lynching for fear of alienating their congregations. On the regional and national levels, however, leading white evangelical leaders and organizations, such as the Southern Methodists in General Conference and the Southern Baptist Convention, denounced lynching and supported federal legislation against it. Moreover, prominent white organizations working to eradicate lynching, namely the Commission on Interracial Cooperation and the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, were rooted in religious, particularly Methodist, traditions.

African American protest against racial violence in the South also had strong roots in evangelical Christianity. Many black activists conceptualized black lynching victims as Christian martyrs as a means to

cope with and protest racial oppression. African American artists such as William Henry Johnson and Prentiss Taylor, and writers such as Claude McKay and Gwendolyn Brooks, imagined lynching as a form of Christian sacrifice, claiming African Americans as the inheritors of Christian salvation and redemption. However, some African American leaders, such as W.E.B. Du Bois, eschewed such Christian conceptualizations of black suffering as passive, and others, such as Walter White and Ida B. Wells, condemned white southern brutality as Christian hypocrisy.

*Amy Louise Wood*

#### SEE ALSO

African American Religions: African American Christianity; Protestantism in America; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Rights Movement; Ritual and Performance

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## SACRIFICE

Among all the forms of religious violence, none is more ubiquitous than sacrifice. Some form of ceremonial sacrifice, entailing the real or symbolic act of killing a victim in a ritualized setting, can be found in most religions and is the very centerpiece of some (such as Aztec religion and the Vedic religion of ancient India). In other religious traditions (most famously and obviously Christianity), sacrifice as a paradigmatic sacred act lies at the very foundation of the religion and at the heart of its theology. Even more widespread is the application of the *idea* or *concept* of sacrifice to a variety of violent acts both within religions and in modern, secularized life. Acts of violence as various as hunting, warfare, martyrdom, suicide, and capital punishment have been (and continue to be) interpreted as, and therefore transformed into, a "sacrifice."

"Sacrifice" derives from a Latin word that literally means "to make sacred." One could argue that sacrifice is at bottom a conceptual tool that functions within culture to "make sacred," legitimize, or make meaningful, acts of violence. Indeed, it is arguably the very function of "sacrifice" (as both a ritual act and a conceptual label) to sacralize activities that could otherwise be regarded as illegitimate, meaningless, pro-

fane, or even criminal. The same act that under other circumstances or from an alternative point of view would be regarded as, for example, a murder or suicide is transformed when it is designated a "sacrifice."

Although some scholars of religion have defined sacrifice differently—as a kind of gift-giving ceremony or communal meal, for example—many others have understood sacrifice as fundamentally an act of "sacred violence." Some have emphasized the fact that sacrificial rituals often develop as means of commemorating primordial and foundational acts of violence: the crucifixion of Jesus in Christianity, or the hunt (Burkert 1983), or a mythical patricide (Freud [1913] 1950). Many observers highlight the paradoxical fact that the most sacred and the most profane acts seem to come together in sacrifice. Sacrifice is therefore also understood to be an act about which there is great ambivalence. As Rene Girard wrote, "In many rituals the sacrificial act assumes two opposing aspects, appearing at times as a sacred obligation to be neglected at grave peril, and at other times as a sort of criminal activity entailing perils of equal gravity. . . . If sacrifice resembles criminal violence, we may say that there is, inversely, hardly any form of violence that cannot be described in terms of sacrifice" (Girard 1977). Or as





An Aztec priest performing the sacrificial offering of a living human heart to the war god Huitzilopochtli  
(Library of Congress)

Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss observed nearly a century ago in what remains one of the classic studies of the topic, the culminating point and most sacred moment of the sacrifice, when the sacralized victim is put to death, is also “a crime, a kind of sacrilege” (Hubert and Mauss [1898] 1964).

Crucial to such theories is the pivotal role played by the “victim,” the thing or being “offered up” in the sacrifice. One of the victim’s main functions is to stand in or substitute for the sacrificer. Sacrifice is thus an act of violence displaced, and it is indeed this displacement of violence onto the substitute that distinguishes a “sacrifice” from the profane acts of literal murder or suicide. The victim, in order to play this role properly, must be understood to be *close to* the sacrificer but *not identical to* him or her—thus the typical selection of the sacrificial victim from among one’s children, slaves, domesticated animals, “first fruits,” and so on. Such a conceptualization of the victim also allows for sacrificial violence to sometimes assume a

scapegoating function, whereby the “sins” of the group are transferred onto a liminal and marginalized victim (who is both “us” and “not us”). Here the sacrificial victim is made to bear the impurities of the group as a whole. In the sacrifice, the profane or even criminal act of the “murder” of the scapegoat-victim is transformed into a sacred act of purification and expiation.

Sacrifice as an act of violence also entails a great deal of mystification, if not denial. Religions with traditions of ritual sacrifice usually surround the sacred act of killing with many rules and taboos and often simply deny that what is happening is really happening. The ritualists avoid any responsibility for the victim’s death, and the act of killing the victim is shrouded in euphemism whereby the victim is, for example, merely being “quieted” or sent to a better existence. As one ancient Indian text put it, “Violence [*himsa*] when done in the sacrifice is really nonviolence [*ahimsa*].”

In other cases, however, the violence inherent in sacrifice is proudly displayed and deployed as a kind of weapon of intimidation. In the infamous mass human sacrifices carried out by the Aztecs, the victims of choice were often captured enemy soldiers (or people from client states offered as tribute) who were executed by the thousands in what David Carrasco has called “ritual extravaganzas.” One of the main purposes of such displays was apparently political intimidation. Carrasco wrote: “Curiously, at these ceremonies of massive human sacrifice, the kings and lords from allied and enemy city-states were invited to the ceremonial center to witness the spectacular festival. The ritual extravaganza was carried out with maximum theatrical tension, paraphernalia, and terror in order to amaze and intimidate the visiting dignitaries, who returned to their kingdoms trembling with fear and convinced that cooperation, and not rebellion, was the best response to Aztec imperialism” (Carrasco 1999). Such acts of intentionally overt sacrificial violence might be understood to serve a pacifying role in another sense. As Rene Girard has insisted, “Only violence can put an end to violence” (Girard 1977), pointing out that sacrifice serves as one method whereby the violence inherent in society itself is channeled and focused onto an “acceptable” victim (the scapegoat, who cannot retaliate). Sacrifice at least temporarily diverts violence away from members within a society by redirecting it toward the substitutionary figure of the scapegoat-victim.

“Sacrifice” continues to be employed in modern, secularized societies to legitimate and transform acts of violence. In what has been called the “civic religion” of modern nationalism, the populace is often called upon to make “sacrifices” for the nation and its security, up to and including offering up their sons and daughters in war. The discourse and performance of modern American capital punishment also often turns on language, conceptualizations, and ritualizations reminiscent of the violence in religious sac-

rificial traditions. Modern executions are highly ritualized affairs—with an inordinate attention to detail—that result in the death of a victim, as are many traditional sacrifices. And the victims here, as in the traditional rituals, tend to be marginalized or even “liminal” figures who often seem to function as scapegoat figures for larger social problems. In American executions they are disproportionately drawn from racial minority groups and from the economically disadvantaged, and have even included the mentally retarded.

It would seem probable that as long as violence is a part of human life there will be the application of the concept of “sacrifice” to transform it and make it “sacred.”

—Brian K. Smith

#### SEE ALSO

Death; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion; Ritual and Performance

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## TERRORISM

Beginning in the last decade of the twentieth century, a burst of new religious activism in various parts of the world has led to incidents of terrorism in virtually every religious tradition and every part of the world. American military installations and symbols of American power have often been the target of these attacks, including the devastating aerial assault on September 11, 2001, that destroyed New York City's World Trade Center and claimed the lives of 3,000 persons.

The al Qaeda network led by Osama bin Laden was implicated in the World Trade Center assault. Earlier the network was linked with the 2000 attack on the USS *Cole* in a harbor in Yemen, the 1998 attacks on U.S. embassies in Africa, the 1997 bombing of a U.S. military residence building in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, and the earlier attack on the World Trade Center in 1993, organized by expatriate Egyptians in New Jersey associated with the blind cleric Sheik Omar Abdul Rahman. Bin Laden's anti-Americanism was motivated by an image of global warfare based on the conviction that he and his followers were protecting the social values and organization of traditional Islam. In 2002, members of the Jewish Defense League were alleged to have attacked Muslims in America in retaliation.

Most acts of religious terrorism on American soil have been related to Christianity, however. These have included the shootings at a Jewish day-care center in Los Angeles in 1999, the 1996 bombing at the Atlanta Olympic Games, the 1995 devastation of Oklahoma City's Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, and a rash of attacks on abortion clinics and gay bars at the turn of the twenty-first century. Two major schools of thought lie behind such acts in the present day, one justified by Christian Reconstruction theology and the other by ideas associated with Christian Identity. The latter also provides the ideological support for many of America's militia movements.

Christian Reconstruction theology provided the ideological justification for the 1994 killing of abortion clinic staff in Florida by a Presbyterian pastor, the Reverend Paul Hill, and for a wave of abortion clinic attacks by Lutheran, Presbyterian, and other Christian activists over a fifteen-year period. Although these acts have been condemned by the most prolific

Reconstruction writer, Gary North, the violence is motivated by the Reconstruction goal of tearing down the wall between church and state and establishing a Calvinist religious politics in the United States.

A different theological school, Christian Identity, is behind many of the militia encounters with secular authorities in the American Midwest, Northwest, and Southwest regions. The central idea of this movement is that white Anglo-Saxons are the true inheritors of the divine promises of the Old Testament. Contemporary followers are extremely antigovernment and disapprove of what they regard as the government's permissive attitude toward ethnic pluralism and different sexual orientations.

A variant on Christian Identity thinking is the Cosmotheism of William Pierce, whose novel *The Turner Diaries* (1978) inspired Timothy McVeigh to bomb the Oklahoma City federal building. The novel depicted a great war between a sinister secular government and a freedom-loving band of patriots who had their own monklike version of what they regarded as pure Christianity. Although McVeigh and other followers of William Pierce despised the established religion of most American churches—including those related to the Christian Identity tradition—they regarded themselves as upholding the true spirit and values of Christendom. Prior to the September 11, 2001, assault on the World Trade Center, McVeigh's act had been the most devastating terrorist attack in American history. Though he received the death penalty and was executed in 2001, McVeigh remained convinced that he was right. He maintained that he had acted only as a soldier in a righteous cause.

—Mark Juergensmeyer

### SEE ALSO

Islam in America; Protestantism in America; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Fundamentalism

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The twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York burn before collapsing after a terrorist attack, September 11, 2001 (Reuters NewMedia Inc./Corbis)

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## WAR

The characteristics of North American warfare are as varied as the people who have inhabited the continent. They include complex tribal rituals through which war was often but not always circumscribed, and through which warriors made entry into and purification from a state of war. French and English colonists often adopted Native American styles of warfare in the many conflicts of the seventeenth century. These same colonists, however, also understood the so-called barbarism of Native Americans at war to be a crucial element in the distinction between the barbaric and the civilized, the human and the "other."

For European colonists, early conflicts with Native Americans, such as the Pequot War of 1637 and King Philip's War of 1675–1676, were religious crises. Understanding themselves as God's new chosen people, they interpreted the horror of war as God's judgment upon them. They also, however, perceived war against Native Americans as holy war, which meant that Christian warriors had divine sanction to wage war without restraint on the "ungodly" Native Americans, while they themselves could remain "godly" in the process.

The myths, symbols, and rituals of warfare were the basic building blocks of the emerging nation's civil religion. From the American Revolution through the total wars of the twentieth century, war was perceived as a fundamentally religious event and warriors were among the culture's religious figures. War brought apocalyptic fears of chaos and destruction, literally old worlds disappearing—"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord: he is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored; He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword," wrote Julia Ward Howe during the Civil War in 1862—and the utopian promise of new worlds being born. World War I, exclaimed President Woodrow Wilson, was a war to make the world "safe for democracy."

The nation's warriors have often been celebrated as savior figures, redeemers, and creators. Through their redemptive blood sacrifice, the nation emerged cleansed and reborn, and warriors gained immortality in the life of the new nation. The image of the Minuteman, Billy Yank, Johnny Reb, the Doughboy, and the GI is not a celebration of a warrior class but of civilian warriors humane and righteous. Memorial Day and Veterans Day are part of the nation's civil religious calendar through which martial sacrifice is honored, and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery, which holds the remains of a warrior from World War I, is a symbol that holds together clashing images: war as a glorious and heroic event, and modern war as an occasion of mass death.

Battlefields—symbolically transformed by the power of the events that transpired on them—are a constitutive element of the American commemorative landscape. Lexington and Concord; the Alamo; Civil War sites such as Antietam, Shiloh, Vicksburg, and Gettysburg; sites of conflict with Native Americans such as the Washita and the Little Bighorn, site of "Custer's Last Stand"; and Pearl Harbor—in which the sacred relic of the USS *Arizona* is located—are only the best known of the hundreds of battlefields that attract tourists, pilgrims, and battle reenactors. Various forms of veneration take place at such sites: patriotic rhetoric, which celebrates the warrior virtues as contemporary models for civic life; monument building, designed to ensure that subsequent generations never forget the sacrifices made for them; and preservation efforts, so that the sacred ground will never be contaminated by secular commercial intrusion.

Battlefields are not merely ceremonial centers, however. They are also places where Americans come to argue about the meaning of war and sacrifice and, more recently, to practice commemorative restoration of those left out of the nation's sacred stories of war



Federal dead on the battlefield, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, 1863 (Library of Congress)

and warriors. Tejanos (Mexican Texans) only recently were recognized as being among the defenders at the Alamo. Native Americans pressured the National Park Service to focus less on the figure of Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer at the Little Bighorn and remind the public that the battle was part of a larger clash of cultures in which Native Americans should be perceived as more than just “enemies.” And National Park Service commemorative events and interpretive programs have begun to correct a century of intentional forgetfulness of the several hundred thousand African Americans who fought for the Union.

Certain wars have sparked bitter controversy: the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and the Spanish-

American War, for example. The growing American involvement in Vietnam, particularly after American troops arrived there in large numbers beginning in 1965, set off a religious crisis as the nation became sharply divided over the nature, wisdom, and morality of the war. Revelations of American warriors as perpetrators of atrocities upon Vietnamese civilians, the most famous of which was the massacre at My Lai, threatened cherished assumptions about the righteousness of American wars and warriors. Traditional convictions about the meaning of sacrifice were threatened when some veterans spoke about lives “wasted” for no reason in Vietnam.

Three powerful religious symbols emerged at the end of World War II: the United Nations, the Holo-

caust, and the atomic bomb. The United Nations symbolized the promise of a world united and at peace, a creative and constructive response to a war that left over 60 million dead, most of them civilians. The revelations of the Nazis' killing centers and concentration camps came to stand as the benchmark of evil against which all other evils could be compared, and it engendered agonizing theological reappraisals among both Jews and Christians. The mushroom cloud that appeared over Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, signaled the onset of the nuclear age. The atomic bomb—and the world of nuclear energy that gave it birth—were immediately understood in both apocalyptic and redemptive terms. Within hours after Hiroshima was destroyed, American opinion-shapers were proclaiming the possibility of the end of the world through atomic warfare. No longer were visions of the apocalypse situated in the realm of metaphor; they could be realized on earth. And for some, the Bomb was just another weapon in the holy crusade against communism, wielded by God's people in a final war to exterminate evil. Atomic weapons, in this view, were instruments of salvation, purification, and redemption.

There was also widespread fascination with the new world that atomic energy could bring; this destructive force was envisioned also as creative, promising magical cures for illness, improving work and leisure, and because of the unprecedented threat it presented, compelling the peoples of the world to join together and renounce war, to finally beat swords into plowshares.

At the beginning of the new millennium, however, terrorist organizations around the world dreamed of final purification through apocalyptic destruction. Some American terrorists were inspired by radical visions of mass murder as part of a war against the federal government and dreamed of a final holy race war. One such "battle" took place when Timothy

McVeigh detonated a massive bomb at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995, killing 168 people, casualties in the ever-increasing fervor of holy warriors transforming the everyday world into a world at war. The coordinated terrorist attacks by Islamic terrorists in the United States on September 11, 2001, revealed that religious violence will continue to energize "sacred" murderous visions around the world. In response, the rhetoric and ritual of warfare are called upon to translate the world of terrorism into a recognizable landscape of battle.

—Edward T. Linenthal

#### SEE ALSO

Native American Religions and Politics: Nationhood; Death; Popular Theodicies: Antebellum America, Civil War and the Late Nineteenth Century, Evil in the Twentieth Century; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion; Ritual and Performance: Civic and Political Ritual Performances: Tourism; Sacred Space; Sacred Time; Violence: Apocalypticism

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# INTRODUCTION





Just exactly what is “religion and American cultures”? The same impossible question that drove the first two volumes is also behind the third. Understanding the answer involves not only studying new materials, but also reconceptualizing what counts as primary sources in the study of religion and substituting fresh, new directions for stale, well-trodden paths. This third volume advances an understanding of American religious life by (re)constructing, and (re)delineating a textual genealogy of religious discourse, from the voyage of Columbus in the fifteenth century until the turn of the twenty-first century. We believe students of American religious history can sharpen their insights by re-visioning these texts and by emphasizing diversity as a guiding principle in the exploration of religion and American cultures.

Puritan pacts with God, slave spirituals, and Jewish reform are familiar narratives in American history. But when seen in the reflection of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that ended the Mexican-American War (1846–1848), Shirley MacLaine’s new-age proclamations, emergent Buddhist doctrines, and pleas for Christian love toward lesbians and gay men, they speak anew. In other words, combining the familiar with the not-so-familiar enables students to make intertextual and thus cultural and historical connections that have heretofore remained unimagined.

Rather than focusing on a single institutional history, the following collection charts broad patterns such as dissent, innovation, change, and return that, we suggest, characterize much greater spiritual and religious phenomena in American religion than previously estimated. Documents collected herein illustrate discursive shifts in American religious thought and culture by providing a fragmented and incomplete genealogical context for the essays in the previous volumes. Although some direct connections exist between the interpretive essays and the more descriptive primary sources, not all are directly correlated. But again, American religion cannot be neatly contained in either primary or secondary narrations; it must be understood as it is lived—as variegated ideas, movements, practices, symbols, and more that take place in specific institutional, political, and personal contexts.

And yet, remarkably, this symbolic chaos we call “American religion” often coalesces around sacred principles.

Chief among the beliefs that stand out in American religion is religious freedom. Be it ambiguous, contested, or jealously held, the notion that religious adherence is fundamentally an individual’s choice remains the nation’s most cohesive and formative inheritance. This doctrine emerges again and again in American religious discourse, from the Maryland Toleration Act of 1649 to the poetry of prominent Buddhist leader Daisaku Ikeda in the 1990s. Additionally, still today as in times past, America grapples with the often ominous belief of providence, or a divinely ordained destiny that sacralizes the nation’s place in the profane world. From Cotton Mather to George W. Bush, the imperialist notion of divine right paradoxically becomes central to the ethos of the modern republic.

But definitive and contradictory ideas of religious freedom and religious destiny have created great ironies in American history with tragic consequences. Consequences from such rhetorical inconsistencies have been felt most severely by people of color in the United States, those who were outsiders to American Euroamerican Protestant institutions. Thomas Jefferson’s writing on Cherokees, and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s I Have a Dream speech are but two examples of this paradoxical impulse.

Still, much remains to be collected. And so finally, we issue this third volume, a collection of primary texts, as a challenge for students of American religious history and culture to identify, uncover, and represent what remains. Most striking is the absence of accessible primary texts for those textual and narrative traditions still occupying the subaltern terrain of American religious cartography—especially Native, non-Christian, and non-Jewish traditions, and the racialized components of American Judeo-Christianity. With this lacuna in mind, how might we begin to envision a companion collection of primary sources to the present work? Certainly such a collection would break new ground by gathering documents that teach us about American religious history, but

that emerged abroad, influencing generations of migrants who would eventually come to America. Since the United States is a nation of immigrants, why should primary texts in American religious history emerge only from the U.S.? And why must these texts be in English only? A next volume would include many translated narratives from many faraway

places that were translated yet again upon arrival in North America. Thus, we offer this volume and its predecessors as a starting point, hoping to steer the conversation in a different direction. We remain optimistic about the future direction of this undertaking, believing that the best is yet to come.

## Privileges and Prerogatives Granted by Their Catholic Majesties to Christopher Columbus (1492)

*Christopher Columbus's arrival in the New World initiated a series of monumental changes in the presence and role of religion in the Americas. With support from the King and Queen of Spain, Columbus made a voyage that for some signaled the eventual, inevitable triumph of Christianity in the New World and for others the tragic destruction of indigenous forms of religious life that existed for thousands of years before his arrival. In either case, this journey has assumed mythic proportions in American religious history specifically and marks a turning point in global history generally.*

FERDINAND and ELIZABETH, by the Grace of God, King and Queen of Castile, of Leon, of Arragon, of Sicily, of Granada, of Toledo, of Valencia, of Galicia, of Majorca, of Minorca, of Sevil, of Sardinia, of Jaen, of Algarve, of Algezira, of Gibraltar, of the Canary Islands, Count and Countess of Barcelona, Lord and Lady of Biscay and Molina, Duke and Duchess of Athens and Neopatria. Count and Countess of Rousillon and Cerdagne, Marquess and Marchioness of Oristan and Gociano, &c.

For as much of you, *Christopher Columbus*, are going by our command, with some of our vessels and men, to discover and subdue some Islands and Continent in the ocean, and it is hoped that by God's assistance, some of the said Islands and Continent in the ocean will be discovered and conquered by your means and conduct, therefore it is but just and reasonable, that since you expose yourself to such danger to serve us, you should be rewarded for it. And we being willing to honour and favour you for the reasons aforesaid: Our will is, That you, *Christopher Columbus*, after discovering and conquering the said Islands and Continent in the said ocean, or any of them, shall be our Admiral of the said Islands and Continent you shall so discover and conquer; and that you be our Admiral, Vice-Roy, and Governour in them, and that for the future, you may call and stile yourself, D. *Christopher Columbus*, and that your sons and successors in the said employment, may call themselves Dons, Ad-

mirals, Vice-Roys, and Governours of them; and that you may exercise the office of Admiral, with the charge of Vice-Roy and Governour of the said Islands and Continent, which you and your Lieutenants shall conquer, and freely decide all causes, civil and criminal, appertaining to the said employment of Admiral, Vice-Roy, and Governour, as you shall think fit in justice, and as the Admirals of our kingdoms used to do; and that you have power to punish offenders; and you and your Lieutenants exercise the employments of Admiral, Vice-Roy, and Governour, in all things belonging to the said offices, or any of them; and that you enjoy the perquisites and salaries belonging to the said employments, and to each of them, in the same manner as the High Admiral of our kingdoms does. And by this our letter, or a copy of it signed by a *Public Notary*: We command Prince *John*, our most dearly beloved Son, the Infants, Dukes, Prelates, Marquesses, Great Masters and Military Orders, Priors, Commendaries, our Counsellors, Judges, and other Officers of Justice whatsoever, belonging Courts, and Chancery, and Constables of Castles, Strong Houses, and others; and all Corporations, Bayliffs, Governours, Judges, Commanders, Sea Officers; and the Aldermen, Common Council, Officers, and Good People of all Cities, Lands, and Places in our Kingdoms and Dominions, and in those you shall conquer and subdue, and the captains, masters, mates, and other officers and sailors, our natural subjects now being, or that shall be for the time to come, and any of them that when you shall have discovered the said Islands and Continent in the ocean; and you, or any that shall have your commission, shall have taken the usual oath in such cases, that they for the future, look upon you as long as you live, and after you, your son and heir, and so from one heir to another forever, as our Admiral on our said Ocean, and as Vice-Roy and Governour of the said Islands and Continent, by you, *Christopher Columbus*, discovered and conquered; and that they treat you and your Lieutenants, by you

appointed, for executing the employments of Admiral, Vice-Roy, and Governour, as such in all respects, and give you all the perquisites and other things belonging and appertaining to the said offices; and allow, and cause to be allowed you, all the honours, graces, concessions, prehaminences, prerogatives, immunities, and other things, or any of them which are due to you, by virtue of your commands of Admiral, Vice-Roy, and Governour, and to be observed completely, so that nothing be diminished; and that they make no objection to this, or any part of it, nor suffer it to be made; forasmuch as we from this time forward, by this our letter, bestow on you the employments of Admiral, Vice-Roy, and perpetual Governour forever; and we put you into possession of the said offices, and of every of them, and full power to use and exercise them, and to receive the perquisites and salaries belonging to them, or any of them, as was said above. Concerning all which things, if it be requisite, and you shall desire it, we command our Chancellour, Notaries, and other Officers, to pass, seal, and deliver to you, our Letter of Privilege, in such form and legal manner, as you shall require or stand in need of. And that none of them presume to do any thing to the contrary, upon pain of our displeasure, and forfeiture of 30 ducats for each offence. And we command him, who shall show them this our Letter, that he summon them to appear before us at our Court, where we shall then be, within fifteen days

after such summons, under the said penalty. Under which same, we also command any Public Notary whatsoever, that he give to him that shows it him, a certificate under his seal, that we may know how our command is obeyed.

*GIVEN at Granada, on the 30th of April,  
in the year of our Lord, 1492.*

*I, THE KING, I, THE QUEEN.*

*By their Majesties Command,*

*John Coloma*

*Secretary to the King and Queen.*

*Entered according to order.*

*RODERICK, Doctor.*

*SEBASTIAN DOLONA,*

*FRANCIS DE MADRID,*

*Councillors.*

*Registered*

**SEE ALSO**

Catholicism in America; Latina/Latino Religious Communities; Native American Religions and Politics

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Privileges and Prerogatives Granted by Their Catholic Majesties to Christopher Columbus, 1492. <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/colum.htm>, The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm> (Dec. 22, 2002).

## Excerpt from Anne Hutchinson Trial (1637)

*Seventeenth-century Puritans did not tolerate religious dissent, especially from independent women like Anne Hutchinson, who argued that people could communicate directly with God. For these beliefs she was put on trial and ultimately banished from Massachusetts Bay Colony.*

[Anne Hutchinson.] Therefore take heed what ye go about to do unto me. You have power over my body, but the Lord Jesus hath power over my body and soul; neither can you do me any harm, for I am in the hands of the eternal Jehovah, my Saviour. I am at his appointment, for the bounds of my habitation are cast in Heaven, and no further do I esteem of any mortal man than creatures in his hand. I fear none but the great Jehovah, which hath foretold me of these things, I do verily believe that he will deliver me out of your hands. Therefore take heed how you proceed against me; for I know that for this you go about to do to me, God will ruin you and your posterity, and this whole state.

Mr. Nowell. How do you know that it was God that did reveal these things to you, and not Satan?

Mrs. Hutchinson. How did Abraham know that it was God that bid him offer his son, being a breach of the sixth commandment?

Deputy-Governor Dudley. By an immediate voice.

Mrs. Hutchinson. So to me by an immediate revelation.

Deputy-Governor. How! an immediate revelation?

Mrs. Hutchinson. By the voice of his own spirit to my soul.

Governor Winthrop. Daniel was delivered by miracle; do you think to be delivered so too?

Mrs. Hutchinson. I do here speak it before the Court. I look that the Lord should deliver me by his providence. . . .

Governor Winthrop. The Court hath already declared themselves satisfied concerning the things you hear, and concerning the troublesomeness of her spirit, and the danger of her course amongst us, which is not to be suffered. Therefore, if it be the mind of the Court that Mrs. Hutchinson, for these things that appear before us, is unfit for our society, and if it be the mind of the Court that she shall be banished out of our liberties, and imprisoned till she be sent away, let them hold up their hands.

[All but three hold up their hands.]

Governor Winthrop. Those that are contrary minded, hold up yours.

[Mr. Coddington and Mr. Colburn raise their hands.]

Mr. Jennison. I cannot hold up my hand one way or the other, and I shall give my reason if the Court require it.

Governor Winthrop. Mrs. Hutchinson, you hear the sentence of the Court. It is that you are banished from out our jurisdiction as being a woman not fit for our society. And you are to be imprisoned till the Court send you away.

Mrs. Hutchinson. I desire to know wherefore I am banished.

Governor Winthrop. Say no more. The Court knows wherefore, and is satisfied.

### SEE ALSO

Protestantism in America: Puritanism; Public Theologies and Political Cultures: Feminisms

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Excerpt from Anne Hutchinson Trial, 1637. The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm> (Dec. 22, 2002).

## Excerpt from Cambridge Platform, Congregational Church Synod (1648)

*Adopted in the middle of the seventeenth century by a church synod at Cambridge, Massachusetts, the Cambridge Platform defined the polity of Congregationalism and provided an alternative model from Church of England guidelines. It also attempted to establish uniformity in church organization so New England colonial churches were not threatened by Presbyterian or sectarian forces.*

### **Chapter I.**

Of the form of Church-Government; and that it is one, immutable, and prescribed in the Word of God.

1. Ecclesiasticall Polity or Church Government, or discipline is nothing els, but that Forme & order that is to be observed in the Church of Christ upon earth, both for the Constitution of it, & all the Administrations that therein are to bee performed.

2. Church-Government is Considered in a double respect either in regard of the parts of Government themselves, or necessary Circumstances thereof. The parts of Government are prescribed in the word, because the Lord Jesus Christ the King and Law-giver of his Church, is no less faithfull in the house of God than was Moses, who from the Lord delivered a form & pattern of Government to the Children of Israel in the old Testament: And the holy Scriptures are now also soe perfect, as they are able to make the man of God perfect & thoroughly furnished unto euery good work; and therefore doubtless; to the well ordering of the house of God.

3. The partes of Church-Government are all of them exactly described in the word of God being parts or means of Instituted worship according to the second Commandement: & therefore to continue one

& the same, vnto the apearing of our Lord Jesus Christ as a kingdom that cannot be shaken, untill hee shall deliver it up unto God, enen the Father. Soe that it is not left in the power of men, officers, Churches, or any state in the world to add, or diminish, or alter any thing in the least measure therein.

4. The necessary circumstances, as time & place &c belonging unto order and decency, are not soe left unto men as that under pretence of them, they may thrust their own Inventions vpon the Churches: Being Circumscribed in the word with many Generall limitations; where they are determined in respect of the matter to be neither worship it self, nor Circumstances seperable from worship: in respect of their end, they must be done vnto edification: in respect of the manner, decently, and in order, according to the nature of the things them selves, & Civill, & Church Custom. doth not euen nature it selfe teach you? Yea they, are in some sort determined particularly, namely that they be done in such a manner, as all Circumstances considered, is most expedient for edification: so, as if there bee no error of man concerning their determination, the determining of them is to be accounted as if it were divine.

### **SEE ALSO**

Protestantism in America: Denominationalism

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Excerpt from Cambridge Platform, Congregational Church Synod, 1648. The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm> (Dec. 22, 2002).

## The Maryland Toleration Act (1649)

*This act was an unprecedented call for toleration in the colonies. Originally dominated by Catholics, by the middle of the seventeenth century more and more Protestants settled in Maryland. The Toleration Act, though clearly intolerant in many respects, was a practical solution to early recognition of Christian diversity in North America.*

### **An Act Concerning Religion**

Forasmuch as in a well governed and Christian Common Wealth matters concerning Religion and the honor of God ought in the first place to bee taken, into serious consideracion and endeavoured to bee settled, Be it therefore ordered and enacted by the Right Honourable Cecilius Lord Baron of Baltemore absolute Lord and Proprietary of this Province with the advise and consent of this Generall Assembly:

That whatsoever person or persons within this Province and the Islands thereunto belonging shall from henceforth blaspheme God, that is Curse him, or deny our Saviour Jesus Christ to bee the sonne of God, or shall deny the holy Trinity the father sonne and holy Ghost, or the Godhead of any of the said Three persons of the Trinity or the Unity of the Godhead, or shall use or utter any reproachfull Speeches, words or language concerning the said Holy Trinity, or any of the said three persons thereof, shall be punished with death and confiscation or forfeiture of all his or her lands and goods to the Lord Proprietary and his heires.

And bee it also Enacted by the Authority and with the advise and assent aforesaid, That whatsoever person or persons shall from henceforth use or utter any reproachfull words or Speeches concerning the blessed Virgin Mary the Mother of our Saviour or the holy Apostles or Evangelists or any of them shall in such case for the first offence forfeit to the said Lord Proprietary and his heires Lords and Proprietaries of this Province the summe of five pound Sterling or the value thereof to be Levyed on the goods and chattells of every such person soe offending, but in case such Offender or Offenders, shall not then

have goods and chattells sufficient for the satisfyeing of such forfeiture, or that the same bee not otherwise speedily satisfied that then such Offender or Offenders shall be publicly whipt and bee imprisoned during the pleasure of the Lord Proprietary or the Lieutenant or cheife Governor of this Province for the time being. And that every such Offender or Offenders for every second offence shall forfeit tenne pound sterling or the value thereof to bee levyed as aforesaid, or in case such offender or Offenders shall not then have goods and chattells within this Province sufficient for that purpose then to bee publicly and severely whipt and imprisoned as before is expressed. And that every person or persons before mentioned offending herein the third time, shall for such third Offence forfeit all his lands and Goods and bee forever banished and expelled out of this Province.

And be it also further Enacted by the same authority advise and assent that whatsoever person or persons shall from henceforth upon any occasion of Offence or otherwise in a reproachfull manner or Way declare call or denominate any person or persons whatsoever inhabiting, residing, traffiqueing, trading or comerceing within this Province or within any the Ports, Harbors, Creeks or Havens to the same belonging an heritick, Scismatick, Idolator, puritan, Independant, Prespiterian popish prest, Jesuite, Jesuited papist, Lutheran, Calvenist, Anabaptist, Brownist, Antinomian, Barrowist, Roundhead, Separatist, or any other name or terme in a reproachfull manner relating to matter of Religion shall for every such Offence forfeit and loose the somme of tenne shillings sterling or the value thereof to bee levyed on the goods and chattells of every such Offender and Offenders, the one half thereof to be forfeited and paid unto the person and persons of whom such reproachfull words are or shall be spoken or uttered, and the other half thereof to the Lord Proprietary and his heires Lords and Proprietaries of this Province. But if such person or persons who shall at any time utter or speake any such reproachfull words or Language shall not have Goods or Chattells sufficient and overt



within this Province to bee taken to satisfie the penalty aforesaid or that the same bee not otherwise speedily satisfied, that then the person or persons soe offending shalbe publickly whipt, and shall suffer imprisonment without baile or maineprise [bail] untill hee, shee or they respectively shall satisfy the party soe offended or greived by such reproachfull Language by asking him or her respectively forgiveness publickly for such his Offence before the Magistrate of cheife Officer or Officers of the Towne or place where such Offence shalbe given.

And be it further likewise Enacted by the Authority and consent aforesaid That every person and persons within this Province that shall at any time hereafter prophane the Sabbath or Lords day called Sunday by frequent swearing, drunkennes or by any uncivill or disorderly recreacion, or by working on that day when absolute necessity doth not require it shall for every such first offence forfeit 2s 6d sterling or the value thereof, and for the second offence 5s sterling or the value thereof, and for the third offence and soe for every time he shall offend in like manner afterwards 10s sterling or the value thereof. And in case such offender and offenders shall not have sufficient goods or chattells within this Province to satisfy any of the said Penalties respectively hereby imposed for prophaning the Sabbath or Lords day called Sunday as aforesaid, That in Every such case the partie soe offending shall for the first and second offence in that kinde be imprisoned till hee or shee shall publickly in open Court before the cheife Commander Judge or Magistrate, of that County Towne or precinct where such offence shalbe committed acknowledg the Scandall and offence he hath in that respect given against God and the good and civill Governement of this Province, And for the third offence and for every time after shall also bee publickly whipt.

And whereas the inforceing of the conscience in matters of Religion hath frequently fallen out to be of dangerous Consequence in those commonwealthes where it hath been practised, And for the more quiett and peaceable governement of this Province, and the better to preserve mutuall Love and amity amongst the Inhabitants thereof, Be it Therefore also by the Lord Proprietary with the advise and consent of this Assembly Ordeyned and enacted (except as in this present Act is before Declared and sett forth) that noe

person or persons whatsoever within this Province, or the Islands, Ports, Harbors, Creekes, or havens thereunto belonging professing to beleive in Jesus Christ, shall from henceforth bee any waies troubled, Molested or discountenanced for or in respect of his or her religion nor in the free exercise thereof within this Province or the Islands thereunto belonging nor any way compelled to the beleife or exercise of any other Religion against his or her consent, soe as they be not unfaithfull to the Lord Proprietary, or molest or conspire against the civill Governement established or to bee established in this Province under him or his heires. And that all and every person and persons that shall presume Contrary to this Act and the true intent and meaning thereof directly or indirectly either in person or estate willfully to wrong disturb trouble or molest any person whatsoever within this Province professing to beleive in Jesus Christ for or in respect of his or her religion or the free exercise thereof within this Province other than is provided for in this Act that such person or persons soe offending, shalbe compelled to pay trebble damages to the party soe wronged or molested, and for every such offence shall also forfeit 20s sterling in money or the value thereof, half thereof for the use of the Lord Proprietary, and his heires Lords and Proprietaries of this Province, and the other half for the use of the party soe wronged or molested as aforesaid, Or if the partie soe offending as aforesaid shall refuse or bee unable to recompense the party soe wronged, or to satisfy such fyne or forfeiture, then such Offender shalbe severely punished by publick whipping and imprisonment during the pleasure of the Lord Proprietary, or his Lieutenant or cheife Governor of this Province for the tyme being without baile or maineprise.

And bee it further alsoe Enacted by the authority and consent aforesaid That the Sheriff or other Officer or Officers from time to time to bee appointed and authorized for that purpose, of the County Towne or precinct where every particular offence in this present Act conteyned shall happen at any time to bee committed and whereupon there is hereby a forfeiture fyne or penalty imposed shall from time to time distraine and seise the goods and estate of every such person soe offending as aforesaid against this present Act or any part thereof, and sell the same or any part thereof for the full satisfaccion of such forfei-

ture, fine, or penalty as aforesaid, Restoring unto the partie soe offending the Remainder or overplus of the said goods or estate after such satisfaccion soe made as aforesaid.

The freemen have assented.

**SEE ALSO**

Catholicism in America; Public Theologies and Political Culture

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The Maryland Toleration Act, 1649. The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm> (Dec. 22, 2002).

## Half-Way Covenant, Congregational Synod (1662)

*Only adults who could attest to a personal experience of conversion were eligible for full membership in the Congregational Church; however, children of full members were admitted to all the privileges of the church except the Lord's Supper. The Half-Way Covenant, adopted by a church synod in 1662, extended these privileges to the children of these children regardless of whether their parents confessed to a conversion experience. Some churches refused to adopt this controversial measure; in those that did, many members seceded and formed new settlements truer to their strict religious beliefs.*

1. They that, according to the scripture, are members of the visible church are the subjects of baptism.

2. The members of the visible church, according to scripture, are confederate visible believers, in particular churches; and their infant seed, i.e., children in minority whose next parents, one or both, are in covenant.

3. The infant seed of confederate visible believers are members of the same church with their parents, and when grown up are personally under the watch, discipline, and government of that church.

4. These adult persons are not, therefore, to be admitted to full communion merely because they are and continue members, without such further qualifications as the word of God requires thereunto.

5. Church members who are admitted in minority, understanding the doctrine of faith and publicly professing their assent thereto, not scandalous in life, and solemnly owning the covenant before the church,

wherein they give up themselves and their children to the Lord, and subject themselves to the government of Christ in the church, their children are to be baptized.

6. Such church members who, either by death or some other extraordinary providence, have been inevitably hindered from public acting as aforesaid, yet have given the church cause in judgement of charity to look at them as so qualified, and such as had they been called thereunto would have so acted, their children are to be baptized.

7. The members of orthodox churches, being sound in faith and not scandalous in life and presenting due testimony thereof, these occasionally coming from one church to another, may have their children baptized in the church whither they come by virtue of communion of churches, But if they remove their habitation they ought orderly to covenant and subject themselves to the government of Christ in the church where they settle their abode, and so their children to be baptized. It being the church's duty to receive such into communion so far as they are regularly fit for the same. . . .

### SEE ALSO

Protestantism in America: Denominationalism; Generations

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Half-Way Covenant, Congregational Synod, 1662. The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm> (Dec. 22, 2002).

## Pennsylvania Charter of Privileges (1701)

*In 1701, during his last visit to Pennsylvania, William Penn signed into law the Pennsylvania Charter of Privileges. The most liberal of all colonial constitutions, the Charter codified freedom of conscience and allowed Christians of any denomination to hold governmental offices. For Penn, it was the capstone of his twenty-year "holy experiment" in governing his colony according to the Quaker principles of equity and tolerance.*

Because no People can be truly happy, though under the greatest Enjoyment of Civil Liberties, if abridged of the Freedom of their Consciences, as to their Religious Profession and Worship: And Almighty God being the only Lord of Conscience, Father of Lights and Spirits; and the Author as well as the Object of all divine Knowledge, Faith and Worship, who only doth enlighten the Minds, and persuade and convince the Understanding of People, I do hereby grant and declare, That no Person or Persons, inhabiting in this province or Territories, who shall confess and acknowledge One almighty God, the Creator, Upholder and Ruler of the World; and profess him or themselves obliged to live quietly under the Civil Government, shall be in any Case molested or preju-

diced, in his or their Person or Estate, because of his or their conscientious Persuasion or Practice, nor be compelled to frequent or maintain any religious Worship, Place or Ministry, contrary to his or their Mind, or to do or suffer any other Act or Thing, contrary to their religious Persuasion.

AND that all Persons who also profess to believe in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World, shall be capable (notwithstanding their other Persuasions and Practices in Point of Conscience and Religion) to serve this Government in any Capacity, both legislatively and executively, he or they solemnly promising, when lawfully required, Allegiance to the King as Sovereign, and Fidelity to the Proprietary and Governor, and taking the Attests as now established by the Law.

### SEE ALSO

Public Theologies and Political Culture: Liberalism

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Pennsylvania Charter of Privileges, 1701. The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm> (Dec. 22, 2002).

Cotton Mather, excerpts from *Magnalia Christi Americana:*  
*or, the Ecclesiastical History of New England* (1702)

*Cotton Mather came from a distinguished line of major Puritan figures. He was grandson of Richard Mather, among the first leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and son of Increase Mather, influential minister, president of Harvard College, and the colony's emissary to the English throne. As the most prominent Puritan minister and writer of his time, his encyclopedic Magnalia Christi Americana contained a vast amount of materials relating to the life and events of the colony. His narration of these events is Mather's attempt to prove how the history of Massachusetts demonstrated the "wonderful works of God" in the new world.*

**From "A General Introduction"**

I write the Wonders of the Christian Religion, flying from the depravations of Europe, to the American strand; and, assisted by the Holy Author of that Religion, I do with all conscience of truth, required therein by Him, who is the Truth itself, report the wonderful displays of His infinite power, wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness, wherewith His Divine Providence hath irradiated an Indian Wilderness.

I relate the considerable matters, that produced and attended the first settlement of colonies, which have been renowned for the degree of Reformation, professed and attained by evangelical churches, erected in those ends of the earth; and a field being thus prepared, I proceed unto a relation of the considerable matters which have been acted thereupon.

I first introduce the actors, that have in a more exemplary manner served those colonies; and give remarkable occurrences, in the exemplary lives of many magistrates, and of more ministers, who so lived as to leave unto posterity examples worthy of everlasting remembrance.

I add hereunto, the notables of the only Protestant university that ever shone in that hemisphere of the New World; with particular instances of Criolians, in our biography, provoking the whole world with virtuous objects of emulation.

I introduce then, the actions of a more eminent importance, that have signalized those colonies: whether the establishments, directed by their synods; with a rich variety of synodical and ecclesiastical determinations; or, the disturbances, with which they have been from all sorts of temptations and enemies tempestuated; and the methods by which they have still weathered out each horrible tempest.

And into the midst of these actions, I interpose an entire book, wherein there is, with all possible veracity, a collection made of memorable occurrences, and amazing judgments and mercies befalling many particular persons among the people of New England.

Let my readers expect all that I have promised them, in this bill of fare; and it may be they will find themselves entertained with yet many other passages, above and beyond their expectation, deserving likewise a room in History: in all which, there will be nothing but the author's too mean way of preparing so great entertainments, to reproach the invitation. . . .

**From "Book V"**

The settlement of the New-English churches, with a long series of preserving and prosperous smiles from Heaven upon them, is doubtless to be reckoned amongst the more "wonderful works of God," in this age; the true glories of the young plantation had not upon the face of God's earth a parallel, our adversaries themselves being judges. But when people began more notoriously to forget the "errand into the wilderness," and when the enchantments of this world caused the rising generation more sensibly to neglect the primitive designs and interests of religion propounded by their fathers; a change in the tenour of the divine dispensations towards this country, was quickly the matter of every body's observation. By land, some of the principal grains, especially our wheat and our pease, fell under an unaccountable blast, from which we are not, even unto this day, delivered; and besides that constant frown of Heaven

upon our husbandry, recurring every year, few years have passed, wherein either worms or droughts, or some consuming disasters have not befallen the “labour of the husbandman.” By sea, we were visited with multiplied shipwrecks, enemies prey’d on our vessels and sailors, and the affairs of the merchant were clogged with losses abroad; or fires, breaking forth in the chief seats of trade at home, wasted their substance with yet more costly desolations. Nor did the land and the sea more proclaim the controversie of our God against us, than that other element of the air, by the contagious vapours whereof several pestilential sicknesses did sometimes become epidemical among us. Yea, the judgments of God having done first the part of the moth upon us, proceeded then to do the part of a lion, in lamentable wars, wherein the barbarous Indians cruelly butchered many hundreds of our inhabitants, and scattered whole towns with miserable ruins. . . .

The serious people throughout the country were awakened by these intimations of divine displeasure, to enquire into the causes and matters of the controversie. And besides the self-reforming effects of these calamities on the hearts and lives of many particular Christians, who were hereby brought unto an exacter walk with God, particular churches exerted their power of self-reformation, especially in the time of the Indian war; wherein with much solemn fasting and prayer, they renewed their covenants with God and one another. Moreover, the General Courts enacted what laws were judged proper for the extinction of

those provoking evils, which might expose the land unto the anger of Heaven: and the ministers in their several congregations, by their ministry, set themselves to testify against those evils. Nor is it a thing unworthy of a great remark, that great successes against the enemy accompanied some notable transactions both in church and in court, for the reformation of our provoking evils. Indeed, the people of God in this land were not gone so far in degeneracy, but that there were further degrees of disorder and corruption to be found—I must freely speak it—in other, yea, in all other places, where the Protestant religion is professed: and the most impartial observers must have acknowledged, that there was proportionately still more of true religion, and a larger number of the strictest saints in this country, than in any other on the face of the earth. But it was to be confessed, that the degeneracy of New-England, in any measure, into the spirit of the world, was a thing extremely aggravated, by the greatness of our obligations to the contrary, and even sinful omissions in this, were no less criminal than the most odious commissions in some other countries. . . .

#### SEE ALSO

Protestantism in America: Puritanism; Popular Theodocies: Colonial Period; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion; Violence: War

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Excerpts from Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana: or, the Ecclesiastical History of New England*, 1702.

## Jonathan Edwards, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” Enfield, Connecticut (July 8, 1741)

*Considered one of America’s greatest preachers and theologians, Jonathan Edwards was a Congregationalist minister who gained fame for sparking the Great Awakening in 1734 when his Northampton parish recorded over thirty religious conversions per week. Edwards preached fiery sermons such as “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” to remind the unconverted that because they “hang by a slender thread” over the pit of hell, they need to be reborn by accepting the mercy of Christ. Eventually Edwards alienated many both within his pastorate and the larger Congregational church by excluding from Communion anyone who did not publicly profess her experience of conversion.*

Their foot shall slide in due time.

—Deuteronomy 32:35

In this verse is threatened the vengeance of God on the wicked unbelieving Israelites, who were God’s visible people, and who lived under the means of grace; but who, notwithstanding all God’s wonderful works towards them, remained (as vers 28.) void of counsel, having no understanding in them. Under all the cultivations of heaven, they brought forth bitter and poisonous fruit; as in the two verses next preceding the text.

The expression I have chosen for my text, their foot shall slide in due time, seems to imply the following things, relating to the punishment and destruction to which these wicked Israelites were exposed.

1. That they were always exposed to destruction; as one that stands or walks in slippery places is always exposed to fall. This is implied in the manner of their destruction coming upon them, being represented by their foot sliding. The same is expressed, Psalm 72:18. “*Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction.*”

2. It implies, that they were always exposed to sudden unexpected destruction. As he that walks in slip-

pery places is every moment liable to fall, he cannot foresee one moment whether he shall stand or fall the next; and when he does fall, he falls at once without warning: Which is also expressed in Psalm 73:18,19. “*Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction: How are they brought into desolation as in a moment!*”

3. Another thing implied is, that they are liable to fall of themselves, without being thrown down by the hand of another; as he that stands or walks on slippery ground needs nothing but his own weight to throw him down.

4. That the reason why they are not fallen already and do not fall now is only that God’s appointed time is not come. For it is said, that when that due time, or appointed time comes, their foot shall slide. Then they shall be left to fall, as they are inclined by their own weight. God will not hold them up in these slippery places any longer, but will let them go; and then, at that very instant, they shall fall into destruction; as he that stands on such slippery declining ground, on the edge of a pit, he cannot stand alone, when he is let go he immediately falls and is lost.

The observation from the words that I would now insist upon is this.—“There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of hell, but the mere pleasure of God.”—By the mere pleasure of God, I mean his sovereign pleasure, his arbitrary will, restrained by no obligation, hindered by no manner of difficulty, any more than if nothing else but God’s mere will had in the least degree, or in any respect whatsoever, any hand in the preservation of wicked men one moment.—The truth of this observation may appear by the following considerations.

1. There is no want of power in God to cast wicked men into hell at any moment. Men’s hands cannot be strong when God rises up. The strongest have no power to resist him, nor can any deliver out of his hands.—He is not only able to cast wicked men into

hell, but he can most easily do it. Sometimes an earthly prince meets with a great deal of difficulty to subdue a rebel, who has found means to fortify himself, and has made himself strong by the numbers of his followers. But it is not so with God. There is no fortress that is any defence from the power of God. Though hand join in hand, and vast multitudes of God's enemies combine and associate themselves, they are easily broken in pieces. They are as great heaps of light chaff before the whirlwind; or large quantities of dry stubble before devouring flames. We find it easy to tread on and crush a worm that we see crawling on the earth; so it is easy for us to cut or singe a slender thread that any thing hangs by: thus easy is it for God, when he pleases, to cast his enemies down to hell. What are we, that we should think to stand before him, at whose rebuke the earth trembles, and before whom the rocks are thrown down?

2. They deserve to be cast into hell; so that divine justice never stands in the way, it makes no objection against God's using his power at any moment to destroy them. Yea, on the contrary, justice calls aloud for an infinite punishment of their sins. Divine justice says of the tree that brings forth such grapes of Sodom, "*Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?*" Luke 13:7. The sword of divine justice is every moment brandished over their heads, and it is nothing but the hand of arbitrary mercy, and God's mere will, that holds it back.

3. They are already under a sentence of condemnation to hell. They do not only justly deserve to be cast down thither, but the sentence of the law of God, that eternal and immutable rule of righteousness that God has fixed between him and mankind, is gone out against them, and stands against them; so that they are bound over already to hell. John 3:18. "*He that believeth not is condemned already.*" So that every unconverted man properly belongs to hell; that is his place; from thence he is, John 8:23. "*Ye are from beneath.*" And thither he is bound; it is the place that justice, and God's word, and the sentence of his unchangeable law assign to him.

4. They are now the objects of that very same anger and wrath of God, that is expressed in the torments of hell. And the reason why they do not go down to hell at each moment, is not because God, in whose power they are, is not then very angry with them; as he is with many miserable creatures now tor-

mented in hell, who there feel and bear the fierceness of his wrath. Yea, God is a great deal more angry with great numbers that are now on earth: yea, doubtless, with many that are now in this congregation, who it may be are at ease, than he is with many of those who are now in the flames of hell.

So that it is not because God is unmindful of their wickedness, and does not resent it, that he does not let loose his hand and cut them off. God is not altogether such a one as themselves, though they may imagine him to be so. The wrath of God burns against them, their damnation does not slumber; the pit is prepared, the fire is made ready, the furnace is now hot, ready to receive them; the flames do now rage and glow. The glittering sword is whet, and held over them, and the pit hath opened its mouth under them.

5. The devil stands ready to fall upon them, and seize them as his own, at what moment God shall permit him. They belong to him; he has their souls in his possession, and under his dominion. The scripture represents them as his goods, Luke 11:12. The devils watch them; they are ever by them at their right hand; they stand waiting for them, like greedy hungry lions that see their prey, and expect to have it, but are for the present kept back. If God should withdraw his hand, by which they are restrained, they would in one moment fly upon their poor souls. The old serpent is gaping for them; hell opens its mouth wide to receive them; and if God should permit it, they would be hastily swallowed up and lost.

6. There are in the souls of wicked men those hellish principles reigning, that would presently kindle and flame out into hell fire, if it were not for God's restraints. There is laid in the very nature of carnal men, a foundation for the torments of hell. There are those corrupt principles, in reigning power in them, and in full possession of them, that are seeds of hell fire. These principles are active and powerful, exceeding violent in their nature, and if it were not for the restraining hand of God upon them, they would soon break out, they would flame out after the same manner as the same corruptions, the same enmity does in the hearts of damned souls, and would beget the same torments as they do in them. The souls of the wicked are in scripture compared to the troubled sea, Isa. 57:20. For the present, God restrains their wickedness by his mighty power, as he does the raging waves of the troubled sea, saying, "*Hitherto shalt*



*thou come, but no further*”, but if God should withdraw that restraining power, it would soon carry all before it. Sin is the ruin and misery of the soul; it is destructive in its nature; and if God should leave it without restraint, there would need nothing else to make the soul perfectly miserable. The corruption of the heart of man is immoderate and boundless in its fury; and while wicked men live here, it is like fire pent up by God’s restraints, whereas if it were let loose, it would set on fire the course of nature; and as the heart is now a sink of sin, so if sin was not restrained, it would immediately turn the soul into a fiery oven, or a furnace of fire and brimstone.

7. It is no security to wicked men for one moment, that there are no visible means of death at hand. It is no security to a natural man, that he is now in health, and that he does not see which way he should now immediately go out of the world by any accident, and that there is no visible danger in any respect in his circumstances. The manifold and continual experience of the world in all ages, shows this is no evidence, that a man is not on the very brink of eternity, and that the next step will not be into another world. The unseen, unthought-of ways and means of persons going suddenly out of the world are innumerable and inconceivable. Unconverted men walk over the pit of hell on a rotten covering, and there are innumerable places in this covering so weak that they will not bear their weight, and these places are not seen. The arrows of death fly unseen at noon-day; the sharpest sight cannot discern them. God has so many different unsearchable ways of taking wicked men out of the world and sending them to hell, that there is nothing to make it appear, that God had need to be at the expense of a miracle, or go out of the ordinary course of his providence, to destroy any wicked man, at any moment. All the means that there are of sinners going out of the world, are so in God’s hands, and so universally and absolutely subject to his power and determination, that it does not depend at all the less on the mere will of God, whether sinners shall at any moment go to hell, than if means were never made use of, or at all concerned in the case.

8. Natural men’s prudence and care to preserve their own lives, or the care of others to preserve them, do not secure them a moment. To this, divine providence and universal experience do also bear testimony. There is this clear evidence that men’s own

wisdom is no security to them from death; that if it were otherwise we should see some difference between the wise and politic men of the world, and others, with regard to their liableness to early and unexpected death: but how is it in fact? Eccles. 2:16. “*How dieth the wise man? even as the fool.*”

9. All wicked men’s pains and contrivance which they use to escape hell, while they continue to reject Christ, and so remain wicked men, do not secure them from hell one moment. Almost every natural man that hears of hell, flatters himself that he shall escape it; he depends upon himself for his own security; he flatters himself in what he has done, in what he is now doing, or what he intends to do. Every one lays out matters in his own mind how he shall avoid damnation, and flatters himself that he contrives well for himself, and that his schemes will not fail. They hear indeed that there are but few saved, and that the greater part of men that have died heretofore are gone to hell; but each one imagines that he lays out matters better for his own escape than others have done. He does not intend to come to that place of torment; he says within himself, that he intends to take effectual care, and to order matters so for himself as not to fail.

But the foolish children of men miserably delude themselves in their own schemes, and in confidence in their own strength and wisdom; they trust to nothing but a shadow. The greater part of those who heretofore have lived under the same means of grace, and are now dead, are undoubtedly gone to hell; and it was not because they were not as wise as those who are now alive: it was not because they did not lay out matters as well for themselves to secure their own escape. If we could speak with them, and inquire of them, one by one, whether they expected, when alive, and when they used to hear about hell, ever to be the subjects of misery: we doubtless, should hear one and another reply, “No, I never intended to come here: I had laid out matters otherwise in my mind; I thought I should contrive well for myself—I thought my scheme good. I intended to take effectual care; but it came upon me unexpected; I did not look for it at that time, and in that manner; it came as a thief—Death outwitted me: God’s wrath was too quick for me. Oh, my cursed foolishness! I was flattering myself, and pleasing myself with vain dreams of what I would do hereafter; and when I was saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction came upon me.”

10. God has laid himself under no obligation, by any promise to keep any natural man out of hell one moment. God certainly has made no promises either of eternal life, or of any deliverance or preservation from eternal death, but what are contained in the covenant of grace, the promises that are given in Christ, in whom all the promises are yea and amen. But surely they have no interest in the promises of the covenant of grace who are not the children of the covenant, who do not believe in any of the promises, and have no interest in the Mediator of the covenant.

So that, whatever some have imagined and pretended about promises made to natural men's earnest seeking and knocking, it is plain and manifest, that whatever pains a natural man takes in religion, whatever prayers he makes, till he believes in Christ, God is under no manner of obligation to keep him a moment from eternal destruction.

So that, thus it is that natural men are held in the hand of God, over the pit of hell; they have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it; and God is dreadfully provoked, his anger is as great towards them as to those that are actually suffering the executions of the fierceness of his wrath in hell, and they have done nothing in the least to appease or abate that anger, neither is God in the least bound by any promise to hold them up one moment; the devil is waiting for them, hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them, and would fain lay hold on them, and swallow them up; the fire pent up in their own hearts is struggling to break out: and they have no interest in any Mediator, there are no means within reach that can be any security to them. In short, they have no refuge, nothing to take hold of; all that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted, unobliged forbearance of an incensed God.

### Application

The use of this awful subject may be for awakening unconverted persons in this congregation. This that you have heard is the case of every one of you that are out of Christ.—That world of misery, that take of burning brimstone, is extended abroad under you. There is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is hell's wide gaping mouth

open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor any thing to take hold of; there is nothing between you and hell but the air; it is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up.

You probably are not sensible of this; you find you are kept out of hell, but do not see the hand of God in it; but look at other things, as the good state of your bodily constitution, your care of your own life, and the means you use for your own preservation. But indeed these things are nothing; if God should withdraw his hand, they would avail no more to keep you from falling, than the thin air to hold up a person that is suspended in it.

Your wickedness makes you as it were heavy as lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf, and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell, than a spider's web would have to stop a falling rock. Were it not for the sovereign pleasure of God, the earth would not bear you one moment; for you are a burden to it; the creation groans with you; the creature is made subject to the bondage of your corruption, not willingly; the sun does not willingly shine upon you to give you light to serve sin and Satan; the earth does not willingly yield her increase to satisfy your lusts; nor is it willingly a stage for your wickedness to be acted upon; the air does not willingly serve you for breath to maintain the flame of life in your vitals, while you spend your life in the service of God's enemies. God's creatures are good, and were made for men to serve God with, and do not willingly subserve to any other purpose, and groan when they are abused to purposes so directly contrary to their nature and end. And the world would spew you out, were it not for the sovereign hand of him who hath subjected it in hope. There are the black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God, it would immediately burst forth upon you. The sovereign pleasure of God, for the present, stays his rough wind; otherwise it would come with fury, and your destruction would come like a whirlwind, and you would be like the chaff on the summer threshing floor.

The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course, when once it is let loose. It is true, that judgment against your evil works has not been executed hitherto; the floods of God's vengeance have been withheld; but your guilt in the mean time is constantly increasing, and you are every day treasuring up more wrath; the waters are constantly rising, and waxing more and more mighty; and there is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, that holds the waters back, that are unwilling to be stopped, and press hard to go forward. If God should only withdraw his hand from the flood-gate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God, would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come upon you with omnipotent power; and if your strength were ten thousand times greater than it is, yea, ten thousand times greater than the strength of the stoutest, sturdiest devil in hell, it would be nothing to withstand or endure it.

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood. Thus all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all you that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life, are in the hands of an angry God. However you may have reformed your life in many things, and may have had religious affections, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and closets, and in the house of God, it is nothing but his mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction. However unconvinced you may now be of the truth of what you hear, by and by you will be fully convinced of it. Those that are gone from being in the like circumstances with you, see that it was so with them; for destruction came suddenly upon most of them; when they expected nothing of it, and while they were saying, Peace and safety: now

they see, that those things on which they depended for peace and safety, were nothing but thin air and empty shadows.

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you were suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment.—And consider here more particularly,

1. Whose wrath it is: it is the wrath of the infinite God. If it were only the wrath of man, though it were of the most potent prince, it would be comparatively little to be regarded. The wrath of kings is very much dreaded, especially of absolute monarchs, who have the possessions and lives of their subjects wholly in

their power, to be disposed of at their mere will. Prov. 20:2. *“The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: Whoso provoketh him to anger, sinneth against his own soul.”* The subject that very much enrages an arbitrary prince, is liable to suffer the most extreme torments that human art can invent, or human power can inflict. But the greatest earthly potentates in their greatest majesty and strength, and when clothed in their greatest terrors, are but feeble, despicable worms of the dust, in comparison of the great and almighty Creator and King of heaven and earth. It is but little that they can do, when most enraged, and when they have exerted the utmost of their fury. All the kings of the earth, before God, are as grasshoppers; they are nothing, and less than nothing: both their love and their hatred is to be despised. The wrath of the great King of kings, is as much more terrible than theirs, as his majesty is greater. Luke 12:4,5. *“And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell: yea, I say unto you, Fear him.”*

2. It is the fierceness of his wrath that you are exposed to. We often read of the fury of God; as in Isa. 59:18. *“According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay fury to his adversaries.”* So Isa. 66:15. *“For behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.”* And in many other places. So, Rev. 19:15, we read of *“the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”* The words are exceeding terrible. If it had only been said, *“the wrath of God,”* the words would have implied that which is infinitely dreadful: but it is *“the fierceness and wrath of God.”* The fury of God! the fierceness of Jehovah! Oh, how dreadful that must be! Who can utter or conceive what such expressions carry in them! But it is also *“the fierceness and wrath of almighty God.”* As though there would be a very great manifestation of his almighty power in what the fierceness of his wrath should inflict, as though omnipotence should be as it were enraged, and exerted, as men are wont to exert their strength in the fierceness of their wrath. Oh! then, what will be the consequence! What will become of the poor worms that shall suffer it! Whose hands can be strong? And whose heart can endure? To what a dreadful, inexpressible, inconceivable depth of misery must the poor creature be sunk who shall be the subject of this!

Consider this, you that are here present, that yet remain in an unregenerate state. That God will execute the fierceness of his anger, implies, that he will inflict wrath without any pity. When God beholds the inflexible extremity of your case, and sees your torment to be so vastly disproportioned to your strength, and sees how your poor soul is crushed, and sinks down, as it were, into an infinite gloom; he will have no compassion upon you, he will not forbear the executions of his wrath, or in the least lighten his hand; there shall be no moderation or mercy, nor will God then at all stay his rough wind; he will have no regard to your welfare, nor be at all careful lest you should suffer too much in any other sense, than only that you shall not suffer beyond what strict justice requires. Nothing shall be withheld, because it is so hard for you to bear. Ezek. 8:18. *“Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet I will not hear them.”* Now God stands ready to pity you; this is a day of mercy; you may cry now with some encouragement of obtaining mercy. But when once the day of mercy is past, your most lamentable and dolorous cries and shrieks will be in vain; you will be wholly lost and thrown away of God, as to any regard to your welfare. God will have no other use to put you to, but to suffer misery; you shall be continued in being to no other end; for you will be a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction; and there will be no other use of this vessel, but to be filled full of wrath. God will be so far from pitying you when you cry to him, that it is said he will only *“laugh and mock,”* Prov. 1:25,26,&c.

How awful are those words, Isa. 63:3, which are the words of the great God. *“I will tread them in mine anger, and will trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.”* It is perhaps impossible to conceive of words that carry in them greater manifestations of these three things, viz. contempt, and hatred, and fierceness of indignation. If you cry to God to pity you, he will be so far from pitying you in your doleful case, or showing you the least regard or favour, that instead of that, he will only tread you under foot. And though he will know that you cannot bear the weight of omnipotence treading upon you, yet he will not regard that, but he will crush you under his feet without mercy; he will crush out your blood, and make it fly,

and it shall be sprinkled on his garments, so as to stain all his raiment. He will not only hate you, but he will have you in the utmost contempt: no place shall be thought fit for you, but under his feet to be trodden down as the mire of the streets.

3. The misery you are exposed to is that which God will inflict to that end, that he might show what that wrath of Jehovah is. God hath had it on his heart to show to angels and men, both how excellent his love is, and also how terrible his wrath is. Sometimes earthly kings have a mind to show how terrible their wrath is, by the extreme punishments they would execute on those that would provoke them. Nebuchadnezzar, that mighty and haughty monarch of the Chaldean empire, was willing to show his wrath when enraged with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; and accordingly gave orders that the burning fiery furnace should be heated seven times hotter than it was before; doubtless, it was raised to the utmost degree of fierceness that human art could raise it. But the great God is also willing to show his wrath, and magnify his awful majesty and mighty power in the extreme sufferings of his enemies. Rom. 9:22. *“What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?”* And seeing this is his design, and what he has determined, even to show how terrible the unrestrained wrath, the fury and fierceness of Jehovah is, he will do it to effect. There will be something accomplished and brought to pass that will be dreadful with a witness. When the great and angry God hath risen up and executed his awful vengeance on the poor sinner, and the wretch is actually suffering the infinite weight and power of his indignation, then will God call upon the whole universe to behold that awful majesty and mighty power that is to be seen in it. Isa. 33:12–14. *“And the people shall be as the burnings of lime, as thorns cut up shall they be burnt in the fire. Hear ye that are far off, what I have done; and ye that are near, acknowledge my might. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites,”* &c.

Thus it will be with you that are in an unconverted state, if you continue in it; the infinite might, and majesty, and terribleness of the omnipotent God shall be magnified upon you, in the ineffable strength of your torments. You shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and when you shall be in this state of suffer-

ing, the glorious inhabitants of heaven shall go forth and look on the awful spectacle, that they may see what the wrath and fierceness of the Almighty is; and when they have seen it, they will fall down and adore that great power and majesty. Isa. 66:23,24. *“And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.”*

4. It is everlasting wrath. It would be dreadful to suffer this fierceness and wrath of Almighty God one moment; but you must suffer it to all eternity. There will be no end to this exquisite horrible misery. When you look forward, you shall see a long for ever, a boundless duration before you, which will swallow up your thoughts, and amaze your soul; and you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverance, any end, any mitigation, any rest at all. You will know certainly that you must wear out long ages, millions of millions of ages, in wrestling and conflicting with this almighty merciless vengeance; and then when you have so done, when so many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner, you will know that all is but a point to what remains. So that your punishment will indeed be infinite. Oh, who can express what the state of a soul in such circumstances is! All that we can possibly say about it, gives but a very feeble, faint representation of it; it is inexpressible and inconceivable: For *“who knows the power of God’s anger?”*

How dreadful is the state of those that are daily and hourly in the danger of this great wrath and infinite misery! But this is the dismal case of every soul in this congregation that has not been born again, however moral and strict, sober and religious, they may otherwise be. Oh that you would consider it, whether you be young or old! There is reason to think, that there are many in this congregation now hearing this discourse, that will actually be the subjects of this very misery to all eternity. We know not who they are, or in what seats they sit, or what thoughts they now have. It may be they are now at ease, and hear all these things without much disturbance, and are now flattering themselves that they are not the persons, promising themselves that they shall escape. If we knew that there was one person, and but one, in the

whole congregation, that was to be the subject of this misery, what an awful thing would it be to think of! If we knew who it was, what an awful sight would it be to see such a person! How might all the rest of the congregation lift up a lamentable and bitter cry over him! But, alas! instead of one, how many is it likely will remember this discourse in hell? And it would be a wonder, if some that are now present should not be in hell in a very short time, even before this year is out. And it would be no wonder if some persons, that now sit here, in some seats of this meeting-house, in health, quiet and secure, should be there before tomorrow morning. Those of you that finally continue in a natural condition, that shall keep out of hell longest will be there in a little time! Your damnation does not slumber; it will come swiftly, and, in all probability, very suddenly upon many of you. You have reason to wonder that you are not already in hell. It is doubtless the case of some whom you have seen and known, that never deserved hell more than you, and that heretofore appeared as likely to have been now alive as you. Their case is past all hope; they are crying in extreme misery and perfect despair; but here you are in the land of the living and in the house of God, and have an opportunity to obtain salvation. What would not those poor damned hopeless souls give for one day's opportunity such as you now enjoy!

And now you have an extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open, and stands in calling and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners; a day wherein many are flocking to him, and pressing into the kingdom of God. Many are daily coming from the east, west, north and south; many that were very lately in the same miserable condition that you are in, are now in a happy state, with their hearts filled with love to him who has loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. How awful is it to be left behind at such a day! To see so many others feasting, while you are pining and perishing! To see so many rejoicing and singing for joy of heart, while you have cause to mourn for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit! How can you rest one moment in such a condition? Are not your souls as precious as the souls of the people at Suffield, where they are flocking from day to day to Christ?

Are there not many here who have lived long in the world, and are not to this day born again? and so are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and have done nothing ever since they have lived, but treasure up wrath against the day of wrath? Oh, sirs, your case, in an especial manner, is extremely dangerous. Your guilt and hardness of heart is extremely great. Do you not see how generally persons of your years are passed over and left, in the present remarkable and wonderful dispensation of God's mercy? You had need to consider yourselves, and awake thoroughly out of sleep. You cannot bear the fierceness and wrath of the infinite God.—And you, young men, and young women, will you neglect this precious season which you now enjoy, when so many others of your age are renouncing all youthful vanities, and flocking to Christ? You especially have now an extraordinary opportunity; but if you neglect it, it will soon be with you as with those persons who spent all the precious days of youth in sin, and are now come to such a dreadful pass in blindness and hardness.—And you, children, who are unconverted, do not you know that you are going down to hell, to bear the dreadful wrath of that God, who is now angry with you every day and every night? Will you be content to be the children of the devil, when so many other children in the land are converted, and are become the holy and happy children of the King of kings?

And let every one that is yet out of Christ, and hanging over the pit of hell, whether they be old men and women, or middle aged, or young people, or little children, now hearken to the loud calls of God's word and providence. This acceptable year of the Lord, a day of such great favour to some, will doubtless be a day of as remarkable vengeance to others. Men's hearts harden, and their guilt increases apace at such a day as this, if they neglect their souls; and never was there so great danger of such persons being given up to hardness of heart and blindness of mind. God seems now to be hastily gathering in his elect in all parts of the land; and probably the greater part of adult persons that ever shall be saved, will be brought in now in a little time, and that it will be as it was on the great out-pouring of the Spirit upon the Jews in the apostles' days; the election will obtain, and the rest will be blinded. If this should be the case with you, you will eternally curse this day, and will curse the day that ever you [were] born, to see such a sea-

son of the pouring out of God's Spirit, and will wish that you had died and gone to hell before you had seen it. Now undoubtedly it is, as it was in the days of John the Baptist, the axe is in an extraordinary manner laid at the root of the trees, that every tree which brings not forth good fruit, may be hewn down and cast into the fire.

Therefore, let every one that is out of Christ, now awake and fly from the wrath to come. The wrath of Almighty God is now undoubtedly hanging over a great part of this congregation. Let every one fly out

of Sodom: "Haste and escape for your lives, look not behind you, escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed."

**SEE ALSO**

Protestantism in America: Puritanism; The Body: Pain; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Conservatism

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Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," Enfield, Connecticut, July 8, 1741.

## George Whitefield, “The Eternity of Hell-Torments” (1772)

*John Wesley, founder of Methodism and old friend from Oxford, persuaded George Whitefield to join him in Georgia preaching the evangelical doctrine of a “new birth” to the colonists. Typical of a style of preaching that became immensely popular during the Great Awakening, Whitefield’s “The Eternity of Hell-Torments” sets before citizens of Savannah “the terrors of the Lord” so as to provide a “powerful dissuasive from sin” and encourage conversion experiences. Whitefield returned to America six more times, traveling from Georgia throughout New England and attracting huge audiences to his unorthodox, open-air sermons.*

**Matthew 25:46** *“These shall go away into everlasting punishment.”*

To the INHABITANTS of Savannah in Georgia.

My dear Friends,

Though the following sermon has been preached elsewhere, yet as the occasion of my preaching it among you was particular, as you seemed to give an uncommon attention to it in public, and afterwards expressed your satisfaction in it to me, when I came to visit you in your own houses, I thought proper to offer it to you.

And here I cannot but bless God for the general dislike of heretical principles that I have found among you; as also for your zeal and approbation of my conduct, when the glory of God and your welfare, have obliged me to resent and publicly declare against the antichristian tenets of some lately under my charge.

I need only exhort you to beg of God to give you a true faith, and to add to your faith virtue, that you may adorn the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in all things.

Your constant daily attendance upon public worship, the gladness wherewith you have received me into your houses, the mildness wherewith you have submitted to my reproofs, more especially the great (though unmerited) concern you showed at my departure, induce me to hope this will be your endeavor.

How long God of his good providence will keep me from you, I know not. However, you may assure

yourselves I will return according to my promise, as soon as I have received imposition of hands, and completed the other business that called me hither.

In the mean while, accept of this, as a pledge of the undissembled love of

Your affectionate though unworthy pastor,  
*George Whitefield*  
London, 1738

**Matthew 25:46** *“These shall go away into everlasting punishment.”*

The excellency of the gospel dispensation, is greatly evidenced by those sanctions of rewards and punishments, which it offers to the choice of all its hearers, in order to engage them to be obedient to its precepts. For it promises no less than eternal happiness to the good, and denounces no slighter a punishment than everlasting misery against the wicked: On the one hand, It is a favor of life unto life,” on the other, “A favor of death unto death.” And though one would imagine, the bare mentioning of the former would be sufficient to draw men to their duty, yet ministers in all ages have found it necessary, frequently to remind their people of the latter, and to set before them the terrors of the Lord, as so many powerful dissuasives from sin.

But whence is it that men are so disingenuous [insincere, deceitful]? The reason seems to be this: The promise of eternal happiness is so agreeable to the inclinations and wishes of mankind, that all who call themselves christians, universally and willingly subscribe to the belief of it: but then there is something so shocking in the consideration of eternal torments, and seemingly such an infinite disproportion between an endless duration of pain, and short life spent in pleasure, that men (some at least of them) can scarcely be brought to confess it as an article of their faith, that an eternity of misery awaits the wicked in a future state.

I shall therefore at this time, beg leave to insist on the proof of this part of one of the Articles of our Creed; and endeavor to make good what our blessed



Lord has here threatened in the words of the text, "These (that is, the wicked) shall go away into everlasting punishment."

Accordingly, without considering the words as they stand in relation to the context; I shall resolve all I have to say, into this one general proposition, "That the torments reserved for the wicked hereafter, are eternal."

But before I proceed to make good this, I must inform you that I take it for granted,

All present do steadfastly believe, They have something within them, which we call a soul, and which is capable of surviving the dissolution of the body, and of being miserable or happy to all eternity.

I take it for granted farther, That you believe a divine revelation; that those books, emphatically called the Scriptures, were written by the inspiration of God, and that the things therein contained, are founded upon eternal truth.

I take it for granted, That you believe, that the Son of God came down to die for sinners; and that there is but one Mediator between God and man, even the man Christ Jesus.

These things being granted, (and they were necessary to be premised) proceed we now to make good the one general proposition asserted in the text, That the torments reserved for the wicked hereafter are eternal. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment."

The first argument I shall advance to prove that the torments reserved for the wicked hereafter, are eternal, is, That the word of God himself assures us, in line upon line, that it will be so.

To quote all the texts that might be produced in proof of this, would be endless. Let it suffice to instance only in a few. In the Old Testament, in the book of Daniel, chap. 12, ver. 2 we are told, that "some shall wake to everlasting life, and others to everlasting contempt." In the book of Isaiah, it is said, that "the worm of those that have transgressed God's law, and die impenitently, shall not die, nor their fire be quenched." And in another place the holy Prophet, struck, no doubt, with astonishment and horror at the prospect of the continuance of the torments of the damned, breaks out into this moving expostulation, "Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?"

The New Testament is still fuller as to this point, it being a revelation which brought this and such-like

particulars to a clear light. The Apostle Jude tells us of the profane despisers of dignities in his days, that "for them was reserved the blackness of darkness forever." And in the book of the Revelation, it is written, that "the smoke of the torments of the wicked ascendeth for ever and ever." And if we believe the witness of men inspired, the witness of the Son of God, who had the Spirit given him, as Mediator, without measure, is still far greater: and in St. Mark's gospel, He repeats this solemn declaration three several times, "It is better for thee to enter into life maimed"; that is, it is better to forego the gratification of thy lust, or incur the displeasure of a friend, which may be as dear to thee as a hand, or as useful as a foot, "than having two hands and feet, (that is, for indulging the one, or disobeying God to oblige the other) to be cast into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

And here again, in the words of the text, "These (the wicked) shall go away into everlasting punishment."

I know it has been objected by some who have denied the eternity of hell-torments, That the words everlasting and ever and ever, are often used in the Holy Scriptures (especially in the Old Testament) when they signify not an endless duration, but a limited term of time.

And this we readily grant: but then we reply, That when the words are used with this limitation, they either manifestly appear to be used so from the context; or are put in opposition to occasional types which God gave his people on some special occasions, as when it is said, "It shall be a perpetual or everlasting statute," or, "a statute for ever"; that is, a standing type, and not merely transient or occasional, as was the pillar of cloud, the manna, and such-like. Or, lastly, they have a relation to that covenant, God made with his spiritual Israel; which, if understood in a spiritual sense, will be everlasting, though the ceremonial dispensation be abolished.

Besides, it ought to be observed, that some of the passages just now referred to, have neither of these words so much as mentioned in them, and cannot possibly be interpreted, so as to denote only a limited term of years.

But let that be as it will, it is evident even to a demonstration, that the words of the text will not admit of such a restrained signification, as appears from their being directly opposed to the words immediately

following, "That the righteous shall go into life eternal." From which words, all are ready to grant, that the life promised to the righteous will be eternal. And why the punishment threatened to the wicked should not be understood to be eternal likewise, when the very same word in the original, is used to express the duration of each, no shadow of a reason can be given.

But, Secondly, There cannot be one argument urged, why God should reward his saints with everlasting happiness, which will not equally prove that he ought to punish sinners with eternal misery.

For, since we know nothing (at least for a certainty) how he will deal with either but by a Divine Revelation; and since, as was proved by the foregoing argument, he hath as positively threatened eternally to punish the wicked, as to reward the good; it follows, that his truth will be as much impeached and called in question, did he not inflict his punishments, as it would be, if he did not confer his rewards.

To this also it has been objected, That though God is obliged by promise to give his rewards, yet his veracity could not be called in question, supposing he should not execute his threatenings, as he actually did not in the case of Nineveh; which God expressly declared by his Prophet Jonah, "should be destroyed in forty days": notwithstanding the sequel of the story informs us, that Nineveh was spared.

But in answer to this objection we affirm, that God's threatenings, as well as promises, are without repentance; and for this reason, because they are both founded on the eternal laws of right reason. Accordingly we always find, that where the conditions were not performed, on the non-performance of which the threatenings were denounced, God always executed the punishment threatened. The driving Adam out of Eden, the destruction of the old world by a deluge of water, and the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, are, and will be always so many standing monuments of God's executing his threatenings when denounced, though to our weak apprehensions, the punishment may seem far to exceed the crime.

It is true, God did spare Nineveh, and that because the inhabitants did actually repent, and therefore performed the conditions upon which it was supposed, by the Prophet's being sent to warn them, the threatened punishment should be withheld.

And so in respect to gospel threatenings. If men will so far consult their own welfare, as to comply with

the gospel, God certainly will not punish them, but on the contrary, confer upon them his rewards. But to affirm that he will not punish, and that eternally to, impenitent, obstinate sinners, according as he hath threatened; what is it, in effect, but to make God like a man, that he should lie, or the son of man, that he should repent?

But the absurdity of such an opinion will appear still more evident from The Third argument I shall offer to prove, that the torments reserved for the wicked hereafter are eternal, From the nature of the christian covenant.

And here I must again observe, that it was taken for granted at the beginning of this discourse, that you believe the Son of God came down to save sinners; and that there is but one Mediator between God and men, even the Man Christ Jesus.

And here I take it for granted farther, (unless you believe the absurd and unwarrantable doctrine of purgatory) that you are fully persuaded, this life is the only time allotted by Almighty God for working out our salvation, and that after a few years are passed over, there will remain no more sacrifice for sin.

And if this be granted (and who dares deny it?) it follows, that if the wicked man dieth in his wickedness, and under the wrath of God, he must continue in that state to all eternity. For, since there is no possibility of their being delivered out of such a condition, but by and through Christ; and since, at the hour of death, the time of Christ's mediation and intercession for him is irrecoverably gone; the same reason that may be given, why God should punish a sinner that dieth under the guilt of his sins for a single day, will equally hold good, why he should continue to punish him for a year, an age, nay all eternity.

But I hasten to the Fourth and last argument, to prove, That the torments reserved for the wicked hereafter are eternal, Because the devil's punishment is to be so.

That there is such a being whom we call the devil; that he was once an angel of light, but for his pride and rebellion against God, was cast down from heaven, and is now permitted, with the rest of the spiritual wickednesses, to walk to and fro, seeking whom they may devour; that there is a place of torment reserved for them, or, to use the Apostle's words, "That they are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day";

are truths all here present were supposed to be convinced of, at the beginning of the discourse, you believing the Holy Scriptures to be written by the inspiration of God, wherein these truths are delivered.

But then if we allow all this, and think it no injustice in God to punish those once glorious spirits for their rebellion; how can we think it unjust in him, to punish wicked men for their impenitency to all eternity?

You will say, perhaps, that they have sinned against greater light, and therefore deserve a greater punishment. And so we grant that the punishment of the fallen angels may be greater as to degree, than that of wicked men; but then we affirm, it will be equal as to the eternal duration of it: for in that day, as the lively oracles of God inform us, shall the Son of Man say to them on his left hand, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Where we find that impenitent sinners are to be cast into the same everlasting fire, with the devil and his angels; and that too very justly. For though they may have sinned against greater light, yet christians sin against greater mercy. Since Christ took not hold of, did not die for, the fallen angels, but for men and for our salvation. So that if God spared not those excellent beings, assure thyself, O obstinate sinner, whoever thou art, he will by no means spare thee.

From what then has been said it plainly appears, that verily the torments reserved for the wicked hereafter, war eternal. And if so, brethren, how ought we to fly to Jesus Christ for refuge; how holy ought we to be in all manner of conversation and godliness, that we may be accounted worthy to escape this wrath to come!

But before I proceed to a practical exhortation, permit me to draw an inference or two from what has been said.

And First, If the torments reserved for the wicked hereafter are eternal, what shall we say to those, who make an open profession in their creed to believe a life everlasting, a life of misery as well as happiness, and yet dare to live in the actual commission of those sins which will unavoidably, without repentance, bring them into that place of torment? Thou believest that the punishments of the impenitently wicked in another life, are eternal: "Thou dost well, the devils also believe and tremble." But know O vain man, unless this belief doth influence thy practice, and makes thee bid adieu to thy sins, every time thou repeatest

thy creed, thou doest in effect say, I believe I shall be undone for ever.

But, Secondly, If the torments reserved for the wicked hereafter are eternal, then let this serve as a caution to such persons, (and it is to be feared there are some such) who go about to dissuade others from the belief of such an important truth: There being no surer way, in all probability, to encourage and promote infidelity and profaneness, than the broaching or maintaining so unwarrantable a doctrine. For if the positive threats of God concerning the eternity of hell-torments, are already found insufficient to deter men from sin, what a higher pitch of wickedness may we imagine they will quickly arrive at, when they are taught to entertain any hopes of a future recovery out of them; or, what is still worse, that their souls are hereafter to be annihilated, and become like the beasts that perish? But woe unto such blind leaders of the blind. No wonder if they both fall into that ditch. And let such corrupters of God's word know, that I testify unto every man that heareth me this day, "That if any one shall add unto, or take away from the words that are written in the book of God, God shall take his part out of the book of life, and shall add unto him all the plagues that are in that book."

Thirdly and Lastly, If the torments reserved for the wicked hereafter are eternal, then this may serve as a reproof for those who quarrel with God, and say it is inconsistent with his justice, to punish a person to all eternity, only for enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season. But such persons must be told, that it is not their thinking or calling God unjust, will make him so, no more than a condemned prisoner's saying the law or judge is unjust, will render either duly chargeable with such an imputation. But knowest thou, O worm, what blasphemy thou are guilty of, in charging God with injustice? "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?" Wilt thou presume to arraign the Almighty at the bar of thy shallow reasoning? And call him unjust, for punishing thee eternally, only because thou wishest it may not be so? But hath God said it, and shall he not do it? He hath said it: and let God be true, though every man be a liar. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" Assuredly he will. And if sinners will not own his justice in his threatenings here, they will be compelled ere long to own and feel them, when tormented by him hereafter.

But to come to a more practical application of what has been delivered.

You have heard, brethren, the eternity of hell-torments plainly proved, from the express declarations of holy scriptures, and consequences naturally drawn from them. And now there seems to need no great art of rhetoric to persuade any understanding person to avoid and abhor those sins, which without repentance will certainly plunge him into this eternal gulf. The disproportion between the pleasure and the pain (if there be any pleasure in sin) is so infinitely great, that supposing it was only possible, though not certain, that the wicked would be everlastingly punished, no one that has the reason of a man, for the enjoying a little momentary pleasure, would, one might imagine, run the hazard of enduring eternal pain. But since the torments of the damned are not only possible, but certain (since God himself, who cannot lie, has told us so) for men, notwithstanding, to persist in their disobedience, and then flatter themselves, that God will not make good his threatenings, is a most egregious (gross, excessive) instance of folly and presumption.

Dives himself supposed, that if one rose from the dead, his brethren would amend their lives, but Christians, it seems, will not repent, though the Son of God died and rose again, and told them what they must expect, if they continue obstinate in evil-doing.

Would we now and then draw off our thoughts from sensible objects, and by faith meditate a while on the miseries of the damned, I doubt not but we should, as it were, hear many an unhappy soul venting his fruitless sorrows, in some such piteous moans as these.

“O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!” O foolish mortal that I was, thus to bring myself into these never-ceasing tortures, for the transitory enjoyment of a few short-lived pleasures, which scarcely afforded me any satisfaction, even when I most indulged myself in them. Alas! Are these the wages, these the effects of sin? O damned apostate! First to delude me with pretended promises of happiness, and after several years drudgery in his service, thus to involve me in eternal woe. O that I had never hearkened to his beguiling insinuations! O that I had rejected his very first suggestions with the utmost detestation and abhorrence! O that I had taken up my cross and followed Christ! O that I had never ridiculed serious godliness; and out of a

false politeness, condemned the truly pious as too severe, enthusiastic, or superstitious! For I then had been happy indeed, happy beyond expression, happy to all eternity, yonder in those blessed regions where they fit, clothed with unspeakable glory, and chanting forth their seraphic hallelujahs to the Lamb that sitteth upon the throne for ever. But, alas! These reflections come now too late; these wishes now are vain and fruitless. I have not suffered, and therefore must not reign with them. I have in effect denied the Lord that bought me, and therefore justly am I now denied by him. But must I live for ever tormented in these flames? Must this body of mine, which not long since lay in state, was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, must it be here eternally confined, and made the mockery of insulting devils? O eternity! That thought fills me with despair: I must be miserable for ever.

Come then, all ye self-deluding, self-deluded sinners, and imagine yourselves for once in the place of that truly wretched man I have been here describing. Think, I beseech you by the mercies of God in Christ Jesus, think with yourselves, how racking, how unsupportable the never-dying worm of a self-condemning conscience will hereafter be to you. Think how impossible it will be for you to dwell with everlasting burnings.

Come, all ye christians of a lukewarm, Laodicean spirit, ye Gallie’s in religion, who care a little, but not enough for the things of God; O think, think with yourselves, how deplorable it will be to lose the enjoyment of heaven, and run into endless torments, merely because you will be content to be almost, and will not strive to be altogether christians. Consider, I beseech you consider, how you will rave and curse that fatal stupidity which made you believe any thing less than true faith in Jesus, productive of a life of strict piety, self-denial, and mortification, can keep you from those torments, the eternity of which I have been endeavoring to prove.

But I can no more. These thoughts are too melancholy for me to dwell on, as well as for you to hear; and God knows, as punishing is his strange work, so denouncing his threatenings is mine. But if the bare mentioning the torments of the damned is so shocking, how terrible must the enduring of them be!

And now, are not some of you ready to cry out, “These are hard sayings, who can bear them?”

But let not sincere christians be in the least terrified at what has been delivered: No, for you is reserved a crown, a kingdom, an eternal and exceeding weight of glory. Christ never said that the righteous, the believing, the upright, the sincere, but the wicked, merciless, negatively good professors before described, shall go into everlasting punishment. For you, who love him in sincerity, a new and living way is laid open into the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus Christ: and an abundant entrance will be administered unto you, at the great day of account, into eternal life. Take heed, therefore, and beware that there be not in any of you a root of bitterness springing up of unbelief: but on the contrary, steadfastly and heartily rely on the many precious promises reached out to you in the gospel, knowing that he who hath promised is faithful, and therefore will perform.

But let no obstinately wicked professors dare to apply any of the divine promises to themselves: “For it is not meet to take the children’s meat and give it unto dogs”: No, to such the terrors of the Lord only belong. And as certainly as Christ will say to his true

followers, “Come, ye blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world”; so he will unalterably pronounce this dreadful sentence against all that die in their sins, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

From which unhappy state, may God of his infinite mercy deliver us all through Jesus Christ; to whom, with thee O Father, and thee O Holy Ghost, three Persons and one eternal God, be ascribed, as is most due, all honor, power, might, majesty, and dominion, now and for ever more.

**SEE ALSO**

Protestantism in America: Emotion, Puritanism;  
The Body: Pain

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George Whitefield, “The Eternity of Hell-Torments,” E. and C. Dilly, 1771–1772, London. [http://www.ccel.org/w/whitefield/sermons/txt/WITF\\_026.TXT](http://www.ccel.org/w/whitefield/sermons/txt/WITF_026.TXT). Christian Classics Ethereal Library at Calvin College, <http://www.ccel.org/> (Nov. 18, 2002).

## Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776)

*On July 4, 1776, the Second Continental Congress approved the Declaration of Independence, which set forth the principles that justified the Revolutionary War. Both the French and English Revolutions heavily influenced Thomas Jefferson, the document's primary drafter. He argued that because King George III had repeatedly violated the "laws of nature" in his treatment of the American colonists, they had not only the right but the duty to revolt.*

### **The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America**

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the Political Bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the Earth, the separate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent Respect to the Opinions of Mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the Separation.

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness—That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive to these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles and organizing its Powers in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient Causes; and accordingly all Experience hath shown that Mankind are more disposed to suffer, while Evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the Forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long Train of Abuses and Usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object, evinces a Design to reduce them under

absolute Despotism, it is their Right, it is their Duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future Security. Such has been the patient Sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the Necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The History of the present King of Great Britain is a History of repeated Injuries and Usurpations, all having in direct Object the Establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid World.

HE has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public Good.

HE has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing Importance, unless suspended in their Operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

HE has refused to pass other Laws for the Accommodation of large Districts of People, unless those People would relinquish the Right of Representation in the Legislature, a Right inestimable to them and formidable to Tyrants only.

HE has called together Legislative Bodies at Places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the Depository of their public Records, for the sole Purpose of fatiguing them into Compliance with his Measures.

HE has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly Firmness his Invasions on the Rights of the People.

HE has refused for a long Time, after such Dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the meantime exposed to all the Dangers of Invasion from without, and the Convulsions within.

HE has endeavored to prevent the Population of these States; for that Purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their Migration hither, and raising the Conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

HE has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers.

HE has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the Tenure of their Offices, and the Amount and Payment of their Salaries.

HE has erected a Multitude of new Offices, and sent hither Swarms of Officers to harass our People, and eat out their Substance.

HE has kept among us, in Times of Peace, Standing Armies without the consent of our Legislature.

HE has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to Civil Power.

HE has combined with others to subject us to a Jurisdiction foreign to our Constitution, and unacknowledged by our Laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

FOR quartering large Bodies of Armed Troops among us:

FOR protecting them, by mock Trial, from Punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

FOR cutting off our Trade with all Parts of the World:

FOR imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

FOR depriving us in many Cases, of the Benefits of Trial by Jury:

FOR transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended Offences:

FOR abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighboring Province, establishing therein an arbitrary Government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an Example and fit Instrument for introducing the same absolute Rule into these Colonies:

FOR taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

FOR suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with Power to legislate for us in all Cases whatsoever.

HE has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

HE has plundered our Seas, ravaged our Coasts, burned our Towns, and destroyed the Lives of our People.

HE is, at this Time, transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the Works of Death,

Desolation, and Tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty and Perfidy, scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous Ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized Nation.

HE has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the Executioners of their Friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

HE has excited domestic Insurrections amongst us, and has endeavored to bring on the Inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known Rule of Warfare, is undistinguished Destruction of all Ages, Sexes and Conditions.

IN every stage of these Oppressions we have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble Terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated Injury. A Prince, whose Character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the Ruler of a free People.

NOR have we been wanting in Attentions to our British Brethren. We have warned them from Time to Time of attempts by their Legislature to extend an unwarrantable Jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the Circumstances of our Emigration and Settlement here. We have appealed to their native Justice and Magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the Ties of our common Kindred to disavow these Usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our Connections and Correspondence. They too have been deaf to the Voice of Justice and Consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the Necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of Mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace, Friends.

WE, therefore, the Representatives of the UNITED STATES of AMERICA, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the World for the Rectitude of our Intentions, do, in the Name, and by the Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly Publish and Declare, that these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be, FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES; that they are absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political Connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Com-

merce, and to do all other Acts and Things which INDEPENDENT STATES may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm Reliance on the Protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

- New Hampshire: Josiah Bartlett, William Whipple, Matthew Thornton
- Massachusetts: John Hancock, Samuel Adams, John Adams, Robert Treat Paine, Elbridge Gerry
- Rhode Island: Stephen Hopkins, William Ellery
- Connecticut: Roger Sherman, Samuel Huntington, William Williams, Oliver Wolcott
- New York: William Floyd, Philip Livingston, Francis Lewis, Lewis Morris
- New Jersey: Richard Stockton, John Witherspoon, Francis Hopkinson, John Hart, Abraham Clark
- Pennsylvania: Robert Morris, Benjamin Rush, Benjamin Franklin, John Morton, George Clymer, James Smith, George Taylor, James Wilson, George Ross

- Delaware: Caesar Rodney, George Read, Thomas McKean
- Maryland: Samuel Chase, William Paca, Thomas Stone, Charles Carroll of Carrollton
- Virginia: George Wythe, Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Harrison, Thomas Nelson, Jr., Francis Lightfoot Lee, Carter Braxton
- North Carolina: William Hooper, Joseph Hewes, John Penn
- South Carolina: Edward Rutledge, Thomas Heyward, Jr., Thomas Lynch, Jr., Arthur Middleton
- Georgia: Button Gwinnett, Lyman Hall, George Walton.

**SEE ALSO**

Protestantism in America; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion, Liberalism

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Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776.



## Charles Chauncy, excerpt from *The Salvation of All Men* (1784)

*Although he shared with Jonathan Edwards the distinction of being among the most influential Congregationalist ministers in New England, Charles Chauncy opposed Edwards and other proponents of the Great Awakening who used the specter of divine punishment to encourage conversions to Christianity. In *The Salvation of All Men* and other works, Chauncy instead forwarded the doctrine of “universal restoration,” according to which the salvation of Christ would be given to all people.*

### 1.

As the First Cause of all things is infinitely benevolent, 'tis not easy to conceive that he should bring mankind into existence, unless he intended to make them finally happy. And if this was his intention, it cannot well be supposed, as he is infinitely intelligent and wise, that he should be unable to project or carry into execution, a scheme that would be effectual to secure, sooner or later, the certain accomplishment of it. Should it be suggested, Free agents, as men are allowed to be, must be left to their own choices, in consequence whereof blame can be reflected justly no where but upon themselves . . . the answer is perfectly obvious. Their Creator, being perfectly benevolent, would be disposed to prevent their making, or at least, their finally persisting in such wrong choices; and, being infinitely intelligent and wise, would use suitable and yet effectual methods in order to attain this end. Should it be said further, Such free agents as men are may oppose all the methods that can be used with them, in consistency with liberty, and persist in wrong pursuits . . . the reply is, This is sooner said than proved. Who will undertake to make it evident that infinite wisdom, excited by infinite benevolence, is incapable of devising expedients whereby moral agents, without any violence offered to their liberty, may certainly be led, if not at first, yet after various repeated trials, into such determinations and consequent actions as would finally prepare them for happiness? It would be hard to suppose that infinite wisdom should finally be outdone by the obstinacy and folly of any free agents whatsoever. If this might really be the case, how can it be thought, with respect to

such free agents, that they should ever have been produced by an infinitely benevolent cause? If the only good God knew . . . that some free agents would make themselves unhappy, notwithstanding the utmost efforts of his wisdom to prevent it, why did he create them?

### 2.

In the house where I lodged, when I first came to [Philadelphia], I had, in the freedom of conversation, and with some appearance of joy, expressed myself in general terms upon the subject, but always in the exact words of Scripture, or in such a manner as this, viz:—That I could not help hoping that God would finally bring *every knee to bow* and *every tongue to swear*; and that *at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth; and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess JESUS CHRIST to be Lord to the glory of God the Father.* And that I hoped, *that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in CHRIST, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, &c.*

Such passages as these I mentioned in this manner, hoping that they would be fulfilled. The people of the house seemed surprised, and asked me if I believed so; I answered, “That sometimes I could not help hoping that it might be so.” I could hardly have imagined among friends that any danger could have arisen from my expressing a hope that the Scriptures were true.

However these false friends told a minister, whom for a number of years I had esteemed as my best and most intimate friend, that I was turned heretic, and believed in the doctrine of the *Universal Restoration*, and desired him to convince me. Some time after he met with me in the street, and in a very abrupt manner told me, that he had wanted to see me for some time, that he might give me a piece of his mind; that he had been informed by such a person, that I was inclined to the doctrine of the *Universal Restoration*, and then, instead of using any argument to convince me, or taking any method for my recovery, added this *laconic*

*speech*, “If you embrace this sentiment, I shall no longer own you for a brother.” And he has hitherto been as good as his word, having never written nor spoken to me from that day to this, and when I have since offered to shake hands with him, he refused; and yet he was one whom I esteemed above any other on earth, as a hearty, sincere, long-trying, and faithful friend. If my intimate friend treated me in such a manner, what had I not to expect from my open and avowed enemies?

I now foresaw the storm, and I determined to prepare for it, not by denying what I had said, but by examining and determining for myself, whether the sentiment was according to scripture or not. If I found that it was not, I was determined to retract, but if it was, to hold it fast, let the consequences be what they might. I had now no time to lose. I expected in a short time to be called to an account, and examined respecting this doctrine, and obliged either to *defend or deny it*; I was already too well persuaded that it was true, to do the latter without hesitation, and yet not sufficiently for the former. For this purpose, I shut myself up chiefly in my chamber, read the Scriptures, and prayed to God to lead me into all truth, and not

suffer me to embrace any error; and I think that with an upright mind, I laid myself open to believe whatever the Lord had revealed. It would be too long to tell all the teachings I had on this head; let it suffice, in short, to say, that I became so well persuaded of the truth of the *Universal Restoration*, that I was determined never to deny it, let it cost ever so much, though all my numerous friends should forsake me, as I expected they would, and though I should be driven from men, and obliged to dwell in caves or dens of the earth, and feed on wild roots and vegetables, and suffer the loss of all things, friends, wealth, fame, health, character, and even life itself. The truth appeared to me more valuable than all things, and as I had found it, I was determined never to part with it, let what would be offered in exchange.

**SEE ALSO**

Protestantism in American: Denominationalism; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Liberalism

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Excerpt from Charles Chauncy, *The Salvation of All Men*, Charles Dilly, 1784.

Thomas Paine, excerpt from  
“Of the Religion of Deism Compared with the Christian Religion,  
and the Superiority of the Former over the Latter” (1804)

*Thomas Paine made a name for himself as a defender of the American Revolution in the pamphlet Common Sense (1776) and as a defender of the French Revolution in his Rights of Man (1791). However, Paine’s progressive, broad-minded writings went beyond the political. In “Of the Religion of Deism” (1804) and his more famous Age of Reason (1795), Paine attacks Christianity and defends deism, which posits belief in a Creator-God based on the light of nature and reason and denies revelation as repugnant to reason.*

Every person, of whatever religious denomination he may be, is a DEIST in the first article of his Creed. Deism, from the Latin word *Deus*, God, is the belief of a God, and this belief is the first article of every man’s creed.

It is on this article, universally consented to by all mankind, that the Deist builds his church, and here he rests. Whenever we step aside from this article, by mixing it with articles of human invention, we wander into a labyrinth of uncertainty and fable, and become exposed to every kind of imposition by pretenders to revelation.

The Persian shows the Zend-Avesta of Zoroaster, the lawgiver of Persia, and calls it the divine law; the Bramin shows the *Shaster*, revealed, he says, by God to Brama, and given to him out of a cloud; the Jew shows what he calls the Law of Moses, given, he says, by God, on the Mount Sinai; the Christian shows a collection of books and epistles, written by nobody knows who, and called the New Testament; and the Mahometan shows the Koran, given, he says, by God to Mahomet: each of these calls itself *revealed religion*, and the *only* true Word of God, and this the followers of each profess to believe from the habit of education, and each believes the others are imposed upon.

But when the divine gift of reason begins to expand itself in the mind and calls man to reflection, he then reads and contemplates God and His works, and not in the books pretending to be revelation. The creation

is the Bible of the true believer in God. Everything in this vast volume inspires him with sublime ideas of the Creator. The little and paltry, and often obscene, tales of the Bible sink into wretchedness when put in comparison with this mighty work.

The Deist needs none of those tricks and shows called miracles to confirm his faith, for what can be a greater miracle than the creation itself and his own existence?

There is a happiness in Deism, when rightly understood, that is not to be found in any other system of religion. All other systems have something in them that either shock our reason, or are repugnant to it, and man, if he thinks at all, must stifle his reason in order to force himself to believe them.

But in Deism our reason and our belief become happily united. The wonderful structure of the universe, and everything we behold in the system of the creation, prove to us, far better than books can do, the existence of a God, and at the same time proclaim His attributes.

It is by the exercise of our reason that we are enabled to contemplate God in His works, and imitate Him in His way. When we see His care and goodness extended over all His creatures, it teaches us our duty toward each other, while it calls forth our gratitude to Him. It is by forgetting God in His works, and running after the books of pretended revelation, that man has wandered from the straight path of duty and happiness, and become by turns the victim of doubt and the dupe of delusion.

Except in the first article in the Christian creed, that of believing in God, there is not an article in it but fills the mind with doubt as to the truth of it, the instant man begins to think. Now every article in a creed that is necessary to the happiness and salvation of man ought to be as evident to the reason and comprehension of man as the first article is, for God has not given us reason for the purpose of confounding us,

but that we should use it for our own happiness and His glory.

The truth of the first article is proved by God Himself, and is universal; for *the creation is of itself demonstration of the existence of a Creator*. But the second article, that of God's begetting a son, is not proved in like manner, and stands on no other authority than that of a tale.

Certain books in what is called the New Testament tell us that Joseph dreamed that the angel told him so (Matthew i. 20): "And behold the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."

The evidence upon this article bears no comparison with the evidence upon the first article, and therefore is not entitled to the same credit, and ought not to be made an article in a creed, because the evidence of it is defective, and what evidence there is is doubtful and suspicious. We do not believe the first article on the authority of books, whether called Bibles or Korans, nor yet on the visionary authority of dreams, but on the authority of God's own visible works in the creation.

The nations who never heard of such books, nor of such people as Jews, Christians or Mahometans, believe the existence of God as fully as we do, because it is self-evident. The work of man's hands is a proof of the existence of man as fully as his personal appearance would be.

When we see a watch, we have as positive evidence of the existence of a watchmaker, as if we saw him; and in like manner the creation is evidence to our reason and our senses of the existence of a Creator. But there is nothing in the works of God that is evidence that He begat a son, nor anything in the system of creation that corroborates such an idea, and, therefore, we are not authorized in believing it. . . .

The four books called the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, which give, or pretend to give, the birth, sayings, life, preaching, and death of Jesus Christ, make no mention of what is called the fall of man; nor is the name of Adam to be found in any of those books, which it certainly would be if the writers of them believed that Jesus was begotten, born and died for the purpose of redeeming mankind from the sin which Adam had brought into the world. Jesus

never speaks of Adam himself, of the Garden of Eden, nor of what is called the fall of man.

But the Church of Rome having set up its new religion, which it called Christianity, invented the creed which it named the Apostles' Creed, in which it calls Jesus the *only son of God, conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary*; things of which it is impossible that man or woman can have any idea, and consequently no belief but in words; and for which there is no authority but the idle story of Joseph's dream in the first chapter of Matthew, which any designing impostor or foolish fanatic might make.

It then manufactured the allegories in the book of Genesis into fact, and the allegorical tree of life and the tree of knowledge into real trees, contrary to the belief of the first Christians, and for which there is not the least authority in any of the books of the New Testament; for in none of them is there any mention made of such place as the Garden of Eden, nor of anything that is said to have happened there.

But the Church of Rome could not erect the person called Jesus into a Savior of the world without making the allegories in the book of Genesis into fact, though the New Testament, as before observed, gives no authority for it. All at once the allegorical tree of knowledge became, according to the Church, a real tree, the fruit of it real fruit, and the eating of it sinful.

As priestcraft was always the enemy of knowledge, because priestcraft supports itself by keeping people in delusion and ignorance, it was consistent with its policy to make the acquisition of knowledge a real sin.

The Church of Rome having done this, it then brings forward Jesus the son of Mary as suffering death to redeem mankind from sin, which Adam, it says, had brought into the world by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge. But as it is impossible for reason to believe such a story, because it can see no reason for it, nor have any evidence of it, the Church then tells us we must not regard our reason, but must *believe*, as it were, and that through thick and thin, as if God had given man reason like a plaything, or a rattle, on purpose to make fun of him. . . .

The dogma of the redemption is the fable of priestcraft invented since the time the New Testament was compiled, and the agreeable delusion of it suited with the depravity of immoral livers. When men are taught to ascribe all their own crimes and vices to the

temptations of the devil, and to believe that Jesus, by his death, rubs all off, and pays their passage to heaven gratis, they become as careless in morals as a spendthrift would be of money were he told that his father had engaged to pay off all his scores.

It is a doctrine not only dangerous to morals in this world, but to our happiness in the next world, because it holds out such a cheap, easy, and lazy way of getting to heaven, as has a tendency to induce men to hug the delusion of it to their own injury.

But there are times when men have serious thoughts, and it is at such times, when they begin to think, that they begin to doubt the truth of the Christian religion; and well they may, for it is too fanciful and too full of conjecture, inconsistency, improbability and irrationality to afford consolation to the thoughtful man. His reason revolts against his creed. He sees that none of its articles are proved, or can be proved.

He may believe that such a person as is called Jesus (for Christ was not his name) was born and grew to be a man, because it is no more than a natural and probable case. But who is to prove he is the son of God, that he was begotten by the Holy Ghost? Of these things there can be no proof; and that which admits not of proof, and is against the laws of probability and the order of nature, which God Himself has established, is not an object for belief. God has not given man reason to embarrass him, but to prevent his being imposed upon.

He may believe that Jesus was crucified, because many others were crucified, but who is to prove he was crucified for *the sins of the world*? This article has

no evidence, not even in the New Testament; and if it had, where is the proof that the New Testament, in relating things neither probable nor possible, is to be believed as true?

When an article in a creed does not admit of proof nor of probability, the salvo is to call it revelation; but this is only putting one difficulty in the place of another, for it is as impossible to prove a thing to be revelation as it is to prove that Mary was gotten with child by the Holy Ghost.

Here it is that the religion of Deism is superior to the Christian religion. It is free from all those invented and torturing articles that shock our reason or injure our humanity, and with which the Christian religion abounds. Its creed is pure, and sublimely simple. It believes in God, and there it rests.

It honors reason as the choicest gift of God to man, and the faculty by which he is enabled to contemplate the power, wisdom and goodness of the Creator displayed in the creation; and reposing itself on His protection, both here and hereafter, it avoids all presumptuous beliefs, and rejects, as the fabulous inventions of men, all books pretending to revelation.

#### SEE ALSO

Public Theologies and Political Culture: Liberalism;  
Sacred Space: Nature

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Thomas Paine, "Of the Religion of Deism Compared with the Christian Religion, and the Superiority of the Former over the Latter," 1804, in *New World Metaphysics: Readings on the Religious Meaning of the American Experience*, ed. Giles Gunn, Oxford University Press, 1981.

## Thomas Jefferson, To the Chiefs of the Cherokee Nation (January 10, 1806)

*Author of the phrase "all men are created equal," Thomas Jefferson's lofty rhetoric often conflicted with his behavior toward groups such as Native Americans and African-American slaves. In his letter "To the Chiefs of the Cherokee Nation" Jefferson appears as an admirer of Cherokee character and culture. However, President Jefferson's policies of civilization, removal, and protection of frontier populations were catastrophic for Native Americans.*

My Friends and Children,  
Chiefly of the Cherokee Nation,—

Having now finished our business and to mutual satisfaction, I cannot take leave of you without expressing the satisfaction I have received from your visit. I see with my own eyes that the endeavors we have been making to encourage and lead you in the way of improving your situation have not been unsuccessful; it has been like grain sown in good ground, producing abundantly. You are becoming farmers, learning the use of the plough and the hoe, enclosing your grounds and employing that labor in their cultivation which you formerly employed in hunting and in war; and I see handsome specimens of cotton cloth raised, spun and wove by yourselves. You are also raising cattle and hogs for your food, and horses to assist your labors. Go on, my children, in the same way and be assured the further you advance in it the happier and more respectable you will be.

Our brethren, whom you have happened to meet here from the West and Northwest, have enabled you to compare your situation now with what it was formerly. They also make the comparison, and they see how far you are ahead of them, and seeing what you are they are encouraged to do as you have done. You will find your next want to be mills to grind your corn, which by relieving your women from the loss of time in beating it into meal, will enable them to spin and weave more. When a man has enclosed and improved his farm, builds a good house on it and raised plentiful stocks of animals, he will wish when he dies

that these things shall go to his wife and children, whom he loves more than he does his other relations, and for whom he will work with pleasure during his life. You will, therefore, find it necessary to establish laws for this. When a man has property, earned by his own labor, he will not like to see another come and take it from him because he happens to be stronger, or else to defend it by spilling blood. You will find it necessary then to appoint good men, as judges, to decide contests between man and man, according to reason and to the rules you shall establish. If you wish to be aided by our counsel and experience in these things we shall always be ready to assist you with our advice.

My children, it is unnecessary for me to advise you against spending all your time and labor in warring with and destroying your fellow-men, and wasting your own members. You already see the folly and iniquity of it. Your young men, however, are not yet sufficiently sensible of it. Some of them cross the Mississippi to go and destroy people who have never done them an injury. My children, this is wrong and must not be; if we permit them to cross the Mississippi to war with the Indians on the other side of that river, we must let those Indians cross the river to take revenge on you. I say again, this must not be. The Mississippi now belongs to us. It must not be a river of blood. It is now the water-path along which all our people of Natchez, St. Louis, Indiana, Ohio, Tennessee, Kentucky and the western parts of Pennsylvania and Virginia are constantly passing with their property, to and from New Orleans. Young men going to war are not easily restrained. Finding our people on the river they will rob them, perhaps kill them. This would bring on a war between us and you. It is better to stop this in time by forbidding your young men to go across the river to make war. If they go to visit or to live with the Cherokees on the other side of the river we shall not object to that. That country is ours. We will permit them to live in it.

My children, this is what I wished to say to you. To go on in learning to cultivate the earth and to avoid war. If any of your neighbors injure you, our beloved men whom we place with you will endeavor to obtain justice for you and we will support them in it. If any of your bad people injure your neighbors, be ready to acknowledge it and to do them justice. It is more honorable to repair a wrong than to persist in it. Tell all your chiefs, your men, women and children, that I take them by the hand and hold it fast. That I am their father, wish their happiness and well-being, and am always ready to promote their good.

My children, I thank you for your visit and pray to

the Great Spirit who made us all and planted us all in this land to live together like brothers that He will conduct you safely to your homes, and grant you to find your families and your friends in good health.

**SEE ALSO**

Native American Religions and Politics; Sacred Space

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Thomas Jefferson, To the Chiefs of the Cherokee Nation, January 10, 1806, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/jeffind4.htm>. The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm> (Nov. 18, 2002).

## John Adams, Letter to Thomas Jefferson (September 14, 1813)

*Although different in many ways, New England Federalist John Adams and Southern Republican Thomas Jefferson developed a strong liking and healthy respect for one another that manifested itself in a rich correspondence. In their letters the second and third presidents of the United States, respectively, discussed topics ranging from politics, philosophy, religion, and family life. Here Adams describes to Jefferson his thoughts on the relationship between revelation, reason, and the nature of the universe.*

Dear Sir

I owe you a thousand thanks for your favour of Aug. 22 and its Enclosures, and for Dr. Priestley's "Doctrines of heathen Philosophy compared with those of Revelation." Your Letter to Dr. Rush, and the Syllabus, I return inclosed with this, according to your Injunction; though with great reluctance. May I beg a copy of both? They will do you no harm: me and others much good. I hope you will pursue your plan, for I am confident you will produce a Work much more valuable than Priestleys; tho' that is curious and considering the expiring Powers with which it was written, admirable.

The Bill in Parliament for the relief of Antitrinitarians is a great Event; and will form an Epoch in Ecclesiastical History. The Motion was made by my Friend [William] Smith of Clapham, a Friend of the Belshams. I should be very happy to hear, that the Bill is passed.

The human Understanding is a revelation from its Maker which can never be disputed or doubted. There can be no Scepticism, Pyrrhonism or Incredulity or Infidelity here. No Prophecies, no Miracles are necessary to prove this celestial communication. This revelation has made it certain that two and one make three; and that one is not three; nor can three be one. We can never be so certain of any Prophecy, or the fulfillment of any Prophecy; or of any miracle, or the design of any miracle as We are, from the revelation of nature i.e., nature's God that

two and two are equal to four. Miracles or Prophecies might frighten Us out of our Wits; might scare us to death; might induce Us to lie; to say that We believe that 2 and 2 make 5. But We should not believe it. We should know the contrary.

Had you and I been forty days with Moses on Mount Sinai and admitted to behold, the divine Shekinah, and there told that one was three and three, one: We might not have had courage to deny it, but We could not have believed it. The thunders and Lightnings and Earthquakes and the transcendent Splendors and Glories, might have overwhelmed Us with terror and Amazement: but We could not have believed the doctrine. We should be more likely to say in our hearts, whatever We might say with our Lips, This is Chance. There is no God! No Truth. This is all delusion, fiction and a lie: or it is all Chance. But what is Chance? It is motion; it is Action; it is Event; it is Phenomenon, without Cause. Chance is no cause at all. It is nothing. And Nothing has produced all this Pomp and Splendor; and Nothing may produce Our eternal damnation in the flames of Hell fire and Brimstone for what We know, as well as this tremendous Exhibition of Terror and Falseness.

God has infinite Wisdom, goodness and power. He created the Universe. His duration is eternal, a parte Ante, and a parte post. His presence is as extensive as Space. What is Space? an infinite, spherical Vacuum. He created this Speck of Dirt and the human Species for his glory: and with the deliberate design of making, nine tenths of our Species miserable forever, for his glory. This is the doctrine of Christian Theologians in general: ten to one.

Now, my Friend, can Prophecies, or miracles convince You, or Me, that infinite Benevolence, Wisdom and Power, created and preserves, for a time, innumerable millions to make them miserable, forever; for his own Glory? Wretch! What is his Glory? Is he ambitious? does he want promotion? Is he vain? tickled



with Adulation? Exulting and tryumphing in his Power and the Sweetness of his Vengeance? Pardon me, my Maker, for these Aweful Questions. My Answer to them is always ready: I believe no such Things. My Adoration of the Author of the Universe is too profound and too sincere. The Love of God and his Creation; delight, Joy, Tryumph, Exultation in my own existence, 'tho but an Atom, a Molecule Organique, in the Universe; are my religion. Howl, Snarl, bite, Ye Calvinistick! Ye Athanasian Divines, if You will. Ye will say, I am no Christian: I say Ye are no Christians: and there the Account is ballanced. Yet I believe all the honest men among you, are Christians in my Sense of the Word.

When I was at Colledge I was a mighty Metaphis[ic]ian. At least I thought myself such; and such Men as Lock, Hemenway, and West thought me so too: for We were forever disputing, though in great good humour.

When I was sworn as an Attorney in 1758, in Boston, 'tho I lived in Braintree; I was in a low state of Health; thought in great danger of a Consumption; living on Milk, Vegetable Pudding and Water. Not an Atom of Meat or a drop of Spirit. My next Neighbour, my Cousin my Friend Dr. Savil was my Physician. He was anxious for me, and did not like to take upon himself the sole Responsibility of my recovery. He invited me to a ride. I mounted my Horse and rode with him to Hingham, on a visit to Dr. Ezekiel Hersey, a Physician of great fame: who felt my pulse, looked in my Eyes, heard Savil describe my regimen and course of Medicine; and then pronoun[c]ed his Oracle "Persevere, and as sure as there is a God in Heaven you will recover." He was an everlasting Talker, and ran out, into History, Philosophy Metaphysicks, etc. and frequently put questions to me, as if he wanted to sound me, and see if there was any thing in me, besides Hectic fever. I was young, and then very bashful; however saucy I may have sometimes been since. I gave him very modest and very diffident Answers. But when he got upon Metaphysicks, I seemed to feel a little bolder, and ventured into some thing like Argument with him. I drove him

up, as I thought, into a Corner, from which he could not escape. Sir, it will follow from what you have now advanced, that the Universe, as distinct from God is both infinite and eternal. "Very true, said Dr. Harsey: Your inference is just; the Consequence is inevitable; and I believe the Universe to be, both eternal and infinite." Here I was brought up! I was defeated. I was not prepared for this Answer. This was 55 Years ago.

When I was in England from 1785, to 1788 I may say, I was intimate with Dr. Price. I had much conversation with him at his own House, at my houses, and at the houses and Tables of many Friends. In some of our most unreserved Conversations, when We have been alone, he has repeatedly said to me "I am inclined to believe that the Universe, is eternal and infinite. It seems to me that an eternal and infinite Effect, must necessarily flow from an eternal and infinite Cause; and an infinite Wisdom Goodness and Power, that could have been induced to produce a Universe in time, must have produced it from eternity." "It seems to me, the Effect must flow from the Cause."

Now, my Friend Jefferson, suppose an eternal self existent Being existing from Eternity, possessed of infinite Wisdom, Goodness and Power, in absolute total Solitude, Six thousand Years ago, conceiving the benevolent project of creating a Universe! I have no more to say, at present.

It has been long, very long a settled opinion in my Mind that there is now, never will be, and never was but one being who can Understand the Universe. And that it is not only vain but wicked for insects to pretend to comprehend it.

*John Adams*

**SEE ALSO**

Protestantism in America

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John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, September 14, 1813, in *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams*, ed. Lester J. Cappon, University of North Carolina Press, 1959.

## William Ellery Channing, excerpt from “Unitarian Christianity” (1830)

*Ordained a Congregationalist minister, William Ellery Channing soon broke from his Calvinist roots and became the head of the “liberal” party in New England Congregational politics. The “Unitarian Christianity” championed by Channing and described here opposed orthodox Calvinist views on the Trinity, atonement, total depravity, scriptural interpretation, and predestination and forwarded a belief in the moral nature of man.*

There are two natural divisions under which my thoughts will be arranged. I shall endeavour to unfold, 1st, The principles which we adopt in interpreting the Scriptures. And 2dly, Some of the doctrines, which the Scriptures, so interpreted, seem to us clearly to express.

I. We regard the Scriptures as the records of God’s successive revelations to mankind, and particularly of the last and most perfect revelation of his will by Jesus Christ. Whatever doctrines seem to us to be clearly taught in the Scriptures, we receive without reserve or exception. We do not, however, attach equal importance to all the books in this collection. Our religion, we believe, lies chiefly in the New Testament. The dispensation of Moses, compared with that of Jesus, we consider as adapted to the childhood of the human race, a preparation for a nobler system, and chiefly useful now as serving to confirm and illustrate the Christian Scriptures. Jesus Christ is the only master of Christians, and whatever he taught, either during his personal ministry, or by his inspired apostles, we regard as of divine authority, and profess to make the rule of our lives. . . .

Our leading principle in interpreting Scripture is this, that the Bible is a book written for men, in the language of men, and that its meaning is to be sought in the same manner, as that of other books. We believe that God, when he speaks to the human race, conforms, if we may so say, to the established rules of speaking and writing. How else would the Scriptures avail us more, than if communicated in an unknown tongue?

Now all books, and all conversation, require in the reader or hearer the constant exercise of reason; or their true import is only to be obtained by continual comparison and inference. Human language, you well know, admits various interpretations; and every word and every sentence must be modified and explained according to the subject which is discussed, according to the purposes, feelings, circumstances and principles of the writer, and according to the genius and idioms of the language which he uses. These are acknowledged principles in the interpretation of human writings; and a man, whose words we should explain without reference to these principles, would reproach us justly with a criminal want of candor, and an intention of obscuring or distorting his meaning. . . .

Enough has been said to show, in what sense we make use of reason in interpreting Scripture. From a variety of possible interpretations, we select that, which accords with the nature of the subject and the state of the writer, with the connexion of the passage, with the general strain of Scripture, with the known character and will of God, and with the obvious and acknowledged laws of nature. In other words, we believe that God never contradicts, in one part of Scripture, what he teaches in another; and never contradicts, in revelation, what he teaches in his works and providence. And we, therefore, distrust every interpretation, which, after deliberate attention, seems repugnant to any established truth. We reason about the Bible precisely as civilians do about the constitution under which we live; who, you know, are accustomed to limit one provision of that venerable instrument by others, and to fix the precise import of its parts, by inquiring into its general spirit, into the intentions of its authors, and into the prevalent feelings, impressions, and circumstances of the time when it was framed. Without these principles of interpretation, we frankly acknowledge, that we cannot defend the divine authority of the Scriptures. Deny us this

latitude, and we must abandon this book to its enemies.

II. Having thus stated the principles according to which we interpret Scripture, I now proceed to the second great head of this discourse, which is, to state some of the views, which we derive from that sacred book, particularly those which distinguish us from other Christians.

1. In the first place, we believe in the doctrine of GOD'S UNITY, or that there is one God, and one only. To this truth we give infinite importance, and we feel ourselves bound to take heed, lest any man spoil us of it by vain philosophy. The proposition, that there is one God, seems to us exceedingly plain. We understand by it, that there is one being, one mind, one person, one intelligent agent, and one only, to whom underived and infinite perfection and dominion belong. We conceive, that these words could have conveyed no other meaning to the simple and uncultivated people, who were set apart to be depositaries of this great truth, and who were utterly incapable of understanding those hair-breadth distinctions between being and person, which the sagacity of latter ages has discovered. We find no intimation, that this language was to be taken in an unusual sense, or that God's unity was a quite different thing from the oneness of other intelligent beings.

We object to the doctrine of the trinity, that whilst acknowledging in words, it subverts in effect, the unity of God. According to this doctrine, there are three infinite and equal persons, possessing supreme divinity, called the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Each of these persons, as described by theologians, has his own particular consciousness, will, and perceptions. They love each other, converse with each other, and delight in each other's society. They perform different parts in man's redemption, each having his appropriate office, and neither doing the work of the other. The Son is mediator and not the Father. The Father sends the Son, and is not himself sent; nor is he conscious, like the Son, of taking flesh. Here then, we have three intelligent agents, possessed of different consciousnesses, different wills, and different perceptions, performing different acts, and sustaining different relations; and if these things do not imply and constitute three minds or beings, we are utterly at a loss to know how three minds or beings are to be formed. It is difference of properties, and acts, and

consciousness, which leads us to the belief of different intelligent beings, and if this mark fails us, our whole knowledge falls; we have no proof, that all the agents and persons in the universe are not one and the same mind. When we attempt to conceive of three Gods, we can do nothing more, than represent to ourselves three agents, distinguished from each other by similar marks and peculiarities to those, which separate the persons of the trinity; and when common Christians hear these persons spoken of as conversing with each other, loving each other, and performing different acts, how can they help regarding them as different beings, different minds? . . .

2. Having thus given our views of the unity of God, I proceed in the second place to observe, that we believe in the unity of Jesus Christ. We believe that Jesus is one mind, one soul, one being, as truly as we are, and equally distinct from the one God. We complain of the doctrine of the trinity, that not satisfied with making God three beings, it makes Jesus two beings, and thus introduces infinite confusion into our conceptions of his character. This corruption of Christianity, alike repugnant to common sense, and to the general strain of scripture, is a remarkable proof of the power of a false philosophy in disfiguring the simple truth of Jesus.

According to this doctrine, Jesus Christ, instead of being one mind, one conscious intelligent principle, whom we can understand, consists of two souls, two minds; the one divine, the other human; the one weak, the other almighty; the one ignorant, the one omniscient. Now we maintain, that this is to make Christ two beings. To denominate him one person, one being, and yet to suppose him made up of two minds, infinitely different from each other, is to abuse and confound language, and to throw darkness over all our conceptions of intelligent natures. According to the common doctrine, each of these two minds in Christ has its own consciousness, its own will, its own perceptions. They have in fact no common properties. The divine mind feels none of the wants and sorrows of the human, and the human is infinitely removed from the perfection and happiness of the divine. Can you conceive of two beings in the universe more distinct? We have always thought that one person was constituted and distinguished by one consciousness. The doctrine, that one and the same person should have two consciousnesses, two wills, two

souls, infinitely different from each other, this we think an enormous tax on human credulity. . . .

3. Having thus given our belief on two great points, namely, that there is one God, and that Jesus Christ is a being distinct from, and inferior to God, I now proceed to another point on which we lay still greater stress. We believe in the *moral perfection of God*. We consider no part of theology so important as that which treats of God's moral character; and we value our views of Christianity chiefly, as they assert his amiable and venerable attributes. . . .

We believe that God is infinitely good, kind, benevolent, in the proper sense of these words; good in disposition, as well as in act; good, not to a few, but to all; good to every individual, as well as to the general system.

We believe, too, that God is just; but we never forget, that his justice is the justice of a good being, dwelling in the same mind, and acting in harmony, with perfect benevolence. . . .

To give our views of God, in one word, we believe in his Parental character. We ascribe to him, not only the name, but the dispositions and principles of a father. We believe that he has a father's concern for his creatures, a father's desire for their improvement, a father's equity in proportioning commands to their powers, a father's joy in their progress, a father's readiness to receive the penitent, and a father's justice for the incorrigible. We look upon this world as a place of education, in which he is training men by prosperity and adversity, by aids and obstructions, by conflicts of reason and passion, by motives to duty and temptations to sin, by a various discipline suited to free and moral beings, for union with himself, and for a sublime and ever growing virtue in heaven.

Now we object to the systems of religion, which prevail among us, that they are adverse, in a greater or less degree, to these purifying, comforting, and honorable views of God, that they take from us our Father in heaven, and substitute for him a being, whom we cannot love if we would, and whom we ought not to love if we could. We object, particularly on this ground, to that system, which arrogates to itself the name of Orthodoxy, and which is now industriously propagated through our country. This system indeed takes various shapes, but in all it casts dishonor on the Creator. According to its old and genuine form, it teaches, that God brings us into life

wholly depraved, so that under the innocent features of our childhood, is hidden a nature averse to all good and propense to all evil, a nature, which exposes us to God's displeasure and wrath, even before we have acquired power to understand our duties, or to reflect upon our actions. According to a more modern exposition, it teaches, that we came from the hands of our Maker with such a constitution and are placed under such influences and circumstances, as to render certain and infallible the total depravity of every human being, from the first moment of his moral agency; and it also teaches, that the offence of the child, who brings into life this ceaseless tendency to unmingled crime, exposes him to the sentence of everlasting damnation. Now, according to the plainest principles of morality, we maintain, that a natural constitution of the mind, unfaillingly disposing it to evil and to evil alone, would absolve it from guilt; that to give existence under this condition would argue unspeakable cruelty, and that to punish the sin of this unhappily constituted child with endless ruin, would be a wrong unparalleled by the most merciless despotism.

This system also teaches, that God selects from this corrupt mass a number to be saved, and plucks them, by a special influence, from the common ruin; that the rest of mankind, though left without that special grace which their conversion requires, are commanded to repent under penalty of aggravated woe; and that forgiveness is promised them on terms, which their very constitution infallibly disposes them to reject, and in rejecting which they awfully enhance the punishments of hell. These proffers of forgiveness and exhortations of amendment, to beings born under a blighting curse, fill our minds with horror, which we want words to express. . . .

4. Having thus spoken of the unity of God; of the unity of Jesus, and his inferiority to God; and of the perfections of the divine character; I now proceed to give our views of the mediation of Christ and of the purposes of his mission. With regard to the great object, which Jesus came to accomplish, there seem to be no possibility of mistake. We believe, that he was sent by the Father to effect a moral, or spiritual deliverance of mankind; that is, to rescue men from sin and its consequences, and to bring them to a state of everlasting purity and happiness. We believe, too, that he accomplishes this sublime purpose by a vari-

ety of methods; by his instructions respecting God's unity, parental character, and moral government, which are admirably fitted to reclaim the world from idolatry and impiety, to the knowledge, love, and obedience of the Creator; by his promises of pardon to the penitent, and of divine assistance to those, who labor for progress in moral excellence; by the light which he has thrown on the path of duty; by his own spotless example, in which the loveliness and sublimity of virtue shine forth to warm and quicken, as well as guide us to perfection; by his threatenings against incorrigible guilt; by his glorious discoveries of immortality; by his sufferings and death; by that signal event, the resurrection, which powerfully bore witness to his divine mission, and brought down to men's senses a future life; by his continual intercession, which obtains for us spiritual aid and blessings; and by the power with which he is invested of raising the dead, judging the world, and conferring the everlasting rewards, promised to the faithful.

5. Having thus stated our views of the highest object of Christ's mission, that it is the recovery of men to virtue, or holiness, I shall now, in the last place, give our views of the nature of christian virtue, or true holiness. We believe that all virtue has its foundation in the moral nature of man, that is, in conscience, or his sense of duty, and in the power of forming his temper and life according to conscience. We believe that these moral faculties are the grounds of responsibility, and the highest distinctions of human nature, and that no act is praiseworthy, any farther than it springs from their exertion. We believe, that no dispositions infused into us without our own moral activity, are of the nature of virtue, and therefore, we reject

the doctrine of irresistible divine influence on the human mind, moulding it into goodness, as marble is hewn into a statue. Such goodness, if this word may be used, would not be the object of moral approbation, any more than the instinctive affections of inferior animals, or the constitutional amiableness of human beings. . . .

Among the virtues, we give the first place to the love of God. We believe, that this principle is the true end and happiness of our being, that we were made for union with our Creator, that his infinite perfection is the only sufficient object and true resting place for the insatiable desires and unlimited capacities of the human mind, and that without him, our noblest sentiments, admiration, veneration, hope, and love, would wither and decay. . . .

Another important branch of virtue, we believe to be love to Christ. The greatness of the work of Jesus, the spirit with which he executed it, and the sufferings which he bore for our salvation, we feel to be strong claims on our gratitude and veneration. We see in nature no beauty to be compared with the loveliness of his character, nor do we find on earth a benefactor, to whom we owe an equal debt. We read his history with delight, and learn from it the perfection of our nature.

#### SEE ALSO

Public Theologies and Political Culture: Liberalism

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William Ellery Channing, "Unitarian Christianity," 1830, in *New World Metaphysics: Readings on the Religious Meaning of the American Experience*, ed. Giles Gunn, Oxford University Press, 1981.

Charles Grandison Finney, excerpt from  
*What a Revival of Religion Is* (1835)

*Lawyer turned Presbyterian preacher Charles Grandison Finney was a leading figure during the Second Great Awakening, a thirty-year period (1800–1830) marked by a proliferation of religious revivals across the country. Against his more orthodox Calvinist counterparts, Finney believed that religious conversions were brought about not solely by God’s grace, but by individual choice. In order to move participants in his revivals to repent from their sins and reform their lives, Finney employed controversial “new measures” that included public praying of women in mixed-sex audiences, daily services over a series of days, use of colloquial language, use of the “anxious bench,” praying for people by name, and immediate church membership for converts.*

It is altogether improbable that religion will ever make progress among heathen nations except through the influence of revivals. The attempt is now making to do it by education, and other cautious and gradual improvements. But so long as the laws of mind remain what they are, it cannot be done in this way. There must be excitement sufficient to wake up the dormant moral powers, and roll back the tide of degradation and sin. And precisely so far as our own land approximately to heathenism, it is impossible for God or man to promote religion in such a state of things but by powerful excitements. This is evident from the fact that this has always been the way in which God has done it. God does not create these excitements, and choose this method to promote religion for nothing, or without reason. Where mankind are so reluctant to obey God, they will not obey until they are excited. For instance, how many there are who know that they ought to be religious, but they are afraid if they become pious they will be laughed at by their companions. Many are wedded to idols, others are procrastinating repentance, until they are settled in life, or until they have secured some favorite worldly interest. Such persons never will give up their false shame, or relinquish their ambitious schemes, till they are so excited that they cannot contain themselves any longer. . . .

It is presupposed that the church is sunk down in a backslidden state, and a revival consists in the return of the church from her backsliding, and in the conversion of sinners.

1. A revival always includes conviction of sin on the part of the church. Backslidden professors cannot wake up and begin right away in the service of God, without deep searching of heart. The fountains of sin need to be broken up. In a true revival, Christians are always brought under such convictions; they see their sins in such a light, that often they find it impossible to maintain a hope of their acceptance with God. It does not always go to that extent; but there are always, in a genuine revival, deep convictions of sin, and often cases of abandoning all hope.

2. Backslidden Christians will be brought to repentance. A revival is nothing else than a new beginning of obedience to God. Just as the case of a converted sinner, the first step is a deep repentance, a breaking down of heart, a getting down into the dust before God, with deep humility, and forsaking of sin.

3. Christians will have their fair renewed. While they are in their backslidden state they are blind to the state of sinners. Their hearts are as hard as marble. The truths of the Bible only appear like a dream. They admit it to be all true; their conscience and their judgment assent to it; but their faith does not see it standing out in bold relief, in all the burning realities of eternity. But when they enter into a revival, they no longer see men as trees walking, but they see things in that strong light which will renew the love of God in their hearts. This will lead them to labor zealously to bring others to him. They will feel grieved that others do not love God, when they love him so much. And they will set themselves feelingly to persuade their neighbors to give him their heart. So their love to men will be renewed. They will be filled with a tender and burning love for souls. They will have a longing desire for the salvation of the whole world. They will be in agony for individuals whom they

want to have saved; their friends, relations, enemies. They will not only be urging them to give their hearts to God, but they will carry them to God in the arms of faith, and with strong crying and tears beseech God to have mercy on them, and save their souls from endless burning.

4. A revival breaks the power of the world and sin over Christians. It brings them to such vantage ground that they get a fresh impulse towards heaven. They have a new foretaste of heaven, and new desires after union to God; and the charm of the world is broken, and the power of sin overcome.

5. When the churches are thus awakened and reformed, the reformation and salvation of sinners will follow, going through the same stages of conviction, repentance, and reformation. Their hearts will be broken down and changed. Very often the most abandoned profligates are among the subjects. Harlots, and drunkards, infidels, and all sorts of abandoned characters, are awakened and converted. The worst part of human society are softened, and reclaimed, and made to appear as lovely specimens of the beauty of holiness. . . . You see the error of those who are be-

ginning to think that religion can be better promoted in the world without revivals, and who are disposed to give up all efforts to produce religious excitements. Because there are evils arising in some instances out of great excitements on the subject of religion, they are of opinion that it is best to dispense with them altogether. This cannot, and must not be. True, there is danger of abuses. In cases of great religious as well as all other excitements, more for less incidental evils may be expected of course.

. . . So in revivals of religion, it is found by experience, that in the present state of the world, religion cannot be promoted to any considerable extent without them.

**SEE ALSO**

Protestantism in America: Emotion; Ritual and Performance

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Charles Grandison Finney, *What a Revival of Religion Is*, 1835. The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm> (Dec. 22, 2002).

Angelina E. Grimké, excerpt from  
*Appeal to the Christian Women of the South* (1836)

*Born in Charleston, S.C., in 1805, Angelina Grimké was converted to the Quaker faith by her sister Sarah and, like many other Quakers, became an abolitionist. She wrote her Appeal to the Christian Women of the South both in testimony to her conversion to the abolitionist cause and to forward biblical arguments against slavery. She became an influential orator, speaking throughout the Northeast and making three appearances before the Massachusetts legislative committee on antislavery.*

Shall I ask you now my friends, to draw the *parallel* between Jewish *servitude* and American *slavery*? No! For there is *no likeness* in the two systems; I ask you rather to mark the contrast. The laws of Moses *protected servants* in their *rights as men and women*, guarded them from oppression and defended them from wrong. The Code Noir of the South *robs the slave of all his rights as a man*, reduces him to a chattel personal, and defends the *master*, in the exercise of the most unnatural and unwarantable power over his slave. They each bear the impress of the hand which formed them. The attributes of justice and mercy are shadowed out in the Hebrew code; those of injustice and cruelty, in the Code Noir of America. Truly it was wise in the slaveholders of the South to declare themselves to be “chattels personal”; for before they could be robbed of wages, wives, children, and friends, it was absolutely necessary to deny they were human beings. It is wise in them, to keep them in abject ignorance, for the strong man armed must be bound before we can spoil his house—the powerful intellect of man must be bound down with the iron chains of necessity before we can rob him of his rights as a man; we must reduce him to a *thing* before we can claim the right to set our feet upon his neck, because it was only *all things* which were originally *put under the feet of man* by the Almighty and Beneficent Father of all, who has declared himself to be *no respecter* of persons, whether red, white or black.

But some have even said that Jesus Christ did not condemn slavery. To this I reply that our Holy Re-

deemer lived and preached among the Jews only. The laws which Moses had enacted fifteen hundred years previous to his appearance among them, had never been annulled, and these laws protected every servant in Palestine. If then He did not condemn Jewish servitude this does not prove that he would not have condemned such a monstrous system as that of American *slavery*, if that had existed among them. But did not Jesus condemn slavery? Let us examine some of his precepts. “*Whatsoever* ye would that men should do to you, do *ye even so to them*.” Let every slaveholder apply these queries to his own heart; Am *I* willing to be a slave—Am *I* willing to see my wife the slave of another—Am *I* willing to see my mother a slave, or my father, my sister or my brother? If *not*, then in holding others as slaves, I am doing what I would *not* wish to be done to me or any relative I have; and thus have I broken this golden rule which was given *me* to walk by.

But some slaveholders have said, “we were never in bondage to any man,” and therefore the yoke of bondage would be insufferable to us, but slaves are accustomed to it, their backs are fitted to the burden. Well, I am willing to admit that you who have lived in freedom would find slavery even more oppressive than the poor slave does, but then you may try this question in another form—Am I willing to reduce *my little child* to slavery? You know that *if it is brought up a slave* it will never know any contrast, between freedom and bondage, its back will become fitted to the burden just as the negro child’s does—*not by nature*—but by daily, violent pressure, in the same way that the head of the Indian child becomes flattened by the boards in which it is bound. It has been justly remarked that “*God never made a slave*,” he made man upright; his back was *not* made to carry burdens, nor his neck to wear a yoke, and the *man* must be crushed within him, before *his* back can be *fitted* to the burden of perpetual slavery; and that his back is *not* fitted to it, is manifest by the insurrections that so often dis-



turb the peace and security of slaveholding countries. Who ever heard of a rebellion of the beasts of the field; and why not? simply because *they* were all placed *under the feet of man*, into whose hand they were delivered; it was originally designed that they should serve him, therefore their necks have been formed for the yoke, and their backs for the burden; but *not so with man*, intellectual, immortal man! I appeal to you, my friends, as mothers; Are you willing to enslave *your* children? You start back with horror and indignation at such a question. But why, if slavery is *no wrong* to those upon whom it is imposed? why, if as has often been said, slaves are happier than their masters, free from the cares and perplexities of providing for themselves and their families? why not place *your children* in the way of being supported without your having the trouble to provide for them, or they for themselves? Do you not perceive that as soon as this golden rule of action is applied to *yourselves* that you involuntarily shrink from the test; as soon as *your* actions are weighed in *this* balance of the sanctuary that *you are found wanting*? Try yourselves by another of the Divine precepts, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Can we love a man *as* we love *ourselves* if we do, and continue to do unto him, what we would not wish any one to do to us? Look too, at Christ's example, what does he say of himself, "I came *not* to be ministered unto, but to minister." Can you for a moment imagine the meek, the lowly, and compassionate Savior, *a slaveholder*? do you not shudder at this thought as much as at that of his being a *warrior*? But why, if slavery is not sinful?

Again, it has been said, the Apostle Paul did not condemn Slavery, for he sent Onesimus back to Philemon. I do not think it can be said he sent him back, for no coercion was made use of. Onesimus was not thrown into prison and then sent back in chains to his master, as your runaway slaves often are—this could not possibly have been the case, because you know Paul as a Jew, was *bound to protect* the runaway, *he had no right* to send any fugitive back to his master. The state of the case then seems to have been this. Onesimus had been an unprofitable servant to Philemon and left him—he afterwards became converted under the Apostle's preaching, and seeing that he had been to blame in his conduct, and desiring by future fi-

delity to atone for past error, he wished to return, and the Apostle gave him the letter we now have as a recommendation to Philemon, informing him of the conversion of Onesimus, and entreating him as "Paul the aged" "to receive him, *not* now as a *servant*, but *above* a servant, a brother beloved, especially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord. If thou count *me* therefore as a partner, *receive him as myself*." This then surely cannot be forced into a justification of the practice of returning runaway slaves back to their masters, to be punished with cruel beatings and scourgings as they often are. Besides the word *Souhos* here translated servant, is the same that is made use of in Matt. xviii, 27. Now it appears that this servant owed his lord ten thousand talents; he possessed property to a vast amount. Onesimus could not then have been a *slave*, for slaves do not own their wives, or children; no, not even their own bodies, much less property. But again, the servitude which the apostle was accustomed to, must have been very different from American slavery, for he says, "the heir (or son), as long as he is a child, differeth *nothing from a servant*, though he be lord of all. But is under *tutors* and governors until the time appointed of the father." From this it appears, that the means of *instruction* were provided for *servants* as well as children; and indeed we know it must have been so among the Jews, because their servants were not permitted to remain in perpetual bondage, and therefore it was absolutely necessary they should be prepared to occupy higher stations in society than those of servants. Is it so at the South, my friends? Is the daily bread of instruction provided for *your slaves*? are their minds enlightened, and they gradually prepared to rise from the grade of menials into that of *free*, independent members of the state? Let your own statute book, and your own daily experience, answer these questions.

#### SEE ALSO

African American Religions; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Feminisms

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Angelina E. Grimké, *Appeal to the Christian Women of the South* (New York: New York Anti-Slavery Society, 1836), from the Nineteenth Century Documents Project of Furman University, <http://www.furman.edu/~benson/docs/>.

## Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (February 2, 1848)

*The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed on February 2, 1848, ended the Mexican War. Under the treaty, Mexico ceded to the United States upper California, New Mexico, and Arizona and recognized claims over Texas. In turn, the United States paid Mexico \$15,000,000, assumed the claims of American citizens against Mexico, recognized prior land grants in the Southwest, and offered citizenship to Mexicans residing in the new U.S. territories.*

Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Limits, and Settlement Between the United States of America and the United Mexican States Concluded at Guadalupe Hidalgo, February 2, 1848; Ratification Advised by Senate, with Amendments, March 10, 1848; Ratified by President, March 16, 1848; Ratifications Exchanged at Queretaro, May 30, 1848; Proclaimed, July 4, 1848.

In the Name of Almighty God

The United States of America and the United Mexican States animated by a sincere desire to put an end to the calamities of the war which unhappily exists between the two Republics and to establish Upon a solid basis relations of peace and friendship, which shall confer reciprocal benefits upon the citizens of both, and assure the concord, harmony, and mutual confidence wherein the two people should live, as good neighbors have for that purpose appointed their respective plenipotentiaries, that is to say: The President of the United States has appointed Nicholas P. Trist, a citizen of the United States, and the President of the Mexican Republic has appointed Don Luis Gonzaga Cuevas, Don Bernardo Couto, and Don Miguel Atristain, citizens of the said Republic; Who, after a reciprocal communication of their respective full powers, have, under the protection of Almighty God, the author of peace, arranged, agreed upon, and signed the following:

Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Limits, and Settlement between the United States of America and the Mexican Republic.

### **Article I**

There shall be firm and universal peace between the United States of America and the Mexican Republic, and between their respective countries, territories, cities, towns, and people, without exception of places or persons.

### **Article II**

Immediately upon the signature of this treaty, a convention shall be entered into between a commissioner or commissioners appointed by the General-in-chief of the forces of the United States, and such as may be appointed by the Mexican Government, to the end that a provisional suspension of hostilities shall take place, and that, in the places occupied by the said forces, constitutional order may be reestablished, as regards the political, administrative, and judicial branches, so far as this shall be permitted by the circumstances of military occupation.

### **Article III**

Immediately upon the ratification of the present treaty by the Government of the United States, orders shall be transmitted to the commanders of their land and naval forces, requiring the latter (provided this treaty shall then have been ratified by the Government of the Mexican Republic, and the ratifications exchanged) immediately to desist from blockading any Mexican ports and requiring the former (under the same condition) to commence, at the earliest moment practicable, withdrawing all troops of the United States then in the interior of the Mexican Republic, to points that shall be selected by common agreement, at a distance from the seaports not exceeding thirty leagues; and such evacuation of the interior of the Republic shall be completed with the least possible delay; the Mexican Government hereby binding itself to afford every facility in its power for rendering the same convenient to the troops, on their march and in their new positions, and for promoting a good

understanding between them and the inhabitants. In like manner orders shall be despatched to the persons in charge of the custom houses at all ports occupied by the forces of the United States, requiring them (under the same condition) immediately to deliver possession of the same to the persons authorized by the Mexican Government to receive it, together with all bonds and evidences of debt for duties on importations and on exportations, not yet fallen due. Moreover, a faithful and exact account shall be made out, showing the entire amount of all duties on imports and on exports, collected at such custom-houses, or elsewhere in Mexico, by authority of the United States, from and after the day of ratification of this treaty by the Government of the Mexican Republic; and also an account of the cost of collection; and such entire amount, deducting only the cost of collection, shall be delivered to the Mexican Government, at the city of Mexico, within three months after the exchange of ratifications.

The evacuation of the capital of the Mexican Republic by the troops of the United States, in virtue of the above stipulation, shall be completed in one month after the orders there stipulated for shall have been received by the commander of said troops, or sooner if possible.

#### *Article IV*

Immediately after the exchange of ratifications of the present treaty all castles, forts, territories, places, and possessions, which have been taken or occupied by the forces of the United States during the present war, within the limits of the Mexican Republic, as about to be established by the following article, shall be definitely restored to the said Republic, together with all the artillery, arms, apparatus of war, munitions, and other public property, which were in the said castles and forts when captured, and which shall remain there at the time when this treaty shall be duly ratified by the Government of the Mexican Republic. To this end, immediately upon the signature of this treaty, orders shall be despatched to the American officers commanding such castles and forts, securing against the removal or destruction of any such artillery, arms, apparatus of war, munitions, or other public property. The city of Mexico, within the inner line of intrenchments surrounding the said city, is comprehended in

the above stipulation, as regards the restoration of artillery, apparatus of war, & c.

The final evacuation of the territory of the Mexican Republic, by the forces of the United States, shall be completed in three months from the said exchange of ratifications, or sooner if possible; the Mexican Government hereby engaging, as in the foregoing article to use all means in its power for facilitating such evacuation, and rendering it convenient to the troops, and for promoting a good understanding between them and the inhabitants.

If, however, the ratification of this treaty by both parties should not take place in time to allow the embarkation of the troops of the United States to be completed before the commencement of the sickly season, at the Mexican ports on the Gulf of Mexico, in such case a friendly arrangement shall be entered into between the General-in-Chief of the said troops and the Mexican Government, whereby healthy and otherwise suitable places, at a distance from the ports not exceeding thirty leagues, shall be designated for the residence of such troops as may not yet have embarked, until the return of the healthy season. And the space of time here referred to as, comprehending the sickly season shall be understood to extend from the first day of May to the first day of November.

All prisoners of war taken on either side, on land or on sea, shall be restored as soon as practicable after the exchange of ratifications of this treaty. It is also agreed that if any Mexicans should now be held as captives by any savage tribe within the limits of the United States, as about to be established by the following article, the Government of the said United States will exact the release of such captives and cause them to be restored to their country.

#### *Article V*

The boundary line between the two Republics shall commence in the Gulf of Mexico, three leagues from land, opposite the mouth of the Rio Grande, otherwise called Rio Bravo del Norte, or Opposite the mouth of its deepest branch, if it should have more than one branch emptying directly into the sea; from thence up the middle of that river, following the deepest channel, where it has more than one, to the point where it strikes the southern boundary of New Mexico; thence, westwardly, along the whole southern

boundary of New Mexico (which runs north of the town called Paso) to its western termination; thence, northward, along the western line of New Mexico, until it intersects the first branch of the river Gila; (or if it should not intersect any branch of that river, then to the point on the said line nearest to such branch, and thence in a direct line to the same); thence down the middle of the said branch and of the said river, until it empties into the Rio Colorado; thence across the Rio Colorado, following the division line between Upper and Lower California, to the Pacific Ocean.

The southern and western limits of New Mexico, mentioned in the article, are those laid down in the map entitled "Map of the United Mexican States, as organized and defined by various acts of the Congress of said republic, and constructed according to the best authorities. Revised edition. Published at New York, in 1847, by J. Disturnell," of which map a copy is added to this treaty, bearing the signatures and seals of the undersigned Plenipotentiaries. And, in order to preclude all difficulty in tracing upon the ground the limit separating Upper from Lower California, it is agreed that the said limit shall consist of a straight line drawn from the middle of the Rio Gila, where it unites with the Colorado, to a point on the coast of the Pacific Ocean, distant one marine league due south of the southernmost point of the port of San Diego, according to the plan of said port made in the year 1782 by Don Juan Pantoja, second sailing-master of the Spanish fleet, and published at Madrid in the year 1802, in the atlas to the voyage of the schooners *Sutil* and *Mexicana*; of which plan a copy is hereunto added, signed and sealed by the respective Plenipotentiaries.

In order to designate the boundary line with due precision, upon authoritative maps, and to establish upon the ground land-marks which shall show the limits of both republics, as described in the present article, the two Governments shall each appoint a commissioner and a surveyor, who, before the expiration of one year from the date of the exchange of ratifications of this treaty, shall meet at the port of San Diego, and proceed to run and mark the said boundary in its whole course to the mouth of the Rio Bravo del Norte. They shall keep journals and make out plans of their operations; and the result agreed upon by them shall be deemed a part of this treaty, and

shall have the same force as if it were inserted therein. The two Governments will amicably agree regarding what may be necessary to these persons, and also as to their respective escorts, should such be necessary.

The boundary line established by this article shall be religiously respected by each of the two republics, and no change shall ever be made therein, except by the express and free consent of both nations, lawfully given by the General Government of each, in conformity with its own constitution.

#### *Article VI*

The vessels and citizens of the United States shall, in all time, have a free and uninterrupted passage by the Gulf of California, and by the river Colorado below its confluence with the Gila, to and from their possessions situated north of the boundary line defined in the preceding article; it being understood that this passage is to be by navigating the Gulf of California and the river Colorado, and not by land, without the express consent of the Mexican Government.

If, by the examinations which may be made, it should be ascertained to be practicable and advantageous to construct a road, canal, or railway, which should in whole or in part run upon the river Gila, or upon its right or its left bank, within the space of one marine league from either margin of the river, the Governments of both republics will form an agreement regarding its construction, in order that it may serve equally for the use and advantage of both countries.

#### *Article VII*

The river Gila, and the part of the Rio Bravo del Norte lying below the southern boundary of New Mexico, being, agreeably to the fifth article, divided in the middle between the two republics, the navigation of the Gila and of the Bravo below said boundary shall be free and common to the vessels and citizens of both countries; and neither shall, without the consent of the other, construct any work that may impede or interrupt, in whole or in part, the exercise of this right; not even for the purpose of favoring new methods of navigation. Nor shall any tax or contribution, under any denomination or title, be levied upon vessels or persons navigating the same or upon merchandise or effects transported thereon, except in the

case of landing upon one of their shores. If, for the purpose of making the said rivers navigable, or for maintaining them in such state, it should be necessary or advantageous to establish any tax or contribution, this shall not be done without the consent of both Governments.

The stipulations contained in the present article shall not impair the territorial rights of either republic within its established limits.

### *Article VIII*

Mexicans now established in territories previously belonging to Mexico, and which remain for the future within the limits of the United States, as defined by the present treaty, shall be free to continue where they now reside, or to remove at any time to the Mexican Republic, retaining the property which they possess in the said territories, or disposing thereof, and removing the proceeds wherever they please, without their being subjected, on this account, to any contribution, tax, or charge whatever.

Those who shall prefer to remain in the said territories may either retain the title and rights of Mexican citizens, or acquire those of citizens of the United States. But they shall be under the obligation to make their election within one year from the date of the exchange of ratifications of this treaty; and those who shall remain in the said territories after the expiration of that year, without having declared their intention to retain the character of Mexicans, shall be considered to have elected to become citizens of the United States.

In the said territories, property of every kind, now belonging to Mexicans not established there, shall be inviolably respected. The present owners, the heirs of these, and all Mexicans who may hereafter acquire said property by contract, shall enjoy with respect to it guarantees equally ample as if the same belonged to citizens of the United States.

### *Article IX*

The Mexicans who, in the territories aforesaid, shall not preserve the character of citizens of the Mexican Republic, conformably with what is stipulated in the preceding article, shall be incorporated into the Union of the United States, and be admitted at the proper time (to be judged of by the Congress of the United States) to the enjoyment of all the rights of citizens of the United States, according to the principles

of the Constitution; and in the mean time, shall be maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty and property, and secured in the free exercise of their religion without restriction.

### *Article X*

[Stricken out by the United States Amendments]

### *Article XI*

Considering that a great part of the territories, which, by the present treaty, are to be comprehended for the future within the limits of the United States, is now occupied by savage tribes, who will hereafter be under the exclusive control of the Government of the United States, and whose incursions within the territory of Mexico would be prejudicial in the extreme, it is solemnly agreed that all such incursions shall be forcibly restrained by the Government of the United States whensoever this may be necessary; and that when they cannot be prevented, they shall be punished by the said Government, and satisfaction for the same shall be exacted all in the same way, and with equal diligence and energy, as if the same incursions were meditated or committed within its own territory, against its own citizens.

It shall not be lawful, under any pretext whatever, for any inhabitant of the United States to purchase or acquire any Mexican, or any foreigner residing in Mexico, who may have been captured by Indians inhabiting the territory of either of the two republics; nor to purchase or acquire horses, mules, cattle, or property of any kind, stolen within Mexican territory by such Indians.

And in the event of any person or persons, captured within Mexican territory by Indians, being carried into the territory of the United States, the Government of the latter engages and binds itself, in the most solemn manner, so soon as it shall know of such captives being within its territory, and shall be able so to do, through the faithful exercise of its influence and power, to rescue them and return them to their country, or deliver them to the agent or representative of the Mexican Government. The Mexican authorities will, as far as practicable, give to the Government of the United States notice of such captures; and its agents shall pay the expenses incurred in the maintenance and transmission of the rescued captives; who, in the mean time, shall be treated with the utmost

hospitality by the American authorities at the place where they may be. But if the Government of the United States, before receiving such notice from Mexico, should obtain intelligence, through any other channel, of the existence of Mexican captives within its territory, it will proceed forthwith to effect their release and delivery to the Mexican agent, as above stipulated.

For the purpose of giving to these stipulations the fullest possible efficacy, thereby affording the security and redress demanded by their true spirit and intent, the Government of the United States will now and hereafter pass, without unnecessary delay, and always vigilantly enforce, such laws as the nature of the subject may require. And, finally, the sacredness of this obligation shall never be lost sight of by the said Government, when providing for the removal of the Indians from any portion of the said territories, or for its being settled by citizens of the United States; but, on the contrary, special care shall then be taken not to place its Indian occupants under the necessity of seeking new homes, by committing those invasions which the United States have solemnly obliged themselves to restrain.

#### *Article XII*

In consideration of the extension acquired by the boundaries of the United States, as defined in the fifth article of the present treaty, the Government of the United States engages to pay to that of the Mexican Republic the sum of fifteen millions of dollars.

Immediately after the treaty shall have been duly ratified by the Government of the Mexican Republic, the sum of three millions of dollars shall be paid to the said Government by that of the United States, at the city of Mexico, in the gold or silver coin of Mexico. The remaining twelve millions of dollars shall be paid at the same place, and in the same coin, in annual installments of three millions of dollars each, together with interest on the same at the rate of six per centum per annum. This interest shall begin to run upon the whole sum of twelve millions from the day of the ratification of the present treaty by the Mexican Government, and the first of the installments shall be paid at the expiration of one year from the same day. Together with each annual installment, as it falls due, the whole interest accruing on such installment from the beginning shall also be paid.

#### *Article XIII*

The United States engage, moreover, to assume and pay to the claimants all the amounts now due them, and those hereafter to become due, by reason of the claims already liquidated and decided against the Mexican Republic, under the conventions between the two republics severally concluded on the eleventh day of April, eighteen hundred and thirty-nine, and on the thirtieth day of January, eighteen hundred and forty-three; so that the Mexican Republic shall be absolutely exempt, for the future, from all expense whatever on account of the said claims.

#### *Article XIV*

The United States do furthermore discharge the Mexican Republic from all claims of citizens of the United States, not heretofore decided against the Mexican Government, which may have arisen previously to the date of the signature of this treaty; which discharge shall be final and perpetual, whether the said claims be rejected or be allowed by the board of commissioners provided for in the following article, and whatever shall be the total amount of those allowed.

#### *Article XV*

The United States, exonerating Mexico from all demands on account of the claims of their citizens mentioned in the preceding article, and considering them entirely and forever canceled, whatever their amount may be, undertake to make satisfaction for the same, to an amount not exceeding three and one-quarter millions of dollars. To ascertain the validity and amount of those claims, a board of commissioners shall be established by the Government of the United States, whose awards shall be final and conclusive; provided that, in deciding upon the validity of each claim, the board shall be guided and governed by the principles and rules of decision prescribed by the first and fifth articles of the unratified convention, concluded at the city of Mexico on the twentieth day of November, one thousand eight hundred and forty-three; and in no case shall an award be made in favour of any claim not embraced by these principles and rules.

If, in the opinion of the said board of commissioners or of the claimants, any books, records, or documents, in the possession or power of the Government of the Mexican Republic, shall be deemed necessary

to the just decision of any claim, the commissioners, or the claimants through them, shall, within such period as Congress may designate, make an application in writing for the same, addressed to the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs, to be transmitted by the Secretary of State of the United States; and the Mexican Government engages, at the earliest possible moment after the receipt of such demand, to cause any of the books, records, or documents so specified, which shall be in their possession or power (or authenticated copies or extracts of the same), to be transmitted to the said Secretary of State, who shall immediately deliver them over to the said board of commissioners; provided that no such application shall be made by or at the instance of any claimant, until the facts which it is expected to prove by such books, records, or documents, shall have been stated under oath or affirmation.

#### *Article XVI*

Each of the contracting parties reserves to itself the entire right to fortify whatever point within its territory it may judge proper so to fortify for its security.

#### *Article XVII*

The treaty of amity, commerce, and navigation, concluded at the city of Mexico, on the fifth day of April, A.D. 1831, between the United States of America and the United Mexican States, except the additional article, and except so far as the stipulations of the said treaty may be incompatible with any stipulation contained in the present treaty, is hereby revived for the period of eight years from the day of the exchange of ratifications of this treaty, with the same force and virtue as if incorporated therein; it being understood that each of the contracting parties reserves to itself the right, at any time after the said period of eight years shall have expired, to terminate the same by giving one year's notice of such intention to the other party.

#### *Article XVIII*

All supplies whatever for troops of the United States in Mexico, arriving at ports in the occupation of such troops previous to the final evacuation thereof, although subsequently to the restoration of the custom-houses at such ports, shall be entirely exempt from

duties and charges of any kind; the Government of the United States hereby engaging and pledging its faith to establish and vigilantly to enforce, all possible guards for securing the revenue of Mexico, by preventing the importation, under cover of this stipulation, of any articles other than such, both in kind and in quantity, as shall really be wanted for the use and consumption of the forces of the United States during the time they may remain in Mexico. To this end it shall be the duty of all officers and agents of the United States to denounce to the Mexican authorities at the respective ports any attempts at a fraudulent abuse of this stipulation, which they may know of, or may have reason to suspect, and to give to such authorities all the aid in their power with regard thereto; and every such attempt, when duly proved and established by sentence of a competent tribunal, they shall be punished by the confiscation of the property so attempted to be fraudulently introduced.

#### *Article XIX*

With respect to all merchandise, effects, and property whatsoever, imported into ports of Mexico, whilst in the occupation of the forces of the United States, whether by citizens of either republic, or by citizens or subjects of any neutral nation, the following rules shall be observed:

(1) All such merchandise, effects, and property, if imported previously to the restoration of the custom-houses to the Mexican authorities, as stipulated for in the third article of this treaty, shall be exempt from confiscation, although the importation of the same be prohibited by the Mexican tariff.

(2) The same perfect exemption shall be enjoyed by all such merchandise, effects, and property, imported subsequently to the restoration of the custom-houses, and previously to the sixty days fixed in the following article for the coming into force of the Mexican tariff at such ports respectively; the said merchandise, effects, and property being, however, at the time of their importation, subject to the payment of duties, as provided for in the said following article.

(3) All merchandise, effects, and property described in the two rules foregoing shall, during their continuance at the place of importation, and upon their leaving such place for the interior, be exempt from all duty, tax, or imposts of every kind, under whatsoever

title or denomination. Nor shall they be there subject to any charge whatsoever upon the sale thereof.

(4) All merchandise, effects, and property, described in the first and second rules, which shall have been removed to any place in the interior, whilst such place was in the occupation of the forces of the United States, shall, during their continuance therein, be exempt from all tax upon the sale or consumption thereof, and from every kind of impost or contribution, under whatsoever title or denomination.

(5) But if any merchandise, effects, or property, described in the first and second rules, shall be removed to any place not occupied at the time by the forces of the United States, they shall, upon their introduction into such place, or upon their sale or consumption there, be subject to the same duties which, under the Mexican laws, they would be required to pay in such cases if they had been imported in time of peace, through the maritime custom-houses, and had there paid the duties conformably with the Mexican tariff.

(6) The owners of all merchandise, effects, or property, described in the first and second rules, and existing in any port of Mexico, shall have the right to re-ship the same, exempt from all tax, impost, or contribution whatever.

With respect to the metals, or other property, exported from any Mexican port whilst in the occupation of the forces of the United States, and previously to the restoration of the custom-house at such port, no person shall be required by the Mexican authorities, whether general or state, to pay any tax, duty, or contribution upon any such exportation, or in any manner to account for the same to the said authorities.

#### *Article XX*

Through consideration for the interests of commerce generally, it is agreed, that if less than sixty days should elapse between the date of the signature of this treaty and the restoration of the custom-houses, conformably with the stipulation in the third article, in such case all merchandise, effects and property whatsoever, arriving at the Mexican ports after the restoration of the said custom-houses, and previously to the expiration of sixty days after the day of signature of this treaty, shall be admitted to entry; and no other duties shall be levied thereon than the duties established by the tariff found in force at such custom-

houses at the time of the restoration of the same. And to all such merchandise, effects, and property, the rules established by the preceding article shall apply.

#### *Article XXI*

If unhappily any disagreement should hereafter arise between the Governments of the two republics, whether with respect to the interpretation of any stipulation in this treaty, or with respect to any other particular concerning the political or commercial relations of the two nations, the said Governments, in the name of those nations, do promise to each other that they will endeavour, in the most sincere and earnest manner, to settle the differences so arising, and to preserve the state of peace and friendship in which the two countries are now placing themselves, using, for this end, mutual representations and pacific negotiations. And if, by these means, they should not be enabled to come to an agreement, a resort shall not, on this account, be had to reprisals, aggression, or hostility of any kind, by the one republic against the other, until the Government of that which deems itself aggrieved shall have maturely considered, in the spirit of peace and good neighbourship, whether it would not be better that such difference should be settled by the arbitration of commissioners appointed on each side, or by that of a friendly nation. And should such course be proposed by either party, it shall be acceded to by the other, unless deemed by it altogether incompatible with the nature of the difference, or the circumstances of the case.

#### *Article XXII*

If (which is not to be expected, and which God forbid) war should unhappily break out between the two republics, they do now, with a view to such calamity, solemnly pledge themselves to each other and to the world to observe the following rules; absolutely where the nature of the subject permits, and as closely as possible in all cases where such absolute observance shall be impossible:

(1) The merchants of either republic then residing in the other shall be allowed to remain twelve months (for those dwelling in the interior), and six months (for those dwelling at the seaports) to collect their debts and settle their affairs; during which periods they shall enjoy the same protection, and be on the



same footing, in all respects, as the citizens or subjects of the most friendly nations; and, at the expiration thereof, or at any time before, they shall have full liberty to depart, carrying off all their effects without molestation or hindrance, conforming therein to the same laws which the citizens or subjects of the most friendly nations are required to conform to. Upon the entrance of the armies of either nation into the territories of the other, women and children, ecclesiastics, scholars of every faculty, cultivators of the earth, merchants, artisans, manufacturers, and fishermen, unarmed and inhabiting unfortified towns, villages, or places, and in general all persons whose occupations are for the common subsistence and benefit of mankind, shall be allowed to continue their respective employments, unmolested in their persons. Nor shall their houses or goods be burnt or otherwise destroyed, nor their cattle taken, nor their fields wasted, by the armed force into whose power, by the events of war, they may happen to fall; but if the necessity arise to take anything from them for the use of such armed force, the same shall be paid for at an equitable price. All churches, hospitals, schools, colleges, libraries, and other establishments for charitable and beneficent purposes, shall be respected, and all persons connected with the same protected in the discharge of their duties, and the pursuit of their vocations.

(2) In order that the fate of prisoners of war may be alleviated all such practices as those of sending them into distant, inclement or unwholesome districts, or crowding them into close and noxious places, shall be studiously avoided. They shall not be confined in dungeons, prison ships, or prisons; nor be put in irons, or bound or otherwise restrained in the use of their limbs. The officers shall enjoy liberty on their paroles, within convenient districts, and have comfortable quarters; and the common soldiers shall be disposed (in cantonments, open and extensive enough for air and exercise) and lodged in barracks as roomy and good as are provided by the party in whose power they are for its own troops. But if any officer shall break his parole by leaving the district so assigned him, or any other prisoner shall escape from the limits of his cantonment after they shall have been designated to him, such individual, officer, or other prisoner, shall forfeit so much of the benefit of this article as provides for his liberty on parole or in cantonment. And if any officer so breaking his parole or any

common soldier so escaping from the limits assigned him, shall afterwards be found in arms previously to his being regularly exchanged, the person so offending shall be dealt with according to the established laws of war. The officers shall be daily furnished, by the party in whose power they are, with as many rations, and of the same articles, as are allowed either in kind or by commutation, to officers of equal rank in its own army; and all others shall be daily furnished with such ration as is allowed to a common soldier in its own service; the value of all which supplies shall, at the close of the war, or at periods to be agreed upon between the respective commanders, be paid by the other party, on a mutual adjustment of accounts for the subsistence of prisoners; and such accounts shall not be mingled with or set off against any others, nor the balance due on them withheld, as a compensation or reprisal for any cause whatever, real or pretended. Each party shall be allowed to keep a commissary of prisoners, appointed by itself, with every cantonment of prisoners, in possession of the other; which commissary shall see the prisoners as often as he pleases; shall be allowed to receive, exempt from all duties and taxes, and to distribute, whatever comforts may be sent to them by their friends; and shall be free to transmit his reports in open letters to the party by whom he is employed.

And it is declared that neither the pretense that war dissolves all treaties, nor any other whatever, shall be considered as annulling or suspending the solemn covenant contained in this article. On the contrary, the state of war is precisely that for which it is provided; and, during which, its stipulations are to be as sacredly observed as the most acknowledged obligations under the law of nature or nations.

### *Article XXIII*

This treaty shall be ratified by the President of the United States of America, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate thereof; and by the President of the Mexican Republic, with the previous approbation of its general Congress; and the ratifications shall be exchanged in the City of Washington, or at the seat of Government of Mexico, in four months from the date of the signature hereof, or sooner if practicable.

In faith whereof we, the respective Plenipotentiaries, have signed this treaty of peace, friendship, limits, and settlement, and have hereunto affixed our

seals respectively. Done in quintuplicate, at the city of Guadalupe Hidalgo, on the second day of February, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-eight.

*N. P. TRIST*  
*LUIS P. CUEVAS*  
*BERNARDO COUTO*  
*MIGL. ATRISTAIN*

**SEE ALSO**

Latina/Latino Religious Communities: Mexican American Religious Communities; Sacred Space

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Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed February 2, 1848, from Monterey County Historical Society, Local History Website, [www.users.dedot.com/mchs/treaty.html](http://www.users.dedot.com/mchs/treaty.html).

## Sojourner Truth, “Another Camp Meeting” (1850)

*Born into slavery as Isabella Baumfree in 1797, Sojourner Truth experienced a profound religious conversion early in her life, which led to a trailblazing path as a prominent evangelical preacher and social reformer. Truth’s name change represented a dramatic break with her past, but her speeches and sermons remained grounded in her own experience as a black woman and former slave. At her death in 1883 she was one of the best-known black women of her time.*

### **Another Camp-Meeting**

When Sojourner had been at Northampton a few months, she attended another camp-meeting, at which she performed a very important part.

A party of wild young men, with no motive but that of entertaining themselves by annoying and injuring the feelings of others, had assembled at the meeting, hooting and yelling, and in various ways interrupting the services, and causing much disturbance. Those who had the charge of the meeting, having tried their persuasive powers in vain, grew impatient and tried threatening.

The young men, considering themselves insulted, collected their friends, to the number of a hundred or more, dispersed themselves through the grounds, making the most frightful noises, and threatening to fire the tents. It was said the authorities of the meeting sat in grave consultation, decided to have the ring-leaders arrested, and sent for the constable, to the great displeasure of some of the company, who were opposed to such an appeal to force and arms. Be that as it may, Sojourner, seeing great consternation depicted in every countenance, caught the contagion, and, ere she was aware, found herself quaking with fear.

Under the impulse of this sudden emotion, she fled to the most retired corner of a tent, and secreted herself behind a trunk, saying to herself, “I am the only colored person here, and on me, probably, their wicked mischief will fall first, and perhaps fatally.”

But feeling how great was her insecurity even there, as the very tent began to shake from its foundations, she began to soliloquize as follows:—

“Shall I run away and hide from the Devil? Me, a servant of the living God? Have I not faith enough to go out and quell that mob, when I know it is written—‘One shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight’? I know there are not a thousand here; and I know I am a servant of the living God. I’ll go to the rescue, and the Lord shall go with and protect me.

“Oh,” said she, “I felt as if I had *three hearts!* and that they were so large, my body could hardly hold them!”

She now came forth from her hiding-place, and invited several to go with her and see what they could do to still the raging of the moral elements. They declined, and considered her wild to think of it.

The meeting was in the open fields—the full moon shed its saddened light over all—and the woman who was that evening to address them was trembling on the preachers’ stand. The noise and confusion were now terrific. Sojourner left the tent alone and unaided, and walking some thirty rods to the top of a small rise of ground, commenced to sing, in her most fervid manner, with all the strength of her most powerful voice, the hymn on the resurrection of Christ—

“It was early in the morning—it was early in the morning,

Just at the break of day—

When he rose—when he rose—when he rose,  
And went to heaven on a cloud.”

All who have ever heard her sing this hymn will probably remember it as long as they remember her. The hymn, the tune, the style, are each too closely associated with to be easily separated from herself, and when sung in one of her most animated moods, in the open air, with the utmost strength of her most powerful voice, must have been truly thrilling.

As she commenced to sing, the young men made a rush towards her, and she was immediately encircled by a dense body of the rioters, many of them armed with sticks or clubs as their weapons of defence, if not of attack. As the circle narrowed around her, she ceased singing, and after a short pause inquired, in a gentle but firm tone, "Why do you come about me with clubs and sticks? I am not doing harm to any one." "We ar'n't a going to hurt you, old woman; we came to hear you sing," cried many voices, simultaneously. "Sing to us, old woman," cries one. "Talk to us, old woman," says another. "Pray, old woman," says a third. "Tell us your experience," says a fourth. "You stand and smoke so near me, I cannot sing or talk," she answered.

"Stand back," said several authoritative voices, with not the most gentle or courteous accompaniments, raising their rude weapons in the air. The crowd suddenly gave back, the circle became larger, as many voices again called for singing, talking, or praying, backed by assurances that no one should be allowed to hurt her—the speakers declaring with an oath, that they would "*knock down*" any person who should offer her the least indignity.

She looked about her, and with her usual discrimination, said inwardly—"Here must be many young men in all this assemblage, bearing within them hearts susceptible of good impressions. I will speak to them." She did speak; they silently heard, and civilly asked her many questions. It seemed to her to be given her at the time to answer them with truth and wisdom beyond herself. Her speech had operated on the roused passions of the mob like oil on agitated waters; they were, as a whole, entirely subdued, and only clamored when she ceased to speak or sing.

Those who stood in the background, after the circle was enlarged, cried out, "Sing aloud, old woman, we can't hear." Those who held the sceptre of power among them requested that she should make a pulpit of a neighboring wagon. She said, "If I do, they'll overthrow it." "No, they sha'n't—he who dares hurt you, we'll knock him down instantly, d—n him," cried the chiefs. "No we won't, no we won't, nobody shall hurt you," answered the many voices of the mob. They kindly assisted her to mount the wagon, from which she spoke and sung to them about an hour. Of all she said to them on the occasion, she remembers only the following:—

"Well, there are two congregations on this ground. It is written that there shall be a separation, and the sheep shall be separated from the goats. The other preachers have the sheep, *I* have the goats. And I have a few sheep among my goats, but they are *very* ragged." This exordium produced great laughter. When she became wearied with talking, she began to cast about her to contrive some way to induce them to disperse. While she paused, they loudly clamored for "more," "more,"—"sing," "sing more." She mentioned them to be quiet, and called out to them: "Children, I have talked and sung to you, as you asked me; and now I have a request to make of you: will you grant it?" "Yes, yes, yes," resounded from every quarter. "Well, it is this," she answered: "if I will sing one more hymn for you, will you then go away, and leave us this night in peace?" "Yes, yes," came faintly, feebly from a few. "I repeat it," says Sojourner, "and I want an answer from you all, as of one accord. If I will sing you one more, you will go away, and leave us this night in peace?" "Yes, yes, yes," shouted many voices, with hearty emphasis. "I repeat my request once more," said she, "and I want you *all* to answer." And she reiterated the words again. This time a long, loud "Yes—yes—yes," came up, as from the multitudinous mouth of the entire mob. "AMEN! it is SEALED," repeated Sojourner, in the deepest and most solemn tones of her powerful and sonorous voice. Its effect ran through the multitude, like an electric shock; and the most of them considered themselves bound by their promise, as they might have failed to do under less imposing circumstances. Some of them began instantly to leave; others said, "Are we not to have one more hymn?" "Yes," answered their entertainer, and she commenced to sing:

"I bless the Lord I've got my seal—to-day and to-day—  
To slay Goliath in the field—to-day and to-day;  
The good old way is a righteous way,  
I mean to take the kingdom in the good old way."

While singing, she heard some enforcing obedience to their promise, while a few seemed refusing to abide by it. But before she had quite concluded, she saw them turn from her, and in the course of a few minutes, they were running as fast as they well could in a solid body; and she says she can compare them to nothing but a swarm of bees, so dense was their pha-

lanx, so straight their course, so hurried their march. As they passed with a rush very near the stand of the other preachers, the hearts of the people were smitten with fear, thinking that their entertainer had failed to enchain them longer with her spell, and that they were coming upon them with redoubled and remorseless fury. But they found they were mistaken, and that their fears were groundless; for, before they could well recover from their surprise, every rioter was gone, and not one was left on the grounds, or seen there again during the meeting. Sojourner was informed that as her audience reached the main road, some distance from the tents, a few of the rebellious spirits refused to go on, and proposed returning; but their leaders said, "No—we have promised to leave—all promised, and we must go, all go, and you shall none of you return again."

She did not fall in love at first sight with the Northampton Association, for she arrived there at a time when appearances did not correspond with the ideas of associationists, as they had been spread out in their writings; for their phalanx was a factory, and they were wanting in means to carry out their ideas of beauty and elegance, as they would have done in different circumstances. But she thought she would make an effort to tarry with them one night, though that seemed to her no desirable affair. But as soon as she saw that accomplished, literary and refined persons were living in that plain and simple manner, and submitting to the labors and privations incident to such an infant institution, she said, "Well, if these can live here, *I* can." Afterwards, she gradually became pleased with, and attached to, the place and the people, as well she might; for it must have been no small thing to have found a home in a "Community composed of some of the choicest spirits of the age," where all was characterized by an equality of feeling, a liberty of thought and speech, and a largeness of soul, she could not have before met with, to the same extent, in any of her wanderings.

Our first knowledge of her was derived from a friend who had resided for a time in the "Community," and who, after describing her, and singing one of her hymns, wished that we might see her. But we little thought, at that time, that we should ever pen these "simple annals" of this child of nature.

When we first saw her, she was working with a hearty good will; saying she would not be induced to

take regular wages, believing, as once before, that now Providence had provided her with a never-failing fount, from which her every want might be perpetually supplied through her mortal life. In this, she had calculated too fast. For the Associationists found, that, taking every thing into consideration, they would find it most expedient to act individually; and again, the subject of this sketch found her dreams unreal, and herself flung back upon her own resources for the supply of her needs. This she might have found more inconvenient at her time of life—for labor, exposure and hardship had made sad inroads upon her iron constitution, by inducing chronic disease and premature old age—had she not remained under the shadow of one, who never wearies in doing good, giving to the needy, and supplying the wants of the destitute. She has now set her heart upon having a little home of her own, even at this late hour of life, where she may feel a greater freedom than she can in the house of another, and where she can repose a little, after her day of action has passed by. And for such a "home" she is now dependent on the charities of the benevolent, and to them we appeal with confidence.

Through all the scenes of her eventful life may be traced the energy of a naturally powerful mind—the fearlessness and child-like simplicity of one untrammelled by education or conventional customs—purity of character—an unflinching adherence to principle—and a native enthusiasm, which, under different circumstances, might easily have produced another Joan of Arc.

With all her fervor, and enthusiasm, and speculation, her religion is not tinctured in the least with gloom. No doubt, no hesitation, no despondency, spreads a cloud over her soul; but all is bright, clear, positive, and at times ecstatic. Her trust is in God, and from him she looks for good, and not evil. She feels that "perfect love casteth out fear."

Having more than once found herself awaking from a mortifying delusion,—as in the case of the Sing-Sing kingdom,—and resolving not to be thus deluded again, she has set suspicion to guard the door of her heart, and allows it perhaps to be aroused by too slight causes, on certain subjects—her vivid imagination assisting to magnify the phantoms of her fears into gigantic proportions, much beyond their real size; instead of resolutely adhering to the rule we all like best, when it is to be applied to ourselves—that of

placing every thing we see to the account of the best possible motive, until time and circumstance prove that we were wrong. Where no good motive can be assigned, it may become our duty to suspend our judgment till evidence can be had.

In the application of this rule, it is an undoubted duty to exercise a commendable prudence, by refusing to repose any important trust to the keeping of persons who may be strangers to us, and whose trustworthiness we have never seen tried. But no possible good, but incalculable evil may and does arise from the too common practice of placing all conduct, the source of which we do not fully understand, to the worst of intentions. How often is the gentle, timid soul discouraged, and driven perhaps to despondency, by finding its “good evil spoken of”; and a well-meant but mistaken action loaded with an evil design!

If the world would but sedulously set about reforming itself on this one point, who can calculate the change it would produce—the evil it would annihilate, and the happiness it would confer! None but an all-seeing eye could at once embrace so vast a result. A result, how desirable! and one that can be brought about only by the most simple process—that of every individual seeing to it that he commit not this sin himself. For why should we allow in ourselves, the very fault we most dislike, when committed against us? Shall we not at least aim at consistency?

Had she possessed less generous self-sacrifice, more knowledge of the world and of business matters in general, and had she failed to take it for granted that others were like herself, and would, when her turn came to need, do as she had done, and find it “more blessed to give than to receive,” she might have laid by something for the future. For few, perhaps, have ever possessed the power and inclination, in the same degree, at one and the same time, to labor as she has done, both day and night, for so long a period of time. And had these energies been well-directed, and the proceeds well husbanded, since she has been her own mistress, they would have given her an independence during her natural life. But her constitutional biases, and her early training, or rather want of training, prevented this result; and it is too late now to remedy the great mistake. Shall she then be left to want? Who will not answer, “No!”

**SEE ALSO**

African American Religions: African American Religious Leaders; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Feminisms

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*Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, 1850, dictated by Sojourner Truth (ca. 1797–1883); ed. Olive Gilbert, <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/truth/1850/1850-29.html>, A Celebration of Women Writers, <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/writers.html> (Sept. 16, 2002).

## “Treaty with the Apache” (July 1, 1852)

*During the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century, the federal government negotiated hundreds of treaties in an effort to stabilize its relationships with the Native American tribes. Many of these documents, including the 1852 Treaty with the Apache, helped speed the transfer of Indian land to white settlers and set the stage for a more dramatic policy of Indian removal by granting the federal government the power to set new territorial boundaries and to establish laws governing Indians residing in those areas.*

### *Treaty with the Apache, July 1, 1852*

Articles of a treaty made and entered into at Santa Fe, New Mexico, on the first day of July in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty-two, by and between Col. E. V. Sumner, U.S.A., commanding the 9th Department and in charge of the executive office of New Mexico, and John Greiner, Indian agent in and for the Territory of New Mexico, and acting superintendent of Indian affairs of said Territory, representing the United States, and Cuentas, Azules, Blancito, Negrito, Capitan Simon, Capitan Vuelta, and Mangus Colorado, chiefs, acting on the part of the Apache Nation of Indians, situate and living within the limits of the United States.

#### **Article 1.**

Said nation or tribe of Indians through their authorized Chiefs aforesaid do hereby acknowledge and declare that they are lawfully and exclusively under the laws, jurisdiction, and government of the United States of America, and to its power and authority they do hereby submit.

#### **Article 2.**

From and after the signing of this Treaty hostilities between the contracting parties shall forever cease, and perpetual peace and amity shall forever exist between said Indians and the Government and people of the United States; the said nation, or tribe of Indians, hereby binding themselves most solemnly never to associate with or give countenance or aid to any tribe or

band of Indians, or other persons or powers, who may be at any time at war or enmity with the government or people of said United States.

#### **Article 3.**

Said nation, or tribe of Indians, do hereby bind themselves for all future time to treat honestly and humanely all citizens of the United States, with whom they have intercourse, as well as all persons and powers, at peace with the said United States, who may be lawfully among them, or with whom they may have any lawful intercourse.

#### **Article 4.**

All said nation, or tribe of Indians, hereby bind themselves to refer all cases of aggression against themselves or their property and territory, to the government of the United States for adjustment, and to conform in all things to the laws, rules, and regulations of said government in regard to the Indian tribes.

#### **Article 5.**

Said nation, or tribe of Indians, do hereby bind themselves for all future time to desist and refrain from making any “incursions within the Territory of Mexico” of a hostile or predatory character; and that they will for the future refrain from taking and conveying into captivity any of the people or citizens of Mexico, or the animals or property of the people or government of Mexico; and that they will, as soon as possible after the signing of this treaty, surrender to their agent all captives now in their possession.

#### **Article 6.**

Should any citizen of the United States, or other person or persons subject to the laws of the United States, murder, rob, or otherwise maltreat any Apache Indian or Indians, he or they shall be arrested and tried, and upon conviction, shall be subject to all the penalties provided by law for the protection of the persons and property of the people of the said States.

**Article 7.**

The people of the United States of America shall have free and safe passage through the territory of the aforesaid Indians, under such rules and regulations as may be adopted by authority of the said States.

**Article 8.**

In order to preserve tranquility and to afford protection to all the people and interests of the contracting parties, the government of the United States of America will establish such military posts and agencies, and authorize such trading houses at such times and places as the said government may designate.

**Article 9.**

Relying confidently upon the justice and the liberality of the aforesaid government, and anxious to remove every possible cause that might disturb their peace and quiet, it is agreed by the aforesaid Apaches that the government of the United States shall at its earliest convenience designate, settle, and adjust their territorial boundaries, and pass and execute in their territory such laws as may be deemed conducive to the prosperity and happiness of said Indians.

**Article 10.**

For and in consideration of the faithful performance of all the stipulations herein contained, by the said Apache Indians, the government of the United States will grant to said Indians such donations, presents, and implements, and adopt such other liberal and humane measures as said government may deem meet and proper.

**Article 11.**

This Treaty shall be binding upon the contracting parties from and after the signing of the same, subject only to such modifications and amendments as may be adopted by the government of the United States; and, finally, this treaty is to receive a liberal construction, at all times and in all places, to the end that the said Apache Indians shall not be held responsible for

the conduct of others, and that the government of the United States shall so legislate and act as to secure the permanent prosperity and happiness of said Indians.

In faith whereof we the undersigned have signed this Treaty, and affixed thereunto our seals, at the City of Santa Fe, this the first day of July in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty-two.

*E. V. Sumner, (SEAL.)*

*Bvt. Col. U.S.A. commanding Ninth Department  
in charge of Executive Office of New Mexico.*

*John Greiner, (SEAL.)*

*Act. Supt. Indian Affairs, New Mexico.*

*Capitan Vuelta, his x mark (SEAL.)*

*Cuentas Azules, his x mark (SEAL.)*

*Blancito, his x mark (SEAL.)*

*Negrito, his x mark (SEAL.)*

*Capitan Simon, his x mark (SEAL.)*

*Mangus Colorado, his x mark (SEAL.)*

Witnesses:

*F. A. Cunningham, Paymaster, U.S.A.*

*J. C. McFerran, 1st Lt. 3d Inf. Act. Ast. Adj.*

*Gen. Caleb Sherman.*

*Fred. Saynton.*

*Chas. McDougall. Surgeon, U.S.A.*

*S. M. Baird.*

Witness to the signing of Mangus Colorado:

*John Pope, Bvt. Capt. T. E.*

**SEE ALSO**

Native American Religions and Politics; Sacred Space

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Treaty with the Apache, July 1, 1852 (Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties Vol. II [Treaties], compiled and edited by Charles J. Kappler LL.M., Clerk to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1904). Accessed from: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/ntreaty/apa1852.htm>, The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm> (Oct. 8, 2002).



## Henry David Thoreau, “A Plea for Captain John Brown” (1859)

*Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau is well-known for his maxim, “simplify, simplify.” But Thoreau’s transcendental philosophy did not end at advocating simplistic views of naturalism and individualism. Instead, it also helped justify civil disobedience by insisting that private conscience constituted a higher authority than civil law. Thoreau committed one such act of civil disobedience by reading his defense of abolitionist John Brown to the citizens of Concord, Massachusetts, on October 30, 1859.*

[Read to the citizens of Concord, Mass., Sunday Evening, October 30, 1859.]

I trust that you will pardon me for being here. I do not wish to force my thoughts upon you, but I feel forced myself. Little as I know of Captain Brown, I would fain do my part to correct the tone and the statements of the newspapers, and of my countrymen generally, respecting his character and actions. It costs us nothing to be just. We can at least express our sympathy with, and admiration of, him and his companions, and that is what I now propose to do.

First, as to his history. I will endeavor to omit, as much as possible, what you have already read. I need not describe his person to you, for probably most of you have seen and will not soon forget him. I am told that his grandfather, John Brown, was an officer in the Revolution; that he himself was born in Connecticut about the beginning of this century, but early went with his father to Ohio. I heard him say that his father was a contractor who furnished beef to the army there, in the war of 1812; that he accompanied him to the camp, and assisted him in that employment, seeing a good deal of military life,—more, perhaps, than if he had been a soldier; for he was often present at the councils of the officers. Especially, he learned by experience how armies are supplied and maintained in the field,—a work which, he observed, requires at least as much experience and skill as to lead them in battle. He said that few persons had any

conception of the cost, even the pecuniary cost, of firing a single bullet in war. He saw enough, at any rate, to disgust him with a military life; indeed, to excite in his a great abhorrence of it; so much so, that though he was tempted by the offer of some petty office in the army, when he was about eighteen, he not only declined that, but he also refused to train when warned, and was fined for it. He then resolved that he would never have anything to do with any war, unless it were a war for liberty.

When the troubles in Kansas began, he sent several of his sons thither to strengthen the party of the Free State men, fitting them out with such weapons as he had; telling them that if the troubles should increase, and there should be need of his, he would follow, to assist them with his hand and counsel. This, as you all know, he soon after did; and it was through his agency, far more than any other’s, that Kansas was made free.

For a part of his life he was a surveyor, and at one time he was engaged in wool-growing, and he went to Europe as an agent about that business. There, as everywhere, he had his eyes about him, and made many original observations. He said, for instance, that he saw why the soil of England was so rich, and that of Germany (I think it was) so poor, and he thought of writing to some of the crowned heads about it. It was because in England the peasantry live on the soil which they cultivate, but in Germany they are gathered into villages, at night. It is a pity that he did not make a book of his observations.

I should say that he was an old-fashioned man in respect for the Constitution, and his faith in the permanence of this Union. Slavery he deemed to be wholly opposed to these, and he was its determined foe.

He was by descent and birth a New England farmer, a man of great common-sense, deliberate and practical as that class is, and tenfold more so. He was like the best of those who stood at Concord Bridge

once, on Lexington Common, and on Bunker Hill, only he was firmer and higher principled than any that I have chanced to hear of as there. It was no abolition lecturer that converted him. Ethan Allen and Stark, with whom he may in some respects be compared, were rangers in a lower and less important field. They could bravely face their country's foes, but he had the courage to face his country herself, when she was in the wrong. A Western writer says, to account for his escape from so many perils, that he was concealed under a "rural exterior"; as if, in that prairie land, a hero should, by good rights, wear a citizen's dress only.

He did not go to the college called Harvard, good old Alma Mater as she is. He was not fed on the pap that is there furnished. As he phrased it, "I know no more of grammar than one of your calves." But he went to the great university of the West, where he sedulously pursued the study of Liberty, for which he had early betrayed a fondness, and having taken many degrees, he finally commenced the public practice of Humanity in Kansas, as you all know. Such were his humanities and not any study of grammar. He would have left a Greek accent slanting the wrong way, and righted up a falling man.

He was one of that class of whom we hear a great deal, but, for the most part, see nothing at all,—the Puritans. It would be in vain to kill him. He died lately in the time of Cromwell, but he reappeared here. Why should he not? Some of the Puritan stock are said to have come over and settled in New England. They were a class that did something else than celebrate their forefathers' day, and eat parched corn in remembrance of that time. They were neither Democrats nor Republicans, but men of simple habits, straightforward, prayerful; not thinking much of rulers who did not fear God, not making many compromises, nor seeking after available candidates.

"In his camp," as one has recently written, and as I have myself heard him state, "he permitted no profanity; no man of loose morals was suffered to remain there, unless, indeed, as a prisoner of war. 'I would rather,' said he, 'have the small-pox, yellow-fever, and cholera, all together in my camp, than a man without principle. . . . It is a mistake, sir, that our people make, when they think that bullies are the best fighters, or that they are the fit men to oppose these Southerners. Give me men of good principles,—God-fearing men,—

men who respect themselves, and with a dozen of them I will oppose any hundred such men as these Buford ruffians.'" He said that if one offered himself to be a soldier under him, who was forward to tell what he could or would do, if he could only get sight of the enemy, he had but little confidence in him.

He was never able to find more than a score or so of recruits whom he would accept, and only about a dozen, among them his sons, in whom he had perfect faith. When he was here, some years ago, he showed to a few a little manuscript book,—his "orderly book" I think he called it,—containing the names of his company in Kansas, and the rules by which they bound themselves; and he stated that several of them had already sealed the contract with their blood. When some one remarked that, with the addition of a chaplain, it would have been a perfect Cromwellian troop, he observed that he would have been glad to add a chaplain to the list, if he could have found one who could fill that office worthily. It is easy enough to find one for the United States army. I believe that he had prayers in his camp morning and evening, nevertheless.

He was a man of Spartan habits, and at sixty was scrupulous about his diet at your table, excusing himself by saying that he must eat sparingly and fare hard, as became a soldier, or one who was fitting himself for difficult enterprises, a life of exposure.

A man of rare common-sense and directness of speech, as of action; a transcendentalist above all, a man of ideas and principles,—that was what distinguished him. Not yielding to a whim or transient impulse, but carrying out the purpose of a life. I noticed that he did not overstate anything, but spoke within bounds. I remember, particularly, how, in his speech here, he referred to what his family had suffered in Kansas, without ever giving the least vent to his pent-up fire. It was a volcano with an ordinary chimney-flue. Also referring to the deeds of certain Border Ruffians, he said, rapidly paring away his speech, like an experienced soldier, keeping a reserve of force and meaning, "They had a perfect right to be hung." He was not in the least a rhetorician, was not talking to Buncombe or his constituents anywhere, had no need to invent anything but to tell the simple truth, and communicate his own resolution; therefore he appeared incomparably strong, and eloquence in Congress and elsewhere seemed to me at a discount. It

was like the speeches of Cromwell compared with those of an ordinary king.

As for his tact and prudence, I will merely say, that at a time when scarcely a man from the Free States was able to reach Kansas by any direct route, at least without having his arms taken from him, he, carrying what imperfect guns and other weapons he could collect, openly and slowly drove an ox-cart through Missouri, apparently in the capacity of a surveyor, with his surveying compass exposed in it, and so passed unsuspected, and had ample opportunity to learn the designs of the enemy. For some time after his arrival he still followed the same profession. When, for instance, he saw a knot of the ruffians on the prairie, discussing, of course, the single topic which then occupied their minds, he would, perhaps, take his compass and one of his sons, and proceed to run an imaginary line right through the very spot on which that conclave had assembled, and when he came up to them, he would naturally pause and have some talk with them, learning their news, and, at last, all their plans perfectly; and having thus completed his real survey he would resume his imaginary one, and run on his line till he was out of sight.

When I expressed surprise that he could live in Kansas at all, with a price set upon his head, and so large a number, including the authorities, exasperated against him, he accounted for it by saying, "It is perfectly well understood that I will not be taken." Much of the time for some years he has had to skulk in swamps, suffering from poverty and from sickness, which was the consequence of exposure, befriended only by Indians and a few whites. But though it might be known that he was lurking in a particular swamp, his foes commonly did not care to go in after him. He could even come out into a town where there were more Border Ruffians than Free State men, and transact some business, without delaying long, and yet not be molested; for, said he, "No little handful of men were willing to undertake it, and a large body could not be got together in season."

As for his recent failure, we do not know the facts about it. It was evidently far from being a wild and desperate attempt. His enemy, Mr. Vallandigham, is compelled to say, that "it was among the best planned executed conspiracies that ever failed."

Not to mention his other successes, was it a failure, or did it show a want of good management, to deliver from bondage a dozen human beings, and walk off

with them by broad daylight, for weeks if not months, at a leisurely pace, through one State after another, for half the length of the North, conspicuous to all parties, with a price set upon his head, going into a court-room on his way and telling what he had done, thus convincing Missouri that it was not profitable to try to hold slaves in his neighborhood?—and this, not because the government menials were lenient, but because they were afraid of him.

Yet he did not attribute his success, foolishly, to "his star," or to any magic. He said, truly, that the reason why such greatly superior numbers quailed before him was, as one of his prisoners confessed, because they lacked a cause,—a kind of armor which he and his party never lacked. When the time came, few men were found willing to lay down their lives in defence of what they knew to be wrong; they did not like that this should be their last act in this world.

But to make haste to his last act, and its effects.

The newspapers seem to ignore, or perhaps are really ignorant of the fact, that there are at least as many as two or three individuals to a town throughout the North who think much as the present speaker does about him and his enterprise. I do not hesitate to say that they are an important and growing party. We aspire to be something more than stupid and timid chattels, pretending to read history and our Bibles, but desecrating every house and every day we breathe in. Perhaps anxious politicians may prove that only seventeen white men and five negroes were concerned in the late enterprise; but their very anxiety to prove this might suggest to themselves that all is not told. Why do they still dodge the truth? They are so anxious because of a dim consciousness of the fact, which they do not distinctly face, that at least a million of the free inhabitants of the United States would have rejoiced if it had succeeded. They at most only criticise the tactics. Though we wear no crape, the thought of that man's position and probable fate is spoiling many a man's day here at the North for other thinking. If any one who has seen him here can pursue successfully any other train of thought, I do not know what he is made of. If there is any such who gets his usual allowance of sleep, I will warrant him to fatten easily under any circumstances which do not touch his body or purse. I put a piece of paper and a pencil under my pillow, and when I could not sleep, I wrote in the dark.

On the whole, my respect for my fellow-men, except

as one may outweigh a million, is not being increased these days. I have noticed the cold-blooded way in which newspaper writers and men generally speak of this event, as if an ordinary malefactor, though one of unusual "pluck,"—as the Governor of Virginia is reported to have said, using the language of the cock-pit, "the gamest man he ever saw,"—had been caught, and were about to be hung. He was not dreaming of his foes when the governor thought he looked so brave. It turns what sweetness I have to gall, to hear, or hear of, the remarks of some of my neighbors. When we heard at first that he was dead, one of my townsmen observed that "he died as the fool dieth"; which, pardon me, for an instant suggested a likeness in him dying to my neighbor living. Others, craven-hearted, said disparagingly, that "he threw his life away," because he resisted the government. Which way have they thrown their lives, pray?—such as would praise a man for attacking singly an ordinary band of thieves or murderers. I hear another ask, Yankee-like, "What will he gain by it?" as if he expected to fill his pockets by this enterprise. Such a one has no idea of gain but in this worldly sense. If it does not lead to a "surprise" party, if he does not get a new pair of boots, or a vote of thanks, it must be a failure. "But he won't gain anything by it." Well, no, I don't suppose he could get four-and-sixpence a day for being hung, take the year round; but then he stands a chance to save a considerable part of his soul,—and such a soul!—when you do not. No doubt you can get more in your market for a quart of milk than for a quart of blood, but that is not the market that heroes carry their blood to.

Such do not know that like the seed is the fruit, and that, in the moral world, when good seed is planted, good fruit is inevitable, and does not depend on our watering and cultivating; that when you plant, or bury, a hero in his field, a crop of heroes is sure to spring up. This is a seed of such force and vitality, that it does not ask our leave to germinate.

The momentary charge at Balaclava, in obedience to a blundering command, proving what a perfect machine the soldier is, has, properly enough, been celebrated by a poet laureate; but the steady, and for the most part successful, charge of this man, for some years, against the legions of Slavery, in obedience to an infinitely higher command, is as much more memorable than that, as an intelligent and conscientious man is superior to a machine. Do you think that that will go unsung?

"Served him right,"—"A dangerous man,"—"He is undoubtedly insane." So they proceed to live their sane, and wise, and altogether admirable lives, reading their Plutarch a little, but chiefly pausing at that feat of Putnam, who was let down into a wolf's den; and in this wise they nourish themselves for brave and patriotic deeds some time or other. The Tract Society could afford to print that story of Putnam. You might open the district schools with the reading of it, for there is nothing about Slavery or the Church in it; unless it occurs to the reader that some pastors are wolves in sheep's clothing. "The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions" even, might dare to protest against that wolf. I have heard of boards, and of American boards, but it chanced that I never heard of this particular lumber till lately. And yet I hear of Northern men, and women, and children, by families, buying a "life membership" in such societies as these. A life-membership in the grave! You can get buried cheaper than that.

Our foes are in our midst and all about us. There is hardly a house but is divided against itself, for our foe is the all but universal woodenness of both head and heart, the want of vitality in man, which is the effect of our vice; and hence are begotten fear, superstition, bigotry, persecution, and slavery of all kinds. We are mere figureheads upon a hulk, with livers in the place of hearts. The curse is the worship of idols, which at length changes the worshipper into a stone image himself; and the New-Englander is just as much an idolater as the Hindoo. This man was an exception, for he did not set up even a political graven image between him and his God.

A church that can never have done with excommunicating Christ while it exists! Away with your broad and flat churches, and your narrow and tall churches! Take a step forward, and invent a new style of out-houses. Invent a salt that will save you, and defend our nostrils.

The modern Christian is a man who has consented to say all the prayers in the liturgy, provided you will let him go straight to bed and sleep quietly afterward. All his prayers begin with "Now I lay me down to sleep," and he is forever looking forward to the time when he shall go to his "long rest." He has consented to perform certain old-established charities, too, after a fashion, but he does not wish to hear of any new-fangled ones; he doesn't wish to have any supplementary articles added to the contract, to fit it to the pres-

ent time. He shows the whites of his eyes on the Sabbath, and the blacks all the rest of the week. The evil is not merely a stagnation of blood, but a stagnation of spirit. Many, no doubt, are well disposed, but sluggish by constitution and by habit, and they cannot conceive of a man who is actuated by higher motives than they are. Accordingly they pronounce this man insane, for they know that they could never act as he does, as long as they are themselves.

We dream of foreign countries, of other times and races of men, placing them at a distance in history or space; but let some significant event like the present occur in our midst, and we discover, often, this distance and this strangeness between us and our nearest neighbors. They are our Austrias, and Chinas, and South Sea Islands. Our crowded society becomes well spaced all at once, clean and handsome to the eye,—a city of magnificent distances. We discover why it was that we never got beyond compliments and surfaces with them before; we become aware of as many versts between us and them as there are between a wandering Tartar and a Chinese town. The thoughtful man becomes a hermit in the thoroughfares of the market-place. Impassable seas suddenly find their level between us, or dumb steppes stretch themselves out there. It is the difference of constitution, of intelligence, and faith, and not streams and mountains, that make the true and impassable boundaries between individuals and between states. None but the like-minded can come plenipotentiary to our court.

I read all the newspapers I could get within a week after this event, and I do not remember in them a single expression of sympathy for these men. I have since seen one noble statement, in a Boston paper, not editorial. Some voluminous sheets decided not to print the full report of Brown's words to the exclusion of other matter. It was as if a publisher should reject the manuscript of the New Testament, and print Wilson's last speech. The same journal which contained this pregnant news, was chiefly filled, in parallel columns, with the reports of the political conventions that were being held. But the descent to them was too steep. They should have been spared this contrast,—been printed in an extra, at least. To turn from the voices and deeds of earnest men to the cackling of political conventions! Office-seekers and speech-makers, who do not so much as lay an honest egg, but wear their breasts bare upon an egg of chalk! Their great

game is the game of straws, or rather that universal aboriginal game of the platter, at which the Indians cried hub, bub! Exclude the reports of religious and political conventions, and publish the words of a living man.

But I object not so much to what they have omitted, as to what they have inserted. Even the *Liberator* called it "a misguided, wild, and apparently insane—effort." As for the herd of newspapers and magazines, I do not chance to know an editor in the country who will deliberately print anything which he knows will ultimately and permanently reduce the number of his subscribers. They do not believe that it would be expedient. How then can they print truth? If we do not say pleasant things, they argue, nobody will attend to us. And so they do like some travelling auctioneers, who sing an obscene song, in order to draw a crowd around them. Republican editors, obliged to get their sentences ready for the morning edition, and accustomed to look at everything by the twilight of politics, express no admiration, nor true sorrow even, but call these men "deluded fanatics,"—"mistaken men,"—"insane," or "crazed." It suggests what a sane set of editors we are blessed with, not "mistaken men"; who know very well on which side their bread is buttered, at least.

A man does a brave and humane deed, and at once, on all sides, we hear people and parties declaring, "I didn't do it, nor countenance him to do it, in any conceivable way. It can't be fairly inferred from my past career." I, for one, am not interested to hear you define your position. I don't know that I ever was, or ever shall be. I think it is mere egotism, or impertinent at this time. Ye needn't take so much pains to wash your skirts of him. No intelligent man will ever be convinced that he was any creature of yours. He went and came, as he himself informs us, "under the auspices of John Brown and nobody else." The Republican party does not perceive how many his failure will make to vote more correctly than they would have them. They have counted the votes of Pennsylvania & Co., but they have not correctly counted Captain Brown's vote. He has taken the wind out of their sails,—the little wind they had,—and they may as well lie to and repair.

What though he did not belong to your clique! Though you may not approve of his method or his principles, recognize his magnanimity. Would you not

like to claim kindredship with him in that, though in no other thing he is like, or likely, to you? Do you think that you would lose your reputation so? What you lost at the spile, you would gain at the bung.

If they do not mean all this, then they do not speak the truth, and say what they mean. They are simply at their old tricks still.

"It was always conceded to him," says one who calls him crazy, "that he was a conscientious man, very modest in his demeanor, apparently inoffensive, until the subject of Slavery was introduced, when he would exhibit a feeling of indignation unparalleled."

The slave-ship is on her way, crowded with its dying victims; new cargoes are being added in mid-ocean, a small crew of slaveholders, countenanced by a large body of passengers, is smothering four millions under the hatches, and yet the politician asserts that the only proper way by which deliverance is to be obtained, is by "the quiet diffusion of the sentiments of humanity," without any "outbreak." As if the sentiments of humanity were ever found unaccompanied by its deeds, and you could disperse them, all finished to order, the pure article, as easily as water with a watering-pot, and so lay the dust. What is that that I hear cast overboard? The bodies of the dead that have found deliverance. That is the way we are "diffusing" humanity, and its sentiments with it.

Prominent and influential editors, accustomed to deal with politicians, men of an infinitely lower grade, say, in their ignorance, that he acted "on the principle of revenge." They do not know the man. They must enlarge themselves to conceive of him. I have no doubt that the time will come when they will begin to see him as he was. They have got to conceive of a man of faith and of religious principle, and not a politician or an Indian; of a man who did not wait till he was personally interfered with or thwarted in some harmless business before he gave his life to the cause of the oppressed.

If Walker may be considered the representative of the South, I wish I could say that Brown was the representative of the North. He was a superior man. He did not value his bodily life in comparison with ideal things. He did not recognize unjust human laws, but resisted them as he was bid. For once we are lifted out of the trivialness and dust of politics into the region of truth and manhood. No man in America has ever stood up so persistently and effectively for the dignity

of human nature, knowing himself for a man, and the equal of any and all governments. In that sense he was the most American of us all. He needed no babbling lawyer, making false issues, to defend him. He was more than a match for all the judges that American voters, or office-holders of whatever grade, can create. He could not have been tried by a jury of his peers, because his peers did not exist. When a man stands up serenely against the condemnation and vengeance of mankind, rising above them literally by a whole body,—even though he were of late the vilest murderer, who has settled that matter with himself,—the spectacle is a sublime one,—didn't ye know it, ye Liberator, ye Tribunes, ye Republicans?—and we become criminal in comparison. Do yourselves the honor to recognize him. He needs none of your respect.

As for the Democratic journals, they are not human enough to affect me at all. I do not feel indignation at anything they may say.

I am aware that I anticipate a little,—that he was still, at the last accounts, alive in the hands of his foes; but that being the case, I have all along found myself thinking and speaking of him as physically dead.

I do not believe in erecting statues to those who still live in our hearts, whose bones have not yet crumbled in the earth around us, but I would rather see the statue of Captain Brown in the Massachusetts State-House yard, than that of any other man whom I know. I rejoice that I live in this age, that I am his contemporary.

What a contrast, when we turn to that political party which is so anxiously shuffling him and his plot out of its way, and looking around for some available slave holder, perhaps, to be its candidate, at least for one who will execute the Fugitive Slave Law, and all those other unjust laws which he took up arms to annul!

Insane! A father and six sons, and one son-in-law, and several more men besides,—as many at least as twelve disciples,—all struck with insanity at once; while the same tyrant holds with a firmer gripe than ever his four millions of slaves, and a thousand sane editors, his abettors, are saving their country and their bacon! Just as insane were his efforts in Kansas. Ask the tyrant who is his most dangerous foe, the sane man or the insane? Do the thousands who know him best, who have rejoiced at his deeds in Kansas, and have afforded him material aid there, think him

insane? Such a use of this word is a mere trope with most who persist in using it, and I have no doubt that many of the rest have already in silence retracted their words.

Read his admirable answers to Mason and others. How they are dwarfed and defeated by the contrast! On the one side, half-brutish, half-timid questioning; on the other, truth, clear as lightning, crashing into their obscene temples. They are made to stand with Pilate, and Gesler, and the Inquisition. How ineffectual their speech and action! and what a void their silence! They are but helpless tools in this great work. It was no human power that gathered them about this preacher.

What have Massachusetts and the North sent a few sane representatives to Congress for, of late years?—to declare with effect what kind of sentiments? All their speeches put together and boiled down,—and probably they themselves will confess it,—do not match for manly directness and force, and for simple truth, the few casual remarks of crazy John Brown, on the floor of the Harper's Ferry engine-house,—that man whom you are about to hang, to send to the other world, though not to represent you there. No, he was not our representative in any sense. He was too fair a specimen of a man to represent the like of us. Who, then, were his constituents? If you read his words understandingly you will find out. In his case there is no idle eloquence, no made, nor maiden speech, no compliments to the oppressor. Truth is his inspirer, and earnestness the polisher of his sentences. He could afford to lose his Sharpe's rifles, while he retained his faculty of speech,—a Sharpe's rifle of infinitely surer and longer range.

And the *New York Herald* reports the conversation verbatim! It does not know of what undying words it is made the vehicle.

I have no respect for the penetration of any man who can read the report of that conversation, and still call the principal in it insane. It has the ring of a saner sanity than an ordinary discipline and habits of life, than an ordinary organization, secure. Take any sentence of it,—“Any questions that I can honorably answer, I will; not otherwise. So far as I am myself concerned, I have told everything truthfully. I value my word, sir.” The few who talk about his vindictive spirit, while they really admire his heroism, have no test by which to detect a noble man, no amalgam to

combine with his pure gold. They mix their own dross with it.

It is a relief to turn from these slanders to the testimony of his more truthful, but frightened jailers and hangmen. Governor Wise speaks far more justly and appreciatingly of him than any Northern editor, or politician, or public personage, that I chance to have heard from. I know that you can afford to hear him again on this subject. He says: “They are themselves mistaken who take him to be madman. . . . He is cool, collected, and indomitable, and it is but just to him to say, that he was humane to his prisoners. . . . And he inspired me with great trust in his integrity as a man of truth. He is a fanatic, vain and garrulous,” (I leave that part to Mr. Wise,) “but firm, truthful, and intelligent. His men, too, who survive, are like him. . . . Colonel Washington says that he was the coolest and firmest man he ever saw in defying danger and death. With one son dead by his side, and another shot through, he felt the pulse of his dying son with one hand, and held his rifle with the other, and commanded his men with the utmost composure, encouraging them to be firm, and to sell their lives as dear as they could. Of the three white prisoners, Brown, Stephens, and Coppic, it was hard to say which was most firm.”

Almost the first Northern men whom the slaveholder has learned to respect!

The testimony of Mr. Vallandigham, though less valuable, is of the same purport, that “it is vain to underrate either the man or his conspiracy. . . . He is the farthest possible removed from the ordinary ruffian, fanatic, or madman.”

“All is quiet at Harper's Ferry,” say the journals. What is the character of that calm which follows when the law and the slaveholder prevail? I regard this event as a touchstone designed to bring out, with glaring distinctness, the character of this government. We needed to be thus assisted to see it by the light of history. It needed to see itself. When a government puts forth its strength on the side of injustice, as ours to maintain slavery and kill the liberators of the slave, it reveals itself a merely brute force, or worse, a demoniacal force. It is the head of the Plug-Uglies. It is more manifest than ever that tyranny rules. I see this government to be effectually allied with France and Austria in oppressing mankind. There sits a tyrant holding fettered four millions of slaves; here comes

their heroic liberator. This most hypocritical and diabolical government looks up from its seat on the gasping four millions, and inquires with an assumption of innocence: "What do you assault me for? Am I not an honest man? Cease agitation on this subject, or I will make a slave of you, too, or else hang you."

We talk about a representative government; but what a monster of a government is that where the noblest faculties of the mind, and the whole heart, are not represented. A semi-human tiger or ox, stalking over the earth, with its heart taken out and the top of its brain shot away. Heroes have fought well on their stumps when their legs were shot off, but I never heard of any good done by such a government as that.

The only government that I recognize,—and it matters not how few are at the head of it, or how small its army,—is that power that establishes justice in the land, never that which establishes injustice. What shall we think of a government to which all the truly brave and just men in the land are enemies, standing between it and those whom it oppresses? A government that pretends to be Christian and crucifies a million Christs every day!

Treason! Where does such treason take its rise? I cannot help thinking of you as you deserve, ye governments. Can you dry up the fountains of thought? High treason, when it is resistance to tyranny here below, has its origin in, and is first committed by, the power that makes and forever recreates man. When you have caught and hung all these human rebels, you have accomplished nothing but your own guilt, for you have not struck at the fountain-head. You presume to contend with a foe against whom West Point cadets and rifled cannon point not. Can all the art of the cannon-founder tempt matter to turn against its maker? Is the form in which the founder thinks he casts it more essential than the constitution of it and of himself?

The United States have a cuffle of four millions of slaves. They are determined to keep them in this condition; and Massachusetts is one of the confederated overseers to prevent their escape. Such are not all the inhabitants of Massachusetts, but such are they who rule and are obeyed here. It was Massachusetts, as well as Virginia, that put down this insurrection at Harper's Ferry. She sent the marines there, and she will have to pay the penalty of her sin.

Suppose that there is a society in this State that out of its own purse and magnanimity saves all the fugitive slaves that run to us, and protects our colored fellow-citizens, and leaves the other work to the government, so-called. Is not that government fast losing its occupation, and becoming contemptible to mankind? If private men are obliged to perform the offices of government, to protect the weak and dispense justice, then the government becomes only a hired man, or clerk, to perform menial or indifferent services. Of course, that is but the shadow of a government whose existence necessitates a Vigilant Committee. What should we think of the Oriental Cadi even, behind whom worked in secret a vigilant committee? But such is the character of our Northern States generally; each has its Vigilant Committee. And, to a certain extent, these crazy governments recognize and accept this relation. They say, virtually, "We'll be glad to work for you on these terms, only don't make a noise about it." And thus the government, its salary being insured, withdraws into the back shop, taking the Constitution with it, and bestows most of its labor on repairing that. When I hear it at work sometimes, as I go by, it reminds me, at best, of those farmers who in winter contrive to turn a penny by following the coopering business. And what kind of spirit is their barrel made to hold? They speculate in stocks, and bore holes in mountains, but they are not competent to lay out even a decent highway. The only free road, the Underground Railroad, is owned and managed by the Vigilant Committee. They have tunnelled under the whole breadth of the land. Such a government is losing its power and respectability as surely as water runs out of a leaky vessel, and is held by one that can contain it.

I hear many condemn these men because they were so few. When were the good and the brave ever in a majority? Would you have had him wait till that time came?—till you and I came over to him? The very fact that he had no rabble or troop of hirelings about him would alone distinguish him from ordinary heroes. His company was small indeed, because few could be found worthy to pass muster. Each one who there laid down his life for the poor and oppressed was a picked man, culled out of many thousands, if not millions; apparently a man of principle, of rare courage, and devoted humanity; ready to sacrifice his life at any moment for so much by laymen as by ministers



of the Gospel, not so much by the fighting sects as by the Quakers, and not so much by Quaker men as by Quaker women?

This event advertises me that there is such a fact as death,—the possibility of a man's dying. It seems as if no man had ever died in America before; for in order to die you must first have lived. I don't believe in the hearses, and palls, and funerals that they have had. There was no death in the case, because there had been no life; they merely rotted or sloughed off, pretty much as they had rotted or sloughed along. No temple's veil was rent, only a hole dug somewhere. Let the dead bury their dead. The best of them fairly ran down like a clock. Franklin,—Washington,—they were let off without dying; they were merely missing one day. I hear a good many pretend that they are going to die; or that they have died, for aught that I know. Nonsense! I'll defy them to do it. They haven't got life enough in them. They'll deliquesce like fungi, and keep a hundred eulogists mopping the spot where they left off. Only half a dozen or so have died since the world began. Do you think that you are going to die, sir? No! there's no hope of you. You haven't got your lesson yet. You've got to stay after school. We make a needless ado about capital punishment,—taking lives, when there is no life to take. *Memento mori!* We don't understand that sublime sentence which some worthy got sculptured on his gravestone once. We've interpreted it in a grovelling and snivelling sense; we've wholly forgotten how to die.

But be sure you do die nevertheless. Do your work, and finish it. If you know how to begin, you will know when to end.

These men, in teaching us how to die, have at the same time taught us how to live. If this man's acts and words do not create a revival, it will be the severest possible satire on the acts and words that do. It is the best news that America has ever heard. It has already quickened the feeble pulse of the North, and infused more and more generous blood into her veins and heart, than any number of years of what is called commercial and political prosperity could. How many a man who was lately contemplating suicide has now something to live for!

One writer says that Brown's peculiar monomania made him to be "dreaded by the Missourians as a supernatural being." Sure enough, a hero in the midst of us cowards is always so dreaded. He is just that thing.

He shows himself superior to nature. He has a spark of divinity in him.

"Unless above himself he can Erect himself, how poor a thing is man!"

Newspaper editors argue also that it is a proof of his insanity that he thought he was appointed to do this work which he did,—that he did not suspect himself for a moment! They talk as if it were impossible that a man could be "divinely appointed" in these days to do any work whatever; as if vows and religion were out of date as connected with any man's daily work; as if the agent to abolish slavery could only be somebody appointed by the President, or by some political party. They talk as if a man's death were a failure, and his continued life, be it of whatever character, were a success.

When I reflect to what a cause this man devoted himself, and how religiously, and then reflect to what cause his judges and all who condemn him so angrily and fluently devote themselves, I see that they are as far apart as the heavens and earth are asunder.

The amount of it is, our "leading men" are a harmless kind of folk, and they know well enough that they were not divinely appointed, but elected by the votes of their party.

Who is it whose safety requires that Captain Brown be hung? Is it indispensable to any Northern man? Is there no resource but to cast this man also to the Minotaur? If you do not wish it, say so distinctly. While these things are being done, beauty stands veiled and music is a screeching lie. Think of him,—of his rare qualities!—such a man as it takes ages to make, and ages to understand; no mock hero, nor the representative of any party. A man such as the sun may not rise upon again in this benighted land. To whose making went the costliest material, the finest adamant; sent to be the redeemer of those in captivity; and the only use to which you can put him is to hang him at the end of a rope! You who pretend to care for Christ crucified, consider what you are about to do to him who offered himself to be the savior of four millions of men.

Any man knows when he is justified, and all the wits in the world cannot enlighten him on that point. The murderer always knows that he is justly punished; but when a government takes the life of a man without the consent of his conscience, it is an audacious government, and is taking a step towards its

own dissolution. Is it not possible that an individual may be right and a government wrong? Are laws to be enforced simply because they were made? or declared by any number of men to be good, if they are not good? Is there any necessity for a man's being a tool to perform a deed of which his better nature disapproves? Is it the intention of law-makers that good men shall be hung ever? Are judges to interpret the law according to the letter, and not the spirit? What right have you to enter into a compact with yourself that you will do thus or so, against the light within you? Is it for you to make up your mind,—to form any resolution whatever,—and not accept the convictions that are forced upon you, and which ever pass your understanding? I do not believe in lawyers, in that mode of attacking or defending a man, because you descend to meet the judge on his own ground, and, in cases of the highest importance, it is of no consequence whether a man breaks a human law or not. Let lawyers decide trivial cases. Business men may arrange that among themselves. If they were the interpreters of the everlasting laws which rightfully bind man, that would be another thing. A counterfeit law-factory, standing half in a slave land and half in free! What kind of laws for free men can you expect from that?

I am here to plead his cause with you. I plead not for his life, but for his character,—his immortal life; and so it becomes your cause wholly, and is not his in the least. Some eighteen hundred years ago Christ was crucified; this morning, perchance, Captain Brown was hung. These are the two ends of a chain which is not without its links. He is not Old Brown any longer; he is an angel of light.

I see now that it was necessary that the bravest and humanest man in all the country should be hung. Perhaps he saw it himself. I almost fear that I may yet hear of his deliverance, doubting if a prolonged life, if any life, can do as much good as his death.

“Misguided”! “Garrulous”! “Insane”! “Vindictive”! So ye write in your easy-chairs, and thus he wounded responds from the floor of the Armory, clear as a cloudless sky, true as the voice of nature is: “No man sent me here; it was my own prompting and that of my Maker. I acknowledge no master in human form.”

And in what a sweet and noble strain he proceeds,

addressing his captors, who stand over him: “I think, my friends, you are guilty of a great wrong against God and humanity, and it would be perfectly right for any one to interfere with you so far as to free those you willfully and wickedly hold in bondage.”

And, referring to his movement: “It is, in my opinion, the greatest service a man can render to God.”

“I pity the poor in bondage that have none to help them; that is why I am here; not to gratify any personal animosity, revenge, or vindictive spirit. It is my sympathy with the oppressed and the wronged, that are as good as you, and as precious in the sight of God.”

You don't know your testament when you see it.

“I want you to understand that I respect the rights of the poorest and weakest of colored people, oppressed by the slave power, just as much as I do those of the most wealthy and powerful.”

“I wish to say, furthermore, that you had better, all you people at the South, prepare yourselves for a settlement of that question, that must come up for settlement sooner than you are prepared for it. The sooner you are prepared the better. You may dispose of me very easily. I am nearly disposed of now; but this question is still to be settled,—this negro question, I mean; the end of that is not yet.”

I foresee the time when the painter will paint that scene, no longer going to Rome for a subject; the poet will sing it; the historian record it; and, with the Landing of the Pilgrims and the Declaration of Independence, it will be the ornament of some future national gallery, when at least the present form of slavery shall be no more here. We shall then be at liberty to weep for Captain Brown. Then, and not till then, we will take our revenge.

#### SEE ALSO

Popular Theodicies: Antebellum America, Civil War and the Late Nineteenth Century; Public Theologies and Political Culture

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Henry David Thoreau, “A Plea for Captain John Brown,” October 30, 1859. Accessed from: [http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/treatise/thoreau/thoreau\\_001.htm](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/treatise/thoreau/thoreau_001.htm). The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm> (Nov. 18, 2002).

## Georgia Secession (January 29, 1861)

*On December 20, 1860, South Carolina formally dissolved their ties with the union. Within two months Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas also declared their intentions to secede. As illustrated by Georgia's declaration of secession, the reasons for dissolution included defense of the Southern institution of slavery, protection of the Southern economy from Northern "manufacturing interests," and the federal government's attempt to limit the sovereignty of the Southern states.*

The people of Georgia having dissolved their political connection with the Government of the United States of America, present to their confederates and the world the causes which have led to the separation. For the last ten years we have had numerous and serious causes of complaint against our non-slave-holding confederate States with reference to the subject of African slavery. They have endeavored to weaken our security, to disturb our domestic peace and tranquility, and persistently refused to comply with their express constitutional obligations to us in reference to that property, and by the use of their power in the Federal Government have striven to deprive us of an equal enjoyment of the common Territories of the Republic. This hostile policy of our confederates has been pursued with every circumstance of aggravation which could arouse the passions and excite the hatred of our people, and has placed the two sections of the Union for many years past in the condition of virtual civil war. Our people, still attached to the Union from habit and national traditions, and averse to change, hoped that time, reason, and argument would bring, if not redress, at least exemption from further insults, injuries, and dangers. Recent events have fully dissipated all such hopes and demonstrated the necessity of separation. Our Northern confederates, after a full and calm hearing of all the facts, after a fair warning of our purpose not to submit to the rule of the authors of all these wrongs and injuries, have by a large majority committed the Government of the United States into their hands. The people of Georgia, after an equally full and fair and deliberate hearing of the

case, have declared with equal firmness that they shall not rule over them. A brief history of the rise, progress, and policy of anti-slavery and the political organization into whose hands the administration of the Federal Government has been committed will fully justify the pronounced verdict of the people of Georgia. The party of Lincoln, called the Republican party, under its present name and organization, is of recent origin. It is admitted to be an anti-slavery party. While it attracts to itself by its creed the scattered advocates of exploded political heresies, of condemned theories in political economy, the advocates of commercial restrictions, of protection, of special privileges, of waste and corruption in the administration of Government, anti-slavery is its mission and its purpose. By anti-slavery it is made a power in the state. The question of slavery was the great difficulty in the way of the formation of the *Constitution*. While the subordination and the political and social inequality of the African race was fully conceded by all, it was plainly apparent that slavery would soon disappear from what are now the non-slave-holding States of the original thirteen. The opposition to slavery was then, as now, general in those States and the *Constitution* was made with direct reference to that fact. But a distinct abolition party was not formed in the United States for more than half a century after the Government went into operation. The main reason was that the North, even if united, could not control both branches of the Legislature during any portion of that time. Therefore such an organization must have resulted either in utter failure or in the total overthrow of the Government. The material prosperity of the North was greatly dependent on the Federal Government; that of the South not at all. In the first years of the Republic the navigating, commercial, and manufacturing interests of the North began to seek profit and aggrandizement at the expense of the agricultural interests. Even the owners of fishing smacks sought and obtained bounties for pursuing their own business (which yet continue), and \$500,000 is now paid them annually out of the Treasury. The navigating in-

terests begged for protection against foreign ship-builders and against competition in the coasting trade. Congress granted both requests, and by prohibitory acts gave an absolute monopoly of this business to each of their interests, which they enjoy without diminution to this day. Not content with these great and unjust advantages, they have sought to throw the legitimate burden of their business as much as possible upon the public; they have succeeded in throwing the cost of light-houses, buoys, and the maintenance of their seamen upon the Treasury, and the Government now pays above \$2,000,000 annually for the support of these objects. These interests, in connection with the commercial and manufacturing classes, have also succeeded, by means of subventions to mail steamers and the reduction in postage, in relieving their business from the payment of about \$7,000,000 annually, throwing it upon the public Treasury under the name of postal deficiency. The manufacturing interest entered into the same struggle early, and has clamored steadily for Government bounties and special favors. This interest was confined mainly to the Eastern and Middle non-slaveholding States. Wielding these great States it held great power and influence, and its demands were in full proportion to its power. The manufacturers and miners wisely based their demands upon special facts and reasons rather than upon general principles, and thereby mollified much of the opposition of the opposing interest. They pleaded in their favor the infancy of their business in this country, the scarcity of labor and capital, the hostile legislation of other countries toward them, the great necessity of their fabrics in the time of war, and the necessity of high duties to pay the debt incurred in our war for independence. These reasons prevailed, and they received for many years enormous bounties by the general acquiescence of the whole country.

But when these reasons ceased they were no less clamorous for Government protection, but their clamors were less heeded—the country had put the principle of protection upon trial and condemned it. After having enjoyed protection to the extent of from 15 to 200 per cent. upon their entire business for above thirty years, the act of 1846 was passed. It avoided sudden change, but the principle was settled, and free trade, low duties, and economy in public expenditures was the verdict of the American people. The

South and the Northwestern States sustained this policy. There was but small hope of its reversal; upon the direct issue, none at all.

All these classes saw this and felt it and cast about for new allies. The anti-slavery sentiment of the North offered the best chance for success. An anti-slavery party must necessarily look to the North alone for support, but a united North was now strong enough to control the Government in all of its departments, and a sectional party was therefore determined upon. Time and issues upon slavery were necessary to its completion and final triumph. The feeling of anti-slavery, which it was well known was very general among the people of the North, had been long dormant or passive; it needed only a question to arouse it into aggressive activity. This question was before us. We had acquired a large territory by successful war with Mexico; Congress had to govern it; how, in relation to slavery, was the question then demanding solution. This state of facts gave form and shape to the anti-slavery sentiment throughout the North and the conflict began. Northern anti-slavery men of all parties asserted the right to exclude slavery from the territory by Congressional legislation and demanded the prompt and efficient exercise of this power to that end. This insulting and unconstitutional demand was met with great moderation and firmness by the South. We had shed our blood and paid our money for its acquisition; we demanded a division of it on the line of the Missouri restriction or an equal participation in the whole of it. These propositions were refused, the agitation became general, and the public danger was great. The case of the South was impregnable. The price of the acquisition was the blood and treasure of both sections—of all, and, therefore, it belonged to all upon the principles of equity and justice.

The *Constitution* delegated no power to Congress to exclude either party from its free enjoyment; therefore our right was good under the *Constitution*. Our rights were further fortified by the practice of the Government from the beginning. Slavery was forbidden in the country northwest of the Ohio River by what is called the *ordinance of 1787*. That ordinance was adopted under the old confederation and by the assent of Virginia, who owned and ceded the country, and therefore this case must stand on its own special circumstances. The Government of the United States

claimed territory by virtue of the *treaty of 1783* with Great Britain, acquired territory by cession from Georgia and North Carolina, by treaty from France, and by treaty from Spain. These acquisitions largely exceeded the original limits of the Republic. In all of these acquisitions the policy of the Government was uniform. It opened them to the settlement of all the citizens of all the States of the Union. They emigrated thither with their property of every kind (including slaves). All were equally protected by public authority in their persons and property until the inhabitants became sufficiently numerous and otherwise capable of bearing the burdens and performing the duties of self-government, when they were admitted into the Union upon equal terms with the other States, with whatever republican constitution they might adopt for themselves.

Under this equally just and beneficent policy law and order, stability and progress, peace and prosperity marked every step of the progress of these new communities until they entered as great and prosperous commonwealths into the sisterhood of American States. In 1820 the North endeavored to overturn this wise and successful policy and demanded that the State of Missouri should not be admitted into the Union unless she first prohibited slavery within her limits by her constitution. After a bitter and protracted struggle the North was defeated in her special object, but her policy and position led to the adoption of a section in the law for the admission of Missouri, prohibiting slavery in all that portion of the territory acquired from France lying North of 36 [degrees] 30 [minutes] north latitude and outside of Missouri. The venerable Madison at the time of its adoption declared it unconstitutional. Mr. Jefferson condemned the restriction and foresaw its consequences and predicted that it would result in the dissolution of the Union. His prediction is now history. The North demanded the application of the principle of prohibition of slavery to all of the territory acquired from Mexico and all other parts of the public domain then and in all future time. It was the announcement of her purpose to appropriate to herself all the public domain then owned and thereafter to be acquired by the United States. The claim itself was less arrogant and insulting than the reason with which she supported it. That reason was her fixed purpose to limit, restrain, and finally abolish slavery in the States where it ex-

ists. The South with great unanimity declared her purpose to resist the principle of prohibition to the last extremity. This particular question, in connection with a series of questions affecting the same subject, was finally disposed of by the defeat of prohibitory legislation.

The Presidential election of 1852 resulted in the total overthrow of the advocates of restriction and their party friends. Immediately after this result the anti-slavery portion of the defeated party resolved to unite all the elements in the North opposed to slavery and to stake their future political fortunes upon their hostility to slavery everywhere. This is the party to whom the people of the North have committed the Government. They raised their standard in 1856 and were barely defeated. They entered the Presidential contest again in 1860 and succeeded.

The prohibition of slavery in the Territories, hostility to it everywhere, the equality of the black and white races, disregard of all constitutional guarantees in its favor, were boldly proclaimed by its leaders and applauded by its followers.

With these principles on their banners and these utterances on their lips the majority of the people of the North demand that we shall receive them as our rulers.

The prohibition of slavery in the Territories is the cardinal principle of this organization.

For forty years this question has been considered and debated in the halls of Congress, before the people, by the press, and before the tribunals of justice. The majority of the people of the North in 1860 decided it in their own favor. We refuse to submit to that judgment, and in vindication of our refusal we offer the *Constitution* of our country and point to the total absence of any express power to exclude us. We offer the practice of our Government for the first thirty years of its existence in complete refutation of the position that any such power is either necessary or proper to the execution of any other power in relation to the Territories. We offer the judgment of a large minority of the people of the North, amounting to more than one-third, who united with the unanimous voice of the South against this usurpation; and, finally, we offer the judgment of the Supreme Court of the United States, the highest judicial tribunal of our country, in our favor. This evidence ought to be conclusive that we have never surrendered this right. The

conduct of our adversaries admonishes us that if we had surrendered it, it is time to resume it.

The faithless conduct of our adversaries is not confined to such acts as might aggrandize themselves or their section of the Union. They are content if they can only injure us. The *Constitution* declares that persons charged with crimes in one State and fleeing to another shall be delivered up on the demand of the executive authority of the State from which they may flee, to be tried in the jurisdiction where the crime was committed. It would appear difficult to employ language freer from ambiguity, yet for above twenty years the non-slave-holding States generally have wholly refused to deliver up to us persons charged with crimes affecting slave property. Our confederates, with punic faith, shield and give sanctuary to all criminals who seek to deprive us of this property or who use it to destroy us. This clause of the *Constitution* has no other sanction than their good faith; that is withheld from us; we are remediless in the Union; out of it we are remitted to the laws of nations.

A similar provision of the *Constitution* requires them to surrender fugitives from labor. This provision and the one last referred to were our main inducements for confederating with the Northern States. Without them it is historically true that we would have rejected the *Constitution*. In the fourth year of the Republic Congress passed a law to give full vigor and efficiency to this important provision. This act depended to a considerable degree upon the local magistrates in the several States for its efficiency. The non-slave-holding States generally repealed all laws intended to aid the execution of that act, and imposed penalties upon those citizens whose loyalty to the *Constitution* and their oaths might induce them to discharge their duty. Congress then passed the *act of 1850*, providing for the complete execution of this duty by Federal officers. This law, which their own bad faith rendered absolutely indispensable for the protection of constitutional rights, was instantly met with ferocious revilings and all conceivable modes of hostility. The Supreme Court unanimously, and their own local courts with equal unanimity (with the single and temporary exception of the supreme court of Wisconsin), sustained its constitutionality in all of its provisions. Yet it stands to-day a dead letter for all practicable purposes in every non-slave-holding State in the Union. We have their covenants, we have their oaths

to keep and observe it, but the unfortunate claimant, even accompanied by a Federal officer with the mandate of the highest judicial authority in his hands, is everywhere met with fraud, with force, and with legislative enactments to elude, to resist, and defeat him. Claimants are murdered with impunity; officers of the law are beaten by frantic mobs instigated by inflammatory appeals from persons holding the highest public employment in these States, and supported by legislation in conflict with the clearest provisions of the *Constitution*, and even the ordinary principles of humanity. In several of our confederate States a citizen cannot travel the highway with his servant who may voluntarily accompany him, without being declared by law a felon and being subjected to infamous punishments. It is difficult to perceive how we could suffer more by the hostility than by the fraternity of such brethren.

The public law of civilized nations requires every State to restrain its citizens or subjects from committing acts injurious to the peace and security of any other State and from attempting to excite insurrection, or to lessen the security, or to disturb the tranquillity of their neighbors, and our *Constitution* wisely gives Congress the power to punish all offenses against the laws of nations.

These are sound and just principles which have received the approbation of just men in all countries and all centuries; but they are wholly disregarded by the people of the Northern States, and the Federal Government is impotent to maintain them. For twenty years past the abolitionists and their allies in the Northern States have been engaged in constant efforts to subvert our institutions and to excite insurrection and servile war among us. They have sent emissaries among us for the accomplishment of these purposes. Some of these efforts have received the public sanction of a majority of the leading men of the Republican party in the national councils, the same men who are now proposed as our rulers. These efforts have in one instance led to the actual invasion of one of the slave-holding States, and those of the murderers and incendiaries who escaped public justice by flight have found fraternal protection among our Northern confederates.

These are the same men who say the Union shall be preserved.

Such are the opinions and such are the practices of

the Republican party, who have been called by their own votes to administer the Federal Government under the Constitution of the United States. We know their treachery; we know the shallow pretenses under which they daily disregard its plainest obligations. If we submit to them it will be our fault and not theirs. The people of Georgia have ever been willing to stand by this bargain, this contract; they have never sought to evade any of its obligations; they have never hitherto sought to establish any new government; they have struggled to maintain the ancient right of themselves and the human race through and by that *Constitution*. But they know the value of parchment rights in treacherous hands, and therefore they refuse to commit their own to the rulers whom the North offers us. Why? Because by their declared principles and policy they have outlawed \$3,000,000,000 of our property in the common territories of the Union; put it under the ban of the Republic in the States where it exists and out of the protection of Federal law everywhere; because they give sanctuary to thieves and incendiaries who assail it to the whole extent of their power, in

spite of their most solemn obligations and covenants; because their avowed purpose is to subvert our society and subject us not only to the loss of our property but the destruction of ourselves, our wives, and our children, and the desolation of our homes, our altars, and our firesides. To avoid these evils we resume the powers which our fathers delegated to the Government of the United States, and henceforth will seek new safeguards for our liberty, equality, security, and tranquillity.

[Approved, Tuesday, January 29, 1861]

**SEE ALSO**

Popular Theodicies: Civil War and the Late Nineteenth Century; Public Theologies and Political Culture; Violence: War

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Confederate States of America, Georgia Secession, January 29, 1861. Accessed from: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/csa/geosec.htm>, The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm> (Oct. 8, 2002).

## Harlan Page, "Motives to Early Piety" (1861)

*Many religious tracts inspiring young Confederate soldiers to be prepared to fight and die in the battle over slavery circulated in the South. The evangelical flavor of these texts, emphasizing death, hell, resurrection, and the saving power of Jesus Christ, mirrored the strong evangelical culture of the Southern states at the beginning of the Civil War, a culture that prevailed even in the wake of ultimate defeat.*

### **[Selected for the Soldiers.] No. 322**

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND—While I see so many youth hastening unprepared to eternity, I cannot forbear calling to you to stop for a moment, and consider what affecting MOTIVES urge you to make your peace with God.

Your *Christian friends* earnestly desire your salvation. They see your danger. They know that unless your heart is renewed by the Holy Spirit, your soul must be lost. It is with pain that they see you in the pursuit of sinful pleasure, trifling away your precious time, and treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, preparing for a more aggravated doom. They plead with you. They weep and pray for you, night and day. They long to rejoice over you as a new-born heir of heaven. And must they plead, and weep, and pray for you in vain? O do not despise their reproof. Let them embrace you as a fellow-heir of the grace of life. Let their hearts be made glad by seeing you turning from sin and folly, and accepting the offers of eternal life.

The *angels of God* desire your salvation. Yes, their golden harps are turned to raise a louder song of joy over every one who will repent. Will you not be first to cause the arches of heaven to re-echo, that another wanderer has returned? Shall angels long for your salvation, and you be unconcerned about it yourself? But more,

*Christ himself* desires your salvation. For this he became "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." For this he endured the agony of the garden and the cross. He calls you, by his word, by his providence, and by his Spirit. He declares that he "is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to re-

pentance." And shall he call in vain? Is it nothing to you that he shed his precious blood, and bore the wrath of Jehovah for perishing sinners? O heart of adamant, that will not melt in view of such condescension, suffering, and love. O vile ingratitude, that can behold, unmoved, "the Son of God in tears," offering himself or man's redemption.

Consider, also, *the glories of heaven*. There is the throne of God and of the Lamb. There, the pure river of the water of life forever flows. There, saints and angels offer their unceasing praises. There, your departed Christian friends mingle their voices with the heavenly choir. There, all unite in shouting, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent-reigneth." "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." There, every humble penitent at last arrives. There is the consummation of all his happiness. There he takes his fill of pleasure, for ever to increase with his capacity. It is there the angels wait to rejoice at your conversion.

Think, too, of *the misery of hell*. O the horrors of despair! What pencil can paint, what tongue can tell, or what pen can describe them? Weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth constitute the horrid discord of the abodes of the damned. There, the stings of a guilty conscience, that worm that never dies; heart-rending reflections on murdered time; the view of saints in glory afar off; the surrounding gloom of the infernal pit; unavailing lamentations and despair, all conspire to render their misery complete. O, "who can dwell with devouring fire? Who can inhabit everlasting burnings?" Can you disregard the groans of those who are now suffering the just vengeance of an angry God? Will you sleep on, and delay, until you are awakened by the howlings of that tempest which will assuredly be poured out upon the wicked? Alas, what will you then do; how will you then escape, if you "neglect so great salvation"?

Consider *the worth of the soul*. Its value can be measured only by eternity. When millions of millions of ages shall have rolled away, your soul will still be ac-



tive, and its capacity to suffer or enjoy for ever increasing.

“O the soul that never dies”—here spending its short probation, and preparing for the glories of heaven or miseries of hell.

*Death is rapidly approaching.* Perhaps this night you will close your eyes to awake in eternity. Thousands have been thus surprised. How many of your companions are gone, never to return. Their state is fixed. They are now enduring the wrath of God, or singing his praises in the paradise above. Whoever you are, you may be assured that death is nigh to you. To him you must yield, willing or unwilling; and eternal woe must be your doom, unless you haste to Christ, the only refuge from the impending storm. O remember, that you are mortal, that time flies, that death approaches, and that you have yet no hope, but are exposed every moment to be cut down, and consigned to everlasting ruin.

*The day of judgment* is at hand. Soon the loud trump of the archangel will awake the sleeping dead; and you among them will come forth to “the resurrection of life,” or “the resurrection of damnation.” Then the Saviour, whom you have loved, or despised, will appear in the clouds of heaven, to give to every one “according as his work shall be.” Before him you must stand with assembled millions, while he bids you depart, or welcomes you to a seat at his right hand. How dreadful must be that day to you, if you are not clothed with the robe of Christ’s righteousness. What will you do when the judge shall pronounce your awful doom? How will you then feel, when your dear relatives and friends shall arise to meet Christ in the air, and go with him to the New Jerusalem above, while you are left behind, a companion of wretched men and devils—forever to sink in misery—for ever to remain an outcast from the presence of God, from your Christian friends, and without the prospect of any alleviation of your woe? With what agony must you take up your final abode, where “the smoke of your torment will ascend up for ever and ever.”

Other motives might be urged, but if these will not awaken you to a sense of your danger, others would be unavailing. Now, you have a day of grace. Now, the saints are praying for you; the angels of God wait

to rejoice over you; the Lord Jesus Christ, by his word and by his Spirit, is entreating you to come; the glories of heaven are offered you; the miseries of hell are unveiled to your view; while the worth of your soul, the rapid approach of death and judgment, urge you to make haste—to escape for your life from the destruction that awaits you. O, my young friend, as you value your eternal well being, I beseech you awake from this slumber. Arise, and go to Jesus. Go to him a humble beggar; go, penitent and believing. None such were ever sent empty away. While you tarry, your sins are accumulating, your danger is increasing. Delay a little longer, and your soul, your precious, immortal soul, is lost forever.

As the beloved man who wrote these lines was drawing near to death, he was asked, “Do you feel that it is your choice now to go?” “Yes,” he replied, “if it is God’s will.”

“Should he please to restore you, would you not be willing to remain here and labor a little longer?”

“O yes, I think so, if it was his will. But my work on earth is *all done*. I want now to go and be with Christ. Prophets, and apostles, and martyrs are there; and many pious friends are there—I feel that I should like to meet them. Christ will be there; and we shall be like him, and see him as he is; that will be enough.”

Again he repeated the words, “Home, home” and prayed, “O, for a free and full discharge. Lord Jesus, come quickly. Why wait thy chariot wheels so long? I dedicate myself to thee. O may I have the victory. O come quickly. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.”

#### SEE ALSO

Protestantism in America; Death; Popular Theodicies: Civil War and the Late Nineteenth Century; Violence: War

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Harlan Page, “Motives to Early Piety by the Late Harlan Page,” reprinted by Strother & Marcom, Book and Job printers, Raleigh, N.C., W. J. W. Crowder, Tract Agent, June 1861. Accessed from: <http://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/page/page.html>, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Academic Affairs Library, Documenting the American South, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/> (Oct. 15, 2002).

Julia Ward Howe,  
“The Battle Hymn of the Republic” (1862)

*Julia Ward Howe was an accomplished poet by 1862, but it was only when the Atlantic Monthly published her “Battle Hymn of the Republic” in February of that year that she gained national acclaim for penning what soon became the semiofficial Civil War song of the Union Army. Howe capitalized on her newfound fame by involving herself publicly in social reform movements on behalf of black emancipation, woman suffrage, and international peace.*

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming  
of the Lord  
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes  
of wrath are stored,  
He has loosed the fateful lightening of His terrible  
swift sword  
His truth is marching on.

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred  
circling camps  
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews  
and damps  
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and  
flaring lamps  
His day is marching on.

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
His truth is marching on.

I have read a fiery gospel writ in burnish'd rows  
of steel,  
“As ye deal with my contemners, So with you  
my grace shall deal,”

Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent  
with his heel  
Since God is marching on.

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
His truth is marching on.

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never  
call retreat  
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His  
judgment-seat  
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant,  
my feet!  
Our God is marching on.

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
His truth is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across  
the sea,  
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures  
you and me:  
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make  
men free,  
While God is marching on.

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
His truth is marching on.

**SEE ALSO**

Death; Popular Theodicies: Civil War and the Late  
Nineteenth Century; Violence: Apocalypticism

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Julia Ward Howe, “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” 1862.

## Abraham Lincoln, Emancipation Proclamation (January 1, 1863)

*Issued only reluctantly by Abraham Lincoln, who initially viewed the Civil War in terms of preserving the Union, the Emancipation Proclamation made ending slavery a basic goal of the Civil War. While in practice the proclamation itself neither freed slaves nor ended slavery in America, it paved the way for the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, which accomplished both of these objectives.*

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

“That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

“That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, shall on that day be, in good faith, represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States.”

Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of

the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days, from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New Orleans), Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth[]), and which excepted parts, are for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts,

positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.

*By the President: Abraham Lincoln*  
*William H. Seward, Secretary of State*

**SEE ALSO**

African American Religions; Popular Theodicies: Civil War and the Late Nineteenth Century; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion

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Abraham Lincoln, Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863. Source: Franklin, John Hope, Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1994. Accessed from: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/emancipa.htm>, The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm> (Oct. 8, 2002).

## Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus" (1883)

*Written for an auction in aid of the Pedestal Fund for the Statue of Liberty in 1883, "The New Colossus" only grabbed the attention of the nation when it was added to a bronze plaque at the base of the statue in 1901. Emma Lazarus, the poem's author, was a celebrated poet, essayist, and advocate of Jewish rights who did not live to see her words become a part of American culture and a call for immigrants' rights.*

### The New Colossus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,  
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

"Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she  
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

### SEE ALSO

Asian American Religious Communities; Buddhism in America; Catholicism in America; Hinduism in America; Islam in America; Judaism in America; Latina/Latino Religious Communities

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Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus," 1883, engraved on the Statue of Liberty. Accessed from: <http://www.libertystatepark.com/emma.htm>. Liberty State Park, <http://www.libertystatepark.com/index.html> (Nov. 7, 2002).

## Pittsburgh Platform, Central Conference of American Rabbis (1885)

*Reform rabbis from around the United States met from November 16 through November 19, 1885, to produce the Pittsburgh Platform. This seminal text attempted to preserve Jewish tradition while introducing innovations designed "to impress the modern Jew" that included rejection of the return to Israel, dietary laws, and some Mosaic legislation. The Pittsburgh Platform defined Reformed Judaism for the next fifty years.*

1. We recognize in every religion an attempt to grasp the Infinite, and in every mode, source or book of revelation held sacred in any religious system the consciousness of the indwelling of God in man. We hold that Judaism presents the highest conception of the God-idea as taught in our Holy Scriptures and developed and spiritualized by the Jewish teachers, in accordance with the moral and philosophical progress of their respective ages. We maintain that Judaism preserved and defended midst continual struggles and trials and under enforced isolation, this God-idea as the central religious truth for the human race.

2. We recognize in the Bible the record of the consecration of the Jewish people to its mission as the priest of the one God, and value it as the most potent instrument of religious and moral instruction. We hold that the modern discoveries of scientific researches in the domain of nature and history are not antagonistic to the doctrines of Judaism, the Bible reflecting the primitive ideas of its own age, and at times clothing its conception of divine Providence and Justice dealing with men in miraculous narratives.

3. We recognize in the Mosaic legislation a system of training the Jewish people for its mission during its national life in Palestine, and today we accept as binding only its moral laws, and maintain only such ceremonies as elevate and sanctify our lives, but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization.

4. We hold that all such Mosaic and rabbinical laws as regulate diet, priestly purity, and dress originated in ages and under the influence of ideas en-

tirely foreign to our present mental and spiritual state. They fail to impress the modern Jew with a spirit of priestly holiness; their observance in our days is apt rather to obstruct than to further modern spiritual elevation.

5. We recognize, in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect, the approaching of the realization of Israel's great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.

6. We recognize in Judaism a progressive religion, ever striving to be in accord with the postulates of reason. We are convinced of the utmost necessity of preserving the historical identity with our great past. Christianity and Islam, being daughter religions of Judaism, we appreciate their providential mission, to aid in the spreading of monotheistic and moral truth. We acknowledge that the spirit of broad humanity of our age is our ally in the fulfillment of our mission, and therefore we extend the hand of fellowship to all who cooperate with us in the establishment of the reign of truth and righteousness among men.

7. We reassert the doctrine of Judaism that the soul is immortal, grounding the belief on the divine nature of human spirit, which forever finds bliss in righteousness and misery in wickedness. We reject as ideas not rooted in Judaism, the beliefs both in bodily resurrection and in Gehenna and Eden (Hell and Paradise) as abodes for everlasting punishment and reward.

8. In full accordance with the spirit of the Mosaic legislation, which strives to regulate the relations between rich and poor, we deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve, on the basis of justice and righteousness, the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society.

**SEE ALSO**

Judaism in America

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Pittsburgh Platform, Declaration of Principles, Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1885.

Frances E. W. Harper,  
“The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union  
and the Colored Woman” (1888)

*A celebrated African American poet, writer, and lecturer, Frances Harper was an antislavery, women’s rights, child welfare, and temperance activist. From 1883 until 1890 she headed activities among blacks for the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, the largest women’s organization in the United States and a supporter of a wide range of reform issues. Although the WCTU claimed that it welcomed blacks as well as whites, Harper’s query as to whether “the spirit of caste or the spirit of Christ” would triumph within the WCTU showed that relations across color lines were often fractious.*

A woman sat beneath the shadow of her home, while the dark waves of intemperance dashed against human hearts and hearth-stones, but there came an hour when she found that she could do something else besides wring her hands and weep over the ravages of the liquor traffic, which had darkened so many lives and desolated so many homes. Where the enemy spreads his snares for the feet of the unwary, inexperienced and tempted, she, too, could go and strive to stay the tide of ruin which was sending its floods of sorrow, shame and death to the habitations of men, and 1873 witnessed the strange and wondrous sight of the Woman’s Crusade, when the motherheart was roused up in defense of the home and all that the home held dearest. A Divine impulse seemed to fan into sudden flame and touch with living fire earnest hearts, which rose up to meet the great occasion. Lips that had been silent in the prayer meeting were loosened to take part in the wonderful uprising. Saloons were visited, hardships encountered, insults, violence and even imprisonment endured by women, brave to suffer and strong to endure. Thousands of saloon visits were made, many were closed. Grand enthusiasms were aroused, moral earnestness awakened, and a fire kindled whose beacon lights still stream o’er the gloomy track of our monster evil. Victor Hugo has spoken of the nineteenth century as being woman’s era, and among the most noticeable epochs in this era

is the uprising of women against the twin evils of slavery and intemperance, which had foisted themselves like leeches upon the civilization of the present age. In the great anti-slavery conflict women had borne a part, but after the storm cloud of battle had rolled away, it was found that an enemy, old and strong and deceptive, was warring against the best interests of society; not simply an enemy to one race, but an enemy to all races—an enemy that had entrenched itself in the strongholds of appetite and avarice, and was upheld by fashion, custom and legislation. To dislodge this enemy, to put prohibition not simply on the statute book, but in the heart and conscience of a nation, embracing within itself such heterogeneous masses, is no child’s play, nor the work of a few short moons. Men who were subjects in their own country and legislated for by others, become citizens here, with the power to help legislate for native born Americans. Hundreds of thousands of new citizens have been translated from the old oligarchy of slavery into the new commonwealth of freedom, and are numerically strong enough to hold the balance of power in a number of the States, and sway its legislators for good or evil. With all these conditions, something more is needed than grand enthusiasms lighting up a few consecrated lives with hallowed brightness. We need patient, persevering, Christly endeavor, a consecration of the moral earnestness, spiritual power and numerical strength of the nation to grapple with this evil and accomplish its overthrow.

After the knowledge and experience gained by the crusade, women, instead of letting all their pure enthusiasms become dissipated by expending in feeling what they should utilize in action, came together and formed the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union. From Miss Willard we learn that women who had been crusading all winter called conventions for consultation in respective States, and that several organizations, called Temperance Leagues, were formed.



Another step was the confederation of the States into the National Christian Temperance Union. A circular, aided by an extensive circulation through the press, was sent out to women in different parts of the country, and a convention was called, which met in Cleveland in November, 1874, to which sixteen states responded. A plan of work was adopted, financial arrangements made, and the publishing of an organ resolved upon. Mrs. Whittemyer, of Philadelphia, was elected President, and Miss Willard, of Illinois, Corresponding Secretary. This Union has increased in numbers and territory until at its last convention it embraced thirty-seven States and Territories. For years I knew very little of its proceedings, and was not sure that colored comradeship was very desirable, but having attended a local Union in Philadelphia, I was asked to join and acceded to the request, and was made city and afterwards State Superintendent of work among colored people. Since then, for several years I have held the position of National Superintendent of work among the colored people of the North. When I became National Superintendent there were no colored women on the Executive Committee or Board of Superintendents. Now there are two colored women on the Executive Committee and two on the Board of Superintendents. As a matter of course the colored question has come into this work as it had into the Sons of Temperance, Good Templars and elsewhere. Some of the members of different Unions have met the question in a liberal and Christian manner; others have not seemed to have so fully outgrown the old shards and shells of the past as to make the distinction between Christian affiliation and social equality, but still the leaven of more liberal sentiments has been at work in the Union and produced some hopeful results.

One of the pleasantest remembrances of my connection with the Woman's Christian Temperance Union was the kind and hospitable reception I met in the Missouri State Convention, and the memorable words of their President, Mrs. Hoffman, who declared that the color-line was eliminated. A Superintendent was chosen at that meeting for colored work in the State, at whose home in St. Louis the National Superintendent was for some time a Guest. The State Superintendent said in one of the meetings to the colored sisters, "You can come with us, or you can go by yourselves." There was self-reliance and ability

enough among them to form a Union of their own, which was named after the National Superintendent. Our work is divided into about forty departments, and among them they chose several lines of work, and had departments for parlor meetings, juvenile and evangelistic work, all of which have been in working order. The Union held meetings in Methodist and Baptist churches, and opened in the African Methodist Episcopal Church an industrial school for children, which increased in size until from about a dozen children at the beginning, it closed with about one hundred and fifty, as I understand. Some of the Unions, in their outlook upon society, found that there was no orphan asylum for colored children, except among the Catholics, and took the initiative for founding an asylum for colored children, and in a short time were successful in raising several hundred dollars for the purpose. This Union has, I have been informed, gathered into its association seventeen school teachers, and I think comprises some of the best brain and heart of the race in the city. From West Virginia a lady informs the national Superintendent that her Union has invited the colored sisters to join with them, and adds, "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow." In a number of places where there are local Unions in the North the doors have been opened to colored women, but in the farther South separate State Unions have been formed. Southern white women, it may be, fail to make in their minds the discrimination between social equality and Christian affiliation. Social equality, if I rightly understand the term, is the outgrowth of social affinities and social conditions, and may be based on talent, ability, or wealth, on either or all of these conditions. Christian affiliation is the union of Christians to do Christly work, and to help build up the kingdom of Christ amid the sin and misery of the world, under the spiritual leadership of the Lord Jesus Christ. At our last national Convention two States were represented by colored representatives. The colored President of an Alabama Union represented a Union composed of white and colored people, and is called No. 2, instead of Colored Union, as it was not composed entirely of colored people, and in making its advent into the National Union brought, as I was informed, more than twice the amount of State dues which was paid by the white Alabama Union, No. 1. The question of admission into the White Ribbon Army was brought before

the national President, through a card sent from Atlanta. Twenty-three women had formed a Union, and had written to the National Superintendent of colored work in the North asking in reference to their admission, and if black sheep must climb up some other way to tell them how. I showed the card to Miss Willard, who gave it as her opinion "That the National could not make laws for a State. If the colored women of Georgia will meet and form a Woman's Christian Temperance Union for the State, it is my opinion that their officers and delegates will have the same representation in the National." The President of the Second Alabama was received and recognized in the National as a member of the Executive Committee, and had a place, as I was informed, on the Committee of Resolutions. Believing, as I do, in the human solidarity, I hold that the Woman's Christian Temperance Union has in its hands one of the grandest opportunities that God ever pressed into the hands of the womanhood of any country. Its conflict is not the contest of a social club, but a moral warfare for an imperiled civilization. Whether or not the members of the farther South will subordinate the spirit of caste to the spirit of Christ, time will show. Once between them and the Negro were vast disparities, which have been melting and disappearing. The war obliterated the disparity between freedom and slavery. The civil law blotted out the difference between disfranchisement and manhood suffrage. Schools have sprung up like wells in the desert dust, bringing the races nearer together on the intellectual plane, while as a participant in the wealth of society the colored man has, I believe, in some instances, left his former master behind [in] the race for wealth. With these old landmarks going and gone, one relic remains from the dead past. "Our social customs." In clinging to them let them remember that the most ignorant, vicious and degraded voter outranks, politically, the purest, best and most cultured woman in the South, and learn to look at the question of Christian affiliation on this subject, not in the shadows of the fashion of this world that fadeth away, but in the light

of the face of Jesus Christ. And can any one despise the least of Christ's brethren without despising Him? Is there any path that the slave once trod that Jesus did not tread before him, and leave luminous with the light of His Steps? Was the Negro bought and sold? Christ was sold for thirty pieces of silver. Has he been poor? "The birds had nests, the foxes had holes, but the Son of man had no where to lay His head." Were they beaten in the house of bondage? They took Jesus and scourged Him. Have they occupied a low social position? "He made himself of no reputation and was numbered with the transgressors." Despised and trodden under foot? He was despised and rejected of men; spit upon by the rabble, crucified between thieves, and died as did Rome's meanest criminal slave. Oh, my brothers and sisters, if God chastens every son whom He receiveth, let your past history be a stimulus for the future. Join with the great army who are on the side of our God and His Christ. Let your homes be the best places where you may plant your batteries against the rum traffic. Teach your children to hate intoxicating drinks with a deadly hatred. Though scorn may curl her haughty lip, and fashion gather up her dainty robes from social contact, if your lives are in harmony with God and Christly sympathy with man, you belong to the highest nobility in God's universe. Learn to fight the battle for God and man as athletes armed for a glorious strife, encompassed about with a cloud of witnesses who are in sympathy with the highest and holiest endeavors.

#### SEE ALSO

African American Religions; Protestantism in America: Evangelicalism and Gender; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Feminisms

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Frances E. W. Harper, "The Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Colored Woman," *A.M.E. Church Review* 12 (1888), 313-316. Reprinted in *Discarded Legacy: Politics and Poetics of Frances E. W. Harper*, ed. Melba Joyce Boyd, Wayne State University Press, 1994.

## Andrew Carnegie, excerpt from *The Gospel of Wealth* (1889)

*Andrew Carnegie became the wealthiest man of his time by acquiring small steel manufacturers and consolidating them into his huge Carnegie Steel Company. However, he believed that with wealth came responsibility. In his Gospel of Wealth he set forth the idea that the wealthy should be “trustees” of their wealth and should administer it for the good of the public.*

### **The Problem of the Administration of Wealth**

THE problem of our age is the proper administration of wealth, that the ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and poor in harmonious relationship. The conditions of human life have not only been changed, but revolutionized, within the past few hundred years. In former days there was little difference between the dwelling, dress, food, and environment of the chief and those of his retainers. The Indians are to-day where civilized man then was. When visiting the Sioux, I was led to the wigwam of the chief. It was like the others in external appearance, and even within the difference was trifling between it and those of the poorest of his braves. The contrast between the palace of the millionaire and the cottage of the laborer with us to-day measures the change which has come with civilization. This change, however, is not to be deplored, but welcomed as highly beneficial. It is well, nay, essential, for the progress of the race that the houses of some should be homes for all that is highest and best in literature and the arts, and for all the refinements of civilization, rather than that none should be so. Much better this great irregularity than universal squalor. Without wealth there can be no Mæcenæ. The “good old times” were not good old times. Neither master nor servant was as well situated then as to-day. A relapse to old conditions would be disastrous to both—not the least so to him who serves—and would sweep away civilization with it. But whether the change be for good or ill, it is upon us, beyond our power to alter, and, therefore, to

be accepted and made the best of. It is a waste of time to criticize the inevitable.

It is easy to see how the change has come. One illustration will serve for almost every phase of the cause. In the manufacture of products we have the whole story. It applies to all combinations of human industry, as stimulated and enlarged by the inventions of this scientific age. Formerly, articles were manufactured at the domestic hearth, or in small shops which formed part of the household. The master and his apprentices worked side by side, the latter living with the master, and therefore subject to the same conditions. When these apprentices rose to be masters, there was little or no change in their mode of life, and they, in turn, educated succeeding apprentices in the same routine. There was, substantially, social equality, and even political equality, for those engaged in industrial pursuits had then little or no voice in the State.

The inevitable result of such a mode of manufacture was crude articles at high prices. To-day the world obtains commodities of excellent quality at prices which even the preceding generation would have deemed incredible. In the commercial world similar causes have produced similar results, and the race is benefited thereby. The poor enjoy what the rich could not before afford. What were the luxuries have become the necessities of life. The laborer has now more comforts than the farmer had a few generations ago. The farmer has more luxuries than the landlord had, and is more richly clad and better housed. The landlord has books and pictures rarer and appointments more artistic than the king could then obtain.

The price we pay for this salutary change is, no doubt, great. We assemble thousands of operatives in the factory, and in the mine, of whom the employer can know little or nothing, and to whom he is little better than a myth. All intercourse between them is at an end. Rigid castes are formed, and, as usual, mutual

ignorance breeds mutual distrust. Each caste is without sympathy with the other, and ready to credit anything disparaging in regard to it. Under the law of competition, the employer of thousands is forced into the strictest economies, among which the rates paid to labor figure prominently, and often there is friction between the employer and the employed, between capital and labor, between rich and poor. Human society loses homogeneity.

The price which society pays for the law of competition, like the price it pays for cheap comforts and luxuries, is also great; but the advantages of this law are also greater still than its cost—for it is to this law that we owe our wonderful material development, which brings improved conditions in its train. But, whether the law be benign or not, we must say of it, as we say of the change in the conditions of men to which we have referred: It is here; we cannot evade it; no substitutes for it have been found; and while the law may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for the race, because it insures the survival of the fittest in every department. We accept and welcome, therefore, as conditions to which we must accommodate ourselves, great inequality of environment; the concentration of business, industrial and commercial, in the hands of a few; and the law of competition between these, as being not only beneficial, but essential to the future progress of the race. Having accepted these, it follows that there must be great scope for the exercise of special ability in the merchant and in the manufacturer who has to conduct affairs upon a great scale. That this talent for organization and management is rare among men is proved by the fact that it invariably secures enormous rewards for its possessor, no matter where or under what laws or conditions. The experienced in affairs always rate the MAN whose services can be obtained as a partner as not only the first consideration, but such as render the question of his capital scarcely worth considering: for able men soon create capital; in the hands of those without the special talent required, capital soon takes wings. Such men become interested in firms or corporations using millions; and, estimating only simple interest to be made upon the capital invested, it is inevitable that their income must exceed their expenditure and that they must, therefore, accumulate wealth. Nor is there any middle ground which such men can occupy, because the great manufactur-

ing or commercial concern which does not earn at least interest upon its capital soon becomes bankrupt. It must either go forward or fall behind; to stand still is impossible. It is a condition essential to its successful operation that it should be thus far profitable, and even that, in addition to interest on capital, it should make profit. It is a law, as certain as any of the others named, that men possessed of this peculiar talent for affairs, under the free play of economic forces must, of necessity, soon be in receipt of more revenue than can be judiciously expended upon themselves; and this law is as beneficial for the race as the others.

Objections to the foundations upon which society is based are not in order, because the condition of the race is better with these than it has been with any other which has been tried. Of the effect of any new substitutes proposed we cannot be sure. The Socialist or Anarchist who seeks to overturn present conditions is to be regarded as attacking the foundation upon which civilization itself rests, for civilization took its start from the day when the capable, industrious workman said to his incompetent and lazy fellow, "If thou dost not sow, thou shalt not reap," and thus ended primitive Communism by separating the drones from the bees. One who studies this subject will soon be brought face to face with the conclusion that upon the sacredness of property civilization itself depends—the right of the laborer to his hundred dollars in the savings-bank, and equally the legal right of the millionaire to his millions. Every man must be allowed "to sit under his own vine and fig-tree, with none to make afraid," if human society is to advance, or even to remain so far advanced as it is. To those who propose to substitute Communism for this intense Individualism, the answer therefore is: The race has tried that. All progress from that barbarous day to the present time has resulted from its displacement. Not evil, but good, has come to the race from the accumulation of wealth by those who have had the ability and energy to produce it. But even if we admit for a moment that it might be better for the race to discard its present foundation, Individualism,—that it is a nobler ideal that man should labor, not for himself alone, but in and for a brotherhood of his fellows, and share with them all in common, realizing Swedenborg's idea of heaven, where, as he says, the angels derive their happiness, not from laboring for self, but for each other,—even admit all this, and a sufficient

answer is, This is not evolution, but revolution. It necessitates the changing of human nature itself—a work of eons, even if it were good to change it, which we cannot know.

It is not practicable in our day or in our age. Even if desirable theoretically, it belongs to another and long-succeeding sociological stratum. Our duty is with what is practicable now—with the next step possible in our day and generation. It is criminal to waste our energies in endeavoring to uproot, when all we can profitably accomplish is to bend the universal tree of humanity a little in the direction most favorable to the production of good fruit under existing circumstances. We might as well urge the destruction of the highest existing type of man because he failed to reach our ideal as to favor the destruction of Individualism, Private Property, the Law of Accumulation of Wealth, and the Law of Competition; for these are the highest result of human experience, the soil in which society, so far, has produced the best fruit. Unequally or unjustly, perhaps, as these laws sometimes operate, and imperfect as they appear to the Idealist, they are, nevertheless, like the highest type of man, the best and most valuable of all that humanity has yet accomplished.

We start, then, with a condition of affairs under which the best interests of the race are promoted, but which inevitably gives wealth to the few. Thus far, accepting conditions as they exist, the situation can be surveyed and pronounced good. The question then arises,—and if the foregoing be correct, it is the only question with which we have to deal,—What is the proper mode of administering wealth after the laws upon which civilization is founded have thrown it into the hands of the few? And it is of this great question that I believe I offer the true solution. It will be understood that fortunes are here spoken of, not moderate sums saved by many years of effort, the returns from which are required for the comfortable maintenance and education of families. This is not wealth, but only competence, which it should be the aim of all to acquire, and which it is for the best interests of society should be acquired.

There are but three modes in which surplus wealth can be disposed of. It can be left to the families of the decedents; or it can be bequeathed for public purposes; or, finally, it can be administered by its possessors during their lives. Under the first and second

modes most of the wealth of the world that has reached the few has hitherto been applied. Let us in turn consider each of these modes. The first is the most injudicious. In monarchical countries, the estates and the greatest portion of the wealth are left to the first son, that the vanity of the parent may be gratified by the thought that his name and title are to descend unimpaired to succeeding generations. The condition of this class in Europe to-day teaches the failure of such hopes or ambitions. The successors have become impoverished through their follies, or from the fall in the value of land. Even in Great Britain the strict law of entail has been found inadequate to maintain an hereditary class. Its soil is rapidly passing into the hands of the stranger. Under republican institutions the division of property among the children is much fairer; but the question which forces itself upon thoughtful men in all lands is, Why should men leave great fortunes to their children? If this is done from affection, is it not misguided affection? Observation teaches that, generally speaking, it is not well for the children that they should be so burdened. Neither is it well for the State. Beyond providing for the wife and daughters moderate sources of income, and very moderate allowances indeed, if any, for the sons, men may well hesitate; for it is no longer questionable that great sums bequeathed often work more for the injury than for the good of the recipients. Wise men will soon conclude that, for the best interests of the members of their families, and of the State, such bequests are an improper use of their means.

It is not suggested that men who have failed to educate their sons to earn a livelihood shall cast them adrift in poverty. If any man has seen fit to rear his sons with a view to their living idle lives, or, what is highly commendable, has instilled in them the sentiment that they are in a position to labor for public ends without reference to pecuniary considerations, then, of course, the duty of the parent is to see that such are provided for in moderation. There are instances of millionaires' sons unspoiled by wealth, who, being rich, still perform great services to the community. Such are the very salt of the earth, as valuable as, unfortunately, they are rare. It is not the exception, however, but the rule, that men must regard; and, looking at the usual result of enormous sums conferred upon legatees, the thoughtful man

must shortly say, "I would as soon leave to my son a curse as the almighty dollar," and admit to himself that it is not the welfare of the children, but family pride, which inspires these legacies.

As to the second mode, that of leaving wealth at death for public uses, it may be said that this is only a means for the disposal of wealth, provided a man is content to wait until he is dead before he becomes of much good in the world. Knowledge of the results of legacies bequeathed is not calculated to inspire the brightest hopes of much posthumous good being accomplished by them. The cases are not few in which the real object sought by the testator is not attained, nor are they few in which his real wishes are thwarted. In many cases the bequests are so used as to become only monuments of his folly. It is well to remember that it requires the exercise of not less ability than that which acquires it, to use wealth so as to be really beneficial to the community. Besides this, it may fairly be said that no man is to be extolled for doing what he cannot help doing, nor is he to be thanked by the community to which he only leaves wealth at death. Men who leave vast sums in this way may fairly be thought men who would not have left it at all had they been able to take it with them. The memories of such cannot be held in grateful remembrance, for there is no grace in their gifts. It is not to be wondered at that such bequests seem so generally to lack the blessing.

The growing disposition to tax more and more heavily large estates left at death is a cheering indication of the growth of a salutary change in public opinion. The State of Pennsylvania now takes—subject to some exceptions—one tenth of the property left by its citizens. The budget presented in the British Parliament the other day proposes to increase the death duties; and, most significant of all, the new tax is to be a graduated one. Of all forms of taxation this seems the wisest. Men who continue hoarding great sums all their lives, the proper use of which for public ends would work good to the community from which it chiefly came, should be made to feel that the community, in the form of the State, cannot thus be deprived of its proper share. By taxing estates heavily at death the State marks its condemnation of the selfish millionaire's unworthy life.

It is desirable that nations should go much further in this direction. Indeed, it is difficult to set bounds to

the share of a rich man's estate which should go at his death to the public through the agency of the State, and by all means such taxes should be graduated, beginning at nothing upon moderate sums to dependents, and increasing rapidly as the amounts swell, until of the millionaire's hoard, as of Shylock's, at least

The other half

Comes to the privy coffer of the State.

This policy would work powerfully to induce the rich man to attend to the administration of wealth during his life, which is the end that society should always have in view, as being by far the most fruitful for the people. Nor need it be feared that this policy would sap the root of enterprise and render men less anxious to accumulate, for, to the class whose ambition it is to leave great fortunes and to be talked about after their death, it will attract even more attention, and, indeed, be a somewhat nobler ambition, to have enormous sums paid over to the State from their fortunes.

There remains, then, only one mode of using great fortunes; but in this we have the true antidote for the temporary unequal distribution of wealth, the reconciliation of the rich and the poor—a reign of harmony, another ideal, differing, indeed, from that of the Communist in requiring only the further evolution of existing conditions, not the total overthrow of our civilization. It is founded upon the present most intense Individualism, and the race is prepared to put it in practice by degrees whenever it pleases. Under its sway we shall have an ideal State, in which the surplus wealth of the few will become, in the best sense, the property of the many, because administered for the common good; and this wealth, passing through the hands of the few, can be made a much more potent force for the elevation of our race than if distributed in small sums to the people themselves. Even the poorest can be made to see this, and to agree that great sums gathered by some of their fellow-citizens and spent for public purposes, from which the masses reap the principal benefit, are more valuable to them than if scattered among themselves in trifling amounts through the course of many years.

If we consider the results which flow from the Cooper Institute, for instance, to the best portion of the race in New York not possessed of means, and

compare these with those which would have ensued for the good of the masses from an equal sum distributed by Mr. Cooper in his lifetime in the form of wages, which is the highest form of distribution, being for work done and not for charity, we can form some estimate of the possibilities for the improvement of the race which lie embedded in the present law of the accumulation of wealth. Much of this sum, if distributed in small quantities among the people, would have been wasted in the indulgence of appetite, some of it in excess, and it may be doubted whether even the part put to the best use, that of adding to the comforts of the home, would have yielded results for the race, as a race, at all comparable to those which are flowing and are to flow from the Cooper Institute from generation to generation. Let the advocate of violent or radical change ponder well this thought.

We might even go so far as to take another instance—that of Mr. Tilden's bequest of five millions of dollars for a free library in the city of New York; but in referring to this one cannot help saying involuntarily: How much better if Mr. Tilden had devoted the last years of his own life to the proper administration of this immense sum; in which case neither legal contest nor any other cause of delay could have interfered with his aims. But let us assume that Mr. Tilden's millions finally become the means of giving to this city a noble public library, where the treasures of the world contained in books will be open to all forever, without money and without price. Considering the good of that part of the race which congregates in and around Manhattan Island, would its permanent benefit have been better promoted had these millions been allowed to circulate in small sums through the hands of the masses? Even the most strenuous advocate of Communism must entertain a doubt upon this subject. Most of those who think will probably entertain no doubt whatever.

Poor and restricted are our opportunities in this life, narrow our horizon, our best work most imperfect; but rich men should be thankful for one inestimable boon. They have it in their power during their lives to busy themselves in organizing benefactions from which the masses of their fellows will derive lasting advantage, and thus dignify their own lives. The highest life is probably to be reached, not by such imitation of the life of Christ as Count Tolstoi gives us, but, while animated by Christ's spirit, by recognizing

the changed conditions of this age, and adopting modes of expressing this spirit suitable to the changed conditions under which we live, still laboring for the good of our fellows, which was the essence of his life and teaching, but laboring in a different manner.

This, then, is held to be the duty of the man of wealth: To set an example of modest, unostentatious living, shunning display or extravagance; to provide moderately for the legitimate wants of those dependent upon him; and, after doing so, to consider all surplus revenues which come to him simply as trust funds, which he is called upon to administer, and strictly bound as a matter of duty to administer in the manner which, in his judgment, is best calculated to produce the most beneficial results for the community—the man of wealth thus becoming the mere trustee and agent for his poorer brethren, bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer, doing for them better than they would or could do for themselves.

We are met here with the difficulty of determining what are moderate sums to leave to members of the family; what is modest, unostentatious living; what is the test of extravagance. There must be different standards for different conditions. The answer is that it is as impossible to name exact amounts or actions as it is to define good manners, good taste, or the rules of propriety; but, nevertheless, these are verities, well known, although indefinable. Public sentiment is quick to know and to feel what offends these. So in the case of wealth. The rule in regard to good taste in dress of men or women applies here. Whatever makes one conspicuous offends the canon. If any family be chiefly known for display, for extravagance in home, table, or equipage, for enormous sums ostentatiously spent in any form upon itself—if these be its chief distinctions, we have no difficulty in estimating its nature or culture. So likewise in regard to the use or abuse of its surplus wealth, or to generous, free-handed coöperation in good public uses, or to unabated efforts to accumulate and hoard to the last, or whether they administer or bequeath. The verdict rests with the best and most enlightened public sentiment. The community will surely judge, and its judgments will not often be wrong.

The best uses to which surplus wealth can be put have already been indicated. Those who would administer wisely must, indeed, be wise; for one of the

serious obstacles to the improvement of our race is indiscriminate charity. It were better for mankind that the millions of the rich were thrown into the sea than so spent as to encourage the slothful, the drunken, the unworthy. Of every thousand dollars spent in so-called charity to-day, it is probable that nine hundred and fifty dollars is unwisely spent—so spent, indeed, as to produce the very evils which it hopes to mitigate or cure. A well-known writer of philosophic books admitted the other day that he had given a quarter of a dollar to a man who approached him as he was coming to visit the house of his friend. He knew nothing of the habits of this beggar, knew not the use that would be made of this money, although he had every reason to suspect that it would be spent improperly. This man professed to be a disciple of Herbert Spencer; yet the quarter-dollar given that night will probably work more injury than all the money will do good which its thoughtless donor will ever be able to give in true charity. He only gratified his own feelings, saved himself from annoyance—and this was probably one of the most selfish and very worst actions of his life, for in all respects he is most worthy.

In bestowing charity, the main consideration should be to help those who will help themselves; to provide part of the means by which those who desire to improve may do so; to give those who desire to rise the aids by which they may rise; to assist, but rarely or never to do all. Neither the individual nor the race is improved by almsgiving. Those worthy of assistance, except in rare cases, seldom require assistance. The really valuable men of the race never do, except in case of accident or sudden change. Every one has, of course, cases of individuals brought to his own knowledge where temporary assistance can do genuine good, and these he will not overlook. But the amount which can be wisely given by the individual for individuals is necessarily limited by his lack of knowledge of the circumstances connected with each. He is the only true reformer who is as careful and as anxious not to aid the unworthy as he is to aid the worthy, and, perhaps, even more so, for in almsgiving more injury is probably done by rewarding vice than by relieving virtue.

The rich man is thus almost restricted to following the examples of Peter Cooper, Enoch Pratt of Baltimore, Mr. Pratt of Brooklyn, Senator Stanford, and others, who know that the best means of benefiting

the community is to place within its reach the ladders upon which the aspiring can rise—free libraries, parks, and means of recreation, by which men are helped in body and mind; works of art, certain to give pleasure and improve the public taste; and public institutions of various kinds, which will improve the general condition of the people; in this manner returning their surplus wealth to the mass of their fellows in the forms best calculated to do them lasting good.

Thus is the problem of rich and poor to be solved. The laws of accumulation will be left free, the laws of distribution free. Individualism will continue, but the millionaire will be but a trustee for the poor, intrusted for a season with a great part of the increased wealth of the community, but administering it for the community far better than it could or would have done for itself. The best minds will thus have reached a stage in the development of the race in which it is clearly seen that there is no mode of disposing of surplus wealth creditable to thoughtful and earnest men into whose hands it flows, save by using it year by year for the general good. This day already dawns. Men may die without incurring the pity of their fellows, still sharers in great business enterprises from which their capital cannot be or has not been withdrawn, and which is left chiefly at death for public uses; yet the day is not far distant when the man who dies leaving behind him millions of available wealth, which was free to him to administer during life, will pass away “unwept, unhonored, and unsung,” no matter to what uses he leaves the dross which he cannot take with him. Of such as these the public verdict will then be: “The man who dies thus rich dies disgraced.”

Such, in my opinion is the true gospel concerning wealth, obedience to which is destined some day to solve the problem of the rich and the poor, and to bring “Peace on earth, among men good will.”

#### SEE ALSO

Protestantism in America; Material Culture; Popular Culture

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Andrew Carnegie, “The Gospel of Wealth, 1889,” in *The Gospel of Wealth, and Other Timely Essays*, ed. Edward C. Kirkland, Harvard University Press, 1962. Published originally in the *North American Review* CXLVIII, June 1889, and CXLIX, December 1889.



H. P. Blavatsky, excerpt from  
“Theosophy and the Theosophical Society:  
The Meaning of the Name” (1889)

*Born in 1831, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky founded the Theosophical Movement and defended it in a series of late-nineteenth-century publications. She defined theosophy as a “Divine Knowledge or Science” that sought to reconcile all religions and sects by tapping into the “divine wisdom”—or the one truth—upon which all religions are based.*

I.

*Theosophy and the Theosophical Society:  
The Meaning of the Name*

ENQUIRER. Theosophy and its doctrines are often referred to as a newfangled religion. Is it a religion?

THEOSOPHIST. It is not. Theosophy is Divine Knowledge or Science.

ENQ. What is the real meaning of the term?

THEO. “Divine Wisdom,” *θεοσοφία* (Theosophial) or Wisdom of the gods, as *θεογονία* (theogonia), genealogy of the gods. The word *θεός* means a god in Greek, one of the divine beings, certainly not “God” in the sense attached in our day to the term. Therefore, it is not “Wisdom of God,” as translated by some, but *Divine Wisdom* such as that possessed by the gods.

ENQ. What is the origin of the name?

THEO. It comes to us from the Alexandrian philosophers, called lovers of truth, Philaletheians, from *φιλ* (phil) “loving,” and *ἀλήθεια* (aletheia) “truth.” The name Theosophy dates from the third century of our era, and began with Ammonius Saccas and his disciples, who started the Eclectic Theosophical system.

ENQ. What was the object of this system?

THEO. First of all to inculcate certain great moral truths upon its disciples, and all those who were “lovers of the truth.” Hence the motto adopted by the Theosophical Society: “There is no religion higher than truth.” The chief aim of the Founders

of the Eclectic Theosophical School was one of the three objects of its modern successor, the Theosophical Society, namely, to reconcile all religions, sects and nations under a common system of ethics, based on eternal verities.

ENQ. What have you to show that this is not an impossible dream; and that all the world’s religions *are* based on the one and the same truth?

THEO. Their comparative study and analysis. “All the old worships indicate the existence of a single theosophy anterior to them. ‘The key that is to open one must open all; otherwise it cannot be the right key.’”

*The Policy of the Theosophical Society*

ENQ. In the days of Ammonius there were several ancient great religions, and numerous were the sects in Egypt and Palestine alone. How could he reconcile them?

THEO. By doing that which we again try to do now. The Neo-Platonists were a large body, and belonged to various religious philosophies; so do our Theosophists. In those days, the Jew Aristobulus affirmed that the ethics of Aristotle represented the *esoteric* teachings of the Law of Moses; Philo Judaeus endeavoured to reconcile the *Pentateuch* with the Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy; and Josephus proved that the Essenes of Carmel were simply the copyists and followers of the Egyptian Therapeutae (the healers). So it is in our day. We can show the line of descent of every Christian religion, as of every, even the smallest, sect. The latter are the minor twigs or shoots grown on the larger branches; but shoots and branches spring from the same trunk—the WISDOM RELIGION. To prove this was the aim of Ammonius, who endeavoured to induce Gentiles and Christians, Jews and Idolaters, to lay aside their contentions and strifes, remembering only that they were all in possession of

the same truth under various vestments, and were all the children of a common mother. This is the aim of Theosophy likewise.

ENQ. What are your authorities for saying this of the ancient Theosophists of Alexandria?

THEO. An almost countless number of well-known writers. Mosheim, one of them, says that:

Ammonius taught that the religion of the multitude went hand-in-hand with philosophy, and with her had shared the fate of being by degrees corrupted and obscured with mere human conceits, superstition, and lies; that it ought, therefore, to be brought back to its original purity by purging it of this dross and expounding it upon philosophical principles; and that the whole which Christ had in view was to reinstate and restore to its primitive integrity the Wisdom of the ancients—to reduce within bounds the universally-prevailing dominion of superstition—and in part to correct, and in part to exterminate the various errors that had found their way into the different popular religions.

This, again, is precisely what the modern Theosophists say. Only while the great Philaletheian was supported and helped in the policy he pursued by two Church Fathers, Clement and Athenagoras, by all the learned Rabbis of the Synagogue, the Academy and the Groves, and while he taught a common doctrine for all, we, his followers on the same line, receive no recognition, but, on the contrary, are abused and persecuted. People 1,500 years ago are thus shown to have been more tolerant than they are in this *enlightened* century.

ENQ. Was he encouraged and supported by the Church because, notwithstanding his heresies, Ammonius taught Christianity and was a Christian?

THEO. Not at all. He was born a Christian, but never accepted Church Christianity. As said of him by the same writer:

He had but to propound his instructions “according to the ancient pillars of Hermes, which Plato and Pythagoras knew before, and from them constituted their philosophy.” Finding the same sentiments in the prologue of the Gospel according to St. John, he very properly supposed that the purpose of Jesus was to restore the great doctrine of Wisdom in its primitive in-

tegrity. The narratives of the Bible and the stories of the gods, he considered to be “allegories illustrative of the truth, or else fables to be rejected.”

### *The Wisdom-Religion Esoteric in All Ages*

ENQ. Since Ammonius never committed anything to writing, how can one feel sure that such were his teachings?

THEO. Neither did Buddha, Pythagoras, Confucius, Orpheus, Socrates, or even Jesus, leave behind them any writings. Yet most of these are historical personages, and their teachings have all survived. The disciples of Ammonius (among whom Origen and Herennios) wrote treatises and explained his ethics. Moreover, his pupils—Origen, Plotinus, and Longinus (counsellor of the famous Queen Zenobia)—have all left voluminous records of the Philaletheian System—so far, at all events, as their public profession of faith was known, for the school was divided into exoteric and *esoteric* teachings.

ENQ. How have the latter tenets reached our day, since you hold that what is properly called the WISDOM-RELIGION was esoteric?

THEO. The WISDOM-RELIGION was ever one, and being the last word of possible human knowledge, was, therefore, carefully preserved. It preceded by long ages the Alexandrian Theosophists, reached the modern, and will survive every other religion and philosophy.

ENQ. Where and by whom was it so preserved?

THEO. Among Initiates of every country; among profound seekers after truth—their disciples; and in those parts of the world where such topics have always been most valued and pursued: in India, Central Asia, and Persia.

ENQ. Can you give me some proofs of its esotericism?

THEO. The best proof you can have of the fact is that every ancient religious, or rather philosophical, cult consisted of an esoteric or secret teaching, and an exoteric (outward public) worship. Furthermore, it is a well-known fact that the MYSTERIES of the ancients comprised with every nation the “greater” (secret) and “Lesser” (public) MYSTERIES—*e.g.*, in the celebrated solemnities called the *Eleusinia*, in Greece. From the Hierophants of Samothrace, Egypt, and the initiated Brahmins of the India of old, down to the later Hebrew Rabbis, all pre-

served, for fear of profanation, their real *bona fide* beliefs secret. The Jewish Rabbis called their secular religious series the *Merkabah* (the exterior body), "the vehicle," or, *the covering which contains the hidden soul—i.e.*, their highest secret knowledge. Not one of the ancient nations ever imparted through its priests its real philosophical secrets to the masses, but allotted to the latter only the husks. Northern Buddhism has its "greater" and its "lesser" vehicle, known as the *Mahayana* and the *Hinayana* Schools. Pythagoras called his *Gnosis* "the knowledge of things that are," and preserved that knowledge for his pledged disciples only: for those who could digest such mental food and feel satisfied; and he pledged them to silence and secrecy. Occult alphabets and secret ciphers are the development of the old Egyptian *hieratic* writings, the secret of which was, in the days of old, in the possession only of the Hierogrammatists, or initiated Egyptian priests. Ammonius Saccas, as his biographers tell us, bound his pupils by oath not to divulge *his higher doctrines* except to those who had already been instructed in preliminary knowledge, and who were also bound by a pledge. Finally, do we not find the same even in early Christianity, among the Gnostics, and even in the teachings of Christ? Did he not speak to the multitudes in parables which had a twofold meaning, and explain his reasons only to his disciples? "Unto you," he says, "it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables" (*Mark*, iv, II). "The Essenes of Judea and Carmel made similar distinctions, dividing their adherents into neophytes, brethren and the *perfect*," or those initiated. Examples might be brought from every country to this effect.

ENQ. Can you attain the "Secret Wisdom" simply by study?

THEO. I think not. Ancient Theosophists claimed, and so do the modern, that the infinite cannot be known by the finite—*i.e.*, sensed by the finite Self—but that the divine essence could be communicated to the higher spiritual Self in a state of ecstasy.

ENQ. What is your explanation of it?

THEO. Real ecstasy was defined by Plotinus as "the liberation of the mind from its finite consciousness, becoming one and identified with the infinite." It is identical with that state which is known in India as

*Samadhi*. The latter is practised by the Yogis, who facilitate it physically by the greatest abstinence in food and drink, and mentally by an incessant endeavour to purify and elevate the mind. Meditation is silent and unuttered prayer, or, as Plato expressed it, "the ardent turning of the soul toward the divine; not to ask any particular good (as in the common meaning of prayer), but for good itself—for the universal Supreme Good" of which we are a part on earth, and out of the essence of which we have all emerged. Therefore, adds Plato, "remain silent in the presence of the *divine ones*, till they remove the clouds from thy eyes and enable thee to see by the light which issues from themselves, not what appears as good to thee, but what is intrinsically good."

ENQ. Theosophy, then, is not, as held by some, a newly devised scheme?

THEO. Only ignorant people can thus refer to it. It is as old as the world, in its teachings and ethics, if not in name, as it is also the broadest and most catholic system among all.

ENQ. How comes it, then, that Theosophy has remained so unknown to the nations of the Western Hemisphere? Why should it have been a sealed book to races confessedly the most cultured and advanced?

THEO. We believe there were nations as cultured in days of old and certainly more spiritually "advanced" than we are. But there are several reasons for this willing ignorance. One of them was given by St. Paul to the cultured Athenians—a loss, for long centuries, of real spiritual insight, and even interest, owing to their too great devotion to things of sense and their long slavery to the dead letter of dogma and ritualism. But the strongest reason for it lies in the fact that real Theosophy has ever been kept secret.

ENQ. You have brought forward proofs that such secrecy has existed; but what was the real cause for it?

THEO. The causes for it were: *First*, the perversity of average human nature and its selfishness, always tending to the gratification of *personal* desires to the detriment of neighbours and next of kin. Such people could never be entrusted with *divine* secrets. *Secondly*, their unreliability to keep the sacred and divine knowledge from desecration. It is the latter

that led to the perversion of the most sublime truths and symbols, and to the gradual transformation of things spiritual into anthropomorphic, concrete, and gross imagery—in other words, to the dwarfing of the god-idea and to idolatry.

### *Theosophy Is Not Buddhism*

ENQ. You are often spoken of as “Esoteric Buddhists.” Are you then all followers of Gautama Buddha?

THEO. No more than musicians are all followers of Wagner. Some of us are Buddhists by religion; yet there are far more Hindus and Brahmins than Buddhists among us, and more Christian-born Europeans and Americans than *converted* Buddhists. The mistake has arisen from a misunderstanding of the real meaning of the title of Mr. Sinnett’s excellent work, *Esoteric Buddhism*, which last word ought to have been spelt *with one, instead of two, d’s*, as then *Budhism* would have meant what it was intended for, merely “Wisdomism” (Bodha, bodhi, “intelligence,” “wisdom”) instead of *Buddhism*, Gautama’s religious philosophy. Theosophy, as already said, is the WISDOM-RELIGION.

ENQ. What is the difference between Buddhism, the religion founded by the Prince of Kapilavastu, and *Budhism*, the “Wisdomism” which you say is synonymous with Theosophy?

THEO. Just the same difference as there is between the secret teachings of Christ, which are called “the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven,” and the later ritualism and dogmatic theology of the Churches and Sects. Buddha means the “Enlightened” by *Bodha*, or understanding, Wisdom. This has passed root and branch into the *esoteric* teachings that Gautama imparted to his chosen *Arhats* only.

ENQ. But some Orientalists deny that Buddha ever taught any esoteric doctrine at all?

THEO. They may as well deny that Nature has any hidden secrets for the men of science. Farther on I will prove it by Buddha’s conversation with his disciple Ananda. His esoteric teachings were simply the *Gupta-Vidya* (secret knowledge) of the ancient Brahmins, the key to which their modern successors have, with few exceptions, completely lost.

And this *Vidya* has passed into what is now known as the *inner* teachings of the *Mahayana* school of Northern Buddhism. Those who deny it are simply ignorant pretenders to Orientalism.

ENQ. But are not the ethics of Theosophy identical with those taught by Buddha?

THEO. Certainly, because these ethics are the soul of the Wisdom-Religion, and were once the common property of the initiates of all nations. But Buddha was the first to embody these lofty ethics in his public teachings, and to make them the foundation and the very essence of his public system. It is herein that lies the immense difference between *exoteric* Buddhism and every other religion. For while in other religions ritualism and dogma hold the first and most important place, in Buddhism it is the ethics which have always been the most insisted upon. This accounts for the resemblance, amounting almost to identity, between the ethics of Theosophy and those of the religion of Buddha.

ENQ. Are there any great points of difference?

THEO. One great distinction between Theosophy and *exoteric* Buddhism is that the latter entirely denies (a) the existence of any Deity, and (b) any conscious *post-mortem* life, or even any self-conscious surviving individuality in man. And it is so, if we refer only to Buddha’s public teachings; the reason for such reticence on his part I will give farther on. But the schools of the Northern Buddhist Church, established in those countries to which his initiated *Arhats* retired after the Master’s death, teach all that is now called Theosophical doctrines, because they form part of the knowledge of the initiates. Yet Theosophy is not Buddhism.

### SEE ALSO

Buddhism in America; New Age; New Religious Traditions

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H. P. Blavatsky, “Theosophy and the Theosophical Society: The Meaning of the Name,” in *The Key to Theosophy: An Abridgement*, ed. Joy Mills, copyright © Quest Books/The Theosophical Publishing House, 1972. Original complete edition, 1889.

Swami Vivekananda,  
Remarks at the World's Parliament of Religions,  
Chicago (September 11, 1893)

*A relatively unknown monk in India before 1893, Swami Vivekananda gained immediate fame after his participation at the World's Parliament of Religions held that year at the World's Fair in Chicago. There and in later public appearances he acted as both a religious ambassador for Hinduism and a political ambassador for India, attempting to interpret India's spiritual culture to an American audience.*

Sisters and Brothers of America,

It fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the warm and cordial welcome which you have given us. I thank you in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world; I thank you in the name of the mother of religions; and I thank you in the name of millions and millions of Hindu people of all classes and sects.

My thanks, also, to some of the speakers on this platform who, referring to the delegates from the Orient, have told you that these men from far-off nations may well claim the honour of bearing to different lands the idea of toleration. I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. I am proud to tell you that we have gathered in our bosom the purest remnant of the Israelites, who came to Southern India and took refuge with us in the very year in which their holy temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. I am proud to belong to the religion which has sheltered and is still fostering the remnant of the grand Zoroastrian nation. I will quote to you, brethren, a few lines from a hymn which I remember to have repeated from my earliest boyhood, which is every day repeated by millions of human beings: "*As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take*

*through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee.*"

The present convention, which is one of the most august assemblies ever held, is in itself a vindication, a declaration to the world of the wonderful doctrine preached in the Gita: "*Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to me.*" Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilisation and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.

**Paper on Hinduism read at the Parliament  
on 19th September, 1893**

Three religions now stand in the world which have come down to us from time prehistoric—Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and Judaism. They have all received tremendous shocks and all of them prove by their survival their internal strength. But while Judaism failed to absorb Christianity and was driven out of its place of birth by its all-conquering daughter, and a handful of Parsees is all that remains to tell the tale of their grand religion, sect after sect arose in India and seemed to shake the religion of the Vedas to its very foundations, but like the waters of the seashore in a tremendous earthquake it receded only for a while, only to return in an all-absorbing flood, a thousand times more vigorous, and when the tumult of the rush was over, these sects were all sucked in, ab-

sorbed, and assimilated into the immense body of the mother faith.

From the high spiritual flights of the Vedanta philosophy, of which the latest discoveries of science seem like echoes, to the low ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Buddhists, and the atheism of the Jains, each and all have a place in the Hindu's religion.

Where then, the question arises, where is the common centre to which all these widely diverging radii converge? Where is the common basis upon which all these seemingly hopeless contradictions rest? And this is the question I shall attempt to answer.

The Hindus have received their religion through revelation, the Vedas. They hold that the Vedas are without beginning and without end. It may sound ludicrous to this audience, how a book can be without beginning or end. But by the Vedas no books are meant. They mean the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times. Just as the law of gravitation existed before its discovery, and would exist if all humanity forgot it, so is it with the laws that govern the spiritual world. The moral, ethical, and spiritual relations between soul and soul and between individual spirits and the Father of all spirits, were there before their discovery, and would remain even if we forgot them.

The discoverers of these laws are called Rishis, and we honour them as perfected beings. I am glad to tell this audience that some of the very greatest of them were women. Here it may be said that these laws as laws may be without end, but they must have had a beginning. The Vedas teach us that creation is without beginning or end. Science is said to have proved that the sum total of cosmic energy is always the same. Then, if there was a time when nothing existed, where was all this manifested energy? Some say it was in a potential form in God. In that case God is sometimes potential and sometimes kinetic, which would make Him mutable. Everything mutable is a compound, and everything compound must undergo that change which is called destruction. So God would die, which is absurd. Therefore there never was a time when there was no creation.

If I may be allowed to use a simile, creation and creator are two lines, without beginning and without end, running parallel to each other. God is the ever active providence, by whose power systems after sys-

tems are being evolved out of chaos, made to run for a time and again destroyed. This is what the Brâhmin boy repeats every day: "*The sun and the moon, the Lord created like the suns and moons of previous cycles.*" And this agrees with modern science.

Here I stand and if I shut my eyes, and try to conceive my existence, "I," "I," "I," what is the idea before me? The idea of a body. Am I, then, nothing but a combination of material substances? The Vedas declare, "No." I am a spirit living in a body. I am not the body. The body will die, but I shall not die. Here am I in this body; it will fall, but I shall go on living. I had also a past. The soul was not created, for creation means a combination which means a certain future dissolution. If then the soul was created, it must die. Some are born happy, enjoy perfect health, with beautiful body, mental vigour and all wants supplied. Others are born miserable, some are without hands or feet, others again are idiots and only drag on a wretched existence. Why, if they are all created, why does a just and merciful God create one happy and another unhappy, why is He so partial? Nor would it mend matters in the least to hold that those who are miserable in this life will be happy in a future one. Why should a man be miserable even here in the reign of a just and merciful God?

In the second place, the idea of a creator God does not explain the anomaly, but simply expresses the cruel fiat of an all-powerful being. There must have been causes, then, before his birth, to make a man miserable or happy and those were his past actions.

Are not all the tendencies of the mind and the body accounted for by inherited aptitude? Here are two parallel lines of existence—one of the mind, the other of matter. If matter and its transformations answer for all that we have, there is no necessity for supposing the existence of a soul. But it cannot be proved that thought has been evolved out of matter, and if a philosophical monism is inevitable, spiritual monism is certainly logical and no less desirable than a materialistic monism; but neither of these is necessary here.

We cannot deny that bodies acquire certain tendencies from heredity, but those tendencies only mean the physical configuration, through which a peculiar mind alone can act in a peculiar way. There are other tendencies peculiar to a soul caused by its past actions. And a soul with a certain tendency would by the laws of affinity take birth in a body which is the

fittest instrument for the display of that tendency. This is in accord with science, for science wants to explain everything by habit, and habit is got through repetitions. So repetitions are necessary to explain the natural habits of a new-born soul. And since they were not obtained in this present life, they must have come down from past lives.

There is another suggestion. Taking all these for granted, how is it that I do not remember anything of my past life? This can be easily explained. I am now speaking English. It is not my mother tongue, in fact no words of my mother tongue are now present in my consciousness; but let me try to bring them up, and they rush in. That shows that consciousness is only the surface of the mental ocean, and within its depths are stored up all our experiences. Try and struggle, they would come up and you would be conscious even of your past life.

This is direct and demonstrative evidence. Verification is the perfect proof of a theory, and here is the challenge thrown to the world by the Rishis. We have discovered the secret by which the very depths of the ocean of memory can be stirred up—try it and you would get a complete reminiscence of your past life.

So then the Hindu believes that he is a spirit. Him the sword cannot pierce—him the fire cannot burn—him the water cannot melt—him the air cannot dry. The Hindu believes that every soul is a circle whose circumference is nowhere, but whose centre is located in the body, and that death means the change of this centre from body to body. Nor is the soul bound by the conditions of matter. In its very essence it is free, unbounded, holy, pure, and perfect. But somehow or other it finds itself tied down to matter, and thinks of itself as matter.

Why should the free, perfect, and pure being be thus under the thralldom of matter, is the next question. How can the perfect soul be deluded into the belief that it is imperfect? We have been told that the Hindus shirk the question and say that no such question can be there. Some thinkers want to answer it by positing one or more quasi-perfect beings, and use big scientific names to fill up the gap. But naming is not explaining. The question remains the same. How can the perfect become the quasi-perfect; how can the pure, the absolute, change even a microscopic particle of its nature? But the Hindu is sincere. He does not want to take shelter under sophistry. He is brave

enough to face the question in a manly fashion; and his answer is: "I do not know. I do not know how the perfect being, the soul, came to think of itself as imperfect, as joined to and conditioned by matter." But the fact is a fact for all that. It is a fact in everybody's consciousness that one thinks of oneself as the body. The Hindu does not attempt to explain why one thinks one is the body. The answer that it is the will of God is no explanation. This is nothing more than what the Hindu says, "I do not know."

Well, then, the human soul is eternal and immortal, perfect and infinite, and death means only a change of centre from one body to another. The present is determined by our past actions, and the future by the present. The soul will go on evolving up or reverting back from birth to birth and death to death. But here is another question: Is man a tiny boat in a tempest, raised one moment on the foamy crest of a billow and dashed down into a yawning chasm the next, rolling to and fro at the mercy of good and bad actions—a powerless, helpless wreck in an ever-raging, ever-rushing, uncompromising current of cause and effect; a little moth placed under the wheel of causation which rolls on crushing everything in its way and waits not for the widow's tears or the orphan's cry? The heart sinks at the idea, yet this is the law of Nature. Is there no hope? Is there no escape?—was the cry that went up from the bottom of the heart of despair. It reached the throne of mercy, and words of hope and consolation came down and inspired a Vedic sage, and he stood up before the world and in trumpet voice proclaimed the glad tidings: "Hear, ye children of immortal bliss! even ye that reside in higher spheres! I have found the Ancient One who is beyond all darkness, all delusion: knowing Him alone you shall be saved from death over again." "Children of immortal bliss"—what a sweet, what a hopeful name! Allow me to call you, brethren, by that sweet name—heirs of immortal bliss—yea, the Hindu refuses to call you sinners. Ye are the Children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth—sinners! It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter.

Thus it is that the Vedas proclaim not a dreadful

combination of unforgiving laws, not an endless prison of cause and effect, but that at the head of all these laws, in and through every particle of matter and force, stands One "by whose command the wind blows, the fire burns, the clouds rain, and death stalks Upon the earth."

And what is His nature?

He is everywhere, the pure and formless One, the Almighty and the All-merciful. "Thou art our father, Thou art our mother, Thou art our beloved friend, Thou art the source of all strength; give us strength. Thou art He that beareth the burdens of the universe; help me bear the little burden of this life." Thus sang the Rishis of the Vedas. And how to worship Him? Through love. "He is to be worshipped as the one beloved, dearer than everything in this and the next life."

This is the doctrine of love declared in the Vedas, and let us see how it is fully developed and taught by Krishna, whom the Hindus believe to have been God incarnate on earth.

He taught that a man ought to live in this world like a lotus leaf, which grows in water but is never moistened by water; so a man ought to live in the world—his heart to God and his hands to work.

It is good to love God for hope of reward in this or the next world, but it is better to love God for love's sake, and the prayer goes: "Lord, I do not want wealth, nor children, nor learning. If it be Thy will, I shall go from birth to birth, but grant me this, that I may love Thee without the hope of reward—love unselfishly for love's sake." One of the disciples of Krishna, the then Emperor of India, was driven from his kingdom by his enemies and had to take shelter with his queen in a forest in the Himalayas, and there one day the queen asked him how it was that he, the most virtuous of men, should suffer so much misery. Yudhishtira answered, "Behold, my queen, the Himalayas, how grand and beautiful they are; I love them. They do not give me anything, but my nature is to love the grand, the beautiful, therefore I love them. Similarly, I love the Lord. He is the source of all beauty, of all sublimity. He is the only object to be loved; my nature is to love Him, and therefore I love. I do not pray for anything; I do not ask for anything. Let Him place me wherever He likes. I must love Him for love's sake. I cannot trade in love."

The Vedas teach that the soul is divine, only held in

the bondage of matter; perfection will be reached when this bond will burst, and the word they use for it is therefore, Mukti—freedom, freedom from the bonds of imperfection, freedom from death and misery.

And this bondage can only fall off through the mercy of God, and this mercy comes on the pure. So purity is the condition of His mercy. How does that mercy act? He reveals Himself to the pure heart; the pure and the stainless see God, yea, even in this life; then and then only all the crookedness of the heart is made straight. Then all doubt ceases. He is no more the freak of a terrible law of causation. This is the very centre, the very vital conception of Hinduism. The Hindu does not want to live upon words and theories. If there are existences beyond the ordinary sensuous existence, he wants to come face to face with them. If there is a soul in him which is not matter, if there is an all-merciful universal Soul, he will go to Him direct. He must see Him, and that alone can destroy all doubts. So the best proof a Hindu sage gives about the soul, about God, is: "I have seen the soul; I have seen God." And that is the only condition of perfection. The Hindu religion does not consist in struggles and attempts to believe a certain doctrine or dogma, but in realising—not in believing, but in being and becoming.

Thus the whole object of their system is by constant struggle to become perfect, to become divine, to reach God and see God, and this reaching God, seeing God, becoming perfect even as the Father in Heaven is perfect, constitutes the religion of the Hindus.

And what becomes of a man when he attains perfection? He lives a life of bliss infinite. He enjoys infinite and perfect bliss, having obtained the only thing in which man ought to have pleasure, namely God, and enjoys the bliss with God.

So far all the Hindus are agreed. This is the common religion of all the sects of India; but, then, perfection is absolute, and the absolute cannot be two or three. It cannot have any qualities. It cannot be an individual. And so when a soul becomes perfect and absolute, it must become one with Brahman, and it would only realise the Lord as the perfection, the reality, of its own nature and existence, the existence absolute, knowledge absolute, and bliss absolute. We have often and often read this called the losing of individuality and becoming a stock or a stone.

"He jests at scars that never felt a wound."



I tell you it is nothing of the kind. If it is happiness to enjoy the consciousness of this small body, it must be greater happiness to enjoy the consciousness of two bodies, the measure of happiness increasing with the consciousness of an increasing number of bodies, the aim, the ultimate of happiness being reached when it would become a universal consciousness.

Therefore, to gain this infinite universal individuality, this miserable little prison-individuality must go. Then alone can death cease when I am one with life, then alone can misery cease when I am one with happiness itself, then alone can all errors cease when I am one with knowledge itself; and this is the necessary scientific conclusion. Science has proved to me that physical individuality is a delusion, that really my body is one little continuously changing body in an unbroken ocean of matter; and Advaita (unity) is the necessary conclusion with my other counterpart, soul.

Science is nothing but the finding of unity. As soon as science would reach perfect unity, it would stop from further progress, because it would reach the goal. Thus Chemistry could not progress farther when it would discover one element out of which all others could be made. Physics would stop when it would be able to fulfil its services in discovering one energy of which all the others are but manifestations, and the science of religion become perfect when it would discover Him who is the one life in a universe of death, Him who is the constant basis of an ever-changing world. One who is the only Soul of which all souls are but delusive manifestations. Thus is it, through multiplicity and duality, that the ultimate unity is recalled. Religion can go no farther. This is the goal of all science.

All science is bound to come to this conclusion in the long run. Manifestation, and not creation, is the word of science today, and the Hindu is only glad that what he has been cherishing in his bosom for ages is going to be taught in more forcible language, and with further light from the latest conclusions of science.

Descend we now from the aspirations of philosophy to the religion of the ignorant. At the very outset, I may tell you that there is no *polytheism* in India. In every temple, if one stands by and listens, one will find the worshippers applying all the attributes of God, including omnipresence, to the images. It is not

polytheism, nor would the name henotheism explain the situation. "The rose called by any other name would smell as sweet." Names are not explanations.

I remember, as a boy, hearing a Christian missionary preach to a crowd in India. Among other sweet things he was telling them was that if he gave a blow to their idol with his stick, what could it do? One of his hearers sharply answered, "If I abuse your God, what can He do?" "You would be punished," said the preacher, "when you die." "So my idol will punish you when you die," retorted the Hindu.

The tree is known by its fruits. When I have seen amongst them that are called idolaters, men, the like of whom in morality and spirituality and love I have never seen anywhere, I stop and ask myself, "Can sin beget holiness?"

Superstition is a great enemy of man, but bigotry is worse. Why does a Christian go to church? Why is the cross holy? Why is the face turned toward the sky in prayer? Why are there so many images in the Catholic Church? Why are there so many images in the minds of Protestants when they pray? My brethren, we can no more think about anything without a mental image than we can live without breathing. By the law of association, the material image calls up the mental idea and *vice versa*. This is why the Hindu uses an external symbol when he worships. He will tell you, it helps to keep his mind fixed on the Being to whom he prays. He knows as well as you do that the image is not God, is not omnipresent. After all, how much does omnipresence mean to almost the whole world? It stands merely as a word, a symbol. Has God superficial area? If not, when we repeat that word "omnipresent," we think of the extended sky or of space, that is all.

As we find that somehow or other, by the laws of our mental constitution, we have to associate our ideas of infinity with the image of the blue sky, or of the sea, so we naturally connect our idea of holiness with the image of a church, a mosque, or a cross. The Hindus have associated the idea of holiness, purity, truth, omnipresence, and such other ideas with different images and forms. But with this difference that while some people devote their whole lives to their idol of a church and never rise higher, because with them religion means an intellectual assent to certain doctrines and doing good to their fellows, the whole religion of the Hindu is centred in realisation. Man is

to become divine by realising the divine. Idols or temples or churches or books are only the supports, the helps, of his spiritual childhood: but on and on he must progress.

He must not stop anywhere. "External worship, material worship," say the scriptures, "is the lowest stage; struggling to rise high, mental prayer is the next stage, but the highest stage is when the Lord has been realized." Mark, the same earnest man who is kneeling before the idol tells you, "Him the sun cannot express, nor the moon, nor the stars, the lightning cannot express Him, nor what we speak of as fire; through Him they shine." But he does not abuse any one's idol or call its worship sin. He recognises in it a necessary stage of life. "The child is father of the man." Would it be right for an old man to say that childhood is a sin or youth a sin?

If a man can realise his divine nature with the help of an image, would it be right to call that a sin? Nor even when he has passed that stage, should he call it an error. To the Hindu, man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower to higher truth. To him all the religions, from the lowest fetishism to the highest absolutism, mean so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realise the Infinite, each determined by the conditions of its birth and association, and each of these marks a stage of progress; and every soul is a young eagle soaring higher and higher, gathering more and more strength, till it reaches the Glorious Sun.

Unity in variety is the plan of nature, and the Hindu has recognised it. Every other religion lays down certain fixed dogmas, and tries to force society to adopt them. It places before society only one coat which must fit Jack and John and Henry, all alike. If it does not fit John or Henry, he must go without a coat to cover his body. The Hindus have discovered that the absolute can only be realised, or thought of, or stated, through the relative, and the images, crosses, and crescents are simply so many symbols—so many pegs to hang the spiritual ideas on. It is not that this help is necessary for every one, but those that do not need it have no right to say that it is wrong. Nor is it compulsory in Hinduism.

One thing I must tell you. Idolatry in India does not mean anything horrible. It is not the mother of harlots. On the other hand, it is the attempt of undeveloped minds to grasp high spiritual truths. The

Hindus have their faults, they sometimes have their exceptions; but mark this, they are always for punishing their own bodies, and never for cutting the throats of their neighbours. If the Hindu fanatic burns himself on the pyre, he never lights the fire of Inquisition. And even this cannot be laid at the door of his religion any more than the burning of witches can be laid at the door of Christianity.

To the Hindu, then, the whole world of religions is only a travelling, a coming up, of different men and women, through various conditions and circumstances, to the same goal. Every religion is only evolving a God out of the material man, and the same God is the inspirer of all of them. Why, then, are there so many contradictions? They are only apparent, says the Hindu. The contradictions come from the same truth adapting itself to the varying circumstances of different natures.

It is the same light coming through glasses of different colours. And these little variations are necessary for purposes of adaptation. But in the heart of everything the same truth reigns. The Lord has declared to the Hindu in His incarnation as Krishna, "I am in every religion as the thread through a string of pearls. Wherever thou seest extraordinary holiness and extraordinary power raising and purifying humanity, know thou that I am there." And what has been the result? I challenge the world to find, throughout the whole system of Sanskrit philosophy, any such expression as that the Hindu alone will be saved and not others. Says Vyasa, "*We find perfect men even beyond the pale of our caste and creed.*" One thing more. How, then, can the Hindu, whose whole fabric of thought centres in God, believe in Buddhism which is agnostic, or in Jainism which is atheistic?

The Buddhists or the Jains do not depend upon God; but the whole force of their religion is directed to the great central truth in every religion, to evolve a God out of man. They have not seen the Father, but they have seen the Son. And he that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father also.

This, brethren, is a short sketch of the religious ideas of the Hindus. The Hindu may have failed to carry out all his plans, but if there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which will have no location in place or time; which will be infinite like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Krishna and of Christ, on saints and sin-

ners alike; which will not be Brahminic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of all these, and still have infinite space for development; which in its catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms, and find a place for, every human being, from the lowest grovelling savage not far removed from the brute, to the highest man towering by the virtues of his head and heart almost above humanity, making society stand in awe of him and doubt his human nature. It will be a religion which will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its polity, which will recognise divinity in every man and woman, and whose whole scope, whose whole force, will be created in aiding humanity to realise its own true, divine nature.

Offer such a religion, and all the nations will follow you. Asoka's council was a council of the Buddhist faith. Akbar's, though more to the purpose, was only a parlour-meeting. It was reserved for America to proclaim to all quarters of the globe that the Lord is in every religion.

May He who is the Brahman of the Hindus, the Ahura-Mazda of the Zoroastrians, the Buddha of the

Buddhists, the Jehovah of the Jews, the Father in Heaven of the Christians, give strength to you to carry out your noble idea! The star arose in the East; it travelled steadily towards the West, sometimes dimmed and sometimes effulgent, till it made a circuit of the world; and now it is again rising on the very horizon of the East, the borders of the Sanpo, a thousandfold more effulgent than it ever was before.

Hail, Columbia, motherland of liberty! It has been given to thee, who never dipped her hand in her neighbour's blood, who never found out that the shortest way of becoming rich was by robbing one's neighbours, it has been given to thee to march at the vanguard of civilisation with the flag of harmony.

**SEE ALSO**

Asian American Religious Communities: South Asian American Religious Communities; Hinduism in America: Vedanta Society

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Swami Vivekananda, Remarks at the World's Parliament of Religions, Chicago, September 11, 1893, in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, 1977.

Andrew Dickson White, excerpt from  
*A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896)

*A prominent educator and respected statesman, Andrew Dickson White faced charges of "godlessness" for advocating the notion that universities should be nonsectarian and students should be free to pursue the truth without reference to religious dogma. In his History of the Warfare of Science with Theology and Christendom, he argued that free intellectual inquiry was beneficial to both science and religion.*

**6. Reconstructive Force of Scientific Criticism**

For all this dissolving away of traditional opinions regarding our sacred literature, there has been a cause far more general and powerful than any which has been given, for it is a cause surrounding and permeating all. This is simply the atmosphere of thought engendered by the development of all sciences during the last three centuries.

Vast masses of myth, legend, marvel, and dogmatic assertion, coming into this atmosphere, have been dissolved and are now dissolving quietly away like icebergs drifted into the Gulf Stream. In earlier days, when some critic in advance of his time insisted that Moses could not have written an account embracing the circumstances of his own death, it was sufficient to answer that Moses was a prophet; if attention was called to the fact that the great early prophets, by all which they did and did not do, showed that there could not have existed in their time any "Levitical code," a sufficient answer was "mystery"; and if the discrepancy was noted between the two accounts of creation in Genesis, or between the genealogies or the dates of the crucifixion in the Gospels, the cogent reply was "infidelity." But the thinking world has at last been borne by the general development of a scientific atmosphere beyond that kind of refutation.

If, in the atmosphere generated by the earlier developed sciences, the older growths of biblical interpretation have drooped and withered and are evidently perishing, new and better growths have arisen with roots running down into the newer sciences. Comparative Anthropology in general, by showing that vari-

ous early stages of belief and observance, once supposed to be derived from direct revelation from heaven to the Hebrews, are still found as arrested developments among various savage and barbarous tribes; Comparative Mythology and Folklore, by showing that ideas and beliefs regarding the Supreme Power in the universe are progressive, and not less in Judea than in other parts of the world; Comparative Religion and Literature, by searching out and laying side by side those main facts in the upward struggle of humanity which show that the Israelites, like other gifted peoples, rose gradually, through ghost worship, fetichism, and polytheism, to higher theological levels; and that, as they thus rose, their conceptions and statements regarding the God they worshipped became nobler and better—all these sciences are giving a new solution to those problems which dogmatic theology has so long laboured in vain to solve. While researches in these sciences have established the fact that accounts formerly supposed to be special revelations to Jews and Christians are but repetitions of widespread legends dating from far earlier civilizations, and that beliefs formerly thought fundamental to Judaism and Christianity are simply based on ancient myths, they have also begun to impress upon the intellect and conscience of the thinking world the fact that the religious and moral truths thus disengaged from the old masses of myth and legend are all the more venerable and authoritative, and that all individual or national life of any value must be vitalized by them.

If, then, modern science in general has acted powerfully to dissolve away the theories and dogmas of the older theologic interpretation, it has also been active in a reconstruction and recrystallization of truth; and very powerful in this reconstruction have been the evolution doctrines which have grown out of the thought and work of men like Darwin and Spencer.

In the light thus obtained the sacred text has been transformed: out of the old chaos has come order;

out of the old welter of hopelessly conflicting statements in religion and morals has come, in obedience to this new conception of development, the idea of a sacred literature which mirrors the most striking evolution of morals and religion in the history of our race. Of all the sacred writings of the world, it shows us our own as the most beautiful and the most precious; exhibiting to us the most complete religious development to which humanity has attained, and holding before us the loftiest ideals which our race has known. Thus it is that, with the keys furnished by this new race of biblical scholars, the way has been opened to treasures of thought which have been inaccessible to theologians for two thousand years.

As to the Divine Power in the universe: these interpreters have shown how, beginning with the tribal god of the Hebrews—one among many jealous, fitful, unseen, local sovereigns of Asia Minor—the higher races have been borne on to the idea of the just Ruler of the whole earth, as revealed by the later and greater prophets of Israel, and finally to the belief in the Universal Father, as best revealed in the New Testament. As to man: beginning with men after Jehovah's own heart—cruel, treacherous, revengeful—we are borne on to an ideal of men who do right for right's sake; who search and speak the truth for truth's sake; who love others as themselves. As to the world at large: the races dominant in religion and morals have been lifted from the idea of a "chosen people" stimulated and abetted by their tribal god in every sort of cruelty and injustice, to the conception of a vast community in which the fatherhood of God overarches all, and the brotherhood of man permeates all.

Thus, at last, out of the old conception of our Bible as a collection of oracles—a mass of entangling utterances, fruitful in wrangling interpretations, which have given to the world long and weary ages of "hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness"; of fetichism, subtlety, and pomp; of tyranny, bloodshed, and solemnly constituted imposture; of everything which the Lord Jesus Christ most abhorred—has been gradually developed through the centuries, by the labours, sacrifices, and even the martyrdom of a long succession of men of God, the conception of it as a sacred literature—a growth only possible under that divine light which the various orbs of science have done so much to bring into the mind and heart and soul of man—a revelation, not of the Fall of Man, but of the Ascent of Man—an exposition, not of temporary dogmas and observances, but of the Eternal Law of Righteousness—the one upward path for individuals and for nations. No longer an oracle, good for the "lower orders" to accept, but to be quietly sneered at by "the enlightened"—no longer a fetich, whose defenders must become persecutors, or reconcilers, or "apologists"; but a most fruitful fact, which religion and science may accept as a source of strength to both.

#### SEE ALSO

Protestantism in America; Science: Evolution

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Andrew Dickson White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, vol. II, 1896. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1993. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

Swami Vivekananda,  
excerpt from *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1900)

*Swami Vivekananda gained fame for his attempts to explain Indian culture and religion to Americans during the last decade of the nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth century. In particular, he hoped to enrich America's religious consciousness through the rational and humanistic teachings of Vedanta philosophy.*

**Is Vedanta the Future Religion?**  
(Delivered in San Francisco on April 8, 1900)

Those of you who have been attending my lectures for the last month or so must, by this time, be familiar with the ideas contained in the Vedanta philosophy. Vedanta is the most ancient religion of the world; but it can never be said to have become popular. Therefore the question "Is it going to be the religion of the future?" is very difficult to answer.

At the start, I may tell you that I do not know whether it will ever be the religion of the vast majority of men. Will it ever be able to take hold of one whole nation such as the United States of America? Possibly it may. However, that is the question we want to discuss this afternoon,

I shall begin by telling you what Vedanta is not, and then I shall tell you what it is. But you must remember that, with all its emphasis on impersonal principles, Vedanta is not antagonistic to anything, though it does not compromise or give up the truths which it considers fundamental.

You all know that certain things are necessary to make a religion. First of all, there is the book. The power of the book is simply marvellous! Whatever it be, the book is the centre round which human allegiance gathers. Not one religion is living today but has a book. With all its rationalism and tall talk, humanity still clings to the books. In your country every attempt to start a religion without a book has failed. In India sects rise with great success, but within a few years they die down, because there is no book behind them. So in every other country.

Study the rise and fall of the Unitarian movement. It represents the best thought of your nation. Why should it not have spread like the Methodist, Baptist, and other Christian denominations? Because there was no book. On the other hand, think of the Jews. A handful of men, driven from one country to another, still hold together, because they have a book. Think of the Parsees—only a hundred thousand in the world. About a million are all that remain of the Jains in India. And do you know that these handfuls of Parsees and Jains still keep on just because of their books? The religions that are living at the present day—every one of them has a book.

The second requisite, to make a religion, is veneration for some person. He is worshipped either as the Lord of the world or as the great Teacher. Men must worship some embodied man! They must have the Incarnation or the prophet or the great leader. You find it in every religion today. Hindus and Christians—they have Incarnations: Buddhists, Mohammedans, and Jews have prophets. But it is all about the same—all their veneration twines round some person or persons.

The third requisite seems to be that a religion, to be strong and sure of itself, must believe that it alone is the truth; otherwise it cannot influence people.

Liberalism dies because it is dry, because it cannot rouse fanaticism in the human mind, because it cannot bring out hatred for everything except itself. That is why liberalism is bound to go down again and again. It can influence only small numbers of people. The reason is not hard to see. Liberalism tries to make us unselfish. But we do not want to be unselfish—we see no immediate gain in unselfishness; we gain more by being selfish. We accept liberalism as long as we are poor, have nothing. The moment we acquire money and power, we turn very conservative. The poor man is a democrat. When he becomes rich, he becomes an aristocrat. In religion, too, human nature acts in the same way.

A prophet arises, promises all kinds of rewards to those who will follow him and eternal doom to those who will not. Thus he makes his ideas spread. All existent religions that are spreading are tremendously fanatic. The more a sect hates other sects, the greater is its success and the more people it draws into its fold. My conclusion, after travelling over a good part of the world and living with many races, and in view of the conditions prevailing in the world, is that the present state of things is going to continue, in spite of much talk of universal brotherhood.

Vedanta does not believe in any of these teachings. First, it does not believe in a book—that is the difficulty to start with. It denies the authority of any book over any other book. It denies emphatically that any one book can contain all the truths about God, soul, the ultimate reality. Those of you who have read the Upanishads remember that they say again and again, “Not by the reading of books can we realise the Self.”

Second, it finds, veneration for some particular person, still more difficult to uphold. Those of you who are students of Vedanta—by Vedanta is always meant the Upanishads—know that this is the only religion that does not cling to any person. Not one man or woman has ever become the object of worship among the Vedantins. It cannot be. A man is no more worthy of worship than any bird, any worm. We are all brothers. The difference is only in degree. I am exactly the same as the lowest worm. You see how very little room there is in Vedanta for any man to stand ahead of us and for us to go and worship him—he dragging us on and we being saved by him. Vedanta does not give you that. No book, no man to worship, nothing.

A still greater difficulty is about God. You want to be democratic in this country. It is the democratic God that Vedanta teaches.

You have a government, but the government is impersonal. Yours is not an autocratic government, and yet it is more powerful than any monarchy in the world. Nobody seems to understand that the real power, the real life, the real strength is in the unseen, the impersonal, the nobody. As a mere person separated from others, you are nothing, but as an impersonal unit of the nation that rules itself, you are tremendous. You are all one in the government—you are a tremendous power. But where exactly is the power? Each man is the power. There is no king. I see

everybody equally the same. I have not to take off my hat and bow low to anyone. Yet there is a tremendous power in each man.

Vedanta is just that. Its God is not the monarch sitting on a throne, entirely apart. There are those who like their God that way—a God to be feared and propitiated. They burn candles and crawl in the dust before Him. They want a king to rule them—they believe in a king in heaven to rule them all. The king is gone from this country at least. Where is the king of heaven now? Just where the earthly king is. In this country the king has entered every one of you. You are all kings in this country. So with the religion of Vedanta. You are all Gods. One God is not sufficient. You are all Gods, says the Vedanta.

This makes Vedanta very difficult. It does not teach the old idea of God at all. In place of that God who sat above the clouds and managed the affairs of the world without asking our permission, who created us out of nothing just because He liked it and made us undergo all this misery just because He liked it, Vedanta teaches the God that is in everyone, has become everyone and everything. His majesty the king has gone from this country; the Kingdom of Heaven went from Vedanta hundreds of years ago.

India cannot give up his majesty the king of the earth—that is why Vedanta cannot become the religion of India. There is a chance of Vedanta becoming the religion of your country because of democracy. But it can become so only if you can and do clearly understand it, if you become real men and women, not people with vague ideas and superstitions in your brains, and if you want to be truly spiritual, since Vedanta is concerned only with spirituality.

What is the idea of God in heaven? Materialism. The Vedantic idea is the infinite principle of God embodied in every one of us. God sitting up on a cloud! Think of the utter blasphemy of it! It is materialism—downright materialism. When babies think this way, it may be all right, but when grown-up men try to teach such things, it is downright disgusting—that is what it is. It is all matter, all body idea, the gross idea, the sense idea. Every bit of it is clay and nothing but clay. Is that religion? It is no more religion than is the Mumbo Fumbo “religion” of Africa. God is spirit and He should be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Does spirit live only in heaven? What is spirit? We are all spirit. Why is it we do not realise it? What makes you

different from me? Body and nothing else. Forget the body, and all is spirit.

These are what Vedanta has not to give. No book. No man to be singled out from the rest of mankind—"You are worms, and we are the Lord God!"—none of that. If you are the Lord God, I also am the Lord God. So Vedanta knows no sin. There are mistakes but no sin; and in the long run everything is going to be all right. No Satan—none of this nonsense. Vedanta believes in only one sin, only one in the world, and it is this: the moment you think you are a sinner or anybody is a sinner, that is sin. From that follows every other mistake or what is usually called sin. There have been many mistakes in our lives. But we are going on. Glory be unto us that we have made mistakes! Take a long look at your past life. If your present condition is good, it has been caused by all the past mistakes as well as successes. Glory be unto success! Glory be unto mistakes! Do not look back upon what has been done. Go ahead!

You see, Vedanta proposes no sin nor sinner. No God to be afraid of. He is the one being of whom we shall never be afraid, because He is our own Self. There is only one being of whom you cannot possibly be afraid; He is that. Then is not he really the most superstitious person who has fear of God? There may be someone who is afraid of his shadow; but even he is not afraid of himself. God is man's very Self. He is that one being whom you can never possibly fear. What is all this nonsense, the fear of the Lord entering into a man, making him tremble and so on? Lord bless us that we are not all in the lunatic asylum! But if most of us are not lunatics, why should we invent such ideas as fear of God? Lord Buddha said that the whole human race is lunatic, more or less. It is perfectly true, it seems.

No book, no person, no Personal God. All these must go. Again, the senses must go. We cannot be bound to the senses. At present we are tied down—like persons dying of cold in the glaciers. They feel such a strong desire to sleep, and when their friends try to wake them, warning them of death, they say, "Let me die, I want to sleep." We all cling to the little things of the senses, even if we are ruined thereby: we forget there are much greater things.

There is a Hindu legend that the Lord was once incarnated on earth as a pig. He had a pig mate and in course of time several little pigs were born to Him.

He was very happy with His family, living in the mire, squealing with joy, forgetting His divine glory and lordship. The gods became exceedingly concerned and came to the earth to beg Him to give up the pig body and return to heaven. But the Lord would have none of that; He drove them away. He said He was very happy and did not want to be disturbed. Seeing no other course, the gods destroyed the pig body of the Lord. At once He regained His divine majesty and was astonished that He could have found any joy in being a pig.

People behave in the same way. Whenever they hear of the Impersonal God, they say, "What will become of my individuality?—my individuality will go!" Next time that thought comes, remember the pig, and then think what an infinite mine of happiness you have, each one of you. How pleased you are with your present condition! But when you realise what you truly are, you will be astonished that you were unwilling to give up your sense-life. What is there in your personality? Is it any better than that pig life? And this you do not want to give up! Lord bless us all!

What does Vedanta teach us? In the first place, it teaches that you need not even go out of yourself to know the truth. All the past and all the future are here in the present. No man ever saw the past. Did any one of you see the past? When you think you are knowing the past, you only imagine the past in the present moment. To see the future, you would have to bring it down to the present, which is the only reality—the rest is imagination. This present is all that is. There is only the One. All is here right now. One moment in infinite time is quite as complete and all-inclusive as every other moment. All that is and was and will be is here in the present. Let anybody try to imagine anything outside of it—he will not succeed.

What religion can paint a heaven which is not like this earth? And it is all art, only this art is being made known to us gradually. We, with five senses, look upon this world and find it gross, having colour, form, sound, and the like. Suppose I develop an electric sense—all will change. Suppose my senses grow finer—you will all appear changed. If I change, you change. If I go beyond the power of the senses, you will appear as spirit and God. Things are not what they seem.

We shall understand this by and by, and then see it: all the heavens—everything—are here, now, and they



really are nothing but appearances on the Divine Presence. This Presence is much greater than all the earths and heavens. People think that this world is bad and imagine that heaven is somewhere else. This world is not bad. It is God Himself if you know it. It is a hard thing even to understand, harder than to believe. The murderer who is going to be hanged tomorrow is all God, perfect God. It is very hard to understand, surely; but it can be understood.

Therefore Vedanta formulates, not universal brotherhood, but universal oneness. I am the same as any other man, as any animal—good, bad, anything. It is one body, one mind, one soul throughout. Spirit never dies. There is no death anywhere, not even for the body. Not even the mind dies. How can even the body die? One leaf may fall—does the tree die? The universe is my body. See how it continues. All minds are mine. With all feet I walk. Through all mouths I speak. In everybody I reside.

Why can I not feel it? Because of that individuality, that piggishness. You have become bound up with this mind and can only be here, not there. What is immortality? How few reply, “It is this very existence of ours!” Most people think this is all mortal and dead—that God is not here, that they will become immortal by going to heaven. They imagine that they will see God after death. But if they do not see Him here and now, they will not see Him after death. Though they all believe in immortality, they do not know that immortality is not gained by dying and going to heaven, but by giving up this piggish individuality, by not tying ourselves down to one little body. Immortality is knowing ourselves as one with all, living in all bodies, perceiving through all minds. We are bound to feel in other bodies than this one. We are bound to feel in other bodies. What is sympathy? Is there any limit to this sympathy, this feeling in our bodies? It is quite possible that the time will come when I shall feel through the whole universe.

What is the gain? The pig body is hard to give up; we are sorry to lose the enjoyment of our one little pig body! Vedanta does not say, “Give it up”: it says, “Transcend it.” No need of asceticism—better would be the enjoyment of two bodies, better three, living in more bodies than one! When I can enjoy through the whole universe, the whole universe is my body.

There are many who feel horrified when they hear these teachings. They do not like to be told that they

are not just little pig bodies, created by a tyrant God. I tell them, “Come up!” They say they are born in sin—they cannot come up except through someone’s grace. I say, “You are Divine!” They answer, “You blasphemer, how dare you speak so? How can a miserable creature be God? We are sinners!” I get very much discouraged at times, you know. Hundreds of men and women tell me, “If there is no hell, how can there be any religion?” If these people go to hell of their own will, who can prevent them?

Whatever you dream and think of, you create. If it is hell, you die and see hell. If it is evil and Satan, you get a Satan. If ghosts, you get ghosts. Whatever you think, that you become. If you have to think, think good thoughts, great thoughts. This taking for granted that you are weak little worms! By declaring we are weak, we become weak, we do not become better. Suppose we put out the light, close the windows, and call the room dark. Think of the nonsense! What good does it do me to say I am a sinner? If I am in the dark, let me light a lamp. The whole thing is gone. Yet how curious is the nature of men! Though always conscious that the universal mind is behind their life, they think more of Satan, of darkness and lies. You tell them the truth—they do not see it; they like darkness better.

This forms the one great question asked by Vedanta: Why are people so afraid? The answer is that they have made themselves helpless and dependent on others. We are so lazy, we do not want to do anything for ourselves. We want a Personal God, a saviour or a prophet to do everything for us. The very rich man never walks, always goes in the carriage; but in the course of years, he wakes up one day paralysed all over. Then he begins to feel that the way he had lived was not good after all. No man can walk for me. Every time one did, it was to my injury. If everything is done for a man by another, he will lose the use of his own limbs. Anything we do ourselves, that is the only thing we do. Anything that is done for us by another never can be ours. You cannot learn spiritual truths from my lectures. If you have learnt anything, I was only the spark that brought it out, made it flash. That is all the prophets and teachers can do. All this running after help is foolishness.

You know, there are bullock carts in India. Usually two bulls are harnessed to a cart, and sometimes a sheaf of straw is dangled at the tip of the pole, a little

in front of the animals but beyond their reach. The bulls try continually to feed upon the straw, but never succeed. This is exactly how we are helped! We think we are going to get security, strength, wisdom, happiness from the outside. We always hope but never realise our hope. Never does any help come from the outside.

There is no help for man. None ever was, none is, and none will be. Why should there be? Are you not men and women? Are the lords of the earth to be helped by others? Are you not ashamed? You will be helped when you are reduced to dust. But you are spirit. Pull yourself out of difficulties by yourself! Save yourself by yourself! There is none to help you—never was. To think that there is, is sweet delusion. It comes to no good.

There came a Christian to me once and said, “You are a terrible sinner.” I answered, “Yes, I am. Go on.” He was a Christian missionary. That man would not give me any rest. When I see him, I fly. He said, “I have very good things for you. You are a sinner and you are going to hell.” I replied, “Very good, what else?” I asked him, “Where are you going?” “I am going to heaven,” he answered. I said, “I will go to hell.” That day he gave me up.

Here comes a Christian man and he says, “You are all doomed; but if you believe in this doctrine, Christ will help you out.” If this were true—but of course it is nothing but superstition—there would be no wickedness in the Christian countries. Let us believe in it—believing costs nothing—but why is there no result? If I ask, “Why is it that there are so many wicked people?” they say, “We have to work more.” Trust in God, but keep your powder dry! Pray to God, and let God come and help you out! But it is I who struggle, pray, and worship; it is I who work out my problems—and God takes the credit. This is not good. I never do it.

Once I was invited to a dinner. The hostess asked me to say grace. I said, “I will say grace to you, madam. My grace and thanks are to you.” When I work, I say grace to myself. Praise be unto me that I worked hard and acquired what I have!

All the time you work hard and bless somebody else, because you are superstitious, you are afraid. No more of these superstitions bred through thousands of years! It takes a little hard work to become spiritual. Superstitions are all materialism, because they

are all based on the consciousness of body, body, body. No spirit there. Spirit has no superstitions—it is beyond the vain desires of the body.

But here and there these vain desires are being projected even into the realm of the spirit. I have attended several spiritualistic meetings. In one, the leader was a woman. She said to me, “Your mother and grandfather come to me.” She said that they greeted her and talked to her. But my mother is living yet! People like to think that even after death their relatives continue to exist in the same bodies, and the spiritualists play on their superstitions. I would be very sorry to know that my dead father is still wearing his filthy body. People get consolation from this, that their fathers are all encased in matter. In another place they brought me Jesus Christ. I said, “Lord, how do you do?” It makes me feel hopeless. If that great saintly man is still wearing the body, what is to become of us poor creatures? The spiritualists did not allow me to touch any of those gentlemen. Even if these were real, I would not want them. I think, “Mother, Mother! atheists—that is what people really are! Just the desire for these five senses! Not satisfied with what they have here, they want more of the same when they die!”

What is the God of Vedanta? He is principle, not person. You and I are all Personal Gods. The absolute God of the universe, the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe, is impersonal principle. You and I, the cat, rat, devil, and ghost, all these are Its persons—all are Personal Gods. You want to worship Personal Gods. It is the worship of your own self. If you take my advice, you will never enter any church. Come out and go wash off. Wash yourself again and again until you are cleansed of all the superstitions that have clung to you through the ages. Or, perhaps, you do not like to do so, since you do not wash yourself so often in this country—frequent washing is an Indian custom, not a custom of your society.

I have been asked many times, “Why do you laugh so much and make so many jokes?” I become serious sometimes—when I have stomach-ache! The Lord is all blissfulness. He is the reality behind all that exists, He is the goodness, the truth in everything. You are His incarnations. That is what is glorious. The nearer you are to Him, the less you will have occasions to cry or weep. The further we are from Him, the more will long faces come. The more we know of Him, the

more misery vanishes. If one who lives in the Lord becomes miserable, what is the use of living in Him? What is the use of such a God? Throw him overboard into the Pacific Ocean! We do not want Him!

But God is the infinite, impersonal being—ever existent, unchanging, immortal, fearless; and you are all His incarnations, His embodiments. This is the God of Vedanta, and His heaven is everywhere. In this heaven dwell all the Personal Gods there are—you yourselves. Exit praying and laying flowers in the temples!

What do you pray for? To go to heaven, to get something, and let somebody else not have it. “Lord, I want more food! Let somebody else starve!” What an idea of God who is the reality, the infinite, ever blessed existence in which there is neither part nor flaw, who is ever free, ever pure, ever perfect! We attribute to him all our human characteristics, functions, and limitations. He must bring us food and give us clothes. As a matter of fact we have to do all these things ourselves and nobody else ever did them for us. That is the plain truth.

But you rarely think of this. You imagine there is God of whom you are special favourites, who does things for you when you ask Him; and you do not ask of Him favours for all men, all beings, but only for yourself, your own family, your own people. When the Hindu is starving, you do not care; at that time you do not think that the God of the Christians is also the God of the Hindus. Our whole idea of God, our praying, our worshipping, all are vitiated by our ignorance, our foolish idea of ourselves as body. You may not like what I am saying. You may curse me today, but tomorrow you will bless me.

We must become thinkers. Every birth is painful. We must get out of materialism. My Mother would not let us get out of Her clutches; nevertheless we must try. This struggle is all the worship there is; all the rest is mere shadow. You are the Personal God. Just now I am worshipping you. This is the greatest prayer. Worship the whole world in that sense—by serving it. This standing on a high platform, I know, does not appear like worship. But if it is service, it is worship.

The infinite truth is never to be acquired. It is here all the time, undying and unborn. He, the Lord of the universe, is in every one. There is but one temple—the body. It is the only temple that ever existed. In this

body, He resides, the Lord of souls and the King of kings. We do not see that, so we make stone images of Him and build temples over them. Vedanta has been in India always, but India is full of these temples—and not only temples, but also caves containing carved images. “The fool, dwelling on the bank of the Gangâ, digs a well for water!” Such are we! Living in the midst of God—we must go and make images. We project Him in the form of the image, while all the time He exists in the temple of our body. We are lunatics, and this is the great delusion.

Worship everything as God—every form is His temple. All else is delusion. Always look within, never without. Such is the God that Vedanta preaches, and such is His worship. Naturally there is no sect, no creed, no caste in Vedanta. How can this religion be the national religion of India?

Hundreds of castes! If one man touches another man’s food, he cries out, “Lord help me, I am polluted!” When I returned to India after my visit to the West, several orthodox Hindus raised a howl against my association with the Western people and my breaking the rules of orthodoxy. They did not like me to teach the truths of the Vedas to the people of the West.

But how can there be these distinctions and differences? How can the rich man turn up his nose at the poor man, and the learned at the ignorant, if we are all spirit and all the same? Unless society changes, how can such a religion as Vedanta prevail? It will take thousands of years to have large numbers of truly rational human beings. It is very hard to show men new things, to give them great ideas. It is harder still to knock off old superstitions, very hard; they do not die easily. With all his education, even the learned man becomes frightened in the dark—the nursery tales come into his mind, and he sees ghosts.

The meaning of the word “Veda,” from which the word “Vedanta” comes, is knowledge. All knowledge is Veda, infinite as God is infinite. Nobody ever creates knowledge. Did you ever see knowledge created? It is only discovered—what was covered is uncovered. It is always here, because it is God Himself. Past, present, and future knowledge, all exist in all of us. We discover it, that is all. All this knowledge is God himself. The Vedas are a great Sanskrit book. In our country we go down on our knees before the man who reads the Vedas, and we do not care for the man

who is studying physics. That is superstition; it is not Vedanta at all. It is utter materialism. With God every knowledge is sacred. Knowledge is God. Infinite knowledge abides within every one in the fullest measure. You are not really ignorant, though you may appear to be so. You are incarnations of God, all of you. You are the incarnations of the Almighty, Omnipresent, Divine Principle. You may laugh at me now, but the time will come when you will understand. You must. Nobody will be left behind.

What is the goal? This that I have spoken of—Vedanta—is not a new religion. So old—as old as God Himself. It is not confined to any time and place, it is everywhere. Everybody knows this truth. We are all working it out. The goal of the whole universe is that. This applies even to external nature—every atom is rushing towards that goal. And do you think that any of the infinite pure souls are left without knowledge of the supreme truth? All have it, all are going to the same goal—the discovery of the innate Divinity. The maniac, the murderer, the superstitious man, the man who is lynched in this country—all are travelling to the same goal. Only that which we do ignorantly we ought to do knowingly, and better.

The unity of all existence—you all have it already within yourselves. None was ever born without it. However you may deny it, it continually asserts itself. What is human love? It is more or less an affirmation of that unity: “I am one with thee, my wife, my child, my friend!” Only you are affirming the unity ignorantly. “None ever loved the husband for the husband’s sake, but for the sake of the Self that is in the husband.” The wife finds unity there. The husband sees himself in the wife—instinctively he does it, but he cannot do it knowingly, consciously.

The whole universe is one existence. There cannot be anything else. Out of diversities we are all going towards this universal existence. Families into tribes, tribes into races, races into nations, nations into humanity—how many wills going to the One! It is all knowledge, all science—the realisation of this unity.

Unity is knowledge, diversity is ignorance. This knowledge is your birthright. I have not to teach it to you. There never were different religions in the world. We are all destined to have salvation, whether we will it or not. You have to attain it in the long run and become free, because it is your nature to be free. We are already free, only we do not know it, and we

do not know what we have been doing. Throughout all religious systems and ideals is the same morality; one thing only is preached: “Be unselfish, love others.” One says, “Because Jehovah commanded.” “Allah,” shouted Mohammed. Another cries, “Jesus.” If it was only the command of Jehovah, how could it come to those who never knew Jehovah? If it was Jesus alone who gave this command, how could any one who never knew Jesus get it? If only Vishnu, how could the Jews get it, who never were acquainted with that gentleman? There is another source, greater than all of them. Where is it? In the eternal temple of God, in the souls of all beings from the lowest to the highest. It is there—that infinite unselfishness, infinite sacrifice, infinite compulsion to go back to unity.

We have seemingly been divided, limited, because of our ignorance: and we have become as it were the little Mrs. so-and-so and Mr. so-and-so. But all nature is giving this delusion the lie every moment. I am not that little man or little woman cut off from all else; I am the one universal existence. The soul in its own majesty is rising up every moment and declaring its own intrinsic Divinity.

This Vedanta is everywhere, only you must become conscious of it. These masses of foolish beliefs and superstitions hinder us in our progress. If we can, let us throw them off and understand that God is spirit to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Try to be materialists no more! Throw away all matter! The conception of God must be truly spiritual. All the different ideas of God, which are more or less materialistic, must go. As man becomes more and more spiritual, he has to throw off all these ideas and leave them behind. As a matter of fact, in every country there have always been a few who have been strong enough to throw away all matter and stand out in the shining light, worshipping the spirit by the spirit.

If Vedanta—this conscious knowledge that all is one spirit—spreads, the whole of humanity will become spiritual. But is it possible? I do not know. Not within thousands of years. The old superstitions must run out. You are all interested in how to perpetuate all your superstitions. Then there are the ideas of the family brother, the caste brother, the national brother. All these are barriers to the realisation of Vedanta. Religion has been religion to very few.

Most of those who have worked in the field of religion all over the world have really been political

workers. That has been the history of human beings. They have barely tried to live up uncompromisingly to the truth. They have always worshipped the god called society; they have been mostly concerned with upholding what the masses believe—their superstitions, their weakness. They do not try to conquer nature but to fit into nature, nothing else. Go to India and preach a new creed—they will not listen to it. But if you tell them it is from the Vedas—“That is good!” they will say. Here I can preach this doctrine, and you—how many of you take me seriously? But the truth is all here, and I must tell you the truth.

There is another side to the question. Everyone says that the highest, the pure, truth cannot be realised all at once by all, that men have to be led to it gradually through worship, prayer, and other kinds of prevalent religious practices. I am not sure whether that is the right method or not. In India I work both ways.

In Calcutta, I have all these images and temples—in the name of God and the Vedas, of the Bible and Christ and Buddha. Let it be tried. But on the heights of the Himalayas I have a place where I am determined nothing shall enter except pure truth. There I want to work out this idea about which I have spoken to you today. There are an Englishman and an Englishwoman in charge of the place. The purpose is to train seekers of truth and to bring up children without fear and without superstition. They shall not hear about Christs and Buddhas and Shivas and Vishnus—none of these. They shall learn, from the start, to stand upon their own feet. They shall learn, from their childhood that God is the spirit and should be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Everyone must be looked upon as spirit. That is the ideal. I do not know what success will come of it. Today I am preaching the thing I like. I wish I had been brought up entirely on that, without all the dualistic superstitions.

Sometimes I agree that there is some good in the dualistic method: it helps many who are weak. If a man wants you to show him the polar star, you first point out to him a bright star near it, then a less bright star, then a dim star, and then the polar star. This process makes it easy for him to see it. All the various practices and trainings, Bibles and Gods, are but the rudiments of religion, the kindergartens of religion.

But then I think of the other side. How long will the world have to wait to reach the truth if it follows this slow, gradual process? How long? And where is the surety that it will ever succeed to any appreciable degree? It has not so far. After all, gradual or not gradual, easy or not easy to the weak, is not the dualistic method based on falsehood? Are not all the prevalent religious practices often weakening and therefore wrong? They are based on a wrong idea, a wrong view of man. Would two wrong make one right? Would the lie become truth? Would darkness become light?

I am the servant of a man who has passed away. I am only the messenger. I want to make the experiment. The teachings of Vedanta I have told you about were never really experimented with before. Although Vedanta is the oldest philosophy in the world, it has always become mixed up with superstitions and everything else.

Christ said, “I and my father are one,” and you repeat it. Yet it has not helped mankind. For nineteen hundred years men have not understood that saying. They make Christ the saviour of men. He is God and we are worms! Similarly in India. In every country, this sort of belief is the backbone of every sect. For thousands of years millions and millions all over the world have been taught to worship the Lord of the world, the Incarnations, the saviours, the prophets. They have been taught to consider themselves helpless, miserable creatures and to depend upon the mercy of some person or persons for salvation. There are no doubt many marvellous things in such beliefs. But even at their best, they are but kindergartens of religion, and they have helped but little. Men are still hypnotised into abject degradation. However, there are some strong souls who get over that illusion. The hour comes when great men shall arise and cast off these kindergartens of religion and shall make vivid and powerful the true religion, the worship of the spirit by the spirit.

#### SEE ALSO

Hinduism in America: Vedanta Society

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*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 8, Advaita Ashrama, 1971. Used by permission of Advaita Ashrama.

W. E. B. Du Bois, excerpt from  
*The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)

*One of the most influential black leaders in the first half of the twentieth century, W.E.B. Du Bois spent his life studying what he termed "the Negro problem" in America. This was also the topic of his most famous work, The Souls of Black Folk, in which he explored how it might be possible to be "both a Negro and an American."*

***The Forethought***

Herein lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being black here at the dawning of the Twentieth Century. This meaning is not without interest to you, Gentle Reader; for the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line. I pray you, then, receive my little book in all charity, studying my words with me, forgiving mistake and foible for sake of the faith and passion that is in me, and seeking the grain of truth hidden there.

I have sought here to sketch, in vague, uncertain outline, the spiritual world in which ten thousand thousand Americans live and strive. First, in two chapters I have tried to show what Emancipation meant to them, and what was its aftermath. In a third chapter I have pointed out the slow rise of personal leadership, and criticized candidly the leader who bears the chief burden of his race to-day. Then, in two other chapters I have sketched in swift outline the two worlds within and without the Veil, and thus have come to the central problem of training men for life. Venturing now into deeper detail, I have in two chapters studied the struggles of the massed millions of the black peasantry, and in another have sought to make clear the present relations of the sons of master and man. Leaving, then, the white world, I have stepped within the Veil, raising it that you may view faintly its deeper recesses,—the meaning of its religion, the passion of its human sorrow, and the struggle of its greater souls. All this I have ended with a tale twice told but seldom written, and a chapter of song.

Some of these thoughts of mine have seen the light before in other guise. For kindly consenting to their republication here, in altered and extended form, I must thank the publishers of the *Atlantic Monthly*, *The World's Work*, the *Dial*, *The New World*, and the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Before each chapter, as now printed, stands a bar of the Sorrow Songs,—some echo of haunting melody from the only American music which welled up from black souls in the dark past. And, finally, need I add that I who speak here am bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of them that live within the Veil?

W. E. B. Du Bois.  
*Atlanta, Ga., Feb. 1, 1903*

I

Of Our Spiritual Strivings

O water, voice of my heart, crying in the sand,  
All night long crying with a mournful cry,  
As I lie and listen, and cannot understand  
The voice of my heart in my side or  
the voice of the sea,  
O water, crying for rest, is it I, is it I?  
All night long the water is crying to me.

Unresting water, there shall never be rest  
Till the last moon droop and the last tide fail,  
And the fire of the end begin to burn in the west;  
And the heart shall be weary and wonder  
and cry like the sea,  
All life long crying without avail,  
As the water all night long is crying to me.

Arthur Symons

Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying

directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.

And yet, being a problem is a strange experience,—peculiar even for one who has never been anything else, save perhaps in babyhood and in Europe. It is in the early days of rollicking boyhood that the revelation first bursts upon one, all in a day, as it were. I remember well when the shadow swept across me. I was a little thing, away up in the hills of New England, where the dark Housatonic winds between Hoosac and Taghkanic to the sea. In a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards—ten cents a package—and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card,—refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. I had thereafter no desire to tear down that veil, to creep through; I held all beyond it in common contempt, and lived above it in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows. That sky was bluest when I could beat my mates at examination-time, or beat them at a foot-race, or even beat their stringy heads. Alas, with the years all this fine contempt began to fade; for the words I longed for, and all their dazzling opportunities, were theirs, not mine. But they should not keep these prizes, I said; some, all, I would wrest from them. Just how I would do it I could never decide: by reading law, by healing the sick, by telling the wonderful tales that swam in my head,—some way. With other black boys the strife was not so fiercely sunny: their youth shrunk into tasteless sycophancy, or into silent hatred of the pale world about them and mocking distrust of everything white; or wasted itself in a bitter cry, Why did God make me an outcast and a stranger in mine own house? The shades of the prison-house closed round about us all: walls strait and stubborn to the whitest, but relentlessly narrow, tall, and unscalable to sons of night who must plod darkly on in resignation, or beat unavailing palms

against the stone, or steadily, half hopelessly, watch the streak of blue above.

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.

This, then, is the end of his striving: to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation, to husband and use his best powers and his latent genius. These powers of body and mind have in the past been strangely wasted, dispersed, or forgotten. The shadow of a mighty Negro past flits through the tale of Ethiopia the Shadowy and of Egypt the Sphinx. Through history, the powers of single black men flash here and there like falling stars, and die sometimes before the world has rightly gauged their brightness. Here in America, in the few days since Emancipation, the black man's turning hither and thither in hesitant and doubtful striving has often made his very strength to lose effectiveness, to seem like absence of power, like weakness. And yet it is not weakness,—it is the contradiction of double aims. The double-aimed struggle of the black artisan—

on the one hand to escape white contempt for a nation of mere hewers of wood and drawers of water, and on the other hand to plough and nail and dig for a poverty-stricken horde—could only result in making him a poor craftsman, for he had but half a heart in either cause. By the poverty and ignorance of his people, the Negro minister or doctor was tempted toward quackery and demagoguery; and by the criticism of the other world, toward ideals that made him ashamed of his lowly tasks. The would-be black savant was confronted by the paradox that the knowledge his people needed was a twice-told tale to his white neighbors, while the knowledge which would teach the white world was Greek to his own flesh and blood. The innate love of harmony and beauty that set the ruder souls of his people a-dancing and a-singing raised but confusion and doubt in the soul of the black artist; for the beauty revealed to him was the soul-beauty of a race which his larger audience despised, and he could not articulate the message of another people. This waste of double aims, this seeking to satisfy two unreconciled ideals, has wrought sad havoc with the courage and faith and deeds of ten thousand thousand people,—has sent them often wooing false gods and invoking false means of salvation, and at times has even seemed about to make them ashamed of themselves.

Away back in the days of bondage they thought to see in one divine event the end of all doubt and disappointment; few men ever worshipped Freedom with half such unquestioning faith as did the American Negro for two centuries. To him, so far as he thought and dreamed, slavery was indeed the sum of all villainies, the cause of all sorrow, the root of all prejudice; Emancipation was the key to a promised land of sweeter beauty than ever stretched before the eyes of wearied Israelites. In song and exhortation swelled one refrain—Liberty; in his tears and curses the God he implored had Freedom in his right hand. At last it came,—suddenly, fearfully, like a dream. With one wild carnival of blood and passion came the message in his own plaintive cadences:—

“Shout, O children! Shout, you’re free! For God has bought your liberty!”

Years have passed away since then,—ten, twenty, forty; forty years of national life, forty years of renewal and development, and yet the swarthy spectre

sits in its accustomed seat at the Nation’s feast. In vain do we cry to this our vastest social problem:—

“Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves Shall never tremble!”

The Nation has not yet found peace from its sins; the freedman has not yet found in freedom his promised land. Whatever of good may have come in these years of change, the shadow of a deep disappointment rests upon the Negro people,—a disappointment all the more bitter because the unattained ideal was unbounded save by the simple ignorance of a lowly people.

The first decade was merely a prolongation of the vain search for freedom, the boon that seemed ever barely to elude their grasp,—like a tantalizing will-o’-the-wisp, maddening and misleading the headless host. The holocaust of war, the terrors of the Ku-Klux Klan, the lies of carpet-baggers, the disorganization of industry, and the contradictory advice of friends and foes, left the bewildered serf with no new watchword beyond the old cry for freedom. As the time flew, however, he began to grasp a new idea. The ideal of liberty demanded for its attainment powerful means, and these the Fifteenth Amendment gave him. The ballot, which before he had looked upon as a visible sign of freedom, he now regarded as the chief means of gaining and perfecting the liberty with which war had partially endowed him. And why not? Had not votes made war and emancipated millions? Had not votes enfranchised the freedmen? Was anything impossible to a power that had done all this? A million black men started with renewed zeal to vote themselves into the kingdom. So the decade flew away, the revolution of 1876 came, and left the half-free serf weary, wondering, but still inspired. Slowly but steadily, in the following years, a new vision began gradually to replace the dream of political power,—a powerful movement, the rise of another ideal to guide the unguided, another pillar of fire by night after a clouded day. It was the ideal of “book-learning”; the curiosity, born of compulsory ignorance, to know and test the power of the cabalistic letters of the white man, the longing to know. Here at last seemed to have been discovered the mountain path to Canaan; longer than the highway of Emancipation and law, steep and rugged, but straight, leading to heights high enough to overlook life.



Up the new path the advance guard toiled, slowly, heavily, doggedly; only those who have watched and guided the faltering feet, the misty minds, the dull understandings, of the dark pupils of these schools know how faithfully, how piteously, this people strove to learn. It was weary work. The cold statistician wrote down the inches of progress here and there, noted also where here and there a foot had slipped or some one had fallen. To the tired climbers, the horizon was ever dark, the mists were often cold, the Canaan was always dim and far away. If, however, the vistas disclosed as yet no goal, no resting-place, little but flattery and criticism, the journey at least gave leisure for reflection and self-examination; it changed the child of Emancipation to the youth with dawning self-consciousness, self-realization, self-respect. In those sombre forests of his striving his own soul rose before him, and he saw himself,—darkly as through a veil; and yet he saw in himself some faint revelation of his power, of his mission. He began to have a dim feeling that, to attain his place in the world, he must be himself, and not another. For the first time he sought to analyze the burden he bore upon his back, that dead-weight of social degradation partially masked behind a half-named Negro problem. He felt his poverty; without a cent, without a home, without land, tools, or savings, he had entered into competition with rich, landed, skilled neighbors. To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardships. He felt the weight of his ignorance,—not simply of letters, but of life, of business, of the humanities; the accumulated sloth and shirking and awkwardness of decades and centuries shackled his hands and feet. Nor was his burden all poverty and ignorance. The red stain of bastardy, which two centuries of systematic legal defilement of Negro women had stamped upon his race, meant not only the loss of ancient African chastity, but also the hereditary weight of a mass of corruption from white adulterers, threatening almost the obliteration of the Negro home.

A people thus handicapped ought not to be asked to race with the world, but rather allowed to give all its time and thought to its own social problems. But alas! while sociologists gleefully count his bastards and his prostitutes, the very soul of the toiling, sweating black man is darkened by the shadow of a vast despair. Men call the shadow prejudice, and learnedly

explain it as the natural defence of culture against barbarism, learning against ignorance, purity against crime, the “higher” against the “lower” races. To which the Negro cries Amen! and swears that to so much of this strange prejudice as is founded on just homage to civilization, culture, righteousness, and progress, he humbly bows and meekly does obeisance. But before that nameless prejudice that leaps beyond all this he stands helpless, dismayed, and well-nigh speechless; before that personal disrespect and mockery, the ridicule and systematic humiliation, the distortion of fact and wanton license of fancy, the cynical ignoring of the better and the boisterous welcoming of the worse, the all-pervading desire to inculcate disdain for everything black, from Toussaint to the devil,—before this there rises a sickening despair that would disarm and discourage any nation save that black host to whom “discouragement” is an unwritten word.

But the facing of so vast a prejudice could not but bring the inevitable self-questioning, self-disparagement, and lowering of ideals which ever accompany repression and breed in an atmosphere of contempt and hate. Whisperings and portents came home upon the four winds: Lo! we are diseased and dying, cried the dark hosts; we cannot write, our voting is vain; what need of education, since we must always cook and serve? And the Nation echoed and enforced this self-criticism, saying: Be content to be servants, and nothing more; what need of higher culture for half-men? Away with the black man’s ballot, by force or fraud,—and behold the suicide of a race! Nevertheless, out of the evil came something of good,—the more careful adjustment of education to real life, the clearer perception of the Negroes’ social responsibilities, and the sobering realization of the meaning of progress.

So dawned the time of Sturm und Drang: storm and stress to-day rocks our little boat on the mad waters of the world-sea; there is within and without the sound of conflict, the burning of body and rending of soul; inspiration strives with doubt, and faith with vain questionings. The bright ideals of the past,—physical freedom, political power, the training of brains and the training of hands,—all these in turn have waxed and waned, until even the last grows dim and overcast. Are they all wrong,—all false? No, not that, but each alone was over-simple and incomplete,—the dreams of a credulous race-childhood, or

the fond imaginings of the other world which does not know and does not want to know our power. To be really true, all these ideals must be melted and welded into one. The training of the schools we need to-day more than ever,—the training of deft hands, quick eyes and ears, and above all the broader, deeper, higher culture of gifted minds and pure hearts. The power of the ballot we need in sheer self-defence,—else what shall save us from a second slavery? Freedom, too, the long-sought, we still seek,—the freedom of life and limb, the freedom to work and think, the freedom to love and aspire. Work, culture, liberty,—all these we need, not singly but together, not successively but together, each growing and aiding each, and all striving toward that vaster ideal that swims before the Negro people, the ideal of human brotherhood, gained through the unifying ideal of Race; the ideal of fostering and developing the traits and talents of the Negro, not in opposition to or contempt for other races, but rather in large conformity to the greater ideals of the American Republic, in order that some day on American soil two world-races may give each to each those characteristics both so sadly lack. We the darker ones come even now not altogether empty-handed: there are to-day no truer exponents of the pure human spirit of the Declaration of Independence than the American Negroes; there is no true American music but the wild sweet melodies of the Negro slave; the American fairy tales and folklore

are Indian and African; and, all in all, we black men seem the sole oasis of simple faith and reverence in a dusty desert of dollars and smartness. Will America be poorer if she replace her brutal dyspeptic blundering with light-hearted but determined Negro humility? or her coarse and cruel wit with loving jovial good-humor? or her vulgar music with the soul of the Sorrow Songs?

Merely a concrete test of the underlying principles of the great republic is the Negro Problem, and the spiritual striving of the freedmen's sons is the travail of souls whose burden is almost beyond the measure of their strength, but who bear it in the name of an historic race, in the name of this the land of their fathers' fathers, and in the name of human opportunity.

And now what I have briefly sketched in large outline let me on coming pages tell again in many ways, with loving emphasis and deeper detail, that men may listen to the striving in the souls of black folk.

#### SEE ALSO

African American Religions: African American Religious Leaders

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W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903. Accessed from: [http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/treatise/dubois/dubois\\_01.htm](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/treatise/dubois/dubois_01.htm). The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm> (Nov. 18, 2002).

## H. L. Mencken, "In Memoriam: W.J.B." (1925)

*Henry Louis Mencken was the most prominent newspaperman, book reviewer, social critic, and political commentator of the first half of the twentieth century. "The Great Commoner" William Jennings Bryan was a frequent target of Mencken's sharp wit. Mencken criticized Bryan as an ignorant, religious, underclass leader whose fateful climax came during the Scopes Trial.*

In its first form this was printed in the Baltimore *Evening Sun*, July 27, 1925, the day after Bryan's death at Dayton, Tenn. I reworked it for the *American Mercury*, Oct., 1925. My adventures as a newspaper correspondent at the Scopes trial are told in my *Newspaper Days* (New York, 1943).

Has it been duly marked by historians that William Jennings Bryan's last secular act on this globe of sin was to catch flies? A curious detail, and not without its sardonic overtones. He was the most sedulous fly-catcher in American history, and in many ways the most successful. His quarry, of course, was not *Musca domestica* but *Homo neandertalensis*. For forty years he tracked it with coo and bellow, up and down the rustic backways of the Republic. Wherever the flambeaux of chautauqua smoked and guttered, and the bilge of idealism ran in the veins, and Baptist pastors dammed the brooks with the sanctified, and men gathered who were weary and heavy laden, and their wives who were full of Peruna and as fecund as the shad (*Alosa sapidissima*), there the indefatigable Jennings set up his traps and spread his bait. He knew every country town in the South and West, and he could crowd the most remote of them to suffocation by simply winding his horn. The city proletariat, transiently flustered by him in 1896, quickly penetrated his buncombe and would have no more of him; the cockney gallery jeered him at every Democratic national convention for twenty-five years. But out where the grass grows high, and the horned cattle dream away the lazy afternoons, and men still fear the powers and principalities of the air—out there between the corn-rows he held his old puissance to the end. There was no need of beaters to drive in his game. The

news that he was coming was enough. For miles the flivver dust would choke the roads. And when he rose at the end of the day to discharge his Message there would be such breathless attention, such a rapt and enchanted ecstasy, such a sweet rustle of amens as the world had not known since Johann fell to Herod's ax.

There was something peculiarly fitting in the fact that his last days were spent in a one-horse Tennessee village, beating off the flies and gnats, and that death found him there. The man felt at home in such simple and Christian scenes. He liked people who sweated freely, and were not debauched by the refinements of the toilet. Making his progress up and down the Main Street of little Dayton, surrounded by gaping primates from the upland valleys of the Cumberland Range, his coat laid aside, his bare arms and hairy chest shining damply, his bald head sprinkled with dust—so accoutred and on display, he was obviously happy. He liked getting up early in the morning, to the tune of cocks crowing on the dunghill. He liked the heavy, greasy victuals of the farmhouse kitchen. He liked country lawyers, country pastors, all country people. He liked country sounds and country smells.

I believe that this liking was sincere—perhaps the only sincere thing in the man. His nose showed no uneasiness when a hillman in faded overalls and hickory shirt accosted him on the street, and besought him for light upon some mystery of Holy Writ. The simian gabble of the crossroads was not gabble to him, but wisdom of an occult and superior sort. In the presence of city folks he was palpably uneasy. Their clothes, I suspect, annoyed him, and he was suspicious of their too delicate manners. He knew all the while that they were laughing at him—if not at his baroque theology, then at least at his alpaca pantaloon. But the yokels never laughed at him. To them he was not the huntsman but the prophet, and toward the end, as he gradually forsook mundane politics for more ghostly concerns, they began to elevate him in their hierarchy. When he died he was the peer of Abraham. His old enemy, Wilson, aspiring to

the same white and shining robe, came down with a thump. But Bryan made the grade. His place in Tennessee hagiography is secure. If the village barber saved any of his hair, then it is curing gallstones down there today.

But what label will he bear in more urbane regions? One, I fear, of a far less flattering kind. Bryan lived too long, and descended too deeply into the mud, to be taken seriously hereafter by fully literate men, even of the kind who write schoolbooks. There was a scattering of sweet words in his funeral notices, but it was no more than a response to conventional sentimentality. The best verdict the most romantic editorial writer could dredge up, save in the humorless South, was to the general effect that his imbecilities were excused by his earnestness—that under his clowning, as under that of the juggler of Notre Dame, there was the zeal of a steadfast soul. But this was apology, not praise; precisely the same thing might be said of Mary Baker G. Eddy. The truth is that even Bryan's sincerity will probably yield to what is called, in other fields, definitive criticism. Was he sincere when he opposed imperialism in the Philippines, or when he fed it with deserving Democrats in Santo Domingo? Was he sincere when he tried to shove the Prohibitionists under the table, or when he seized their banner and began to lead them with loud whoops? Was he sincere when he bellowed against war, or when he dreamed of himself as a tin soldier in uniform, with a grave reserved at Arlington among the generals? Was he sincere when he fawned over Champ Clark, or when he betrayed Clark? Was he sincere when he pleaded for tolerance in New York, or when he bawled for the faggot and the stake in Tennessee?

This talk of sincerity, I confess, fatigues me. If the fellow was sincere, then so was P. T. Barnum. The word is disgraced and degraded by such uses. He was, in fact, a charlatan, a mountebank, a zany without sense or dignity. His career brought him into contact with the first men of his time; he preferred the company of rustic ignoramuses. It was hard to believe, watching him at Dayton, that he had traveled, that he had been received in civilized societies, that he had been a high officer of state. He seemed only a poor clod like those around him, deluded by a childish theology, the foe. That foe, alas, refused to be alarmed. It insisted upon seeing the whole battle as a comedy. Even Darrow, who knew better, occasionally yielded to the prevailing spirit. One day he lured poor Bryan into the folly I have mentioned: his astounding argument against the notion that man is a mammal. I am glad I heard it, for otherwise I'd never believe it. There stood the man who had been thrice a candidate for the Presidency of the Republic—there he stood in the glare of the world, uttering stuff that a boy of eight would laugh at. The artful Darrow led him on: he repeated it, ranted for it, bellowed it in his cracked voice. So he was prepared for the final slaughter. He came into life a hero, a Galahad, in bright and shining armor. He was passing out a poor mountebank.

#### SEE ALSO

Popular Culture: Religion in the News; Science

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H. L. Mencken, "In Memoriam: W. J. B.," 1925, in *The American Scene*, copyright © 1965 by Alfred A. Knopf, a division of Random House, Inc. Used by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, a division of Random House, Inc.

## Cecil B. DeMille, "The Screen as a Religious Teacher," in *Theatre* (June 1927)

*An immensely popular movie director and producer in the first half of the twentieth century, Cecil B. DeMille's films were marked by their epic style, big budgets, mass crowd scenes, and biblical themes. His short essay on "The Screen as a Religious Teacher" defends his use of film as an appropriate medium for educating millions of viewers around the world about "the Ministry, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of Jesus—the greatest story ever told."*

To give the peoples of the modern world the same opportunity to see the wondrous life-drama of Jesus as was given to the citizens of Judea nineteen hundred years ago has been the object of my endeavors in making *The King of Kings*. My purpose is, of course, dramatic entertainment; drama in its highest sense as defined in the immortal apothegm of Aristotle. And in this connection I wish to refer to the assemblage of representatives of more than thirty religious sects and beliefs who gathered at the studio last August, opening the film-taking with a service of prayer.

What brought these ministers of conflicting faiths together? Not only all the religions believed in by European peoples and Americans were represented, but also the Buddhist and Mohammedan faiths. It was the first time in history that two of the sects had ever appeared together in public. The reason for their friendly, co-operating presence lay in the belief of these religious leaders that the motion-picture medium possessed the power to carry the story of Jesus to millions who might not otherwise be sympathetic to it, or who would find difficulty in grasping it because of racial or linguistic reasons.

A dozen years ago such an attempt as mine would have been impossible. Movies then would have been regarded as too cheap and banal a medium, whereas today they are associated with the greatest of themes and embody the thoughts of many of the world's greatest thinkers. Twelve years ago the subject would not have appealed for another reason, namely, that religion was a thing conventionally accepted by the

great majority of people, but too often disregarded. The World War shook everything to its foundations. Old standards and old ideas would not fit, and new theories and principles were strained after, only to be found worthless. The same people are groping today for a foundation, for proven standards of acceptance. The ideals of the Man of Nazareth have persisted throughout all the centuries, and there is an almost universal demand for the return to greater knowledge of Him and the influence of His mission. The power of the screen as a vital factor in education has been thoroughly proven. Consequently the focusing of this power on the teachings of Jesus will be of tremendous value.

I am not referring only to those who are termed Christians. The fundamental truths brought out through the ministry of Jesus cannot be confined to belief, race, nationality or social position. Whether he believes that Jesus was a divine being who descended to humanity or a human being who rose to divinity, it is not after all tremendously important in view of the fact that His ideals apply to all of us.

Thus it is our earliest desire to offend no one's religious beliefs, but to benefit uncounted millions of the world's population by telling of the Ministry, Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus—the greatest story ever told. It was with the utmost humility that I approached this subject, and it was with the deepest reverence that the work of visualizing it was done.

Permit me to illustrate this fact by two or three happenings among the sets or on location which demonstrate the power of the scenes over those who worked in their midst. When we were filming Jesus teaching the Lord's Prayer to the assembled multitude on the temple steps, there followed a moment's silence, after which the set orchestra played softly the Doxology. Moved by the emotion of the scene, one of the players began to sing the words, and immediately the entire group, numbering a thousand, spontaneously chorused the soul-stirring song in unison.

On another occasion, as we were closing our work of representing the beautiful scenes of the Resurrection and the hour approached Christmas Eve, the great pipe organ on the set pealed forth one after another of the loved carols of Yuletide. The actors and actresses forgot themselves and sang these carols as their religious forebears had sung them in front of the churches and homes of Merrie England centuries ago.

The children who were on the set for the six or eight months of our picture-taking received a religious education the equivalent of at least two or three years' plodding attendance in a Bible class. I believe it will be found that, just as appropriate motion pictures greatly shorten the pupils' acquirement of the essential factors of history, geography and other literary studies, so Bible pictures will enable the boys and girls to get the outlines of the Old and New Testament stories in briefest time with the greatest pleasure

and delight and with the utmost reverence for the subjects and the arousing of the religious emotions.

At no time in the world's history has humanity so hungered for the truth. Science has declared there is a God. And a groping, eager world, cries, "How may we find Him?"

The answer goes back two thousand years, to a Man who stood with a little band of ragged followers in the midst of bigotry, cruelty and ignorance lighting with the torch of His own life the flame of hope in the heart of man and showing us by sublime Sacrifice—Death and Resurrection—our own Immortality.

**SEE ALSO**

Popular Culture: Film

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Cecil B. DeMille, "The Screen as a Religious Teacher," in *Theatre*, June 1927.

# The Motion Picture Production Code of 1930

*Adopted by The Association of Motion Picture Producers, Inc., and The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc., in March of 1930, The Motion Picture Production Code of 1930 governed movies made from 1930 to 1968. It recognizes that movies exert a wide influence over the American public and promises to use that power responsibly by producing movies that tend to improve the moral character of the human race.*

Motion picture producers recognize the high trust and confidence which have been placed in them by the people of the world and which have made motion pictures a universal form of entertainment.

They recognize their responsibility to the public because of this trust and because entertainment and art are important influences in the life of a nation.

Hence, through regarding motion pictures primarily as entertainment without any explicit purpose of teaching or propaganda, they know that the motion picture within its own field of entertainment may be directly responsible for spiritual or moral progress, for higher types of social life, and for much correct thinking.

During the rapid transition from silent to talking pictures they have realized the necessity and the opportunity of subscribing to a Code to govern the production of talking pictures and of reacknowledging this responsibility.

On their part, they ask from the public and from public leaders a sympathetic understanding of their purposes and problems and a spirit of cooperation that will allow them the freedom and opportunity necessary to bring the motion picture to a still higher level of wholesome entertainment for all the people.

## General Principles

1. No picture shall be produced which will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence the sympathy of the audience shall never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin.

2. Correct standards of life, subject only to the re-

quirements of drama and entertainment, shall be presented.

3. Law, natural or human, shall not be ridiculed, nor shall sympathy be created for its violation.

## Particular Applications

### *I. Crimes against the Law*

These shall never be presented in such a way as to throw sympathy with the crime as against law and justice or to inspire others with a desire for imitation.

#### 1. *Murder*

a. The technique of murder must be presented in a way that will not inspire imitation.

b. Brutal killings are not to be presented in detail.

c. Revenge in modern times shall not be justified.

#### 2. *Methods of Crime* should not be explicitly presented.

a. Theft, robbery, safe-cracking, and dynamiting of trains, mines, buildings, etc., should not be detailed in method.

b. Arson must be subject to the same safeguards.

c. The use of firearms should be restricted to essentials.

d. Methods of smuggling should not be presented.

#### 3. *Illegal drug traffic* must never be presented.

#### 4. *The use of liquor* in American life, when not required by the plot or for proper characterization, will not be shown.

### *II. Sex*

The sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld. Pictures shall not infer that low forms of sex relationship are the accepted or common thing.

1. *Adultery*, sometimes necessary plot material, must not be explicitly treated or justified or presented attractively.

2. *Scenes of Passion*

- a. They should not be introduced when not essential to the plot.
  - b. Excessive and lustful kissing, lustful embraces, suggestive postures and gestures, are not to be shown.
  - c. In general passion should so be treated that these scenes do not stimulate the lower and baser elements.
3. *Seduction or Rape*
    - a. They should never be more than suggested, and only when essential for the plot, and even then never shown by explicit method.
    - b. They are never the proper subject for comedy.
  4. *Sex perversion* or any inference to it is forbidden.
  5. *White slavery* shall not be treated.
  6. *Miscegenation* (sex relationship between white and black races) is forbidden.
  7. *Sex Hygiene* and venereal disease are not subjects for motion pictures.
  8. Scenes of *actual child birth*, in fact or in silhouette, are never to be presented.
  9. *Children's sex organs* are never to be exposed.

### **III. Vulgarity**

The treatment of low, disgusting, unpleasant, though not necessarily evil, subjects should be subject always to the dictate of good taste and a regard for the sensibilities of the audience.

### **IV. Obscenity**

Obscenity in word, gesture, references, song, joke, or by suggestion (even when likely to be understood only by part of the audience) is forbidden.

### **V. Profanity**

Pointed profanity (this includes the words, God, Lord, Jesus, Christ—unless used reverently—Hell, S.O.B., damn, Gawd), or every other profane or vulgar expression however used, is forbidden.

### **VI. Costume**

1. *Complete nudity* is never permitted. This includes nudity in fact or in silhouette, or any lecherous or licentious notice thereof by other characters in the pictures.
2. *Undressing scenes* should be avoided, and never used save where essential to the plot.
3. *Indecent or undue exposure* is forbidden.

4. *Dancing costumes* intended to permit undue exposure or indecent movements in the dance are forbidden.

### **VII. Dances**

1. Dances suggesting or representing sexual actions or indecent passion are forbidden.
2. Dances which emphasize indecent movements are to be regarded as obscene.

### **VIII. Religion**

1. No film or episode may throw *ridicule* on any religious faith.
2. *Ministers of religion* in their character as ministers of religion should not be used as comic characters or as villains.
3. *Ceremonies* of any definite religion should be carefully and respectfully handled.

### **IX. Locations**

The treatment of bedrooms must be governed by good taste and delicacy.

### **X. National Feelings**

1. *The use of the Flag* shall be consistently respectful.
2. The history, institutions, prominent people and citizenry of other nations shall be represented fairly.

### **XI. Titles**

Salacious, indecent, or obscene titles shall not be used.

### **XII. Repellent Subjects**

The following subjects must be treated within the careful limits of good taste:

1. *Actual hangings* or electrocutions as legal punishments for crime.
2. *Third degree* methods.
3. *Brutality* and possible gruesomeness.
4. *Branding* of people or animals.
5. *Apparent cruelty* to children or animals.
6. *The sale of women*, or a woman selling her virtue.
7. *Surgical operations*.

### **The Reasons Supporting Preamble of Code**

1. Theatrical motion pictures, that is, pictures intended for the theatre as distinct from pictures in-



tended for churches, schools, lecture halls, educational movements, social reform movements, etc., are primarily to be regarded as ENTERTAINMENT.

Mankind has always recognized the importance of entertainment and its value in rebuilding the bodies and souls of human beings.

But it has always recognized that entertainment can be of a character either HELPFUL or HARMFUL to the human race, and in consequence has clearly distinguished between:

- a. *Entertainment which tends to improve* the race, or at least to re-create and rebuild human beings exhausted with the realities of life; and
- b. *Entertainment which tends to degrade* human beings, or to lower their standards of life and living.

Hence the MORAL IMPORTANCE of entertainment is something which has been universally recognized. It enters intimately into the lives of men and women and affects them closely; it occupies their minds and affections during leisure hours; and ultimately touches the whole of their lives. A man may be judged by his standard of entertainment as easily as by the standard of his work.

So *correct entertainment raises* the whole of a nation.

*Wrong entertainment lowers* the whole living conditions and moral ideas of a race.

*Note*, for example, the healthy reactions to healthful, moral sports, like baseball, golf; the unhealthy reactions to sports like cock-fighting, bull-fighting, bear baiting, etc.

Note, too, the effect on ancient nations of gladiatorial combats, the obscene plays of Roman times, etc.

## 2. Motion pictures are very important as art.

Though a new art, possibly a combination art, it has the same object as the other arts, the presentation of human thought, emotion, and experience, in terms of an appeal to the soul through the senses.

Here, as in entertainment:

*Art enters intimately* into the lives of human beings.

Art can be *morally good*, lifting men to higher levels.

This has been done through good music, great painting, authentic fiction, poetry, drama.

Art can be *morally evil* in its effects. This is the case clearly enough with unclean art, indecent books, suggestive drama. The effect on the lives of men and women is obvious.

Note: It has often been argued that art in itself is unmoral, neither good nor bad. This is perhaps true of the THING which is music, painting, poetry, etc. But the thing is the PRODUCT of some person's mind, and the intention of that mind was either good or bad morally when it produced the thing. Besides, the thing has its EFFECT upon those who come into contact with it. In both these ways, that is, as a product of a mind and as the cause of definite effects, it has a deep moral significance and an unmistakable moral quality.

Hence: The motion pictures, which are the most popular of modern arts for the masses, have their moral quality from the intention of the minds which produce them and from their effects on the moral lives and reactions of their audiences. This gives them a most important morality.

1. They *reproduce* the morality of the men who use the pictures as a medium for the expression of their ideas and ideals.
2. They *affect* the moral standards of those who through the screen take in these ideas and ideals.

In the case of the motion pictures, this effect may be particularly emphasized because no art has so quick and so widespread an appeal to the masses. It has become in an incredibly short period *the art of the multitudes*.

## 3. The motion picture, because of its importance as an entertainment and because of the trust placed in it by the peoples of the world, has special MORAL OBLIGATIONS.

A. Most arts appeal to the mature. This art appeals at once to *every class*, immature, developed, undeveloped, law abiding, criminal. Music has its grades for different classes; so has literature and drama. This art of the motion picture, combining as it does the two fundamental appeals of looking at a *picture* and *listening to a story*, at once reaches every class of society.

B. By reason of the mobility of a film and the ease of picture distribution, and because of the possibility of duplicating positives in large quantities, this art reaches *places* unpenetrated by other forms of art.

C. Because of these two facts, it is difficult to produce films intended for only certain classes of people. The exhibitor's theatres are built for the masses, for the cultivated and the rude, the mature and the immature, the self-respecting and the criminal. Films, unlike books and music, can with difficulty be confined to certain selected groups.

D. The latitude given to film material cannot, in consequence, be as wide as the latitude given to *book material*. In addition:

- a. A book describes; a film vividly presents. One presents on a cold page; the other by apparently living people.
- b. A book reaches the mind through words merely; a film reaches the eyes and ears through the reproduction of actual events.
- c. The reaction of a reader to a book depends largely on the keenness of the reader's imagination; the reaction to a film depends on the vividness of presentation.

Hence many things which might be described or suggested in a book could not possibly be presented in a film.

E. This is also true when comparing the film with the newspaper.

- a. Newspapers present by description, films by actual presentation.
- b. Newspapers are after the fact and present things as having taken place; the film gives the events in the process of enactment and with the apparent reality of life.

F. Everything possible in a *play* is not possible in a film.

- a. Because of the *larger audience of the film* and its consequential mixed character. Psychologically, the larger the audience, the lower the moral mass resistance to suggestion.
- b. Because through light, enlargement of character,

presentation, scenic emphasis, etc., the screen story is *brought closer* to the audience than the play.

- c. The enthusiasm for and interest in the film actors and actresses, developed beyond anything of the sort in history, makes the audience largely sympathetic toward the characters they portray and the stories in which they figure. Hence the audience is more ready to confuse actor and actress and the characters they portray, and it is most receptive of the emotions and ideals presented by their favorite stars.

G. *Small communities*, remote from sophistication and from the hardening process which often takes place in the ethical and moral standards of groups in larger cities, are easily and readily reached by any sort of film.

H. The grandeur of mass settings, large action, spectacular features, etc., affects and arouses more intensely the emotional side of the audience.

In general, the mobility, popularity, accessibility, emotional appeal, vividness, straightforward presentation of fact in the film make for more intimate contact with a larger audience and for greater emotional appeal. Hence the larger moral responsibilities of the motion pictures.

### Reasons Supporting the General Principles

1. No picture shall be produced which will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence, the sympathy of the audience should never be thrown on the side of crime, wrong-doing, evil or sin.

This is done:

1. When *evil* is made to appear *attractive* or *alluring* and good is made to appear *unattractive*.
2. When the *sympathy* of the audience is thrown on the side of crime, wrong-doing, evil, sin. The same thing is true of a film that would throw sympathy against goodness, honor, innocence, purity or honesty.

Note: Sympathy with a person who sins is not the same as sympathy with the sin or crime of which he is guilty. We may feel sorry for the plight of the mur-

derer or even understand the circumstances which led him to his crime. We may not feel sympathy for the wrong which he has done.

The *presentation of evil* is often essential for art or fiction or drama.

This in itself is not wrong provided:

- a. That evil is *not presented alluringly*. Even if later in the film the evil is condemned or punished, it must not be allowed to appear so attractive that the audience's emotions are drawn to desire or approve so strongly that later the condemnation is forgotten and only the apparent joy of the sin remembered.
- b. That throughout, the audience feels sure that *evil is wrong and good is right*.

2. Correct standards of life shall, as far as possible, be presented.

A *wide knowledge of life and living* is made possible through the film. When right standards are consistently presented, the motion picture exercises the most powerful influences. It builds character, develops right ideals, inculcates correct principles, and all this in the attractive story form.

If motion pictures consistently *hold up for admiration high types of characters* and present stories that will affect lives for the better, they can become the most powerful and natural force for the improvement of mankind.

3. Law, natural or human, shall not be ridiculed, nor shall sympathy be created for its violation.

By *natural law* is understood the law which is written in the hearts of all mankind, the great underlying principles of right and justice dictated by conscience.

By *human law* is understood the law written by civilized nations.

1. *The presentation of crimes* against the law is *often necessary* for the carrying out of the plot. But the presentation must not throw sympathy with the crime as against the law nor with the criminal as against those who punish him.
2. *The courts of the land* should not be presented as unjust. This does not mean that a single court may not be represented as unjust, much less that a single court official must not be presented this

way. But the court system of the country must not suffer as a result of this presentation.

### Reasons Underlying Particular Applications

#### *Preliminary:*

1. *Sin and evil* enter into the story of human beings and hence in themselves *are dramatic material*.

2. In the use of this material, it must be distinguished between *sin which repels* by its very nature, and *sins which often attract*.

- a. In the first class come murder, most theft, many legal crimes, lying, hypocrisy, cruelty, etc.
- b. In the second class come sex sins, sins and crimes of apparent heroism, such as banditry, daring thefts, leadership in evil, organized crime, revenge, etc.

The first class needs far less care in treatment, as sins and crimes of this class are naturally unattractive. The audience instinctively condemns and is repelled. Hence the important objective must be to avoid the hardening of the audience, especially of those who are young and impressionable, to the thought and fact of crime. People can become accustomed even to murder, cruelty, brutality, and repellent crimes, if these are sufficiently repeated. The second class needs real care in handling, as the response of human natures to their appeal is obvious. This is treated more fully below.

3. A careful distinction can be made between films intended for *general distribution*, and films intended for use in theatres restricted to a *limited audience*. Themes and plots quite appropriate for the latter would be altogether out of place and dangerous in the former.

Note: In general the practice of using a general theatre and limiting its patronage during the showing of a certain film to "Adults Only" is not completely satisfactory and is only partially effective.

However, maturer minds may easily understand and accept without harm subject matter in plots which do younger people positive harm.

Hence: If there should be created a special type of theatre, catering exclusively to an adult audience, for plays of this character (plays with problem themes, difficult discussions and maturer treatment) it would seem to afford an outlet, which does not now exist,

for pictures unsuitable for general distribution but permissible for exhibitions to a restricted audience.

### ***I. Crimes against the Law***

The treatment of crimes against the law must not:

1. *Teach methods of crime.*
2. *Inspire potential criminals with a desire for imitation.*
3. *Make criminals seem heroic and justified.*

*Revenge* in modern times shall not be justified. In lands and ages of less developed civilization and moral principles, revenge may sometimes be presented. This would be the case especially in places where no law exists to cover the crime because of which revenge is committed.

Because of its evil consequences, the drug traffic should not be presented in any form. The existence of the trade should not be brought to the attention of audiences.

*The use of liquor* should never be excessively presented even in picturing countries where its use is legal. In scenes from American life, the necessities of plot and proper characterization alone justify its use. And in this case, it should be shown with moderation.

### ***II. Sex***

Out of regard to the sanctity of marriage and the home, the *triangle*, that is, the love of a third party for one already married, needs careful handling. The treatment should not throw sympathy against marriage as an institution. *Scenes of passion* must be treated with an honest acknowledgment of human nature and its normal reactions. Many scenes cannot be presented without arousing dangerous emotions on the part of immature, the young or the *criminal classes*.

Even within the limits of *pure love*, certain facts have been universally regarded by lawmakers as outside the limits of safe presentation.

In the case of *impure love*, the love which society has always regarded as wrong and which has been banned by divine law, the following are important:

1. Impure love must *not* be presented as *attractive and beautiful*.
2. It must *not* be the subject of *comedy or farce*, or treated as material for *laughter*.

3. It must *not* be presented in such a way as to *arouse passion* or morbid curiosity on the part of the audience.

4. It must *not* be made to seem *right and permissible*.

5. In general, it must *not* be *detailed* in method and manner.

### ***III. Vulgarity;***

### ***IV Obscenity;***

***V. Profanity***, hardly need further explanation than is contained in the Code.

### ***VI. Costume***

#### *General Principles*

1. The effect of nudity or semi-nudity upon the normal man or woman, and much more upon the young and upon the immature persons, has been honestly recognized by all lawmakers and moralists.

2. Hence the fact that the nude or semi-nude body may be *beautiful* does not make its use in the films moral. For, in addition to its beauty, the effect of the nude or semi-nude body on the normal individual must be taken into consideration.

3. Nudity or semi-nudity used simply to put a "*punch*" into a picture comes under the head of immoral actions. It is immoral in its effect on the average audience.

4. Nudity can never be permitted as being *necessary for the plot*. Semi-nudity must not result in undue or indecent exposure.

5. *Transparent or translucent materials* and silhouettes frequently more suggestive than actual exposure.

### ***VII. Dances***

Dancing in general is recognized as an *art* and as a *beautiful* form of expressing human emotions.

But dances which suggest or represent sexual actions, whether performed solo or with two or more, dances intended to excite the emotional reaction of an audience, dances with movement of the breasts, excessive body movements while the feet are stationary, violate decency and are wrong.

### ***VIII. Religion***

The reason why ministers of religion may not be comic characters or villains is simply because the attitude taken toward them may easily become the attitude taken toward religion in general. Religion is low-

ered in the minds of the audience because of the lowering of the audience's respect for a minister.

***IX. Locations***

Certain places are so closely and thoroughly associated with sexual life or with sexual sin that their use must be carefully limited.

***X. National Feelings***

The just rights, history, and feelings of any nation are entitled to consideration and respectful treatment.

***XI. Titles***

As the title of a picture is the brand on that particular

type of goods, it must conform to the ethical practices of all such honest business.

***XII. Repellent Subjects***

Such subjects are occasionally necessary for the plot. Their treatment must never offend good taste or injure the sensibilities of an audience.

**SEE ALSO**

Popular Culture: Film; Sexuality

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The Motion Picture Production Code of 1930.

## Langston Hughes, "Christ in Alabama" (1931)

*A prolific author of novels, short stories, plays, and poetry, Langston Hughes is known for his insightful portrayals of black life in America from the twenties through the sixties. As illustrated by the poem "Christ in Alabama," Hughes told the stories of African Americans in ways that reflected the whole of black culture including its suffering, its joys, and its unique language.*

### Christ in Alabama

Christ is a nigger,  
Beaten and black:  
Oh, bare your back!

Mary is His mother:  
Mammy of the South,  
Silence your mouth.

God is His father:  
White Master above  
Grant Him your love.

Most Holy bastard  
Of the bleeding mouth,  
Nigger Christ  
On the cross  
Of the South.

### SEE ALSO

African American Religions: African American Christianity

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Langston Hughes, "Christ in Alabama," 1931, in *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, copyright © 1994 by The Estate of Langston Hughes. Used by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, a division of Random House, Inc. Electronic format by permission of Harold Ober Associates Incorporated.

## John Dewey, excerpt from *A Common Faith* (1934)

*A prominent philosopher and educator, John Dewey developed a pragmatic philosophy based in part upon the notion that because truth is evolutionary in nature and based upon human experience, it can be shared by all who attempt to investigate it. As such Dewey conceived of democracy as a primary ethical value and helped formulate ways for Americans to infuse that value into their society through educational, political, and religious reform. In A Common Faith he argues that to harmonize oneself with the Universe (or with God), we should turn away from the dogmatic principles of historical religions and instead seek to adopt religious values that champion the ability of each individual to achieve this harmony by reference to her own unique experiences.*

The heart of my point, as far as I shall develop it in this first section, is that there is a difference between religion, a religion, and the religious; between anything that may be denoted by a noun substantive and the quality of experience that is designated by an adjective. It is not easy to find a definition of religion in the substantive sense that wins general acceptance. However, in the *Oxford Dictionary* I find the following: "Recognition on the part of man of some unseen higher power as having control of his destiny and as being entitled to obedience, reverence and worship."

This particular definition is less explicit in assertion of the supernatural character of the higher unseen power than are others that might be cited. It is, however, surcharged with implications having their source in ideas connected with the belief in the supernatural, characteristic of historic religions. Let us suppose that one familiar with the history of religions, including those called primitive, compares the definition with the variety of known facts and by means of the comparison sets out to determine just what the definition means. I think he will be struck by three facts that reduce the terms of the definition to such a low common denominator that little meaning is left.

He will note the "unseen powers" referred to have been conceived in a multitude of incompatible ways. Eliminating the differences, nothing is left beyond the

bare reference to something unseen and powerful. This has been conceived as the vague and undefined Mana of the Melanesians; the Kami of primitive Shintoism; the fetish of the Africans; spirits, having some human properties, that pervade natural places and animate natural forces; the ultimate and impersonal principle of Buddhism; the unmoved mover of Greek thought; the gods and semi-divine heroes of the Greek and Roman Pantheons; the personal and loving Providence of Christianity, omnipotent, and limited by a corresponding evil power; the arbitrary Will of Moslemism; the supreme legislator and judge of deism. And these are but a few of the outstanding varieties of ways in which the invisible power has been conceived.

There is no greater similarity in the ways in which obedience and reverence have been expressed. There has been worship of animals, of ghosts, of ancestors, phallic worship, as well as of a Being of dread power and of love and wisdom. Reverence has been expressed in the human sacrifices of the Peruvians and Aztecs; the sexual orgies of some Oriental religions; exorcisms and ablutions; the offering of the humble and contrite mind of the Hebrew prophet, the elaborate rituals of the Greek and Roman Churches. Not even sacrifice has been uniform; it is highly sublimated in Protestant denominations and in Moslemism. Where it has existed it has taken all kinds of forms and been directed to a great variety of powers and spirits. It has been used for expiation, for propitiation and for buying special favors. There is no conceivable purpose for which rites have not been employed.

Finally, there is no discernible unity in the moral motivations appealed to and utilized. They have been as far apart as fear of lasting torture, hope of enduring bliss in which sexual enjoyment has sometimes been a conspicuous element; mortification of the flesh and extreme asceticism; prostitution and chastity; wars to extirpate the unbeliever; persecution to convert or punish the unbeliever, and philanthropic zeal; servile

acceptance of imposed dogma, along with brotherly love and aspiration for a reign of justice among men.

I have, of course, mentioned only a sparse number of facts which fill volumes in any well-stocked library. It may be asked by those who do not like to look upon the darker side of the history of religions why the darker facts should be brought up. We all know that civilized man has a background of bestiality and superstition and that these elements are still with us. Indeed, have not some religions, including the most influential forms of Christianity, taught that the heart of man is totally corrupt? How could the course of religion in its entire sweep not be marked by practices that are shameful in their cruelty and lustfulness, and by beliefs that are degraded and intellectually incredible? What else than what we find could be expected, in the case of people having little knowledge and no secure method of knowing; with primitive institutions, and with so little control of natural forces that they lived in a constant state of fear?

I gladly admit that historic religions have been relative to the conditions of social culture in which peoples lived. Indeed, what I am concerned with is to press home the logic of this method of disposal of outgrown traits of past religions. Beliefs and practices in a religion that now prevails are by this logic relative to the present state of culture. If so much flexibility has obtained in the past regarding an unseen power, the way it affects human destiny, and the attitudes we are to take toward it, why should it be assumed that change in conception and action has now come to an end? The logic involved in getting rid of inconvenient aspects of past religions compels us to inquire how much in religions now accepted are survivals from outgrown cultures. It compels us to ask what conception of unseen powers and our relations to them would be consonant with the best achievements and aspirations of the present. It demands that in imagination we wipe the slate clean and start afresh by asking what would be the idea of the unseen, of the manner of its control over us and the ways in which reverence and obedience would be manifested, if whatever is basically religious in experience had the opportunity to express itself free from all historic encumbrances.

For we are forced to acknowledge that concretely there is no such thing as religion in the singular.

There is only a multitude of religions. "Religion" is a strictly collective term and the collection it stands for is not even of the kind illustrated in textbooks of logic. It has not the unity of a regiment or assembly but that of any miscellaneous aggregate. Attempts to prove the universality prove too much or too little. It is probable that religions have been universal in the sense that all the peoples we know anything about have had *a* religion. But the differences among them are so great and so shocking that any common element that can be extracted is meaningless. The idea that religion is universal proves too little in that the older apologists for Christianity seem to have been better advised than some modern ones in condemning every religion but one as an impostor, as at bottom some kind of demon worship or at any rate a superstitious figment. Choice among religions is imperative, and the necessity for choice leaves nothing of any force in the argument from universality. Moreover, when once we enter upon the road of choice, there is at once presented a possibility not yet generally realized.

For the historic increase of the ethical and ideal content of religions suggests that the process of purification may be carried further. It indicates that further choice is imminent in which certain values and functions in experience may be selected. This possibility is what I had in mind in speaking of the difference between the religious and a religion. I am not proposing a religion, but rather the emancipation of elements and outlooks that may be called religious. For the moment we have a religion, whether that of the Sioux Indian or of Judaism or of Christianity, that moment the ideal factors in experience that may be called religious take on a load that is not inherent in them, a load of current beliefs and of institutional practices that are irrelevant to them.

I can illustrate what I mean by a common phenomenon in contemporary life. It is widely supposed that a person who does not accept any religion is thereby shown to be a non-religious person. Yet it is conceivable that the present depression in religion is closely connected with the fact that religions now prevent, because of their weight of historic encumbrances, the religious quality of experience from coming to consciousness and finding the expression that is appropriate to present conditions, intellectual and moral. I be-



lieve that such is the case. I believe that many persons are so repelled from what exists as a religion by its intellectual and moral implications, that they are not even aware of attitudes in themselves that if they came to fruition would be genuinely religious. I hope that this remark may help make clear what I mean by the distinction between "religion" as a noun substantive and "religious" as adjectival.

To be somewhat more explicit, a religion (and as I have just said there is no such thing as religion in general) always signifies a special body of beliefs and practices having some kind of institutional organization, loose or tight. In contrast, the adjective "religious" denotes nothing in the way of a specifiable entity, either institutional or as a system of beliefs. It does not denote anything to which one can specifically point as one can point to this and that historic religion or existing church. For it does not denote anything that can exist by itself or that can be organized into a particular and distinctive form of existence. It denotes attitudes that may be taken toward every object and every proposed end or ideal.

Before, however, I develop my suggestion that realization of the distinction just made would operate to emancipate the religious quality from encumbrances that now smother or limit it, I must refer to a position that in some respects is similar in words to the position I have taken, but that in fact is a whole world removed from it. I have several times used the phrase "religious elements of experience." Now at present there is much talk, especially in liberal circles, of religious experience as vouching for the authenticity of certain beliefs and the desirability of certain practices, such as particular forms of prayer and worship. It is even asserted that religious experience is the ultimate basis of religion itself. The gulf between this position and that which I have taken is what I am now concerned to point out.

Those who hold to the notion that there is a definite kind of experience which is itself religious, by that very fact make out of it something specific, as a kind of experience that is marked off from experience as aesthetic, scientific, moral, political; from experience as companionship and friendship. But "religious" as a quality of experience signifies something that may belong to all these experiences. It is the polar opposite of some type of experience that can exist by itself. The

distinction comes out clearly when it is noted that the conception of this distinct kind of experience is used to validate a belief in some special kind of object and also to justify some special kind of practice.

The discussion may be made more definite by introducing, at this point, a particular illustration of this type of reasoning. A writer says: "I broke down from overwork and soon came to the verge of nervous prostration. One morning after a long and sleepless night . . . I resolved to stop drawing upon myself so continuously and begin drawing upon God. I determined to set apart a quiet time every day in which I could relate my life to its ultimate source, regain the consciousness that in God I live, move and have my being. That was thirty years ago. Since then I have had literally not one hour of darkness or despair."

This is an impressive record. I do not doubt its authenticity nor that of the experience related. It illustrates a religious aspect of experience. But it illustrates also the use of that quality to carry a super-imposed load of a particular religion. For having been brought up in the Christian religion, its subject interprets it in the terms of the personal God characteristic of that religion. Taoists, Buddhists, Moslems, persons of no religion including those who reject all supernatural influence and power, have had experiences similar in their effect. . . .

The intent of this discussion is not to deny the genuineness of the result nor its importance in life. It is not, save incidentally, to point out the possibility of a purely naturalistic explanation of the event. My purpose is to indicate what happens when religious experience is already set aside as something *sui generis*. The actual religious quality in the experience described is the *effect* produced, the better adjustment in life and its conditions, not the manner and cause of its production. The way in which the experience operated, its function, determines its religious value. If the reorientation actually occurs, it, and the sense of security and stability accompanying it, are forces on their own account. It takes place in different persons in a multitude of ways. It is sometimes brought about by a devotion to a cause; sometimes by a passage of poetry that opens a new perspective; sometimes as was the case with Spinoza—deemed an atheist in his day—through philosophical reflection.

I do not suppose for many minds the dislocation of the religious from a religion is easy to effect. Tradition and custom, especially when emotionally charged, are parts of the habits that have become one with our very being. But the possibility of the transfer is demonstrated by its actuality. Let us then for the moment drop the term "religious," and ask what are the attitudes that lend deep and enduring support to the processes of living. I have, for example, used the words "adjustment" and "orientation." What do they signify?

While the words "accommodation," "adaptation," and "adjustment" are frequently employed as synonyms, attitudes exist that are so different that for the sake of clear thought they should be discriminated. There are conditions we meet that cannot be changed. If they are particular and limited, we modify our own particular attitudes in accordance with them. Thus we accommodate ourselves to changes in weather, to alterations in income when we have no other recourse. When the external conditions are lasting we become inured, habituated, or as the process is now often called, conditioned. The two main traits of this attitude, which I should like to call accommodation, are that it affects *particular* modes of conduct, not the entire self, and that the process is mainly *passive*. It may, however, become general and then it becomes fatalistic resignation or submission. There are other attitudes toward the environment that are also particular but that are more active. We re-act against conditions and endeavor to change them to meet our wants and demands. Plays in a foreign language are "adapted" to meet the needs of an American audience. A house is rebuilt to suit changed conditions of the household; the telephone is invented to serve the demand for speedy communication at a distance; dry soils are irrigated so that they may bear abundant crops. Instead of accommodating ourselves to conditions, we modify conditions so that they will be accommodated to our wants and purposes. This process may be called adaptation.

Now both of these processes are often called by the more general name of adjustment, but there are also changes in ourselves in relation to the world in which we live that are much more inclusive and deep seated. They relate not to this and that want in relation to this and that condition of our surroundings, but per-

tain to our being in its entirety. Because of their scope, this modification of ourselves is enduring. It lasts through any amount of vicissitude of circumstances, internal and external. There is a composing and harmonizing of the various elements of our being such that, in spite of changes in the special conditions that surround us, these conditions are also arranged, settled, in relation to use. This attitude includes a note of submission. But it is voluntary, not externally imposed; and as voluntary it is something more than a mere Stoical resolution to endure unperturbed throughout the buffetings of fortune. It is more outgoing, more ready and glad, than the latter attitude, and it is more active than the former. And in calling it voluntary, it is not meant that it depends upon a particular resolve or volition. It is a change *of* will conceived as the organic plenitude of our being, rather than any special change *in* will.

It is the claim of religions that they effect this generic and enduring change in attitude. I should like to turn the statement around and say that whenever this change takes place there is a definitely religious attitude. It is not *a* religion that brings it about, but when it occurs, from whatever cause and by whatever means, there is a religious outlook and function. As I have said before, the doctrinal or intellectual apparatus and the institutional accretions that grow up are, in a strict sense, adventitious to the intrinsic quality of such experiences. For they are affairs of the traditions of the culture with which individuals are inoculated. Mr. Santayana has connected the religious quality of experience with the imaginative, as that is expressed in poetry. "Religion and poetry," he says, "are identical in essence, and differ merely in the way in which they are attached to practical affairs. Poetry is called religion when it intervenes in life, and religion, when it merely supervenes upon life, is seen to be nothing but poetry." The difference between intervening *in* and supervening *upon* is as important as is the identity set forth. Imagination may play upon life or it may enter profoundly into it. As Mr. Santayana puts it, "poetry has a universal and a moral function," for "its highest power lies in its relevance to the ideals and purposes of life." Except as it intervenes, "all observation is observation of brute fact, all discipline is mere repression, until these facts digested and this discipline embodied in humane impulses become the start-

ing point for a creative movement of the imagination, the firm basis for ideal constructions in society, religion, and art.”

If I may make a comment upon this penetrating insight of Mr. Santayana, I would say that the difference between imagination that only supervenes and imagination that intervenes is the difference between one that completely interpenetrates all the elements of our being and one that is interwoven with only special and partial factors. There actually occurs extremely little observation of brute facts merely for the sake of the facts, just as there is little discipline that is repression and nothing but repression. Facts are usually observed with reference to some practical end and purpose, and that end is presented only imaginatively. The most repressive discipline has some end in view to which there is at least imputed an ideal quality; otherwise it is purely sadistic. But in such cases of observation and discipline imagination is limited and partial. It does not extend far; it does not permeate deeply and widely.

The connection between imagination and the harmonizing of the self is closer than is usually thought. The idea of a whole, whether of the whole personal being or of the world, is an imaginative, not a literal, idea. The limited world of our observation and reflection becomes the Universe only through imaginative extension. It cannot be apprehended in knowledge nor realized in reflection. Neither observation, thought, nor practical activity can attain that complete unification of the self which is called a whole. The *whole* self is an ideal, an imaginative projection. Hence the idea of thoroughgoing and deep-seated harmonizing of the self with the Universe (as a name for the totality of conditions with which the self is connected) operates only through imagination—which is one reason why this composing of the self is not voluntary in the sense of an act of special volition or resolution. An “adjustment” possesses the will rather than is its express product. Religionists have been right in thinking of it as an influx from sources beyond conscious deliberation and purpose—a fact that helps explain, psychologically, why it has so generally been attributed to a supernatural source and that, perhaps, throws some light upon the reference of it by William James to unconscious factors. And it is pertinent to note that the unification of the self throughout

the ceaseless flux of what it does, suffers, and achieves, cannot be attained in terms of itself. The self is always directed toward something beyond itself and so its own unification depends upon the idea of the integration of the shifting scenes of the world into that imaginative totality we call the Universe.

It we apply the conception set forth to the terms of the definition earlier quoted, these terms take on a new significance. An unseen power controlling our destiny becomes the power of an ideal. All possibilities, as possibilities, are ideal in character. The artist, scientist, citizen, parent, as far as they are actuated by the spirit of their callings, are controlled by the unseen. For all endeavor for the better is moved by faith in what is possible, not by adherence to the actual. Nor does this faith depend for its moving power upon intellectual assurance or belief that the things worked for must surely prevail and come into embodied existence. For the authority of the object to determine our attitude and conduct, the right that is given it to claim our allegiance and devotion is based on the intrinsic nature of the ideal. The outcome, given our best endeavor, is not with us. The inherent vice of all intellectual schemes of idealism is that they convert the idealism of action into a system of beliefs about antecedent reality. The character assigned this reality is so different from that which observation and reflection lead to and support that these schemes inevitably glide into alliance with the supernatural.

Any activity pursued in behalf of an ideal end against obstacles and in spite of threats of personal loss because of conviction of its general and enduring value is religious in quality. Many a person, inquirer, artist, philanthropist, citizen, men and women in the humblest walks of life, have achieved, without presumption and without display, such unification of themselves and of their relations to the conditions of existence. It remains to extend their spirit and inspiration to even wider numbers. If I have said anything about religions and religion that seems harsh, I have said those things because of a firm belief that the claim on the part of religions to possess a monopoly of ideals and of the supernatural means by which alone, it is alleged, they can be furthered, stands in the way of the realization of distinctively religious val-

ues inherent in natural experience. For that reason, if for no other, I should be sorry if any were misled by the frequency with which I have employed the adjective "religious" to conceive of what I have said as a disguised apology for what have passed as religions. The opposition between religious values as I conceive them and religions is not to be bridged. Just because the release of these values is so important, their identification with the creeds and cults of religions must be dissolved.

**SEE ALSO**

Protestantism in America; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Liberalism

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Excerpt from John Dewey, *A Common Faith*, 1934. Permission granted by Yale University Press.

## Cyril E. Bentley, Clergy Letter to Franklin Delano Roosevelt (November 15, 1935)

*In a 1932 election pledge, Franklin Delano Roosevelt promised "a new deal" for all American people. One outgrowth of this political philosophy was the creation of the Works Progress Administration, which employed over 3 million people in the wake of one of the worst economic periods in American history. Often referred to as the "social conscience of the New Deal," the WPA led to the collection of a great deal of social and cultural information about the lives of Americans from all walks of life, including life in black churches.*

My Dear Mr. President:

I regret that a long journey through the south visiting our schools has prevented me from writing you sooner in reply to your letter of Sept. 23, 1935.

While on this journey, however, I decided to get the facts concerning the condition of the Negro and attempt to learn whether or not the various government agencies created to sustain and rehabilitate the citizens of the country generally, were really being any great service to the Negro. Our schools, in which we had about ten thousand Negroes enrolled this last year in the regular and special courses, proved a good source from which to gain such information.

I am sorry indeed to report that I found the racial discrimination which we know exists has expressed itself in the matter of giving government aid to the Negro. Naturally, a large number of Negroes are on relief and are receiving help in that way. The Negro being at the bottom of the economic scale under normal conditions, had that "bottom" sink beneath him under depressed times. Hundreds of the positions he used to have were taken by whites which forced the Negro to go on relief in larger numbers than ever before. His schools have run shorter terms, he has suffered from every angle and lost a good part of the little he possessed in the matter of property. I am told that the trouble regarding the obtaining of farm loans has been that the final authority regarding these was vested in a local committee and that although appeal could be made to a State committee and then to

Washington, in the end the matter was invariably settled by the local committee and the main effect of the appeals was to anger the local committee to the point where it gave the Negro no chance for help. The Negroes to whom I have talked say that the only remedy for these conditions is for Washington to learn the real facts in the case by sending about undercover agents, unknown to anyone locally. I am inclined to agree with them. Racial discrimination works in most subtle ways its ends to accomplish!

Strange as it may seem, the Negro resents being on relief. Yet we see today that he gets little or no consideration unless he is in that unhappy state. If he needs financial assistance to educate his children, and noble are the sacrifices being made in that endeavor these days, he can't get that aid from the government unless he is an absolute object for charity. This seems unfortunate indeed and reflects upon our social intelligence as well.

Our schools, though containing a very small number of Episcopalians, are denominational institutions and therefore can get little or no Federal aid. Yet they have carried on and furnished full educational terms to Negroes when public schools have been operating only short terms and some not at all during these trying times. However, you will be interested to know that in spite of all the trials and tribulations we have had and the cruel reductions in salary items and every other sort of expense, we have come through these years entirely out of debt and, in several schools, we have been able to add new buildings and equipment. In fact, the Institute is the only branch of the work of the General Church which is in a stable financial condition today.

Be assured we are attempting to do all within our power to train Negroes for real citizenship by giving trade as well as academic courses and spending plenty of time in an effort to make the Negro see that he not only has to train himself to make a living and build up his self-respect but he must accept the challenge to

use that training to lead his people in the establishment of a civilization for his racial group in this land. On the other side, we are attempting to influence white people to assist the Negro to find his niche in this country and put aside the fears, bitterness, hatred and prejudices which are the obstacles the Negro meets on every hand. A few years ago the white people of the south were doing little or nothing for Negro education. Last year they contributed \$45,000 to the schools. We are also encouraging Negroes to support the schools through community drives held annually. Negroes contributed \$7,500 for the schools last year and hope to make it \$10,000 this year. We feel that these efforts and results are a real contribution to the welfare of America in the solution of one of the greatest problems it has before it and I am anxious that you should know these facts because I believe they prove we are going at our work in the right way.

I congratulate you upon the vision you have demonstrated and the accomplishments you have made possible during these trying times. I trust the facts I have brought to your attention in this letter

may be of some help to you in making government aid more effective as it relates to the American Negro and I ask God's blessing upon you in the arduous task your office offers a man today. You have wrought well indeed!

Respectfully yours,

*Cyril E. Bentley, Associate Director,  
The American Church Institute for Negroes  
281 Fourth Avenue  
New York  
November 15, 1935*

**SEE ALSO**

African American Religions: African American Christianity

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Cyril E. Bentley, The American Church Institute for Negroes, New York City, Clergy Letter to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, November 15, 1935 (FDR Library, President's Personal File, Entry 21, Box 22). Accessed from: <http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/396.htm>. New Deal Network, <http://newdeal.feri.org> (Oct. 10, 2002).

Virgil Michel,  
“The Liturgy the Basis of Social Regeneration,”  
from *The Liturgy of the Church According to the Roman Rite*  
and *Orate Frates* (1938)

*Virgil Michel was a close friend of Dorothy Day's and a fellow supporter of the Catholic Worker Movement. A Benedictine priest, Michel found that the antidote to society's materialism, individualism, and indifference to the suffering of others was in the liturgy. In short form, his argument runs as follows: because a true Christian spirit is necessary for the regeneration of the social order and a true Christian spirit can be found only in the liturgy, the regeneration of society depends on participation in the liturgy.*

### **The Liturgy the Basis of Social Regeneration**

At the mention of the subject of this article one might be inclined to ask: What has the liturgy to do with social reconstruction or the social question? Can the liturgy help to give jobs or raise wages? Can there be any connection between the liturgy and the social problem?

The moment we deal with the problem of social regeneration, we shall do well to have recourse to the classic Catholic text on the question, the encyclical *Quadregesimo Anno* of the present Holy Father “on Reconstructing the Social Order.”

The very idea of social regeneration or reconstruction implies that there is something very much awry with our present social order. Pius XI refers to this fact in the following brief sentence: “Nowadays, as more than once in the history of the Church, we are confronted with a world which in large measure has almost fallen back into paganism.” In analyzing conditions the Pontiff speaks of a double danger. This is how he expresses it when he discusses the particular question of private property: “There is, therefore, a double danger to be avoided. On the one hand, if the social and public aspect of ownership be denied or minimized, the logical consequence is Individualism,

as it is called; on the other hand, the rejection or diminution of its private and individual character necessarily leads to some form of Collectivism (e.g., communism). To disregard these dangers would be to rush headlong into the quicksands of Modernism.”

These, then, are the two dangers the Holy Father warns us to avoid if society is to be regenerated: they are the products of an un-Christian view of life and are therefore pagan at heart; and they are both current symptoms of a diseased social order.

Now this renewal of human society, which must needs bring about a harmonious relation between men, one of cooperation and mutual aid and not one of mutual strife and cut-throat competition, must have its origin and inspiration in religion. The Holy Father quotes his great predecessor Leo XIII to that effect: “For the foundation of social laws being thus laid in religion, it is not hard to establish the relations of members one to another, in order that they may live together in concord and achieve prosperity.”

### **Renewal of Christian Spirit Needed**

He is indeed very emphatic on this point: “If we examine matters diligently and thoroughly we shall perceive clearly that this longed-for social reconstruction must be preceded by a profound renewal of the Christian spirit, from which multitudes engaged in industry in every country have unhappily departed. Otherwise, all our endeavors will be futile, and our social edifice will be built, not upon a rock, but upon shifting sand.

Now the question logically arises: Where are we to find this Christian spirit that is essential to the successful regeneration of the social order? The answer was given long ago by the saintly Pius X in a statement that many of you have undoubtedly heard re-

peated time and again. He first of all expressed it as his keenest desire "that the true Christian spirit flourish again and become more firmly grounded in all the faithful." Then he pointed out the great need "of deriving this spirit from its primary and indispensable source, which is active participation in the sacred mysteries and the public and solemn prayers of the Church."

With this we have come to the liturgy. For the liturgy is nothing else than the solemn and public worship of the Church, her official prayers and blessings, the sacraments, and above all the holy Sacrifice of Christ, the Mass. Pius X not only called this liturgy the indispensable source of the true Christian spirit, but added that the faithful must derive this spirit from the Church's worship by active participation; therefore, not by passive bodily presence, but by being present in such a manner that mind and heart are actively joined to the official worship and take intelligent part in the holy action.

There is no time here to dwell on the meaning of active participation, nor to analyse further the nature of the elements that make up the Church's liturgy. I shall proceed at once to the question: What is the basic idea of this liturgy?

It is that of the Mystical Body of Christ—a concept that was not only well known to the early Christians but also a primary inspiration for all their conduct and life. It was constantly preached by the Church Fathers and taught by the Church down to our own day, but it has often, among the faithful of all ranks, been left in the background, even quite forgotten, especially since the growing dominance of an un-Christian individualism.

The doctrine of the Mystical Body was explained by Christ under the example of the vine and the branches and by St. Paul under the picture of the human body composed of head and member. When through the liturgical initiation of Baptism we enter the Church, by that same fact we become intimately united with Christ as members of the Mystical Body of which He is the Head. Christ is then most truly and supernaturally our Brother, we are all children of God in a very special and sublime manner, we are all brethren together who are intimately united in the one Christ. In this holy fellowship we find a harmonious combination of the two complementary factors of humankind, that is, organic fellowship coupled

with full respect for human personality and individual responsibility.

Similarly the liturgy of the Church not only makes and keeps us members of this fellowship, but it always puts the idea of fellowship in Christ into full practice. Just in so far as we participate in the liturgy is so truly the primary and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit; it not only teaches us what this spirit is but also has us live this spirit in all its enactments. In the liturgy the teaching is inseparable from the putting into practice.

This, then is the true Christian spirit and first and last the supreme lesson of the liturgy as the official worship and life of the Mystical Body of Christ. And this spirit must needs be the source of all further extension and application of the principles of solidarity and fellowship in our common life and civilization.

So it is pointed out by the Holy Father himself. For him this mutual supernatural relationship of men united in Christ is the model towards which all social regeneration must strive. Speaking of the proper economic relations between men he says, for instance: "Where this harmonious proportion is kept, man's various economic activities combine and unite into one single organism and become as members of a common body, lending each other mutual help and service." Again: "Then only will it be possible to unite all in a harmonious striving for the common good, when all sections of society have the intimate conviction that they are members of a single family and children of the same heavenly Father, and further, that they are one body in Christ and everyone members one of another."

In conclusion, I may summarize in what happens to take on the form of a logical syllogism:

Pius X tells that the liturgy is the indispensable source of the true Christian spirit; Pius XI says that the true Christian spirit is indispensable for social regeneration.

Hence the conclusion: The liturgy is the indispensable basis of Christian social regeneration.

### **Liturgy: Font of Life in the Body of Christ**

This then is the sublime function of the liturgy of the Church: to assimilate us unto Christ, to make us partakers of the Christ-life, of the eternal life of God. We attain God through the mediatorship of Christ who



lives and acts in his Church. The life of the Church is this continuing life of Christ. Hence we must seek God first of all in this life of the Church, that is, in her liturgy. Without the latter it is impossible to attain union with Christ. To be in the Church, to be a living member of the Church and of Christ, means precisely to be in living union with the divine Godhead of the Trinity. And so the Church, which has been characterized as the continuation of Christ on earth, is constituted not only of those who by special transmission from the apostles exercise the priestly and missionary office of Christ in an official way, but of all those who by participation in the liturgical life of the Church also live the life of Christ.

Thence arises the beautiful idea of the Church as the mystical Body of Christ, all the faithful being the members that make up this body, with Christ as the head; and again the idea of the faithful as the branches of the vine which is Christ. "I am the vine; you the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can

do nothing." The members of the Church of Christ are all engrafted upon him as the vine. They are not an accidental agglomerate or aggregate, like a heap of stone, no matter how close these may be together, but a unified organism. The Church is thus a common fellowship of souls in Christ, a fellowship that extends to all who have been incorporated in Christ. It therefore embraces also the souls of the blessed in heaven—a doctrine which Christian tradition expresses by the term communion of saints.

**SEE ALSO**

Catholicism in America; Ritual and Performance

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Virgil Michel, *The Liturgy of the Church According to the Roman Rite*, Macmillan, 1938, and Michel, "The Liturgy the Basis of Social Regeneration," *Orate Frates*, November 1935. *Houston Catholic Worker*, Vol. XV, No. 3 (April 1995). Permission granted by *Worship* (formerly *Orate Frates*), St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, MN.

## Dorothy Day, “Aims and Purposes” (1940)

*An adult convert to Catholicism, Dorothy Day helped found the Catholic Worker Movement by starting a paper, The Catholic Worker, to publicize Catholic social teaching, voice dissatisfaction with the current social order, and promote steps to bring about the peaceful transformation of society. The new “Christian social order” Day called for in the pages of The Catholic Worker included offering hospitality to the poor and homeless, supporting labor unions, promoting pacifism, and actively participating in the Civil Rights Movement.*

For the sake of new readers, for the sake of men on our breadlines, for the sake of the employed and unemployed, the organized and unorganized workers, and also for the sake of ourselves, we must reiterate again and again what are our aims and purposes.

Together with the Works of Mercy, feeding, clothing and sheltering our brothers, we must indoctrinate. We must “give reason for the faith that is in us.” Otherwise we are scattered members of the Body of Christ, we are not “all members one of another.” Otherwise, our religion is an opiate, for ourselves alone, for our comfort or for our individual safety or indifferent custom.

We cannot live alone. We cannot go to Heaven alone. Otherwise, as Péguy said, God will say to us, “Where are the others?” (This is in one sense only as, of course, we believe that we must be what we would have the other fellow be. We must look to ourselves, our own lives first.)

If we do not keep indoctrinating, we lose the vision. And if we lose the vision, we become merely philanthropists, doling out palliatives.

The vision is this. We are working for “a new heaven and a new *earth*, wherein justice dwelleth.” We are trying to say with action, “Thy will be done on *earth* as it is in heaven.” We are working for a Christian social order.

We believe in the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God. This teaching, the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, involves today the issue of unions (where men call each other brothers); it in-

volves the racial question; it involves cooperatives, credit unions, crafts; it involves Houses of Hospitality and Farming Communes. It is with all these means that we can live as though we believed indeed that we are all members one of another, knowing that when “the health of one member suffers, the health of the whole body is lowered.”

This work of ours toward a new heaven and a new earth shows a correlation between the material and the spiritual, and, of course, recognizes the primacy of the spiritual. Food for the body is not enough. There must be food for the soul. Hence the leaders of the work, and as many as we can induce to join us, must go daily to Mass, to receive food for the soul. And as our perceptions are quickened, and as we pray that our faith be increased, we will see Christ in each other, and we will not lose faith in those around us, no matter how stumbling their progress is. It is easier to have faith that God will support each House of Hospitality and Farming Commune and supply our needs in the way of food and money to pay bills, than it is to keep a strong, hearty, living faith in each individual around us—to see Christ in him. If we lose faith, if we stop the work of indoctrinating, we are in a way denying Christ again.

We must practice the presence of God. He said that when two or three are gathered together, there He is in the midst of them. He is with us in our kitchens, at our tables, on our breadlines, with our visitors, on our farms. When we pray for our material needs, it brings us close to His humanity. He, too, needed food and shelter. He, too, warmed His hands at a fire and lay down in a boat to sleep.

When we have spiritual reading at meals, when we have the rosary at night, when we have study groups, forums, when we go out to distribute literature at meetings, or sell it on the street corners, Christ is there with us. What we do is very little. But it is like the little boy with a few loaves and fishes. Christ took that little and increased it. He will do the rest. What we do is so little we may seem to be constantly failing.

But so did He fail. He met with apparent failure on the Cross. But unless the seed fall into the earth and die, there is no harvest.

And why must we see results? Our work is to sow. Another generation will be reaping the harvest.

When we write in these terms, we are writing not only for our fellow workers in thirty other Houses, to other groups of Catholic Workers who are meeting for discussion, but to every reader of the paper. We hold with the motto of the National Maritime Union, that every member is an organizer. We are upholding the ideal of personal responsibility. You can work as you are bumming around the country on freights, if you are working in a factory or a field or a shipyard or a filling station. You do not depend on any organization which means only paper figures, which means only the labor of the few. We are not speaking of mass action, pressure groups (fearful potential for evil as well as good). We are addressing each individual reader of *The Catholic Worker*.

The work grows with each month, the circulation

increases, letters come in from all over the world, articles are written about the movement in many countries.

Statesmen watch the work, scholars study it, workers feel its attraction, those who are in need flock to us and stay to participate. It is a new way of life. But though we grow in numbers and reach far-off corners of the earth, essentially the work depends on each one of us, on our way of life, the little works we do.

“Where are the others?” God will say. Let us not deny Him in those about us. Even here, right now, we can have that new earth, wherein justice dwelleth!

#### SEE ALSO

Catholicism in America: Public Catholicism; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Feminisms, Liberalism

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Dorothy Day, “Aims and Purposes,” originally published in *The Catholic Worker*, February 1940. This text is reprinted from “Dorothy Day Library on the Web” at URL: <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/> (Oct. 18, 2002).

## Eleanor Roosevelt, “Civil Liberties—The Individual and the Community” (March 14, 1940)

*Known as the “First Lady of the World,” Eleanor Roosevelt was a well-respected humanitarian activist before she married Franklin Delano Roosevelt and became First Lady of the White House. She traveled around the country advocating women’s rights, promoting consumer and child welfare, working for the civil rights of oppressed minorities, and helping combat unemployment and insufficient housing. She also made her mark on the world community, most notably serving as the U.S. delegate to the United Nations and helping to make the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights a reality.*

Ladies and gentlemen: I am glad you gave an award to the press tonight, because that gave them the opportunity to tell us just what they could do. Now we have come here tonight because of civil liberties. I imagine a great many of you could give my talk far better than I could, because you have had first-hand knowledge in the things you have had to do in Chicago over the years to preserve civil liberties. Perhaps, however, I am more conscious of the importance of civil liberties in the particular moment of our history than anyone else, because as I travel through the country and meet people and see things that have happened to little people, I realize what it means to democracy to preserve our civil liberties. All through the years we have had to fight for civil liberty, and we know that there are times when the light grows rather dim, and every time that happens democracy is in danger. Now largely because of the troubled state of the world as a whole civil liberties have disappeared in many other countries. It is impossible, of course, to be at war and to keep freedom of the press and freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. They disappear automatically. And so in many countries where ordinarily they were safe, today they have gone and in other countries, even before war came, not only freedom of the press and freedom of assembly and freedom of speech disappeared, but freedom of religion disappeared and so we know that here in this country we have a grave responsibility. We are at

peace. We have no reason for the fears which govern so many other peoples throughout the world, and, therefore, we have to guard the freedoms of democracy. Civil liberties emphasizes the liberty of the individual. In many other forms of government the importance of the individual has disappeared. The individual lives for the state. Here in a democracy the government still exists for the individual, but that does not mean that we do not have to watch and that we do not have to examine ourselves to be sure that we preserve the civil liberties for all our people, which are the basis of our democracy. Now you know if we are honest with ourselves, in spite of all we have said, in spite of our Constitution, many of us in this country do not enjoy real liberty. For that reason we know that everywhere in this country every person who believes in democracy has come to feel a real responsibility to work in his community and to know the people of his community, and to take the trouble to try to bring about the full observance for all our people of their civil liberties.

I think I will tell you a little story that brought home to me how important it was that in every community there should be someone to whom people could turn, who were in doubt as to what were their rights under the law, when they couldn’t understand what was happening to them. I happen to go every now and then to a certain mining community and in that mining community there are a number of people who came to this country many years ago. They have been here so many years that they have no other country. This is their country. Their children have been born here. They work here. They have created great wealth for this country, but they came over at a time when there was not very much feeling of social responsibility about giving them the opportunity to learn the language of the country to which they had come, or telling them how to become citizens, or teaching about the government of this country. I had contact with a family where the man had been here

over thirty-five years, and the first time I went to see him in his house it came about this way. I was standing with a group of people, and a young girl with arms full of packages came along the road. She stopped to look at me and said, "Why, you are Mrs. Roosevelt. My mama say, 'She is happy if you come to her house.'" I said, "Where is her house!" "Up the run." So I walked with her and when I got to the house a Polish woman was sitting at the table. The girl walked in and said, "Mama, this is Mrs. Roosevelt," and the woman got up and threw both arms around me, and I was kissed on both cheeks. She told me she had been expecting me to come for a long time. She wanted me to come because she wanted me to see how really nice her house was and we went through the four rooms and it was nice. She had made crochet pieces which decorated every table. The bedspreads were things of real beauty. We admired everything together. We came back to the kitchen and she said, "You eat with us?" and I said, "No, I just had breakfast." She wouldn't let me leave without eating something, so we had a piece of bread there together.

Six months later I came back and I went again to visit my friend. The minute I crossed the threshold I knew something had happened in that house. It was quite dark. In a few minutes the old man came through from the back room and said "Mrs. Roosevelt, you have come. I have wanted to ask you something for a long time. The mine, it close down, no more work. I work on W.P.A. for a time and then they tell me I no citizen. Mrs. Roosevelt, I vote. I vote often. Why I no citizen?" There was nobody that stood out in the community that he dared trust, that he felt he could go to find out what his rights were or what he should do. Well, of course, it was true that he had never become a citizen. His children were born in this country; they were citizens, but he was not. And they had lived, those two people by being allowed by the county to take in four old men who would have gone otherwise to the county poor house. Six people were living on the allowance of those four old men. The allowance was pitifully small. As I looked at the stove at what they were going to have for supper, I realized the woman wouldn't again say, "Sit down and eat." There wasn't enough for a stranger, and that was the breakdown of her morale. It hurt you. Something was wrong with the spirit of America that an injustice

like that could happen to a man who, after all, worked hard and contributed to the wealth of the country. It should have been somebody's business, first of all, to see that he learned the English language well enough to find things out for himself. Secondly, when he was in trouble, to fight for his rights and to tell him how to go about to remedy what was wrong. I felt there was something wrong with any community where you had to wait many months for a stranger to come to listen to your story and help you straighten out what was a manifest injustice. He couldn't be on W.P.A. He could start out to become a citizen, and he could get relief and, at least, have the feeling that there was an interest on the part of someone in justice. I think that is, perhaps, one of the greatest things that the civil liberties committees do, and I wish we had one in every place throughout the country—one group of people who really care when things go wrong and do something when there is an infringement of the individual's rights.

There are many times when even with freedom of the press and freedom of speech, it is hard to get a hearing for certain causes. I often think that we, all of us, should think very much more carefully than we do about what we mean by freedom of speech, by freedom of the press, by freedom of assembly. I sometimes am much worried by the tendency that you find today in our country only to think that these are rights for the people who think as we do. Some people seem to think these rights are not for people who disagree with them. I believe that you must apply to all groups the right to all forms of thought, to all forms of expression. Otherwise, you practically refuse to trust people to choose for themselves what is wise and what is right, and in doing that you deny the possibility of a democratic form of government. You have to be willing to listen or to allow people to state any point of view they may have, to say anything they may believe, and trust that when everyone has had his say, when there has been free discussion and really free expression in the press, in the end the majority of the people will have the wisdom to decide what is right. We have to have faith that even when the majority seems to decide as we think wrongly, we still believe the fundamental principles that we have laid down, and we wait for the day to come when the thing that we believe is right becomes the majority decision of the people.

Well, of course that means that we have to have a real belief that people have sufficient intelligence to live in a democracy, and that is something which we are really testing out in this country today, because we are the only great democracy and we are the only democracy that is at peace and that can go on and live in what we consider a normal and free way of living. It is only here that people don't have to tremble when they say what they think. I don't know how many of you have read a book that I have been reading, but I think it is a most vivid picture of the kind of fear that has gradually come to all the people of Europe. It is *Stricken Field* by Martha Gellhorn, a young woman who was a war correspondent. The story was put in novel form and is about the taking over of Czechoslovakia. Certain people in Czechoslovakia were considered dangerous to the new regime—and the whole description is horrible of what they called "going under-ground," living in hiding, afraid to speak to each other, afraid to recognize each other on the streets, for fear they would be tortured to death. Only great fear could bring people to treat other people like that, and I can only say that it seems to me that we should read as vivid a story as this now, just to make us realize how important it is that for no reason whatsoever we allow ourselves to be dominated by fears so that we curtail civil liberties. Let us see that everybody who is really in danger in our community has, at least, his or her day in court. Constituted authority has to work under the law. When the law becomes something below the surface, hidden from the people, something which is underground, so to speak, and over which the people no longer hold control, then all of us are in danger.

Never before was it so important that every individual should carry his share of responsibility and see that we do obey the laws, live up to the Constitution, and preserve every one of those precious liberties which leave us free as individuals. One of the things that we have to be particularly alive to today is the growth of religious prejudice and race prejudice. Those are two things which are a great menace because we find that in countries where civil liberties have been lost, both religious and race prejudice have been rampant. I think it would be well for us, if we could define what we mean when we say that we believe in religious freedom. I sat at a desk in a political campaign once. I was running the office dealing with

women for the National Democratic Committee. Over my desk came literature and material which I did not suppose anyone would print in the United States, and much of it was written and published by people who belong to various religious denominations. It seems to me that the thing we must fix in our minds is that from the beginning this country was founded on the right of all people to worship God as they saw fit, and if they do not wish to worship they are not forced to worship. That is a fundamental liberty. When religion begins to take part in politics, we violate something which we have set up, which is a division between church and state.

As far as having respect for the religion of other people and leaving them to live their lives the way they wish, we should teach that to every child. Every child should know that his religion is his own and nobody else has the right to question it. In addition to that I think we should begin much earlier to teach all the children of our nation what a wonderful heritage they have for freedom. For freedom from prejudice, because they live in a nation which is made up of a great variety of other nations. They have before them and around them every day the proof that people can understand each other and can live together amicably, and that races can live on an equal basis, even though they may be very different in background, very different in culture. We have an opportunity to teach our children how much we have gained from the coming to this land of all kinds of races, how much it has served in the development of the land, and somehow I think we have failed in many ways in bringing it early enough to children how great is their obligation to the various strains that make up the people of the United States. Above all, there should never be race prejudice here, there should never be a feeling that one strain is better than another. Indians are the only real inhabitants of the country who have a right to say that they own this country! I think this is the reason that we should preserve freedom of mind on the things which are basic to civil liberties. And it should be easy for us to live up to our Constitution.

I am very much interested to find that in our younger generation, however, there is a greater consciousness of what civil liberties really mean, and I think that is one of the hopeful things in the world today, that youth is really taking a tremendous interest in the preservation of civil liberties. It is a very hard

period in the world for youth because they are faced with new kinds of problems. We don't know the answers to many of the problems that face us today and neither do the young people, and the problems are very much more important to the young because they must start living. We have had our lives. The young people want to begin and they can't find a way to get started. Perhaps that has made them more conscious of civil liberties. Perhaps that is why when you get a group of them together you find them fighting against the prejudices which have grown up in our country, against the prejudices which have made it hard for the minority groups in our country. The other night someone sent up a question to me: "What do you think should be done about the social standing of the Negro race in this country?" Well now, of course, I think the social situation is one that has to be dealt with by individuals. The real question that we have to face in this country is what are we doing about the rights of a big minority group as citizens in our democracy. That we have to face. Any citizen in this country is entitled to equality before the law; to equality of education; to equality at earning a living, as far as his abilities have made it possible for him to do; to equality of participation in government so that he or she may register their opinion in just the way that any other citizens do. Now those things are basic rights, belonging to every citizen in every minority group, and we have an obligation, I think, to stand up and be counted when it comes to the question of whether any minority group does not have those rights as citizens in this country. The minute we deny any rights of this kind to any citizen we are preparing the way for the denial of those rights to someone else. We have to make up our minds what we really believe. We have to decide whether we believe in the Bill of Rights, in the Constitution of the United States, or whether we are going to modify it because of the fears that we may have at the moment.

Now I listened to the broadcast this afternoon with a great deal of interest. I almost forgot what a fight had been made to assure the rights of the working man. I know there was a time when hours were longer and wages lower, but I had forgotten just how long that fight for freedom, to bargain collectively, and to have freedom of assembly, had taken. Sometimes, until some particular thing comes to your no-

tice, you think something has been won for every working man, and then you come across as I did the other day a case where someone had taken the law into his own hands and beaten up a labor organizer. I didn't think we did those things anymore in this country, but it appears we do. Therefore, someone must be always on the lookout to see that someone is ready to take up the cudgels to defend those who can't defend themselves. That is the only way we are going to keep this country a law-abiding country, where law is looked upon with respect and where it is not considered necessary for anybody to take the law into his own hands. The minute you allow that, then you have acknowledged that you are no longer able to trust in your courts and in your law-enforcing machinery, and civil liberties are not very well off when anything like that happens; so I think that after listening to the broadcast today, I would like to remind you that behind all those who fight for the Constitution as it was written, for the rights of the weak and for the preservation of civil liberties, we have a long line of courageous people, which is something to be proud of and something to hold on to. Its only value lies, however, in the fact that we profit by example and continue the tradition in the future. We must not let those people back of us down; we must have courage; we must not succumb to fear of any kind; and we must live up to the things that we believe in and see that justice is done to the people under the Constitution, whether they belong to minority groups or not. This country is a united country in which all people have the same rights as citizens. We are grateful that we can trust in the youth of the nation that they are going on to uphold the real principles of democracy and put them into action in this country. They are going to make us an even more truly democratic nation.

#### SEE ALSO

Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion, Feminisms, Liberalism

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Eleanor Roosevelt, "Civil Liberties—The Individual and the Community." Address to the Chicago Civil Liberties Committee, March 14, 1940, originally printed in the *Reference Shelf* 14 (1940). Accessed from: <http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/515.htm>. New Deal Network, <http://newdeal.feri.org> (Oct. 8, 2002).

Thomas Sugrue, excerpt from  
*There Is a River: The Story of Edgar Cayce* (1945)

*Thomas Sugrue's There Is a River tells the story of Edgar Cayce (1877–1945), one of America's best-known psychics. Known as the "Sleeping Prophet," Cayce and his followers believed that while lying down with eyes closed in a trancelike state he could tap into a higher consciousness to receive "psychic knowledge," which he delivered as a verbal "reading." Cayce's readings were recorded stenographically and later typed. At his death they numbered over 14,000 pages and covered topics ranging from answers about specific personal questions to broad discourses on such subjects as meditation, the Bible, and world affairs.*

UNCLE BILLY EVANS huddled in the rear seat of his cab and watched the afternoon train pull into the Louisville and Nashville Railroad station in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. It was a cold, still afternoon in January, 1912.

A stranger stepped off the Pullman. Uncle Billy left his warm seat and went to meet him.

He was a large, tall man, wrapped in a heavy overcoat, with its collar turned up to protect his ears. He let Uncle Billy take his two suitcases and followed him to the cab.

"I am looking for a man named Edgar Cayce," he said while the old colored man stowed the bags away. "Can you take me to him?" He spoke quickly, with a thick, Germanic accent.

Uncle Billy straightened himself and shivered a little.

"Mr. Edgar's gone home for the day," he said. "And it's a mile and a half out there to the Hill. Miss Gertrude's mighty sick these days, and Mr. Edgar's there with her most o' the time."

The stranger settled himself in the cab and Uncle Billy tucked a blanket around his legs.

"They don't have many visitors, on account of Miss Gertrude," he went on. "Lord, I hope nothin' happens to that child!"

"She is his daughter?" the stranger asked.

Uncle Billy finished with the blanket.

"No, sir. Miss Gertrude is Mr. Edgar's wife," he explained. "Now, I can take you to the hotel and first thing tomorrow morning . . ."

"We will go now to the house," the stranger said. "And tell me, why is it so cold down here in the South?"

"Lord God, sir!" Uncle Billy said. "This ain't the South! The South's way down yonder!"

He pointed.

"This here's Kentucky, and the Lord ain't got a bit o' use for it!"

He paused before closing the door.

"You think you'll be warm enough ridin' way out there and back again?" he asked.

"I will be comfortable," the stranger said. "Let us go quickly."

Uncle Billy closed the door and climbed to his box, muttering. The two horses, eager for exercise, started briskly down East Ninth Street, turned left along the park, headed out East Seventh Street. The town fell behind and the street became Russellville Road. Houses gave way to brown, rolling hills, and bare fields looted of their crops. A single bright spot loomed through the dusk. On a hill higher than the rest and covered with trees, a gray, rambling house stood with its face to the north, the four white columns of its porch glistening in the sidewise glance of the winter sun. Beyond it the road swerved to the right. Just before the cab reached the carriage entrance leading to the house on the hill, it stopped. A little off the road, almost hidden by a giant oak and some maple trees, was a small cottage, brightly painted in green and white. Uncle Billy got down from his box and opened the cab door.

"In here, sir," he said.

The stranger got out, stretched, and looked around him.

"He doesn't live in the big house?" he said, as if disappointed.

Uncle Billy pointed to the glistening columns.



“That’s the Hill,” he said. “It’s the old Salter Place, where Miss Gertrude’s folks live. This here”—he pointed to the cottage—“is Miss Lizzie’s little place. Miss Lizzie is Miss Gertrude’s mother. She lives up at the Hill with Miss Kate.”

The stranger smiled a little.

“Do your southern ladies never marry?” he said.

“Oh, they’s all married,” Uncle Billy said, “but they ain’t got no husbands, except Miss Gertrude. They’s dead.”

The stranger changed the subject.

“What does this land produce?” he asked, waving his arm toward Hopkinsville.

“Dark tobacco,” Uncle Billy said.

“Dark?” The stranger looked thoughtful. He stared at Uncle Billy.

“Dark tobacco,” Uncle Billy repeated. “Hopkinsville is famous fo’ being the dark tobacco market of the whole world.”

“It is also famous for another thing that is dark,” the stranger said. Then he added, as if to himself, “Funny place to find it.”

He started for the cottage. Uncle Billy crawled into the cab to wait.

The young man who opened the cottage door was slim and almost as tall as the stranger. Without saying anything the stranger stepped into the hallway.

“You are Edgar Cayce?” he asked.

“I am,” the young man answered.

“I am Dr. Hugo Münsterberg, of Harvard,” the stranger said. I have come here to expose you. There has been entirely too much written about you in the newspapers lately.”

He looked quickly around the hallway and peered into the living room, which opened from the hallway to the right.

“What is your *modus operandi*?” he said. “Where is your cabinet?”

The young man had not moved. He looked dazed.

“I don’t know what you mean,” he said.

Dr. Münsterberg struck the air impatiently with an arm.

“The cabinet, the cabinet,” he said brusquely.

The young man recovered himself suddenly. He smiled and led the way into the living room.

“Come in and sit down,” he said. “I will take your coat. There is a fire in the fireplace. But I have no cabinet. I don’t use any apparatus at all, if that’s what

you mean. I could lie down on the floor here and go to sleep, if I wanted to.”

Dr. Münsterberg came into the room but did not sit down or remove his coat. From its inner pocket he took a sheaf of newspaper clippings.

“There’s been too much publicity for this thing not to be a fake,” he said, putting the clippings on a tea table.

Idly the young man leafed through the clippings. Apparently he had seen them before. One was a full-page display from the Sunday magazine section of the New York *Times* for October 9, 1910. The headline said, ILLITERATE MAN BECOMES A DOCTOR WHEN HYPNOTIZED—STRANGE POWER SHOWN BY EDGAR CAYCE PUZZLES PHYSICIANS. The first paragraph read:

The medical fraternity of the country is taking a lively interest in the strange power said to be possessed by Edgar Cayce of Hopkinsville, Ky., to diagnose difficult diseases while in a semi-conscious state, though he has not the slightest knowledge of medicine when not in this condition.

There was a photograph of the young man, another of his father, a mustached gentleman named Leslie B. Cayce, who was described as the “conductor” of the hypnotic sleeps; and a third picture showing a young physician named Dr. Wesley H. Ketchum, who had reported the phenomena to the American Society of Clinical Research, of Boston. There was a drawing which showed the young man lying on a table, asleep, while a weird demon of the other world hovered over him.

“All this was done without my knowledge or permission,” the young man explained to Dr. Münsterberg. “I was in Alabama at the time. I didn’t know anything about it.”

Dr. Münsterberg stood with his back to the fireplace, warming himself.

“You say you do not have a cabinet,” he said. “Do you allow yourself to be seen? Are the lights on?”

“Oh, it’s always very light,” the young man said. “I give the readings in the morning and afternoon, two each day. If there isn’t enough light we have to turn on the lamps, so the stenographer can see to take down what I say.”

“And the patient? Where is the patient?”

"Most of them are at home, wherever that is. They just read me the address, and I seem to find the place all right."

"You do not examine the patients beforehand?"

"Oh, no. I don't know anything about medicine when I'm awake. I prefer not to know even the name of the person before I go to sleep. The names wouldn't mean much to me, anyhow. Most of the people are from out of the state somewhere."

"They tell their symptoms in letters to this . . . Dr. Ketchum?"

"Oh, no. We only want to be sure that they really need help. That's all."

Dr. Münsterberg watched the young man's face while he talked. It was a frank, open countenance. The cheeks were round, the nose straight, the chin receding but not weak, the eyes gray-blue and friendly. His hair was straight and brown. He spoke with a soft drawl. He looked about twenty-five.

"You are how old?" the doctor asked.

"Thirty-four. I'll be thirty-five in March."

"You look younger. What is your name? You are Irish?"

"No, it was originally Cuaci. Norman-French, I reckon. Our records don't go back to the country from which we came originally. Our direct ancestor is Shadrach Cayce. He lived in Powhatan County, Virginia, and his sons fought in the Revolution. They received land grants in Tennessee and Kentucky from the government, and that's why we're here."

He went to a square-topped walnut table in the corner of the room. His stride was quick and sure, his step soft, like a man used to hunting and life in the open.

"This table came from Virginia more than a hundred years ago," he said.

"You were born on a farm?" Dr. Münsterberg asked.

The young man came back to the tea table and sat down.

"Yes, sir. I was born here in Christian County. The Cayces used to own nearly all the land between Hopkinsville and the Tennessee line. That's about fifteen miles. But my great-grandfather had four sons and my grandfather had seven sons, so by the time all the land was split up there wasn't a great deal left for my generation. So I'm a photographer."

"But you do not work at that now, of course."

"Oh, yes. That's in the contract I have with my partners. They have to furnish me with a studio and equipment. That's where I make my living. I can only give two readings a day, you see, and some of them are for people who have no money."

Dr. Münsterberg laughed a little and shook his head.

"Either you are a very simple fellow," he said, "or you are very clever. I cannot penetrate your ruse."

The young man shook his head mournfully.

"I'm the dumbest man in Christian County," he said, "when I'm awake."

"But when you are asleep you know everything. Is that it?"

"That's what they tell me. I don't know. The people say I tell them how they feel better than they know how to tell it themselves. They take the medicines and the treatment I prescribe, and they get better. The stenographer takes it down and gives the patient a copy. Dr. Ketchum adds whatever comment is needed. That's all I know."

"You have no explanation for this? There is no tradition of psychic power in your family?"

"They say my grandfather was a water witch. He would walk around with a forked hazel twig in his hand and tell the farmers where to dig their wells. They always found water there, so they said.

"He was supposed to be able to do other things, too, such as make a broom dance, but that was probably just talk. There's nothing funny about my father except that snakes love him, and he hates them."

"Snakes are fond of your father?"

"They used to follow him home from the fields. They would wrap themselves around his hat brim if he laid his hat down in the field. It got on his nerves so much that he gave up farming. The family has lived in town for about fifteen years now."

"And you have been doing this business how long?"

"The readings? Oh, just regularly since all the publicity started a year ago. I didn't pay much attention to it until then. I just did it for friends, and people round about who asked me now and then."

"What have been your studies? Not medicine, you say?"

"No. I never got further than what would be first year in high school. I was graduated down in the country, where they have nine grades."

"But since then you have read a lot, naturally."

"Well, I like to read, and I used to work in a bookstore, but I reckon my taste isn't very high. You can look through the bookcase there in the hall if you like."

Dr. Münsterberg went immediately into the hallway.

"We will see what you read. It should be interesting," he said.

He began taking books from the cases, stacking them on the floor. Some he flipped open, running through the pages quickly; these he dropped carelessly, so that some of them fell face open on the floor.

"There seems to be nothing worth while here," he said. "*The Harvester, The Common Law, The Rosary, Girl of the Limberlost, The Trail of the Lonesome Pine . . .* Let me see what are these large volumes . . . *Judge* magazine and *Red Book* magazine."

"I have them bound each year," the young man explained. "We like to keep them."

"*The Circular Staircase, The Awakening of Helena Richie . . .* who is this E. P. Roe? Ah, you have a complete set of his works!"

"Those are my wife's. I gave them to her years ago. E. P. Roe is her favorite novelist."

"Hmmm. Yes, I see now. Love stories—what trash! Here is *The Doctor*. No, it is a novel. *The Jungle, Coniston, The Clansman, Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm, The Cardinal's Snuffbox . . .* some poetry here . . . hmmm . . . it is Ella Wheeler Wilcox."

He straightened himself and turned back to the living room.

"Well, there is nothing here," he said. "I shall have to look further."

"Perhaps you would like to see a reading?" the young man said. "The copies are kept at the office, downtown, but I have my wife's readings here. We had a check reading for her the other day. The doctors all said she would die. She has tuberculosis. But she is getting better by following the readings."

He was eager now; his face shone.

"I'll get it!"

He went into a room across the hall, returning almost immediately with two sheets of typewritten manuscript. Each sheet carried his picture at the top, with the legend, "Edgar Cayce, Jr., Psychic Diagnostician."

"The printer made a mistake," he said, handing the sheets to the doctor and pointing to the legend. "He

got me mixed up with my Uncle Edgar and put me down as junior. I'm not."

Dr. Münsterberg began to read the sheets. The young man stepped away politely and sat down by the tea table.

"I cannot learn much from this; I am not a medical doctor," Dr. Münsterberg said. He looked quickly at the young man to see how this was taken.

The young man offered another suggestion.

"There are some people you might go to see, who have had experience with the readings. They could tell you whether they work or not. You could see Mrs. Dietrich, and some of the others . . . Mrs. Dabney, Miss Perry . . . Mrs. Bowles, maybe."

"Good," the doctor said. "You will write down their names and addresses?" He continued to read.

The young man went to a desk against the wall and wrote on a pad. Dr. Münsterberg watched him, returning to his perusal of the manuscript sheets when the young man finished and looked up.

"Here are the names and addresses. Uncle Billy can take you to all of them. They are too far apart to walk. Are you planning to stay here tonight? We're going to have a reading in the morning. Perhaps you'd like to watch it."

"I intend to stay," the doctor said, putting the manuscript sheets on the tea table. "I will take a room at the hotel. Tonight I will visit these people and question them."

"The owner of the hotel, Mr. Noe, is one of my partners. You'll probably find Dr. Ketchum and my father there, too, later on."

"Good. I shall endeavor to see them."

He tucked the sheet with the names and addresses into an inside pocket.

"Well, we meet again, tomorrow, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, there is one more thing. To what power or force do you and your associates attribute this phenomenon?"

"We don't know, sir, except for what the readings have said themselves."

"You mean what you have said while asleep?"

"Yes, sir. It's here, in this New York *Times* story."

He picked up the clipping and read from it.

"This is what I said when they asked me to explain the thing: 'Edgar Cayce's mind is amenable to suggestion, the same as all other subconscious minds, but in

addition thereto it has the power to interpret to the objective mind of others what it acquired from the subconscious state of other individuals of the same kind. The subconscious mind forgets nothing. The conscious mind receives the impression from without and transfers all thought to the subconscious, where it remains even though the conscious be destroyed."

He folded the clipping and returned it, with the others, to Dr. Münsterberg. The doctor looked him squarely in the eye.

"The story of the subconscious mind can be told in three words," he said. "There is none! . . . Well, I shall continue my investigations."

He went out without shaking hands or saying good-bye. The young man watched through the living-room window until the cab drove away. Then he went into the room across the hall, taking the manuscript sheets with him.

On the far side of the room, on a massive oak bed, lay a frail, dark-haired girl, almost lost in the great expanse of sheets and counterpane. In the twilight only her outline was visible; she was a shadow on the bed. The young man lit one of the lamps on the dresser and brought it to the sick table. Her face leaped up at him like a flame. Her eyes were dark, but a fierce light shone from them. Her cheeks were bright red. Her oval face was like a miniature portrait come to life. Her face was worried, quick, yet the words came softly.

"Who was that man, Edgar? What did he want? You're not going off with him somewhere, are you?"

The young man leaned down and kissed her forehead.

"Just a professor from Harvard," he said. "He came all the way down here to expose me."

She seemed relieved.

"No wonder his voice sounded so officious. What did he say?"

"Nothing much. He dumped all the books on the floor and called me a simpleton."

The girl sighed.

"I declare I don't know where people learn such bad manners," she said. "What time is it? Mother ought to be bringing Hugh Lynn down soon."

"They're coming now. I hear Hugh Lynn banging that gate again. It's five o'clock."

He went to the front door and opened it. A little boy with fat cheeks grabbed him around the legs.

"Hey, dad, the bears are after me again!" he cried.

The young man smiled at the lady who had come with the boy and waved a hand against the cold air that was blowing in on him.

"Go 'way, bears!" he said.

The little boy released his legs and walked into the hallway.

"Almost got me that time," he said.

"What about your grandmother?" the young man said. "Aren't you afraid the bears will get her?"

"No," the boy said. "They don't eat ladies. Only little boys."

He struggled out of his coat and ran into the bedroom, shouting, "Muddie, the bears didn't get me again!"

The lady who had come with him took off her black coat and black hat, revealing a black dress, high at the throat, and black hair brushed straight away from her forehead.

"How is Gertrude?" she said to the young man.

"About the same," he answered.

They went into the bedroom together. The girl turned her head and smiled at her mother.

"Hugh Lynn says Aunt Kate made him some ginger cookies," she said.

"Kate's a fool," her mother said. "Hugh Lynn's like a ball of butter now and she keeps feeding him sweets. How do you feel?"

"All right, I reckon."

"I'll get you freshened up for dinner. Edgar, who was that who just drove away from here? Anyone I know?"

"No. Some professor from Harvard, down here to investigate me and show me up as a fake, same as they all try to do."

"He spilled our books all over the floor and called Edgar a simpleton," the girl said. Her voice was resentful.

"I noticed the mess as I came in. Well, you've got to expect that sort of thing from Yankees. They don't know any better, poor souls."

"I think they know what's right as well as anyone else," the girl said. "They just think they're better than we are, that's all."

"Don't excite yourself, child," her mother said. "That white trash isn't worth it. Edgar, why don't you get some decent school to investigate you, like Washington and Lee? Harvard is just a pesthole of Republicans. You know that."

"This man is a foreigner," the young man said. "A German, I would say, from his accent."

"Oh, well, that explains everything. Here, take Hugh Lynn out of here while I fuss around with Gertrude some."

The young man and the boy went into the living room.

"Was that a bad man who was here, dad?" he asked.

The young man lifted him high in the air and set him down by the fireplace.

"No, he wasn't bad. Nobody is really bad. People just make mistakes. They don't understand about God."

"Do you understand about God, dad?"

"Nobody really does. But I try to remember that God is the only One who really knows anything, and that He told me what He wants me to do in the Bible. So I try to do that."

The little boy nodded.

"Let's play bears," he said. "You be the big bear who's chasing me."

Uncle Billy huddled in his cab outside the large house on South Walnut Street. In the living room of the house his fare sat, overcoat removed, listening to a mild, lovely woman, whose face became radiant as she told her story.

"When our daughter, Aime, was two," Mrs. Dietrich began, "she caught gripe. After apparently recovering, she became afflicted with convulsions. She would fall down suddenly and her body would stiffen until it was rigid. Her mind stopped developing.

"We had all sorts and kinds of doctors. They did her no good, and after two years of futile experimentation we took her to Evansville, Indiana, to see Dr. Linthicum and Dr. Walker. They said it was a type of nervousness, and they treated her for months, but she didn't improve.

"We brought her home. We had treatments here, but she got worse—twenty convulsions a day, sometimes. Her mind became a blank.

"We took her to Dr. Hoppe, in Cincinnati. He said she had a rare brain affliction that was invariably fatal.

"We brought her home to die. Then one of our local friends, Mr. Wilgus, told us about Edgar Cayce."

Dr. Münsterberg interrupted. "This Mr. Wilgus . . .

was he connected with the young man Cayce in any way?"

"Oh, no, except that he had always been interested in him. Mr. Wilgus is one of our most influential citizens. He used to hunt a good deal down on the Cayce property, and when Edgar was a boy Mr. Wilgus used to hire him as guide. One day a piece of shot glanced from a bird which Mr. Wilgus had brought down and struck the boy in the cheek.

Mr. Wilgus felt so conscience-stricken that he always kept an eye on Edgar and tried to help him out.

"At any rate, Mr. Wilgus had readings, and on the advice of one of them went to Cincinnati for a minor operation, which he said vastly improved his health.

"He urged us to give the young man a chance—you understand, of course, that he was not in the business of giving readings at the time. This was in the summer of 1902, nearly ten years ago. Edgar was then working in Bowling Green, in a bookstore."

Dr. Münsterberg nodded. "I understand," he said. "We will proceed."

"My husband asked him to come here, and he did. He wanted no other remuneration than the railroad ticket. He said the trip gave him a chance to see his girl. They were married the following year, I believe.

"He came with Mr. Al C. Layne, the local man who was at the time conducting the readings and giving some of the treatments."

Dr. Münsterberg interrupted again. "He was a doctor, this Layne?"

"He was studying osteopathy at the time. Later he was graduated in the profession. His wife had a millinery shop in Hopkinsville and Edgar Cayce's sister was employed there."

"Mr. Layne put Cayce into a trance," Dr. Münsterberg said. "Did either of the men examine the child?"

"No. They saw her, but I remember Edgar saying how he did not see how it could help him. I remember how young and boyish he looked. I thought to myself, 'How can this boy be of any help to us when the best doctors in the country have failed?' You see, we knew his family and we knew Edgar. He had very little schooling."

"You were skeptical, then?" Dr. Münsterberg asked.

"I hoped for a miracle, as any mother would."

The doctor nodded.

"He removed his coat and loosened his tie and shoelaces. Then he lay on that sofa there"—she

pointed and the doctor looked—"and apparently went to sleep. After a few minutes Mr. Layne spoke to him, telling him to have before him the body of our child, who was in the house, and to examine her and tell what was wrong with her body.

"I could not believe my ears when the sleeping man began to talk and said, 'Yes, we have the body.' His voice seemed different. It seemed—well, authoritative."

Dr. Münsterberg nodded. "Exactly," he said.

"He told us that on the day before she caught grippe she suffered an injury to her spine, and the grippe germs had settled in the spine, causing the attacks. He then told exactly where the lesion was and gave instructions for correcting it osteopathically.

"He could not possibly have known of the injury to her spine beforehand. I alone knew of it, and had not considered it serious—or even an injury."

"But you are sure it happened?"

"The day before Aime caught grippe she was getting out of the carriage with me. She slipped and struck the end of her spine on the carriage step. She jumped up as if unhurt, and I thought no more of it."

"The lesion was discovered where he described it?"

"Yes. Mr. Layne gave Aime a treatment that night. Next day we took another reading. He said the adjustment had not been properly made."

"Very interesting," Dr. Münsterberg said. "He told the man, Layne, his own conductor, that he had not carried out instructions?"

"Yes. Then he told what had been done that was wrong, and explained how to do it the right way. Layne tried again that morning. In the afternoon another reading was taken. Still the correction had not been made. Layne tried again. The next morning a reading was taken and the treatment was approved.

"Edgar returned to Bowling Green, and Mr. Layne, who lived in Hopkinsville, continued the treatments. He came every day for three weeks.

"At the end of the first week Aime's mind began to clear up. She suddenly called the name of a doll of which she had been fond before the attacks occurred. A few days later she called me by name; then she called her father. Her mind picked up just where it had left off three years before, when she was only two."

"She advanced rapidly then?"

"Quite rapidly. Soon she had the mind of a normal

five-year-old. After the three weeks of treatment we had a check reading. At that time he said the condition had been removed. There was never any more trouble. Aime today is a normal girl of fifteen. She'll be finished with her lessons in a few minutes and I will bring her in."

"Yes, yes. I would like to see her."

"I don't know what this strange ability is," Mrs. Dietrich went on. "We have only our own experience and the experiences of our friends by which to judge. But so far as we know it always works. Edgar Cayce is certainly no charlatan. He's one of the pillars of the Christian Church, and so far as anyone knows he has never taken advantage of anyone. It's just the other way around. People are always taking advantage of his good nature and his generosity."

"Of course," the doctor said, "of course."

He answered automatically, as if he had not quite heard what she was saying but was aware that she had stopped.

He was staring past her, dreamily, at the sofa on which, ten years before, the young man he had visited that afternoon had gone to sleep.

The man with the mustache paused to measure the distance between himself and the cuspidor. Accurately he spat into it. His listeners, grouped around him in the foyer of the Latham Hotel, waited respectfully.

Leslie Cayce went on with his story.

"Well, you can see for yourself that he was a normal boy, except in school. There, he was dull. No doubt about it. He dreamed too much; all his teachers told me that. When he was twelve years old he was still in the third reader.

"That was in the spring of 1889. My brother Lucian was teaching the school. One afternoon Lucian met me and told me he had asked Edgar to spell 'cabin' and the boy couldn't do it. 'I hope I did right, Leslie,' Lucian said. 'I made him stay after school and write the word five hundred times on the blackboard.' 'Do as you like, Lucian,' I said. 'You're the teacher.'

"Well, I felt mighty badly, mighty badly. Maybe it's my own fault, I thought. Maybe I don't spend enough time with the boy. Maybe he just needs somebody to bring him out properly, you know?"

"So that night I sat down with him and we took hold of the spelling lesson. Well, there didn't seem to

be anything I could do to get the lesson into his head. I'd think he had it; then when I'd close the book and ask him to spell the words, he couldn't do it.

"First thing I knew it was nearly eleven o'clock. The boy was tired, I knew, so I told him he might better go to bed. 'Just let me rest for five minutes,' he said to me, 'and I'll know the lesson.' 'All right,' I said, just to humor him, you know.

"Well, I went into the kitchen to get a glass of water. I pattered around with a few things, then went back to the living room. There he was, asleep in the chair, with the spelling book for a pillow. I laughed and gave him a shake. 'Wake up, Old Man,' I said, 'time for bed.'

"Well, he woke up right off, and said, 'Ask me the lesson. I know it now.' I was sure he didn't, but to humor him I asked him a few words.

"Well, dogged if he couldn't spell them. I asked him some more and he knew them. 'Ask me anything in the book,' he said. He seemed all excited. So I skipped through the book, and no matter what I asked, he knew it.

"Then he began telling me what other words were on the page with the words I asked him, and what the pictures were on the pages, and the numbers of the pages. He knew that book as if he had it in his hands looking at it."

Dr. Münsterberg leaned forward. "What was his explanation?" he asked. "What did he say had caused this?"

"All I could ever get out of him was that he suddenly felt that night that if he slept a little on the book he would know the lesson. And he did.

"After that he slept on all his lessons, and he knew them all perfectly. He began to hop grades like he was skipping rope."

"His memory of these lessons, did it persist?" Dr. Münsterberg asked.

"Never forgot any of them. Even to this day he remembers them."

"Very interesting. And you recall no peculiar circumstances or accidents at his birth, or in his youth, before this?"

"Not a thing, except milk on the breasts."

"Milk on the breasts?"

"Cried for a month after he was born. Nobody knew what the trouble was. Then old Patsy Cayce—colored woman at my father's house, used to be a

slave—she came over and asked my wife for a needle. 'Boil it up first,' she said. Then she took it and pricked a little hole in the nipple of each breast, and dogged if milk didn't come from them. After that the baby never cried much at all."

"I have heard of that," Dr. Münsterberg said, "in my medical studies."

"Are you a medical doctor as well as a Ph.D.?" Dr. Ketchum asked. He was a smiling, quick-moving, bright-eyed man, in his middle thirties.

"Oh, yes," Dr. Münsterberg said, "I have a medical degree. I studied both at Leipzig and Heidelberg."

"Then I may tell you of some of my cases?" Dr. Ketchum said.

"I am most interested to know what school of medicine he endorses," Dr. Münsterberg said. "For the Dietrich child he prescribed osteopathy."

"He uses all schools," Dr. Ketchum said, "and often for the same case. He sometimes gives osteopathy along with electrical treatments, massage, diet, and compounds to be taken internally.

"He sometimes calls for herbs that are hard to get or for a medicine we haven't heard about. Sometimes it's just come on the market, sometimes it's been off the market for a while."

"Always he seems to know everything," Dr. Münsterberg said. "You would say that he was . . . quoting from a universal mind, perhaps?"

Dr. Ketchum nodded sagely. "I have often thought so," he said. "In one of the earliest readings I conducted a preparation was given called 'Oil of Smoke.' I had never heard of it, nor had any of our local druggists. It was not listed in the pharmaceutical catalogues. We took another reading and asked where it could be found. The name of a drugstore in Louisville was given. I wired there, asking for the preparation. The manager wired back saying he did not have it and had never heard of it."

"This was given for what?" Dr. Münsterberg asked.

"For a boy with a very obstinate leg sore," Dr. Ketchum said.

"We took a third reading. This time a shelf in the back of the Louisville drugstore was named. There, behind another preparation—which was named—would be found a bottle of 'Oil of Smoke,' so the reading said. I wired the information to the manager of the Louisville store. He wired me back, 'Found it.'

The bottle arrived in a few days. It was old. The label was faded. The company which put it up had gone out of business. But it was just what he said it was, 'Oil of Smoke.'

"Very interesting," Dr. Münsterberg said. "Very interesting."

Leslie Cayce cleared his throat and spat again into the cuspidor.

"I remember a case," he said, "when the boy was in Bowling Green . . ."

The young man sat at the kitchen table of the Cayce home on West Seventh Street, looking miserable, staring into the cup of coffee set before him. His mother, a gray-haired woman with a tired, pretty face, sat opposite him, looking at his downcast head and bent shoulders.

"I don't know what happens to all the pairs of rubbers you get," she said. "You'll be lucky if you don't catch cold, walking two miles to get here and two miles back again in a snowstorm with nothing on your feet but those light shoes."

"It wasn't snowing when I started," he said.

"You should wear rubbers anyhow. The ground is cold and damp even when there isn't snow."

She smiled.

"Well, I'm glad you came, anyhow. It's nice to see you. I know you're working too hard, staying at the studio all day and being up with Gertrude at night. You shouldn't bother even to talk with these people who come here to do their so-called 'investigations.' If you ask me I think most of them are bigger fakes than the poor soul they try to bedevil. They go and get a little learning and then run around being superior to everybody else."

"He didn't bother me, mother, except to start me bothering myself again. I could see his viewpoint: standing there, asking me questions, and comparing the answers with what he knows to be true in science. I kept realizing more and more that the only answer that to me would answer the whole thing satisfactorily would just make him certain that I'm crazy."

His mother nodded.

"Everybody takes it for granted—even the best Christians, the ministers and missionaries—that the things that happened in the days of the Bible and the days of the saints, can't happen now," she said.

He shook his head gloomily, agreeing with her.

"Suppose I had said to him, 'Dr. Münsterberg, when I was quite young I became attached to the Bible. I resolved to read it once for every year of my life. When I was twelve years old I finished it for the twelfth time . . . reckon I whizzed through it most of those times, reading the parts I liked best.

"I had built a little playhouse for myself in the woods on a creek that ran through the old Cayce place, by a bend at the willows. Every afternoon I went there to read my favorite book. One spring day when I was reading the story of Manóah for the thirteenth time, I looked up and saw a woman standing before me.

"I thought it was my mother, come to fetch me home for the chores. Then I saw that she was not my mother, and that she had wings on her back. She said to me, 'Your prayers have been answered, little boy. Tell me what it is you want most of all, so that I may give it to you.' I was very frightened, but after a minute I managed to say, 'Most of all I would like to be helpful to other people, especially children.' Then she disappeared."

"Suppose I told him that, and then, how the next day in school I couldn't spell a word, and was kept after school, and how that night I slept on my spelling book and knew everything in the book when I woke up. What would he say to that?"

Wistfully his mother looked at him.

"I reckon they'd have the wagon after you and send you up the road to the asylum," she said. "But to me it's the most beautiful story I've ever heard. I remember the first day you told it to me . . . the day it happened, before you even knew it meant anything. And we never told it to anyone else. . . . You were so solemn, and so worried about what it meant. And you looked so angelic. I prayed then that you would always remain that way."

He was embarrassed and drank his coffee noisily.

"That's the trouble," he said. "If it had happened to an angel it would be all right. But I'm no angel. There are so many people who are better than I am. Why did it happen to me, unless it's the work of the Devil?"

His mother got up and took her Bible from the kitchen shelf.

"Good men," she said, "always worry about that. You'll find it in here"—she tapped the Bible—"everywhere you look. You know that. It's the people who



are actually the tools of the Devil who never worry about whether they are wrong or right. They're sure they are right."

"But we're sure the readings are right . . ."

"So long as *you* are right, son, they will be right. The Devil cannot speak through a righteous man. I saw the Dietrich girl on the street yesterday. She's a beautiful girl, and as bright as can be. There's proof on every street in this town that the readings are right."

She opened the Bible and turned to the Gospel of St. John.

"We read this together the day you had the vision. I found it for you, remember? It's in the sixteenth chapter.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

"Yes, I remember," he said. "St. John: 'Let not your heart be troubled . . . In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you . . . that where I am, there ye may be also . . . love me . . . keep my commandments . . .'"

"Read from the fifteenth, mother."

She began: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. . . ."

When he left she kissed him and patted his shoulder.

"As long as I'm sure of you, I'm sure of the readings," she said, "and I'm still sure of you. Now put on your father's rubbers and don't fuss about it."

He stepped into a night that was quiet, windless. The snow fell straight down, noiselessly. Large, fuzzy flakes fell on his cheeks, his nose, his lips, his eyelashes. He turned east and started the long walk home.

Behind him, down the rolling hills and shallow vales of Christian County, snow fell on the scattered farms of the Cayces, and on the creek that runs through the old place, where it bends to pass the willows.

During the night the snow stopped. Only a light covering was on the ground next morning when Dr. Münsterberg left the hotel and walked to North Main Street. He turned right at the corner and went halfway down the block, stopping at the red-brick

building next to the bookstore. A sign pointed the way upstairs to the "Cayce Studio." The doctor trudged up the steps and paused in the hallway. One door led to the studio, another was labeled, "Edgar Cayce, Psychic Diagnostician."

The doctor opened this door, entering a small reception room. Beyond it was a large office room. From his place behind a massive desk Leslie Cayce waved him in.

"Our patient ought to be here soon. Due on the ten o'clock train from Cincinnati," he said. "Sit down."

The room was elaborately furnished. It held two large rocking chairs, two overstuffed easy chairs, a center table, a desk and typewriter for a stenographer, and Leslie's desk. All these were bedded in the pile of an enormous, deep rug.

Dr. Münsterberg sat down but did not remove his coat. He complained of the cold.

"Edgar's in the studio, developing some plates," Leslie explained. "He'll be here shortly. The reading is set for ten-thirty. I have ten-twenty now."

"Where will the reading take place?" the doctor asked.

There was a small room opening off the large one. In it was a high, bare couch, like a doctor's examination table. Near it was a small table and chair. Straight chairs sat against the wall. Leslie pointed to the room.

"In there," he said. "Edgar lies on the couch. I stand by him to give the suggestion and read the questions. The stenographer sits at the table and takes notes."

"And on the couch he will put himself into this state of self-hypnosis, only waking when you suggest it?"

"Yes."

"That will be very interesting. That is what I wish to see," the doctor said.

The door opened and Dr. Ketchum came in. With him was a sallow-faced man who identified himself as the patient. He was escorted to the large desk, where he sat with Leslie Cayce, answering questions and filling out several blanks. Dr. Ketchum chatted with Dr. Münsterberg. In a few minutes a young lady entered, took a pad and some pencils from the stenographer's desk, and went into the small room, seating herself at the table.

"And here is the young man himself," Dr. Münsterberg said as the door again opened.

The young man smiled and shook hands. Then he took off his coat and loosened his tie.

"You are going to lie on that couch and sleep?" Dr. Münsterberg asked, pointing into the small room.

"Yes," the young man said. "I'll bring a chair in and you can sit right beside me."

"That will be unnecessary. My seat here is very comfortable. I can see the couch and hear what you say. I will remain here."

The young man went into the small room. Sitting on the side of the couch he unfastened his cuff links and loosened his shoelaces. Then he swung his legs up, lay flat on his back, closed his eyes, and folded his hands on his abdomen.

Leslie Cayce escorted the patient into the small room and gave him a straight chair. Dr. Ketchum remained in the large room, as a courtesy to the visitor. Leslie Cayce stood by the couch, at his son's right hand, and prepared to read from a small black notebook.

Dr. Münsterberg watched the young man keenly. His respiration deepened gradually, until there was a long, deep breath. After that he seemed to be asleep. Leslie Cayce began to read from the black notebook.

"Now the body is assuming its normal forces, and will give the information which is required of it. You will have before you the body of"—he gave the patient's name—"who is present in this room. You will go over the body carefully, telling us the conditions you find there, and what may be done to correct anything which is wrong. You will speak distinctly, at a normal rate of speech, and you will answer the questions which I will put to you."

For several minutes there was silence. Then the young man began to mumble in a voice that sounded faraway and haunting, as if he were speaking from a dream. Over and over again he repeated the patient's name and the phrase, "present in this room."

Suddenly he cleared his throat and spoke distinctly and forcibly, in a tone stronger than that he used when awake.

"Yes, we have the body," he said. "There is a great deal of trouble in this system.

"Along the spine, through the nervous system, through the circulation (which is perverted), through the digestive organs, there is trouble . . . also inflammation in the pelvic organs, trouble with the kidneys and slight inflammation in the bladder. Seems that it starts from digestive disturbances in the stomach. The digestive organs fail to perform their function prop-

erly . . . there is lack of secretion along the digestive tract . . .

"The pancreas and liver are also involved . . ."

The voice went on, continuing the diagnosis. Dr. Münsterberg hunched forward in his chair, listening intently. His eyes went back and forth from the young man to the patient.

How did the patient feel?

"There is a dryness of the skin and disturbed lymphatic circulation, aching in the arms and legs, particularly noticeable under the knee, on the side of the leg . . . he feels stretchy when he gets up . . . pains in the arms, pains and a tired feeling between the shoulders and back of the head . . ."

How to cure all this?

Many things were to be done. First: "Get the stomach in better shape . . . we have some inflammation here. Cleanse the stomach: when this is done we will stimulate the liver and the kidneys . . . drink large quantities of water, pure water . . . hitherto we have not had enough liquids in the system to aid nature in throwing off the secretions of the kidneys. . . ."

"When the stomach is cleansed, not before, give small doses of sweet spirits of niter and oil of juniper . . . use vibrations along the spine . . . not manipulation but vibration . . . all the way up and down from the shoulders to the tip of the spine, but not too close to the brain. . . ."

There were other things: exercises, a tonic, a diet. Then the voice said, "Ready for questions." Leslie Cayce read a few which he had written down in the notebook. They were promptly answered. Then the voice said, "We are through for the present."

From the notebook Leslie Cayce read the suggestion that, "Now the body will have its circulation restored for the waking state, and feeling refreshed and with no ill effects, you will wake up."

After about a minute the deep, long, sighing breath that had preceded the sleep was repeated. The young man's eyes opened. He stretched his arms over his head, yawned, rubbed his eyes, and sat up.

The stenographer got up from her seat and came into the large room, where she sat at her typewriter, preparing to transcribe her notes. Leslie Cayce stood by his son, waiting for him to get down off the couch. The patient stood up and stared at him, smiling awkwardly. Dr. Münsterberg suddenly surged up from his chair and walked into the small room.

“What do you think of this man?” he said to the patient.

“Well, he’s described my condition and the way I feel better than I could possibly do it myself.”

“Then, if I were you—” Dr. Münsterberg was measuring his words carefully—“if I were you I would do exactly as he says. From what I have heard, and from the people I have talked with who claim his readings have helped them, I would say that some extraordinary benefits have come from these experiences. Where did you hear of this man?”

“I read about him in one of the Cincinnati papers. I wrote and asked for an appointment, Then I decided to come here for the reading.”

“You told, in your letters, of your condition?”

“No, not a thing. I just said I wanted a reading.”

“Remarkable, remarkable.”

Dr. Münsterberg retreated within himself. His eyes glazed. He stood lost in thought.

The patient turned to the young man on the couch and offered his hand.

“Thank you very much,” he said. “I don’t know how to express my appreciation, but I’m going to follow all of your suggestions.”

The young man shook hands and laughed.

“That’s the best way to make me happy,” he said. “If this thing works, we want to know about it. If it doesn’t work we want to know about it, even more so, because if it’s a fake we want to stop doing it.”

“Dr. Ketchum will explain how everything is to be done,” Leslie Cayce said. He led the patient into the large room.

Dr. Münsterberg watched the young man tie his shoelaces. When the bows were knotted he said:

“Young man, I would like to know more about this. I have never encountered anything quite like it. I would hesitate to pass any opinion without a long and thorough examination. But if it is a trick, I am convinced you are not yourself aware of it.”

“If it is a trick, doctor, I would like to know about it before I go too far and cause some harm,” the young man said.

“I do not think it will cause harm,” the doctor said. “But”—he glanced toward the large room—“I believe you are mixed up with the wrong crowd. This thing should not have a material aspect to it.”

Quickly he thrust out his hand, seized the young man’s hand and shook it.

“Well, I must be going,” he said. “Keep your feet on the ground. Someday you may find yourself. However, if you never accomplish anything more than you did in the Dietrich case, you will not have lived in vain. I must go now.”

The young man escorted him from the office. At the stairhead they parted. The doctor expressed a regret.

“It is too bad we could not know more about the so-called powers of your grandfather,” he said. “It would be very interesting to know whether heredity is a possible source for this thing.”

The young man watched him until he reached the street, then went into the photographic studio. In the great, bare room, with its prop chairs and backdrops stacked in a corner, Mrs. Doolittle was waiting for him with her small son.

“It’s his fourth birthday,” she explained. “I thought it would be nice if we had a picture taken together.”

“Sure,” the young man said. “Jim will be tickled. And this is Danny, I reckon.”

“I’m Daniel Doolittle,” the boy said solemnly.

His mother laughed. “He won’t have the nickname,” she said.

The young man posed them with Daniel standing beside his mother while she sat sidewise, looking over the back of a light, low parlor chair.

“You’re too big to sit in your mother’s lap, aren’t you?” he said to the boy.

“A gentleman should always stand,” Daniel said coldly.

The doctor’s last words clung to the young man as he arranged the camera and inserted a plate.

“The so-called powers of your grandfather . . .”

Had his grandfather really possessed psychic powers? Had he inherited his ability from old Thomas Jefferson Cayce, the tall, kindly man with a beard? His grandmother always told him there was nothing wrong with strange powers so long as they were used in God’s work. She must have known about her husband’s abilities, if he had them. Only once had she mentioned the subject. “Your grandfather could do certain things, but he always said they came from the Lord and were not his to be showing off and misusing.” But what were they? Certainly his grandfather could not have given readings, or he would have done so. He always wanted to help people.

It was hard to remember him. There was the mem-

ory of going to the big house and sleeping with grandfather and grandmother, and waking up at night and feeling with his hands for their faces, to find which was which. If there was a beard, it was grandfather.

There was the memory of riding behind him on his horse, of listening to him call to the men in the tobacco fields, of hearing him ask the blessing at Sunday dinner.

There was that sunny, hot day in June, 1881 . . . the eighth of June.

The young man sighted through the camera. He saw Daniel's proud, unsmiling face, with its upturned nose and freckles.

He was just four himself on that June day.

"Quiet now. Watch my hand. Be still," he said.

He was just Daniel's age, and they were riding across the big field, heading for the barns . . .

He pressed the bulb. The shutter clicked.

**SEE ALSO**

New Age: Channeling

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Thomas Sugrue, *There Is a River: The Story of Edgar Cayce*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1945; Mary Ganey Sugrue, 1970; and Patricia Sugrue Cannon, 1973. Reprinted by permission of Henry Holt and Company, LLC.

## H. L. Mencken, excerpt from *Minority Report* (1956)

*H. L. Mencken published Minority Report shortly before his death in 1956. The popular journalist, literary critic, and essayist kept notebooks throughout his life. In Minority Report Mencken published brief essays and selections from these notebooks, resulting in an elegant hodgepodge of observations on a wide variety of topics.*

The effort to explain away the Puritan, though it has been undertaken by earnest men and some of them have been more or less intelligent, has got nowhere. The facts are too plain to be disposed of by special pleading, however adroit. One of the favorite lines of approach is to demonstrate that the Puritan of New England was not altogether a savage—that he, too, had his *Kultur*, and that in part at least it was not inimical to civilization. This may be admitted, but it proves nothing. The Borgias also had their *Kultur*, and it was on a much higher level than that of the Puritans. So did the Victorian English. So did the Goths and Huns. So, also, there is a kind of *Kultur* in Serbia and Albania today, and even in Arkansas, Mississippi and Oklahoma. Nor is it apposite to show that the harsh mandates of the New England Puritans were never really enforced—that multitudes of antinomians resisted them from the first days, and that the Puritans themselves constantly evaded them. All this proves is that civilization survived, not because of Puritanism, but in spite of it. Nor is there any weight in pointing to the New England *Aufklärung*, for even a professional historian must be intelligent enough to see that it was a revolt *against* Puritanism. When that revolt began to succeed, the thing itself was driven into the South and West, and there it lingers today, uncontaminated by the flashes of enlightenment that ameliorated it in New England. Theologically speaking, rural Georgia is now in the state that Massachusetts was before 1787, when the first Unitarian church in Boston lit its fires; on other cultural counts it has hardly got beyond the Seventeenth Century, and in some ways it is actually in the Thirteenth. The defenders of Puritanism, it is to be noted, always confine their argument to New England, which is as ab-

surd as confining an argument about Protestantism to Wittenberg. By 1800 it was actually weaker there than in any other area save the Southern Tidewater, and ever since then its stronghold has been elsewhere. The average American is no longer the average New Englander; he is rather the average Indianan, or Georgian, or Kansan. Scratch him, and you will find a Puritan.

The personal austerity of the Puritans was not unique and not new. The Catholic pietists had long surpassed it, both in pretension and in performance. What was novel in it was simply the extraordinary ferocity of its effort to force an uncomfortable way of life upon the other fellow. Puritanism, like democracy, seldom got far from hatred of whoever was having a better time. He was not only a sinner doomed to hell; he was also a private enemy to be smitten on this earth. The same motive is constantly cropping up in democracy. It is, at its best, only a scheme to counteract the natural differences between man and man by setting up artificial likenesses. At its worst, it is a relentless hatred of every sort of superiority. Superiority in wealth is the variety that a democrat hates most, for it offers the advantages that he most esteems and envies, but he is also against all other varieties. The bitter Puritan animosity to Catholic monasticism probably had one of its chief springs in a sneaking fear that monks and nuns, on the awful Day of Judgment, would stand a bit higher at the bar than any money-grubbing, meat-eating and concupiscent Puritan, however prayerful. The recurrent effort to prove that the Puritans were the pioneers of democracy, though based on false premises and animated by dubious motives, nevertheless has some sense in it. They were actually the pioneers of everything that is worst in democracy, including especially hatred of the fellow having a better time. For the good that is (or may be) in it, to wit, the limitation of government, equality before the law, and free speech and conscience, they certainly had no liking. All these things were introduced into the American scheme of things by men who were atheists by the Puritan definition,

though they borrowed from Holy Church quite as often as they borrowed from the French rationalists. It must be obvious that the American scheme of things no longer includes such concepts. They have been purged mainly under the influence of the decadent Puritanism that still afflicts the country. Prohibition, to take one example, was not merely a transient aberration, an accidental and in some sense pathological department from the true faith of democracy, as we are asked to believe. It was perfectly characteristic of

the Puritanism that has always been the bedfellow of American democracy. Its malignant swinishness fitted into the Puritan pattern perfectly.

**SEE ALSO**

Protestantism in America: Puritanism

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## Dwight Eisenhower, Military-Industrial Complex Speech (1961)

*The thirty-fourth president of the United States, Dwight David Eisenhower—"Ike" to his friends and admirers—used his immense popularity as a World War II hero to gain the White House. But in his farewell address as president, Eisenhower warned against granting undue influence to America's growing "military-industrial complex" at the expense of American civil liberties and democratic processes.*

My fellow Americans:

Three days from now, after half a century in the service of our country, I shall lay down the responsibilities of office as, in traditional and solemn ceremony, the authority of the Presidency is vested in my successor.

This evening I come to you with a message of leave-taking and farewell, and to share a few final thoughts with you, my countrymen.

Like every other citizen, I wish the new President, and all who will labor with him, Godspeed. I pray that the coming years will be blessed with peace and prosperity for all.

Our people expect their President and the Congress to find essential agreement on issues of great moment, the wise resolution of which will better shape the future of the Nation.

My own relations with the Congress, which began on a remote and tenuous basis when, long ago, a member of the Senate appointed me to West Point, have since ranged to the intimate during the war and immediate post-war period, and, finally, to the mutually interdependent during these past eight years.

In this final relationship, the Congress and the Administration have, on most vital issues, cooperated well, to serve the national good rather than mere partisanship, and so have assured that the business of the Nation should go forward. So, my official relationship with the Congress ends in a feeling, on my part, of gratitude that we have been able to do so much together.

### **II.**

We now stand ten years past the midpoint of a century that has witnessed four major wars among great nations. Three of these involved our own country. Despite these holocausts America is today the strongest, the most influential and most productive nation in the world. Understandably proud of this pre-eminence, we yet realize that America's leadership and prestige depend, not merely upon our unmatched material progress, riches and military strength, but on how we use our power in the interests of world peace and human betterment.

### **III.**

Throughout America's adventure in free government, our basic purposes have been to keep the peace; to foster progress in human achievement; and to enhance liberty, dignity and integrity among people and among nations. To strive for less would be unworthy of a free and religious people. Any failure traceable to arrogance, or our lack of comprehension or readiness to sacrifice would inflict upon us grievous hurt both at home and abroad.

Progress toward these noble goals is persistently threatened by the conflict now engulfing the world. It commands our whole attention, absorbs our very beings. We face a hostile ideology—global in scope, atheistic in character, ruthless in purpose, and insidious in method. Unhappily the danger it poses promises to be of indefinite duration. To meet it successfully, there is called for, not so much the emotional and transitory sacrifices of crisis, but rather those which enable us to carry forward steadily, surely, and without complaint the burdens of a prolonged and complex struggle—with liberty the stake. Only thus shall we remain, despite every provocation, on our chartered course toward permanent peace and human betterment.

Crises there will continue to be. In meeting them, whether foreign or domestic, great or small, there is a

recurring temptation to feel that some spectacular and costly action could become the miraculous solution to all current difficulties. A huge increase in newer elements of our defense; development of unrealistic programs to cure every ill in agriculture; a dramatic expansion in basic and applied research—these and many other possibilities, each possibly promising in itself, may be suggested as the only way to the road we wish to travel.

But each proposal must be weighed in the light of a broader consideration: the need to maintain balance in and among national programs—balance between the private and the public economy, balance between cost and hoped for advantage—balance between the clearly necessary and the comfortably desirable; balance between our essential requirements as a nation and the duties imposed by the nation upon the individual; balance between actions of the moment and the national welfare of the future. Good judgment seeks balance and progress; lack of it eventually finds imbalance and frustration.

The record of many decades stands as proof that our people and their government have, in the main, understood these truths and have responded to them well, in the face of stress and threat. But threats, new in kind or degree, constantly arise. I mention two only.

#### *IV.*

A vital element in keeping the peace is our military establishment. Our arms must be mighty, ready for instant action, so that no potential aggressor may be tempted to risk his own destruction.

Our military organization today bears little relation to that known by any of my predecessors in peacetime, or indeed by the fighting men of World War II or Korea.

Until the latest of our world conflicts, the United States had no armaments industry. American makers of plowshares could, with time and as required, make swords as well. But now we can no longer risk emergency improvisation of national defense; we have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions. Added to this, three and a half million men and women are directly engaged in the defense establishment. We annually spend on military security more than the net income of all United States corporations.

This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence—economic, political, even spiritual—is felt in every city, every State house, every office of the Federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society.

In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.

We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.

Akin to, and largely responsible for the sweeping changes in our industrial-military posture, has been the technological revolution during recent decades.

In this revolution, research has become central; it also becomes more formalized, complex, and costly. A steadily increasing share is conducted for, by, or at the direction of, the Federal government.

Today, the solitary inventor, tinkering in his shop, has been overshadowed by task forces of scientists in laboratories and testing fields. In the same fashion, the free university, historically the fountainhead of free ideas and scientific discovery, has experienced a revolution in the conduct of research. Partly because of the huge costs involved, a government contract becomes virtually a substitute for intellectual curiosity. For every old blackboard there are now hundreds of new electronic computers.

The prospect of domination of the nation's scholars by Federal employment, project allocations, and the power of money is ever present and is gravely to be regarded. Yet, in holding scientific research and discovery in respect, as we should, we must also be alert to the equal and opposite danger that public policy could itself become the captive of a scientific-technological elite.

It is the task of statesmanship to mold, to balance, and to integrate these and other forces, new and old,



within the principles of our democratic system—ever aiming toward the supreme goals of our free society.

#### V.

Another factor in maintaining balance involves the element of time. As we peer into society's future, we—you and I, and our government—must avoid the impulse to live only for today, plundering, for our own ease and convenience, the precious resources of tomorrow. We cannot mortgage the material assets of our grandchildren without risking the loss also of their political and spiritual heritage. We want democracy to survive for all generations to come, not to become the insolvent phantom of tomorrow.

#### VI.

Down the long lane of the history yet to be written America knows that this world of ours, ever growing smaller, must avoid becoming a community of dreadful fear and hate, and be instead, a proud confederation of mutual trust and respect.

Such a confederation must be one of equals. The weakest must come to the conference table with the same confidence as do we, protected as we are by our moral, economic, and military strength. That table, though scarred by many past frustrations, cannot be abandoned for the certain agony of the battlefield.

Disarmament, with mutual honor and confidence, is a continuing imperative. Together we must learn how to compose differences, not with arms, but with intellect and decent purpose. Because this need is so sharp and apparent I confess that I lay down my official responsibilities in this field with a definite sense of disappointment. As one who has witnessed the horror and the lingering sadness of war—as one who knows that another war could utterly destroy this civilization which has been so slowly and painfully built over thousands of years—I wish I could say tonight that a lasting peace is in sight.

Happily, I can say that war has been avoided. Steady progress toward our ultimate goal has been made. But, so much remains to be done. As a private

citizen, I shall never cease to do what little I can to help the world advance along that road.

#### VII.

So—in this my last good night to you as your President—I thank you for the many opportunities you have given me for public service in war and peace. I trust that in that service you find some things worthy; as for the rest of it, I know you will find ways to improve performance in the future.

You and I—my fellow citizens—need to be strong in our faith that all nations, under God, will reach the goal of peace with justice. May we be ever unswerving in devotion to principle, confident but humble with power, diligent in pursuit of the Nation's great goals.

To all the peoples of the world, I once more give expression to America's prayerful and continuing aspiration:

We pray that peoples of all faiths, all races, all nations, may have their great human needs satisfied; that those now denied opportunity shall come to enjoy it to the full; that all who yearn for freedom may experience its spiritual blessings; that those who have freedom will understand, also, its heavy responsibilities; that all who are insensitive to the needs of others will learn charity; that the scourges of poverty, disease and ignorance will be made to disappear from the earth, and that, in the goodness of time, all peoples will come to live together in a peace guaranteed by the binding force of mutual respect and love.

#### SEE ALSO

Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion;  
Science: Technology; Violence: War

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Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Military-Industrial Complex Speech*, 1961. Source: *Public Papers of the Presidents*, Dwight D. Eisenhower. <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/president/speeches/eisenhower001.htm>. The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm> (Nov. 18, 2002).

## Elijah Muhammad, “What the Muslims Want,” from the Nation of Islam (1964)

*The Nation of Islam, a black nationalist and separatist religious movement, emerged on the American scene in the 1930s. Under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad and the preaching of Malcolm X, the group grew rapidly into the 1960s. Although the Nation of Islam has since embraced more traditional Islamic practices, at the time “What the Muslims Want” was written the community sought not only full freedom and political equality but also the establishment of a separate black state, the release of all blacks from federal jails, the exemption from taxation for all blacks, the establishment of separate black schools, and the prohibition of intermarriage and other race-mixing.*

This is the question asked most frequently by both the whites and the Blacks. The answers to this question I shall state as simply as possible.

We want freedom. We want a full and complete freedom. We want equal justice. Equal justice under the law. We want justice applied equally to all, regardless of creed or class or color. We want equality of opportunity. We want equal membership in society with the best in civilized society. We want our people in America whose parents or grandparents were descendant from slaves, to be allowed to establish a separate state or territory of their own either on this continent or elsewhere. We believe that our former slave masters are obligated to provide such land and that the area must be fertile and minerally rich. We believe that our former slave masters are obligated to maintain and supply our needs in this separate territory for the next 20 to 25 years—until we are able to produce and supply our own needs. Since we cannot get along with them in peace and equality, after giving them 400 years of our sweat and blood and receiving in return some of the worst treatment human beings have ever experienced, we believe our contributions to this land and the suffering forced upon us by white America justifies [sic] our demand for complete separation in a state or territory of our own.

1. We want a complete freedom for all Believers of Islam now held in federal prisons. We want freedom

for all Black men and women now under death sentence in innumerable prisons in the North as well as the South. We want every Black man and woman to have the freedom to accept or reject being separated from the slave master’s children and establish a land of their own. We know that the above plan for the solution of the Black and white conflict is the best and only answer to the problem between the two people.

2. We want an immediate end to the police brutality and mob attacks against the so-called Negro throughout the United States. We believe that the federal government should intercede to see that Black men and women tried in white courts receive justice in accordance with the laws of the land—or allow us to build a new nation for ourselves, dedicated to justice, freedom and liberty.

3. As long as we are not allowed to establish a state or territory of our own, we demand not only equal justice under the laws of the United States, but equal employment opportunities—NOW! We do not believe that after 400 years of free or nearly free labor, sweat and blood, which has helped America become rich and powerful, that so many thousands of Black people should have to subsist on relief, charity, or live in poor houses.

4. We want the government of the United States to exempt our people from ALL taxation as long as we are deprived of equal justice under the laws of the land.

5. We want equal education—but separate schools up to 16 for boys and 18 for girls on the condition that the girls be sent to women’s colleges and universities. We want all Black children educated, taught and trained by their own teachers. Under such a schooling system we believe we will make a better nation of people. The United States government should provide, free, all necessary text books and equipment, schools and college buildings. The Muslim teachers shall be left free to teach and train their people in the way of righteousness, decency, and self-respect.

6. We believe that intermarriage or race mixing should be prohibited. We want the religion of Islam taught without hindrance or suppression.

These are some of the things that we, the Muslims, want for our people in North America.

**SEE ALSO**

African American Religions: African American Religious Leaders, African Americans and Islam

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Elijah Muhammad, "What the Muslims Want," from the Nation of Islam.

## Martin Luther King, Jr., “I Have a Dream” (August 28, 1963)

*Mass demonstrations opposing racial inequality in communities around the U.S. followed on the heels of events such as Martin Luther King’s Birmingham protests and the obstinacy of segregationist politicians such as George Wallace. These culminated in an August 28, 1963, march on Washington, D.C., during which Dr. King delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.*

Five score years ago, a great American in whose symbolic shadow we stand signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity.

But one hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. So we have come here today to dramatize an appalling condition.

In a sense we have come to our nation’s capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check which has come back marked “insufficient funds.” But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is

bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check—a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God’s children. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment and to underestimate the determination of the Negro. This sweltering summer of the Negro’s legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred.

We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the

Negro community must not lead us to distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of in-

justice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, whose governor's lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the South. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with a new meaning, "My country, tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring."

And if America is to be a great nation this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado!

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous peaks of California!

But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia!

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee!

Let freedom ring from every hill and every molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! free at last! thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

**SEE ALSO**

African American Religions: African American Christianity; African American Religious Leaders; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion, Civil Rights Movement

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Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream," August 28, 1963. Source: ASCII Text Prepared by Project Gutenberg. Accessed from: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/treatise/king/mlk01.htm>, The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm> (Oct. 8, 2002).

## Religion and Evolution, 1: O. W. Garrigan, “On Evolution,” from *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, volume 5 (1967)

*Although fundamentalist Protestants and other biblical literalists have repeatedly condemned the theory of evolution, Catholics have not been so consistent. From church fathers such as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas to more recent ecumenical councils and papal encyclicals, the official Catholic position on the relationship between science and religion has been that reason and revelation cannot contradict one another. Regarding the doctrine of evolution, this means that faithful Catholics may acknowledge it “as an acceptable working hypothesis,” but whether they do so is a question of scientific evidence, not doctrinal decree.*

### 3. Theological Aspect

If, as seems to be the case, man lives in a changing, evolving universe, the evolution of man himself must be examined on the level of theology as well as by biology and philosophy. Man, intelligent, free, graced and the recipient of revelation, has a relationship beyond other creatures to God, his Creator. Hence, there are theological dimensions to such evolutionary postulates as the historical origin of mankind from lower animal forms, the present state of human nature in a condition of dynamic flux, and future goals of the race to be achieved, perhaps, through man’s conscious control of his own evolution.

Pope Pius XII confined the questions of man’s genesis to “the origin of the human body as coming from pre-existent and living matter” (Denz 3896). The human soul, spiritual and immortal, is not explained by purely material antecedents. Man may share biological continuity with lower animals, but there is at least some measure of psychic and moral discontinuity.

To the question “What is the origin of man?” Scripture gives a religious answer. The Book of Genesis teaches that God is man’s Creator and Father and that man is the most excellent of earthly creatures, a creature “made to the image and likeness of God” (Gn 1.3). The Genesis account is a “popular description of the origin of the human race . . . in simple and

figurative language adapted to the mentality of a people” in a nontechnological culture (Denz 3898). In his hymn of praise of the Creator, the sacred writer may have taken something (under inspiration) from popular, non-Biblical narrations.

### *Traditional Idea*

For most of Christian history the possibility of evolution in its modern connotation was imagined only as most improbable speculation. The traditional idea that God had created things as they are, fixed in species, did not have a serious rival. Evolution (transformism) came into prominence chiefly through the work of Charles Darwin (*The Origin of Species*, 1859) and Alfred R. Wallace. Early proponents of Darwinism (e.g., T. H. Huxley in England and Ernst Haeckel in Germany) were militant materialists, atheists, or agnostics (Huxley’s term). Many churchmen responded to evolution as to an attack upon Christianity, and an unfortunate atmosphere of controversy was the result. In a famous debate, typical of the times, Anglican Bishop Samuel Wilberforce confronted Huxley at Oxford in 1860. In Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925 the celebrated “monkey trial” of John T. Scopes saw Clarence Darrow ridicule the fundamentalist ideas of William Jennings Bryan.

Statements of the Fathers and theologians before Darwin are not strictly *ad rem*, since the issue had not even been raised. St. Gregory of Nyssa is sometimes cited as an evolutionist, but he also held that man was privileged above other creatures in being formed in God’s own hands. St. John Chrysostom held the view, hardly evolutionary in the modern sense, that Adam’s body was lifeless before it received a soul. St. Augustine taught that in the beginning God created *rationes seminales*, the seeds or germs of all things that would eventually develop in time. These seminal causes were postulated to account for the appearance of new things without contradicting the doctrine that God had created all things simultaneously. Augustine

also proposed principles applied in 1893 by Pope Leo XIII to cases of apparent conflict between science and the Bible: “Whatever they [scientists] can really demonstrate to be true of physical nature, let us show to be capable of reconciliation with our Scriptures” (Denz 3287); and “the Holy Spirit [in the Scriptures] . . . did not intend to teach men these things in no way profitable unto salvation” (Denz 3288).

### *After Darwin*

Although churchmen after Darwin regarded evolution as inopportune and dangerous, no official statement of condemnation issued from Rome, and no written work was placed in the Index of Forbidden Books for that reason. The record of the attitudes of theologians, however, shows considerable change since the mid-19th century. The provincial council Cologne (not ecumenical) in 1860 declared that the theory of transformism whereby some lower form spontaneously became a human body was contrary to Scripture and to the faith. Vatican Council I in 1870 was content to repeat the commonsense advice: the same God gives revelation and reason; one truth cannot contradict the other (Denz 3017). In 1909 the Biblical Commission refused to call into question the literal and historical meaning of Genesis in cases “which touch the fundamental teachings of the Christian religion” but ruled that one is not bound to seek for scientific exactitude of expression in the first chapter of Genesis and that free discussion of the 6 days of creation is permitted (June 30, 1909; Denz 3512–19). In 1948 a letter to Cardinal E. Suhard from the secretary of the Biblical Commission noted that the replies of the Biblical Commission in 1909 are “in no way a hindrance to further truly scientific examination of the problems in accordance with the results acquired in these last 40 years” (Denz 3862).

In 1950 the encyclical *Humani generis* marked the point of a new development. Materialism and pantheism were condemned, caution and moderation were counseled in reinterpreting Scripture, but evolution was expressly recognized as a valid hypothesis:

The teaching authority of the Church does not forbid that, in conformity with the present state of human sciences and sacred theology, research and discussions on the part of men experienced in both fields take place with regard to the doctrine of evolution. [Denz 3896.]

Since then an increasing number of theologians have come to respect the well-documented majority opinion among scientists concerning evolutionary origins. The trend is to leave astronomy to the followers of Galileo and biology to the followers of Darwin, and to allow as an acceptable working hypothesis the notion of cosmic evolution, including mankind’s. Evolutionary insights are more and more applied to theology, especially since the publication of the works of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. In fact, the view is beginning to emerge, inverting the common opinion of the last century, that revelation says less about evolution than evolution says about the theology of creation.

*O. W. Garrigan*

### SEE ALSO

Catholicism in America: Public Catholicism; Science: Evolution

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O. W. Garrigan, “On Evolution,” from “Evolution, Human” entry, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 5, pp. 684–685. Catholic University of America Press, 1967.



Religion and Evolution, 2:  
Philip Hefner, “The Churches and Evolution,”  
from *Changing Man: The Threat and the Promise* (1968)

*Trained as a professor in systematic theology, Philip Hefner spent the bulk of his scholarly career investigating the relationship between science and religion. In “The Churches and Evolution” Hefner argues that churches must recognize that they are embedded in culture and as such must address scientific theories—such as evolution—to stay relevant in the everyday lives of church members, but also to challenge them. In particular, evolutionary theory forces communities of faith to reinterpret the notion of freedom, determinism, and changing conceptions of what it means to be human.*

Unless Christian institutions share in and speak to man’s common destiny, they have no legitimate claim to existence. The greatest danger for the churches in the dialogue between science and religion is the temptation to stand on the sidelines, watching their corps of theologians engage the scientific community. This spectator role is particularly tempting in the discussion of evolution, since as institutions which encompass the broad masses of people the churches assume that relatively few of their members will ever confront the issues of evolution posed by the biological and anthropological sciences in the sophisticated form articulated by the scientists and theologians.

This spectator attitude simply reveals that the churches do not comprehend the real issues of the dialogue in general, of the discussion of evolution in particular. The issues of evolution touch the fundamental patterns of development in which the churches as institutions and all their members as persons participate—no matter what the level of their sophistication. When the churches recognize this they will have to move very quickly off the sidelines and into the thick of the discussion.

Several kinds of issues confront the churches in the discussion of evolution. Some have to do with concrete ethical dilemmas which arise out of new meth-

ods of technology; others pertain to the theological rearrangements which these ethical dilemmas demand; still others are highly theoretical, pertaining to the churches’ relation to culture. At the risk of diffuseness I shall touch on all of these, so as to indicate the breadth of the implications evolution has for the churches.

***Changing Concepts of “Man”***

The most startling impact of the biological sciences today is their assault on conventional notions of what it means to be man, of what it means to live and die. The procedures of man’s change and evolution have been so radically recast by the learning and technology of our age, specifically by biotechnology, that the old understandings of humanity, life and death simply do not obtain in the way they once did. A few sensational data will establish this point:

What does it mean to be man, when the heights and depths of human emotion (the emotional range worthy of an Oedipus Rex or a Lear) can be manipulated by chemicals or by electrical charges? What does it mean to be man when asexual reproduction of life is foreseeable? What do life and death mean in an age when resuscitation of the heart, transplanting of organs and employment of certain drugs make it possible to maintain heart and lung activity indefinitely? For centuries the “mirror test” (holding a mirror to a man’s mouth in order to detect breath of life) served as a legal definition of death; today, physicians speak in terms of the state of a man’s brain (revealed by various tests) as the definition—since certain kinds of brain damage render life nothing more than “vegetable existence” regardless of the state of heart and lung activity. What does this do to theological concepts of life and death? What do human development and achievement become if it proves feasible to ma-

nipulate intelligence through genetic engineering, or if memory can be improved through injections?

That some of these developments are decades, even generations, away from perfection does not detract from the clear implication that the biological sciences have—through their technology—radically altered our conception of what it means to be man and what it means to live and die. It is the factors of *control* and *manipulation* that figure most in upsetting previous conceptions of man. Precisely because they encompass broad masses of people whose daily lives are influenced mightily by prevailing conceptions of what it means to live and die, the churches have no choice but to take biotechnology seriously in their theology of man and in their preaching about and to man.

In some ways the traditional Christian understandings are extremely pertinent to our new understandings of man. For example, Christian faith has never equated life with physical longevity; rather, it has understood that the *quality* of human existence is pre-eminent over its *length*. Does this mean that euthanasia is distinctly commensurate with Christian doctrine? Christian faith has also understood, under the rubric of “ongoing creation,” that God continues his creative activity in every age. Does this mean that human manipulation of emotions, memory, growth and development, life and death is somehow God’s creative will? It would certainly be difficult to ascribe to God’s creativity the experiments performed by Hitler’s doctors in the 1940s, but perhaps that creativity seems more obvious in the experiments being performed in mental hospitals today, or in the genetic engineering which may in the years ahead eliminate muscular dystrophy or sickle-celled anemia.

This is not the place to offer answers for such questions and dilemmas. It is enough to assert here that the issues raised by biotechnology are significant for the day-to-day theology and preaching that mark the life of the churches. The character of that theology and preaching will have a marked influence on laymen who are daily responsible for resolving the new dilemmas (physicians, for example, who must determine rationally which patients shall live and which shall be neglected). And it will determine what role pastors and congregations play in forming public policy. No single dimension of our doctrine of man, for example, is untouched by the fact that rage, lust, eu-

phoria and contentment can be induced at will by human manipulators, just as our doctrine of God is reshaped by awareness that God has permitted man to remold the natural order.

### *Foundations for the Dialogue*

When the churches begin to rethink their theology and preaching about man in the light of the technology of the biological sciences and when they formulate social-ethical policy in accordance with that theology and preaching, other issues, even larger and more amorphous, will emerge. As they engage in day-to-day theologizing, preaching and ethical planning, as they attend in detail to the discussion of evolutionary theory as a whole, the churches become aware that they are not alone in their concern, that they share a bond with other men and other groups, a bond with all of man’s cultural forms within the fundamental processes of life. The churches participate in the universal life process just as do all other forms; the evolutionist reminds them that they stand with all other human forms deeply embedded within a cultural milieu out of which they have emerged and in intercourse with which they have pursued their destinies.

For the churches to be so embedded within a culture means that they share in that culture’s response to what Julian H. Steward (in an earlier chapter) calls the circumstances which activate its inherent but hitherto latent genius. The churches are co-products, along with other human forms, of the cultural processes which have enabled man to reach his present level of development. Whether or not they wish to acknowledge it, they are part of the evolution of culture which serves the purpose of rendering it possible for man to be what we consider human and to develop even more complex and, hopefully, satisfactory forms of human being.

Confrontation with the fundamental relatedness between church and culture compels the churches to be more modest, realistic and self-conscious about their roles in society. This is not simply an affirmation of the cultural determinedness of the churches; more important, it is a reminder that the theories of the cultural evolutionists call attention to the matrix within which the churches carry out their life and mission. If the churches are communities of redemption or if they are beholden for their existence to some sort of

divine revelation, it is perfectly clear that that redemption and divine revelation are incarnate within the forms, aspirations and teleology of the culture in which those churches exist.

Furthermore, if we accept evolutionary theory, these cultural forms, aspirations and teleology do not exist autonomously for their own sake; rather, they exist for the development of the processes of life or, more specifically, for the sake of refining and developing and maintaining human life. Far from challenging the transcendence of redemption and revelation, the assertion of cultural embeddedness reminds us that such transcendence cannot be defined in terms of distance or "otherness" from the processes of life. Revelation and redemption are described in terms of the intensification, or even the perfection, of the authentic purpose of life in any given time or place, an intensification and perfection that only God can actualize. As such, the revelation which constitutes the churches has come in, with and under the power of evolution. And when that revelation asserts a kind of pre-eminence over the life process itself, it is a pre-eminence from within, a pre-eminence rooted in the basis of creation.

### *Transcendence Offers an Option*

If divine revelation and redemption are incarnate within the realities described by the evolutionary theorists, it is inevitable that they will be construed as options (perhaps the only real options) for the fulfillment of human destiny. To deny that our faith pertains inherently to the consummation of our destiny as human beings is to insist on a rupture between the churches and the fundamental processes of life-development which at best is unintelligible and at worst grotesque.

Within this framework the cliché that "Christian faith is a message about man's true humanity" appears to be unassailable, since the communities of the churches participate in the processes of life's evolution that make human existence what it is and since their message concerns itself with man's profoundest option for the authentic fulfillment of existence. This is not an authoritarian claim by the churches. For they know well that often there is no discernible empirical difference between the humanity of Christians and that of non-Christians, and that men *do* come to full, authentic humanity outside the church, while

those inside often fall far short of the mark of humanity. Nevertheless, Christians believe that, as Michael Novak recently put it, "men seeking to be men are at least very like what Jesus reveals them to be." That is, even though there are a plurality of ways to achieve authentic humanity, the Jesus Christ who is honored in the churches is the fulfillment of that humanity.

In a passive sense, this suggests that the churches have received much, and continue to receive much, from their cultural milieu. They have received the total background against which they live out their careers, as well as the possibilities within which they can stake out their goals. They must inevitably acknowledge their debt to culture, not with regret or with the pragmatic notion that cultural forms are simply the inescapable target toward which their missionary strategy must be aimed, but with readiness to acknowledge that the shapes and thrusts of their culture are intrinsic to their life, that indeed culture *is* their life (as Tillich reminded us when he said that "culture is the form of religion, religion the substance of culture").

Cultural processes and tendencies are not patterns imposed from without, to which the churches must conform their strategies; these processes and tendencies inform the churches' life from within, and they constitute the lineaments according to which the life of the churches expresses itself. The churches need not hesitate to make this assertion, because they believe that God created those cultural processes.

In an active sense, cultural evolution is something to which the churches can make a positive and creative contribution on the basis of the insights which derive from revelation and redemption, a contribution which they believe can stand as an option for the development of man's life. This does not mean that they simply legitimize whatever forms and purposes are currently available for cultural development. In fact, their very participation in the teleology of their culture may be the basis for critique and protest (as, for example, the German churchmen's protest against Hitler). Certain forms and purposes appear to be deleterious, even disastrous—unworthy of man's human being and even fatal for it. The churches believe that God's revelation discloses the truest and profoundest destiny for man, a destiny which cultural processes can (at least momentarily) thwart and reject. But that revelation does not pull man away from

the biological and cultural evolutionary processes that have made him; on the contrary, revelation enables man to share in the consummation of those processes.

The inseparable relatedness of the churches and their cultural milieu points to a second affirmation which underlies the argument of the preceding paragraphs. It is a bifocal affirmation: (1) The redemption which is cradled in the life of the churches is the fulfillment of the life processes which the evolutionary theorist describes, and as such the "Christian faith cannot ever be in conflict with any of the historical forms of the building of the earthly city, to the extent that these forms are authentically human"; (2) the life processes which stand at the center of evolutionary theory cannot fulfill their destiny apart from obedience to the God who created life. As Karl Rahner has put it, "An integral humanism requires the experience of God."

Evolution of life—biological and cultural—aims at the maintenance and refinement of life, and so far as we now know that life is pre-eminently human. The churches are both free and under the imperative to present themselves as communities which seek to actualize the most adequate options for the development of human life. But they insist that man's most authentic evolution is inclusive of the affirmation of God, whose purpose has set evolution in motion and whose redemption aims at its fulfillment. This bifocal affirmation is a fundamental assumption which guides the theologian or preacher who tries to speak meaningfully to a world caught up in the new biotechnology.

### ***Implications for the Christian Community***

The line of argument I have unfolded thus far indicates that *the issues which emerge from evolutionary theory make their most significant thrust at the substance of the churches' life and preaching*. That is, as the churches face the issues posed by evolution they discover that fostering high-level dialogue between scientists and theologians is only one level of their response, and perhaps a secondary level at that. Important as such dialogue may be, it is a problematic enterprise, at least in this country, and considering the magnitude of the issues at stake for our culture the number of working scientists and theologians involved in it is surprisingly small. Furthermore, the range of the dialogue is disappointingly narrow, reaching out only occasionally be-

yond a relatively small group of interested intellectuals. Important as the methodology of dialogue is, it is even more urgent today for the churches to concentrate their efforts at the second level of response to evolution—that of their substantial life and preaching.

At the level of methodology theologians and philosophers seek to refine their conceptualities. This involves analysis of how men know, and whether "scientific" knowing and religious knowing are identical, antithetical or otherwise commensurable. It also involves detailed scrutiny of the language used by religion and science in order to understand how the one compares with the other, as well as investigation into the philosophical presuppositions underlying the scientific endeavor in order to determine whether it is open to the consideration of the ultimate realities to which theology's attention is directed. Finally, the dialogue seeks to determine whether the concerns and formulations of theology have any intelligible correlate within the scientific purview.

The second level, that on which the substance of the churches' life and preaching is involved, in many ways presupposes the intellectual efforts of the first. But it is quite distinct, and its goals and methods must not be confused with those of the first. For at this level the churches are involved in shaping the basic patterns and content of their common life in the light of what the biological and cultural evolutionary theorists are telling us. Out of this common life emerge the theology, preaching and ethical planning mentioned above. In comparison with the dialogue, this shaping of life and preaching aims at a different audience and pursues different goals. The churches shape their life and preaching in order to touch the millions of people who come into contact with Christian faith at the level of the ordinary processes of existence which form the loom on which human life is woven. Although not divorced from the problems of conceptual refinement, shaping the churches' impact on the lives of their people is better conceived as a task of gaining insight into the significance of evolution for life and acting upon that insight.

This second level of response is in no sense an anti-intellectual retreat from the rigors of dialogue—indeed, it presupposes its own kind of dialogue. Efforts at this level are rigorous attempts to bring what evolutionary theory says about the processes of life in general to bear upon the specific processes of life that

constitute the existence of the churches. They represent an honest attempt to structure the *life* of the Christian communities in response to what men have come to learn generally about life from evolutionary theory.

Such efforts to restructure church life rest on the prior convictions outlined above: that Christian truth is a fulfillment rather than a destruction of natural truth; that God's truth is continuous (not identical) and not discontinuous with what man's best reason has discovered about man himself. From this perspective we judge that the attempt to bring evolutionary theory to bear upon the churches is an effort to be humanly honest about the life we lead in our concrete communities of faith. This humanly honest effort is an affirmation that the concrete life of our communities of faith is of a piece with all created life. Only so is it possible for the churches to claim that their life represents the redemption of all created life.

What are the issues raised by evolutionary theory, in light of which the churches will want to reshape the substance of their life and preaching? What are the evolutionary theorists telling us that could be pertinent to the communities of Christian faith? The preceding articles in this series have laid before us three basic issues that have deep significance for the life of the churches: freedom, determinism, change. These issues underlie the perplexities posed by biotechnology. Freedom questions whether man has the ability—within his technology—to fulfill his own selfhood; determinism, whether he is the product of what has gone before and of what his environment pressures him to be; change, what kind of continuity exists between tomorrow's needs, today's responses and the heritage of truth from the past.

To say that evolutionary theory makes its impact at the substance of the churches' life and preaching means that life and preaching must enable Christians to find resources within their communities of faith for understanding freedom, determinism and change so as to perceive within those elements God's redemption for their everyday lives. This is not a matter of ecclesiastical evangelistic strategy but rather a challenge to set forth in the empirical communities of faith the Christian options within a world that the evolutionary theorists describe. It is in these communities that men and women conduct their lives under the impact of the realities which those theorists de-

scribe; it is there that they carry with them the bewilderment, fear, anxiety, disappointment, despair, hopefulness, anticipation, courage and perseverance that attend freedom, determinism and change. So if they are to find the actuality of God's redemption, it must be in the context of these hopes and fears.

### *Where Men's Lives Are Lived*

To say that evolutionary theory touches men where they actually live means that the churches must challenge, buttress, stimulate and console the common life of men and women who daily wrestle with the processes of freedom, determinism and change. It means that the substance of life and preaching must be shaped with reference to the actual impact of freedom, determinism and change upon men's lives. The most practical consequence will be that everything that takes place within our churches—worship, ethics, education, pastoral counseling—must be a reasonable and honest response to human existence under the impact of these central issues. Otherwise the churches cannot make any intelligible claim upon men today, nor can they assert that theirs are communities of God's redemption.

To put it squarely: To shape life and preaching in the light of evolutionary theory is to seek a rediscovery of the gospel, the Word and grace of God, in the context of freedom, determinism and change, which the evolutionary theorists rightly designate as constitutive for life. These theorists remind the churches that God's Word is irrelevant, that it is not really a word at all if it is not incarnate within the realities of freedom, determinism and change that mark the universal processes of life.

The issue of freedom demands that we proclaim and actualize within the Christian community the possibilities for achieving selfhood in the face of forces that would destroy the self's integrity. Christian freedom is more than indeterminism—the sheer unpredictability of the self's actions—just as it is more than the assertion that the self cannot be reduced to the sum of its parts and the components of its own past and its social context. Freedom is the capacity to achieve integral selfhood, and although—as Langdon Gilkey's article reminds us—this capacity is not sheer autonomy, it must relate positively to the intelligent and constructive participation in the *making* of our own future which technologies of all types set before

us today. Freedom must be the capacity and willingness to enter into the making of our future despite the fact that man can now deal death to himself. God's grace in Jesus Christ is a grace that frees us for both the integrity of free selfhood and the shaping of constructive policy for our own future.

Determinism raises the question of God's providence—perhaps the most difficult article of Christian belief. Affirmation of providence entails the excruciatingly uncertain task of discerning God's hand in the affairs of the day; it also entails, in the face of a prevailing secular view that considers freedom and providence to be antitheses, the absurd claim that man's freedom is raised to its highest power in the fulfillment of his destiny under a supremely providential God. As Professor Gilkey has indicated, scientific thought has not succeeded in holding freedom and determinism together in a meaningful way. The churches' preaching may not succeed in doing so either, but Christian life today will be sham if it does not persuasively set forth the perennial Christian conviction that man can accept his destiny because it is formed by the same God who created him free.

The churches must confront the radical discontinuities threatened by the radical movements of change with the affirmation that God himself is at the root of change, and that he himself effects the continuity within all change. The change that is intrinsic to our common life represents the dynamic of God, who is accomplishing his own will and fulfilling his own nature even as he is propelling us toward the consummation of his kingdom. We need not fear change; we can immerse ourselves in it freely because we thereby participate in God himself. At the same time the churches must demonstrate that their traditions can be resources of life within change; rather than being demonic forces which stifle change by their insistence that today must always bear yesterday's stamp of approval, those traditions provide the resources for both freedom and criticism within change.

Closer attention to change and the churches' relationship to it can serve as a paradigm of the churches' relationship to culture as a whole and to the life process which evolutionary theory describes.

Professor Steward asserts that change is "not only accepted but is becoming a goal for its own sake." This is in sharp contrast to previous attitudes which resisted change as a degradation of the Golden Age

(remember Henry Adams' *bon mot*: "All that is necessary to refute Evolution is to compare the development in the American presidency from George Washington to U. S. Grant") or which relegated change to the evanescent realm of becoming, from which one ought to escape into the pure realm of being-itself. For most of its history the Christian church has argued that change is not to be considered real in itself but is to be looked on simply as a restatement of the past, the original revelation from Jesus and the apostles. Development of doctrine has always been a difficult pill for Christian theology to swallow, not to mention development of faith or of God.

### *Time to Acknowledge Change*

Evolutionary theory, whether biological or cultural, insists that change is inherent in the very foundation of the life process in which the churches live. So deeply and decisively is change a part of our common life that Professor Steward can write: "Whereas socio-cultural systems and values formerly persisted for centuries or even millenniums, one now has to ask how briefly a social system, art form or other component of culture can endure and still be an integral part of the culture." Biotechnology brings the inevitability of this swift change home to us with crushing force.

The churches have not as yet fully acknowledged this decisive character of change. They have not committed themselves wholly to change in even the obvious sectors: civil rights, automation, international relations. As a consequence, much of what they say and do has no meaningful correlation to the present experience of the men and women who come within their orbit. This accounts for a widespread breakdown of confidence within the churches.

On the other hand, in certain selected areas and among certain enclaves where the churches have accepted change, there are vigor, excitement and strong interest in the efforts by Christians to be honest in their relationship with the mainstream of life and in their articulation of redemptive realities within that mainstream. For years some sensational, somewhat superficial programs have been set forth which have sought to propel the churches into the maincurrents of the day's cultural change. Today some very serious attempts are being made to demonstrate that change is intrinsic to God himself and that therefore cultural change can be rooted in his very nature. Names of

such men as Leslie Dewart, Gerhard Ebeling, Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg and Schubert Ogden come to mind. Different as are their attempts and uneven as is the quality of their achievements, the aim of all is to show that commitment to change, as Professor Steward describes it and as the biotechnicians implement it, is not a threat to our faith but an avenue for deeper understanding of the God who is affirmed in the Christian tradition.

Professor Steward goes on to say, however: "Change seems to be getting out of hand. Every individual and every nation confront conflicting choices and expectations, and there are no clear guidelines for behavior." He closes his essay on the rather stoic note that change inevitably brings traumatic effects and that the most we can hope to do is to mitigate those effects somewhat.

If participation in the processes of cultural life forces the churches to accept radical change as a constant feature of everyday life, obedience to God's revelation within those life processes compels them also to contribute their own creative suggestions and patterns for establishing guidelines in the midst of change, along with criteria for determining the direction of change. The role of tradition in the life and faith of the Christian community rises all the more importantly, not as a dead monument that seeks to obliterate change but rather as a witness to all men that there is continuity amid change, and that full participation in the tradition actually liberates men to accept change fully and immerse themselves in it.

Such commitment to the problems of guiding cultural change will increasingly occupy the churches' efforts, not as an adjunct to their "religious" activity but as intrinsic to their life. If it is true that feeding myself is a material problem, whereas feeding my neighbor is a spiritual problem, then participation in the decision-making process of guiding the future of biological and cultural evolution is also a spiritual work, since it involves God's destiny for his creation. In this light, urban planning, air pollution, arms control, civil rights, the practice of medicine (and its impact on law) and a great number of other problems become spiritual concerns which the churches cannot avoid when they plan concretely for the allocation of their time and money.

The Christian churches cannot rest with Professor Steward's cautious goals of "mitigating" the traumatic

effects of change. Rather, they believe that since God is the Lord and Creator of change, that change will move toward the consummation God has designed. This is the basis of Christian hope—a Christian virtue that may well be judged as an empirical mark of God's presence in the world. The depth and unshakability of Christian hope—in its present and material rather than in an other-worldly form—will drive the churches to cooperate all the more vigorously in efforts to guide cultural change.

The earnest Christian grappling with the problem of man's freedom to face his selfhood amid the flux of cultural change, as well as his confidence that God is the Lord of change, brings together the three major strands of concern within which God's revelation comes to men who live in the midst of the issues that evolutionary theory has framed. When the churches listen obediently to the gospel of man's freedom in Christ under the Lord of history and change, they are participating Christianly in the processes of life evolution in which all men share. They are not distancing themselves from the cultural evolutionary process; rather, they are demonstrating that to be a Christian today is to share in the ultimate destiny of humankind which is relevant for all men living in that process. Their special hope for and special criticism of this process stem from their conviction that Jesus has unfolded the goal and the center of all of life.

If this argument is correct, it seems clear that the task of the churches is to share in and contribute to the common life of our culture. Their life and preaching are misunderstood—both by those inside and by those outside—if they are not recognized simultaneously as part of the thrust of our common life toward its evolutionary end and as part of the ultimate answer as to the destiny of that evolutionary thrust. Biological and cultural evolutionary theory and the technology they have produced confront the churches with an unprecedented testimony to the fact that our faith is part of man's development toward his humanity, and that the consummation we hope for is the ultimate goal of that development.

Until the churches recognize their place in the total evolutionary process of life, they cannot fully appreciate their responsibility or their positive significance in God's world. When they do acknowledge their place in the universal movement of life, they will glimpse the true cosmic implications of the gospel which

forms the substance of their existence. They will understand that their commitment to God is a commitment to man. They will understand that if they do not share in and speak to the common destiny of all life, they have no legitimate claim to existence.

**SEE ALSO**

Protestantism in America; Science: Evolution

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## Ruth Montgomery, "How to Remember," from *Here and Hereafter* (1968)

*Ruth Montgomery was a syndicated columnist in Washington, a member of the White House Press Corps, and president of the National Women's Press Club before she became the best-selling author of books dealing with New Age topics such as alternative healing, psychic phenomena, and reincarnation. In books such as Here and Hereafter, Ruth Montgomery includes both verbatim communications from her "Guides"—a group of nonphysical beings that channel information about occult philosophy through her—and her own reactions to those communications.*

Insofar as I can recall, the first time that I experienced a strong sensation of familiarity with a strange place occurred in 1952, while on a news-gathering assignment in the Middle East. The Egyptian Foreign Office had provided a guide, and at my request we made our initial stop at the Great Pyramid in Giza, whose peak I had excitedly glimpsed from the balcony of my Nile-side room, at the Semiramis Hotel in Cairo. A comfortable feeling of "belonging" swept over me as we approached the pyramid, and when we stood at the entrance, the guide began, "We have to stoop our heads and proceed along a narrow passageway for about . . ."

"Yes," I interrupted. "Then we bear right and upward, and then . . ." and gave the remaining directions for reaching the king's chamber.

The guide started in surprise, saying, "But I thought you said this was your first visit to Egypt."

"It is," I replied, and added shakily, "but I've been in that pyramid before."

I did not consciously believe it, nor could I understand why I had made such a spontaneous remark. I had never given any particular thought to reincarnation, and if someone had told me that he believed in it, I would have laughed him off as a freak. Yet, as we inched our way along the dark passages, aided only by the flickering light of a candle, each turn was precisely as I had indicated. It was impossible that I could somewhere have read such directions, because

although pictures of the pyramids were naturally familiar, I knew so little about them that I had assumed them to be virtually hollow structures. In the years since, I have repeatedly been drawn back to Egypt, choosing to go there rather than to places I have not yet visited, or to more glamorous spots that I have known. Each time, I am again seized by that odd feeling of belonging. The Nile seems as familiar to me as the Potomac, on whose banks I have lived for a quarter century. I am shamefully lax in remembering names and faces, but I never forget an Egyptian one. On subsequent trips, I have felt so at home in Luxor and the Temple of Karnak that I could scarcely bear to leave.

A similar sense of "returning home" overwhelmed me in Palestine, particularly at the site of Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee, and in the Dead Sea area near Jericho. It was as if I had trod those paths many times before, although such a reaction may be a normal outgrowth of religious emotions.

Even after I began delving into psychic phenomena, the subject of reincarnation failed to stir my interest. My initial skepticism about the possibility of communication between the living and the so-called dead had gradually dissolved, in the face of mounting evidence; but to believe that each of us has survived many previous deaths, and will emerge again from a mother's womb, seemed to belie reason. Then, toward the end of my work on *A Search for the Truth* in 1965, the mysterious Guides who had been bringing messages through automatic writing began to hint at reincarnation, in this manner:

"We are no more the 'hereafter' than are you, who sprang from a previous stage which you cannot recall. The very thought that thinking human beings sprang fully developed in that one state of existence would seem laughable to any except you earth people, who are accustomed to accepting everything at face value. You who are more advanced and sensitive have lived through many previous phases, while some of the

more doltish varieties had only primer training in a previous step. To that life which went before, you are as much the 'hereafter' as we here are to you. The hereafter goes on and on, my dear child, until at last you and we and all of us eventually pass through that Golden Door where longing shall be no more, where perfection has been attained, and where we are at last one with God, our Creator. This voyage through the various stages of life can be as rapidly performed, or as slowly drawn, as you make it, depending on your own contribution there, here, and in all the various steps. The progress depends on you, not on God, Who has given all equal opportunity, although not all have the same opportunity at each level of their advancement."

The Guides added that since some are in different stages of living than others, "the ones you call the 'unfortunate' may not be unfortunate at all. It may simply be their way of achieving goodness and oneness with God more rapidly than you, because if they sacrifice more, and live more abundantly for others, they are far more fortunate than those of you with mink coats, chauffeured cars, and the countless temptations that beset your trail through the maze of parties and working hours."

Several weeks later, they wrote: "Those who feel that they have lived before are not too far off base. The thing they misunderstand is that no personality is completely reborn. As the soul advances, the baser parts are sluffed off as a shell, and the shining parts blossom into new heights. As a consequence, no one is the same person he would have been in an earlier existence, or has lived before in the recognizable form of personality that now exists. The growth of the soul so advances and polishes personality, that were we to be reincarnated we would not seem to those who knew us to be the same entity as before. Parts of us remain, but not the whole man who sinned and struggled and loved and slaved. We here are not the same entity in its entirety that we were in our earth-life. We have memories and knowledge acquired during that phase, but we are constantly progressing, so that the less important things of the earth are now forgotten by us." Another time, they wrote: "We were first born in God. God is our ultimate home. It is the cycle of the universe, to seek that of which we once were a glowing part. Our reunion with God will be the ultimate step by which we will obtain the glory of true

love and happiness . . . but we have millenniums yet to go in our progression toward eternal truth and Oneness with God."

After the publication of *A Search for the Truth*, a number of editors contacted me about writing books for them, and I was giving serious consideration to one about Washington, D.C., when the Guides began urging me to tackle the subject of reincarnation, declaring: "We will now discuss the path that a soul follows from its original breath of life until its reunion with the Creator. To understand the beginnings, picture a revolving sun, brilliant, warm and enveloping, which sprays off fragments of itself in its rapid evolutions. Each is a tiny little light that has set forth upon its way through darkness, with but one goal in mind, to rejoin the sun from which it sprang. But as the little sparklets take on the breath of life granted by their Creator, they turn this way and that, eager to see what may lie in the darkness, but also afraid; so that instead of helping to guide other little lost sparks back toward the radiant center, they may hide for a time, or become so engrossed in themselves returning that they forget to administer to other lost sparks. This is simply a pictorial illustration, and is not meant to signify that God is actually the sun. It might be misunderstood unless we here explain that the sun, like all the other planets and stars and satellites, is merely another manifestation of God's universe from whence we all sprang eons ago, but the journey ends when we at last achieve such understanding of God's will and such perfection of soul that we are fit to rejoin God. Try to understand that as we return again and again to earth to complete our purification, we are beset not only by the old sins that we came to resolve, but also by new temptations which must be met and overcome, or we do not grow."

At another session, the Guides emphasized that we not only choose to be reborn, but also have free will in working off previously incurred karma. "There is no set pattern," they declared, "which decrees that at such and such a time we will meet a situation which will permit us to dissolve the age-old scar on our akashic record of all thought forms and experiences of mankind. We make our own opportunities, and although we may have returned to dispel certain karma, we will wisely work off other debts until the time comes when we are able to dispel the one we particularly wished to cancel out. It will thus be seen

that every minute counts, and no time should be wasted; for the more rapidly we repay these debts the sooner we will be freed from the wheel of recurring earth lives, and advance to higher dimensions. Remember not to acquire habits and yens that bind you too closely to the earth, for they invariably keep you coming back there, rather than growing here in wisdom and spirituality.”

The Guides, reminding that many millions of people have believed in reincarnation “since time immemorial,” directed attention to what they termed “the wrong attitude of many Orientals, who try to escape the eternal wheel by withdrawing from life and living one of pure contemplation.” This, they said, “defeats the very purpose of rebirth, for instead of helping others and doing all possible to make a real contribution to the betterment of mankind, they withdraw into themselves, thinking of their own salvation rather than helping others to achieve it.” They added that “this listless attitude has caused great harm among the backward peoples, who would benefit greatly by the keen minds and brilliant thought processes of the seers and yogis who should devote themselves to the people, rather than to their own quest for nirvana.”

The Guides declared that it is sometimes possible for a soul to work off bad karma without reincarnating, “if there is not too much of it,” by helping those on the earth plane to progress. “By so doing we gradually, oh so gradually, progress to higher stages here,” they continued. “But some unfortunately lack the patience to work out their salvation here, or have incurred so much indebtedness there that it is almost impossible to repay the obligations here. Thus, after staying here long enough to realize the enormity of his error, a soul will deliberately choose to reincarnate for faster progress, and through hardships of the earth phase to repay some of the damage he has done there.”

Then they wrote this intriguing passage: “Some plunge back into earthly forms too quickly to realize the purpose of reincarnation. Thus, they lack the detachment and wisdom to improve their own lot, or that of others. They are strictly earth people, not Old Souls, and it is these who cause so much of the strife and discord there, for they lack the broad view and tolerance for others.” Referring to soldiers “who became victims of their nation’s national policy and died in battle,” the Guides said that inasmuch as they

were “cheated out of their earth phase by events not of their own making,” they are often the first to be re-born. “Some stay awhile to recover their quietude and seek to communicate with loved ones on the earth plane, but others plunge back rapidly into another fetus or newborn baby before they have learned the all-powerful weapon for good, the power of love.

“Often these soldiers and others who are accidentally killed in the fighting reincarnate within weeks of the crossover,” the Guides continued. “They carry back with them burning resentment against a war which robbed them of life in their youth, and disdain for older people who forced them into such a situation through war. These are the ones most likely to lead the revolts, the student uprisings, the loudly expressed criticism of elders; storming against the policy in Vietnam or anywhere else that leads to the killing of youth, and against the conscription that would force them to kill others. It is understandable that they feel this revolt within themselves, but they do not know why. If they understood the reason for their burning zeal against war, they might take a more philosophical and thoughtful approach, forming councils or study groups to work with the older generation to defeat policies that eventually lead to war, rather than aimlessly and loudly protesting, without solutions.”

Inasmuch as the Bible warns of “an eye for an eye,” I asked how this admonition applies to servicemen who are required to kill the enemy in battle. The Guides replied: “This question is not as perplexing as it seems at first glance. Those who, in the name of protecting their country, are forced to slay those whom their nation has branded ‘enemy’ have no responsibility for an act which is committed according to man-made laws, and for which the man has no lust or liking. But the ones who go beyond the call of duty by relishing the slaying, and who inflict torture merely for torture’s sake—not because they are commanded to do so by a superior in order to exact knowledge from the prisoner—must pay the same penalty as a civilian who tortures or murders fellow human beings. The difference, then, stems from the heart of the individual soldier. If ordered to kill in order to save his nation or a segment of humanity, or because his government has ordered him to be a brave soldier and go into battle, he will bear no scars for the slaughter; but he must never relish killing, and

must not torture captives unless bade to do so for a purpose.”

Intrigued by these messages from an unknown source, I began to study the subject of reincarnation, including the life readings given by Edgar Cayce, and innumerable books on the subject. Surprised to learn that many people were seemingly able to recapture detailed memories of past lives, I asked the Guides how others might do likewise, and they wrote: “When you think back to certain aspects of your childhood which stand out as unique, see if you will also remember something else that seemed to have promulgated that situation for which there seemed no explanation. This could help to remind you of something in a previous earth phase that was influencing you in this one. These youthful happenings are the best for recollections of earlier lives, before you became too immersed in this one. Muse on those childhood events which most stand out in memory; then try to determine why they impressed you so much more than others.”

At a later date, they wrote: “The easiest way to prompt one’s faulty memory is by reaching back into the mind through meditation. Then, as the glimmers of truth flash before the inner eye, one may seek to determine from whence they came. As a starter, one could simply recall a past experience which made an unusual impact, such as a doorway that seemed familiar, the tantalizing aroma of a flower not previously encountered, or the yearning for a particular fragrance or taste. Your own love of licorice means that you once lived in the East, where you were addicted to anise. Why do you love butter beans so much? Because you once cultivated them in another life. You nursed them, loved to watch them develop, and considered them the most beautiful plant in your world; and before we knew so much about nutrition, you had convinced yourself that the richness of flavor and solid quality must make butter beans the most nourishing and sustaining food in the world. This was when you ate no meat, and lived virtually as a hermit; but this is only a sample of what each person will be able to do, in drawing forth the influences that made him what he is today.”

The following week, the Guides sought to be more specific in their suggestions for recapturing memories. They proposed that we let the mind roam backward to a place which we feel that we have visited before,

to a surrounding in which we have felt as comfortable as if it were home, or to a situation which we seemed to have lived through before. Then we should try to analyze the feeling. Why was it so familiar? Had we dreamed it, or visited a similar place? If not, we should make notes of the conditions, and keep a running diary of these recollections, matching each notation with comments on the circumstances and the perceptive flashes until, like pieces of a jigsaw, they begin to form patterns. Soon, the Guides declared, a flash of total recall may occur, so that a previous incarnation is suddenly revealed to us. At that point, they said, we should analyze each fragment of that life, to see what has influenced our present course of action, what errors of commission or omission we are here to rectify, and what good we accomplished from which we are now reaping benefit.

Another day, they wrote: “Those who would recall past lives should keep a notebook on incidents which are hard to explain by ordinary intellect. These would include happenings of the past that bore no relationship to one’s conscious awareness or intellect at the time, dreams that were unrelated to everyday happenings, memories stirred by a place visited which had not previously been seen by one’s physical eyes, recognition of someone who had until then been a stranger, strong affinity for persons, places, things, tastes and smells, fear unprompted by remembered events, or happiness unrelated to known causes. Keep a running list, and space for comment beside each such recall; then meditate separately on these isolated incidents. Visualize oneself in another time and place, trying to fit the happening into a framework of a different physical lifetime. Conjure up a whole new realm of spirit, and fit it into the mosaic of fragmented recall. Isolate each incident as to time, place and sensory reaction; then see if it will drop into the jigsaw of a past incarnation.”

Subsequently, they elaborated: “Begin each day to meditate on one childhood experience or reaction at a time, trying to relax and take it with you into the recesses of the subconscious, so that outcroppings of previous lives are stirred. At bedtime, concentrate briefly on the same incident that you have used in meditation, and let the mind of the unconscious work over it while you sleep. Keep pencil and pad beside the bed, and plan to jot down these flashes of recall as you awaken.”

Since publication of *A Search for the Truth*, many readers have written to ask whether I yet know the identity of the principal Guide who identifies himself by drawing a flower beside the word Lily, if a pencil is being used. I still do not. Some have suggested that the messages, rather than originating with an entity who is no longer in physical body, may stem from my own subconscious; others believe that I am tapping into my “higher self,” or superconsciousness. I have no way of knowing, except to be convinced that the philosophy contained was not previously in my conscious thought.

I would be willing to accept the “higher self,” or “superconscious,” explanation, were it not for a strange series of happenings early in 1967. Olga Worrall, the famous Baltimore psychic who, with her husband Ambrose, coauthored the excellent book, *The Gift of Healing*, had given me a copy of it. I therefore sent her an advance copy of *A Search for the Truth*, before it appeared in bookstores, and on January 31, 1967, she wrote to say how much she was enjoying it. At the lower left-hand corner of her letter she had drawn a picture of a flower, and written “Lily” beside it. I was astonished! Although I had shown no one the automatic writing, this was precisely the way Lily himself drew a flower and signed his name, all in one sweep of the pencil.

I wrote to her of my surprise, and illustrated what I meant by sketching the way I think a lily should be drawn; for Lily’s flower looks like a six-petaled daisy with a two-leafed tulip stem, and that is the way Mrs. Worrall had drawn hers, even to the same number of petals and leaves. On February fifth, I received a reply from Mrs. Worrall which said, “As I ended that letter to you, your Lily appeared to me (and I can assure you that he wasn’t in my thoughts) and said he wanted me to add his signature. Needless to say I was

startled. Without thinking, I found myself drawing a lily that looked very unlilylike—but Lily insisted that it was what he wanted. I majored in art in school and I really do know how a lily should be drawn, but your Lily had other ideas. When Ambrose read my letter to you he commented on the silly-looking lily, and I found myself telling him, ‘I can’t redraw it, but Ruth will understand.’ Things like this can’t be explained. I am really thrilled over Lily’s signature, because this verifies what you have been receiving from him. He is ‘for real.’”

What Mrs. Worrall did not know was that three hours before the postman delivered to me her second letter, I sat for my regular automatic writing session, which began like this: “Ruth, this is Lily. The way Mrs. Worrall drew my signature was because we showed it to her as further proof to you that we are here and able to communicate, that it is not your subconscious or another part of your mind. This she will tell you soon.”

At that time I had not, of course, heard again from Mrs. Worrall, and consequently had no idea that she had “seen” Lily, or been told by him to draw the lily in that fashion. Yet her letter, written to me the day before Lily wrote the above, contained the message that he said I would receive from her: that he is “real,” rather than a part of my own super- or subconscious.

#### SEE ALSO

New Age: Channeling, New Age Bestsellers; Ritual and Performance: Therapy and Healing

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## James Nelson, “Homosexuality and the Church,” in *Christianity and Crisis* (1977)

*James Nelson, a professor of Christian ethics at the United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, published “Homosexuality and the Church” in Christianity and Crisis on April 4, 1977, written in part to address the concerns of the growing and vocal community of homosexuals in the church. Nelson argues that Christians must reexamine their theology and practice by taking responsibility for the part they have played in forwarding negative stereotypes about homosexuality and attending to the insights of feminist theologians, gay Christians, and secular scholars in formulating a new ethic that recognizes our common humanity.*

### Homosexuality and the Church

The Gay Caucuses now active in virtually every major American denomination no longer will let us forget that the church must face the issue of homosexuality more openly, honestly, and sensitively than it has yet done. Beyond this legitimate and appropriate pressure, however, there are other compelling reasons for the church to reexamine its theology and practice:

1. Homosexual Christians are sisters and brothers of all other Christians, earnestly seeking the church’s full acceptance without prejudice on the basis of a sexual orientation regarding which they had no basic choice.

2. While antihomosexual bias has existed in Western culture generally, the church must take responsibility for its share in shaping, supporting, and transmitting negative attitudes toward homosexuality.

3. The Christian mandate for social justice will not let us forget that discrimination continues today against millions of gay persons in employment, housing, public accommodations, education, and in the enjoyment of fundamental civil liberties.

4. The church is called to do its ongoing theological and ethical work as responsibly as possible. Fresh insights from feminist theologians, gay Christians, and those secular scholars who frequently manifest God’s “common grace” in the world remind us of the nu-

merous ways in which our particular sexual conditions color our perceptions of God’s nature and presence among us. If the Protestant Principle turns us against absolutizing historically relative theological judgments, so also our openness to continuing revelation should convince us, with some of our ancestors-in-faith, that “the Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth.”

5. The heterosexually oriented majority in the church has much to gain from a deeper grappling with this issue: an enriched capacity to love other human beings more fully and with less fear.

### *The Bible and Homosexuality*

A brief survey of pertinent scriptural passages must begin with a word about our interpretive principles. My first hermeneutical assumption—and the most fundamental one—is that Jesus Christ is the bearer of God’s invitation to human wholeness and is the focal point of God’s humanizing action; hence, Jesus Christ is the central norm through which and by which all else must be judged. Second, I believe that the interpreter must take seriously both the historical context of the biblical writer and the present cultural situation. Third, we should study the Bible, aware of the cultural relativity through which we perceive and experience Christian existence. And, fourth, our scriptural interpretation should exhibit openness to God’s truth that may be revealed through other disciplines of human inquiry.

With these assumptions in mind let us turn to the Bible, noting first that nowhere does it say anything about homosexuality as a *sexual orientation*. Its references are to certain kinds of homosexual *acts*. Understanding homosexuality as a psychic orientation is relatively recent. It is crucial that we remember this, for in all probability the biblical writers in each instance were speaking of homosexual acts undertaken by those persons whom the authors presumed to be heterosexually constituted.

While the Onan story (Gen. 38:1–11) does not deal directly with homosexual activity, it gives us important clues to some of the reasons for its ancient condemnation. Onan's refusal to impregnate his widowed sister-in-law, a refusal expressed in his deliberate withdrawal before ejaculation, was interpreted by the biblical writer as so serious a violation of divine decree that Onan was killed by Yahweh.

Three interpretive observations are important to our subject. First, the story clearly represents the strong procreative emphasis characteristic of the Hebrew interpretation of sexuality. Our awareness that the very survival of a relatively small tribe struggling against external challenges depended significantly upon abundant procreation helps us to understand this emphasis. Yet, our own situation on an overcrowded planet is markedly different, and faithful response to God's humanizing activity in Christ should compel us to reassess this procreative norm.

Second, the story is based in part upon a biological misunderstanding present throughout the Bible. The prescientific mind, and more particularly the prescientific male mind, believed that the man's semen contained the whole of nascent life. With no knowledge of eggs and ovulation, it was assumed that the woman provided only the incubating space, "ground for the seed." Hence, the deliberate and nonproductive spilling of semen was equivalent to the deliberate destruction of human life. When such occurred in male masturbation, in male homosexual acts, or in *coitus interruptus*, the deserved judgment was as severe as that for abortion or for murder. The third observation follows from this. Male masturbatory and homosexual acts have been condemned far more vigorously in the Judeo-Christian tradition than have similar female acts. The sexism endemic to a patriarchal society ironically bore with its logic a heavier burden upon "deviants" of the "superior" gender.

It is, however, another Genesis account (19:1–29) that we associate more directly with homosexual activity—the Sodom story. Contemporary biblical studies persuasively indicate that the major themes of the story and concern of the writer were not homosexual activity as such but rather the breach of ancient Hebrew hospitality norms and persistent violations of rudimentary social justice. That inhospitality and injustice are "the sin of Sodom" is evident when one examines parallel scriptural accounts as well as explicit

references to Sodom elsewhere in the Old Testament. Further, the story is not given an explicitly and dominantly sexual interpretation until several centuries after it was written—in the intertestamental Book of Jubilees.

Given this general agreement, scholars do differ as to whether homosexual activity actually played any role in the story at all. However, within the context of the story's major theme, what if we assume that the writer did intend to condemn certain homosexual acts as particularly illustrative of human guilt in the face of God's righteousness? Even then, in fairness to the text, it is difficult to construe the Sodom account as a judgment against all homosexual activity, for its condemnation then would be directed against homosexual rape. Indeed, as John McNeill has observed, the use of the Sodom story in the Christian West may be another of those ironies of history. In the name of a biblical account whose major theme is inhospitality and injustice, countless homosexually oriented persons have been subjected to precisely that.

What are we to make of those Old Testament passages that in addition to rape condemn other homosexual acts? (See, for example, the Holiness Code in Lev. 18:22 and 20:13; also Deut. 23:17 and 1 Kings 14:24, 15:12 and 22:46.) Cultic defilement is the context of these passages. Canaanite fertility worship, involving sacral prostitution and orgies, constituted a direct threat to Yahweh's exclusive claim. Yahweh was the God who worked through the freedom of human history and not, primarily, through the cycles of biological life. Thus, sexuality was to be seen not as a mysterious sacred power, but rather as part of human life to be used responsibly in gratitude to its creator. In this context these texts are most adequately interpreted, and this central message is utterly appropriate to the norm of the new humanity that we meet in Jesus Christ.

Also, remember that a common Middle East practice during this period was to submit captured male foes to anal rape. Such was an expression of domination and scorn. As long as homosexual activity was generally understood to express such hatred and contempt—particularly in societies where the dignity of the male was held to be of great importance—any such activity was to be rejected summarily.

In the New Testament we have no record of Jesus saying anything about homosexuality, either as a sex-

ual orientation or as a practice. The major New Testament references are found in two Pauline letters and in 1 Timothy. The context of Paul's widely quoted statement in Romans 1:26–27 is clearly his concern about idolatry. Three things should be noted. First, concerned about the influence of paganism upon the Roman Christians, Paul sees homosexual expression as a result of idolatry, but he does not claim that such practices are the *cause* of God's wrath. Second, in this passage we have a description of homosexual *lust* ("consumed with passion for one another") but not an account of interpersonal homosexual love.

Third, Paul's wording makes it plain that he understands homosexual activity as that indulged in by heterosexuals, hence that which is contrary to their own sexual orientation. Thus, it is difficult to construe Paul's statements as applicable to acts of committed love engaged in by persons for whom same-sex orientation is part of the givenness of their "nature." Indeed, Paul uses "nature" as a flexible concept expressing varying concerns in different contexts. An ethical position that condemns homosexuality as a violation of natural law must turn to a nonbiblical philosophical position—but not to Pauline material—for its content.

### ***Remembering Human Historicity***

Paul's other reference to homosexual acts (1 Cor. 6:9–10) is similar to that of the writer of 1 Timothy (1:8–11). Both passages list practices that exclude people from the kingdom—acts that dishonor God and harm the neighbor, including thievery, drunkenness, kidnapping, lying, and the like. Thus, if it is apparent that here homosexual acts are not singled out for special condemnation, it could also be argued that there was general disapproval. What, then are we to make of Paul's moral judgment in this case?

Perhaps we should accept Paul for what he was—a peerless interpreter of the heart of the gospel and one who was also a fallible and historically conditioned person. If the norm of the new humanity in Jesus Christ obliges us to question the Apostle's opinions about the proper status of women and the institution of human slavery, so also that norm obliges us to scrutinize each of his moral judgments regarding its Christian faithfulness for our time—including his perception of homosexuality.

Surely, the central biblical message regarding sexu-

ality is clear enough. Idolatry, the dishonoring of God, inevitably results in the dishonoring of persons. Faithful sexual expression always honors the personhood of the companion. Sexuality is not intended by God as a mysterious and alien force of nature, but as a power to be integrated into one's personhood and used responsibly in the service of love.

A typology of four possible theological stances toward homosexuality can begin with the most negative assessment. A *rejecting-punitive* position unconditionally rejects homosexuality as Christianly legitimate and bears a punitive attitude toward homosexual persons. While no major contemporary theologians defend this position and while official church bodies have moved away from it, this stance unfortunately is amply represented in Christian history.

If we have been ignorant of the persecutions of homosexuals, it is not without reason. Unlike the recognized histories of other minority groups, there has been no "gay history." Heterosexual historians usually have considered the subject unmentionable, and gay historians have been constrained by the fear of ceasing to be invisible. A conspiracy of silence has resulted. Yet, the facts are there. Stoning, sexual mutilation, and the death penalty were fairly common treatment for discovered homosexuals through centuries of the West's history. While the church frequently gave its blessings to civil persecutions, in its internal ecclesiastical practice its disapproval was even more frequently shown through the refusal of sacraments and ostracism from the common life.

The rejecting-punitive stance today may be milder in its usual manifestations, though it continues to bear highly punitive attitudes along with its theological arguments. If the latter are based upon a selective biblical literalism, the former are rooted in familiar stereotypes. All lesbians are hard, and all male gays effeminate; homosexuals are compulsive and sex-hungry; male gays are inherently prone to child molestation; homosexuals are by nature promiscuous. Each of the preceding stereotypes has been thoroughly discounted by reliable research; yet they persist in the minds of many, buttressed by untenable biblical interpretations. But the key criticism of this stance is simply the incongruity of a punitive orientation with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The *rejecting-nonpunitive* stance must be taken more seriously, for no less eminent a theologian than Karl



Barth represents his view. Since humanity is “fellow-humanity,” says Barth, men and women come into full humanity only in relation to persons of the opposite sex. To seek one’s humanity in a person of the same sex is to seek “a substitute for the despised partner;” and as such it constitutes “physical, psychological and social sickness, the phenomenon of perversion, decadence and decay.” This is idolatry, for one who seeks the same-sex union is simply seeking oneself: self-satisfaction and self-sufficiency. While Barth says homosexuality thus is unnatural and violates the command of the Creator, he hastens to add that the central theme of the gospel is God’s overwhelming grace in Jesus Christ. Hence, homosexuality must be condemned, but the homosexual *person* must not.

William Muehl argues for the rejecting-nonpunitive position from a more consequentialist stance. Maintaining that “the fundamental function of sex is procreation” and that homosexuality is an illness comparable to alcoholism, Muehl then turns his major attention to social consequences. Sheer acceptance of homosexuality would have “implications for our view of marriage, the limitations appropriate to sexual activity, the raising of children and the structure of the family.” Since we are relatively ignorant concerning such potentially grave social results, Muehl argues, we should respect the historic position of the church, which rejects homosexuality.

The rejecting-nonpunitive stance appears to rest upon two major stated arguments and two major unstated assumptions—each open to serious question. The first stated argument is that of natural law and idolatry. At this point Barth seems to forget our human historicity, apparently assuming that human nature is an unchangeable, once-and-for-all substance given by the Creator. Actually, our human nature is shaped in some significant part by the interaction of people in specific periods of time with specific cultural symbols and specific historic environments. Committed to this alternative interpretation, Gregory Baum fittingly writes, “In other words, human nature as it is at present is not normative for theologians. . . . What is normative for normal life is the human nature to which we are divinely summoned, which is defined in terms of mutuality. This, at least, is the promise of biblical religion.” After examining the evidence of mutual fulfillment in committed gay couples, Father Baum concludes: “homosexual love, then, is not con-

trary to human nature, defined in terms of mutuality toward which mankind is summoned.”

### *Is Sex Orientation Chosen?*

Barth’s idolatry judgments appear to rest upon several additional—and equally questionable—assumptions. One is that procreative sex is divinely commanded and normative. Yet, in light of the gospel and of our current human situation, we might better say that while responsible love and sexual expression cannot be sundered, procreation and sex cannot be irrevocably joined. Another assumption is that there can be no “fellow humanity” apart from the opposite sex. But is it not more biblical to maintain that there is no genuine humanity apart from *community*?

Still another assumption is that homosexuality means a “despising” of the other sex—an assertion without logical or factual foundation. Indeed, many homosexuals exhibit the ability to establish deeply meaningful and loving relationships with members of the opposite sex precisely because sexual “conquest,” in whatever form, is excluded from the situation. And the logic of Barth’s argument at this point would seem to be that *heterosexuals* by their nature should despise members of *their* own sex. Finally, Barth maintains that homosexuality is idolatrous because it is basically self-worship. It is as if the classic syllogism were to be changed to read as follows: “I love men; Socrates is a man; therefore, I love myself.” Non sequitur. In actuality, compared with heterosexual couples committed gay couples show no intrinsic or qualitative differences in their capacities for self-giving love.

The second major argument of the rejecting-nonpunitive position is that undesirable social consequences probably would result from homosexual acceptance. This argument appears to rest upon a major unspoken assumption: that homosexuals in fact do have meaningful choices about their same-sex orientation. If one makes this assumption, then one might (as Muehl appears to do) draw a further conclusion: that societal acceptance would bring in its wake a significant increase in the numbers of those choosing homosexuality.

Such assumptions must be radically questioned. Actually, statistics show no demonstrable increase in homosexual behavior in the quarter-century since Kinsey’s study, in spite of somewhat less punitive

social attitudes in recent years. Further, it is probable that greater acceptance of homosexuality would have desirable consequences for families and child-rearing: Emotional intimacy among same-sex heterosexual family members would be less inhibited by unrecognized homosexual fears, and syndromes of alienation and destructive rejection of the homosexual child in the family would be lessened.

The great majority of homosexuals do not appear to have a meaningful choice concerning their orientation any more than do the great majority of heterosexuals. There exists today no general agreement about the cause of homosexuality. Major theories cluster around two different approaches, the psychogenic and the genetic, but both remain in dispute. It is significant, however, that in 1973 the Trustees of the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from that association's list of mental disorders, saying, "Homosexuality per se implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capabilities."

### *Moral Responsibility and Self-Acceptance*

The minority of gay persons who have sought therapeutic treatment to reverse their sex orientation have experienced an extremely low success rate. Behavioral modification programs using aversive therapy have conditioned some homosexuals against attraction to their own sex, but most frequently they have been unable to replace that with attraction to the opposite sex, a dehumanizing result. Indeed, Dr. Gerald C. Davison, who developed and popularized the "orgasmic reorientation" technique, recently disavowed his own treatment, calling upon behavior therapists to "stop engaging in voluntary therapy programs aimed at altering the choice of adult partners."

The other underlying assumption appears to be this: that theological positions and ecclesiastical practices which reject homosexuality can, in fact, be non-punitive toward those persons so oriented. This, too, must be radically questioned, and we shall do so in the context of the next major position.

The third major theological option is that of the qualified acceptance of homosexuality. Helmut Thielicke provides its best articulation. His argument follows several steps. First, similar to Barth's contention, Thielicke maintains, "The fundamental order of creation and the created determination of the two

sexes make it appear justifiable to speak of homosexuality as a 'perversion' . . . [which] is in every case not in accord with the order of creation." But Thielicke is more open than Barth to the results of contemporary psychological and medical research. Thus, he takes a second step: "But now experience shows that constitutional homosexuality at any rate is largely unsusceptible to medical or psychotherapeutic treatment, at least so far as achieving the desired goal of a fundamental conversion to normality is concerned." Further, homosexuality as a predisposition ought not to be depreciated any more than the varied distortions of the created order in which all fallen people share.

But what of sexual expression? If the homosexual can change his or her sexual orientation, such a person should seek to change. Admittedly, however, most cannot. Then such persons should seek to sublimate their homosexual desires and not act upon them. But some constitutional homosexuals "because of their vitality" are not able to practice abstinence. If that is the case, they should structure their sexual relationships "in an ethically responsible way" (in adult, faithfully committed relationships). Homosexuals should make the best of their painful situations, without idealizing them or pretending that they are normal.

More than Barth and Muehl, Thielicke is empirically informed and pastorally sensitive on this issue. But his position is still grounded in an unacceptably narrow and rigid version of natural law. As such, in spite of its greater humanness his argument becomes self-contradictory. In effect the gay person is told, "We heterosexual Christians sympathize with your plight, and we believe that any sexual expression in which you engage must be done in an ethically responsible way—but do not forget that you are a sexual pervert!"

An ethics of the gospel ought never forget that moral responsibility is intrinsically related to self-acceptance, and that self-acceptance is intrinsically related to acceptance by significant others and, ultimately, by God. Gay persons in our society frequently have been told by their families that they do not belong to them, by the church that they are desperate sinners because of their sexual orientation, by the medical profession that they are sick, and by the law that they are criminals. In the face of such rejection, the amazing thing is that so many are emotionally stable and sexually responsible. If emotional

problems still have a higher incidence among gay persons (as they do within any oppressed social group), we should cut through the vicious circle of self-fulfilling prophecy and recognize where the root of the problem lies—in societal oppression. Thieliicke fails to do this. More humane though his position is, by continuing to label same-sex orientation as a perversion of God's natural law, he encourages continuing punitive attitudes toward homosexuals and in consequence undercuts his own hope for more responsible sexual relationships.

### ***Realizing Our Intended Humanity***

The fourth major theological possibility is full acceptance. While it usually makes the assumption that homosexual orientation is much more a given than a free choice, even more fundamentally this position rests upon the conviction that same-sex relationships are fully capable of expressing God's humanizing intentions.

Though still in a minority, the advocates of full Christian acceptance are increasing in number. In 1963 the English Friends state in their widely read *Towards a Quaker View of Sex*: "One should no more deplore 'homosexuality' than left-handedness. . . . Homosexual affection can be as selfless as heterosexual affection, and therefore we cannot see that it is in some way morally worse."

Among individual theologians Norman Pittenger has articulated this position most fully. God, he affirms, is the "Cosmic Lover," ceaselessly and unfailingly in action as love, and manifested supremely in Jesus Christ. God's abiding purpose for humankind is that in response to divine action we should realize our intended humanity as human lovers—in the richest, broadest, and most responsible sense of the term. Our embodied sexuality is the physiological and psychological base for our capacity to love.

For all of its continuity with animal sexuality, human sexuality is different: As persons our sexuality means the possibility of expressing and sharing a total personal relationship in love. And such expression contributes immeasurably toward the destiny to which we are all intended. Hence, abnormality or deviance should not be defined statistically, but rather in reference to the norm of humanity in Jesus Christ. Gay persons desire and need deep and lasting rela-

tionships, just as do heterosexual persons, and appropriate genital expression should be denied to neither.

Thus, the ethical question according to Pittenger is this: What sexual behavior will serve and enhance, rather than inhibit, damage, or destroy, our fuller realization of divinely intended humanity? The appropriate answer is a sexual ethics of love. This means commitment and trust, tenderness, respect for the other, and the desire for ongoing and responsible communion with the other. On its negative side such an ethics of love mandates against selfish sexual expression, cruelty, impersonal sex, obsession with sex, and against actions done without willingness to take responsibility for their consequences. Such an ethics always asks about the meaning of any particular sexual act in the total context of the persons involved, in the context of their society, and in the context of that direction which God desires for human life. It is an ethics equally appropriate for both homosexual and heterosexual Christians. There is no double standard.

It is obvious by this point that my own convictions favor the full Christian acceptance of homosexuality and its responsible genital expression. I have felt quite personally the force of each of the other stances described in this article, for at various earlier periods in my life I have identified, in turn, with each one—beginning as a teenager with the full complement of antihomosexual stereotypes. In recent years, both through theological-ethical reflection and through personal friendships with some remarkable gay persons, I have become increasingly convinced that the positions of both Barth and Thieliicke inadequately express the implications of the gospel on this issue.

### ***Homosexuality: A Heterosexual Problem?***

Reinhold Niebuhr has powerfully argued that Christians must learn to live with the tension of "having and not having the truth." "Tolerance" in its truest sense, he maintained, is experienced when, on the one hand, a person can have vital convictions that lead to committed action and, on the other hand, that same person can live within the reality of forgiveness. The latter means experiencing divine forgiveness for the distortion of one's own understanding and having the willingness to accept those whose convictions sincerely differ. Hopefully, it is in such spirit that this personal note is written, and in such spirit the hetero-

sexual reader is invited to wonder with me at this point about three possibilities.

One possibility is that “the homosexual problem” may be more truly a heterosexual problem. We are learning that “the black problem” is basically the problem of white racism, and that “the woman problem” is basically the problem of male sexism. So, also, we might well wonder whether or not “the homosexual problem” could be rooted in a homophobia frequently experienced by heterosexuals.

My own experience suggests this. While in the preceding paragraphs, for the sake of economy, I have simply used the terms “heterosexual” and “homosexual” (or “gay”), the best available evidence indicates that we are all bisexual to some degree. True, most of us, for reasons not yet fully understood, develop a dominant orientation toward one or the other side of the continuum. But Kinsey’s early research repeatedly has been confirmed: On the scale of sexual orientation relatively few persons fall near the “zero” end (exclusively heterosexual) and relatively few approach the “six” mark (exclusively homosexual).

Though, for the majority of us, our adult genital expression may have been exclusively heterosexual, it is quite probable that we do experience homosexual feelings even if such are frequently relegated to the unconscious level. And males in our society generally have the greater difficulty with this, inasmuch as we have been continuously subjected to exaggerated images of masculinity. Thus, I believe it is worth pondering whether some of our common reactions against homosexuality might be linked to secret fears of homosexual feelings in ourselves—Freud’s “reaction formation,” defending against an impulse felt in oneself by attacking it in others.

Gay people may also represent threats to us in other related ways. The gay man seems to belie the importance of “super-masculinity,” and his very presence calls into question so much that “straight” males have sacrificed in order to be manly. Homosexuals appear to disvalue commonly held public values related to marriage, family, and children. Because we so frequently judge others by our own standards, those who obviously deviate from them appear to be seriously deviant. And, strangely enough, homosexuals may awaken in heterosexuals a dimly recognized fear of death. Sometimes our hopes of vicarious immortality

through our children and grandchildren are stronger than our resurrection faith. Then the presence of the gay person who (usually) does not have children may reawaken the fear of death, even though its conscious experience may be a nameless anxiety. I wonder.

Second, I wonder how much of the heterosexual reaction against homosexuality is related to male sexism. I suspect that some of our responses are. Surely, the more severe biblical condemnation of male homosexuality was not unrelated to the status of the male in a patriarchal society. For a man to act sexually like a woman was serious degradation (literally loss of grade). And in our own society, where male sexism remains a serious problem, it is still the male who more commonly experiences homophobia. Indeed, the striking parallelism between so many arguments against homosexual acceptance and arguments against full acceptance of women-men equality ought to make us reflect upon this.

Third, I wonder about the possibilities of augmented liberation for us all were a greater acceptance of homosexuality to come. Many of us have experienced some diminution of our own homophobia bringing new possibilities of tenderness, lessened competitiveness, and greater emotional intimacy with those of our own sex. Many of us males have become more conscious of the connection between the uses of violence and our needs for assurance of our virility, and we wonder whether greater understanding and acceptance of our own homosexual impulses might not well contribute to a more peaceful society. The list of liberating possibilities could be expanded, but perhaps the point is clear. In any event, I wonder about the relation between Jesus’ apparent silence concerning homosexuality and Jesus as the image of authentic human liberation.

Precisely because we must live with “having and not having the truth,” it is important that we share our serious wonderings. Perceptions of sincere Christians will differ on this issue, but we can all attempt to invite each other into our quests for fuller understanding of that humanity into which God invites us all.

### *Some Implications for the Church*

The church’s firm support of civil rights for gay persons ought not depend upon agreement concerning the theological and ethical appropriateness of the

homosexual orientation or of specific same-sex acts. Civil rights support ought to be considered an expression of Christian concern for basic social justice.

The present legal situation is still very uneven. Some states and municipalities have legislated civil protection for gay persons, while others (the majority) have not. Most states still have punitive legislation on their books, though in actual practice enforcement is varied and often unpredictable. In any event, laws labeling "sodomy" or "unnatural sexual intercourse" as punishable offenses have a number of inherent problems. They violate the rights of privacy. They are ineffective and virtually unenforceable except through objectionable methods such as entrapment and enticement. However, enforced or not, sodomy laws stigmatize as criminal the person whose only crime is preference for the same sex, and inevitably such laws have considerable effect upon the gay individual's sense of self-worth. Further, an important principle of church-state separation is involved. What some Christians on fairly narrow doctrinal grounds consider a sin ought not to be made a crime unless that moral judgment can be defended on broader grounds of public interest and unless the behavior in question constitutes a demonstrable threat to human well-being and public welfare.

Beyond the civil rights, if and when churches were to affirm homosexuality and its responsible expression as fully appropriate to those persons so constituted, the implications for church life would be many, and their implementation might well be complex.

What about the full acceptance of gay Christians in the ongoing life of congregations? Because such acceptance still is largely absent, the movement toward congregations organized principally for gay persons will undoubtedly continue. This movement is completely understandable, but regrettable, for the majority's lack of acceptance then continues to fragment the body of Christ.

To be sure, congregational affirmation of gay persons would involve significant attitudinal changes on the part of many heterosexual Christians. With full acceptance, for example, all of those gestures and behaviors appropriate to heterosexuals in church gatherings must be affirmed for homosexuals as well. This should mean, then, no double standards concerning the hand-holding couple, the kiss of greeting, or the appropriate partner at the church dance.

The ordination question continues to be difficult. Not only division over theological and ethical issues but also differing patterns of ministerial placement and job security cause deep concern for many otherwise sympathetic church leaders. While no doubt there are presently ordained homosexual ministers in every major denomination, the vast majority of them continue secrecy about their sexual orientation. Only one major denomination has ordained a stated homosexual: The Rev. William R. Johnson was ordained by the United Church of Christ in 1972 and then only after prolonged study and debate in his association.

The recommendation made by the United Church's Executive Council in 1973, if difficult to implement, is the appropriate stance: "It [the Executive Council] recommends to associations that in the instance of considering a stated homosexual's candidacy for ordination the issue should not be his/her homosexuality as such, but rather the candidate's total view of human sexuality and his/her understanding of the morality of its use." This, indeed, is the logic of full acceptance. It is not the gay person's sexual orientation that would cause difficulty in ministerial leadership, but rather the misunderstandings and prejudices held by those whom he or she would lead. (Should a dominantly white denomination ordain black persons to the ministry? The parallel with racism seems clear.)

Most difficult of all gay-related questions for the present denominational church is that of homosexual marriage. The ordinance of marriage has a very long theological and ecclesiastical history, and that history is a heterosexual one. Profound symbols are organic. They must grow and develop, and sudden changes in their understanding cannot successfully be legislated. Marriage, involving a wife and a husband and the possibility of children, is clearly a heterosexual symbol.

But new rites can be created to meet legitimate needs unmet by existing symbols. There are, indeed, gay Christian couples living in long-term, permanently intended covenantal relationships who earnestly desire the affirmation of their religious communion. A "blessing of union" rite (by whatever name) could function in ways not identical but parallel to marriage rites. Such an ordinance could give the church's recognition, sanction, and support to a union whose intention is lasting and faithful. Indeed, if the church encourages responsible sexual expression among gay persons and then denies them its ritual

and communal support, it engages in hypocrisy. If and when the church moves toward such liturgical recognition, it should also work for legal recognition of homosexual unions, involving such matters as tax laws and inheritance rights.

The ecclesiastical implications of full acceptance are undoubtedly complex. Very understandably, however, many gay Christians are tired of waiting for such complexities to be resolved. They have waited—and hurt—long enough. Their impatience, I believe, is a call for repentance and for urgent work by the rest of us. At its root the basic issue is not about “them,” but about us all: What is the nature of that humanity

toward which God is pressing us, and what does it mean to be a woman or a man in Jesus Christ.

**SEE ALSO**

Protestantism in America; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Liberalism; Sexuality: Sexual Identities

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Excerpt from James Nelson, “Homosexuality and the Church,” 1977, in *Ethics in the Present Tense: Significant Writings from Christianity and Crisis Magazine, 1966–1991*, ed. Leon Howell and Vivian Lindermayer (New York: Friendship Press, 1991). All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

## Jimmy Carter, Inaugural Address (January 20, 1977)

*Georgian Jimmy Carter was inaugurated the thirty-ninth president of the United States on January 20, 1977. In his Inaugural Address, President Carter highlighted some of the major themes that characterized his presidency: a decidedly Christian emphasis on improving the moral and spiritual strength of the nation by strengthening the American family, a concern for civil rights, and an emphasis on forwarding peace through effective foreign policy.*

For myself and for our Nation, I want to thank my predecessor for all he has done to heal our land.

In this outward and physical ceremony we attest once again to the inner and spiritual strength of our Nation. As my high school teacher, Miss Julia Coleman, used to say: “We must adjust to changing times and still hold to unchanging principles.”

Here before me is the Bible used in the inauguration of our first President, in 1789, and I have just taken the oath of office on the Bible my mother gave me a few years ago, opened to a timeless admonition from the ancient prophet Micah:

“He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.” (Micah 6: 8)

This inauguration ceremony marks a new beginning, a new dedication within our Government, and a new spirit among us all. A President may sense and proclaim that new spirit, but only a people can provide it.

Two centuries ago our Nation’s birth was a milestone in the long quest for freedom, but the bold and brilliant dream which excited the founders of this Nation still awaits its consummation. I have no new dream to set forth today, but rather urge a fresh faith in the old dream.

Ours was the first society openly to define itself in terms of both spirituality and of human liberty. It is that unique self-definition which has given us an ex-

ceptional appeal, but it also imposes on us a special obligation, to take on those moral duties which, when assumed, seem invariably to be in our own best interests.

You have given me a great responsibility—to stay close to you, to be worthy of you, and to exemplify what you are. Let us create together a new national spirit of unity and trust. Your strength can compensate for my weakness, and your wisdom can help to minimize my mistakes.

Let us learn together and laugh together and work together and pray together, confident that in the end we will triumph together in the right.

The American dream endures. We must once again have full faith in our country—and in one another. I believe America can be better. We can be even stronger than before.

Let our recent mistakes bring a resurgent commitment to the basic principles of our Nation, for we know that if we despise our own government we have no future. We recall in special times when we have stood briefly, but magnificently, united. In those times no prize was beyond our grasp.

But we cannot dwell upon remembered glory. We cannot afford to drift. We reject the prospect of failure or mediocrity or an inferior quality of life for any person. Our Government must at the same time be both competent and compassionate.

We have already found a high degree of personal liberty, and we are now struggling to enhance equality of opportunity. Our commitment to human rights must be absolute, our laws fair, our natural beauty preserved; the powerful must not persecute the weak, and human dignity must be enhanced.

We have learned that “more” is not necessarily “better,” that even our great Nation has its recognized limits, and that we can neither answer all questions nor solve all problems. We cannot afford to do everything, nor can we afford to lack boldness as we meet

the future. So, together, in a spirit of individual sacrifice for the common good, we must simply do our best.

Our Nation can be strong abroad only if it is strong at home. And we know that the best way to enhance freedom in other lands is to demonstrate here that our democratic system is worthy of emulation.

To be true to ourselves, we must be true to others. We will not behave in foreign places so as to violate our rules and standards here at home, for we know that the trust which our Nation earns is essential to our strength.

The world itself is now dominated by a new spirit. Peoples more numerous and more politically aware are craving and now demanding their place in the sun—not just for the benefit of their own physical condition, but for basic human rights.

The passion for freedom is on the rise. Tapping this new spirit, there can be no nobler nor more ambitious task for America to undertake on this day of a new beginning than to help shape a just and peaceful world that is truly humane.

We are a strong nation, and we will maintain strength so sufficient that it need not be proven in combat—a quiet strength based not merely on the size of an arsenal, but on the nobility of ideas.

We will be ever vigilant and never vulnerable, and we will fight our wars against poverty, ignorance, and injustice—for those are the enemies against which our forces can be honorably marshaled.

We are a purely idealistic Nation, but let no one confuse our idealism with weakness.

Because we are free we can never be indifferent to the fate of freedom elsewhere. Our moral sense dictates a clearcut preference for these societies which share with us an abiding respect for individual human rights. We do not seek to intimidate, but it is clear that a world which others can dominate with impunity would be inhospitable to decency and a threat to the well-being of all people.

The world is still engaged in a massive armaments race designed to ensure continuing equivalent strength among potential adversaries. We pledge perseverance and wisdom in our efforts to limit the world's armaments to those necessary for each nation's own do-

mestic safety. And we will move this year a step toward the ultimate goal—the elimination of all nuclear weapons from this Earth. We urge all other people to join us, for success can mean life instead of death.

Within us, the people of the United States, there is evident a serious and purposeful rekindling of confidence. And I join in the hope that when my time as your President has ended, people might say this about our Nation:

that we had remembered the words of Micah and renewed our search for humility, mercy, and justice;

that we had torn down the barriers that separated those of different race and region and religion, and where there had been mistrust, built unity, with a respect for diversity;

that we had found productive work for those able to perform it;

that we had strengthened the American family, which is the basis of our society;

that we had ensured respect for the law, and equal treatment under the law, for the weak and the powerful, for the rich and the poor;

and that we had enabled our people to be proud of their own Government once again.

I would hope that the nations of the world might say that we had built a lasting peace, built not on weapons of war but on international policies which reflect our own most precious values.

These are not just my goals, and they will not be my accomplishments, but the affirmation of our Nation's continuing moral strength and our belief in an undiminished, ever-expanding American dream.

#### SEE ALSO

Protestantism in America; Generations: The Family; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion

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Jimmy Carter, Inaugural Address, January 20, 1977. <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/presiden/inaug/carter.htm>, The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm> (Oct. 8, 2002).



## Camp David Accords (September 17, 1978)

*Considered perhaps the greatest achievement of Jimmy Carter's presidency, the Camp David Accords comprise the first peace treaty signed between Israel and an Arab state. Personally brokered by Carter at the Camp David retreat in Maryland from September 5 to September 17, 1978, the Accords set out a framework "to achieve peace and good neighborly relations" in the Middle East that was signed both by Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat and Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin. Although the Accords were successful in defining and normalizing the relations between Israel and Egypt, they left the future of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and status of the Palestinians living in those territories uncertain.*

### **The Framework for Peace in the Middle East**

Muhammed Anwar al-Sadat, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, and Menachem Begin, Prime Minister of Israel, met with Jimmy Carter, President of the United States of America, at Camp David from September 5 to September 17, 1978, and have agreed on the following framework for peace in the Middle East. They invite other parties to the Arab-Israel conflict to adhere to it.

#### ***Preamble***

The search for peace in the Middle East must be guided by the following:

The agreed basis for a peaceful settlement of the conflict between Israel and its neighbors is *United Nations Security Council Resolution 242*, in all its parts.

After four wars during 30 years, despite intensive human efforts, the Middle East, which is the cradle of civilization and the birthplace of three great religions, does not enjoy the blessings of peace. The people of the Middle East yearn for peace so that the vast human and natural resources of the region can be turned to the pursuits of peace and so that this area can become a model for coexistence and cooperation among nations.

The historic initiative of President Sadat in visiting Jerusalem and the reception accorded to him by the parliament, government and people of Israel, and the

reciprocal visit of Prime Minister Begin to Ismailia, the peace proposals made by both leaders, as well as the warm reception of these missions by the peoples of both countries, have created an unprecedented opportunity for peace which must not be lost if this generation and future generations are to be spared the tragedies of war.

The provisions of the *Charter of the United Nations* and the other accepted norms of international law and legitimacy now provide accepted standards for the conduct of relations among all states. To achieve a relationship of peace, in the spirit of Article 2 of the United Nations Charter, future negotiations between Israel and any neighbor prepared to negotiate peace and security with it are necessary for the purpose of carrying out all the provisions and principles of *Resolutions 242* and *338*.

Peace requires respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force. Progress toward that goal can accelerate movement toward a new era of reconciliation in the Middle East marked by cooperation in promoting economic development, in maintaining stability and in assuring security.

Security is enhanced by a relationship of peace and by cooperation between nations which enjoy normal relations. In addition, under the terms of peace treaties, the parties can, on the basis of reciprocity, agree to special security arrangements such as demilitarized zones, limited armaments areas, early warning stations, the presence of international forces, liaison, agreed measures for monitoring and other arrangements that they agree are useful.

#### ***Framework***

Taking these factors into account, the parties are determined to reach a just, comprehensive, and durable settlement of the Middle East conflict through the conclusion of peace treaties based on *Security Council resolutions 242* and *338* in all their parts. Their pur-

pose is to achieve peace and good neighborly relations. They recognize that for peace to endure, it must involve all those who have been most deeply affected by the conflict. They therefore agree that this framework, as appropriate, is intended by them to constitute a basis for peace not only between Egypt and Israel, but also between Israel and each of its other neighbors which is prepared to negotiate peace with Israel on this basis. With that objective in mind, they have agreed to proceed as follows:

#### West Bank and Gaza

Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the representatives of the Palestinian people should participate in negotiations on the resolution of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects. To achieve that objective, negotiations relating to the West Bank and Gaza should proceed in three stages:

Egypt and Israel agree that, in order to ensure a peaceful and orderly transfer of authority, and taking into account the security concerns of all the parties, there should be transitional arrangements for the West Bank and Gaza for a period not exceeding five years. In order to provide full autonomy to the inhabitants, under these arrangements the Israeli military government and its civilian administration will be withdrawn as soon as a self-governing authority has been freely elected by the inhabitants of these areas to replace the existing military government. To negotiate the details of a transitional arrangement, Jordan will be invited to join the negotiations on the basis of this framework. These new arrangements should give due consideration both to the principle of self-government by the inhabitants of these territories and to the legitimate security concerns of the parties involved. Egypt, Israel, and Jordan will agree on the modalities for establishing elected self-governing authority in the West Bank and Gaza. The delegations of Egypt and Jordan may include Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza or other Palestinians as mutually agreed. The parties will negotiate an agreement which will define the powers and responsibilities of the self-governing authority to be exercised in the West Bank and Gaza. A withdrawal of Israeli armed forces will take place and there will be a redeployment of the remaining Israeli forces into specified security locations. The agreement will also include arrangements for assuring internal and external security and public order. A

strong local police force will be established, which may include Jordanian citizens. In addition, Israeli and Jordanian forces will participate in joint patrols and in the manning of control posts to assure the security of the borders.

When the self-governing authority (administrative council) in the West Bank and Gaza is established and inaugurated, the transitional period of five years will begin. As soon as possible, but not later than the third year after the beginning of the transitional period, negotiations will take place to determine the final status of the West Bank and Gaza and its relationship with its neighbors and to conclude a peace treaty between Israel and Jordan by the end of the transitional period. These negotiations will be conducted among Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the elected representatives of the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza. Two separate but related committees will be convened, one committee, consisting of representatives of the four parties which will negotiate and agree on the final status of the West Bank and Gaza, and its relationship with its neighbors, and the second committee, consisting of representatives of Israel and representatives of Jordan to be joined by the elected representatives of the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza, to negotiate the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan, taking into account the agreement reached in the final status of the West Bank and Gaza. The negotiations shall be based on all the provisions and principles of *UN Security Council Resolution 242*. The negotiations will resolve, among other matters, the location of the boundaries and the nature of the security arrangements. The solution from the negotiations must also recognize the legitimate right of the Palestinian peoples and their just requirements. In this way, the Palestinians will participate in the determination of their own future through:

The negotiations among Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the representatives of the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza to agree on the final status of the West Bank and Gaza and other outstanding issues by the end of the transitional period.

Submitting their agreements to a vote by the elected representatives of the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza. Providing for the elected representatives of the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza to decide how they shall govern themselves consistent with the provisions of their agreement.

Participating as stated above in the work of the committee negotiating the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan.

All necessary measures will be taken and provisions made to assure the security of Israel and its neighbors during the transitional period and beyond. To assist in providing such security, a strong local police force will be constituted by the self-governing authority. It will be composed of inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza. The police will maintain liaison on internal security matters with the designated Israeli, Jordanian, and Egyptian officers.

During the transitional period, representatives of Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and the self-governing authority will constitute a continuing committee to decide by agreement on the modalities of admission of persons displaced from the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, together with necessary measures to prevent disruption and disorder. Other matters of common concern may also be dealt with by this committee. Egypt and Israel will work with each other and with other interested parties to establish agreed procedures for a prompt, just and permanent implementation of the resolution of the refugee problem.

#### Egypt-Israel

Egypt-Israel undertake not to resort to the threat or the use of force to settle disputes. Any disputes shall be settled by peaceful means in accordance with the provisions of *Article 33* of the *U.N. Charter*.

In order to achieve peace between them, the parties agree to negotiate in good faith with a goal of concluding within three months from the signing of the Framework a peace treaty between them while inviting the other parties to the conflict to proceed simultaneously to negotiate and conclude similar peace treaties with a view to achieving a comprehensive peace in the area. The Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel will govern the peace negotiations between them. The parties will agree on the modalities and the timetable for the implementation of their obligations under the treaty.

#### *Associated Principles*

Egypt and Israel state that the principles and provisions described below should apply to peace treaties between Israel and each of its neighbors—Egypt, Jor-

dan, Syria and Lebanon. Signatories shall establish among themselves relationships normal to states at peace with one another. To this end, they should undertake to abide by all the provisions of the *U.N. Charter*. Steps to be taken in this respect include:

- full recognition;
- abolishing economic boycotts;
- guaranteeing that under their jurisdiction the citizens of the other parties shall enjoy the protection of the due process of law.

Signatories should explore possibilities for economic development in the context of final peace treaties, with the objective of contributing to the atmosphere of peace, cooperation and friendship which is their common goal.

Claims commissions may be established for the mutual settlement of all financial claims. The United States shall be invited to participate in the talks on matters related to the modalities of the implementation of the agreements and working out the timetable for the carrying out of the obligations of the parties.

The United Nations Security Council shall be requested to endorse the peace treaties and ensure that their provisions shall not be violated. The permanent members of the Security Council shall be requested to underwrite the peace treaties and ensure respect for the provisions. They shall be requested to conform their policies and actions with the undertaking contained in this Framework.

For the Government of Israel:  
*Menachem Begin*

For the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt:  
*Muhammed Anwar al-Sadat*

Witnessed by:  
*Jimmy Carter,*  
*President of the United States of America*

#### ***Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel***

In order to achieve peace between them, Israel and Egypt agree to negotiate in good faith with a goal of concluding within three months of the signing of this framework a peace treaty between them. It is agreed that:

The site of the negotiations will be under a United Nations flag at a location or locations to be mutually agreed.

All of the principles of *U.N. Resolution 242* will apply in this resolution of the dispute between Israel and Egypt.

Unless otherwise mutually agreed, terms of the peace treaty will be implemented between two and three years after the peace treaty is signed.

The following matters are agreed between the parties:

the full exercise of Egyptian sovereignty up to the internationally recognized border between Egypt and mandated Palestine;

the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from the Sinai;

the use of airfields left by the Israelis near al-Arish, Rafah, Ras en-Naqb, and Sharm el-Sheikh for civilian purposes only, including possible commercial use only by all nations;

the right of free passage by ships of Israel through the Gulf of Suez and the Suez Canal on the basis of the Constantinople Convention of 1888 applying to all nations; the Strait of Tiran and Gulf of Aqaba are international waterways to be open to all nations for unimpeded and nonsuspendable freedom of navigation and overflight;

the construction of a highway between the Sinai and Jordan near Eilat with guaranteed free and peaceful passage by Egypt and Jordan;

and the stationing of military forces listed below.

### ***Stationing of Forces***

No more than one division (mechanized or infantry) of Egyptian armed forces will be stationed within an area lying approximately 50 km. (30 miles) east of the Gulf of Suez and the Suez Canal. Only United Nations forces and civil police equipped with light weapons to perform normal police functions will be stationed within an area lying west of the international border and the Gulf of Aqaba, varying in width from 20 km. (12 miles) to 40 km. (24 miles).

In the area within 3 km. (1.8 miles) east of the international border there will be Israeli limited military forces not to exceed four infantry battalions and United Nations observers.

Border patrol units not to exceed three battalions will supplement the civil police in maintaining order in the area not included above.

The exact demarcation of the above areas will be as decided during the peace negotiations. Early warning stations may exist to insure compliance with the terms of the agreement.

United Nations forces will be stationed:

in part of the area in the Sinai lying within about 20 km. of the Mediterranean Sea and adjacent to the international border, and in the Sharm el-Sheikh area to insure freedom of passage through the Strait of Tiran; and these forces will not be removed unless such removal is approved by the Security Council of the United Nations with a unanimous vote of the five permanent members.

After a peace treaty is signed, and after the interim withdrawal is complete, normal relations will be established between Egypt and Israel, including full recognition, including diplomatic, economic and cultural relations; termination of economic boycotts and barriers to the free movement of goods and people; and mutual protection of citizens by the due process of law.

### ***Interim Withdrawal***

Between three months and nine months after the signing of the peace treaty, all Israeli forces will withdraw east of a line extending from a point east of El-Arish to Ras Muhammad, the exact location of this line to be determined by mutual agreement.

For the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt:

*Muhammed Anwar al-Sadat*

For the Government of Israel:

*Menachem Begin*

Witnessed by:

*Jimmy Carter,*

*President of the United States of America*

### **SEE ALSO**

Judaism in America: Holocaust and Israel; Public Theologies and Political Culture; Sacred Space

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Camp David Accords, September 17, 1978. Accessed from: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/campdav.htm>, The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm> (Oct. 8, 2002).

Shakti Gawain,  
excerpt from *Creative Visualization* (1978)

*Popular New Age author Shakti Gawain has appeared on nationally syndicated television shows, has been featured in popular magazines, and runs well-attended visualization workshops around the country. Gawain defines her area of expertise as personal growth and consciousness. In books such as Creative Visualization, she argues that by practicing visualization and meditation you can improve your health, build your self-esteem, reach career goals, and even access divine wisdom.*

Every moment of your life is infinitely creative  
and the universe is endlessly bountiful.  
Just put forth a clear enough request,  
and everything your heart desires must come to you.

### What Is Creative Visualization?

Creative visualization is the technique of using your imagination to create what you want in your life. There is nothing at all new, strange, or unusual about creative visualization. You are already using it every day, every minute in fact. It is your natural power of imagination, the basic creative energy of the universe which you use constantly, whether or not you are aware of it.

In the past, many of us have used our power of creative visualization in a relatively unconscious way. Because of our own deep-seated negative concepts about life, we have automatically and unconsciously expected and imagined lack, limitation, difficulties, and problems to be our lot in life. To one degree or another that is what we have created for ourselves.

This book is about learning to use your natural creative imagination in a more and more conscious way, as a technique to create what you *truly* want—love, fulfillment, enjoyment, satisfying relationships, rewarding work, self-expression, health, beauty, prosperity, inner peace and harmony . . . whatever your heart desires. The use of creative visualization gives us a key to tap into the natural goodness and bounty of life.

Imagination is the ability to create an idea or mental picture in your mind. In creative visualization you use your imagination to create a clear image of something you wish to manifest. Then you continue to focus on the idea or picture regularly, giving it positive energy until it becomes objective reality . . . in other words, until you actually achieve what you have been visualizing.

Your goal may be on any level—physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual. You might imagine yourself with a new home, or a new job, or having a beautiful relationship, or feeling calm and serene, or perhaps with an improved memory and learning ability. Or you might picture yourself handling a difficult situation effortlessly, or simply see yourself as a radiant being, filled with light and love. You can work on any level, and all will have results . . . through experience you will find the particular images and techniques which work best for you.

Let us say, for example, that you have difficulty getting along with someone and you would like to create a more harmonious relationship with that person.

After relaxing into a deep, quiet, meditative state of mind, you mentally imagine the two of you relating and communicating in an open, honest, and harmonious way. Try to get a feeling in yourself that your mental image is possible; experience it as if it is already happening.

Repeat this short, simple exercise often, perhaps two or three times a day or whenever you think about it. If you are sincere in your desire and intention, and truly open to change, you will soon find that the relationship is becoming easier and more flowing, and that the other person seems to become more agreeable and easier to communicate with. Eventually you will find that the problem will resolve itself completely, in one way or another, to the benefit of all parties concerned.

It should be noted here that this technique *cannot* be used to “control” the behavior of another or cause

them to do something against their will. Its effect is to dissolve our internal barriers to natural harmony and self-realization, allowing everyone to manifest in their most positive aspect.

To use creative visualization it is not necessary to believe in any metaphysical or spiritual ideas, though you must be willing to entertain certain concepts as being possible. It is not necessary to “have faith” in any power outside yourself.

The only thing necessary is that you have the desire to enrich your knowledge and experience, and an open enough mind to try something new in a positive spirit.

Study the principles, try the techniques with an open mind and heart, and then judge for yourself whether they are useful to you.

If so, continue using and developing them, and soon the changes in yourself and your life will probably exceed anything you could have originally dreamed of . . .

Creative visualization is magic in the truest and highest meaning of the word. It involves understanding and aligning yourself with the natural principles that govern the workings of our universe, and learning to use these principles in the most conscious and creative way.

If you had never seen a gorgeous flower or a spectacular sunset before, and someone described one to you, you might consider it to be a miraculous thing (which it truly is!). Once you saw a few yourself, and began to learn something about the natural laws involved, you would begin to understand how they are formed and it would seem natural to you and not particularly mysterious.

The same is true of the process of creative visualization. What at first might seem amazing or impossible to the very limited type of education our rational minds have received, becomes perfectly understandable once we learn and practice with the underlying concepts involved.

Once you do so, it may seem that you are working miracles in your life . . . and you truly will be!

### **How Creative Visualization Works**

In order to understand how creative visualization works, it's useful to look at several interrelated principles:

#### ***The physical universe is energy***

The scientific world is beginning to discover what metaphysical and spiritual teachers have known for centuries. Our physical universe is not really composed of any “matter” at all; its basic component is a kind of force or essence which we can call *energy*.

Things appear to be solid and separate from one another on the level at which our physical senses normally perceive them. On finer levels, however, atomic and subatomic levels, seemingly solid matter is seen to be smaller and smaller particles within particles, which eventually turn out to be just pure energy.

Physically, we are all energy, and everything within and around us is made up of energy. We are all part of one great energy field. Things which we perceive to be solid and separate are in reality just various forms of our essential energy which is common to all. We are all one, even in a literal, physical sense.

The energy is vibrating at different rates of speed, and thus has different qualities, from finer to denser. Thought is a relatively fine, light form of energy and therefore very quick and easy to change. Matter is relatively dense, compact energy, and therefore slower to move and change. Within matter there is great variation as well. Living flesh is relatively fine, changes quickly, and is easily affected by many things. A rock is a much denser form, slower to change and more difficult to affect. Yet even rock is eventually changed and affected by the fine, light energy of water, for example. All forms of energy are interrelated and can affect one another.

#### ***Energy is magnetic***

One law of energy is this: energy of a certain quality or vibration tends to attract energy of a similar quality and vibration.

Thought and feelings have their own magnetic energy which attracts energy of a similar nature. We can see this principle at work, for instance, when we “accidentally” run into someone we've just been thinking of, or “happen” to pick up a book which contains exactly the perfect information we need at that moment.

#### ***Form follows idea***

Thought is a quick, light, mobile form of energy. It manifests instantaneously, unlike the denser forms such as matter.

When we create something, we always create it first

in a thought form. A thought or idea always precedes manifestation. "I think I'll make dinner" is the idea which precedes creation of a meal. "I want a new dress," precedes going and buying one, "I need a job" precedes finding one, and so on.

An artist first has an idea or inspiration, then creates a painting. A builder first has a design, then builds a house.

The idea is like a blueprint; it creates an image of the form, which then magnetizes and guides the physical energy to flow into that form and eventually manifest it on the physical plane.

The same principle holds true even if we do not

take direct physical action to manifest our ideas. Simply having an idea or thought, holding it in your mind, is an energy which will tend to attract and create that form on the material plane. If you constantly think of illness, you eventually become ill; if you believe yourself to be beautiful, you become so.

**SEE ALSO**

New Age: Channeling, New Age Bestsellers

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Excerpt from Shakti Gawain, *Creative Visualization*. Mill Valley, CA: Whatever Publishing, 1978: 13–20.

## American Indian Religious Freedom Act, United States Congress (1978)

*Enacted by Congress on August 11, 1978, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) does not create any substantive rights for Native Americans and lacks any enforcement mechanism. Instead, the Act is a policy statement about protecting and preserving Native religious traditions. After the Supreme Court issued their controversial decisions that failed to support this act in Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective Association and Oregon v. Smith, Congress amended AIRFA (October 6, 1994) to specifically permit the use of peyote in Native American religious ceremonies.*

An Act to amend the American Indian Religious Freedom Act to provide for the traditional use of peyote by Indians for religious purposes, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

### **Section 1. Short Title.**

This Act may be cited as the “American Indian Religious Freedom Act Amendments of 1994.”

### **Section 2. Traditional Indian Religious Use of the Peyote Sacrament.**

The Act of August 11, 1978 (42 U.S.C. 1996), commonly referred to as the “American Indian Religious Freedom Act,” is amended by adding at the end thereof the following new section:

### **Section 3.**

A. The Congress finds and declares that

1. for many Indian people, the traditional ceremonial use of the peyote cactus as a religious sacrament has for centuries been integral to a way of life, and significant in perpetuating Indian tribes and cultures;
2. since 1965, this ceremonial use of peyote by Indians has been protected by Federal regulation;
3. while at least 28 States have enacted laws which

are similar to, or are in conformance with, the Federal regulation which protects the ceremonial use of peyote by Indian religious practitioners, 22 States have not done so, and this lack of uniformity has created hardship for Indian people who participate in such religious ceremonies;

4. the Supreme Court of the United States, in the case of *Employment Division v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872 (1990), held that the First Amendment does not protect Indian practitioners who use peyote in Indian religious ceremonies, and also raised uncertainty whether this religious practice would be protected under the compelling State interest standard; and

5. the lack of adequate and clear legal protection for the religious use of peyote by Indians may serve to stigmatize and marginalize Indian tribes and cultures, and increase the risk that they will be exposed to discriminatory treatment.

B. 1. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the use, possession, or transportation of peyote by an Indian for bona fide traditional ceremonial purposes in connection with the practice of a traditional Indian religion is lawful, and shall not be prohibited by the United States or any State. No Indian shall be penalized or discriminated against on the basis of such use, possession or transportation, including, but not limited to, denial of otherwise applicable benefits under public assistance programs.

2. This section does not prohibit such reasonable regulation and registration by the Drug Enforcement Administration of those persons who cultivate, harvest, or distribute peyote as may be consistent with the purposes of this Act.

3. This section does not prohibit application of the provisions of section 481.111 of Vernon’s Texas Health and Safety Code Annotated, in effect on the date of enactment of this section, insofar as those provisions pertain to the cultivation, harvest, and distribution of peyote.



4. Nothing in this section shall prohibit any Federal department or agency, in carrying out its statutory responsibilities and functions, from promulgating regulations establishing reasonable limitations on the use or ingestion of peyote prior to or during the performance of duties by sworn law enforcement officers or personnel directly involved in public transportation or any other safety-sensitive positions where the performance of such duties may be adversely affected by such use or ingestion. Such regulations shall be adopted only after consultation with representatives of traditional Indian religions for which the sacramental use of peyote is integral to their practice. Any regulation promulgated pursuant to this section shall be subject to the balancing test set forth in section 3 of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (Public Law 103-141; 42 U.S.C. 2000bb-1).

5. This section shall not be construed as requiring prison authorities to permit, nor shall it be construed to prohibit prison authorities from permitting, access to peyote by Indians while incarcerated within Federal or State prison facilities.

6. Subject to the provisions of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (Public Law 103-141; 42 U.S.C. 2000bb-1), this section shall not be construed to prohibit States from enacting or enforcing reasonable traffic safety laws or regulations.

7. Subject to the provisions of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (Public Law 103-141; 42 U.S.C. 2000bb-1), this section does not prohibit the Secretary of Defense from promulgating regulations establishing reasonable limitations on the use, possession, transportation, or distribution of peyote to promote military readiness, safety, or compliance with international law or laws of other countries. Such regulations shall be adopted only after consultation with representatives of traditional Indian religions for which the sacramental use of peyote is integral to their practice.

C. For purposes of this section

1. the term "Indian" means a member of an Indian tribe;

2. the term "Indian tribe" means any tribe, band, nation, pueblo, or other organized group or community of Indians, including any Alaska Native village (as defined in, or established pursuant to, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act [43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.]), which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provide by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians;

3. the term "Indian religion" means any religion;

- a. which is practiced by Indians; and
- b. the origin and interpretation of which is from within a traditional Indian culture or community; and

4. the term "State" means any State of the United States and any political subdivision thereof.

D. Nothing in this section shall be construed as abrogating, diminishing, or otherwise affecting;

1. the inherent rights of any Indian tribe;

2. the rights, express or implicit, of any Indian tribe which exist under treaties, Executive orders, and laws of the United States;

3. the inherent right of Indians to practice their religions; and

4. the right of Indians to practice their religions under any Federal or State law.

**SEE ALSO**

Native American Religions and Politics: Nationhood;  
Public Theologies and Political Culture: Law; Sacred Space

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American Indian Religious Freedom Act, United States Congress, 1978. The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm> (Dec. 22, 2002).

## Jerry Falwell, excerpt from *Listen, America!* (1980)

*First published in 1980, Listen America! is both a political manifesto for Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority and a call to "the Christian public in America" to "revers[e] the trends of decay in our republic." In 1979 Falwell organized The Moral Majority, a conservative political action group, to strengthen America's "traditional religious values" through support of conservative political candidates who championed such causes as prayer in school and the teaching of creationism while opposing such causes as feminism, the Equal Rights Amendment, gay rights, and abortion. The Moral Majority dissolved in 1989, but groups such as the Christian Coalition have taken up its conservative banner.*

If a man is not a student of the Word of God and does not know what the Bible says, I question his ability to be an effective leader. Whatever he leads, whether it be his family, his church, or his nation, will not be properly led without this priority. God alone has the wisdom to tell men and women where this world is going, where it needs to go, and how it can be redirected. Only by godly leadership can America be put back on a divine course. God will give national healing if men and women will pray and meet God's conditions, but we must have leadership in America to deliver God's message.

We must reverse the trend America finds herself in today. Young people between the ages of twenty-five and forty have been born and reared in a different world than Americans of years past. The television set has been their primary baby-sitter. From the television set they have learned situation ethics and immorality—they have learned a loss of respect for human life. They have learned to disrespect the family as God has established it. They have been educated in a public-school system that is permeated with secular humanism. They have been taught that the Bible is just another book of literature. They have been taught that there are no absolutes in our world today. They have been introduced to the drug culture. They have been reared by the family and by the public school in a society that is greatly void of discipline

and character-building. These same young people have been reared under the influence of a government that has taught them socialism and welfarism. They have been taught to believe that the world owes them a living whether they work or not.

I believe that America was built on integrity, on faith in God, and on hard work. I do not believe that anyone has ever been successful in life without being willing to add that last ingredient—diligence or hard work. We now have second- and third-generation welfare recipients. Welfare is not always wrong. There are those who do need welfare, but we have reared a generation that understands neither the dignity nor the importance of work.

Every American who looks at the facts must share a deep concern and burden for our country. We are not unduly concerned when we say that there are some very dark clouds on America's horizon. I am not a pessimist, but it is indeed a time for truth. If Americans will face the truth, our nation can be turned around and can be saved from the evils and the destruction that have fallen upon every other nation that has turned its back on God.

There is no excuse for what is happening in our country. We must, from the highest office in the land right down to the shoeshine boy in the airport, have a return to biblical basics. If the Congress of our United States will take its stand on that which is right and wrong, and if our President, our judiciary system, and our state and local leaders will take their stand on holy living, we can turn this country around.

I personally feel that the home and the family are still held in reverence by the vast majority of the American public. I believe there is still a vast number of Americans who love their country, are patriotic, and are willing to sacrifice for her. I remember the time when it was positive to be patriotic, and as far as I am concerned, it still is. I remember as a boy, when the flag was raised, everyone stood proudly and put his hand upon his heart and pledged allegiance with gratitude. I remember when the band struck up "The

Stars and Stripes Forever,” we stood and goose pimples would run all over me. I remember when I was in elementary school during World War II, when every report from the other shores meant something to us. We were not out demonstrating against our boys who were dying in Europe and Asia. We were praying for them and thanking God for them and buying war bonds to help pay for the materials and artillery they needed to fight and win and come back.

I believe that Americans want to see this country come back to basics, back to values, back to biblical morality, back to sensibility, and back to patriotism. Americans are looking for leadership and guidance. It is fair to ask the question, “If 84 per cent of the American people still believe in morality, why is America having such internal problems?” We must look for the answer to the highest places in every level of government. We have a lack of leadership in America. But Americans have been lax in voting in and out of office the right and the wrong people.

My responsibility as a preacher of the Gospel is one of influence, not of control, and that is the responsibility of each individual citizen. Through the ballot box Americans must provide for strong moral leadership at every level. If our country will get back on the track in sensibility and moral sanity, the crises that I have herein mentioned will work out in the course of time and with God’s blessings.

It is now time to take a stand on certain moral issues, and we can only stand if we have leaders. We must stand against the Equal Rights Amendment, the feminist revolution, and the homosexual revolution. We must have a revival in this country. It can come if we will realize the danger and heed the admonition of God found in 2 Chronicles 7:14, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

As a preacher of the Gospel, I not only believe in prayer and preaching, I also believe in good citizenship. If a labor union in America has the right to organize and improve its working conditions, then I believe that the churches and the pastors, the priests, and the rabbis of America have a responsibility, not just the right, to see to it that the moral climate and

conscience of Americans is such that this nation can be healed inwardly. If it is healed inwardly, then it will heal itself outwardly.

It is not easy to go against the tide and do what is right. This nation can be brought back to God, but there must first be an awareness of sin. The Bible declares, “Righteousness exalteth a nation: But sin is a reproach to any people.” (Pr. 14:34) It is right living that has made America the greatest nation on earth, and with all of her shortcomings and failures, America is without question the greatest nation on the face of God’s earth. We as Americans must recommit ourselves to keeping her that way. Our prayers must certainly be behind our President and our Congress. We are commissioned by Scripture (1. Tm. 2:1-3) to pray for those who are in authority, but we would also remind our leaders that the future of this great nation is in their hands. One day they will stand before God accountable with what they have done to ensure our future. God has charged us as Americans with great privileges, but to whom much is given “much is required.” We are faced with great responsibilities. Today, more than at any time in history, America needs men and women of God who have an understanding of the times and are not afraid to stand up for what is right.

Americans have been silent much too long. We have stood by and watched as American power and influence have been systematically weakened in every sphere of the world.

We are not a perfect nation, but we are still a free nation because we have the blessing of God upon us. We must continue to follow in a path that will ensure that blessing. We must not forget the words of our national anthem, “Oh! thus be it ever, when free men shall stand/Between their loved homes and the war’s desolation!/Blest with victory and peace, may the heav’n rescued land/Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation./Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,/And this be our motto: ‘In God is our trust.’” We must not forget that it is God Almighty who has made and preserved us a nation.

Let us never forget that as our Constitution declares, we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights. It is only as we abide by those laws established by our Creator that He will continue to bless us with these rights. We are endowed our rights

to freedom and liberty and the pursuit of happiness by the God who created man to be free and equal.

The hope of reversing the trends of decay in our republic now lies with the Christian public in America. We cannot expect help from the liberals. They certainly are not going to call our nation back to righteousness and neither are the pornographers, the smut peddlers, and those who are corrupting our youth. Moral Americans must be willing to put their reputations, their fortunes, and their very lives on the line for this great nation of ours. Would that we had the courage of our forefathers who knew the great responsibility that freedom carries with it. Patrick Henry said, "It is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth. . . . Is this the part of wise men, engaged in a great and arduous struggle for liberty? Are we disposed to be a number of those who, having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not, the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation? For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst and to provide for it. . . . Is life so dear or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains or slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

More than ever before in the history of humanity, we must have heroes, those men and women who will stand for what is right and stand against what is wrong, no matter what it costs. Today we need men and women of character and integrity who will commit themselves to letting their posterity know the freedom that our Founding Fathers established for this nation. Let us stand by that statement in the Declaration of Independence that cost our forefathers so much: ". . . with a firm Reliance on the Protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor."

Our Founding Fathers separated church and state in function, but never intended to establish a government void of God. As is evidenced by our Constitution, good people in America must exert an influence and provide a conscience and climate of morality in which it is difficult to go wrong, not difficult for people to go right in America.

I am positive in my belief regarding the Constitution that God led in the development of that docu-

ment, and as a result, we here in America have enjoyed 204 years of unparalleled freedom. The most positive people in the world are people who believe the Bible to be the Word of God. The Bible contains a positive message. It is a message written by 40 men over a period of approximately 1,500 years under divine inspiration. It is God's message of love, redemption, and deliverance for a fallen race. What could be more positive than the message of redemption in the Bible? But God will force Himself upon no man. Each individual American must make His choice.

Peter Marshall knew that the choices of individuals determine the destiny of a nation. He immigrated to the United States as a young man and worked his way through seminary by digging ditches and doing newspaper work. His years in the ministry culminated with the pastorate of the historic New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. (Abraham Lincoln's church), located two blocks from the White House. Dr. Marshall became chaplain of the Senate in January 1947. He died suddenly in January 1949 while still holding office. He was a dynamic Christian and was called by many a reporter the "conscience of the Senate."

Peter Marshall summed it up well when in a sermon to the New York Presbyterian Church he challenged its members with these words: "Today, we are living in a time when enough individuals, choosing to go to hell, will pull the nation down to hell with them. The choices you make in moral and religious questions determine the way America will go. The choice before us is plain, Christ or chaos, conviction or compromise, discipline or disintegration. I am rather tired about hearing about our rights and privileges as American citizens. The time has come, it now is, when we ought to hear about the duties and responsibilities of our citizenship. America's future depends upon her accepting and demonstrating God's government. It is just as plain and clear as that."

Americans must no longer linger in ignorance and apathy. We cannot be silent about the sins that are destroying this nation. The choice is ours. We must turn America around or prepare for inevitable destruction. I am listening to the sounds that threaten to take away our liberties in America. And I have listened to God's admonitions and His direction—the only hopes of saving America. Are you listening too?

**SEE ALSO**

Protestantism in America: Puritanism; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion, Conservatism, Fundamentalism

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“Declaration on Euthanasia,”  
Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,  
Vatican (May 5, 1980)

*Beginning in the 1970s, movements sprang up in many Western nations in favor of legalizing the practice of euthanasia. In an effort to clarify its position on this subject, the Vatican issued its “Declaration on Euthanasia” on May 5, 1980. This document is primarily based on traditional Catholic doctrine affirming the “lofty dignity of every person” and “his or her right to life.” It prohibits euthanasia because, like murder, abortion, and other “crimes against life,” it rejects both God’s gift of life and God’s sovereign power over that life.*

**Introduction**

The rights and values pertaining to the human person occupy an important place among the questions discussed today. In this regard, the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council solemnly reaffirmed the lofty dignity of the human person, and in a special way his or her right to life. The Council therefore condemned crimes against life “such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or willful suicide” (Pastoral Constitution “*Gaudium et spes*,” no. 27).

More recently, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has reminded all the faithful of Catholic teaching on procured abortion. The Congregation now considers it opportune to set forth the Church’s teaching on euthanasia.

It is indeed true that, in this sphere of teaching, the recent Popes have explained the principles, and these retain their full force; but the progress of medical science in recent years has brought to the fore new aspects of the question of euthanasia, and these aspects call for further elucidation on the ethical level.

In modern society, in which even the fundamental values of human life are often called into question, cultural change exercises an influence upon the way of looking at suffering and death; moreover, medicine has increased its capacity to cure and to prolong life in particular circumstances, which sometimes give

rise to moral problems. Thus people living in this situation experience no little anxiety about the meaning of advanced old age and death. They also begin to wonder whether they have the right to obtain for themselves or their fellowmen an “easy death,” which would shorten suffering and which seems to them more in harmony with human dignity.

A number of Episcopal Conferences have raised questions on this subject with the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The Congregation, having sought the opinion of experts on the various aspects of euthanasia, now wishes to respond to the Bishops’ questions with the present Declaration, in order to help them to give correct teaching to the faithful entrusted to their care, and to offer them elements for reflection that they can present to the civil authorities with regard to this very serious matter.

The considerations set forth in the present document concern in the first place all those who place their faith and hope in Christ, who, through His life, death and resurrection, has given a new meaning to existence and especially to the death of the Christian, as St. Paul says: “If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord” (Rom. 14:8; cf. Phil. 1:20).

As for those who profess other religions, many will agree with us that faith in God the Creator, Provider and Lord of life—if they share this belief—confers a lofty dignity upon every human person and guarantees respect for him or her.

It is hoped that this Declaration will meet with the approval of many people of good will, who, philosophical or ideological differences notwithstanding, have nevertheless a lively awareness of the rights of the human person. These rights have often, in fact, been proclaimed in recent years through declarations issued by International Congresses; and since it is a question here of fundamental rights inherent in every human person, it is obviously wrong to have recourse

to arguments from political pluralism or religious freedom in order to deny the universal value of those rights.

### *I. The Value of Human Life*

Human life is the basis of all goods, and is the necessary source and condition of every human activity and of all society. Most people regard life as something sacred and hold that no one may dispose of it at will, but believers see in life something greater, namely, a gift of God's love, which they are called upon to preserve and make fruitful. And it is this latter consideration that gives rise to the following consequences:

1. No one can make an attempt on the life of an innocent person without opposing God's love for that person, without violating a fundamental right, and therefore without committing a crime of the utmost gravity.

2. Everyone has the duty to lead his or her life in accordance with God's plan. That life is entrusted to the individual as a good that must bear fruit already here on earth, but that finds its full perfection only in eternal life.

3. Intentionally causing one's own death, or suicide, is therefore equally as wrong as murder; such an action on the part of a person is to be considered as a rejection of God's sovereignty and loving plan. Furthermore, suicide is also often a refusal of love for self, the denial of the natural instinct to live, a flight from the duties of justice and charity owed to one's neighbor, to various communities or to the whole of society—although, as is generally recognized, at times there are psychological factors present that can diminish responsibility or even completely remove it.

However, one must clearly distinguish suicide from that sacrifice of one's life whereby for a higher cause, such as God's glory, the salvation of souls or the service of one's brethren, a person offers his or her own life or puts it in danger (cf. Jn. 15:14).

### *II. Euthanasia*

In order that the question of euthanasia can be properly dealt with, it is first necessary to define the words used.

Etymologically speaking, in ancient times euthanasia meant an easy death without severe suffering. To-

day one no longer thinks of this original meaning of the word, but rather of some intervention of medicine whereby the suffering of sickness or of the final agony are [sic] reduced, sometimes also with the danger of suppressing life prematurely. Ultimately, the word euthanasia is used in a more particular sense to mean "mercy killing," for the purpose of putting an end to extreme suffering, or saving abnormal babies, the mentally ill or the incurably sick from the prolongation, perhaps for many years, of a miserable life, which could impose too heavy a burden on their families or on society.

It is, therefore, necessary to state clearly in what sense the word is used in the present document.

By euthanasia is understood an action or an omission which of itself or by intention causes death, in order that all suffering may in this way be eliminated. Euthanasia's terms of reference, therefore, are to be found in the intention of the will and in the methods used.

It is necessary to state firmly once more that nothing and no one can in any way permit the killing of an innocent human being, whether a fetus or an embryo, an infant or an adult, an old person, or one suffering from an incurable disease, or a person who is dying. Furthermore, no one is permitted to ask for this act of killing, either for himself or herself or for another person entrusted to his or her care, nor can he or she consent to it, either explicitly or implicitly. Nor can any authority legitimately recommend or permit such an action. For it is a question of the violation of the divine law, an offense against the dignity of the human person, a crime against life, and an attack on humanity.

It may happen that, by reason of prolonged and barely tolerable pain, for deeply personal or other reasons, people may be led to believe that they can legitimately ask for death or obtain it for others. Although in these cases the guilt of the individual may be reduced or completely absent, nevertheless the error of judgment into which the conscience falls, perhaps in good faith, does not change the nature of this act of killing, which will always be in itself something to be rejected. The pleas of gravely ill people who sometimes ask for death are not to be understood as implying a true desire for euthanasia; in fact, it is almost always a case of an anguished plea for help and love.

What a sick person needs, besides medical care, is love, the human and supernatural warmth with which the sick person can and ought to be surrounded by all those close to him or her, parents and children, doctors and nurses.

### ***III. The Meaning of Suffering for Christians and the Use of Painkillers***

Death does not always come in dramatic circumstances after barely tolerable sufferings. Nor do we have to think only of extreme cases. Numerous testimonies which confirm one another lead one to the conclusion that nature itself has made provision to render more bearable at the moment of death separations that would be terribly painful to a person in full health. Hence it is that a prolonged illness, advanced old age, or a state of loneliness or neglect can bring about psychological conditions that facilitate the acceptance of death.

Nevertheless the fact remains that death, often preceded or accompanied by severe and prolonged suffering, is something which naturally causes people anguish.

Physical suffering is certainly an unavoidable element of the human condition; on the biological level, it constitutes a warning of which no one denies the usefulness; but, since it affects the human psychological makeup, it often exceeds its own biological usefulness and so can become so severe as to cause the desire to remove it at any cost.

According to Christian teaching, however, suffering, especially suffering during the last moments of life, has a special place in God's saving plan; it is in fact a sharing in Christ's passion and a union with the redeeming sacrifice which He offered in obedience to the Father's will. Therefore, one must not be surprised if some Christians prefer to moderate their use of painkillers, in order to accept voluntarily at least a part of their sufferings and thus associate themselves in a conscious way with the sufferings of Christ crucified (cf. Mt. 27:34). Nevertheless it would be imprudent to impose a heroic way of acting as a general rule. On the contrary, human and Christian prudence suggest for the majority of sick people the use of medicines capable of alleviating or suppressing pain, even though these may cause as a secondary effect semi-consciousness and reduced lucidity. As for those who

are not in a state to express themselves, one can reasonably presume that they wish to take these painkillers, and have them administered according to the doctor's advice.

But the intensive use of painkillers is not without difficulties, because the phenomenon of habituation generally makes it necessary to increase their dosage in order to maintain their efficacy. At this point it is fitting to recall a declaration by Pius XII, which retains its full force; in answer to a group of doctors who had put the question: "Is the suppression of pain and consciousness by the use of narcotics . . . permitted by religion and morality to the doctor and the patient (even at the approach of death and if one foresees that the use of narcotics will shorten life)?" the Pope said: "If no other means exist, and if, in the given circumstances, this does not prevent the carrying out of other religious and moral duties: Yes." In this case, of course, death is in no way intended or sought, even if the risk of it is reasonably taken; the intention is simply to relieve pain effectively, using for this purpose painkillers available to medicine.

However, painkillers that cause unconsciousness need special consideration. For a person not only has to be able to satisfy his or her moral duties and family obligations; he or she also has to prepare himself or herself with full consciousness for meeting Christ. Thus Pius XII warns: "It is not right to deprive the dying person of consciousness without a serious reason."

### ***IV. Due Proportion in the Use of Remedies***

Today it is very important to protect, at the moment of death, both the dignity of the human person and the Christian concept of life, against a technological attitude that threatens to become an abuse. Thus some people speak of a "right to die," which is an expression that does not mean the right to procure death either by one's own hand or by means of someone else, as one pleases, but rather the right to die peacefully with human and Christian dignity. From this point of view, the use of therapeutic means can sometimes pose problems.

In numerous cases, the complexity of the situation can be such as to cause doubts about the way ethical principles should be applied. In the final analysis, it pertains to the conscience either of the sick person, or



of those qualified to speak in the sick person's name, or of the doctors, to decide, in the light of moral obligations and of the various aspects of the case.

Everyone has the duty to care for his or her own health or to seek such care from others. Those whose task it is to care for the sick must do so conscientiously and administer the remedies that seem necessary or useful.

However, is it necessary in all circumstances to have recourse to all possible remedies?

In the past, moralists replied that one is never obliged to use "extraordinary" means. This reply, which as a principle still holds good, is perhaps less clear today, by reason of the imprecision of the term and the rapid progress made in the treatment of sickness. Thus some people prefer to speak of "proportionate" and "disproportionate" means. In any case, it will be possible to make a correct judgment as to the means by studying the type of treatment to be used, its degree of complexity or risk, its cost and the possibilities of using it, and comparing these elements with the result that can be expected, taking into account the state of the sick person and his or her physical and moral resources.

In order to facilitate the application of these general principles, the following clarifications can be added:

- If there are no other sufficient remedies, it is permitted, with the patient's consent, to have recourse to the means provided by the most advanced medical techniques, even if these means are still at the experimental stage and are not without a certain risk. By accepting them, the patient can even show generosity in the service of humanity.
- It is also permitted, with the patient's consent, to interrupt these means, where the results fall short of expectations. But for such a decision to be made, account will have to be taken of the reasonable wishes of the patient and the patient's family, as also of the advice of the doctors who are specially competent in the matter. The latter may in particular judge that the investment in instruments and personnel is disproportionate to the results foreseen; they may also judge that the techniques applied impose on the patient strain or suffering out of

proportion with the benefits which he or she may gain from such techniques.

- It is also permissible to make do with the normal means that medicine can offer. Therefore one cannot impose on anyone the obligation to have recourse to a technique which is already in use but which carries a risk or is burdensome. Such a refusal is not the equivalent of suicide; on the contrary, it should be considered as an acceptance of the human condition, or a wish to avoid the application of a medical procedure disproportionate to the results that can be expected, or a desire not to impose excessive expense on the family or the community.
- When inevitable death is imminent in spite of the means used, it is permitted in conscience to take the decision to refuse forms of treatment that would only secure a precarious and burdensome prolongation of life, so long as the normal care due to the sick person in similar cases is not interrupted. In such circumstances the doctor has no reason to reproach himself with failing to help the person in danger.

### **Conclusion**

The norms contained in the present Declaration are inspired by a profound desire to serve people in accordance with the plan of the Creator. Life is a gift of God, and on the other hand death is unavoidable; it is necessary, therefore, that we, without in any way hastening the hour of death, should be able to accept it with full responsibility and dignity. It is true that death marks the end of our earthly existence, but at the same time it opens the door to immortal life. Therefore, all must prepare themselves for this event in the light of human values, and Christians even more so in the light of faith.

As for those who work in the medical profession, they ought to neglect no means of making all their skill available to the sick and the dying; but they should also remember how much more necessary it is to provide them with the comfort of boundless kindness and heartfelt charity. Such service to people is also service to Christ the Lord, who said: "As you did

it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt. 25:40).

*At the audience granted to the undersigned Prefect, His Holiness Pope John Paul II approved this Declaration, adopted at the ordinary meeting of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and ordered its publication.*

Rome, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, May 5, 1980.

*Franjo Cardinal Seper, Prefect  
+ Jerome Hamer, O.P., Tit. Archbishop of Lorum Secretary*

**SEE ALSO**

Catholicism in America: Public Catholicism; Death: Euthanasia

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Declaration on Euthanasia, Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Vatican, May 5, 1980. Reprinted with permission of the Libreria Editrice Vaticana, <http://www.euthanasia.com/vatican.html> (Sept. 18, 2002).

Ronald Reagan, The Evil Empire Speech,  
delivered to the National Association of Evangelicals,  
Orlando, Florida (March 8, 1983)

*Ronald Reagan was elected president in 1980 and again in 1984 based largely on his promise to lead a successful “Reagan Revolution” in American life and politics. The platform of his revolution included downsizing big government, decreasing taxes, injecting religion into American public life, and ridding the world of the menace of the Soviet Union, which he termed an “evil empire.” In this 1983 speech Reagan described the Soviet Union as “running against the tide of history” by denying its citizens human freedom and dignity, and he outlined a program for weakening the so-called evil empire that called for the U.S. to build up a huge arsenal of nuclear arms so that it could bargain from a position of strength.*

Those of you in the National Association of Evangelicals are known for your spiritual and humanitarian work. And I would be especially remiss if I didn't discharge right now one personal debt of gratitude. Thank you for your prayers. Nancy and I have felt their presence many times in many years. And believe me, for us they've made all the difference.

The other day in the East Room of the White House at a meeting there, someone asked me whether I was aware of all the people out there who were praying for the President. And I had to say, “Yes, I am. I've felt it. I believe in intercessory prayer.” But I couldn't help but say to that questioner after he'd asked the question that—or at least say to them that if sometimes when he was praying he got a busy signal, it was just me in there ahead of him. I think I understand how Abraham Lincoln felt when he said, “I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go.” From the joy and the good feeling of this conference, I go to a political reception. Now, I don't know why, but that bit of scheduling reminds me of a story—which I'll share with you.

An evangelical minister and a politician arrived at Heaven's gate one day together. And St. Peter, after doing all the necessary formalities, took them in hand

to show them where their quarters would be. And he took them to a small, single room with a bed, a chair, and a table and said this was for the clergyman. And the politician was a little worried about what might be in store for him. And he couldn't believe it then when St. Peter stopped in front of a beautiful mansion with lovely grounds, many servants, and told him that these would be his quarters.

And he couldn't help but ask, he said, “But wait, how—there's something wrong—how do I get this mansion while that good and holy man only gets a single room?” And St. Peter said, “You have to understand how things are up here. We've got thousands and thousands of clergy. You're the first politician who ever made it.”

But I don't want to contribute to a stereotype. So I tell you there are a great many God-fearing, dedicated, noble men and women in public life, present company included. And yes, we need your help to keep us ever mindful of the ideas and the principles that brought us into the public arena in the first place. The basis of those ideals and principles is a commitment to freedom and personal liberty that, itself, is grounded in the much deeper realization that freedom prospers only where the blessings of God are avidly sought and humbly accepted.

The American experiment in democracy rests on this insight. Its discovery was the great triumph of our Founding Fathers, voiced by William Penn when he said: “If we will not be governed by God, we must be governed by tyrants.” Explaining the inalienable rights of men, Jefferson said, “The God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time.” And it was George Washington who said that “of all the disposition and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supporters.”

And finally, that shrewdest of all observers of American democracy, Alexis de Tocqueville, put it eloquently after he had gone on a search for the secret

of America's greatness and genius—and he said: “Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the greatness and the genius of America . . . America is good. And if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.”

Well, I'm pleased to be here today with you who are keeping America great by keeping her good. Only through your work and prayers and those of millions of others can we hope to survive this perilous century and keep alive this experiment in liberty, this last, best hope of man.

I want you to know that this administration is motivated by a political philosophy that sees the greatness of America in you, here people, and in your families, churches, neighborhoods, communities—the institutions that foster and nourish values like concern for others and respect for the rule of law under God.

Now, I don't have to tell you that this puts us in opposition to, or at least out of step with, a prevailing attitude of many who have turned to a modern-day secularism, discarding the tried and time-tested values upon which our very civilization is based. No matter how well intentioned, their value system is radically different from that of most Americans. And while they proclaim that they're freeing us from superstitions of the past, they've taken upon themselves the job of superintending us by government rule and regulation. Sometimes their voices are louder than ours, but they are not yet a majority.

An example of that vocal superiority is evident in a controversy now going on in Washington. And since I'm involved I've been waiting to hear from the parents of young America. How far are they willing to go in giving to government their prerogatives as parents?

Let me state the case as briefly and simply as I can. An organization of citizens, sincerely motivated and deeply concerned about the increase in illegitimate births and abortions involving girls well below the age of consent, some time ago established a nationwide network of clinics to offer help to these girls and, hopefully, alleviate this situation. Now, again, let me say, I do not fault their intent. However, in their well-intentioned effort, these clinics have decided to provide advice and birth control drugs and devices to underage girls without the knowledge of their parents.

For some years now, the federal government has helped with funds to subsidize these clinics. In provid-

ing for this, the Congress decreed that every effort would be made to maximize parental participation. Nevertheless, the drugs and devices are prescribed without getting parental consent or giving notification after they've done so. Girls termed “sexually active”—and that has replaced the word “promiscuous”—are given this help in order to prevent illegitimate birth or abortion.

Well, we have ordered clinics receiving federal funds to notify the parents such help has been given. One of the nation's leading newspapers has created the term “squeal rule” in editorializing against us for doing this, and we're being criticized for violating the privacy of young people. A judge has recently granted an injunction against an enforcement of our rule. I've watched TV panel shows discuss the issue, seen columnists pontificating on our error, but no one seems to mention morality as playing a part in the subject of sex.

Is all of Judeo-Christian tradition wrong? Are we to believe that something so sacred can be looked upon as a purely physical thing with no potential for emotional and psychological harm? And isn't it the parents' right to give counsel and advice to keep their children from making mistakes that may affect their entire lives?

Many of us in government would like to know what parents think about this intrusion in their family by government. We're going to fight in the courts. The right of parents and the rights of family take precedence over those of Washington-based bureaucrats and social engineers.

But the fight against parental notification is really only one example of many attempts to water down traditional values and even abrogate the original terms of American democracy. Freedom prospers when religion is vibrant and the rule of law under God is acknowledged. When our Founding Fathers passed the First Amendment, they sought to protect churches from government interference. They never intended to construct a wall of hostility between government and the concept of religious belief itself.

The evidence of this permeates our history and our government. The Declaration of Independence mentions the Supreme Being no less than four times. “In God We Trust” is engraved on our coinage. The Supreme Court opens its proceedings with a religious invocation. And the members of Congress open their

sessions with a prayer. I just happen to believe the schoolchildren of the United States are entitled to the same privileges as Supreme Court justices and congressmen.

Last year, I sent the Congress a constitutional amendment to restore prayer to public schools. Already this session, there's growing bipartisan support for the amendment, and I am calling on the Congress to act speedily to pass it and to let our children pray.

Perhaps some of you read recently about the Lubbock school case, where a judge actually ruled that it was unconstitutional for a school district to give equal treatment to religious and nonreligious student groups, even when the group meetings were being held during the students' own time. The First Amendment never intended to require government to discriminate against religious speech.

Senators Denton and Hatfield have proposed legislation in the Congress on the whole question of prohibiting discrimination against religious forms of student speech. Such legislation could go far to restore freedom of religious speech for public school students. And I hope the Congress considers these bills quickly. And with your help, I think it's possible we could also get the constitutional amendment through the Congress this year.

More than a decade ago, a Supreme Court decision literally wiped off the books of fifty states statutes protecting the rights of unborn children. Abortion on demand now takes the lives of up to one and a half million unborn children a year. Human life legislation ending this tragedy will someday pass the Congress, and you and I must never rest until it does. Unless and until it can be proven that the unborn child is not a living entity, then its right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness must be protected.

You may remember that when abortion on demand began, many, and indeed, I'm sure many of you, warned that the practice would lead to a decline in respect for human life, that the philosophical premises used to justify abortion on demand would ultimately be used to justify other attacks on the sacredness of human life, infanticide or mercy killing. Tragically enough, those warnings proved all too true. Only last year a court permitted the death by starvation of a handicapped infant.

I have directed the Health and Human Services Department to make clear to every health care facility in

the United States that the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects all handicapped persons against discrimination based on handicaps, including infants. And we have taken the further step of requiring that each and every recipient of federal funds who provides health care services to infants must post and keep posted in a conspicuous place a notice stating that "discriminatory failure to feed and care for handicapped infants in this facility is prohibited by federal law." It also lists a twenty-four-hour, toll-free number so that nurses and others may report violations in time to save the infant's life.

In addition, recent legislation introduced in the Congress by Representative Henry Hyde of Illinois not only increases restrictions on publicly financed abortions, it also addresses this whole problem of infanticide. I urge the Congress to begin hearings and to adopt legislation that will protect the right of life to all children, including the disabled or handicapped.

Now, I'm sure that you must get discouraged at times, but you've done better than you know, perhaps. There's a great spiritual awakening in America, a renewal of the traditional values that have been the bedrock of America's goodness and greatness.

One recent survey by a Washington-based research council concluded that Americans were far more religious than the people of other nations; 95 percent of those surveyed expressed a belief in God and a huge majority believed the Ten Commandments had real meaning in their lives. And another study has found that an overwhelming majority of Americans disapprove of adultery, teenage sex, pornography, abortion, and hard drugs. And this same study showed a deep reverence for the importance of family ties and religious belief.

I think the items that we've discussed here today must be a key part of the nation's political agenda. For the first time the Congress is openly and seriously debating and dealing with the prayer and abortion issues; and that's enormous progress right there. I repeat: America is in the midst of a spiritual awakening and a moral renewal. And with your biblical keynote, I say today, "Yes, let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream."

Now, obviously, much of this new political and social consensus I've talked about is based on a positive view of American history, one that takes pride in our country's accomplishments and record. But we must

never forget that no government schemes are going to perfect man. We know that living in this world means dealing with what philosophers would call the phenomenology of evil or, as theologians would put it, the doctrine of sin.

There is sin and evil in the world, and we're enjoined by Scripture and the Lord Jesus to oppose it with all our might. Our nation, too, has a legacy of evil with which it must deal. The glory of this land has been its capacity for transcending the moral evils of our past. For example, the long struggle of minority citizens for equal rights, once a source of disunity and civil war, is now a point of pride for all Americans. We must never go back. There is no room for racism, anti-Semitism, or other forms of ethnic and racial hatred in this country.

I know that you've been horrified, as have I, by the resurgence of some hate groups preaching bigotry and prejudice. Use the mighty voice of your pulpits and the powerful standing of your churches to denounce and isolate these hate groups in our midst. The commandment given us is clear and simple: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

But whatever sad episodes exist in our past, any objective observer must hold a positive view of American history, a history that has been the story of hopes fulfilled and dreams made into reality. Especially in this century, America has kept alight the torch of freedom, but not just for ourselves but for millions of others around the world.

And this brings me to my final point today. During my first press conference as president, in answer to a direct question, I point out that, as good Marxist-Leninists, the Soviet leaders have openly and publicly declared that the only morality they recognize is that which will further their cause, which is world revolution. I think I should point out I was only quoting Lenin, their guiding spirit, who said in 1920 that they repudiate all morality that proceeds from supernatural ideas—that's their name for religion—or ideas that are outside class conceptions. Morality is entirely subordinate to the interests of class war. And everything is moral that is necessary for the annihilation of the old, exploiting social order and for uniting the proletariat.

Well, I think the refusal of many influential people to accept this elementary fact of Soviet doctrine illustrates a historical reluctance to see totalitarian powers

for what they are. We saw this phenomenon in the 1930s. We see it too often today.

This doesn't mean we should isolate ourselves and refuse to seek an understanding with them. I intend to do everything I can to persuade them of our peaceful intent, to remind them that it was the West that refused to use its nuclear monopoly in the forties and fifties for territorial gain and which now proposes a 50-percent cut in strategic ballistic missiles and the elimination of an entire class of land-based, intermediate-range nuclear missiles.

At the same time, however, they must be made to understand we will never compromise our principles and standards. We will never give away our freedom. We will never abandon our belief in God. And we will never stop searching for a genuine peace. But we can assure none of these things America stands for through the so-called nuclear freeze solutions proposed by some.

The truth is that a freeze now would be a very dangerous fraud, for that is merely the illusion of peace. The reality is that we must find peace through strength.

I would agree to freeze if only we could freeze the Soviets' global desires. A freeze at current levels of weapons would remove any incentive for the Soviets to negotiate seriously in Geneva and virtually end our chances to achieve the major arms reductions which we have proposed. Instead, they would achieve their objectives through the freeze.

A freeze would reward the Soviet Union for its enormous and unparalleled military buildup. It would prevent the essential and long overdue modernization of United States and allied defenses and would leave our aging forces increasingly vulnerable. And an honest freeze would require extensive prior negotiations on the systems and numbers to be limited and on the measures to ensure effective verification and compliance. And the kind of a freeze that has been suggested would be virtually impossible to verify. Such a major effort would divert us completely from our current negotiations on achieving substantial reductions.

A number of years ago, I heard a young father, a very prominent young man in the entertainment world, addressing a tremendous gathering in California. It was during the time of the cold war, and communism and our own way of life were very much on

people's minds. And he was speaking to that subject. And suddenly, though, I heard him saying, "I love my little girls more than anything—" And I said to myself, "Oh, no, don't. You can't—don't say that." But I had underestimated him. He went on: "I would rather see my little girls die now, still believing in God, than have them grow up under communism and one day die no longer believing in God."

There were thousands of young people in that audience. They came to their feet with shouts of joy. They had instantly recognized the profound truth in what he had said, with regard to the physical and the soul and what was truly important.

Yes, let us pray for the salvation of all of those who live in that totalitarian darkness—pray they will discover the joy of knowing God. But until they do, let us be aware that while they preach the supremacy of the state, declare its omnipotence over individual man, and predict its eventual domination of all peoples on the earth, they are the focus of evil in the modern world.

It was C.S. Lewis who, in his unforgettable *Screwtape Letters*, wrote: "The greatest evil is not done now in those sordid 'dens of rime' that Dickens loved to paint. It is not even done in concentration camps and labor camps. In those we see its final result. But it is conceived and ordered (moved, seconded, carried and minuted) in clean, carpeted, warmed, and well-lighted offices, by quiet men with white collars and cut fingernails and smooth-shaven cheeks who do not need to raise their voice."

Well, because these "quiet men" do not "raise their voices," because they sometimes speak in soothing tones of brotherhood and peace, because, like other dictators before them, they're always making "their final territorial demand," some would have us accept them at their word and accommodate ourselves to their aggressive impulses. But if history teaches anything, it teaches that simpleminded appeasement or wishful thinking about our adversaries is folly. It means the betrayal of our past, the squandering of our freedom.

So, I urge you to speak out against those who would place the United States in a position of military and moral inferiority. You know, I've always believed that old Screwtape reserved his best efforts for those of you in the church. So, in your discussions of the nuclear freeze proposals, I urge you to beware the

temptation of pride—the temptation of blithely declaring yourselves above it all and label both sides equally at fault, to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire, to simply call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil.

I ask you to resist the attempts of those who would have you withhold your support for our efforts, this administration's efforts, to keep America strong and free, while we negotiate real and verifiable reductions in the world's nuclear arsenals and one day, with God's help, their total elimination.

While America's military strength is important, let me add here that I've always maintained that the struggle now going on for the world will never be decided by bombs or rockets, by armies or military might. The real crisis we face today is a spiritual one; at root, it is a test of moral will and faith.

Whittaker Chambers, the man whose own religious conversion made him a witness to one of the terrible traumas of our time, the Hiss-Chambers case, wrote that the crisis of the Western world exists to the degree in which the West is indifferent to God, the degree to which it collaborates in communism's attempt to make man stand alone without God. And then he said, for Marxism-Leninism is actually the second-oldest faith, first proclaimed in the Garden of Eden with the words of temptation, "Ye shall be as gods."

The Western world can answer this challenge, he wrote, "but only provided that its faith in God and the freedom He enjoins is as great as communism's faith in Man."

I believe we shall rise to the challenge. I believe that communism is another sad, bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages even now are being written. I believe this because the source of our strength in the quest for human freedom is not material, but spiritual. And because it knows no limitation, it must terrify and ultimately triumph over those who would enslave their fellow man. For in the words of Isaiah: "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increased strength . . . But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary . . ."

Yes, change your world. One of our Founding Fathers, Thomas Paine, said, "We have it within our

power to begin the world over again." We can do it, doing together what no one church could do by itself. God bless you, and thank you very much.

**SEE ALSO**

Protestantism in America; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion, Conservatism, Fundamentalism; Popular Theodicies: Evil in the Twentieth Century

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The Evil Empire Speech, President Ronald Reagan's Speech to the National Association of Evangelicals, Orlando, Florida, March 8, 1983. Accessed from: The Ronald Reagan Home Page, <http://reagan.webteamone.com/speeches/empire.cfm> (Nov. 4, 2002).



Shirley MacLaine,  
excerpt from *Dancing in the Light* (1985)

*Shirley MacLaine first gained fame and fortune as a dancer, singer, and actress. However, after publishing many best-selling books, her popularity as a writer threatened to surpass her popularity as an entertainer. A self-proclaimed "New Ager," MacLaine has written books that touch on such topics as reincarnation, spiritual pilgrimages, UFOs, and other metaphysical issues. Here she describes how affirmations helped move her to self-awareness, and how that self-awareness led to an awareness of "the harmony of the higher dimension."*

To work at one's profession and apply spiritual techniques was an adventure I longed to experience just to determine if it was possible. Yoga had long since become a contributive exercise in my daily life. It helped my dancing as well as my physical well-being. But I wanted to experiment with more detailed spiritual mind techniques.

I began to work with what is known as "affirmations" a few days into the rehearsal period. I found that they were remarkably productive.

Affirmations are spoken resolutions which, when used properly, align the physical, mental, and spiritual energies.

The ancient Hindu vedas claimed that the spoken words *I am*, or *Aum* in Hindi, set up a vibrational frequency in the body and mind which align the individual with his or her higher self and thus with the God-source. The word God in any language carries the highest vibrational frequency of any word in that language. Therefore, if one says audibly *I am God*, the sound vibrations literally align the energies of the body to a higher attunement.

You can use *I am God* or *I am that I am* as Christ often did, or you can extend the affirmations to fit your own needs.

I needed affirmations which would help reduce body pain. So I would affirm to myself (sometimes silently and sometimes audibly, depending on whether I would disturb someone else) a resolution such as: I am God in action. Or, I am God in health.

Or, I am God with ease. Whatever came to my mind dictated my creative requirement. Sometimes if I was not feeling as full of fun as I wanted to feel, I would say, I am God in fun. Or, I am God in humor.

What happened was remarkable. I wouldn't have believed it had I not experienced the results myself.

Call it concentration, or call it *believing*, it makes no difference. *I felt no pain*. My perception, and therefore my truth, was altered if I uttered *I am God in happiness* to myself. The result was a feeling that was real. I uttered each affirmation three times. The vedas claim that three times designates mind, body, and spirit. In the middle of the grueling dance number when I wondered, after double days of two shows a day, whether I could finish, I would chant to myself along with the music, *I am God in stamina* and all the pain melted away. One has to try it to believe it. During workout classes when the "burn" was nearly intolerable, I chanted under my breath three times, *I am God in coolness*. The burn was less. Then I would go on to chant gently, *I am God in strength*, or *I am God in light*. The effect is stunning.

If, as happened, there were days when I had either not had enough sleep the night before, or something occurred to jangle my mood, or just the pressure of performing itself caused me to be out of my own center, I would, as soon as I opened my eyes in the morning, begin my affirmations and in five minutes or so I felt better.

Before performing I always did them during the overture and continued right on through my entrance. I felt the alignment occur all through me and I went on to perform with the God Source as my support system.

I began to use this technique in other ways too.

There were many times, over the course of my life, when I was asked to be a public speaker. Either to accept an award or to be a keynote speaker at a political rally. Public speaking terrified me. I always felt the need to have a prepared text to refer to. Either I

would write the speech or a professional speech writer would do it for me. I couldn't feel comfortable doing it spontaneously. This discomfort began to ebb away too. I began to work only with an outlined idea in my head. If I carried notes with me, I found that little by little I didn't bother referring to them. I realized that it was what I was feeling that communicated to the audience more than the words anyway. The words, frankly, got in the way if I was in sync with my feelings. A pause or a decision-making moment was infinitely more effective than the studied intellectual twist of a well-planned phrase. Again, I was learning to trust in the moment and with my affirmation. My higher self was my guide.

This process was so self-enlightening that at times I wanted very much to share it, attempting to light a candle for someone rather than tolerate their cursing of the darkness.

I quickly learned that this is where karma comes in. While pursuing my own awakening, *if* I was working with balanced principles, I was aware at all times that everyone else was pursuing their own path, consciously or unconsciously. They had their own perceptions, their own truth, their own pace, and their own version of enlightenment. It was not possible to judge another's truth. I had to simply proceed along my own path, continually reminding myself of the true meaning of "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

The process of self-realization (or even the theories of reincarnation and karma) does not lend itself to proselytization. It is highly personal, ultimately self-responsible. All one can say, really, is: this happened to me. This is how it feels. If it interests someone else, they must do their own learning, their own reading, their own searching.

So, I can only say that this feeling of higher awareness is so personal that it is a matter purely of one's own consciousness. In my life, and in my work, I realized that what I saw in others was that which I did or didn't want to see in myself. I realized that the perceptions I had of myself were, in the main, perceptions I had of others in the world around me. I was, in effect, only living inside of my own reality, and so was everyone else. Therefore, to desecrate another was to desecrate myself. To denigrate another was to denigrate myself. To judge another was to judge myself. And that's what it was all about: SELF. If I was happy with myself, I was happy with others. If I loved

myself, I could love others. If I could tolerate myself, I could tolerate others. If I was kind to myself, I was kind to others—and on and on. It was a personal evaluation of self that enabled this enlightenment to work for me. Not the evaluation of others. So when I saw people zealously condemning the "sins" of others in the name of God, I found myself wondering what karma they were setting up for themselves. What ye sow, so shall ye reap. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. This simple karmic law of cause and effect was predominant in the religious and spiritual teachings of virtually every culture on earth. So many had misinterpreted this law for their own reasons. I "respected" these reasons, whatever they might be, but with the world heading for possible *self*-destruction, I could only say that we are not victims of the world we see. We are victims of the way we see the world.

In truth, there are no victims. There is only self-perception and self-realization. That was the star to which I hitched my wagon. As the etymology of the word disaster suggested: dis—torn asunder from; astrado—the stars. To experience disaster is to be torn asunder from the stars, and from the higher truth.

There were personal events that occurred during my run in New York that provided me with the opportunity of being more aware of how the harmony of the higher dimension works.

I received a call from a psychic trance-channeler, a friend of mine, who didn't want to concern me unnecessarily but wanted me to be aware of something. She didn't know what it meant, but she said, "Do you know someone named Mark?"

I couldn't think of anyone except one of my four dancers, whose name was Mark Reiner.

"Well, I don't know," said my friend J.Z. "Someone named Mark will cause some disruption, not serious, but just be aware."

Every night during the warm-up period before the overture, I would look at Mark and wonder if J.Z. could have tuned in on something concerning him. I never said anything. I didn't want to alarm him.

A few days later, New York went on daylight saving time. It was a matinee day and I was having dinner with friends in between shows. I had forgotten to put my watch ahead an hour. My friends commented that I was unusually casual about lingering over dinner. I

glanced at my watch and said, “Oh, I have another hour.”

Then our waiter passed and inquired why I was off that night. I said I wasn’t off. He pointed to his watch and said, “Then you’re on in five minutes!”

I panicked. I raced to my limo, where Dominick, my driver, stood tapping his foot, wondering. I am religious about performance deadlines.

He drove the getaway car in a way Al Capone would have admired. I arrived at the theater to find Mike Flowers ashen-faced and annoyed. I didn’t blame him.

“You don’t understand,” said Mike. “Mark Reiner has sprained his ankle and can’t go on. You have three minutes to rechoreograph.”

We used only four dancers. Now there were three. One boy would have to dance two parts!

I rushed to the stage where the other three dancers were perspiringly attempting to work with a fourth person. I couldn’t place him. He turned around. It was one of my old dancers. He “happened” to be in the audience, heard the news, and rushed backstage. He knew the “choreographer” number! Mark’s clothes fit him perfectly—even his *dance shoes!*

“If you want, I’ll go on,” said Gary. “But I’d really like to see the show first. I can be ready tomorrow night. Mark is going to be out for several weeks.”

The impact of J.Z.’s warning hit me. Yet at the same time, I realized I was protected not only by Gary’s “accidental” presence, but by forgetting the time change. I hadn’t had time to worry!

We went on without Gary or Mark, rechoreographing as we moved. I explained to the audience what had happened. They loved being in on it. Larry, the dancer now dancing two parts, had the time of his life. The audience wildly applauded him, and when it was all over, I called J.Z. to tell her what had happened.

“Oh, now I understand,” she said.

“But how did you know?” I asked.

“When you’re tuned in, you’re tuned in,” she said. “A psychic is just a little more tuned in to the ‘knowingness’ of his or her higher self than others. That’s why they call us psychics. But the knowingness is there for all of us. We are all psychics, we just don’t know it. If we each trusted our knowingness, we’d each be totally aware. We are what we’re aware of. And that should be our true goal in life.”

I thanked her and hung up. I sat for a long time, thinking again about the limitation of linear time.

I could only perceive events that had either just happened or were immediately about to happen. I felt frustrated that I couldn’t view what a past lifetime had been or what a future event would reveal.

I thought of a canoe floating down the river. From the perspective of the canoe, one could only see immediately behind or immediately ahead. Seen from a perspective *above* the canoe, that view became a broader and more elongated perspective. One could see miles behind and miles ahead.

If the river was time, then, and we wished to see the past and the future, all it took was to plug into a higher perspective. Again there was no such thing as reality, only perception. But to plug into that higher perspective required more knowledge of the higher self—our higher selves resided in the astral dimension, not in the earth-plane, physical dimension.

The astral dimension was real even though we couldn’t see it or measure it in linear terms. There is a greater reality than our “perceived” conscious reality. That is what has come to be called the new age of thought. A new age of awareness. An Awareness that includes the knowledge that there is indeed a level of dimension that operates in harmony and with perfection, waiting for us to understand that being alive on earth is only a limited aspect of what we truly are.

The sense of knowing that the great unfathomable mystery isn’t really such a mystery was a practical, contributive, earth-plane support system for me. It was not only out there, it was in fact inside me, waiting to be tapped and realized. As above, so below. The two dimensions were mirrors for each other. I was living on the limited earth-plane dimension, but if I trusted that I was indeed unlimited, then *I* would also be able to tune in and know that Mark Reiner was going to sprain his ankle.

During my years of searching for spiritual understanding in myself and others, my path has led me through some almost unbelievable events and relationships. Some included “regular” people. But other relationships were not of the “home-grown” variety. As I have described, I visited accredited mediums who channeled spirit guides from the astral plane. I developed relationships with those “entities.” Some were humorous, some purely educational. But one

was more profound than any of the others. His name was Ramtha. He identified himself as Ramtha the Enlightened One. My relationship with Ramtha was deep, seeming to speak to another time and place. He said he had had one incarnation during the Atlantean time period and had achieved total realization in that lifetime. When I was first told about Ramtha, a very strange soul-memory feeling came over me. As a matter of fact, the first time I heard his name I broke down and sobbed. I couldn't understand what was happening to me. I only knew that the mention of his name brought up feelings that I couldn't control and touched me so deeply it almost frightened me.

During our first session, the same thing occurred. He channeled through J.Z. Knight (the same woman who had called me about Mark). J.Z. was a beautiful blonde with a kind of delicate friendliness. Ramtha was a definitive masculine energy of loving forcefulness. When she went into trance and Ramtha came through, everything about J.Z. changed. The soul energy of Ramtha was *in* her. J.Z. is about five feet four inches tall and not particularly strong. When Ramtha came through, he picked me up in his arms and carried me around the room, nearly lifting me over his head. I could feel *his* masculine energy through *her* arms. I am a heavy, muscled woman weighing usually between one hundred thirty and one hundred forty pounds. Using his energy to strengthen J.Z.'s arms, he had no problem with my weight. (Sometime later I watched him lift a two-hundred-pound man.) As soon as he embraced me and lifted me, I began to cry again. I felt some awakened feeling in my heart that I couldn't understand. Then Ramtha put me down. He took my hands in his and kissed them. He stroked my face. Then he gazed intently into my eyes. I could feel him pouring through J.Z.'s face. I *felt* his thoughts. It was unbelievably real. So much so it was disconcerting. I had often experienced the energy of entities from the astral dimensions working with Kevin and other mediums. But this was different. Never had it been so profoundly moving to me as with Ramtha. I leaned forward to feel his energy more intensely. I couldn't stop my tears. Ramtha smiled. Then *he* began to cry! I felt that I was in another world. My mind clicked off. I wasn't thinking. I was only feeling. Who was he? Why was I behaving this way? Then something familiar began to well up in my heart. It

began first as an abstract intuition. I didn't obstruct the feeling by trying to figure it out with my mind. I let it happen. The feeling expanded until it took the form of an intuitive thought. As I looked into the eyes of Ramtha, I heard myself say, "Were you my brother in your Atlantean incarnation?"

More tears spilled from his eyes. "Yes, my beloved," he said, "and *you* were my brother."

I can only say that what he said *felt* exquisite. I *knew* it was true. That was the reason I had been so moved.

Ramtha and I went on to spend quite a bit of time together. He taught me about light frequencies in relation to the human body. He humorously predicted personal events in my life—that *always* evolved to be true. He was lovingly stern with me when I allowed my intellectual skepticism to block my growing "knowingness." He related story after story of our life together, pointing out other people we knew then who are part of my present incarnation. He examined what was karmically necessary for me to work out with those people. He spoke calmly and evenly of why I had chosen to have conflicts with certain people in order to understand myself and them more fully. He specified the areas of my growth that needed more work. He warned me about my blindness in relation to some of my friends and revealed some of the past-life incarnations we had had together.

He spoke of the vitamins I needed, the kind of exercise I should have, the foods I should stay away from, and even gave me his evaluation of the scripts I was reading.

I asked questions relating to everything from the personal life of Jesus Christ to whether I would ever meet my soul mate in this incarnation. What I learned from Ramtha would fill another book. But no matter how much I learned from him, he continually reminded me that *I* already knew all the answers. I mustn't depend on him or any other spiritual guide for knowledge. I must be my own guide. I should learn to trust and depend on my own capability for awareness. Guru-hopping could be fun, but it only postponed one's own self-truth.

Ramtha was amusing, fun, and loved to have a good time when he was in the body of J.Z. Often he would ask for wine, as he had enjoyed it when *he* was in the body. Several times he got drunk and J.Z. was left with the residue of a hangover.

His was an activating energy. He was not at all laid back and generalized. He could zero in on your personal life until you felt he was invading your privacy. And there was nothing he didn't know about me. He brought up events in my childhood that I had forgotten long ago. He questioned me about my most private inner confusions, which no one could have known. He did this not to prove his credibility, but to help ease my conflicts through discussion. It wasn't possible to conceal anything from him. He knew it all anyway. From the astral dimensions there were no secrets, no games, no need for clandestine manipulation. The point of his spiritual education was to impart the truth that *we* were God. We were as capable of knowledge as *he*. There was no pecking order. No one was more advanced or evolved than anyone else. They might be only more *aware*.

Ramtha became a spiritual friend, but he endeavored at every meeting to help me realize that my own higher self was my best spiritual friend. In the meantime he would be there to help me whenever I needed it as long as I didn't become dependent. (The warning about dependency was common with all the spiritual entities I talked with.)

Now in New York a few years later, Ramtha came to help me when I was really in trouble. He often worked with other entities on the astral plane whom I had learned to trust. In this case, he worked with Tom McPherson.

I was about three weeks into the run at the Gershwin Theatre. The summer weather hadn't hit full blast until the third week in May. As always in New York when summer is hot outside, air conditioning is like winter inside. The theater was no exception.

During the middle of a performance, the air-conditioning system came on full blast and the change in temperature not only caused my muscles to seize up, but I felt my throat go dry, cold, and finally very raw and sore. The last thing I needed was a summer cold while I was performing. I got a shawl from the wings and finished the performance, but I felt the die had been cast unless I took some preventive measures immediately. I called a doctor I knew, waking him up, and he prescribed an antibiotic which I rushed to have filled at an all-night drugstore. I hadn't taken any medicine for years. Why I made the mistake of doing it then, I don't know.

By the next afternoon I was so weak from the antibiotics that I could hardly stand. My throat felt better, but my legs were gone. How could I perform?

Dominick picked me up at my apartment, but I couldn't walk. He lifted me into the car.

"How're you going to work like this?" he asked.

I sighed, very depressed. "I don't know. Maybe it'll be better when I get there. Don't tell anyone, okay?"

"Okay."

I dragged myself to my dressing room. Maybe if I could get through a warm-up, I'd be all right. It worked in reverse. The more I stretched and jumped to prepare myself, the weaker I became. The rapid blood flow only spread the antibiotics more fully through my system.

The orchestra was tuning up. I put on my opening costume and went to the stage. I did one plié and collapsed behind the curtain off to the side of the stage where no one could see me. I was conscious as I lay there, but I couldn't move my body. It was terrifying. I couldn't even speak.

I heard Michael Flowers calling for me. I couldn't answer. I heard people yell from my dressing room that I wasn't there.

Then, as I lay there, I knew I wouldn't be able to go on unless I had help. What kind of help? I put everything out of my mind and I called on Tom McPherson and Ramtha.

"Come in and help me," I pleaded desperately. "You have my permission to infuse your energies with mine. Please come above me and pick me up."

I waited . . . I tried not to doubt. They would be there if I *allowed* it. Slowly, I felt my arms energize. A permeating glow ran through them. I found I could lift them. Then I felt a current in both of my legs, a kind of mellow, activating current. I moved my right leg. It didn't feel leaden anymore. I lifted it slowly over my head. It stretched easily. Then the left leg. The same ease was there.

I carefully pulled myself to my feet. I felt a dizziness. I looked above me, attempting to *see* what I felt. I visualized the light aura of Ramtha and McPherson mingling with mine. The dizziness left me. I shook myself all over. I felt my energy come into an alignment. I walked to the backstage wings where everyone milled about, trying to locate me. Michael saw me first, walking toward him.

“Are you all right?” he asked. “You look different. Where were you?”

“I collapsed from those damn antibiotics,” I explained dreamily. He put his arm around me.

“Well, will you be able to go on?”

“Are you kidding?” I said, almost as though it weren’t me talking. “I’ve never missed a performance in my life and I’m not about to start now.”

“Well, good,” said Mike. He looked at me closely.

“I may not be doing it alone, though.”

“What do you mean?” he asked me expectantly.

“Well,” I said, “I’ve asked Ramtha and Tom McPherson to come in and help me. They are above me right now. I can feel them. As soon as they hovered close to me, I could move again, otherwise I’d still be in a heap behind that curtain over there.”

Michael knew all about Ramtha and McPherson.

“Well, okay,” said Mike, like a football coach before a game. “So we’ll have a little spiritual energizing here, eh? Can Ramtha dance?” he asked with delight.

“I don’t know, but I know McPherson can be funny. I think Ramtha will be holding me up and McPherson gets to perform.”

Michael kissed me on the cheek as the overture began. I warmed up with pliés and stretching. My energy was fine. With the overture over, I took my place behind the revolving piano and waited for it to turn. My cue came, the piano revealed me, and the spotlight bathed me in number III surprise pink. I stopped a moment. The lights felt different. The sound was off. I couldn’t measure the distance from where I was to the front of the stage. I felt like a foreigner in strange territory. I looked above myself as though to reconfirm that my friends were there. I could feel them say, “It’s all right. Relax. Let us do this. *Know* that we are here.”

I had no other choice.

I began to sing. To me my voice sounded as though it belonged to someone else. The stage under me felt farther away than usual. My familiar reality on the stage I knew so well was being infused with the reality of two other soul energies I knew just as well. It was a remarkably new but “homey” experience.

Apparently we did a good show. I don’t remember any of it. In fact, according to others, the show was better than usual, I am unhappy to say. I had always liked to do things myself, regardless of the effort it

took. I was learning that to sometimes call on help from my spiritual friends was no reflection on my capabilities. In fact, the sooner I gave up my “I am strong in the face of adversity” streak, the better.

Michael said I took my last bow and then as soon as the curtain came down I collapsed again. The energy of Ramtha and McPherson left me. Michael ran to me and picked me up in his six-foot-four-inch matching arms.

“I see they had another job to go to right away,” he said, laughing, knowing that I was all right.

“Were we good together?” I asked.

“Yes,” he said, “but I’m glad they won’t let you become dependent.”

Dominick had watched what happened from the wings. He was a religious man (Catholic) and had been reading my book. Every now and then he would ask me a question about reincarnation or spiritual guidance. He said the Church wasn’t answering enough of his questions. So we’d talk after the show. Michael lifted me back into the car so Dominick could drive me home. I was stretched out on the back seat.

“How did you perform like that?” he asked hesitantly, almost as though he didn’t want to hear the answer. “I don’t understand.”

“I had some help,” I answered.

“Help? From who?” He swallowed hard.

I sat up and leaned over the back of the front seat. I told him all about Ramtha and McPherson. He didn’t flinch. He seemed to almost understand.

“So you’re telling me that these Ramtha and McPherson fellas are around all the time if you need them?” There was no sarcasm in his voice.

“Yes,” I said. “That’s right.”

“And they used to have bodies and be alive on the earth.” He made a statement instead of asking.

“Yes.”

“And they might sometime decide to reincarnate again and have bodies like us.”

“Yes.”

He hesitated as we pulled up in front of my building. Then he said, “You know why I believe what you’re saying?”

“Why?”

“Because about one month after my brother died, he came one night to visit me. I *know* he was standing

next to my bed explaining that he was all right and I should tell my father not to worry. I asked him why he didn't tell Dad himself. He said, 'Because Dad wouldn't understand. You do.'

Dominick shook his head with the memory. "And the funny thing is, just that day I was looking at the flowers on our patio and the thought occurred to me, if flowers can come back every time they die, why can't people? Nature does it all the time. So when my brother came to me that night, I guess I was ready to understand it. Maybe he could help me sometimes, like your friends helped you tonight. That's what it's all about, isn't it?"

Dominick's simple eloquence was so much more to the point than all the metaphysical books I had read.

"Where can I read more about this, Shirley?" he asked.

"You don't need to, Dominick. It's all inside of you. Just listen to your feelings and trust them. *You* are unlimited. You just don't *realize* it."

He shook his head again and said, "Wow. You know, I don't think my driving you was an accident. I think I needed to just be around and see how you put this stuff into action."

Dominick helped me upstairs, suggesting that I use vitamin C rather than antibiotics to get rid of my cold. "And don't try to do so much yourself," he chided me. "Let some other people help you, like you did tonight."

I was learning that lesson in more ways than I could keep up with.

I would like to relate two more incidents that occurred with McPherson and Ramtha. First, McPherson.

Before doing *Terms of Endearment*, I hadn't acted in nearly three years. There might have been good scripts around, but I wasn't getting any.

Then Steven Spielberg wrote a screenplay called *Poltergeist* and asked me to play the mother. My dream had been to work with Spielberg because of his metaphysical proclivities. But to me *Poltergeist* was too violent. It exploited the negative side of the Force and I didn't want to contribute to negative violence in the marketplace. So, after many meetings and discussions, I told Steven I couldn't do it, regardless of what a stupid career move it seemed to be. He understood and said he had a film planned that focused on the positive side of the Force about the love of a small boy

and an extraterrestrial. But there was no good part in it for me. When he outlined the story to me, I said I thought *E.T.* would be more successful because it gave people hope and was charming besides. He thanked me and promised we'd work together someday when we could emphasize the positive aspects of spiritual understanding.

Many of my associates and friends thought I was nuts to turn down *Poltergeist*, particularly in view of how my career was going at that time. It was hard for me to explain that it went against the grain of my spiritual beliefs, because *Out on a Limb* hadn't been published yet.

In any case, I had another session with McPherson to discuss whether there was any hope for me to get another good part in the near future.

"First of all," he said, "you made some Brownie points with us up here in turning down *Poltergeist*. It's fine for others to do a film like that, but not for you."

"Great," I said to Tom, "but what about making movies? I mean, when will I get a good part?"

He chuckled and said, "Well, would two weeks be soon enough?"

I, of course, didn't know what he was talking about. There was nothing that I knew of, not even on the horizon.

"You will receive," he said, "a very fine script about a mother-and-daughter relationship and the opening shot of the film will be that of a child's clown."

"A mother and daughter?" I asked.

"Quite right," he said confidently. "It will be very popular and you will win one of those golden statues for your portrayal."

I took what he said with less than a grain of salt. Two weeks later I received a call from a fireball of an agent named Sue Mengers. She said she had read a script about a mother and daughter written by James L. Brooks, a man from television. She said it was considered a risky art film by most of the studios in town, but she thought it was brilliant and just right for me. Would I read it?

Immediately I thought of Tom McPherson's prediction, read it the next day, met Jim a week later, and the rest is history.

There is an additional twist to this story. When, a few weeks later, I discussed *Terms of Endearment* with Ramtha, he said, "You won't be doing this film for another year and a half. The time is not ripe yet. The fi-

nancing will not be there and *you* are not yet ready. But it is true that when you do do it, you and the film will be greatly rewarded. Have patience. Do not be afraid.”

The timing worked out exactly as Ramtha had said. Studio after studio walked away from the project believing that it was not at all commercial and insisting that they would not allocate the amount of money Jim needed to shoot it on location in Texas.

I waited. I turned down everything else that came up in the ensuing time period so that I would be available, trusting that what McPherson and Ramtha had said would come to pass. Finally Paramount agreed to make it one and a half years later.

And when, at last, we went into production, Ramtha and McPherson were there with me, encouraging me to “become” Aurora Greenway.

Ramtha also spent a good deal of time with me discussing *Out on a Limb*. He was unalterably opposed to my projections of negativism in the original manuscript, even when they seemed logical in the light of what was happening on the world scene. I am enough of a pragmatist to have had some fairly hot arguments with him on this issue. Choosing one’s own path in positivity is one thing. Ignoring all common-sense predictions of what one sees around one is an-

other. Ramtha’s view, though, was that prophecies are, all too often, self-fulfilling. To project the worst actually contributes to its happening.

I, too, eventually came to this view. This has been one of the most profound lessons for me since beginning my metaphysical searching. Fear and negativity are *not* part of the future. The *erasure* of fear and negativity are [sic] the future. And whatever it takes to eliminate those concepts of consciousness, I will address myself to, not only in relation to global conflict but in relation to my everyday life. I had to eliminate a great deal of fear in myself before I could allow *Out on a Limb* to be published. And as my life continues to progress I find that the more I eliminate fear, the happier I am. Fear has become a non-reality to me. It is a perception, not a fact. Fear is only what I perceive it to be. Yes, it is still there sometimes, but in “reality” I know it is only there because I allow it.

#### SEE ALSO

New Age: New Age Bestsellers

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Excerpt from Shirley MacLaine, *Dancing in the Light*, copyright © 1985 by Shirley MacLaine. Used by permission of Bantam Books, a division of Random House, Inc.



Spalding Gray,  
excerpt from *Sex and Death at the Age of Fourteen* (1986)

*The moniker “master of monology” is an apt one for Spalding Gray. He is best known for his monologue films and his one-man live performances, but he has also appeared in numerous traditional theater and movie roles. Sex and Death at the Age of Fourteen, an introspective, autobiographical discourse on Gray’s teenage years in Rhode Island, is both the first monologue written by Gray and an apt precursor to his later works, which blend intense self-analysis, comic wit, and profound existential themes.*

So one day I was in the bathtub taking a very hot bath. It was a cold day and the radiator was going full blast. I got out of the tub and thought, well, this is a good time to knock myself out, I’m so dizzy, I’m halfway there. So I took 20 deep breaths and went right out, and on my way out I hit my head on the

sink, which was kind of a double knockout. When I landed my arm fell against the radiator. I must have been out quite a long time because when I came to, I lifted my arm up and it was like this dripping-rare-red roast beef, third-degree burn. Actually it didn’t hurt at all because I was in shock, a steam burn on my finger would have hurt more. I ran downstairs and showed it to my mother and she said, “Put some soap in it, dear, and wrap it in gauze.” She was a Christian Scientist, so she had a distance on those things.

**SEE ALSO**

New Religious Traditions: Christian Science

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Excerpt from Spalding Gray, *Sex and Death at the Age of Fourteen*, Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, 1986.

Daisaku Ikeda, excerpt from  
*Songs for America: Poems by Daisaku Ikeda (1987)*

*In these elegant phrases, prominent Buddhist author and lecturer Daisaku Ikeda urges Americans to “open a new page” in their nation’s history by nurturing a philosophy both uniquely American and uniquely Buddhist. This philosophy is based on trustworthiness, perseverance, and progressiveness, values that represent both the spirit of the first pioneers that came to America and the spirit of those who will now lead America to “the summit of eternal happiness.”*

Arise, the Sun of the Century  
*On the Thirtieth Anniversary  
of the Kosen-Rufu Movement in America*

America! O America! O  
Nurturing endless dream  
Of myriads of people  
Who aroused their frontier spirit,  
You are the New World of rainbows,  
You are the great land of freedom.

America! O giant America!  
Anxiety deepens as the century draws to a close.  
You are the protagonist and producer  
Of the drama of world history—  
The drama of incessant change.  
Your powerful vigor shall determine  
The destiny of our precious oasis—  
Our spaceship Earth.

Boundless freedom,  
Pulse of the Republic.  
The deep root of democracy  
And the refreshing spirit of pioneering.  
The conviction in independence,

The unlimited space,  
And the vitality of the states united.

I see those varied and colorful images;  
Songs of praise of America—

Indeed, of all mankind—  
Revolve like a kaleidoscope,  
Deep in my mind.

Since my youth, years ago,  
Emerson and Whitman have always been beside me;  
Together we talked—a dialogue of the heart;  
The land they so loved and had pride in,  
The land I too longed for,  
It is the haven of hope—America!

Though there are signs,  
Here and everywhere,  
That you are ailing,  
Your latent energy,  
Like boiling hot magma,  
Only awaits the moment of explosion.

From where is the cause of this union born?  
This throng that now stands on that land,  
Assembled so valiantly,  
They are the fighters emerging from the earth,  
Hundreds of thousands of courageous ones.

O my beloved ones!  
My precious friends.  
The long-awaited magnificent raising of the curtain,  
Opening the new, grand stage, has begun,  
Beneath the banner of the dignity of man.  
The bell heralds the arrival of a new renaissance,  
Resounding high and loud.

Ah, as many as thirty years have passed  
Since one youth arrived  
In this new world where  
But few embraced the Mystic Law.  
Sharing a karmic bond  
He burned with the mission  
To cultivate and to accomplish  
The noble task of kosen-rufu.

And also I sent  
 Another youth,  
 A young man whom I trained  
 To share the goal;  
 And together did they cherish,  
 Deep down within,  
 The fervent pledge  
 To be the soil of America;  
 These bold youths, with many others,  
 Stood up and forged on along the treacherous road  
 To bravely open the way for the Mystic Law.

To respond to the brave  
 Yet desperate fight of my dear friends,  
 In the autumn of 1960  
 I made the first step in my travels for peace  
 On this great land of America,  
 The world in small scale,  
 The melting pot of diversified races—  
 And twenty-seven years have passed since then.

At a loss in this vast and extensive foreign land,  
 Sick with loneliness  
 And weeping from the karmic tribulations of life,  
 Were my friends, and not a few were they.  
 So, to light the flame of courage and happiness  
 In their dark and depressed hearts,  
 I summoned my strength to its last ounce  
 And in pursuit of this end did I strive.

Time surely flies like an arrow;  
 Over a quarter of a century has gone by,  
 And twenty times and more did I return to this land.

And now, flowers are blooming  
 In my friends' smiling faces,  
 And small yet precious seeds of propagation  
 Have begun to sprout;  
 It is the pioneering fathers and mothers—  
 Mothers above all—  
 Who with sweat and tears and joy and hope  
 Wrote the history of the early stages of kosen-rufu;  
 And today in this land stand hundreds of thousands of  
 Treasure towers.

In praise of the mothers who toiled so tirelessly  
 Across the great land in the early days of  
 propagation,

The "Statue of SGI-USA Pioneers" stands firmly,  
 Erected on a scenic hill in Hawaii,  
 Overlooking the Pacific, under the brilliant sunshine.

Thus the great river of your glorious history has  
 unfolded,  
 And the wave of compassion  
 For propagating the Mystic Law  
 In this land of America is rising ever more.  
 In order to bravely open the new history of America,  
 My dear friends,  
 Resolve to be "men of trustworthiness"!

You, descendants of the proud forefathers  
 Who transformed the pristine land  
 Into a great continent of civilization,  
 Bright with optimism are you;  
 And with unswerving frontier spirit,  
 Your minds are always open toward the future.

This country, from its time of inception,  
 Has been the great land of genuine freedom.  
 Filled with the spirit of democracy and open-  
 mindedness,  
 The citizens have a strong sense  
 Of being fellow countrymen;  
 It is warm goodwill that unites them all.

By stimulating and illuminating  
 These characteristics of the American heart,  
 You, as believers of unwavering faith,  
 Have merged with the community as model citizens,  
 Your rhythm of life unseparated from society.

My precious friends who are to open the road  
 Into the future,  
 Throughout your entire lifetime,  
 Never deviate from this course  
 Of "faith finds expression in daily life."

The magnificent future of the road  
 To kosen-rufu and peace will unfold  
 In the sure and steadfast progress of daily living;  
 That road is lit even brighter with your existence  
 As shining and brilliant examples of this faith.

Therefore, do not forget that Buddhism is reflected  
 In life, living and society;

Show action rooted in compassion for others;  
 Be the proof as a person of value at work;  
 Be the foundation of happiness and harmony at home;  
 And be the light of good sense in society.

No persuasion surpasses that of confidence,  
 No influence exceeds that of trust;  
 Faith shows its validity  
 In our behavior as human beings.  
 If this is so, I pray that you  
 Be praised by others as trusted persons  
 And models of good citizenship.

Behold the soaring Rockies  
 The mountains eternal and imposing  
 Towering up against the skies,  
 In dignity, as those who can be trusted,  
 Unshaken even in the midst of raging storms.

My friends,  
 Construct mountain ranges of trust—  
 Like those Rocky Mountains—  
 That will rise high into the sky and will stay  
     unshaken,  
 A majestic sweep of capable people.

Armed with the philosophy that backs up  
 Our science and civilization in their most advanced  
     stages,  
 And possessed of a fresh perspective on the future,  
 Resolve to be people of perseverance,  
 To open the new history of America.

Construction of the Land of Eternally Tranquil  
     Light,  
 Where peace and happiness prevail, will be possible  
 Only if there is the will, unyielding and indomitable,  
 To continue to make effort after painstaking effort.

Be aware that should you lose  
 The perseverance to continue,  
 Past glories and achievements and labors,  
 No matter how great,  
 Will all come to naught.  
 No matter how large a number may be,  
 The principles of math prove  
 That multiplied by zero,  
 The product is always zero.

Buddhism is reason;  
 And Nichiren Daishonin states,  
 “Fire can at once reduce even a thousand-year-old  
     field  
 of pampas grass to ashes.”

May you never succumb  
 To the merciless winds of tribulation,  
 To the obstacles of adversity;  
 Advance along this road  
 With persistence, with patience, and with  
     perseverance,  
 For this is the road you yourselves have chosen.

May you advance just as the mighty Mississippi  
     River  
 Flows ceaselessly along its determined course  
 In the biting cold winter,  
 In the blooming spring of butterflies,

In the burning hot summer,  
 And in the autumn of the harvest;  
 Contentedly continuing to flow with dignity,  
 Day and night.

There is faith that flares up like fire,  
 Only to quickly fade and disappear;  
 There is faith like the current of water,  
 That flows continuously in serenity.

Ours must be faith like flowing water,  
 Not knowing of an end,  
 Washing away the banks of stagnation and languor;  
 Our faith must be the perpetual river  
 That continues to flow to reach the great sea  
 That is its one and only destination.

Perseverance is strength.  
 Accumulation is strength.  
 Forget not that only through tireless devotion  
 Shall faith glow with genuine brilliance;  
 Thus the life of eternal happiness is fulfilled.

You are the Minutemen of the Mystic Law,  
 The Whitmans of kosen-rufu,  
 Shouldering the responsibility  
 To inherit the prime point  
 Of the second chapter of worldwide kosen-rufu.

To mark the first step,  
 To open a new page in the history of your America,  
 My friends,  
 Resolve to be people of progressive spirit!

It was those possessing a glorious progressive spirit  
 Who brought forth  
 From the immensity of the prairie,  
 From the boundless frontier,  
 The luster of culture  
 And the refreshing breeze of civilization.

The intellect of progressive minds knows no  
 stagnation,  
 For they single-mindedly seek  
 The radiance of truth and wisdom;

The eye of progressive minds  
 Is never shadowed,  
 For they never lose sight  
 Of the distant rainbow of hope.  
 Progressive minds know no hesitation,  
 For action to take initiative itself is our supreme  
 honor.

The course that America led  
 Itself is the history of progressiveness.  
 In search of the New World,  
 With hope for an abundant harvest,  
 Your people cultivated and cultivated,  
 Knowing no lassitude.

Behind the continuous advancement  
 Is the spirit of the pioneers;  
 This is your eternal pride—  
 For the progressive spirit is another name for  
 pioneering.

“Day by day, one starts anew;  
 Each day, one begins again”  
 Are words I have cherished  
 For years since youth;  
 And so have I fought with all my might.

Filled with satisfaction for this day  
 And determination for the next,  
 Today and tomorrow, consistently,  
 Let us climb the hill of progress and development.

Progressiveness is another name for a seeking mind.  
 For this reason, my friends,  
 Neglect not the source of energy  
 To nurture the progressive spirit.  
 Neglect not this source—  
 The basic practice of gongyo and daimoku—  
 Each morning and evening  
 Sitting upright, reciting and chanting sonorously,  
 Neglect not to thoroughly call forth  
 Boundless and endless joy.

So,  
 “Trustworthiness,” “perseverance” and  
 “progressiveness”  
 Are the glorious orders for you, valiant ones,  
 Fighting for the kosen-rufu of the great land of  
 America.  
 Embracing the absolute philosophy of life and of  
 man,  
 Cultivating the ephemeral frontier  
 To reach the profound,

Cultivating the land into an eternal paradise  
 Where blooming, flowers and fruit-bearing trees  
 Perpetuate—  
 This is the magnificent crown  
 For the courageous fighters of kosen-rufu.

I call on you, every one of you!  
 You who are to enrich the earth with the Mystic Law,  
 You who are to determine the future of kosen-rufu,  
 You who hold the key to the future of this world  
 religion.  
 It is you, the true fighters, who,  
 With deep and firm awareness,  
 Shall shine forth with splendor  
 In the history of worldwide kosen-rufu.

The poet of the soul, Walt Whitman, writes:  
 “O soul, repressless, I with thee and thou with me  
 Thy circumnavigation of the world begin,  
 Of man, the voyage of his mind’s return,  
 To reason’s early paradise, . . .”

How profound and strong our karmic relation!  
 For we also are aware  
 Of what the great poet was after:  
 The “early paradise” is nothing

But the Buddha land free from decline;  
 It is nothing but the treasure land  
 Free from deterioration.  
 For that cause we stand up tall.

A single wave summons a second;  
 The second, a third;  
 And the third wave inevitably  
 Brings thousands and tens of thousands of waves to  
 follow.  
 With this firm conviction in mind  
 We rise on the spirit of standing alone,  
 Enabling others to reform the tenets they hold  
 In their hearts.  
 This is the toll for peace and kosen-rufu.

Behold, at this moment,  
 The glorious sun rises,  
 Tinting the surface of the Rockies vermilion,  
 Cherishing the great prairies of Colorado  
 In its golden embrace,  
 Transforming the waters of the Mississippi  
 Into crimson,  
 And casting the morning rays of hope  
 On the windows of Manhattan high-rises.

You, people I am very fond of,  
 Who cherish splendid dreams,  
 A new dawn of kosen-rufu in America has come;  
 The door to the journey toward the future,

A future filled with infinite possibility,  
 Has been opened.

Gallant pioneers of the Mystic Law,  
 Courageous fighters for peace,  
 Raise the anchor! It is time to embark!

Toll the bell high and loud, again and again!  
 It is the bell of departure!  
 It is the bell of daybreak!  
 It is the bell of happiness!

Let us aim for the summit of eternal happiness  
 In the new century,  
 Shining beyond the vast prairies.  
 This day, this very morning,  
 With great pride and conviction  
 Have we boldly launched  
 On a voyage toward a fresh beginning.

*Malibu Training Center  
 February 26, 1987*

**SEE ALSO**

Buddhism in America: Soka Gakkai International–USA;  
 Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion

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From *Songs for America: Poems by Daisaku Ikeda*, World Tribune Press, 2000. Permission granted by World Tribune Press.

Klezomatics, lyrics from “Ale Brider/We’re All Brothers,”  
on *Shvaygen=Toyt* (Silence Equals Death),  
Piranha Records (1988)

*The Klezomatics, a Klezmer revival band from New York City’s East Village, have struck a popular chord with their return to Jewish roots music. They are one example of a larger cultural revival within Jewish communities around the country, and around the world. Fueled in part by renewed interest in, and identification with, Yiddish culture, which was generally moribund by the 1950s, these musical pioneers bring elements of jazz, rock, and folk to their recordings and performances and have found artistic inspiration from a near-forgotten musical genre.*

Un mir zaynen ale brider  
Un mir zingen freylekhe lider.  
Un mir halt’n zikh in eynem  
Azelkhes iz nito bay keynem

Un mir zaynen ale eynik  
Tsi mir zaynen fil tsi veynik.  
Un mir libn zikh dokh ale  
Vi a khosn mit a kale.

Un mir zaynen ale shvester  
Azoy vi Rokhl, Rus un Ester.  
Un mir zaynen ale freylekh  
Vi Yoynoson un Dovid hameylekh.

We are all brothers and sing happy songs.  
We stick together like nobody else,  
Whether we’re few or many. We love each other  
like groom and bride.

**SEE ALSO**

Judaism in America: Jewishness/Judaism in America

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The Klezomatics, lyrics from “Ale Brider/We’re All brothers,” on *Shvaygen=Toyt* (Silence Equals Death), Piranha Records, 1988.

Daisaku Ikeda, *Buddhism Is the Clear Mirror That Reflects Our Lives*,  
delivered at the first SGI-USA women's division meeting,  
Soka University of America, Calabasas, California (February 27, 1990)

*Daisaku Ikeda is a Buddhist author, thinker, and educator who serves as president of Soka Gakkai International (SGI), an organization that promotes individual happiness by supporting world peace, multiculturalism, and education through Buddhist institutions. In his 1990 speech "Buddhism Is the Clear Mirror That Reflects Our Lives," Ikeda explains that Buddhist practice allows people to see their lives as they really are: inter-related and interdependent upon all other life. According to Ikeda, this insight has the power to transform individuals and thus to serve as the concrete means through which the universal value of human dignity will be realized.*

I sincerely thank all of you for gathering here from distant places throughout the United States. My sole desire for women's division members is that they become the happiest people in the world.

What is the purpose of life? It is happiness. There are two kinds of happiness, however: relative and absolute. Relative happiness comes in a wide variety of forms. The purpose of Buddhism is to attain Buddhahood, which in modern terms could be understood as realizing absolute happiness—a state of happiness that can never be destroyed or defeated.

Nichiren Daishonin states in the Gosho, "There is no true happiness for human beings other than chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo" (WND, 681). So long as you maintain strong faith, resolutely chanting daimoku to the Gohonzon no matter what happens, then without fail you will be able to lead a life of complete fulfillment. This accords with the principle that earthly desires are enlightenment.

True happiness lies only in establishing such a supreme state of life. In so doing, you can change all sufferings into causes for joy and contentment and live with composure and jubilation.

Our organization exists so that each member can attain absolute happiness. Let me reiterate that the objective of this organization is your happiness.

Society and daily life are the "great Earth" for our faith and practice of the True Law. The steady development of world peace can be ensured only when, based on faith, we carefully attend to the affairs of society, our daily lives and our families. "Faith manifests itself in daily life"—this is our eternal guideline.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce to you some treasures in the collection of Soka University. This is my way of commemorating today's women's division meeting and showing my appreciation to you for your attendance. Afterward, please take a moment to look them over. Included are letters by George Washington and other American presidents, on display with their portraits; a collection of letters that Napoleon Bonaparte wrote just before his death and a letter in which he appealed for religious freedom in Italy; an autographed first edition of Victor Hugo's anthology of poems *Les Châtiments* (1853), along with some of Hugo's letters; a letter from British historian Arnold J. Toynbee to former U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles appealing for peace in Pakistan; a letter in which the German composer Richard Wagner discusses the performance of his opera *Tannhauser* (1845); a state document signed by John Hancock, American Revolutionary leader; and a letter written by Bartolomeo Vanzetti, dated immediately before his execution (1927) on trumped-up charges, which contains a plea for a retrial. If executed, he wrote, the court would be guilty of murder. We can hear the cry of his soul for liberation.

These articles represent a precious, historic legacy. As part of the SGI's efforts to promote peace, culture and education, we are preserving and introducing these and other artifacts to the public. For the same purpose, we are establishing the *Maison Littéraire de Victor Hugo* (Victor Hugo Literature Hall) in France. I am convinced that these activities will be of great significance for the future of humanity.



### *The Mirror That Perfectly Reflects Our Lives*

I hope that all of you will be cultured and graceful. Intelligent and kind people are beautiful. They inspire trust and a sense of reassurance in those around them. As you continue to deepen your faith in Buddhism, you can broaden your sphere of knowledge.

Without wisdom and sagacity, leaders cannot fulfill their mission, that is, convince others of the power of this Buddhism and help them attain true happiness. In this sense, I would like to speak about the correct attitude in faith through the analogy of mirrors.

A Japanese proverb has it that the mirror is a woman's soul. It is said that just as warriors will never part with their swords, women will never part with their mirrors. There would seem to be some truth to this saying, in that mirrors are prized by women the world over.

In Buddhism, the mirror is used to explain various doctrines. In one place, Nichiren Daishonin states, "There are profound teachings transmitted secretly with regard to mirrors" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 724). Another Gosho states: "A bronze mirror may reflect the body but not the mind. The mirror of the Lotus Sutra reflects not only our physical form but our inner being as well. Furthermore, the sutra mirrors, with complete clarity, one's past karma and its future effect" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1521).

Mirrors reflect our outward form. The mirror of Buddhism, however, reveals the intangible aspect of our lives. Mirrors, which function by virtue of the laws of light and reflection, are a product of human wisdom. On the other hand, the Gohonzon, based on the Law of the universe and life itself, is the culmination of the Buddha's wisdom and makes it possible for us to attain Buddhahood by providing us with a means of perceiving the true aspect of our life. Just as a mirror is indispensable for putting your face and hair in order, you need a mirror that reveals the depths of your life if you are to lead a happier and more beautiful existence.

Incidentally, as indicated in the Daishonin's reference to a bronze mirror in the above passage, mirrors in ancient times were made of polished metal alloys such as bronze, nickel and steel. The oldest metallic mirrors to be unearthed were found in China and Egypt. Older still are mirrors made of polished stone surfaces and those that used water. Suffice it to say that the history of mirrors is as old as that of the hu-

man race. It is perhaps an inborn human instinct to want to look at one's face.

These ancient mirrors, unlike today's mirrors that are made of glass, could only produce somewhat blurred reflections of images. Consequently, the first glance in a glass mirror caused a great sensation. The first time the Japanese encountered a glass mirror was in 1551. Francis Xavier is credited with having brought one with him when he came to do missionary work in Japan.

It was not until the eighteenth century, however, that the average Japanese became acquainted with this kind of mirror. Perhaps because it performed its function all too well, causing people to do nothing but gaze in the mirror all day long, the glass mirror came to be known as the "vanity mirror" among the people of the day. Many prints from this era depict Japanese beauties gazing into mirrors. Still, it was not until the latter half of the nineteenth century that glass mirrors came into wide use among the general populace.

### *Polish the Mirror of Your Life*

Bronze mirrors not only reflected poorly but also tarnished very quickly. Therefore, unless they were polished regularly, they became unusable. This kind of mirror was popular in the time the Daishonin lived.

In the Gosho "On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime," Nichiren Daishonin writes: "This is similar to a tarnished mirror that will shine like a jewel when polished. A mind now clouded by the illusions of the innate darkness of life is like a tarnished mirror, but when polished, it is sure to become like a clear mirror, reflecting the essential nature of phenomena and the true aspect of reality" (WND, 4). In this well-known passage, the Daishonin draws parallels between the tradition of mirror-polishing and the process of attaining Buddhahood.

Originally, every person's life is a brilliantly shining mirror. Differences arise depending on whether one polishes this mirror. A polished mirror is the Buddha's life, whereas a tarnished mirror is that of a common mortal. Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is what polishes our life. Not only do we undertake this practice ourselves, we also endeavor to teach others about the Mystic Law so that the mirror of their lives shines brightly, too. Thus it can be said that we are masters of the art of polishing the mirror of life.

Even though people may make up their faces, they

tend to neglect to polish their lives. While they quickly wash off a stain from their face, they remain unconcerned about stains in their lives.

### ***The Tragedy of Dorian Gray***

Oscar Wilde (1856–1900) wrote a novel titled *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, whose protagonist, a youth named Dorian Gray, is so handsome that he is called a “young Adonis.” An artist who wished to preserve his beauty for eternity painted Dorian’s portrait. It was a brilliant work, an embodiment of Dorian’s youthfulness and beauty. Then something incredible occurred as Dorian was gradually tempted by a friend into a life of hedonism and immorality: His beauty did not fade. Although he advanced in years, he remained as youthful and radiant as ever. Strangely, however, the portrait began to turn ugly and lusterless, reflecting the condition of Dorian’s life.

Making sport of a young woman’s affections, Dorian drives her to commit suicide. At that time the face of the portrait takes on a wicked, savage and frightening expression. Dorian is filled with horror. This portrait of his soul would remain for aeons in this ugly form. Even if he died, the portrait would continue to tell the truth eloquently.

Dorian decides to obliterate the portrait, believing that if only he could do away with it, he could part with his past and be free. So he plunges a knife into the painting. At that moment, hearing screams, his neighbors rush over to find a portrait of the handsome, young Dorian and, collapsed before it, an aged, repulsive-looking man, Dorian, with a knife sticking in his chest.

The portrait had expressed the semblance of his existence, the face of his soul, into which the effects of his actions were etched without the slightest omission.

Though cosmetics can be applied to the face, one cannot gloss over the face of his soul. The Law of cause and effect functioning in the depths of life is strict and impartial.

Buddhism teaches that unseen virtue brings about visible reward. In the world of Buddhism, one never fails to receive an effect for his actions—whether for good or bad; therefore, it is meaningless to be two-faced or to try to put on airs.

The face of the soul that is carved out by the good and evil causes one makes is to an extent reflected in one’s appearance. There is also a saying, “The face is

the mirror of the mind.” It is at the moment of death, however, that one’s past causes show most plainly in one’s appearance. Just as Dorian in the end revealed his own inner ugliness, so the face of one’s life is fully expressed at the time of one’s death. At that time, there is no way to conceal the truth of your soul. We carry out our Buddhist practice now so that we will not have to experience any regret or torment on our deathbed.

### ***Perceive the Buddha Nature Inherent in Your Life***

Just as you look into a mirror when you make up your face, to beautify the face of the soul, you need a mirror that reflects the depths of your life. This mirror is none other than the Gohonzon of “observing one’s mind,” or more precisely, observing one’s life. Nichiren Daishonin explains what it means to observe one’s life in the Goshō “The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind,” “Only when we look into a clear mirror do we see, for the first time, that we are endowed with all six sense organs” (WND, 356).

Similarly, observing one’s life means to perceive that one’s life contains the Ten Worlds and, in particular, the world of Buddhahood. It was to enable people to do this that Nichiren Daishonin bestowed the Gohonzon of “observing one’s mind” upon all humankind. In his exegesis on “The True Object of Worship,” Nichikan, the twenty-sixth high priest of Nichiren Shoshu, states, “The true object of worship can be compared to a wonderful mirror.”

Nichiren Daishonin states in “The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings,” “The five characters of Myōhō-enge-kyō mirror all things without a single exception.” The Gohonzon is the clearest of all mirrors that reflects the entire universe exactly as it is. When you chant to the Gohonzon, you can perceive the true aspect of your life and tap the inexhaustible life force of Buddhahood.

Incidentally, the glass mirrors that we have today are said to have been invented in Venice, Italy. Sources differ as to exactly when, but their appearance is traced as far back as 1279. That was also the year when Nichiren Daishonin inscribed the Dai-Gohonzon, the eternal great “mirror” reflecting the true aspect of all phenomena, for the benefit of all humanity.

At the time of the glass mirror’s invention, the production technique was said to have been kept a

closely guarded secret. To prevent knowledge of the technology from spreading, mirror glass craftsmen were confined to an island. Before long, however, France and other countries learned how to produce mirrors, and today mirrors made of glass have completely replaced earlier types.

These events might be construed as the kosen-rufu of the glass mirror. Similarly, for a long time the mirror of the Gohonzon, the source of profound beauty and happiness, was known to very few people. We are now promoting the movement to spread it far and wide.

The Gohonzon is a clear mirror. It perfectly reveals our state of faith and projects this out into the universe. This demonstrates the principle of “three thousand realms in a single moment of life.”

### ***One's Mind of Faith Is Most Important***

In a letter to his disciple Abutsubo on Sado Island, Nichiren Daishonin wrote: “You may think you offered gifts to the treasure tower of the Thus Come One Many Treasures, but that is not so. You offered them to yourself” (WND, 299). Worshipping the Gohonzon graces and glorifies the treasure tower of your own life.

When people worship the Gohonzon, all Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the entire universe immediately respond to their prayers by lending their protection. If they slander the Gohonzon, the response will be exactly the opposite.

For this reason, one's mind of faith is extremely important. The mind of faith has a subtle and far-reaching influence.

There may be times, for instance, when you feel reluctant to do gongyo or take part in activities. That state of mind is precisely reflected on the entire universe, as if on the surface of a clear mirror. The heavenly deities will then also feel reluctant to play their part, and they will naturally fail to exert their full power of protection.

On the other hand, when you joyfully do gongyo and carry out activities with the determination to accumulate more good fortune in your life, the heavenly deities will be delighted and will valiantly perform their duty. If you must take some action anyway, it is to your advantage that you do so spontaneously and with a feeling of joy. If you practice reluctantly with a sense that it's a waste of time, disbelief

and complaints will erode your good fortune. If you continue to practice in this way, you will not experience remarkable benefits, and this will only serve to further convince you that your practice is in vain. This is a vicious circle.

If you practice faith while doubting its effects, you will get results that are, at best, unsatisfactory. This is the reflection of your own weak faith on the mirror of the cosmos.

On the other hand, when you stand up with strong confidence, you will accrue limitless blessings. While controlling your mind, which is at once both extremely subtle and solemnly profound, you should strive to elevate your faith with freshness and vigor. When you do so, both your life and your surroundings will open wide before you, and every action you take will become a source of benefit. Understanding the subtle workings of one's mind is the key to faith and to attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime.

There is a Russian proverb that says, “It is no use to blame the looking glass if your face is awry.” Likewise, your happiness or unhappiness is entirely the reflection of the balance of good and bad causes accumulated in your life. You cannot blame others for your misfortunes. In the world of faith, it is necessary to realize this all the more clearly.

### ***People Who Do Not Know about Mirrors***

A classic Japanese comedy tells the following story: Once there was a country village where no one had a mirror. In those days mirrors were priceless. A man, returning from his trip to the capital, handed his wife a mirror as a souvenir. That was the first time for her to see a mirror. Looking into it, she exclaimed: “Who on earth is this woman? You must've brought a girl back with you from the capital.” And so began a big fight.

Though this story is fictitious, many people become angry or grieve over phenomena that are actually nothing but the reflection of their own lives—their state of mind and the causes that they have created. Like the wife in the story who exclaims, “Who on earth is this woman?” they do not realize the folly of their ways.

Because they are ignorant of Buddhism's mirror of life, such people cannot see themselves as they truly are. This being the case, they cannot guide others along the correct path of life, nor can they discern the true nature of occurrences in society.

**Mutual Respect**

Human relations also function as a kind of mirror. Nichiren Daishonin states in “The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings”: “When Bodhisattva Never Disparaging bowed in reverence to the four categories of people, the Buddha nature inherent in the lives of these arrogant people bowed back to him. This is the same as how, when one bows facing a mirror, the reflected image bows back” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 769).

Here, the Daishonin reveals the fundamental spirit that we should have in propagating the Mystic Law. Propagation is an act to be conducted with the utmost respect for other people and out of sincere reverence for the Buddha nature inherent in their lives. Therefore, we should strictly observe courtesy and good common sense.

With the thought that we are addressing a person’s Buddha nature, we should politely and calmly carry out a dialogue—sometimes, depending on the situation, mercifully correcting that person with fatherly strictness. In the course of such human interaction, the Buddha nature in that person, reflecting our own sincerity, will bow to us in return.

When we cherish that person with the same profound reverence as we would the Buddha, the Buddha nature in his or her life functions to protect us. On the other hand, if we belittle or regard that person with contempt, as though gazing into our own image reflected in a mirror, we will be disparaged in return.

In the inner realm of life, cause and effect occur simultaneously. With the passage of time, this causal relationship becomes manifest in the phenomenal world of daily life.

In general, the people around us reflect our state of life. Our personal preferences, for example, are mirrored in their attitudes. This is especially clear from the viewpoint of Buddhism, which elucidates the workings of cause and effect as if in a spotless mirror.

To the extent that you praise, respect, protect and care for SGI-USA members, who are all children of the Buddha, you will in turn be protected by the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions and by all heavenly deities. If, on the other hand, you are arrogant or condescending toward members, you will be scolded by the Buddhas and others in like measure. Leaders, in particular, should be clear on this point and take it deeply to heart.

We are a gathering of the Buddha’s children.

Therefore, if we respect one another, our good fortune will multiply infinitely, like an image reflected back and forth among mirrors. A person who practices alone cannot experience this tremendous multiplication of benefit.

In short, the environment that you find yourself in, whether favorable or not, is the product of your own life. Most people, however, fail to understand this and tend to blame others for their troubles. The *Gosho* reads: “These people do not recognize their own belligerence but instead think that I, Nichiren, am belligerent. They are like a jealous woman who glares with furious eyes at a courtesan and, unaware of her own loathsome expression, complains that the courtesan’s gaze is frightening” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1450). Nichiren Daishonin explains human psychology in such a clear and easy-to-understand manner.

There are people who, out of malice, have criticized and sought to oppress us who are the Daishonin’s disciples. But, reflected in the mirror of the world of the True Law, such people see only their own faults, ambitions and greed and therefore slander their own reflections. To a person who is possessed by the lust for power, even the most selfless, benevolent actions of others will appear as cunning moves undertaken to gain power. Similarly, to a person who has a strong desire for fame, actions based on conviction and consideration will be seen as publicity stunts. Those who have become slaves of money simply cannot believe that there are people in the world who are strangers to the desire for wealth.

In contrast, an unusually kind and good-natured person will tend to believe that all others are the same. To a greater or lesser extent, all people tend to see their own reflection in others.

In the SGI-USA there are a great number of people who are full of good will and intentions. In a sense, some might be even too good-natured and trusting, to the extent that I fear deceitful people could mislead them.

**Say What Must Be Said**

In *Le Père Goriot*, the French author Balzac (1799–1850) writes, “Whatever evil you hear of society, believe it. . . .” So full of evil was the world that he perceived. He adds: “And then you will find out what the world is, a gathering of dupes and rogues. Be of neither party.”

We must gain decisive victory over the harsh realities of society and lead a correct and vibrant life. This is the purpose of our faith. We have to become wise and strong.

Also, in the organization for kosen-rufu, we have to clearly say what must be said. The purpose of Buddhism is not to produce dupes who blindly follow their leaders. Rather, it is to produce people of wisdom who can judge right or wrong on their own in the clear mirror of Buddhism.

I hope that you, women's division members, learn the correct way to practice Buddhism so that, in the event that a leader or a man does something that goes against reason, you will be able to clearly point out the error and identify the correct path to follow. Nichiren Daishonin compares men to an arrow and women to the bow. An arrow flies in the direction that the bow points it.

I would like to tell you that when the members of the women's division freely devote themselves to activities and provide a confident and strong lead for men, that will mark the dawn of the "new SGI-USA."

To commemorate today's training session, I would like to dedicate the following poem to the SGI-USA women's division:

Let the flowers of the Law  
Bloom with beauty and purity  
Throughout this land of America.

I close my speech by offering my sincere prayers for the happiness of you and your families and for the further development of the SGI-USA.

**SEE ALSO**

Asian American Religious Communities: Japanese American Religious Communities; Buddhism in America: Soka Gakkai International-USA

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Excerpt from Daisaku Ikeda, *Buddhism Is the Clear Mirror That Reflects Our Lives*, World Tribune Press, 1990.

Pat Robertson,  
excerpt from *The New World Order* (1991)

*Christian Coalition founder Pat Robertson penned The New World Order in response to a speech by President George Bush wherein Bush called for a “new world order” following the end of the Cold War. Robertson attempts to convince his conservative evangelical Christian followers that this new world order poses a greater threat to traditional American values than the Soviet Union had before its fall. Composed of a “single strand” uniting the White House with the Council on Foreign Relations with the United Nations and the “extreme New Agers,” the new world order would require Americans to surrender their rights, property, and religion to a world government that would eliminate national sovereignty, require the redistribution of wealth, and support a “New Age religion of humanity.”*

Harman is just one of the thousands of “counselors” being invited by training directors into U.S. companies to teach employee seminars on principles of creativity, imagination, and intuition—concepts derived exclusively from occultic practices that promise to enhance both the practical and the spiritual powers of its practitioners.

As with Fritjof Capra, whom I mentioned in the last chapter, such self-styled corporate gurus are trying to bring about a mystical fusion of science and spirituality—to heal the fragmentation of the human soul, in their own terms—which is very much in keeping with the growing belief that the new world order will bring about both a spiritual and a political unity.

In *The Crime of World Power*, Richard A. Aliano writes, “Ideology may be considered merely as the rationalization of self-interest.” It has been used as such in times past in order to motivate, inspire, and threaten, but he says that an ideology—whether it is that of a capitalist, socialist, or spiritual regime—is always presented by its proponents as truth and as the ultimate expression of reality.

Seemingly, that is the situation we are confronted with today. Presented as truth and reality, the ideology of a new world order being offered is, in fact, a

rationalization for some form of political or spiritual self-interest and a means of achieving a particular end.

As I review the literature of the New Age and examine the self-evident trends within it, I am continually aware of three particular ends that surface again and again:

1. The subversion and denial of divine revelation
2. The deification of the self
3. The submersion of the individual personality within a larger whole

### The Daring Hypothesis

If you are a religious skeptic, I invite you to suspend your judgment for a moment and explore a challenging concept with me. If you are a Christian or a Jew, I invite you to think about this scenario. Suppose that a powerful spiritual being, a supernatural force such as Satan, a being who is contrary to God and opposed to whatever He does, wanted to overthrow the kingdom of God and to install himself in the seat of power. What would be his agenda? How would he go about implementing such a plan?

First, he would have to cast doubts on God’s authority and righteousness. He would have to subvert and undermine God’s work among men and His guiding principles whenever and wherever possible. In some cases he could do this himself, but to be fully effective in a world such as ours he would need surrogates, agents, and representatives to carry out this mission among his potential subjects—the nearly 5 billion inhabitants of this planet.

Very likely he would use spiritual beings for this duty, and they could be very effective since they would be both unseen and sinister. But to reach effectively into human society he would have to recruit tens of thousands of willing servants among the sons of men to represent him to other men, not as an evil

or sinister force, but as an enticing, wise, loving, and powerful force.

Instead of a source of hate and deception, he would want to persuade men and women that his motives were just, that he had been deprived of his rightful place of authority. He would need to show how mankind is, even now, struggling from darkness toward the light that only he can offer. That would, seemingly, be his natural first objective.

Second, he would no doubt feel that he could easily attract followers with the promise that they could share his kingdom. They, too, would be as gods, have power and dominion, rule the air, the sea, the sky, and hold eternity within their grasp. Poetic metaphors could barely grasp the grandness of such a vision, and the human ego could hardly bear the images of joy such a promise would hold out.

But if his first motive were truly subversion—to overthrow the God of the universe and supplant His authority—not all his methods would necessarily be clean and pure. He would have to do some dark and underhanded things from time to time—which is just common sense; after all, all is fair in love and war, isn't it?—so in some cases he would have to make people understand that dark is light and light is dark. In other words, he would need to create an environment in which any subversive and destructive act would be appropriate and irrefragable.

Third, if his ambition were to rise to godship and to wield divine authority in the world, he could not really share his power. To divide his kingdom would be to take away a part of his glory and dominion, so he would quickly need to submerge this divinity he had promised his subjects in some sort of oversoul or some other cosmic disguise which, in reality, is powerless and noncompetitive with him.

As in the objective stated above, he would also have to convince his would-be followers that the loss of their authority and identity would be the beginning of their godlike powers. Jesus Christ once said (under quite different circumstances) that he who would find his life must lose it. Surely the aspiring sovereign could apply Christ's words for his own purposes.

It is not hard to see that this very simple plan, if applied patiently and consistently over time, could be very effective. Were it not for the power of the authentic God and His followers among men, the job

would be much easier. The institutions of the church, evangelical Christians (who actually believe what they profess), and any other recognition of God would be obstructions to his plan. But knowing the weak character of man and mankind's tendency to bend to persistent pressure, this supernatural interloper could surely have his way with the world over time.

### The Grand Design

It is as if a giant plan is unfolding, everything perfectly on cue. Europe sets the date for its union. Communism collapses. A hugely popular war is fought in the Middle East. The United Nations is rescued from scorn by an easily swayed public. A new world order is announced. Christianity has been battered in the public arena, and New Age religions are in place in the schools and corporations, and among the elite. Then a financial collapse accelerates the move toward a world money system.

The United States cannot afford defense, so it turns its defense requirements over to the United Nations, along with its sovereignty. The United Nations severely limits property rights and clamps down on all Christian evangelism and Christian distinctives under the Declaration of the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religious Belief already adopted by the General Assembly on November 25, 1981.

Then the New Age religion of humanity becomes official, and the new world order leaders embrace it. Then they elect a world president with plenary powers who is totally given to the religion of humanity.

Forty-five years ago such a scenario would have been unthinkable—but the unthinkable is happening. On July 26, 1991, Haynes Johnson wrote a piece in the *Washington Post* reporting a poll which stated "59 percent of the public believes that United Nations resolutions 'should rule over the actions and laws of individual countries, including the United States.'"

He also stated, "They want the United Nations, not the United States, to take the lead in solving international conflicts . . . as head of an international combat force that wages war." This poll may have been rigged to further condition the public toward globalism. But assuming it is accurate, we may presume that

the Persian Gulf War has proved to be an enormous success for the globalists in creating a groundswell reversal of public opinion against the interests of this country.

In earlier chapters, we have traced the infiltration of Continental Freemasonry by the new world philosophy of the Order of the Illuminati, and its subsequent role in the French Revolution. We then were able to find clear documentation that the occultic-oriented secret societies claiming descent from Illuminism and the French Revolution played a seminal role in the thinking of Marx and Lenin.

In fact, one historian has asserted that wealthy and influential Europeans with direct roots to Illuminism operated a very secret society out of Geneva, which in fact controlled the Bolshevik movement. We also know that Lord Milner of the British Round Table and Jacob Schiff, of Federal Reserve Board creator Paul Warburg's banking firm, gave the essential seed money to finance the Russian Revolution.

But where is the link between the Continental Illuminati occultic influences on communism and British and American financial support of the same cause? Let's continue.

### The Masonic Connection

We do not know whether such a tie does exist; there is not presently any known direct evidence to support it. However, one magazine source, whose data have not been verified, indicated that all of the French membership on the Trilateral Commission were members of French Freemasonry. This may just be a coincidence, or it may mean that prominent Frenchmen are also Masons, or it may actually be the missing link tying these sordid elements together.

In any event, this book would be incomplete without a look at the impact of Freemasonry on the current thought processes moving toward a new world. To quote from the *Encyclopedia Britannica*:

Having begun in medieval times as an association of craftsmen, hence its name—Freemasonry has been since the eighteenth century a speculative system. It admits adherents of all faiths, claiming to be based upon those fundamentals of religion held in common by all men . . . it is secret in so far as it has rituals and

other matters which those admitted take an oath never to divulge.

But then the encyclopedist goes on to say:

Since 1738 the Roman Catholic Church repeatedly has declared those of its faithful who join the fraternity to be guilty of grave sin and therefore excommunicated; the chief reason for this is that the church holds that the beliefs of Freemasonry constitute a deistic or pagan religion.

It is obvious from the teachings of Freemasonry that its doctrines are not Christian but indeed track identically with the syncretism of the so-called New Age religions of today. I think it is especially interesting that one of the official publications of American Masons was called until 1990 *The New Age*.

The power of the Masonic Order was extraordinary, and in England it quickly spread among the highest classes. Lord Alexander, General Alexander Hamilton, Quartermaster General Robert Moray, the Earl of Erroll, Lord Pittsigo, and the Duke of Richmond were members in the 1600s. The aristocracy completely took over the leadership. According to the *Britannica*:

From 1737 to 1907 about sixteen English princes of royal blood joined the order. The list of past grand masters included eight princes who later became monarchs: George IV, Edward VII, Edward VIII and George VI of England; Oscar II and Gustav V of Sweden; and Frederick VIII and Christian X of Denmark.

With this incredible array of royal power associated with Freemasonry, can we believe it possible that the powerful Cecil Rhodes and his secret society did not have some involvement with the Freemasons of England or those on the Continent?

### Contrasting Views

In the United States we know the various Masonic lodges as being composed of people who are engaged in a number of projects for community betterment. In my community, the Shriners sponsor the Oyster Bowl,



which pits collegiate football teams in a contest to raise money for crippled children. Their slogan, "Strong legs will run, that weak legs may walk," has enormous appeal. Their benevolent traditions are commendable.

Both George Washington and Benjamin Franklin were Masons. If there is a dark side to Freemasonry, and there is, it should be carefully pointed out that the average American Mason—especially those in the lower orders—is not in any way aware of it. If he were a student of the Bible, he would realize that the Masonic rituals are neither biblical nor Christian, but most Americans know very little about the Bible. To them Freemasonry is a family-centered, fraternal, benevolent organization.

Earlier we pointed out that Adam Weishaupt (the founder of the Order of the Illuminati) had determined to infiltrate the Continental branch of Freemasonry. Weishaupt had been indoctrinated into Egyptian occultism in 1771 by a merchant of unknown origin named Kolmer, who had been seeking European converts. It was said that for five years Weishaupt formulated a plan by which all occultic systems could be reduced to a single powerful organization. He launched the Order of the Illuminati just two months prior to the drafting of the American colonies' Declaration of Independence.

Apparently Weishaupt tried assiduously to promote the concept that the Illuminati, whose offices in Bavaria had been raided and closed down, were therefore merely a transitory phenomenon. But Illuminism was not transitory, and Weishaupt's principles, his disciples, and his influence continue to resurface to this day.

Virtually every single proponent of a complete new world order repeats Weishaupt's concepts, virtually word for word. Here are his revolutionary, destructive goals:

1. Abolition of monarchies and all ordered governments
2. Abolition of private property and inheritances
3. Abolition of patriotism and nationalism
4. Abolition of family life and the institution of marriage, and the establishment of communal education for children
5. Abolition of all religion

In 1921, English historian Nesta Webster, author of *World Revolution*, wrote,

This is the precise language of internationalists today, and it is, of course, easy to point out the evils of exaggerated patriotism. But it will not be found that the man who loves his country is less able to respect foreign patriots any more than the man who loves his family is a worse neighbor than one who cares little for wife and children.

Weishaupt's goal was not just the destruction of monarchy, but the destruction of society. In July 1782, Continental Freemasonry was infiltrated and captured by what Weishaupt called Illuminated Freemasonry. I have read a report by a former Mason, Comte de Virieu, who related his shock at the infiltration of Freemasonry in these words:

Tragic secrets. I will not confide them to you. I can only tell you that all this is very much more serious than you think. The conspiracy which is being woven is so well thought out that it will be impossible for the Monarchy and the Church to escape it.

### **The Missing Link?**

That same year, 1782, the headquarters of Illuminated Freemasonry moved to Frankfurt, a center controlled by the Rothschild family. It is reported that in Frankfurt, Jews for the first time were admitted to the order of Freemasons. If indeed members of the Rothschild family or their close associates were polluted by the occultism of Weishaupt's Illuminated Freemasonry, we may have discovered the link between the occult and the world of high finance. Remember, the Rothschilds financed Cecil Rhodes in Africa; Lord Rothschild was a member of the inner circle of Rhodes's English Round Tables; and Paul Warburg, architect of the Federal Reserve System, was a Rothschild agent.

New money suddenly poured into the Frankfurt lodge, and from there a well-funded plan for world revolution was carried forth. During a Masonic congress in 1786, the deaths of both Louis XVI of France and Gustavus III of Sweden were decreed.

William Still, in his book on the new world order,

indicates that the Illuminati, with their Masonic front organization, were actually a secret society within a secret society. In 1798, Professor John Robison, a highly respected British historian and longtime Mason, wrote in his *Proofs of a Conspiracy*:

I have found that the covert secrecy of a Mason Lodge has been employed in every country for venting and propagating sentiments in religion and politics, that could not have been circulated in public without exposing the author to grave danger. I have observed these doctrines gradually diffusing and mixing with all the different systems of Free Masonry till, at last, An Association Has Been Formed for the Express Purpose of Rooting Out All of the Religious Establishments, and Overturning All the Existing Governments of Europe.

The publishers of Robison's book commented, "A conspiracy conceived not by Masons as Masons, but by evil men using Freemasonry as a vehicle for their own purposes."

Weishaupt enticed people into Illuminated Freemasonry with promises of influence, power, and worldly success. But he also ensured that the members were so compromised by personal revelations about themselves or even the commission of crimes, that denying the order could bring disgrace or even prison. He, and the Masons, had lower orders of rank where the initiates were either lied to or kept in the dark about further secrets. But his biggest appeal was to raw, naked power. He wrote,

The pupils are convinced that the Order will rule the world. Every member therefore becomes a ruler. We all think of ourselves as qualified to rule. It is therefore an alluring thought both to good and bad men. Therefore the Order will spread.

Perhaps more than anything, the following candid admission by Weishaupt can explain the secret of the Illuminati and all those who are seeking world power:

Do you realize sufficiently what it means to rule—to rule in a secret society? Not only over the lesser or more important of the populace, but over the best men, over men of all ranks, nations, and religions, to

rule without external force, to unite them indissolubly, to breathe one spirit and soul into them, men distributed over all parts of the world.

Perhaps this statement answers the question I raised in the first section of this book: how could a concept like world order be kept alive and vital for two hundred years? If successive generations of men indeed bought into Weishaupt's occultic dream of power, they could indeed be willing (or obligated) to perpetuate it.

### To Gain the Whole World

Members of the Illuminati at the highest levels of the order were atheists and Satanists. To the public they professed a desire to make mankind "one good and happy family." They made every effort to conceal their true purposes by use of the name of Freemasonry. By every ruse imaginable, the Illuminists were able to attract to their numbers the rich and powerful of Europe, very possibly including Europe's most powerful bankers.

Illuminism reportedly had large wealth at its disposal. Its influence is clearly alive and powerful today in the doctrines of both the one-world communists and the one-world captains of wealth.

Before we leave the influence of Freemasonry on the quest for a New Age and new world order, we should examine the writings of Albert Pike, whose *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry* was first published in 1871 and subsequently republished in 1966. It was intended for use by the Thirty-Third Degree Masonic Councils. Pike probably was the most prominent expositor of the creed and doctrines of the Masons.

It should be understood that the Scottish Rite is not from Scotland. It was an American adaptation of the Rite of Perfection of the French Freemasons, which were in turn heavily influenced by Illuminated Freemasonry. Keep in mind that Weishaupt learned the Egyptian rites of the occult, so Egyptian symbolism plays a strong role in the Scottish (or French Perfection) Rite of Freemasonry.

Without comment, I will quote directly from the 1966 edition of the principles of the Scottish Rite by its leading expositor in America.

“Every Masonic temple is a temple of religion.” (p. 213)

“The First Masonic legislator . . . was Buddha.” (p. 277)

“Masonry, around whose altars the Christian, the Hebrew, the Muslim, the Brahmin, the followers of Confucius and Zoroaster, can assemble as brethren and unite in prayer to the one God who is above all the Baalim.” (p. 226)

“Everything good in nature comes from Osiris.” [the Egyptian sun God; the all-seeing eye is a Masonic representation of Osiris] (p. 476)

“Masonry . . . conceals its mysteries from all except Adepts and Sages, and uses false symbols to mislead those who deserve to be misled.” (pp. 104–5)

“Everything scientific and grand in the religious dreams of the Illuminati . . . is borrowed from the Kabalah; all Masonic associations owe to it their secrets and their symbols.” (p. 744)

“When the Mason learns that the key to the warrior on the block is the proper application of the dynamo of living power, he has learned the Mystery of his Craft. The seething energies of Lucifer are in his hands.”

*Manly Hall, Lost Keys of Freemasonry, p. 48*

“To you, Sovereign Grand Inspectors General, we say this, that you may repeat it to the Brethren of the 32nd, 31st, and 30th degrees—The Masonic Religion should be, by all of us initiates to the high degrees, maintained in the purity of the Luciferian Doctrine.

“Yes, Lucifer is God, and unfortunately Adonay is also God . . . Lucifer, God of Light and God of good is struggling for humanity against Adonay, the God of Darkness and Evil.”

*Albert Pike, Sovereign Pontiff of Universal Freemasonry, Instructions to the twenty-three Supreme Councils of the World, July 14, 1889*

To my mind, there is no more monstrous evil than to bring public-spirited, often churchgoing, men into an organization that looks like a fraternal lodge, then deliberately mislead them until they are solid members. Then move them up thirty degrees to the place where they are ready to learn that Satan is the good god

waiting to liberate mankind, and the Creator of the Universe (Yahweh, Elohim, Adonai) is, in their theology, the malicious prince of darkness.

It is my understanding that as part of the initiation for the Thirty-Second Degree, the candidate is told that Hiram, the builder of Solomon’s temple, was killed by three assassins. The candidate therefore must strike back at those assassins which are, courtesy of the Illuminati, the government, organized religion, and private property.

This particular ritual is not Egyptian but from the Hung society of China, based on the cult of Amitabha Buddha. The ceremony, which clearly resembles those of the Egyptian Book of the Dead, was apparently copied as well by the Freemasons. It involves not a builder named Hiram, but a group of Buddhist monks, all but five of whom were slain by three villains, one of whom was the Manchu Emperor Khang Hsi.

It is self-evident that Masonic beliefs and rituals flow from the occult. Beliefs from Egyptian mysticism, Chinese Buddhism, and the ancient mysteries of the Hebrew Kabalah have been resuscitated to infuse their doctrines. What a splendid training ground for a new world/New Age citizen!

The New Age religions, the beliefs of the Illuminati, and Illuminated Freemasonry all seem to move along parallel tracks with world communism and world finance. Their appeals vary somewhat, but essentially they are striving for the same very frightening vision.

Now that we have taken a closer look at these spiritual and mystical threads which intertwine to form the historic ideology of a new world order, it is time to take a more precise and in-depth look at what this new world will actually be like.

#### SEE ALSO

Protestantism in America; New Age; Popular Theodicies: Evil in the Twentieth Century; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Conservatism, Fundamentalism

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From Pat Robertson, *The New World Order*, copyright © 1991 by Pat Robertson. Used by permission of World Publishing Group.

Thomas Simmons, excerpt from  
*The Unseen Shore: Memories of a Christian Science Childhood* (1991)

*In the last decade of the nineteenth century, New Englander Mary Baker Eddy founded The Church of Christ, Scientist, which became the Mother Church for Christian Science Churches throughout the world. The church teaches that the material world is merely the emanation of our corrupt minds, that God is the only reality, and that sin, evil, and physical illness can only be overcome through spiritual healing that puts you in touch with the Divine reality. In The Unseen Shore, Simmons describes his upbringing in a Christian Science family, the physical and psychological pain caused when spiritual healing failed him, and the struggle that accompanied his ultimate rejection of the Christian Science faith.*

**I. Cruelty**

Our memories of painful experiences usually recede over time. This is generally a good thing: it allows us to get on with living, even as we try to make some sense of what caused the pain. Sometimes, though, the pain stays; only a slight tug at the threads of memory can call it back in its dark mundanity.

Now, almost without effort, I transport myself back to the child I was at four or five or six, writhing in pain on my bed. It is early evening. The dull ache that started to annoy my left ear several hours ago now blazes through my head. I cannot rest. Every motion is agony, but lying still is impossible. When I try to calm myself, I feel the pain boring into my brain like a fusillade of needles. The fever I have had for hours covers my body in sweat. I clench and unclench my hands, I kick my feet, I scream. From past experience I know this will go on all night, possibly longer. But time scarcely has any meaning: each second is consumed in fire.

Even now I can feel traces of this pain creeping up the side of my neck. It's a prickly, anxious feeling. What I had then, of course, was an ear infection. Many kids get them regularly. To be free of this infection, one goes to a doctor who prescribes amoxicillin, known as the bubble-gum medicine because it's often given to young children in a liquid form that tastes

just like bubble gum. The medicine gives quick relief; children usually take it for seven to ten days, except in more severe cases when a prophylactic dose may subsequently be prescribed. I know this because my own son Nathaniel periodically has ear infections. More than once in the middle of the night we have freed him from his pain by going to an urgent care clinic for bubble-gum medicine.

When I was a child, however, I was not freed from this pain. I did not go to a doctor. I did not receive amoxicillin or any other antibiotic. What I received instead was the extraordinary, elastic kindness of my mother, who stayed up with me all night when I was writhing in bed. As Christian Scientists we did not go to doctors. When I began to feel feverish and miserable, when my ear rang with pain and the flesh around it swelled angrily, my mother would telephone a Christian Science practitioner who would pray for her. (Because Mary Baker Eddy affirmed that a child's illness needed to be treated "mainly through the parent's thought," practitioners prayed primarily for the parents of a sick child rather than for the child.) Although instantaneous healings were part of the lore of Christian Science—I heard about them regularly in Sunday school—I do not remember being instantaneously healed of any ear infection, or even being healed at all. I remember hours and hours of unrelieved pain—and my mother, who did everything she could to comfort me.

Any parent knows the kind of sacrifice required to nurse a sick child through the night. Exhausted from worry and from lack of sleep, my mother would nevertheless hold me in her arms and sing hymns. In her small voice, with its keen, flat intonation, she would work her way through the seven original hymns of Mary Baker Eddy, and then move on to others I liked—Christmas carols, Easter songs, the doxology. And when my cries became too distracting, she would give up being the passive witness of God's healing power and do something on her own. She

would fill a heavy old woolen sock with salt, heat it in the oven, and place it over my ear. The heat from the sock would briefly ease my pain, and for a few minutes I would know a minor, delirious peace. How she reconciled this recourse to material aids—wool, salt, heat—with her belief in unadulterated spiritual healing was never clear to me. But fundamentally it makes perfect, simple sense. She was a mother. Her child was suffering. She understood her religion to preclude seeking medical relief for his suffering. Desperate, she used whatever tools—material and spiritual—were at hand.

Because my mother was an immensely kind woman, it seems grotesque to suggest that she was also cruel. Can a son ever say, really, that his mother is cruel? It sounds spiteful or blasphemous at first; on second thought it merely seems irrelevant. And yet, at least in this case, it is not irrelevant. The cruelty my mother inflicted on me, and on my brother and sister, was scarcely intentional, and the power of her love should have reassured us that we were precious in her

sight. From a very early age, however, we all knew that we were suffering unnecessarily, cruelly. “The opposite of cruelty is not kindness,” says the philosopher Philip Hallie. “The opposite of cruelty is freedom. The victim does not need the ultimately destructive gift of kindness when offered within the cruel relationship. He needs freedom from that relationship.” My mother’s kindness was genuine, but it did not change the cruelty. What we needed was freedom from a cruel relationship, but this was impossible. For behind my mother and father stood the church and its parental God, which enchained us with its freedom.

**SEE ALSO**

New Religious Traditions; Christian Science; Generations: The Family

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# Religious Freedom Restoration Act, United States Congress (1993)

*Passed in the wake of the Supreme Court's controversial Oregon v. Smith decision, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) represented Congress's attempt to protect religious freedom when the courts fail to do so. Under RFRA, governments at the federal, state, and local levels could substantially burden a person's religious exercise only if that government demonstrated a "compelling interest" and used "the least restrictive means" to further that interest. In City of Boerne, Texas v. Flores, the Supreme Court countered by declaring RFRA unconstitutional based on the grounds that in passing it, Congress had exceeded the scope of its powers.*

H.R.1308  
One Hundred Third Congress  
of the United States of America

At the First Session

Begun and held at the City of Washington on Tuesday, the fifth day of January, one thousand nine hundred and ninety-three.

An Act

To protect the free exercise of religion.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

## **Section 1. Short Title.**

This Act may be cited as the "Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993."

## **Sec. 2. Congressional Findings and Declaration of Purposes.**

(a) Findings

The Congress finds that

- (1) the framers of the Constitution, recognizing free exercise of religion as an unalienable right, secured its protection in the First Amendment to the Constitution;
- (2) laws "neutral" toward religion may burden

religious exercise as surely as laws intended to interfere with religious exercise;

- (3) governments should not substantially burden religious exercise without compelling justification;
- (4) in *Employment Division v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872 (1990) the Supreme Court virtually eliminated the requirement that the government justify burdens on religious exercise imposed by laws neutral toward religion; and
- (5) the compelling interest test as set forth in prior Federal court rulings is a workable test for striking sensible balances between religious liberty and competing prior governmental interests.

(b) Purposes

The purposes of this Act are

- (1) to restore the compelling interest test as set forth in *Sherbert v. Verner*, 374 U.S. 398 (1963) and *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 406 U.S. 205 (1972) and to guarantee its application in all cases where free exercise of religion is substantially burdened; and
- (2) to provide a claim or defense to persons whose religious exercise is substantially burdened by government.

## **Sec. 3. Free Exercise of Religion Protected.**

(a) In General

Government shall not substantially burden a person's exercise of religion even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability, except as provided in subsection (b).

(b) Exception

Government may substantially burden a person's exercise of religion only if it demonstrates that application of the burden to the person

- (1) is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest; and
- (2) is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling governmental interest.

(c) **Judicial Relief**

A person whose religious exercise has been burdened in violation of this section may assert that violation as a claim or defense in a judicial proceeding and obtain appropriate relief against a government. Standing to assert a claim or defense under this section shall be governed by the general rules of standing under article III of the Constitution.

**Sec. 4. Attorneys Fees.**

(a) **Judicial Proceedings**

Section 722 of the Revised Statutes (42 U.S.C. 1988) is amended by inserting “the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993,” before “or title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.”

(b) **Administrative Proceedings**

Section 504(b)(1)(C) of title 5, United States Code, is amended

- (1) by striking “and” at the end of clause (ii);
- (2) by striking the semicolon at the end of clause (iii) and inserting, “and”; and
- (3) by inserting “(iv) the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993;” after clause (iii).

**Sec. 5. Definitions.**

As used in this Act

- (1) the term “government” includes a branch, department, agency, instrumentality, and official (or other person acting under color of law) of the United States, a State, or a subdivision of a State;
- (2) the term “State” includes the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and each territory and possession of the United States;
- (3) the term “demonstrates” means meets the burdens of going forward with the evidence and of persuasion; and

- (4) the term “exercise of religion” means the exercise of religion under the First Amendment to the Constitution.

**Sec. 6. Applicability.**

(a) **In General**

This Act applies to all Federal and State law, and the implementation of that law, whether statutory or otherwise, and whether adopted before or after the enactment of this Act.

(b) **Rule of Construction**

Federal statutory law adopted after the date of the enactment of this Act is subject to this Act unless such law explicitly excludes such application by reference to this Act.

(c) **Religious Belief Unaffected**

Nothing in this Act shall be construed to authorize any government to burden any religious belief.

**Sec. 7. Establishment Clause Unaffected.**

Nothing in this Act shall be construed to affect, interpret, or in any way address that portion of the First Amendment prohibiting laws respecting the establishment of religion (referred to in this section as the “Establishment Clause”). Granting government funding, benefits, or exemptions, to the extent permissible under the Establishment Clause, shall not constitute a violation of this Act. As used in this section, the term “granting,” used with respect to government funding, benefits, or exemptions, does not include the denial of government funding, benefits, or exemptions.

*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

*Vice President of the United States and*

*President of the Senate.*

*Proved November 16, 1993.*

**SEE ALSO**

Native American Religions and Politics: Nationhood;  
Public Theologies and Political Culture: Law

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Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (Enrolled Bill [Sent to President]). The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm> (Dec. 22, 2002).

Jim Wallis, “Renewing the Heart of Faith:  
A Prophetic Convergence of the People of God,”  
in *Sojourners* (February 1993)

*Jim Wallis is a popular commentator on ethics, politics, and public life and an activist in the fight to overcome poverty. He is also cofounder of a Christian community called Sojourners, which is dedicated to promoting social justice, and is the editor of Sojourners magazine. In “Renewing the Heart of Faith” Wallis argues that because mainline churches face internal crisis, they cannot adequately address “the real issues of society.” However, a “new Christian community” composed of “kindred spirits” from all denominations is finding a common ground from which to live out a faith “that is both personal and social,” actively engaging the world while insisting on the critical relation between spiritual and social transformation.*

Reading the signs of the times becomes even more crucial in a period of transition—exactly where we find ourselves now. On so many fronts, the old assumptions and structures that have long governed are dying, while the new are still begging to be born. The moment calls for fresh visions and dreams that hold the promise of change.

This is especially apparent in the churches. Out of their institutional and spiritual crisis, a new theological convergence is occurring, with new ecumenical relationships being forged. The result is an emerging ground upon which diverse people from previously divided communities are finding a place to stand. Their standing and walking together opens up the possibility of significant and hopeful new configurations for the church’s future and its contribution to the wider society.

### The Crisis of Religious Institutions

Ironically, the institutions of established religion are in internal crisis just as the real issues of society are being revealed as essentially religious. I speak here of what I most know—the Christian churches—but those from other faith traditions tell a similar story. Virtu-

ally all the vertical structures of American Christianity are in great distress.

Mainline American Protestantism is in serious decline. Decreasing membership and budget cutbacks have caused denominational bureaucracies and seminary administrations to pull back into survival mode. Risk taking and faith ventures are out; cautious management is in.

There are pastors, teachers, denominational officials, and countless local church members who struggle valiantly for an authentic Christian faith. But they constantly face fearful bureaucracies, sterile curriculums, culturally captive congregations, confused theology, and empty spirituality.

American Catholicism is also in deep conflict. A rigid and repressive hierarchy, emanating from Rome is in direct confrontation with a grassroots hunger for change felt throughout the church. Some of the most creative impulses in American religious life today are found in the Catholic Church. Leading the way are communities of religious women, a strong number of progressive bishops and priests, and, of course, ordinary parish members who draw upon faith for personal and community survival. But the patriarchal hierarchies fear and do not understand the populist impulses that would reshape the church.

The evangelical movement in America has been taken over by its fundamentalist right wing. The Religious Right’s extreme nationalist and theocratic agenda bears little resemblance to the gospel. The culture war they have declared on everyone who disagrees with them is alarming to many Americans and genuinely embarrassing to more moderate evangelicals. Many people long for evangelical integrity to reassert itself.

Perhaps the greatest irony of U.S. church history is that a church created by racial marginalization has arguably made the most distinctive and significant



American contribution to world Christianity. The black churches provided a sanctuary for an oppressed people, created our most vibrant spirituality, became the base for the most important social movement in American history, and have served as a conscience to the nation. Yet America's black churches are also facing a dilemma. The failure to reach the alienated young of the nation's cities has created a crisis of confidence and leadership. After a shooting incident during a black church service in Boston, one African-American street pastor remarked, "If the church doesn't go out into the streets, the streets will come into the church." Newer racial and ethnic churches are struggling to force cultural and spiritual identity in a framework of white ecclesiastical control. And a small number of American Indian congregations wrestle with their denominations for respect for native traditions and spirituality.

### A Quiet Coming Together

In the midst of this institutional church crisis, a number of new and ecumenical connections are being made between kindred spirits from all the traditional constituencies. A new sense of community is not based on the old vertical structures, but in horizontal relationships and networks.

After years of very limited results from formal ecumenical dialogues, a vital ecumenism is emerging between people who have found one another while putting faith into action. A new Christian community has begun to emerge in urban ministry centers, homeless shelters, and soup kitchens; in street protests and jail cells; in racial and ecological battlegrounds; in prayer and Bible study groups; and in diverse experiments in community and spiritual renewal.

Our historical crisis, in all its varied manifestations, is bringing us together. Indeed, a *kairos* moment is creating a new faith-based community of response. Though most apparent around works of mercy and prophetic actions, activism is only its most public expression. Much biblical reflection, prayerful searching, theological conversation, and community building are going on. This shared activity and discernment holds promise for both transcending the old categories that have divided us for so long, and revitalizing the faith traditions from which we have come.

### The New Theological Convergence

There is, of course, no fixed creed or dogma that controls this emerging ecumenical community. But there are characteristics, concerns, and points of convergence that describe a new theological common ground.

It will be biblical without being fundamentalist. The practice of action and reflection with a biblical focus is now widespread. A new generation of biblical teachers and practitioners defies the old doctrinal categorizations of conservative and liberal that still dominate most of our theological schools. Now the primary concern is to discover the meaning of the Word of God in our present moment—to allow it to change our lives and our history.

It will be spiritual without being withdrawn from the world. There is a growing intuition, even outside the religious community, that our most important political and cultural problems have a spiritual core. A new politics and a new spirituality will go hand in hand; one is not really possible without the other. A consciousness of the spiritual resources required to sustain persons and communities in the struggle for social transformation is also growing. More and more people find themselves drinking at the wells of each other's spiritual traditions, and engaging in a deep and common quest to root their lives in God.

This theological convergence will be rooted in action, without losing its reflective power. We've learned both that faith without works is dead and that overwork can lead to idolatry and a loss of faith. Faith becomes alive in action; subsequent reflection on the action further clarifies faith's meaning. The life of faith is the inward and outward journey, contemplation and action.

It will be evangelical without being sectarian or self-righteous. By evangelical, I mean a centeredness on Jesus and his radical proclamation of the reign of God. The gospel values of the Sermon on the Mount are finding fresh meaning and application.

To be faithful to the way of Jesus does not require disrespecting other believers and non-believers. There are church-based activists who believe Christian obedience welcomes mutual collaboration in a pluralistic society, and who oppose any effort to translate the precepts of certain religious constituencies into theocratic control. At the same time, they insist

that focusing on the enormous implications of discipleship is absolutely essential, even at those “politically correct” seminars where the name of Jesus has all but disappeared.

It will be catholic, but not just Roman. That is to say, the diversity and integrity of the whole church will be greatly respected, as will the importance of interfaith dialogue that recognizes the particularities of each tradition. Indeed, the new theological convergence lives at the crossroads of the whole church, and of the world’s concerns. The exploration of the churches’ many spiritual treasures and traditions is one of its richest characteristics and greatest contributions. Perhaps the best image of this new ecumenical community is that of a deep, flowing river, fed by many streams.

It will be political without being ideological. Predictable and partisan politics are anathema to authentic prophetic witness. For much too long, evangelicals have been the Republican Party at prayer, liberals have been easily confused with the left wing of the Democratic Party, and even grassroots religious peace and justice activists have not always distinguished themselves from the politics of other secular and solidarity movements. That may be one of the most important things that is changing. A truly religious, moral, and ethical perspective has much to contribute to shaping a new kind of politics, and we must make the nature of that contribution increasingly clear.

It will bring a theological dimension to political discussions and social problems. By revealing the essential theological character of racism, sexism, poverty, environmental destruction, violence, abortion, sexuality, and family, the religious community could help deepen the public dialogue and response. In creating diversity, practicing equality, demonstrating justice, re-connecting with the Earth, helping to resolve conflicts, seeking a consistent ethic of life, and nurturing covenantal relationships, faith communities could make a decisive contribution and provide leadership by example. Faith communities must strive to be and do what they envision for the larger society.

This common ground will be rooted in the sufferings and hopes of poor and marginalized people. At the heart of Christian faith is incarnation—God becoming flesh among the poor and the outcast. Indeed, the cry of the poor has helped to bring us all together.

We have been converted to a more radical faith through relationship with the children of God who are oppressed by the social crisis that defines the modern world. The reality of the poor must continue to shape the new visions and dreams that we hope to help birth. In fact, the possibility of a new partnership of the middle-class and the poor, born of faith and for the sake of justice, has the potential to transform the political landscape.

Those who stand on this new ground will try to live out a faith that is both personal and social, based in community and ecumenical in spirit, deeply rooted and open to change. This faith will actively engage the world and yet seek not to conform to it. It will hold forth alternative visions of racial, economic, gender, and environmental justice, and insist on the essential connection between spiritual and social transformation, between politics and spirituality.

The new ground has yet to be named. But it draws evangelicals with a compassionate heart and a social conscience. It brings together mainline Protestants who desire spiritual revival and justice. It invites Catholics who seek a spirituality for social change. It includes African-American, Latino, Asian and American Indian faith communities that will help shape a more pluralistic and just society. No seminary represents this new theological center, but one can find evidence of it at almost every one. No national church embodies it, but the new ground is emerging in virtually every denomination and constituency.

At this point, naming the common theological ground is less important than naming ourselves as standing on it. It is a network, not an institution, a movement in many places, not a new denomination, an extended community for the sake of the church’s renewal, not a substitute for it.

### **Covenantal Relationships**

While this progressive religious network is getting connected in many local communities, some people and groups have yet to find each other. The future tries in crossing ecumenical, racial, and regional lines to knit ourselves together. Catholic peace activists need to connect with black churches in common causes. Evangelicals need to pray with mainline Protestants about how to minister to the inner city.

Local churches need to come together for community organizing projects. Weary activists need to find quiet refreshment in monastic communities. White Christians need to listen to black preachers and Protestant ministers need spiritual direction from Catholic sisters. For too long, we have been churches behind walls; now the walls are coming down.

We need to recognize, respect, and build on our great ecclesiastical diversity. We are local parishes and congregations, intentional communities and house churches, Bible study and prayer groups, houses of hospitality and monastic communities, projects for justice and ministries for spiritual renewal. This new ground provides a foundation that supports many different structures; our tree has many branches. That is a real strength and a protection from narrow thinking.

But we do need to find each other and build up our networks for support and action. That is the biggest task ahead of us. At the heart of our networks will be covenantal relationships established across constituency lines—relationships that have binding authority in our lives. Political convenience, mutual use, or institutional self-interest won't bring us together; new friendships based on a real spiritual companionship will. The courage to enter into such covenantal relationships and remain faithful to them will be an essential quality of leadership in the days ahead.

### **An Alternative to the Religious Right**

Conservatives have tapped into a genuine energy for a new discussion about basic moral values in the public debate. But that longing is much wider than the narrow interpretations of moral values offered by the evangelical right wing. Their extremism suggests that the only alternatives are to be totally secular or a religious bigot. Fortunately, those are not the only choices. A moral vacuum is waiting to be filled.

We seek a prophetic biblical perspective that is progressive rather than repressive; inclusive and respectful of pluralism instead of exclusive and sectarian. It will speak the language of both social justice and personal responsibility. In economics, it will take us beyond the "bottom line" of profit and the stagnation of bureaucracy to an economic ethic rooted in the religious requirements of community.

On the environment, this biblical perspective transcends old notions of exploitation, stewardship, and

protection and proposes a theology of relationship. In foreign relations, it puts human rights over national self-interest and seeks alternatives to war as a solution. It sees racism and sexism as spiritual as well as social sins, and calls for repentance. And it will insist on the vital connection between politics and morality. It will be open to broad collaboration and could provide a social reservoir of prophetic imagination.

Examples of prophetic religion abound. Bread for the World has become an effective Christian citizens movement against hunger. Pax Christi is a growing national and international Catholic peace and justice network. Witness For Peace is an interfaith initiative seeking reconciliation in war-torn Central America and elsewhere. Evangelicals for Social Action links evangelism and justice. SCUPE, a network of seminarians, pastors, and church workers, now convenes the largest "urban congress" in the nation.

Street ministers, deployed from black churches such as the Azusa Christian Community in Dorchester, Massachusetts, daily confront the challenge of reaching alienated inner-city youth. *Tikkun*, a progressive Jewish magazine, plays a similar role in its own religious community as our *Sojourners* magazine and network plays in the Christian community—a connection point and catalyst for a new movement. In cities and rural areas across the country, the number of faith-based ventures and coalitions to heal and rebuild local communities is beyond counting.

### **A Place to Stand—A Mission to Carry Out**

The new theological convergence offers the possibility of free, safe, creative, and holy space—both healing and prophetic. From that space, new visions could surely come. From all the corners of the churches' life, a new and ecumenical community could boldly proclaim the reign of God in this world. That is our purpose. To demonstrate the power of the gospel in the midst of a great social crisis is our vocation. Our goal is to lift up alternative spiritual and social possibilities at this crucial juncture of history; and our task is to demonstrate concretely what those alternatives might be.

The Spirit calls us and provides the gifts and power to respond. We act, not just for the sake of the church, but for the sake of the world. In a time shrouded with death, we seek to bring the light of hope and healing.

Faithful acts, great and small, can bring forth evidence of justice, peace, truth, goodness, dignity, grace, and love. We are those who are “looking for the day of God and trying to hasten it” (2 Peter 3: 11–12). We are finding a new place to stand together.

**SEE ALSO**

Protestantism in America: Denominationalism; Public Theologies and Political Culture: Liberalism

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Jim Wallis, “Renewing the Heart of Faith: A Prophetic Convergence of the People of God,” *Sojourners*, February 1993. Reprinted with permission from *Sojourners*, 800-714-7474, [www.soho.net](http://www.soho.net).

## Anonymous letter from parents of a gay son, in *Lutheran Partners* (January/February 1994)

*A great deal of discussion about sexuality emerged in the late 1960s, when Christian churches, as well as other religious institutions, began to grapple with the fact that gays and lesbians from their communities were publicly declaring their orientation. The growing public discourse about sexuality and sexual orientation, along with a larger cultural awareness of sexual diversity, led many heterosexuals to explore the limits of their own tolerance as well as the potential expansion of their attitudes about sexual difference.*

I have been a Lutheran pastor for over 40 years, married for almost the same period of time, parent of four children, all well educated and quite successful in their chosen professions. Now retired, I served in three pastorates over my ministry, plus some service time.

About five years ago, our one son, then in his 30s, told us he was gay. He did so at the request of his supervisors, to settle the concern for blackmail possibilities as he moved forward in his professional career. My wife and I had never really suspected this, since we had mistakenly thought that he may have been afraid of marriage, since some of his siblings had had some unfortunate experiences in their married life. Thus, it was a great shock to us. He had been fearful to reveal the news to us because of our potential explosive reaction to the news. We assured him that we loved him, accepted him as he was, and have tried in the years since to make our love obvious and strong, so that he would never feel abandoned or (like an) outcast.

In explaining his situation, he told us that he knew from the time of junior high that he was "different." He told us that he is absolutely convinced that he was born with this gay orientation, and he described some of his pain and difficulty in accepting himself as he was. There is, in case some don't know it, very little help out there for many of those who find themselves with this concern.

Somehow, I missed the (May/June 1993) ad which

has promoted the many letters. . . . But I am really moved about the letters you have published . . . especially those letters which suggest that gays are that way because they choose to be so. . . . I do not believe that one can prove either that homosexuality is fixed by birth or chosen by its practitioners, victims, or whatever term one may choose to describe them. I freely admit that both heterosexual and homosexual persons have caused pain to innocent victims, both children and adults. And just as one writer suggests that he is pained with some of the homosexual abuse to someone in his family, so I am pained, both by the hatred that many express to my son's situation, and by the heterosexual abuses I've had to deal with in my ministry which were perpetrated by pastors with whom I shared the ministry.

My son would have liked to have been a Lutheran minister. . . . But early on, he came to realize that there were too many negative feelings within the church for this to happen, since he refused to be dishonest about his orientation. So he chose another profession and has worked well in that field. But in the process of choosing . . . he has chosen to stay away from the church because of the attitudes and feelings against his lifestyle which church people have made evident. I have found these expressions by church people to be disheartening and painful, because I am dealing with a real person who is gay, and not some unknown, phantom sinner. . . . I am extremely upset that he has become a "drop-out," because he is my son. . . . But I can understand why he has turned away. . . . I admit that I am angered toward those persons who seem to me to be closed-minded and insensitive to a loved one of my family. . . .

. . . I know that it is very difficult for many Christians to confront the possibility that God may have made some persons homosexual and some heterosexual. . . . I would like them to explain to me why a gay person puts up with the pain, harassment, fear and

disapproval, if they were able to change their orientation just by an act of the will. I cannot explain that paradox any more readily than I can explain why God permitted me to live in the joyful and abundant land in which I was born and permits others to live in poverty, filth, and anguish. I can say that I don't believe he gave me privileges because I have been a good child and man.

Some may object to my letter on the basis that it is the ad, and not the matter of homosexuality to which they object. I cannot buy that, and I cannot help but wonder if they believe in freedom of speech, except in church publications. . . .

It is extremely disturbing to learn that many young people take their own lives because they cannot deal with their sexual orientation. . . . If it should happen that some of those who have written so strongly about this topic would someday find that they had a homosexual grandchild, I wonder how accepting they could become toward that person. As much as it

pained me to hear the news from my own son, I am grateful that I have been able to accept him as I believe God made him. I can honestly say that I find myself very distressed and disturbed in trying to picture what my son's behavior as a gay person may be as he relates to others. I have not found it possible to speak about it, even yet, and to share with others what this may mean. But I still love my son, and continue to be loyal to him in what I believe to be a Christian spirit. . . .

Name Withheld upon Request

Published in *Lutheran Partners*, Jan/Feb 1994, p. 12 (LP published by Augsburg Press)

**SEE ALSO**

Protestantism in America; Public Theologies and Political Culture; Sexuality: Sexual Identities

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Anonymous letter, *Lutheran Partners*, January/February 1994.

## Diana Eck, “Difference Is No Excuse for Hatred,” in *Christian Social Action* (May 1994)

*A professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at Harvard Divinity School, Diana Eck is concerned with forging interreligious relations and promoting interfaith dialogue, evident both in her numerous scholarly publications and in her work with such organizations as the World Council of Churches. In “Difference Is No Excuse for Hatred,” Eck urges Americans to take advantage of the “distinctively American opportunity” to build an interfaith structure within which multireligious conversations can take place in a context of “on-going relatedness and trust.” Eck expands this argument in the book A New Religious America (June 2001), in which she challenges Americans to become the world’s only model for a working, multireligious, democratic society.*

America today has a greater range of cultural and religious diversity than any other nation on earth. With the democratic traditions of the United States, this might truly allow us to become a model of what a working, multi-religious society might be like. We don’t have many models for that kind of society in the world, and perhaps, only perhaps, if we can begin to overcome the fear and the anger and to work seriously to develop a really operative interfaith infrastructure, that might happen.

I’m not going to begin by laying out the litany of violence that has brought us here. We do need, however, to bear clearly in our minds how much in recent years this violence has been fueled with the energy of racial, cultural, ethnic and religious difference.

On a world scale Tamils and Sinhalese in Sri Lanka; Muslims and Hindu nationalists in India; Muslims and Christians in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia; a new spate of anti-Semitism in Europe; the massacre of Muslim worshippers in Hebron; and in America as well. Whatever the sources of violence—economic, educational, etc.—the ways in which violence has increasingly been construed and the lines along which it is increasingly cast, however simplistically this may be the case, are racial, ethnic and even religious. This is an issue we need to face squarely.

African-Americans, Korean Americans, Hispanic-Americans, Blacks and Jews, Arabs and Jews, Christians and Muslims. These have too often become the symbolic and rhetorical fault lines for absolutely devastating conflict.

### **New Model of Bridge Building**

The opportunity to provide a new model of bridge-building across the lines of race and ethnicity and religion that our world and that our country so desperately needs is—a distinctively American opportunity today—an opportunity that is yours in virtually every city. It is possible and, indeed, incumbent as a witness to a model of communication and community building across the lines of race and religion and culture that is significant if there is to be an interfaith impact in American cities today. If we are to bear witness against violence, against the symbolic dimensions of racial and ethnic and religious violence, then people of faith must make an active effort to demonstrate that difference is no excuse for hatred and that people in every religious tradition—even those with whom we differ most sharply—can work together and can even love one another. So my first point is really to recognize the dimensions of this new multi-religious reality.

The second point I would make is to recognize that fear and the violence it perpetrates and generates is [sic] not new. For those of you who are Native Americans or African Americans, one does not need to rehearse very long one’s own history to recognize how this is so. But I want to turn again to the new reality that many of us do not know so much about: Our multi-religious history did not begin in 1965 with the change in immigration laws. Our Islamic history, for example, goes back to the slave trade where scholars estimate that 10 percent of the Africans brought to the United States as slaves were Muslims. Our Buddhist history goes back at least to the 1850s with the arrival

of thousands of Chinese who came for the Gold Rush, for the mining industry, and for building the transcontinental railroads.

In the first census taken in Montana, when it was still a territory in 1870, 10 percent of the population counted on the frontier in Montana was Chinese. There were Chinese Buddhist temples in Helena and Butte and Chinese graveyards. So what happened to the Chinese Buddhists who were so much a part of the 19th century frontier?

In 1882 the first Chinese Exclusion Act was passed. As that legislation was debated the governor of California insisted, "No Chinaman would ever be able to understand that he should vote intelligently or honestly." A senator from Massachusetts blustered, "This bill does not prohibit the Chinese laborer; it only says if he comes he'll go to the penitentiary." One of his colleagues in the U.S. Senate added, "They do not wear our kind of clothes, and when they die their bones are taken back to their native country."

Chinese were hanged and beaten and driven, almost without a trace, from Montana, Wyoming, Idaho. The racism that was generated with anti-Chinese legislation gradually expanded to include Japanese, Koreans and other Asiatics, as they were called. And at the time of the World's Parliament of Religion in 1893, there were anti-Japanese signs all the way up and down the west coast, to the point that one of the Buddhist representatives of the tradition from Japan said, "If such be the Christian ethics, well, we're perfectly satisfied to remain heathen." He went on to comment that as Japanese Buddhists, they weren't so concerned about which religion you belonged to but whether you actually had an ethic that conformed with the norms of that tradition—which he did not see to be the case in California.

### **Interfaith Cooperation/Interfaith Violence**

In 1893 at the close of the World Parliament of Religion one of the organizers proclaimed, "Henceforth the religions of the world will make war not on each other but on the giant evils that afflict mankind." We can't help but hear those words with a little bit of irony and sadness 100 years later.

It's true that interfaith cooperation has gotten a good start but interfaith violence has kept pace. The world's religious traditions still manage to provide

fuel and symbolic weaponry for the world's strife. The giant evils that afflict humankind have grown as rapidly as our dreams. The chasms between the cultural, racial, and religious families of humankind have opened as quickly as the bridges we have built to span them. And still suspicions and fears crystallize and take their public shape around issues of difference: religious difference, ethnic difference, racial difference.

Even with the vibrant burst of interfaith activity, nationally and internationally and locally, there is still not a viable interfaith infrastructure capable of bearing the complexity of our interreligious relations now in the late 20th century—not in the world is there such an interfaith infrastructure, not in any nation and certainly not at the local level. All of these instruments of interfaith cooperation are fairly fragile. Not surprisingly I would conclude with the insistence, then, that there is a lot of work to be done, and that the role of religious communities—especially interreligious communities—could be a powerful witness to a world of cooperation that we so desperately need.

Even within our religious traditions, however, there is tension and polarization and fingerpointing and demonizing as if the world didn't present enough problems—the violence, the division, the hate mongering, within the Christian community. The energy of our religious traditions has become enervated by the internal politics and controversies of our denominations, expending millions and millions of human hours on questions like, "What is the gender of the person you love?" or, "What is the gender of the language you use for the God you love?" A new spate of heresy hunting is occurring in the United Methodist Church. Do we use the word *Sophia*, which is, after all, in the Bible in a context of Christian worship? And worse: the unconscionable use of Scripture, tearing verses out of context to use them as clubs to brutalize our neighbors and our co-religionists or people of other faiths.

Our religious traditions, our Christian families of faith have much to account for. How quickly we take offense in the discourse between and among our religious, racial and ethnic groups. How quickly we take offense, we escalate offense, we magnify offense, we return offense.

Criticism is difficult, however, if people don't have the on-going responsibility and opportunity for rela-



tionship and for reparation that makes criticism a form of growth and not a form of violence. If interreligious dialogue is to move beyond occasional meetings and roundtables, it must become “a culture of dialogue.” It must create a whole context of on-going relatedness and trust in which self-criticism and mutual criticism are an acceptable and valuable part of the interreligious exchange and in which criticism and genuine difference are not avoided, but encountered.

That is part of what I would call an interfaith infrastructure, in which genuine difference does not provide the occasion for walking out or walking away from the table, an unacceptable climate in which I will not talk to you because you have said something that offends me. There is no way ahead with this kind of escalation of rhetoric and offense.

Mutual criticism and self-criticism also involve apology and reparation, what Jews call “the mendings of the world.” To apologize, to accept apology, to move forward rather than over and over the same tracks of pain. If religious communities cannot learn to do this with one another, what hope do we have for a larger secular society torn by violence and suspicion and anger?

**SEE ALSO**

Popular Culture: Religion in the News; Public Theologies and Political Culture

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Diana Eck, “Difference Is No Excuse for Hatred,” in *Christian Social Action*, May 1994.

## William J. Clinton, Indian Sacred Sites, Executive Order 13007 (May 24, 1996)

*On May 24, 1996, President Clinton issued Executive Order 13007 in order to preserve Native American sacred sites and thereby protect the religious practices associated with those sites. It requires agencies that manage federal lands to accommodate Native American use of sacred sites, to avoid adversely affecting the physical integrity of those sites, and to provide reasonable notice whenever a proposed action may restrict access or adversely impact a sacred site.*

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, in furtherance of Federal treaties, and in order to protect and preserve Indian religious practices, it is hereby ordered:

### **Section 1. Accommodation of Sacred Sites.**

(a) In managing Federal lands, each executive branch agency with statutory or administrative responsibility for the management of Federal lands shall, to the extent practicable, permitted by law, and not clearly inconsistent with essential agency functions, (1) accommodate access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners and (2) avoid adversely affecting the physical integrity of such sacred sites. Where appropriate, agencies shall maintain the confidentiality of sacred sites.

(b) For purposes of this order:

- (i) "Federal lands" means any land or interests in land owned by the United States, including leasehold interests held by the United States, except Indian trust lands;
- (ii) "Indian tribe" means an Indian or Alaska Native tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, or community that the Secretary of the Interior acknowledges to exist as an Indian tribe pursuant to Public Law No. 103-454, 108 Stat. 4791, and "Indian" refers to a member of such an Indian tribe; and
- (iii) "Sacred site" means any specific, discrete,

narrowly delineated location on Federal land that is identified by an Indian tribe, or Indian individual determined to be an appropriately authoritative representative of an Indian religion, as sacred by virtue of its established religious significance to, or ceremonial use by, an Indian religion; provided that the tribe or appropriately authoritative representative of an Indian religion has informed the agency of the existence of such a site.

### **Section 2. Procedures.**

(a) Each executive branch agency with statutory or administrative responsibility for the management of Federal lands shall, as appropriate, promptly implement procedures for the purposes of carrying out the provisions of section 1 of this order, including, where practicable and appropriate, procedures to ensure reasonable notice is provided of proposed actions or land management policies that may restrict future access to or ceremonial use of, or adversely affect the physical integrity of, sacred sites. In all actions pursuant to this section, agencies shall comply with the Executive memorandum of April 29, 1994, "Government-to-Government Relations with Native American Tribal Governments."

(b) Within 1 year of the effective date of this order, the head of each executive branch agency with statutory or administrative responsibility for the management of Federal lands shall report to the President, through the Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy, on the implementation of this order. Such reports shall address, among other things,

- (i) any changes necessary to accommodate access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites;
- (ii) any changes necessary to avoid adversely affecting the physical integrity of Indian sacred sites; and
- (iii) procedures implemented or proposed to

facilitate consultation with appropriate Indian tribes and religious leaders and the expeditious resolution of disputes relating to agency action on Federal lands that may adversely affect access to, ceremonial use of, or the physical integrity of sacred sites.

**Section 3.**

Nothing in this order shall be construed to require a taking of vested property interests. Nor shall this order be construed to impair enforceable rights to use of Federal lands that have been granted to third parties through final agency action. For purposes of this order, "agency action" has the same meaning as in the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. 551[13]).

**Section 4.**

This order is intended only to improve the internal management of the executive branch and is not in-

tended to, nor does it, create any right, benefit, or trust responsibility, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by any party against the United States, its agencies, officers, or any person.

*William J. Clinton*  
*The White House,*  
*May 24, 1996*

**SEE ALSO**

Native American Religions and Politics; Public Theologies and Political Culture; Sacred Space: Nautre

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Indian Sacred Sites, Executive Order 13007, May 24, 1996.

Marianne Williamson,  
excerpt from *The Healing of America* (1997)

*Spiritual leader of one of the largest New Thought churches in the United States (Church of Today in Warren, Michigan), Marianne Williamson has gained international fame as an author, lecturer, and political activist. The Healing of America calls on Americans to contemplate God's providential plan for the nation and to use knowledge of that plan as a springboard for meaningful political and social activism.*

Beyond the appearances of history, there is a great and glorious, unfolding plan for the destiny of nations. God carries the plan within His mind and seeks always, in all ways, channels for its furtherance. His plan for humanity, and the preparation of teachers to guide it, is called within the esoteric traditions the Great Work.

Contribution to this work is not unique to any one nation or people. Worldly structures are instruments for the advancement of God's plan, to the extent to which the ideals of that structure reflect the highest philosophical truths. Where immoderate ambition or selfishness take hold, the bond is broken between the spirit of the work and the structure that held it. The Work continues; it always continues. But it leaves behind what becomes unworthy of it and gravitates toward truer hearts.

In modern sociological terms, there is a phenomenon called the "local discontinuity of progress." The next step forward in a system rarely comes from a predictable place. Grace is not logical, nor can brilliant insight be rationally formulated. Where human beings pride themselves, the spirit of God departs. Human arrogance is not a container for God's greater work, nor will it ever be.

When a particular group or structure fails to keep faith with God—not measured by its words but by its actions—that structure then loses the privilege of guardianship of the great Work. The plan passes on to other groups or structures. Human beings cannot

stop or pervert the works of destiny, but we can dissociate ourselves from its higher unfoldment. When we do, we cease to share in its blessings.

America has been a vessel for the great Work from its inception. Now, however, we have lost our conscious contact with the greatness of our destiny. We ignore invisible principles, yet obsess about all manner of visible pursuits. We allow our time and attention to be frittered away in a scramble for things too shallow to satisfy us, even if we can attain them. Having overcome so many forms of external bondage, we are now so internally bound that we are yet to be set free.

Still, powers greater than we continue to minister to humanity. Today, as it has been and shall forever be, any heart that surrenders itself becomes a channel for the vibrations of love still emanating from the mind of God. It is not too late to change our minds.

America keeps trying to find the right drivers, when instead we should be questioning what road we're on. Contrary to what we are told, the road ahead is not full of just light; the road ahead is full of consequences. But there is another road that America can take, the road we have always known that we belonged on. It is the road of high and enlightened purpose, a pursuit of the expansion of truth—in who it touches and how deeply. Material expansion will take care of itself if we take care of all things true and beautiful. For those whose hearts respond to this thought, it is time to break through the superstitious thinking that would have us believe it's too late to change. We can change, we will change—in fact, we are changing. That is our destiny. A question that faces us is this: can we recreate politics to reflect these things, or must the pursuit of higher truth remain separate from the public sphere? This moment is one of opportunity for the creation of a new political force-field. It is up to each and every one of us to decide where America goes now.

**SEE ALSO**

New Age: New Age Bestsellers; New Religious Traditions;  
Public Theologies and Political Culture: Civil Religion

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Marianne Williamson, *The Healing of America.*, copyright © 1997 by Marianne Williamson. Reprinted with the permission of Simon and Schuster Adult Publishing Group.

Teresa Watanabe, “A Season for Understanding: Observance of  
Islam’s Holy Period of Ramadan Begins Monday with  
Fasting and an Emphasis on Self-Restraint and Generosity . . .”  
(November 25, 2000)

*Religious diversity is a dominant theme in media coverage of religion in American society. Although popular media tended to have a limited view of the religious landscape for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, by the beginning of the twenty-first century religious pluralism in all of its multiple, copious forms of cultural expression is frequently highlighted in major newspapers and magazines around the country. Intimate, and often informative, portraits of individual or communal life in Hindu, Buddhist, or Muslim families add texture and complexity to our vision of American religious society.*

A few days before the Islamic holy season of Ramadan, many of Leah Greenwald’s seventh-graders at McFadden Intermediate School in Santa Ana were meeting a real, live Muslim for the first time in their lives.

Maria Khani, a speaker from the Council on Islamic Education, wore a black jacket, a long gray skirt and a silk head scarf—but said that at home she dressed as she pleased. She brought in a Koran, a prayer rug and a small model of a mosque—but also a toy camera, just for fun.

She explained Ramadan’s ritual of fasting from dawn to dusk but anchored it in their world: Her boy, she told the class, bought a Nintendo Gameboy with his holiday gift of money. Ramadan, which begins Monday, is going mainstream as more Muslims like Khani bring lessons about the holiday to schools, libraries and public forums. Their dogged efforts to demystify Islam seem to be paying off: Elected officials are now familiar figures at Ramadan-related events, the U.S. Postal Service recently issued a stamp commemorating the holiday and, perhaps most striking, individual attitudes toward Islam are being transformed.

At McFadden, students shared their images of Mus-

lims before hearing Khani speak: Boring. Strict. “Kind of weird.”

Those images changed after Khani’s slide presentation, which touched on everything from the Koran to Legoland.

“I think it’s kind of cool, how much they do for God, because not everyone does that,” said Stephanie Lambert, 12.

“They’re proud of their religion,” said Dalila Toledo, 12.

“They’re nicer than I thought,” said Jaclyn Pavan, one of six students who volunteered to try on the samples of Islamic clothing that Khani brought.

Ramadan, one of the pillars of Islam, commemorates the season in which Muslims believe the holy Koran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. It is marked by refraining from food, drink and other sensual pleasures to learn discipline, self-restraint and generosity.

As the fast-growing Muslim community increases its presence and profile, more mosques are using the Ramadan season as a prime time to increase public awareness of their faith. The Council on American-Islamic Relations gives Muslims ideas on how to publicize Ramadan in an annual “Ramadan Publicity Resource Kit,” with suggestions on pitching stories, holding open houses, lecturing in the schools and the like.

Hussam Ayloush of the council’s Southern California office said news stories about Ramadan in local media have gone from a handful in 1995 to more than 30 last year. He said part of the reason for the sparse coverage had been Muslims themselves: Many distrusted the media and feared to participate in any story that might defame their faith.

But that reluctance seems to have dissipated as

Muslims have actively reached out to share their faith.

The Islamic Center of Hawthorne sponsored a community open house, "Understanding Islam," that drew 40 people—ranging from the Hawthorne mayor to police officers—last week. During Ramadan, the center plans to package extra food prepared for weekend iftars, or fast-breaking meals, and distribute it to the area's homeless, according to board Chairman Jawdat Dajani.

At Masjid Omar near downtown Los Angeles, mosque members plan a free community meal nightly, including a Friday halal Kentucky Fried Chicken dinner prepared according to Islamic rules, and speakers on the Koran.

The masjid has worked with the Los Angeles Unified School District to produce a program on Ramadan, which has been broadcast via the district's Channel 58 each holy season for years, said Yahia Abdul-Rahman, the masjid's religious coordinator and chairman of the 60-mosque Islamic Shura Council of Southern California. Along with the video, the masjid has also worked with the district on a lesson plan about Ramadan.

In what is becoming a major Muslim annual bash, the masjid next month plans to sponsor a gala community dinner and program on the Ramadan season's Night of Power, when it is believed the Koran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. The program typically draws 2,000 people, including Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan.

"We're doing this to build bridges with everyone, because we've been so stereotyped by the media," Abdul-Rahman said.

Khani gives similar reasons for quitting her full-time job as a teacher of Arabic and Islamic studies to devote her time as a speaker for the Islamic educational council. She covers 100 miles a day driving from San Diego to Sherman Oaks, speaking to everyone from kindergartners to adults, three to five days a week.

When she first started speaking a few years ago, one student asked to be excused, telling the teacher she feared Khani would bring guns and bombs to school. The incident only redoubled Khani's determination to expand her efforts.

"Kids here in the U.S. need to know the truth about Islam," said Khani, a Syrian native. "When I speak, they find out Muslims can laugh and go to Disneyland."

Arwa Ayloush is another Muslim mother and teacher dedicated to public education about Ramadan. For the last few years, the second-grade teacher at West Whittier Elementary School has put up Ramadan displays in local Orange County libraries and made presentations to children about the holiday.

Response to the Muslim outreach efforts has varied. Hawthorne mosque members were disappointed that 10,000 fliers about their open house drew 40 people.

On the other hand, Sharon Johnson of the Anaheim Public Library said she leaped at the chance for a Ramadan showcase to round out her other religious holiday displays and has recruited Muslims to recommend books, videos and other material for the library's collection.

At McFadden, Greenwald includes Islam in social studies and brings in Khani to help overcome the "bad rap" Muslims sometimes get.

"I feel we need to talk about some touchy issues, and the Mideast and the Islamic faith are touchy issues," Greenwald said. "But I think people are becoming more well informed and hopefully more tolerant."

#### SEE ALSO

Islam in America; Popular Culture: Religion in the News

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Teresa Watanabe, "A Season for Understanding; Observance of Islam's Holy Period of Ramadan Begins Monday with Fasting and an Emphasis on Self-Restraint and Generosity . . .," *Los Angeles Times*, November 25, 2000, B2.

## George W. Bush, September 11 Attack on America, Proclamation 7462 (September 13, 2001)

*The airline terrorist attacks on American soil—at the Twin Towers in New York City; the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.; and over Pennsylvania en route to a likely target in Washington—shook the nation to its core. In the aftermath of a controversial election, President Bush sought to unite the country and lead its citizens through the chaos, suffering, and sorrow in the horrible shadow of 9/11. Like his predecessors, Bush turned himself and his fellow citizens to God by using his presidential powers and proclaiming a national day of prayer for the victims of the day's carnage.*

### **National Day of Prayer and Remembrance for the Victims of the Terrorist Attacks on September 11, 2001**

*By the President of the United States of America*

#### ***A Proclamation***

On Tuesday morning, September 11, 2001, terrorists attacked America in a series of despicable acts of war. They hijacked four passenger jets, crashed two of them into the World Trade Center's twin towers, and a third into the Headquarters of the U.S. Department of Defense at the Pentagon, causing great loss of life and tremendous damage. The fourth plane crashed in the Pennsylvania countryside, killing all on board but falling well short of its intended target apparently because of the heroic efforts of passengers on board. This carnage, which caused the collapse of both Trade Center towers and the destruction of part of the Pentagon, killed more than 250 airplane passengers and thousands more on the ground.

Civilized people around the world denounce the evildoers who devised and executed these terrible attacks. Justice demands that those who helped or harbored the terrorists be punished—and punished severely. The enormity of their evil demands it. We will use all the resources of the United States and our cooperating friends and allies to pursue those responsible for this evil, until justice is done.

We mourn with those who have suffered great and disastrous loss. All our hearts have been seared by the sudden and senseless taking of innocent lives. We pray for healing and for the strength to serve and encourage one another in hope and faith.

Scripture says: "Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted." I call on every American family and the family of America to observe a National Day of Prayer and Remembrance, honoring the memory of the thousands of victims of these brutal attacks and comforting those who lost loved ones. We will persevere through this national tragedy and personal loss. In time, we will find healing and recovery; and, in the face of all this evil, we remain strong and united, "one Nation under God."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim Friday, September 14, 2001, as a National Day of Prayer and Remembrance for the Victims of the Terrorist Attacks on September 11, 2001. I ask that the people of the United States and places of worship mark this National Day of Prayer and Remembrance with noon-time memorial services, the ringing of bells at that hour, and evening candlelight remembrance vigils. I encourage employers to permit their workers time off during the lunch hour to attend the noontime services to pray for our land. I invite the people of the world who share our grief to join us in these solemn observances.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirteenth day of September, in the year of our Lord two thousand one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-sixth.

#### **SEE ALSO**

Protestantism in America; Death; Popular Theodicies; Public Theologies and Political Culture; Violence: War



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September 11, 2001: Attack on America, Proclamation 7462, September 13, 2001 (U.S. Government Web Site), [http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/sept\\_11/proc002\\_091301.htm](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/sept_11/proc002_091301.htm), The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm> (Oct. 8, 2002).

Immigration and Naturalization Service,  
Naturalization Oath of Allegiance to the United States of America  
(November 2, 2002)

*Immigrants are required by law to transfer their allegiance from their native country to the United States of America in order to become U.S. citizens. In the U.S., this is accomplished by making an oath of allegiance a prerequisite to naturalization. The oath is designed to procure undivided loyalty to the U.S., and toward that end insists upon both support of the U.S. Constitution and renunciation of allegiance to foreign sovereigns and states.*

**Oath:**

“I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms

on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the armed forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God.”

**SEE ALSO**

Asian American Religious Communities; Buddhism in America; Hinduism in America; Islam in America; Latina/Latino Religious Communities

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Naturalization Oath of Allegiance to the United States of America, from Immigration and Naturalization Service, <http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/aboutins/history/teacher/oath.htm> (Nov. 2, 2002).



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