
Engaged Spirituality

SPIRITUALITY AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION
IN MAINSTREAM AMERICAN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

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ON A HOT SUMMER AFTERNOON in the Jefferson Park district of Los Angeles, a perceptible change comes across the face of Imam Saadiq Saafir. His eyes, typically embracing and engaging, drift off as he remembers his pilgrimage to Mecca. A broad smile escapes. The roar of the traffic on the busy street outside and the whir of the overhead fan inside this storefront *masjid* fade away as Saadiq recalls his experience of the *Hajj*.

It is the most imprinting experience of my life ... you really realize that that's where Abraham was tempted to sacrifice his only begotten son. You're drinking this water, and as you're going around and understanding this circumambulation of the Ka'bah, and where Hagar ran, it brings religion home in such a realistic way. It all makes sense now. You see the universal brotherhood. You see where it's ludicrous for me to look at you and judge you by your skin and not understand that it's your heart that counts.... I think it's the most phenomenal human experience that you'll ever have. [It] really transcends what is really human...the strongest influence in the world is spiritual rather than what is tangible.

As we leave the *masjid* that day, two other Muslims arrive carrying bags of supplies for the weekly food distribution that their religious organization, the ILM Foundation, operates in one of the most needy areas of Los Angeles. The powerful experience of *Hajj*, along with commitments to the other pillars of Islam—located deep within the intimate recesses of Saadiq's heart—propel him in very public and outward ways to transform the lives of the members of his *masjid* and, in turn, the “universal brotherhood” of the surrounding community.

Several miles away at the core of South Central Los Angeles, a free health clinic schedules appointments for 25-35 patients a day. Such a scenario may not appear remarkable in many poor, urban areas across the United States. However, this clinic, the University Muslim Medical Association, or UMMA Free Clinic, is unique in its formation and operation.

In 1990, several medical students at UCLA were searching for a socially responsible outlet for the health care skills they were acquiring. Some had volunteered in tutoring programs in California prisons and were eager to continue in that vein of public service. Perhaps, more importantly, this original group of motivated medical students

was predominantly second generation Americans and a decisively new generation of American Muslims. Founding member Dr. Mansur Khan recalls,

We had come out of the Islamic centers and the mosques where we had been affiliated and gotten religious training, but we saw a lack of social activism of people going out into the community. ... Whereas a lot of Islamic charities had been focused on causes abroad, given that there's a lot of third world countries in the Muslim world, we decided that "Hey, there's a need here. And why not take our expertise and put it towards serving the community here?"

Based in their religious upbringing, these young adults expressed that social service in the name of Allah is not just an option; it is an obligation. From its inception, however, the clinic has been ardently nondenominational, interfaith, multiethnic, and non-proselytizing in its mission, and this is reflected in its diverse staff of volunteers, and the array of clients that it treats. By all accounts, UMMA is achieving its two-fold objective of impacting the availability and quality of health care in the immediate community as well as radically transforming the broader definition of Muslim service in the United States. At the dedication ceremony six years ago, a former professor pulled aside one volunteer and confessed, "I didn't know Muslims cared." Clearly the actions of this handful of committed students prove that they do.

Overview

FOR THE PAST YEAR we have collected multiple stories, similar to these, of spiritually committed individuals leading socially committed lives. Every one of the diverse individuals that we have encountered has, as a common denominator, an individual spiritual commitment that propels his or her attempts to change tangible elements of their social world. These are not merely individuals sitting in private contemplation willing the world a better place; they are actively engaged in transforming individual lives as well as the larger social, civic, and religious institutions in which they work, volunteer, and participate.

The purpose of this report is to integrate the data of our yearlong research and identify ways in which individual spirituality may be understood in relation to these forms of social engagement. While spirituality is sometimes viewed as a strictly inward activity, even narcissistic in form, our research confirms the potential of spirituality to propel people

into social service and public participation. In short, spirituality is a vital resource, sustaining people in the hard work of social change, and, on regular occasions, inspiring them to imagine possibilities that exceed realistic expectations.

We propose a new way to view spirituality that breaks from a privatized notion and instead focuses on the subjectively integrated place of spirituality across all dimensions of individual and social lives. We call this engaged spirituality. “Engaged” applies to three conceptual levels. First, individuals engage in tailoring a subjectively meaningful practice and worldview. Second, individuals are engaged by spirituality in personally relevant and experientially transcendent ways. Finally, spirituality is engaged within the context of broader social relations and structures that affect its outcome and application. Engaged spirituality requires us to understand spiritual experience as it affects and is affected by all elements of individual and social life. This includes the central role that spirituality holds in social transformation.

An engaged perspective acknowledges spirituality’s central role as a resource in social transformation. It is not only conducive to the notion of social transformation but the mobilization and action towards those ends. From this perspective, spirituality has apparent contributions that are qualitatively different from those derived from secular means. There are three significant ways that spirituality is infused with socially committed lives:

- > SPIRITUAL APPROPRIATIONS – *individuals tailor a spirituality that is subjectively meaningful. This reinforces and is reinforced through everyday life.*
- > FORMATIVE MOMENTS – *subjectively powerful experiences transform the way that individuals view the world and alter their subsequent actions.*
- > SPIRITUAL BENEFITS – *four benefits arise from spiritual practice and experience that contribute to the motivation and sustainability of social service.*

Each of these elements produces specific changes in the nature of individual spirituality but does not necessarily result in a socially engaged practice. Spirituality only becomes enacted for social transformation when the interpretation and personal meaning constructed around spiritual experiences fuse with interpretations and per-

sonal meanings constructed of a world or society in need of change. This process often occurs in idiosyncratic or accidental ways that are unique to each personal experience; however, there are three common influences that mirror the three conceptual levels of engaged spirituality:

- > **INDIVIDUAL INTERACTION** - *individuals learn to connect the meaning of spirituality with values of social transformation through the significant others in their lives such as friends, family, religious leaders, organizational leaders, or co-workers.*
- > **ORGANIZATIONAL OPPORTUNITY** - *individuals find organizational outlets that allow for, encourage, or foster spirituality as part of their institutional structure. Academic institutions are one place in particular that have the opportunity to spark these connections.*
- > **SPIRITUAL REVELATION** - *individuals perceive a transcendent connection to social transformation that comes directly from a spiritual experience.*

While these connections seem self-evident and readily fostered, we conclude that spirituality remains a significant missing variable in the institutional conversations about social life and transformation in America. Academic analysis must address this social resource and the implications it has for understanding social action and mobilization for change. Furthermore, spirituality is an often-overlooked element within organizations that work for change and the policy decisions that make such change possible. Acknowledging the variations of spirituality from an engaged perspective has substantive benefits for strengthening religious education curricula, transforming organizational development, and enriching social debate on crucial civic issues.

1.

Methodology

THE INFORMATION FOR this project was collected from three primary areas: 1) a review of current literature, 2) documentation of spiritual trends in teaching institutions and community organizations, and 3) in-depth interviews. Employing this three-pronged methodology allows for a triangulation of data, thus establishing a solid platform from which to understand the multifaceted nature of spirituality in relation to social transformation.

The effects of recent shifts in religion and spirituality have only started to emerge in disparate areas of academic research and thought. We therefore cast a broad net in compiling a review of the current literature on spirituality and social transformation. The focus of our investigation focused on academic resources from the social sciences, medicine, business, and law. We did not draw upon theological resources for the literature review of this report, since a close analysis of the theological debate over spiritu-

ality and social transformation lies beyond the scope of this project. Nevertheless, a substantial reading list culled from religious institutions and universities is provided as a reference for the types of theological literature that is currently being used.

The second phase of data collection involved detailed online research of seminaries, rabbinical schools, religious and civic organizations, and online communities. Our sample of Catholic and Christian seminaries was drawn from a database of 193 accredited institutions affiliated with the Association of Theological Schools. Our sample of Rabbinical schools consists of the five accredited institutions in the United States: Hebrew Union College's three campuses, the University of Judaism, Jewish Theological Seminary, Yeshivah University, and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. We read each school's mission statement, degree requirements for higher education, and catalogue of classes. The schools that offered either a specific degree or specialized program in spirituality, or offered at least three explicit classes on spirituality, were contacted and departmental literature, reading lists and syllabi were requested. Representative samples of this information are included in the Religious Education Appendix.

With regard to religious, civic and online communities, we initially relied heavily upon larger, publicly known organizations such as the Muslim Public Affairs Council, Habitat for Humanity, the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, and Pax Christi. From these better-known organizations, we drew together samples from web page "links" as well as online searches. While the organizations we contacted had a relatively high public profile, we included less known organizations that either had unique approaches to spirituality or to social action. Thousands of organizations exist and online organizations are notoriously mercurial. Therefore, our research should not be seen as exhaustive. Nevertheless, we contacted a significant sample that illustrates the array of work being done across the country. The arguments that we make regarding such organizations are also supported through our interviews with participants in these organizations and others in similar fields.

Finally, we interviewed 67 exemplary individuals who embody a connection between spiritual practice and a commitment to social justice. Our sample began with the diverse connections already established through the Center for Religion and Civic Culture at USC. From this original group of individu-

als we built our interview list through snowball sampling techniques. At the conclusion of most interviews we asked for recommendations of others who might contribute to the types of questions we were asking. Additional interviews were gained through personal contacts and recommendations from organizations and seminaries. The final sample includes individuals working for social change across Southern California, as well as in Northern California, Pennsylvania, New York, and Washington D.C. Of the 67 interviews, 11 were Jewish, 28 were Christian, 14 were Catholic, 6 were Muslim, 4 were Buddhist and 4 were Hindu. Thirty-nine were men and 28 were women.

The interviews provided a rich source of data that was not otherwise available through the literature or our review of organizations. We followed an open-ended, narrative-based approach to interviewing, believing that it was important at this stage of the research to uncover the widest variety of ways that people interpret spirituality. We asked broad questions that invited personal reflection, rather than following a structured interview schedule that might limit a participant's responses and introduce researcher bias about the nature, shape, or direction of spirituality. This open-ended approach has at

times revealed surprisingly novel insights.

Although our interviewing was open-ended, we systematically addressed several core elements across interviews. Individuals were asked to describe the types of social action in which they were currently engaged, followed by the reasons they selected this line of work. This level of reflective questions resulted in compacted life histories from which we asked follow-up questions. With regard to spirituality, we asked to what degree, if any, they found connections between their spiritual life and the service work they were involved in. Based on these responses we asked when these connections were first made. Similar spiritual life histories often evolved from these conversations. We asked if they could characterize their religious upbringing and how they viewed their spiritual evolution to where they are today, focusing on any turning points or impacting experiences. Finally, we specifically asked about each individual's daily spiritual practice or routine. At times, this took the form of describing a typical day in their life and the various points in which spirituality emerged. We similarly asked what, if any, perceived connections exist between their spiritual practice and their commitments and actions.

Interviews lasted, on average, one hour but

ranged from half an hour to two hours. All were either audiotaped or videotaped and transcribed. Transcripts of sample interviews are supplied in the Engaged Lives Appendix. A brief collection of videotape samples of the individuals referenced in this report is included in the Video Appendix.

The interview process was at times quite emotional. Childhood lessons of discrimination loomed heavily in several memories. Others relived empowering experiences of personal and social growth. Still others revealed the chain of idiosyncratic “accidents” that together comprised a surreptitious route to their present spiritual, personal and professional position. Some related mystical experiences of hearing a divine guiding voice through the wind in the trees or physically feeling the energy of the Holy Spirit course through their body. Still others appreciated a more mundane and relatively static understanding of a spiritual relationship through private prayer routines and contemplation.

For the most part, our participants were engaged in a vision of social transformation that, while not often explicitly stated in political terms, could be characterized as progressive or liberal. These men and women are fighting for immigrant rights, a living wage for the working poor, healthcare

for those who fall through the insurance gap, and AIDS counseling that embraces and supports various sexualities including transsexuality. Since our objectives are exploratory, we do not believe that the social politics of our participants substantially affects the relational analysis between spirituality and social transformation. Instead the point could be made that spirituality, as a resource for social transformation, is both nondenominational and nonpartisan. While not explored in this project, other civic participants may employ spirituality as a social resource in similar ways with similar results across the political spectrum.

2.

Spirituality Defined

SHIFTS IN AMERICAN SOCIETY during the past generation have had profound effects on the nature of religion, the organization of religious institutions, and the role and experience of individual participation. Perhaps the most pervasive development has been the perceived and reported bifurcation between religion and spirituality. Once seen as complementary components of an integrated whole, these are increasingly interpreted as two distinct phenomena. Born out of strands of secularization theory and challenges to modernity, the divergent paths of religion and spirituality crystallized around a new prototype given voice by Robert Bellah and his colleagues (1985). “Sheilism,” which reconstructs the external elements of organized religion into internal and personalized forms of meaning, became symptomatic of this social and cultural dynamic of eclecticism.

Today, this eclecticism illustrates the divide between religion and spirituality. Religion increasing-

ly denotes an institutional, substantive, and formal phenomenon whereas spirituality embodies a separate, individual, functional and expressive phenomenon (Zinnbauer, Pargament, and Scott 1999). These differences are not merely perceived as empirically or substantively different; they also suggest normative and value-laden judgments. For example, in popular parlance, religion is more than likely qualified as “bad” while spirituality is “good.”

At the same time, spirituality does not escape without criticism. The very same individual, experiential elements of “good” spirituality are precisely the elements that suggest the increase of privatization, fragmentation, decline of civic participation, and narcissism of individual development in lieu of religious community (Marty 1996, Roof 1993). Religious seekers, unsatisfied with ritualized practice within a congregation or community, are seen as retreating into individual practices that, while sometimes engaged in communally, do not lead to a community of believers in the same way that a local synagogue, for example, once did.

ACADEMIC MODELS

*T*hese experiential and behavioral shifts in religion and spirituality have sparked a renewed, although still emerging, conversation in academia. The most recent work has been conducted in what may be considered three very broad and overlapping genres or models of inquiry: the therapeutic model, the business model, and the conceptual model. The therapeutic model is most evident in social work (Canda 1988 and 1998; Cascio 1998, Joseph 1987; Sheridan 2001), psychology and psychotherapy (Rose, Westefeld and Ansley 2001, Helminiak 2001), as well as medicine and occupational therapies (Davidson 2000, Galanter 1997, Kass et. al. 1991). The therapeutic model addresses nearly all elements of the clinical relationship for both the therapist and patient or client. For example, it recognizes the subjective importance of spirituality for the motivations and meanings that clients utilize to make sense of crises or illness. It also brings to light the clinical differences in rates of recovery or adjustment from physical ailments, addictions, and psychological and social disorders. Although much debate and support has arisen among the therapeutic disciplines, spirituality is still not a universally accepted element of diagno-

sis, treatment, recovery and counseling.

The business model has provided some of the most interesting applications of spirituality. Shifts in organizational management styles and workplace environments of the past decade have experimented with what is known as the “spiritual workplace.” Spirituality, in the business model, is not typically described in reference to religious or transcendent ideals (Thompson 2000), although such direct sentiments do surface at times (Neal 2000, Opiela 2000). Instead, the business model employs a more cautious definition that favors the secular, psychologically based, or non-specific spirituality of Stephen R. Covey and M. Scott Peck. Elements of business spirituality include: recognition of the worth and value of people or employee centered management, a working climate of high integrity, creating trust, faith, justice, respect, and love, and meeting both the economic and individual needs of employees (Burack 1999). The business model argues that a holistic approach to improving morale, integrity, and the integration of the entire individual into the workplace is not only morally beneficial but also results in increased productivity and profit. The business model views these outcomes as complementary rather than paradoxical or incompatible.

Finally the conceptual model of spiritual analysis emerges primarily from psychology where significant explorations of the terms religion and spirituality have been taking place (Forman 1998, Helminiak 1987, 1996a, Pargament et. al. 1995, Zinnbauer et. al. 1999). Spirituality is discussed conceptually as a “search for the sacred” (Pargament 1997). It involves the “paths people take in their efforts to find, conserve, and transform the sacred in their lives...[A]s with religion, spirituality can take individual and institutional, traditional and nontraditional, and helpful and harmful forms” (Zinnbauer et. al. 1999: 909). As such, spirituality can act as a powerful motivation in shaping values and pursuing life goals. Some have argued that spirituality, much like the popular argument for emotion, can function as a form of “intelligence,” supplying useful traits beyond the traditional and rational standards of intellectual intelligence (Emmons, 1999). While current conceptual definitions of spirituality allow for a compatibility with religion, they also acknowledge the broad ways in which the sacred can be perceived in otherwise mundane objects, relationships, or processes. In doing so, most conceptual definitions of spirituality are flexible enough to recognize, and be recognized, within both the business and the therapeutic models of spirituali-

ty. This flexibility also opens the door for our analysis of a socially engaged spirituality.

Each of these models contributes to our understanding of spirituality both as a personal and social phenomenon, however none of these disciplinary tracks explores the nexus of spirituality and social transformation in explicit ways. This is due in part to the fairly personal or localized scope of these disciplines. For example, the therapeutic model is most interested in interpersonal dynamics while the business model focuses on the culture of corporations. Yet even other strands of social science that look more broadly at social change are still reluctant to incorporate individual spirituality into their research agendas (Pulido 1998). While analysis of religion (both as a topic itself and as a contributing variable in other social processes) has regained noticeable credibility in academia, the role of spirituality, and more specifically individual spiritual practice as a contributing variable, has only marginally been addressed (Fox, Blanton and Morris 1998, Harris 1999, Kearns 1996, Johnson and Larson 1998). Spirituality, when it is addressed, is often noted for the demographic and social shifts in religious participation. In doing so, spirituality is relegated to a private, personal experience with little acknowledged

applications to social change (Marler and Hadaway 2002, Zinnbauer, et.al. 1997).

Another barrier to including spirituality in social analysis is the variation and abstraction of the working definitions that are available. To a large degree, this can be attributed to our current and inadequate language for such an experiential process. The narratives in this report offer the depth, variation, and substance to better understand the experiential and subjectively meaningful nature of spirituality. Having said that, it is still necessary to define the way we will use this term throughout this report. We begin with a basic, open-ended working definition of spirituality as any personal or collective experience that is perceived by the individual to connect him or her with a subjectively defined ideal, entity, or higher power.

3.

Spiritual Dimensions: Toward a Spirituality of Social Action

CONSISTENT WITH THE INCLUSIVE definitions of spirituality above, spirituality in the hands, hearts, and minds of the people we interviewed has multiple dimensions. Figure One provides an illustrative rather than exhaustive list of the dimensions of engaged spirituality. Although we separate these various dimensions, we do not intend to analyze each in depth. However, acknowledging the many dimensions of spiritual experience opens up multiple applications, including significant individual, community-based, and social transformations. What emerges is the implicit flexibility and application of spirituality at different times across different contexts and with different outcomes. For example, the Muslim students at UCLA employed their spirituality in innovative ways that united them with the local community around the UMMA Free Clinic and changed the public face of Muslim service in Los Angeles. As we shall see, spirituality provides a calming, centering, and therapeutic routine to keep per-

spective during the busy day of a San Francisco-based global interfaith network. A Buddhist monk in Los Angeles is physically filled with an empowering energy for serving those in need in her community. A Presbyterian minister working in San Francisco's Tenderloin goes on spiritual retreats to allow the voice of God to lead her ministry in new directions.

While we have separated each dimension for heuristic purposes, many of the people we interviewed experienced several, if not all, dimensions simultaneously. For example, one might feel all dimensions while practicing meditation or being filled by the Holy Spirit. Others might understandably argue that none of these may be reduced or extrapolated from the whole. And to a large degree, this is precisely our point. Spirituality is a qualitatively different element in individual and public life. Any of these dimensions, direction or empowerment, for example, might be accessible through non-religious practices, secular venues, or interpersonal relationships. What is unique about these dimensions is that they are fortified and made meaningful through a subjective, spiritual experience that is their foundation and their strength. It is this intangible spiritual experience and interpretation that supplies the additional motivation to change individual lives and, in

turn, the communities around them.

Finally, the dimensions listed here are not intended to be hierarchical, although some practitioners may experience or define different levels of spirituality in valued terms. For example, a transcendent communion with what one defines as the sacred may be conjured up when we traditionally think of the ultimate spiritual experience. And for some, this may be the objective of most of their spiritual practice. For example, while a dramatic, transcendent communion through visions may be one dimension of spiritual practice, it is neither necessary nor even necessarily desirable when pursuing spiritual direction to a tangible question. A more detailed experience by Rabbi Leonard I. Beerman illustrates these varying dimensions.

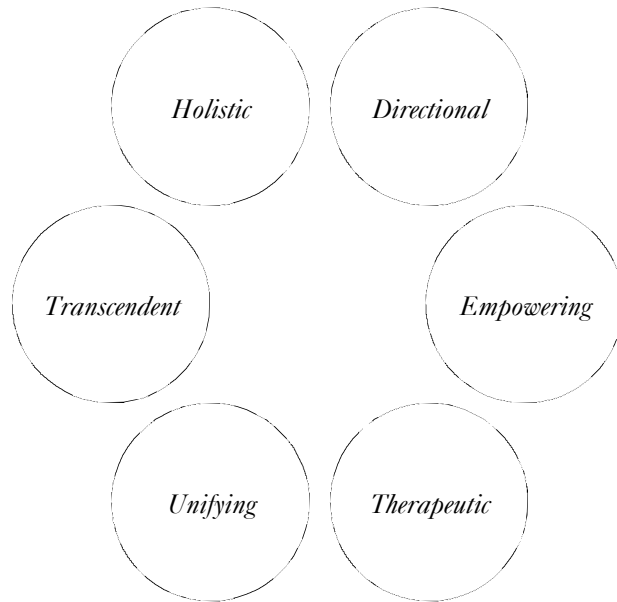


Figure 1: Dimensions of Spirituality

Holistic – practice or experience integrates all components of the self, including values, goals, morals, relationships, and interests. The “spiritual workplace” is one example.

Directional – practice is applied for discernment, clarity, or deciphering divine will. This practice is engaged with a specific agenda and is intentionally used for specific ends.

Empowering – practice provides motivation, energy, and a source of strength and/or perseverance. This energy may be interpreted as a powerful connection to the divine or sacred but also as a motivation to overcome barriers or engage in social action.

Therapeutic – practice is calming, centering, or “in the moment.” This dimension provides a respite from a frantic society or a sense of peace in times of crisis.

Unifying – practice establishes a connection with real or fictive others. Prayer schedules, may provide a sense of unity with a dispersed community of others similarly engaged in this practice and/or social service as a practice establishes a connection with the poor, the homeless, or humanity in general.

Transcendent – practice produces an experience of a different realm or reality. While communion with the sacred is experienced in all the above dimensions of practice, transcendence may be heightened when the self or the social world are forgotten.

RABBI LEONARD I. BEERMAN

One of the most prolific individuals we interviewed with regard to social activist commitments was Rabbi Leonard I. Beerman. A semi-retired rabbi of Leo Baeck Temple in Brentwood, his list of accomplishments is long. Well beyond the age that most people retire, Beerman is still affiliated with numerous local, national, and international organizations, all committed in some way to social justice. He is co-founder of the Interfaith Center to Reverse the Arms Race, co-chairman of the Los Angeles Jewish Commission on Sweatshops, and serves as a member of the Blue Ribbon Committee for Affordable Housing in Los Angeles, just to name a few.

Part of Rabbi Beerman's convictions regarding social change derive from the discrimination and anti-Semitism that he and his family experienced growing up in various towns and cities across America. Several hardships fell on Beerman throughout his life but he contributes his unflagging positive outlook to what he calls "Jewish Optimism." He explains, "Jewish optimism is rooted in the profound contempt for life as it is. If you don't have that contempt for life as it is, you are not an optimist. Because you can imagine the way of life different

from the one you live in, that's optimism."

While Beerman casts a high profile in the civic and religious community of Los Angeles, he is unassuming and intimate when it comes to describing meaningful spiritual practice. The practice that has the most impact and that he cherishes the most is the weekly observance of the Sabbath in his home. Beerman gathers together with his wife, his three daughters, and five grandchildren.

They begin each evening by welcoming the Sabbath and lighting the Sabbath candles. Beerman says a blessing over the wine, symbolic of the wine drunk for centuries of similar observances. A blessing is then said over the special braided bread. The family members kiss each other and the Rabbi, using the same blessing that Jacob used for his family in the Hebrew Bible, blesses his children and his grandchildren. Finally, the meal begins. Rabbi Beerman recalls, "When I divide or cut the bread for my grandchildren and then we pass it around the table I look at their hands and I look at my own hands and I become aware of something."

Beerman rephrases a passage attributed to Robert Bellah, a prominent sociologist of religion and culture. The phrase is about the hands of others that lift us from the womb and will ultimately lay us in

the grave. Beerman smiles and says, “The hands of others make our lives possible.” He reflects on the hands that have brought this bread to this table. There is his grandchild that offers a piece to her mother, the hands of his wife that bought the bread in the market, the bakers who produced the bread from its raw ingredients, and finally the workers, perhaps migrant day workers, who labored in the fields so that this bread could nourish the Rabbi’s loved ones. Beerman continues and thinks of the other workers in Los Angeles, the garment workers for instance, who help to make his life possible and, to whom in turn, he dedicates many of his working hours.

Rabbi Beerman’s intimate portrayal of the most spiritual moment of his week melds together various dimensions of spirituality. This spiritual reflection is holistic through its incorporation of the Rabbi’s family life, his religious calling and his work in social activism. The blessing he bestows connects him to a transcendent, sacred tradition of generations upon generations of fathers, as far back as Jacob, who passed along the same blessing to their children. It therapeutically calms and provides a satisfaction that he admits brings tears to his eyes. It provides connection or unity among his real family around the

table and the imagined workers possibly miles away. And it reaffirms and empowers his sustained commitments to the advocacy on behalf of workers in Los Angeles and worldwide. For Rabbi Beerman, all of these elements occur simultaneously and seamlessly within this one experience.

4.

Engaged Spirituality

MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS emerge from various experiences and cannot produce a static or exclusively private definition of spirituality. We agree that spirituality can be a positive, privatized experience of self-exploration that is consistent with many popular conceptions. However, to limit spirituality to this internal experience overdetermines the effects of privatization and obscures the inherent link to the personally motivated commitment to action found in our research. For the individuals we interviewed, the unifying, directional, holistic, and empowering dimensions of spirituality lend themselves to personal social service commitments and action. Building on already existing definitions of spirituality, we suggest an elaboration on the term already referred to in this report: engaged spirituality.

What we mean by engaged is that spirituality is both personally mutable and meaningful as well as socially embedded. There are three broad conceptual levels that this addresses. First, individuals actively

engage in tailoring or appropriating spiritual practice to resonate with their lived experience and in turn infuse daily life with spiritual qualities. While engaging in spirituality produces a very intimate, personal, and individualized relationship, this experience need not be private. Rabbi Beerman, for example, engages in the active construction of his spirituality when he envisions the hands of all of God's creation in the simple, practice of Friday dinner with his family. Additionally, by thinking about garment workers and migrant farmers, Beerman incorporates other elements of his "public" work into what may otherwise be interpreted as a "private" family ritual. This communion strengthens both his spiritual experience and his social commitments.

Second, in making spiritual practice personally meaningful, Rabbi Beerman is engaged by that spiritual interpretation in ways that brings tears to his eyes. Spiritual experiences impact individuals in emotional ways that are not rational or merely functional. Spirituality often acts back upon the person in expected and sometimes unexpected ways. The emotional experiences that arise when an individual is engaged by their spirituality are typically interpreted as benefits to both spiritual and social convictions.

Finally, we must also understand the way in

which this spiritual interpretation is engaged within broader social relations and processes. On the immediate level, Rabbi Beerman's family meal and the breaking of bread provides the setting and context for his spiritual experience. From a much broader perspective, Rabbi Beerman's lifelong and ongoing participation in labor activism provides a network of information about the plight of farm workers and their connection to his own daily life in ways that many Americans either chose not to acknowledge or are simply unaware of. Furthermore, Beerman's civic connections allow him to actively pursue his spiritually motivated, social justice commitments through institutional connections and organizations.

Spirituality, including private self-reflection, must be understood as engaged in, engaged by and engaged within individual, interpersonal, and social contexts. The concept of engaged spirituality as an integral part of individual and social life opens up a multitude of possibilities for experience and application. Engaged spirituality, in this sense, is a conceptual lens. Through this lens we may view personal spiritual development without any direct social implications as clearly as we may view personal spiritual development that sparks social involvement. As our interviews suggest, working for social change is one

of the fundamental ways that engaged spirituality is utilized, experienced, and best understood.

ENGAGED SPIRITUALITY AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

*I*t was not until we started talking to individuals that we began to uncover the extent to which personal spirituality plays a crucial role in public commitments and action. In the previous section, we developed our framework for engaged spirituality. In the following sections, we will focus on one particular aspect of engaged spirituality through a handful of vignettes from our interviews. Any given story might, and hopefully will, suggest other elements of engaged spirituality but our focus will be on the contributions for social transformation.

Overall, spirituality only becomes enacted for social transformation when the spiritual experiences find personal resonance with motivations and available patterns of action for bringing about social change. As we shall see, this often occurs in unpredictable ways and at conventional as well as unconventional times in a person's life. There are three general patterns that parallel our outline of engaged spirituality.

- > **INDIVIDUAL INTERACTION** - *individuals learn to connect the meaning of spirituality with values of social transformation through the significant others in their lives such as friends, family, religious leaders, organizational leaders, or co-workers, or through personal experiences that become indelibly marked as sparking spiritual and social change.*

- > **ORGANIZATIONAL OPPORTUNITY** - *individuals find organizational outlets that allow for, encourage, or foster spirituality as part of their institutional structure. Academic institutions are one place in particular that have the opportunity to spark these connections. This can be both positive and negative. For example, the lack of organizational opportunities may prompt individual innovation or challenges to institutional arrangements.*

- > **SPIRITUAL REVELATION** - *individuals perceive a transcendent connection to social transformation that comes directly from a spiritual experience. Spirituality remains a vital and dynamic element that can produce both traditional and creative motivations for social change and innovative actions to bring about this change.*

5.

Making Meaning and Finding Relevance

THE MOST ELEMENTARY FORM of spirituality for social engagement is an emotional resonance with all elements of daily life. As such, spirituality is profoundly enmeshed with both private and public dimensions, including social critiques or motivations for social change. But before spirituality may prompt social action, it must first be engaged in ways that are personally meaningful and motivating. The Reverend Glenda Hope illustrates the ways that people construct meaning by 1) selecting relevant practices that link her to her own faith tradition, 2) finding connections with a broader transcendent realm through practices outside her own faith tradition, and 3) reinterpreting her own biography and daily life as infused with spiritual communion.

THE REVEREND GLENDA HOPE

*I*t is only a short walk southwest from Union Square in San Francisco to what has been dubbed the “kill-zone” by San Francisco newspapers. The six-block area in the heart of the Tenderloin district has more homicides per year than any other neighborhood in San Francisco. The designer shops and historic hotels only blocks away are abruptly replaced by strings of liquor stores and one-room residential hotels, tattered drapes billow from several open windows overhead. Many residents behind the doors of these inexpensive hotels are dually diagnosed with more than one mental and/or physical disorder. Back on the street, prostitution, drug use, and drug dealing are conducted in broad daylight, bringing along high rates of associated petty and violent crime. Sadly, HIV rates also skyrocket and the Tenderloin claims the desperate distinction of being the most heavily impacted area for HIV infection in San Francisco.

The 30 linear blocks that make up the entire Tenderloin are home to an incredibly diverse mix of around 25,000 people. Many Southeast Asians settled in the area as immigrants or refugees throughout the 1980s and most of the children of the Tenderloin come from these households. The white population

tends to be elderly, predominantly living in one-room apartments or hotels and participating in communal meal plans. Latino and African-Americans make up equal parts of the community and a small number of Native Americans, Pakistanis, Indians, and Palestinians further diversify the neighborhood. Many others are homeless, driven out from the more affluent areas of the city. The commonality among such a diverse population is that they are all equally poor. While many others come to the Tenderloin for the day to engage in illegal activity, few who live here have made the choice to live here – few except the Reverend Glenda Hope.

For the past thirty years, Glenda Hope has made her home among the families and the elderly, the refugees and the prostitutes. Hers is not a story of judgmental missionary zeal or handing down charity from a lofty vantage. Hope is an active and integrated member of a community that she has built a life around, although, admittedly, not a life she would have envisioned for herself years ago.

Glenda Hope grew up in the south with the career goal of teaching physical education. Years of athletic training, however, took their toll, destroying her knees and refocusing her goals. After struggling to decide what path to take next, Hope received a

religious “calling.” She explained feeling an inner sense of clarity to pursue the ministry within the Presbyterian Church that she joined while in college in Virginia. Yet, while Hope was ready to be a minister, the Presbyterian Church at that time was not ready for her, or any woman for that matter. Hope passed several years as the director of Christian education at a large parish outside of Atlanta until the Church began to ordain women in 1965. It was during her time at the San Francisco Theological Seminary that she married and made the decision to stay in the city that is now her home.

Hope completed her ministry training rather easily yet needed a “call,” or job offer, from a specific ministry before the church would finally ordain her. Gender again stood in her way. While Hope had everything parishes and ministries were looking for, local churches were still not ready for a woman to fill these roles. “It never occurred to me that there would be people who wouldn’t want me because of my gender,” she remembered thinking. “I mean, if God wanted me, why wouldn’t they?” Today, Hope looks back at this response and realizes it was rather naïve. However, that reaction foreshadowed the innocent yet headstrong way she would engage her spirituality to shake up social conventions and restric-

tive barriers for herself and others.

Eventually, the prestigious Old First Presbyterian Church in San Francisco extended a half-time call and the now-ordained Reverend Glenda Hope began working with young adults. But after three years in congregational youth ministry, Hope felt called to reach out to the unchurched. Realizing that this would not happen within a traditional parish, Hope resigned from Old First Presbyterian and started the Young Adult Network on the edge of the Tenderloin. Along with their “house church,” the open doors of the new ministry offered cheap but good coffee and a variety of homemade treats. Without much effort, the Tenderloin quickly came to them. Their open door hospitality beckoned the homeless and the poor who were beginning to characterize the neighborhood even then.

Today, that coffeehouse ministry has become the multifaceted San Francisco Network Ministries and is often the first and last door through which many in the Tenderloin find help and respect. Founded and still under the direction of Reverend Hope, the San Francisco Network Ministries encompasses a vast array of services. These include: SafeHouse – a residential program with 24-hour staff

offering counseling, educational programs, health care, vocational skills, and money management; The Listening Post – a drop-in ministry at the Ambassador Hotel for people living with HIV or full-blown AIDS; Family Residence programs – in conjunction with Asian Neighborhood Design, offering 38 apartments for the working poor; and a Computer Training Center – a 1,600 square foot community center for email connections and job skills training.

Hope's groundbreaking work also includes the first and only street-access AIDS clinic in the Tenderloin and the first program for transgendered people who are HIV positive. The Tenderloin AIDS Resource Center has now been "spun off to be its own thing." Hope clarifies, "We're not empire building, we're model building – getting things started [and then] cutting them loose or giving them over to somebody else and then we do something nobody's doing."

SPIRITUAL APPROPRIATIONS

*T*he lifetime social commitment that Reverend Hope has stems from a lifetime spiritual commitment that is kept strong through an emotional resonance with her daily life. From our interview with Hope and others, we learned that individuals personally construct spiritual meaning and foster relevant connections to their daily life through several very broad levels of spiritual appropriation. This personal meaning infuses all aspects of a person's life, including public social action.

The ways Reverend Hope maintains the spiritual foundations for her social action are not always traditional. For example, Hope takes part in revived Christian practices, such as weekly Taize meetings, that connect her with the past traditions of her faith. The chanting, singing, and communal prayer of Taize communities tap a collective tradition that connects her to a lineage of spiritual and often socially engaged forbearers, and also reclaims religious practices in non-hierarchical or non-institutional ways. At this historical/cultural level of appropriation, individuals rediscover or reclaim elements of their faith tradition that were either previously unknown to them, perceived as forbidden, or routinized through ritual

performance. Beyond Taize, other examples of resurrecting traditional practices include Ignatian meditation, rediscovered Jewish mystical texts, and the rise in contemplative prayer. At this level, the weight of religious history and tradition returns as a complementary component of subjective spiritual meaning.

Benedictine Sister Dorothy Stone is another example of someone who finds that the rich traditions of the Catholic Church provided a depth and stability to her daily contemplation. Without reclaiming these historical, religious antecedents, Sister Stoner believes her spirituality would seem free floating or ephemeral. Personally, she likes to meditate on two Benedictine tenets: stability and conversion. While these tenets may appear contradictory, Stoner's contemplation on these ideas revealed that conversion, literally a constant turning rather than a static event, is dependent upon a sense of stability in her own life. One personally potent source of that stability for Stoner is through her understanding of Catholic ritual, tradition, and culture. From this place of stability, Stoner is able to push and explore new dimensions in her work and social commitments. These connections to the past, while perhaps accessible in institutional religious ritual, are often redefined and individually experienced through contem-

plative prayer or meditation in new and empowering ways.

Along with practices from her own faith tradition, Reverend Hope also incorporates other traditions into her routine as additional pathways for spirituality. Tai Chi, for example, is an eastern meditative practice that has provided great spiritual, contemplative, and physical benefits. Interfaith participation expands the repertoire of practice that Hope has at her disposal. The ease with which Reverend Hope combines Tai Chi and Taize, for example, allows her to have a variety of experiences beyond those traditionally found within her faith tradition alone.

This spirituality across traditions embodies a social/universal level of appropriation. Whereas rediscovering one faith tradition has the potential of particularizing spiritual engagement in meaningful ways (either individually or denominationally), the universality of core spiritual experience across traditions provides a transcendent connection. The universal aspects of spiritual practice are perceived as commonalities that override the differences of practice or form. Sister Joan Chittister, an outspoken Benedictine nun, agrees. She states, "Though every denomination is a finger pointing at the moon, every denomination leads us to the greater religious reality.

That means then that all of the mystical, contemplative dimensions will eventually arrive at the notion that God transcends culture and denomination.”

The universality of spiritual experience constructs a perceived community of individuals across faiths and time engaged in similar experiences and missions.

Rabbi Rami Shapiro of Metivta, a Jewish spiritual resource center with interfaith seminars and educational series, elaborates on universal appropriations from his own experience with Jewish mystics and mystical texts from other faiths.

I am interfaith. My whole approach to religion is inter-faith. I see religion as dialects of a language; an ineffable language. There's a core reality that religions come out of and point back into and you can learn to get to that reality from a variety of teachers, variety of paths, and you can learn more about that reality by listening to the various dialects of that language. Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, Hindu, Buddhist, etcetera.

By engaging his own faith's historical lineage of mysticism and incorporating other forms of practice, Rabbi Shapiro produced a new spirituality that transformed his definition of self. Yet ongoing practice is

an essential aspect of Shapiro's engagement with spirituality and the potential that it holds for social change. He explained, “If [spirituality is] just an intellectual thing, it doesn't go too far. If you can tie it into a meditative practice, chanting practice, some kind of ongoing daily spiritual work, then I think you really transform the individual. And the individual can go out and transform the world.” It is this inherent potential to “transform the world” that is most significant for our task at hand.

Reverend Hope is working to transform her world and views spirituality as key to accomplishing this. Along with the other appropriations of spirituality that Hope uses, she also integrates her everyday experiences as part of her meditation and contemplation. For example, as a meditative practice Hope envisions each woman currently staying in her care and “rests on [her] for a moment.” She then passes on to envision the women that have come through her life that day, all the staff and volunteers and anyone else that may come into her mind.

Incorporating mundane routines into spiritual practice was common across our interviews. On this individual/personal level of spiritual appropriation, personal engagement and integration of spirituality into individual patterns of life makes this realm of

experience especially meaningful and personally applicable. This individual level of appropriation allows for spirituality to manifest itself at any moment of one's private and public life and releases sacred experience from sacred physical sites, symbols, or contexts. Spirituality is fused with daily life and, for all the people we interviewed, that includes working for social change.

Personal spiritual appropriation is especially significant to the Networks Ministries. Hope finds that through a personally meaningful spiritual practice she both sustains her commitments and gains insight into "God's reading" of her work. God's reading does not only come through traditional spiritual practice; it also comes through her daily work and the people she serves. Hope admits, "I think if [seeing God in your work] doesn't happen to somebody then...either they're in the wrong job or they're doing it wrong." Sometimes seeing God through work is a difficult process.

One of Reverend Hope's examples illustrating this point reflects the dire situation of life in the Tenderloin. One night, two friends living in one of the local residential hotels were drinking. An argument broke out. One man had borrowed a small television set and two dollars from the other and had not

returned any of it. The one man stumbled back to his room, retrieved the television he had borrowed, threw it at the other man, said nothing about the two dollars that he also owed and stomped back to his room. Minutes later, the man wanting his two dollars pounded on the door and shot his friend to death. He killed his friend with a gun he had only recently bought for protection after being mugged by a local gang. For Hope, this incident symbolizes all the social strain and loopholes of the Tenderloin; addiction, gun control, gangs, crime, and the economic fear that leads to killing a friend for a couple of dollars. At the memorial service for this man, Hope questioned her faith,

When I stood up and put on that stole and those people looked at me and I knew they wanted me to say something that would bring meaning or comfort, I just thought, "I can't do it." I was so mad at God. "Where are you? Why is this happening?" I wanted to run out of the room and those people were just waiting for me to say something. And so I said, "Let us say this together. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." And they all knew it and they all said it. Their faith, their faith lifted me up out of the pit. It wasn't me lifting them, it was them lifting me. And that happens over and over and over.

Hope's community commitments are inseparable from the spirituality that motivates them and the spirituality that is found through them. The application of Hope's spirituality through social action is not limited to the remarkable work in the Tenderloin alone. Hope feels compelled to bring these stories, these voices, and these lives to the broader public arena. Unique memorial services for the homeless take place several days a week. When we spoke with Hope she said,

I'll be performing a memorial service for five people who died homeless. And that will be conducted on the street, directly across from City Hall, just to remind City Hall that people are dying on the street. At Christmas I organize, and have for fifteen years, an interfaith memorial service for all the homeless who died in San Francisco that year. We started out fifteen years ago with sixteen names and we've had now as many as a hundred and eighty-three.

Reverend Hope's story illustrates many of the levels on which individuals tailor and interpret a personally meaningful spirituality. The various appropriations indicate the ways in which spirituality becomes resonant with the public and private ele-

ments of daily life as well as informs social action.

Hope interprets her own biography through a spiritual lens that shapes the way she views her past as well as her present commitments and future ambitions.

6.

Spiritual Conversions and Contributions

THE PREVIOUS SECTION revealed that spiritual appropriation creates a personally resonant spirituality that infuses the daily routines, struggles, and joys of individual life beyond simple introspection. This personal spiritual relevance spills over from the private into the public arena and potentially includes motivations that propel individuals into their communities in transforming ways. In this section, we turn more directly to the ways that spirituality engages individuals through powerful formative moments and provides spiritual benefits that contribute to social commitments.

FORMATIVE MOMENTS

As we learned above, Reverend Glenda Hope has built her life around a very progressive commitment to social change. While in many ways, Hope's path to her current position involved a series of accidents, blocked avenues, and serendipitous circumstances, a deep spiritual stirring has given solid direction over the past thirty years. Hope's career-long dedication to spiritually informed social service was awakened at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s funeral in 1968; an event that (using the Biblical reference to the conversion of Paul) she terms her "Damascus experience." The confluence of social justice and spirituality that she felt at that service was a catalyst for Hope's own convictions. "I don't know what would have become of me if that hadn't happened," Hope says.

Across our interviews, a variety of formative moments, like Hope's Damascus experience, are often responsible for heightening commitments to spiritual life and social action. These moments stand out as deeply and emotionally connected to individual biographies. Personal transformations took many forms. For example, some people, like Pastor Isaac Canales of Mission Ebenezer Family Church, had clear and dramatic religious experiences character-

ized by visions and a direct communion with Jesus. Others, like Mudafer Al-Tawash of Islamic Relief, had successive life experiences informed by prayer that slowly transformed his commitments in an evolutionary rather than event-based manner.

While religious conversions clearly were the case with many, other people experienced significantly powerful academic formations, such as being introduced to liberation theology in a classroom led by Gustavo Gutierrez, or secular experiences, such as being jailed during the Civil Rights movement. These alternative formative experiences occur along with or in place of religious transformations, much like Hope's experience of a conjoined spiritual and secular transformation.

Still others experienced the integration of spirituality and social action as a continuation of the only way that they knew to express their commitments. Rather than having clear formative moments, this sense of a socially informed spirituality was based in the religious heritage they received from their family, religious institution, community, or culture. A few respondents saw the combination of religion and social service as the only and "natural" way to understand religion. While some of these experiences may not be traditionally or exclusively considered reli-

gious, all were discussed in deeply spiritual ways, eroding these external categories of religious, academic, and secular.

Returning to Reverend Hope's "Damascus experience" at the funeral of Martin Luther King, Jr., it is important to note that spirituality and spiritually motivated social change is not merely an echo of more fundamental, or more "real," social or political philosophies. In fact, it is quite the opposite in her case. Hope explains her view about the work she does today by saying, "We're very political people. We always have been. We feel very strongly that our faith impels us to challenge the structures of our society that hurt people and break people or any other part of God's creation for that matter." Hope says that political ideals and values are very important in the work that they do in the Tenderloin. However, she clearly stresses that it is faith that propels this work first, acting as the initial spark and engine to power their political and social action.

SPIRITUAL BENEFITS

Spiritual formations often act as catalysts that ignite spiritual and social commitments. However, ongoing spiritual practice that nurtures this relationship is crucial to most people we interviewed. Across a variety of faith traditions and types of spiritual practice, there are four main perceived benefits of spiritual engagement that recurred across our interviews: 1) Loss of ego, 2) Self as a vessel, 3) Purpose, and 4) Sustainability. The Reverend Man Yee Shih exemplifies the way that these benefits are perceived.

THE REVEREND MAN YEE SHIH

Approximately twenty miles east of Los Angeles is the predominantly Chinese and Chinese-American suburb with the Spanish name, Hacienda Heights. Banks and real estate signs beckon in both English and Chinese along the main road that leads off the freeway and up into a small, rounded ridge of foothills. After passing fast-food chains and strip malls, the boulevard begins to climb and soon the stunning gold-tiled roof of the Hsi Lai Buddhist Temple commands attention. Built in 1988, Hsi Lai, literally translated as “coming to the West,” is a major spiritual and cultural center for the thousands that visit each year. Once inside its formidable gates, it is easy to see why. The traditional Chinese architecture captivates the imagination while the vast open courtyard leading to the main temple provides visual relief from the ornate detail and Buddhist sculptures that surround it.

Shaved-headed monks, mostly women, in saffron-colored robes, walk in and out of the maze of temple rooms that circle the courtyard. Most are from Taiwan and many do not speak English; however flyers for English dharma classes dot the bulletin boards throughout the temple. In the far corner, a tearoom

is open for those who need a break from the heat or those who have just come out from chanting mantras in the incense-shrouded, grand, main temple.

Hsi Lai Temple, and the community oriented Buddha’s Light International Association, serve the spiritual and social needs of the area through interpersonal and family counseling, daycare, elderly housing, and educational donations to local schools. Hsi Lai representatives also stay active in a variety of interfaith partnerships throughout Los Angeles and Southern California.

The Reverend Man Yee Shih is one of the monks who lives at the temple. Originally from Taiwan, Man Yee moved to Hsi Lai after giving up a very profitable real estate career in Toronto. Her organizational skill, personal charisma, and command of the English language have given her prominence in the interfaith community in Los Angeles. During our interview she described the contact that the nuns have with the community on a daily basis. While the nuns mostly serve the Buddhist families from the area and the Asian visitors that pass through, they must also deal with unexpected visitors. Man Yee explained one particular interaction that encapsulates in a very personal way the benefits of spiritual practice.

One afternoon, a mentally ill, homeless man entered the inner courtyard of the lavish temple grounds. The nuns at the information table were concerned that the man might hurt himself or others in the temple and called for Man Yee to intervene. Man Yee, who is no taller than five foot two inches, quickly arrived and escorted the man to a private sitting room just off the courtyard. In the few yards between the information booth where she met him and the door of the sitting room, Man Yee drew upon her years of spiritual practice in a deliberate way. She repeatedly recited the name of the compassionate Buddha. “And it works!” she told us with a broad smile. Once inside the sitting room, Man Yee was able to calm the man and explore what types of services might be needed to deal with his problem. The chanting of the name of the compassionate Buddha benefited Man Yee in several ways that we found to be consistent in perceived effects across interviews, across faiths, and across modes of spiritual practice. Such benefits often occur simultaneously, while at other times, they may occur sporadically and individually. These benefits are not hierarchical or additive, rather, they illustrate the range of contributions that may arise from spiritual practice.

LOSS OF EGO

An expert at meditation and practice, Man Yee was able to clear her mind of self-interest, in this case, fear and anxiety, through the mantra of the compassionate Buddha. Man Yee refers to this as detachment and suggests that when it is achieved through meditation or contemplation, there are no longer feelings of fear, worry, competition, or anxiety. Detachment allowed Man Yee to put aside her own initial anxiety, compounded by that of the nuns at the information booth, and respond to this man without fear. Across disciplines, this feeling of selflessness is one of the most commonly mentioned direct effects of individual spiritual practice. The self and self-motivations such as material considerations, status, or the stress of modern living, dissolve. Spiritual practice, as one interviewee noted, “shuts down” the ego-driven level of daily life and allows for the opening up of another level of consciousness or perspective. While this is often an individually experienced element of practice, it is also beneficial organizationally. For example, some organizations incorporate scheduled spiritual practice into their day in order to refocus on the meaning and motivations for the work they do.

SELF AS A VESSEL

Connected in this case to the loss of ego, spiritual practice empties the self in order to become a receptacle or vehicle for spiritual intervention and direction. By clearing her mind of ego driven thoughts, Man Yee described feeling the energy and power of the Buddha filling her body. “The energy,” she said, “was within me at that time.” Man Yee received a physical sensation that provided the compassion to properly transcend the immediate concerns of the here and now to serve this homeless man. Being filled as a vessel is often described across interviews as spiritual energy or power that can be redirected in real ways with real consequences. While Man Yee found this through the Buddha of compassion, others described this benefit in equally vivid and physically experienced ways such as speaking in tongues. Similarly, a devout Muslim explained his experience of prayer throughout the day saying, “When the body bows down, the soul lifts up.”

The experience of Man Yee is an example of a physically experienced spirituality, but nearly all of the individuals we spoke with mentioned turning themselves over in prayer or contemplation to the divine will for spiritual direction, “discernment,” or guidance. Allowing God or some divine voice to

reach them once they have “shut down” the self-motivations and stresses of the day was, for many, the reason they engaged in practice. Reverend Hope, for example, explains her biannual retreats as a time to listen for God’s voice. She nearly always comes back with ways to reshape the Tenderloin. As she describes,

I spend most of my time by myself. And I just have time to be silent. There’s actually a kind of saying in Network Ministries — don’t let Glenda go on retreats or she’ll come back with something else for us to do. It’s true. While I was on retreat I felt really clearly that we’re going to build an apartment building, which was a totally ridiculous idea. What do we know about construction? We had nothing for collateral. We didn’t know anything, but here it is [the building we are sitting in]. It’s an award-winning building. It’s astonishing. You just decide — “Do you really believe this is what God is calling?” And right. You just don’t wait to get all your ducks in a row. You just start — you just start and say, “This is what we’re going to do.”

Radical and even irrational inspiration emerges through spiritual engagement and practice. Opening

oneself to spiritual guidance trumps secular practicality in this particular case as in others. Reverend Hope is not deterred by material or organizational limitations. After determining a spiritual direction, she views all other concerns as secondary issues that will fall into place. The spiritual communion that provides the inspiration and direction translates into a sense of duty and strength to carry this out.

PURPOSE

*B*eyond individual benefits and motivations, spiritual practice connects individuals to a larger moral and otherworldly trajectory. Reverend Man Yee invoked the name of the Buddha of compassion in order to be filled with the compassionate energy that would allow her to serve according to the ancient Buddhist moral principles of the Bodhisattva. The energy Man Yee was filled with was not hers alone to squander as an internal spiritual moment, but to be employed for a social purpose. This sense of moral purpose is felt individually, but spiritual practice reminded many interviewees of the historical, cultural, and socially directed significance of their actions. Just as appropriating traditional rituals or texts was a way of making spirituality personally meaningful, engaging in these practices produces a sense of moral purpose. Sacred texts were one of the most common ways that individuals connected with their moral histories, often spending the initial hours of the morning reading in order to set their “moral compass” for the day. Further, individually enacted communal practices such as the daily office or the scheduled prayers in Islam linked individuals with a sense of purpose gained from a collective and dispersed spiri-

tual community engaged in similar practices around the world and across time. For others, a moral mandate or social purpose is clear from the spiritual relationship itself. Reverend Sandie Richards of the Church in Ocean Park said she often hears at rallies and demonstrations that she “doesn’t sound like a religious leader.” But, she continues, “If only they knew it was my love of Jesus that brought me here in the first place!”

SUSTAINABILITY

Cultivating a meaningful practice provides confidence and a personal spiritual strength required to participate in social commitments on a daily basis or over time. As Man Yee explains,

Meditation helps us to be mindful. When we are mindful [there are] a lot of things that we can handle...When we have a moment of our own time, like when we're walking, or sitting, or eating, we always recite the name of the Buddha in our mind because it reminds us of [his] teachings. Once we try to memorize what we learn, and practice it in our daily lives, when a difficult situation comes, we will be able to handle it.

As Man Yee indicates, individual spiritual practice allows for the continued motivation and commitment to difficult daily routines and social commitments. For example, the day-to-day social service provided in the Tenderloin is incredibly trying on the workers and volunteers that come in and out of the variety of ministries that Reverend Hope oversees. Hope perceives her spirituality and deep sense of faith as responsible for her ability to sustain her com-

mitments and rigorous work pace and she sees this in her workers as well. She says, “In general, not exclusively, the people who stay and whose hearts are kept tender are the religious people. You have to have a transcendent faith and a transcendent view of life to keep doing this.... And in general, it’s the religious people, and the Marxist, interestingly — the people who clearly know why they are there and have a larger view of human history than just the immediate.”

While we have been illustrating the ways that spirituality is used for specific ends or for inspiration, we should clarify that this is not a predictable or uniform experience. Unexpected experiences occur in spiritual practice as some of our interviews suggest. While sometimes feeling the presence of God, there are days when “I just don’t feel anything – and that’s okay too” said Sister Dorothy Stoner about her meditation practice. Rabbi Beerman agrees about spiritual experience or inspiration. He admits, “I can feel it anywhere. I don’t always feel it in the synagogue and I don’t always feel it in prayer. Sometimes I feel alienated in the synagogue. And I can’t call it up at will. It isn’t a constant in my life... I can’t make it happen.” A Pentecostal pastor explains that speaking in tongues sometimes “just kicks in” and might provide clarity on a certain issue that he had been

struggling with throughout the week. The point here is that engaged spiritual practice is dynamic. In other words, it is unpredictable, elusive, and enigmatic as well as directed, pragmatic, and intentional. As such, engaged spirituality in practice is best understood as a process of both intended and unintended consequences.

CONTRIBUTIONS IN COMMUNITIES,
NETWORKS, AND RELATIONSHIPS

*T*he benefits or contributions of individual spiritual practice that we have outlined illustrate one segment of spirituality and social transformation. While our project focused entirely on individuals working within social venues or religious communities, another segment of understanding spirituality and social transformation is the personal spirituality of the individuals they serve. Reverend Alexia Salvatiera, who works with Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice, related that spiritual counseling is sought as often and at times more often than social services in the Central American Pico Union district of Los Angeles. She recalled returning from an emergency relief center one evening after September 11th. The community was experiencing the economic ramifications of a diminishing tourist economy that was leading to layoffs of immigrant hotel and restaurant workers. Salvatiera left the doors of her church open. Inside, solitary women sat dispersed among the pews, sobbing and seeking transcendent answers to seemingly insurmountable odds.

The spiritual commitments in the communities are also connected to social commitments. The same

Pico Union neighborhood had other residents who had been part of ongoing labor disputes at a large university near their community. Reverend Altagracia Perez, an Episcopal priest, was asked by the members of the local union to come in as a spiritual, rather than strategic, advisor and answer the meaningful questions that were plaguing members of the movement. She remembers being moved by a woman who sincerely asked through her tears if it was okay in God's eyes to continue her hunger strike in support of a living wage for her family. The spiritual consolation and validation of this labor movement, facilitated by Reverend Perez, spurred on flagging members who were questioning the moral and practical consequences of their actions.

Regardless of their theological orientation, we found people drawing on spiritual resources in their struggle for social justice and social service work. In fact, the process, relationships, and contexts of the work itself suggested that spirituality was inseparable from their work experience. Beyond any explicit spiritual message that might be passed on, the work of serving others, as discussed above, became defined as an individual and very intimate form of spiritual practice. The process enables transformation for both the worker and the individuals they serve. As

Reverend Hope stated above, “Their faith lifted me up out of the pit. It wasn’t me lifting them, it was them lifting me.”

The embedded place of spirituality in the entire process of social service requires that one caveat be reiterated. At the beginning of this report we indicated the limitation of language in capturing the spiritual experience. While typologies of spiritual experience and spiritual benefits are necessary for conveying the spiritual connections to social transformation, individual experience is often irreducible to formulas. Even though some of the people we interviewed were profoundly articulate in expressing their ideas on spirituality, others stumbled in equally profound ways indicating the complexity of spirituality in the fuller process of social service relationships.

Father Michael Kennedy is the pastor of the Dolores Mission in East Los Angeles. The church and one of its nonprofit organizations, Proyecto Pastoral, house up to fifty men a night who have recently crossed the border. The men are given showers, meals, skills training, HIV testing, and English classes. They are able to stay three months and are then helped to get a job in the community. The church sponsors community watch programs run by mothers to protect their children from gangs and

drugs, food distribution for up to 200 people and houses the offices of Father Greg Boyle’s Jobs for a Future. One of the most intimate services that Father Kennedy provides is meditation, counseling, and legal intervention for incarcerated teens at Juvenile Hall. Kennedy tellingly vacillates as he tries to pin down what it is that ultimately brings about personal and lasting change among his often gang-affiliated charges. While spirituality is important, the context in which that spirituality is engaged is crucial. He says,

[W]hat really counts is the relationship between you and the other person in the group... Obviously this particular [Ignatian meditation technique] of bringing people to God and each other is important. It’s like if I went in there and was just someone interested in doing meditation with them, it doesn’t work. But it’s much more than that. It’s who they are. “Eldering,” “mentoring,” “father figure” – to me those are irrelevant. But, to really be there for people? That’s what counts. So if you can have something in your bag and have enough spirituality to add to it, that’s richer. But if someone else comes in and does this other type of practice, and doesn’t really connect to them...I don’t know. Love is what transforms us.

7.

Engaged Spirituality — A Narrative Account

THE PREVIOUS SECTIONS discussed the ways that spirituality becomes personally meaningful and the benefits that it provides for social transformation among individuals and communities. In this section, all aspects of engaged spirituality are represented through one example. Lee DeLeon and the various ministries at Templo Calvario illustrate the processes through which spirituality is engaged by individuals, the way spirituality engages individuals experientially, and the degree to which spirituality is engaged within other social structures. Each level illustrates the contributions that spirituality provides for social action as well as the limitations of social structures.

LEE DELEON

Lee DeLeon’s soft-spoken voice echoes in the cavernous sanctuary of Templo Calvario in sharp contrast to the vibrant worship services that typically take place here. A massive, bilingual, Hispanic congregation in Santa Ana, Templo Calvario is like many other Assemblies of God churches on any given Sunday morning. Row upon row of chairs bustle with welcoming fellowship as live music fills the air from the altar. However in significant ways, Templo Calvario, and Lee DeLeon are unique models in the Hispanic community and the Pentecostal community in general.

DeLeon is an exceptionally humble man although his organizational skills and successes have made him very sought after by more than a few churches with lucrative offers. DeLeon is involved with various organizations such as We Care Southland in Los Angeles, City Teams Ministries in Miami, and his own consortium of local and global food distribution groups called the Compassion Network. Beyond DeLeon’s organizational and networking skills, he stands out as part of a relatively new but growing group of socially concerned and socially active Pentecostals who are motivated by

their spiritual beliefs and relationships. DeLeon praises other Pentecostal groups such as Teen Challenge and Victory Outreach that are doing spiritually motivated work among drug addicts and “gang-bangers” but admits,

Through the years we’ve not seen a lot of involvement as far as Pentecostal churches and the Assembly of God... What I don’t understand is why more people aren’t involved in social justice. Living out their faith in that dimension. I mean, the passages are there. The mandate is there. It hits me, time and again, especially when I come to passages that speak about the poor, speak about those that are bound by sin, drugs, alcoholism, you name it. Those things — I think they really jump out of the Word, jump out of the Bible. They just speak tons to me and motivate me to do more.

DeLeon’s current commitments to social service took root early on in his childhood. Both his father and mother were formidable examples for how to lead a spiritually and socially responsible life. DeLeon’s father “came to Christ” in California before Lee was born. He moved to Texas with this newfound “fire in his heart,” but found little Pentecostal outlet in the

Texan small-town religious communities. DeLeon's father instead turned his zeal to the social needs in the communities that he moved through as a traveling salesman. He particularly tried to help immigrants as much as possible. Since the Bracero Program was very active throughout Texas at that time, he found plenty of opportunities. DeLeon's mother was equally committed in her own way to helping those less fortunate. Their family lived across the street from the railroad tracks. Lee remembers watching the hobos eating the food his mother prepared off the family's plates and drinking out of the family's glasses. These impressions and convictions burned deeply in DeLeon's memory. Years later they were solidified in his own spiritual transformation and are sustained today through his daily practice.

Living in Orange County, California and serving a growing, often-poor immigrant community, is very different from DeLeon's childhood in rural Texas. At the helm of several charitable outreach organizations, DeLeon finds it difficult to see more need than he has products and services to fill and his faith is essential in the face of this disparity. He admits his own form of personal spiritual practice drives, directs and sustains this work. But Lee's practice differs from

others around him. Lee's brother, Danny, for example, is the pastor of Templo Calvario and also is sustained by spiritual practice. Danny enjoys being outside and takes prayer walks each morning as his practice. During his walk, Danny says, "I lay out the day to [God]. I say, 'Here's my life, spirit and body. You take it. I am your child. Do with me what you want.'" Others people in the congregation, Lee realizes, have visions and dreams. But for Lee, reading the scriptures is his practice of choice. "I guess [that's] the way I'm made. I can't think of anything else that really sustains my walk, that keeps me motivated." Reading scripture however is not a passive act for DeLeon and prayer is not just about reciting words. Both are interactive experiences. He explains,

I find a command or a question that's rather strong and really communicates a powerful message. I take time to highlight those types of things. So it's more of a study than just a casual reading of the Bible. And when I pray, one thing I encourage other people to do is not just a lot of talking but a lot of listening...If you were to walk in my little office at home you wouldn't hear me talking much. I do spend a little bit of time just really bringing some things before the

Lord. Most of the time I just listen. I listen to what I just read; I listen to what He has to say. A whole lot of listening and just kinda being open to what the spirit would say to me during that moment, that time.

Engaged In:

MULTI-DIRECTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

The way that spirituality is implemented has as many possible directions as the way it is practiced. Lee DeLeon illustrates that spiritual practice and spirituality in general have many dimensions and are utilized along a range of possible applications and experiences. For example, while his brother prays as he walks, Lee prefers the solitude of his office where he typically sits in silence. Lee does not judge or envy those who have visions or dreams, but understands that their path and their connections differ from his own.

Differences arise as well in the ways that this spirituality is applied. Part of Lee's experience is based in the overwhelming cries from the scripture that he feels will not be silenced until some action is taken to help the poor, the needy, or the addicted. For Lee and others, there are both inward and outward actions that help rectify the individualistic, privatized, and narcissistic critiques often leveled at spirituality. Lee acknowledges that his "gift" is an organizational mind. And, in fact, the models that he has constructed in the field of social services have helped many other denominations and congregations

across the country. His brother, on the other hand, directs his spirituality into his gift for preaching. An engaged spirituality then, is best understood as a multi-linear, multi-directional resource or element that may be engaged in various ways, for various experiences, and for various purposes.

Lee DeLeon engages his spiritual practice in ways that make sense to him, provide meaning in his life, and propel him in ways that utilize his gifts for social service. His own biography has a unique affect on the socially directed nature of his current spiritual sense of social mission. However the night that DeLeon was saved by the Holy Spirit provides a more dramatic example of the ways that spirituality can also engage individuals in vividly experiential and emotional ways. DeLeon confesses with a shy smile that he's had "some real supernatural experiences." One of those experiences changed his life. He recalls,

One night, [my friend] and another fella, we were just sharing what God was doing. Some type of a presence, some powerful presence, like an angel, visited with us, and I remember [my friend] was able to see the angel, I couldn't see the angel. But I remember the angel giving us instructions to lay hands on me. It

was then that I received what they call in the church, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, [and I] spoke in other tongues...I'll never forget it. It was so powerful. So awesome. I'm always reminded that there's that special touch in my life that needs to be shared with others, and I know that! I know that there's a definite call to my life to reach out to hurting people.

The emotional and intangible weight that this spiritual engagement provided had a qualitatively significant impact on DeLeon's life. Yet, DeLeon was young at the time he received his "baptism" and not fully committed to a career of social service. "I wasn't really sure what this was all about," he says. "[Speaking in tongues] was a fun thing, if you will." Even if his motivations had been solidly in place at that time, the Pentecostal church did not have the organizational mechanisms available to provide a social service outlet. Over time, DeLeon learned to develop his "gift of tongues" and incorporate it into his daily practice in ways that grew along with and contributed to his commitments to social action. He explained,

There are sometimes points in my time of prayer where I no longer know what to say and I maybe don't listen and I need to express what's in my heart, and when we run short of words...That's when the gift kicks in... I don't really understand it, but there's something going on and I know it's very pure worship. That's probably the purest worship you can ever experience. Because then it's just you and God and it's your soul and your spirit and God just really communicating. Very honestly I can feel myself being built up. Sometimes I'm driving and I've sung a couple of songs on the radio and they move me, but I want to continue to worship God, so there, once again I use that gift of tongues. Sometimes I just, for five minutes, fifteen, whatever, I'm just in tongues worshipping my God. Very uplifting, boy you can really feel the power. Of course a lot of times it moves your emotions so you break up a little, start shedding some tears...All of a sudden, it impacts me in a powerful way. An insight that I had not considered as I read the Word becomes very clear, it comes to light. So that baptism of the Holy Spirit is a dimension that I would never ignore. It's a part of my daily walk.

Engaged By:

DYNAMIC ENGAGEMENT

The sense of power and energy that DeLeon receives reminds us of the benefits of spiritual practice discussed earlier. However, there is a dynamism in what DeLeon discusses as well. This parallels repeated references in our interviews to the mystical and non-rational elements of spiritual practice. The dynamic component, as DeLeon so successfully captures, was one of the most significant aspects of a rich, rewarding, and meaningful experience, yet this spiritual payout, for lack of a better term, is not a reliably expected outcome of spiritual engagement. DeLeon admits that “the gift kicks in,” almost independently of his own volition. Similarly, he does not understand the words used in this communication but is touched deeply by the connection that it fosters. DeLeon relates the joy of the experience. At other times he expresses tears that come out of the overwhelming emotion and still other times the feeling of power.

As part of his daily spiritual journey, the gift of tongues corroborates the social mandates that DeLeon sees “jumping out of the Bible” and motivates him to do more. One element of DeLeon’s

career has been sharply attuned to bringing about this change within the institutional structure of the Assemblies of God. DeLeon suggests that part of the problem is generations of Pentecostals who may have exceptionally devout spiritual lives, but, who grew up without seeing organized social service outreach within their own congregations. This is what DeLeon sees as his calling. He says,

I'm determined to be a model. To be different is to say, "I can also demonstrate some of these principals. I can also live them out!" There's a constant challenge and motivation in that dimension...I'm just determined to really see it through, and do what is in my heart to do. And I believe what's in my heart is to do what scripture tells me I should be doing.

Being a model and providing an example opens doors for others who are spiritually committed but unable to act on their convictions. DeLeon also sees personal spiritual transformations within the leadership of other Pentecostal churches that have spawned successful outreach organizations. These individuals, DeLeon says, have been touched by the Holy Spirit in similar ways and have been reminded by God of their own experiences of poverty, the pain that it

causes, and the shame that keeps people from seeking help. Reevaluating personal success as a debt to help those still struggling with poverty is an awakening often sparked by a personal spiritual encounter.

While Pentecostals engage in and are engaged by their spirituality, these experiences are located within social and institutional contexts that in the past have limited their outlets for social service. DeLeon address the denominational missed opportunities for directing spiritual motivations, but describes other structural barriers as well. The economic and legal influences, especially on the large immigrant Pentecostal communities in Southern California, exclude many who are otherwise committed to bringing about change on their on block and beyond. DeLeon is moved and impressed by the spiritual passions of the immigrant pastors who "set up shop opening churches." However, these churches do not have the economic ability to provide for their own congregation, let alone the broader community around them. The growing social needs among the immigrant churches have started to produce organizational change within the denomination. In many instances, DeLeon has been leading the way.

One of the projects that DeLeon has been run-

ning for 25 years is *Obras de Amor*, or Works of Love. Open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4, Obras de Amor distributes everything from bananas, to cleaning supplies, to canned beans. On the day we walked through the large warehouse at one end of Templo Calvario's complex, there was even a dishwasher, still in its box, waiting for delivery to a family in need. Ten to twelve volunteers work each day, unpacking boxes from overstocked grocery stores or slow moving items from distribution centers, and repacking boxes for distribution to the 50 churches that take part both in providing volunteers and receiving goods and services. DeLeon admits with a hopeful rather than frustrated tone, "It could grow into hundreds [of churches] if we just had the food to give them."

Engaged Within:

RELATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Spirituality in social action is limited to the real and perceived, individual or social barriers and opportunities available. In other words, engaged spirituality is a relational spirituality. Relational does not exclusively refer to a relationship with "God" or a "higher power," although this is of course the central element of most people's spirituality. Relational in our sense also includes all elements of a person's individual experience and practice as well as their social contexts. DeLeon's life exemplifies the positive and negative possibilities from the relational nature of spirituality. Because of his parents' strong examples, DeLeon always expected that social service was fundamentally connected to spirituality. The barriers he faced within his own denomination by others who did not assume this social and spiritual connection were challenges that he has successfully overcome. Yet the economic and material realities of donations limit the extent to which this socially directed spirituality may be employed.

Abel Perez, the young and articulate executive director behind Obras de Amor, unabashedly states, "The church's sole purpose for being is to serve

human needs.” In his position at Obras de Amor, Perez sees the organization as facilitating the churches that have the spiritual commitment to serve these needs but not the ability to do it. In his own words, “They have the desire but not the resources... We’re putting tangible works to the spiritual convictions the Lord has given us. You can be social responsible and not spiritual, but, you can’t be spiritual without being socially responsible.” Perez agrees with DeLeon that there are more needs than resources but explains that his faith sustains him and his work. He says,

We’ve not been able to help some people who’ve come to the door asking for help. There’s certain times when we don’t have the resources to meet that need... But that isn’t why I’m here — to just give the resources. What keeps my sanity is I serve my Lord with it and I do my best for my fellow brother. That’s the way I balance my spirituality with the work I do. Just being socially responsible. If you want to be spiritual you’ve got to bear the fruit of responsibility.

Abel Perez exemplifies the changes that the spiritual motivations of Lee DeLeon can inspire. While it would be difficult to get DeLeon to speak

so directly about the impact of his mission on Abel and the Southern California Hispanic Pentecostal community in general, we believe the personal and social transformations speak for themselves.

8.

Applications and Contributions of Engaged Spirituality

THE READILY AVAILABLE stories of spiritually committed, socially active individuals indicates an under-appreciated population, an untapped resource for public policy consideration, and a missing but significant variable in social science research and analysis. Spirituality cannot be considered only a private practice that is merely functional, a crutch in hard times. Instead it affects and is affected by the public lives of these individuals, and ultimately the organizations and communities in which they volunteer, work, and call home. Acknowledging an engaged versus private definition opens up our analysis spirituality as a resource for social transformations in three ways that stay true to the lived-experience of our interviews:

- ▶ **Intention** – The intentional nature of spirituality opens the possibilities for organizations to frame public debate around subjectively meaningful arguments.

- ▶ **Action-orientation** – Spirituality also provides motivation and may demand interpersonal, community-wide, and/or civic involvement that has significant potential for bringing about systematic and sustainable change.

- ▶ **Structural analysis** – A more rigorous understanding of the nature of spirituality is inseparable from the construction and the consequences of broader social structures such as material resources, politics, and social convention.

SR. JOAN CHITTISTER

*I*t is December in Erie, Pennsylvania and the snow is falling in large, white flakes. The Christmas lights at the original Benedictine stone building downtown blur into a fuzzy array of colors. There is a calmed hush blanketing the street that only comes with this type of snowstorm. But anyone who has met Sister Joan Chittister knows that this hush will soon be shattered, if not by her voice then by the powerful words that she speaks.

Sister Joan is a member and former prioress of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, Pennsylvania. She is also the founder and executive director of Benetvision, a research and resource center for contemplative spirituality. The mission of Benetvision is, in Chittister's words, to find the "bridges between public and private spirituality... Benetvision is designed to look at both of those levels of the person in the relationship to the religious impulse." This vision and her active role in the International Peace Council have taken her to thirty-nine countries as an outspoken leader and activist for human rights issues. It has also inspired numerous books as well as a monthly column for the interfaith online community and journal, *Beliefnet*.

As an outspoken voice for radical change within the Roman Catholic Church as well as the rest of society, Chittister has as many enemies as she has friends. However she embodies Benedictine hospitality and is warm, welcoming, and eager to answer questions. Sister Joan's spirituality is tough and critical and is in no way tolerant of definitions that are private or individualistic; definitions she claims that lead to a notion of the "spiritual Jacuzzi" or "spiritual massage." Chittister's spirituality compels as much as it comforts. Just as DeLeon saw the social concerns jumping out of the scriptures, Chittister explains, "You don't have to take any issues into [contemplation of the scriptures]. The issues are all there." An agenda of social responsibility has developed in Chittister and her intention to effect social change is inseparable from her spirituality.

I raise questions about process and politics and legislation, about the fact that the richest country in the world has forty-four million uninsured people tonight, and ten million of whom are children. I can't believe that somehow or another I have a moral right to do less. So how does [spirituality] translate? It may translate into something as simple as asking the question. It might translate into something as simple

as answering your questions. It will certainly translate into sending a post card about the next piece of legislation that makes it even worse. I mean, I will do my best to keep the alternative questions alive in this society, because when they die, we die morally. We'll die as a spiritual people, no matter how religious this country thinks it stays.

INTENTION

*E*ngaged spirituality preserves the agency of people like Chittister who direct their ideas, values, morals, and actions based on spiritual experience or practice. Chittister vows to keep the alternative questions alive yet her definition of alternatives is directly shaped by her Benedictine contemplation, the scripture passages she reads, and the social realities she perceives in the world around her. Just as a private spirituality may be tailored toward specific ends for self-reflection or spiritual development, the same intention may be used in interpreting spiritual experience for social change and engaging spirituality to fuel ideas for that end. Of course, because of the individual variation of experience and the dynamic elements of spirituality, not all definitions of social engagement will emerge in the same ways from spiritual practice. However, the contribution here is that intention allows for a spirituality of social transformation depending on individual or organizational agency and the utilization of intentionally engaged spirituality as a resource.

Intention, or interpretation, is important in understanding the ways in which individuals and organizations actively conceptualize spirituality, the

ways it will be engaged in, the meanings that will be drawn from it, and the values or critiques that this inspires. However, intention alone does not ensure social action. Yet as our interviews indicate, a socially informed spirituality without action is antithetical. Spirituality must move beyond intention. Chittister looks to the spiritual exemplars of the past as examples and states,

They stepped outside the establishment boxes. They just could not be contained by a class or a country or a type of civil thought. And you began to realize that they weren't standing up telling you about the glories of the French Revolution and the new parliament and the constitution. They were always talking to you about the life of Jesus and what this meant and how somehow or another it demanded that you be in the Leprosariums and it demanded that you be with the poor. It demanded that you be with the refugee. It made great non-conventional, un-conventional demands on you.

Chittister makes a crucial point about former spiritual leaders who lead socially committed lives. These men and women, the ones whose footsteps Chittister is clearly filling, were not working within

or primarily for a secular, progressive, political agenda. First and foremost, a spiritual motivation was the source of their intentions and actions. As Reverend Glenda Hope also emphasized, the spiritual energy that motivates social action is not merely a reflection or private accessory to a more fundamental political. Both these women make clear that this spiritual foundation not only shapes beliefs but also insists on, “demanded” as Chittister said, action.

I believe we're here as co-creators. I believe we have a tremendous responsibility for the entire globe. I believe God left the work unfinished and seeded in us the right and the responsibility to finish it. So when I say God is presence, God is energy, God is world — that's all the same to me. It means that God is not a distinct figure. God is also not a magician. God doesn't intervene with doves and scarves. “Oh, pray, Sister, that nuclear weapons will be eliminated.” Well, I do of course. But I don't pray that God will eliminate nuclear weapons. God didn't make them. We did. We can eliminate them tomorrow. And so I would pray that somehow or another — What is the purpose of prayer? It's not to persuade a vending machine God to make my life better. The function of prayer is to prepare me for the inbreaking of God.

ACTION ORIENTATION

As we argued at the beginning of this report, engaged spirituality is one that is not only conducive to the notion of social transformation but the mobilization and action towards those ends. The above statement by Chittister exemplifies the action orientation of spirituality. Using a term that several rabbis also used in our interviews, Chittister felt both the right and the responsibility to be a “co-creator” with God; to work on the project that God left the world to finish. Notions of private spirituality as a consolation and the notion that spiritual beliefs are a veil or illusion to the material reality of everyday life cannot stand up to Chittister's interpretation. God does not, nor is God expected to, intervene in the social conditions of the modern world. God, or the spiritual impulse, intervenes in guiding intentions and mandating public action. Acting upon this mandate is the crucial element of spirituality that continually emerged throughout our interviews.

Intention and action-orientation always exist within a broader social context. In our interview, Chittister continually directed attention to the embedded nature and connection of spirituality to its surrounding environment. She explains,

If hospitality is what [Benedictines are] about, and stability, which is one of our vows, is what we're about, then we rise and fall with Erie, Pennsylvania. We can't live outside this neurotic, romantic notion that somehow or another you can be religious which means you are less human and less responsible for the humanity around you. [This is a] warped notion concentration or contemplation of God. What are you contemplating? Pink and fluffy nothingness? You are contemplating the way God is working in the world right now. And that means then, you contemplate what God wills for the world, you see what is going on in the world and you fill the gap between what is going on and what is willed for all people.

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

We conceptually illustrated in the previous section that engaged spirituality is relational. Here we reiterate this but emphasize that this engaged spirituality found in our interviews contributes to research and policy in ways that clarify the connections between spirituality and social structures (i.e., social, cultural, political and economic). Chittister acknowledges the connection between Benedictine spirituality and the social structures of the city in which she lives.

Chittister suggests that if the social structure and social needs of Erie suffer, the Sisters, as an active part of the civic life of Erie, also suffer. In other words, for Chittister, spirituality is never divorced from broader processes.

Looking at this example from another perspective suggests a yardstick with which to measure spiritual success. In Chittister's view, the spiritual community must rise and fall with its surroundings or else it is not thoroughly or sufficiently engaged in the community that it is called to serve.

Just as the success of spiritually motivated individual or organizational action is affected by the resources and community networks around them, structural analysis also sheds light on who partici-

pates and why. Reverend Glenda Hope, for example, was forced to redirect her spiritual energies throughout her life in part because of the prevailing gender norms of the time. Congregations would not hire female pastors.

Social and cultural norms, economic and material resources, and institutional networks and opportunities, all effect the connections between spirituality and social transformation. Acknowledging structural factors opens the analysis to the existence, success, and failure of engaged spiritual action. For the founding students of the UMMA Free Clinic that we discussed earlier, the old networks of social service, such as voluntary prison work, were not spiritually fulfilling enough for many individuals, but the new networks, especially new Muslim networks, were not yet in place. The demographic immigration patterns and the high amount of first generation Muslims in America affected the venues through which Islamic mandates for social service and relief were carried out. Many Muslim relief organizations and donors relied upon already existing, and trusted, global or foreign relief agencies that served communities in their country of origin or in Muslim communities worldwide. It was not until a new generation came of age, born and/or heavily influenced by local commu-

nities, that a domestic version of social service emerged.

The challenge then is the isolated practitioner who finds energy and social motivation in spiritual practice yet does not feel able to utilize this subjectively powerful resource to its full potential. They may engage in their spirituality to make it personally meaningful and even attuned to social critique and concerns. It may engage them in powerful and emotional ways that motivate action. Yet if the isolated practitioner is engaged within a broader social context that does not make organizational outlets for this energy available, social action and potential broader transformations may be limited. Yasser Aman of the UMMA Free Clinic, whom we met at the beginning of this report, epitomizes the increasing need for social and institutional outlets for this rise in spiritual energy. He says,

I was here from when the clinic opened up and it instantly sparked something as a realization of “Well, I’m kind of on the receiving end of what they were wanting to do for Muslims.” Finally I had an avenue of actually doing something and also setting an example for Muslims and non-Muslims that we’re human too, we care.

The slow but emerging rise of institutional acknowledgement and organizational outlets for spiritually motivated social service limits the utilization of this energy for broader social transformation.

9.

Organizational Spirituality

IN THE PREVIOUS SECTIONS we have defined engaged spirituality, illustrated the concept through individual lives, and discussed the contributions this has for analyzing social action and social transformation. In this section we show that while individuals are already actively participating in engaged spirituality for social transformation, organizations and religious institutions are only beginning to acknowledge and utilize this.

SEMINARIES AND RABBINICAL SCHOOLS

*R*eligious organizations, seminaries and rabbinical schools embody the newly rising trends in spirituality. Connections to social transformation, however, are minimal. After researching all accredited Jewish, Christian and Catholic seminaries as well as talking with professors and administrators at several schools, we believe that religious institutions, rabbinical schools and seminaries, are reactive rather than proactive with their spirituality curricula.

Acknowledging the increases in spirituality over the past generation, the institutional incorporation of spirituality is beginning to emerge. Furthermore, ideas of social transformation tend to be considered within a much broader apparatus of denominational theology, ethics, and canonical law, rather than in explicit conjunction with individual spirituality. Morally motivated social change is examined and taught through rational and historical analysis. This is not to say that social justice and social transformation are not thoroughly covered or emphasized. Many of these religious traditions have strong histories of social struggles for justice and deeply understand this struggle as central to their religious mission.

However, this focus is not systematically linked to the perceived benefits or experiences of spiritual practice. Spirituality and spiritual practice are most often presented within the curricula with reference to private, reflective, and personal formation or ministerial applications.

Nearly all accredited Christian seminaries have one or two courses in spiritual or Christian formation, many of which are required courses in the seminary degree curriculum. Of the 193 accredited Christian schools, 31 had particular curriculum emphases and/or degree certificates. Yet far fewer classes combined spirituality with social transformation.

Rabbinical schools were similar, offering a few courses explicitly on spirituality or social justice, all of which were electives. The only program that focused on spirituality was a community workshop, “Faces of Spirituality,” offered to residents of Queens and Long Island by the Jewish Theological Seminary. One of the few courses to combine spirituality with social justice, “Social Justice and Tzedakah,” was offered at the progressive Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. Yet social justice issues loom large within Jewish history and contemporary congregational commitments. Rabbi William Cutter, a professor at the Hebrew Union

College in Los Angeles, suggests that Jewish social justice and Judaism as a whole, in contrast to some trends within Christianity, follow traditionally communal rather than individual paths. Although individual spiritual practice is rising among seminarians at HUC, the curriculum currently reflects this communal emphasis.

There are several factors that contribute to this profile of spirituality within religious education centers. First, spirituality, and especially spirituality beyond individual relationship with the sacred, does not hold a substantial place within the scholastic canon. Nearly all institutions refer in some way to spiritual development in mission statements, and the core degree requirements typically include one or two specific survey courses devoted to the history of spiritual leaders, the evolution of spiritual practice, and the individual cultivation of spirituality. For the majority of schools, “Spiritual Formation I and II” are often the only mention of spirituality within their course listings. This is not to say that spiritual practice does not arise in academic tracts within these institutions. In fact, several instructors use spiritual exercises such as journaling as part of the learning experience, as well as contemplation as a tool for classroom participation. The subtle and perhaps

ubiquitous role of spirituality in these schools may have profound effects on students. However, the lack of institutional prominence of spirituality as a canonical area of seminary training may also affect the perception and role of spirituality among the leaders that these institutions produce. While the ubiquity of spirituality may parallel the increase in popular spiritual attention, the ways in which it may be a force in civic change, organizational restructuring, and broader social transformation are rarely addressed.

Resource allocation is a second contributing factor that is related to the canonical consideration of spirituality within religious institutions. Typically larger nondenominational seminaries that have the resources and diversity of staff also have the ability to provide a wide range of specializations, including both spirituality and spiritual contributions to social transformation. The Graduate Theological Union (GTU) is an excellent example. Course offerings range from common topics such as “Experiencing Prayer” to specialized ministries found in “Gay Spirituality in Christianity,” as well as several courses with direct connections to social action. “Call and Response: An Examination of the Depth and Limits of Our Call,” for example, challenges students by asking,

Why would someone allow themselves to be burned at the stake with their book tied to their leg? Why would protesters lock themselves down to a street sign knowing they will be assaulted with mace and pepper spray? What motivates us to go beyond the bounds of safety and what some would call common sense? The purpose of this course is to facilitate a process through which students can gain a deeper understanding of their call to ministry and their dedication to that call. Using a multi-medium, multi-sensory approach that will focus on reading, experiential learning, journaling and discussion, we will witness other visionaries' journeys. Through music, written word and video, we will see the alienation and hostility that often greets those who try to bring something new into the world. The combination of reflection on course work and experiments in group creativity will provide the fuel for our ongoing discussion, feedback and support for each other. The instructor's goal is to create a focused, safe and intimate atmosphere in which people can look into the depths of their heart and emerge with knowledge of what they have to share and the limitations they place on themselves.

Such diverse offerings are exponentially greater at the GTU than at any other religious seminary.

Developed as a consortium of disparate, smaller seminaries, GTU is able to draw upon the resources and array of backgrounds and specialties from a wide range of disciplines to offer one of the most comprehensive seminary experiences.

Strong examples of spiritual programs at schools without the diversity of academic and financial resources, such as Biola University's Talbot School of Theology, are beginning to emerge across the country and across denominations. Biola, for example, is launching the Institute for Spiritual Formation in the fall of 2002. Many of these pioneering efforts solicit outside institutional support from foundations like the Lilly Endowment or collaborate with local and regional religious institutions or spiritual organizations in order to share resources and expertise in piecing together a spiritually substantive curriculum.

The San Francisco Theological Seminary provides an illustration of the use of outside funding as well as networks in constructing a comprehensive palette of spiritual exploration and application. Affiliated with GTU, San Francisco draws on the diversity of professional resources of the consortium in order to offer academic programs specifically in spiritual direction and spiritual formation. Additionally, the seminary has secured substantial

funding from the Lilly Endowment to launch a ten-year Youth Ministry and Spirituality Project. The hypothesis of this project is that youth ministry requires a spiritually experiential element, above and beyond education and social activities, in order to adequately reach a new generation. The spiritual convictions of the organizers of this project are effecting applied and organizational change in partner churches from Hawaii to Connecticut.

Of the few seminaries that offered courses connecting spiritual development and social justice, North Park Theological Seminary and George Fox Seminary stand out. North Park Theological Seminary states the “development of intellectual abilities is enhanced by the development of spiritual life.” While most seminaries would agree, North Park, an Evangelical Covenant Church seminary, concretizes this commitment in its curriculum and further explores the connections between the “inner life and outer life” through such courses as “Spirituality and Conflict,” “Spirituality and Intercultural Issues” and “Spirituality and Justice.” Similarly, the George Fox Seminary’s Special Program in Spiritual Formation and Discipleship offers an array of classes in spiritual development, including one elective, “Spirituality and Social

Justice.” Professor Carole Spencer teaches the Spirituality and Social Justice course. In her course description she writes,

“What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.” [Micah 6:8]. Spirituality is often perceived as otherworldly, with a focus on the interior life and individual piety. But many spiritual traditions such as the Wesleyan, with a biblical and theological foundation for uniting holiness and justice, provide an established model for relating prayer and social action. This course will explore the lives and writings of Christians past and present who integrate spirituality with social vision. The goal is to provide students with spiritual resources for social action rooted in prayer and contemplation. Service to others is both a means and an end of spiritual formation.

Students have given very positive evaluations to the Spiritual Formation and Discipleship program at George Fox. In a 1999 survey of this program just over half of the courses received good or excellent evaluations for content and overall effectiveness and none of the classes received below average ratings.

While outstanding examples such as the George Fox program are making interesting strides in promoting an active and diverse concept of spirituality in the curriculum, many of these schools see themselves as standing outside of the mainstream national norms for core curricula and often are not aware of other developments within their own denomination or within religious training in general. This disconnection sustains the marginal place of spirituality within academia and segregates the strengths of spiritual centers and leaders who may otherwise collaborate toward a stronger presence of spirituality across institutions and communities.

Interestingly, the Catholic Church has incorporated spiritual formation curricula more formally than Protestant and Jewish seminaries. Every Catholic seminary has spiritual formation emphases that are often constructed around a year of contemplative study or retreat. For example, the Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary requires a “Spirituality Year” based on Pope John Paul II’s Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. The exhortation calls for a sufficient amount of preparation for the seminarian to adjust to his new “style of life.” During this year seminarians live communally at the Mary Immaculate Center overlooking the Lehigh Valley of

Pennsylvania. Each participant is expected to develop and internalize his relationship with God through sacraments, ritual, prayer, the Bible, and course instruction. The entire seminary process involves “Human,” “Intellectual,” and “Pastoral” formation. Pastoral formation includes one day a week in a community-based ministry in order to “provide a concrete means for a seminarian to validate by his life what he has appropriated in his prayer.”

Just as the lack of canonical placement of spirituality in other institutions was problematic, the organizational incorporation of spirituality in the most hierarchical religious institution poses another potential barrier; namely, organizational influences on spiritual experience. Capturing strong or transforming spiritual experiences in the classroom is difficult. Not only are intense and emotionally transcendent experiences difficult to convey rationally or within academic parlance, they may also challenge the hierarchy of the particular denomination or institution.

In conversations with institutional and spiritual leaders, it has been suggested that where there is an increased hierarchy, there is less emphasis on spirituality. Carol Ochs of Hebrew Union College in New York makes this point, arguing that spirituality is like charisma. It is a quality or energy that is difficult to

harness and therefore potentially dangerous to hierarchical, traditional, and/or bureaucratic institutions. To the same degree, spirituality, like charisma, is antithetical to bureaucratic structure and ultimately becomes routinized and less potent when constrained within boundaries such as hierarchical religious institutions or classrooms. Daniel Helminiak (1987) in a study of various stages of spiritual development states that traditional institutional forms based on conformity cannot promote individual thought and growth. While we are not saying that all of these religious institutions are traditional and hierarchical in their form, it is important to point out the inherent tension between the expressive forms of spirituality and the institutional form of religious education as a dynamic that these organizations must confront.

Religious educational institutions will have to experiment with varying versions of this balance between the intensely experiential aspect of spirituality and the amount of structure that it can take. They must also be attuned to the nature and uses of spirituality in the society in which they are sending their new religious leaders. And the students are leading this trend.

Although spirituality may not be uniformly

reflected in the academic curricula, it is prevalent across the rabbinical and seminary campuses. The rise of kashrut observance and the return to *Lectio Divino* illustrate the yearning for spiritual practices among these students. Rabbi Cutter of Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles also sees a new generation of students reclaiming ancient sacred practices such as putting on Tefillin, the leather prayer scroll boxes that are worn on the arm. Others are renewing the practice of the *Mikveh* or ritual bath for purifying the body. While this practice has typically been engaged in by women, young men are also recovering this purification ritual for a variety of reasons, including recovery from addictions or types of abuse.

These students often engage in new forms of spirituality on outdoor quads, at campus dining facilities or in residence halls. Yet metaphorically, these dramatic changes are taking place outside the institutional walls of religious education. During one of our initial interviews at a large interdenominational seminary with a center for spiritual development, the president ended our conversation by saying, "If you really want to find out what's happening with spirituality in the United States today, you probably are in the wrong place. You should go to the grassroots."

RELIGIOUS, SPIRITUAL, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS

*T*he trend in spirituality is most visible through the array of organizations, on-line communities, personal web pages, and consumer products on the market. Grassroots organizations, civic groups, and retreat centers are multiplying to meet the needs of people seeking spiritual interaction and experience.

Even among these organizations, when our emphasis focused on the connections between individual spirituality and social transformation, familiar divisions arose. Spirituality was often reserved as intimate and personal whereas religion was seen as organizational and publicly articulated. Overall, religious social action organizations vary in their explicit articulations about spiritual practice. In a similar way, spiritual movements vary in their explicit articulations about social action. In the majority of cases, spiritual communities did not discuss social transformation, and social action organizations, while often using religious language, did not discuss individual spirituality or practice.

Many spiritual movements and online communities, for example, focus exclusively on spiritual practice within or across traditions. ePrayer for exam-

ple, established as a “place to share a piece of your spirit, uplift your soul, and discover peace on the internet,” allows visitors to send an ePrayer to a loved one, reflect on the Daily Inspiration, post prayer requests and read the success stories of others who have had their prayers answered. Visitors can even light eCandles. Online meditation communities are growing as well. Verididas: The Worldwide Labyrinth Project of the Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, for example, provides virtual labyrinths that anyone may log into and find serenity without leaving the isolation of their workplace cubicle.

Other organizations, such as 24/7 Prayer, promote face-to-face interaction and, admittedly, social transformation is an implicit goal. This youth movement, based in the United Kingdom but growing quickly across the United States, calls young believers to come together to engage in “nonstop prayer across the nations.” Local groups are encouraged to sign up to pray in overlapping shifts, 24 hours a day, for seven days. Suggestions are offered about how to generate support and stay motivated, and beautiful, atmospheric examples of prayer room artwork gives inspiration for expressing spirituality through nontraditional forms. In this form, social transformation is the goal yet prayer is seen as the transforming agent

rather than an element toward individual or collective social action.

On the other hand, many Jewish, Catholic, Christian, and Muslim outreach organizations frame their commitments in terms of broad, historical and eschatological religious roots and traditions. Spiritual practice may be one way of connecting to this base, but it is rarely discussed prominently in mission statements or resources. However, changes are starting to occur. For example, many Jewish organizations, such as The Jewish Fund for Justice, have strong social commitments and identity-based advocacy rooted in broad Jewish moral teachings such as *tikkun olam* (healing the world) but relatively little on individual spirituality and practice. On the periphery, however, are growing spiritually inclined organizations such as The Shalom Center and Aleph: Alliance for Jewish Renewal that promote personal engagement and practice. For these groups, *tikkun olam* (healing the world) is inseparable from *tikkun halev* (healing the heart). Other strong examples in this trend across faith traditions include Sojourners (“Sojo” circles), Benetvision, the Ziv Tzedakah Fund, AVODAH, and the Islamic Circle of North America Relief-Helping Hand.

Several of the organizations that blend individ-

ual spirituality and social concerns are substantial organizations in their own right. Yet within the broader field of spiritual movements and social justice organizations, this integration remains an emerging trend rather than the standard model. However, a significant number of people working in these fields engage in a personal form of spiritual practice that is not yet fully acknowledged within their organizations or working relationships. Consequently, the current, albeit changing, visibility of spirituality in religious institutions and grassroots organizations perpetuates the privatizing perception of spirituality. In fact, during our interviews, several respondents who have been in social justice work for decades were surprised to be asked about the role that their spiritual practice played in their social commitments.

Furthermore, some had not made conscious connections between their own spiritual biographies and the social service they do on a daily basis. Here lies the central paradox of this report. Most, if not all, organizations and individuals involved in social service work would agree that a spiritual life and spiritual practice have strong connections to their daily life and, in particular, their social commitments. Yet, few organizations actively and publicly acknowledge or utilize this resource.

The growing and vocal movements that do utilize this connection illuminate the power and motivational elements that engaged spirituality can contribute. Many interfaith groups, such as the United Religions Initiative (URI), are especially strong in their commitments to spiritual practice and incorporate it as a central organizing principle in their daily routine. The Reverend Charles Gibbs of URI (who personally engages in several forms of interfaith practices) explains that throughout each day attention is drawn to the spiritual foundations on which they base their work. In the modern, crisp offices of URI's headquarters, nestled in a quiet park in San Francisco, workers are called to meditation at regular intervals. While individuals may chose to spend that time in a specific meditation room in the suite or simply sit at their desks, the intention is to divert attention away from a particular agenda or the pace of the office schedule and contemplate the grander objectives and connections that provide the girding for their work at fostering global interfaith connections between individuals working for change. Practice is essential to this type of spirituality. Practice provides a corrective to the pace and intensity of some organizational work; it allows for the time and space to refocus personal energy and purpose.

10.

19th Century Spirituality in a 21st Century Context

JIM WALLIS LEADS A LIFE of engaged spirituality, encouraging others to notice the social, political, and economic connections to spiritual life. Years ago during the student movements of the 1960s and 1970s, Wallis discovered that the Sermon on the Mount held a “manifesto of a new order of things” that was “more radical to me than Ho Chi Minh or Che Guevara or Karl Marx or anyone else.” Today, as the editor of *Sojourners* magazine and an active participant in lectures across the country, Wallis has a sense of the tangible contributions that spirituality has for socially active communities across an array of backgrounds. He sees a new generation already being galvanized by the “radical” manifestos of spirituality. Wallis makes this point using part of a conversation with former gang members who told him, “We need spiritual power, man, spiritual power! To overcome the madness!” Wallis added, “And they’re right. So that’s what we bring as people of faith. So how do you, in your discipline, your practice, how do

you stay connected to that hope? That's crucial. Otherwise you just — it becomes all theoretical and academic and rhetorical.”

The focus on spiritual power to overcome the “madness” is reminiscent, Wallis believes, of another period when itinerant preachers drew thousands to often-scandalous revivals in the fields and steepled churches across a conflicted and divided young America. These emotional, physical, and transcendent experiences fused a vibrant spirituality with the pressing social issues of the day, sometimes indirectly. The altar call that most Christians are familiar with today was born out of the desire to get the names and addresses of “new converts” across the country in order to add them to the roles of the anti-slavery movement. Nineteenth century revivals were similarly tied to women’s suffrage and child welfare reforms. Revival and reform went hand in hand. Although the 20th century was marked by a spiritual turn inward, Wallis sees this reforming spirit returning to the faces in his audiences again today.

A lot are young people.... And they're hungry for a very different type of faith that really engages the world. So the 21st Century may look more like the 19th than the 20th. I see a lot of 19th Century young

evangelicals in the 21st Century [for whom] it's obvious that faith connects to their concern for the environment, for the poor, for resolving conflicts in a peaceful way, for human rights, for all kinds of what seems to be just causes. And they don't see how that's different from their Christian faith, [which] is the motivating force behind their engagement.

Wallis provides a wonderful metaphor for this new emerging spiritual energy and we believe Wallis is right. We are on the cusp of change. In the shadows of Ernst Troelsch and Max Weber, the routinization of religion is a cyclical process that inevitably requires a flourish of spiritual energy and fervor to reorganize the institutional structures and social dynamics around which certain key debates turn. The dramatic increase in spirituality over the past generation and the changing structures of religious organization suggest that substantial change is taking place within our country. The nascent connections between this spiritual fervor and social commitments for a better world, we believe, are only the hint of what is yet to come as we enter a new century.

At the beginning of this report, we acknowledged the consequences of the social, cultural, institutional, and demographic shifts of the past genera-

tion on the bifurcation between religion and spirituality and the trend toward a private, internally directed, spirituality. At the same time, many of these social shifts, such as the Civil Rights movement and various identity movements of the 1970s, also had substantially positive and formative effects on personal spiritual transformations including the rebirth of a socially engaged spirituality. Beyond this, our interviews make clear that just as general social, cultural, and institutional change has affected spirituality, spirituality holds the potential to affect social change in return. While it is perhaps easier to believe that either spiritual trends follow social trends or that spiritual norms dictate social norms, our point is that neither spirituality nor social transformation has a unidirectional or predetermined effect on the other. Instead, personal and social transformations are entwined in social and spiritual processes that are pregnant with possibilities for the next generation.

We want to make clear that this trend toward spirituality for social transformation is not suggesting that people should simply pray more and the world will be a better place. Although many of the people we interviewed may believe this, and in some instances that may be true, religious agendas obviously are embedded in a vast array of competing

social and political agendas. More to the point of the task at hand, the notion that privatized prayer or contemplation alone produces a better world, flies in the face of the data we have collected and the lives these individuals bring to bear. Such a private perception only helps to sustain the overgeneralizations of spirituality as a crutch, an illusion, and a distraction from the realities of the social conditions under which we live.

Instead, by our definition, spiritual practice is engaged as part of individual systems of meaning and broader social structures. It therefore has the inherent potential to be the foundation of radical and lasting social transformations. Repeatedly we have shown that, while being affected by social processes and contexts, this engaged spirituality must be acknowledged as a resource in its own right rather than interpreted as personal compensation or a derivative of political or social agendas. Jim Wallis says the following:

What's at stake in our response to the issue of poverty is not some kind of social, political thing. What's at stake is our relationship to Jesus Christ... So to me, we're not going to overcome the issue of poverty unless we experience a spiritual renewal that leads to engagement with the issue of poverty.

Engaged spirituality is better understood as a relatively autonomous social force. While not dependent upon or derivative of other social structures, engaged spirituality must be understood in combination with individual agency, social and interpersonal relationships, cultural contexts, and structural barriers and opportunities. For some individuals that we interviewed, spiritual practice alone is a significant resource for accumulating strength, gaining clarity on a decision making process, or discovering a sense of purpose that transcends the day to day advances and setbacks that often lead to social service burnout. However, in order for broader and lasting social transformation to occur, these practices must be coupled with the social networks, economic and material resources, and institutional acknowledgement of engaged spirituality as a viable resource for individual actors, organizations and society as a whole.

11.

New Directions

THE LACK OF SOCIAL science and public policy attention to spirituality and social transformation is unfortunate. While contemporary research is instructive therapeutically and conceptually and the business model has both practical and economic ramifications, there needs to be a fuller understanding and recognition of the role of engaged spirituality as a social resource in social action. When understood as a resource, spirituality is a personally relevant motivation, validation, and source of energy and sustenance for ongoing social commitments that, when coupled with viable social and organizational networks, has substantial potential for change. What future does this hold and how might we best foster the utilization of this resource? Let us suggest five possibilities.

Religious Education

As we mentioned in this report, the dialogue of a renewed spirituality and a spiritually informed social service is already occurring across campuses and will continue with or without the seminary and rabbinical schools involvement. However, tapping this source of subjective meaning and involvement would revitalize recruitment, reshape the classroom, and redefine the parameters and options of ministry. While spirituality is already applied within various courses in religious education, the creative and individual appropriations that are taking place on campuses are not institutionally reflected. One suggestion may be the politicized classroom. Feminist contributions across disciplines have made substantial inroads to radically revising classroom dynamics, power relationships, and the very words we use to express social thoughts and relationships. A similar approach to decentralizing spirituality, while linking it to broader social processes, discourses, and structures, would change the way it is discussed as a concept and as an experience. Liberation theology made the most recent and significant contributions toward engaged spirituality. In similar ways, we suggest incorporating an active debate of the role of spirituality as social critique

across political persuasions and social issues. For example, in what ways is spirituality embedded within structural forces and what effect might this have on individual experience, service applications, and social critiques? Secondly, formal institutional recognition of the active use of engaged spirituality among students and faculty would foster connections within and across seminaries, denominations, and religious traditions. Acknowledgement, let alone connection, between individuals or programs that utilize spirituality would begin to counter the perceived marginal or solitary status that some involved in spiritual programs currently experience.

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

*T*he perceived divide between spirituality and religion has had significant effects on the nature and organizational structure of the past generation. Much of what has been taking place within mainline Christian denominations reflects the experiential nature of spirituality with the reorganization around small fellowship and prayer groups. Incorporating spirituality would further decentralize the traditional hierarchy of church leadership and authority.

However, this need not be seen as problematic or threatening to tradition. As we have pointed out above, the historical and cultural roots that are tied into many spiritual experiences strengthen that experience in profound ways.

Religious institutions have the opportunity to foster spiritual relationships with tradition and ritual in ways that result in subjective meaning for the individual and deepen their commitment to a religious cultural lineage. The benefits of spiritual practiced outlined above may also be used as ways to direct and encourage individual spiritual practice and development. These benefits, once experienced by members of religious institutions, hold the potential to work as resources, allowing parishioners, congre-

gants, or members of mosques to actively and creatively explore the ways that their spiritual development directs changes within their institution as well as within local community participation efforts.

Connections between educational centers and individuals with strong commitments to spirituality in general, as well as strong commitments to social transformation, would open up dialogue in ways that currently do not to exist.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Contributions for social service organizations follow many of the recommendations for the spiritual workplace discussed within the business model. Applying a holistic approach to organizational development and interpersonal relationships boosts morale, values integrity, and provides sustainability to difficult work. Creating an environment that acknowledges and supports individual spiritual practice among its members allows for the full utilization of this resource.

Whether organizations schedule specific times within the workday routine for reflection or spiritual practice, as URI does, or whether organizations allow room for open and respected contributions based in spiritual foundations as valid, the outlet for spiritual motivation becomes a viable option.

Second, as with religious education, an increased network of individuals and organizations engaged in similar work and following a spiritual motivation would provide support, a network for sharing resources, and a visible community of common objectives. The particularizing effect of engaged spirituality (individual appropriations and intimate, emotional experiences) may spark the desire for collective action in some but not in others. This is true

within denominations and religious communities. However, finding connections with others, either within one's own faith tradition or beyond, who are spiritually motivated around the same social action, could lead to innovative collaboration and new forms of community. While numerous organizations exist that are devoted to spirituality, a greater profile must be created for those who also make the connections between their spirituality and social transformation.

SOCIAL DEBATE

*T*he months following the September 11th tragedy in the United States were a time of significant religious and spiritual reflection, both individually and collectively. Religious tolerance and pluralism among the Abrahamic Faiths was preached from the White House to Hollywood. While this focus on faith was relatively short lived, its effects were significant. Religion and spirituality were touted as multidirectional and applicable to both constructive and destructive social action. Similar social debate failed however with regard to Charitable Choice and the direct funding of religiously based social services. Ongoing debates about the separation of church and state rightly raised cautions and overly politicized bureaucracy fatally wounded the effort. However, what are the resources being lost in this trade and are there acceptable solutions for finding common ground?

These first four areas of implementation of engaged spirituality offer alternatives for individual, local, and organizational change as well as continued ways in which we as a society incorporate spirituality into our cultural dialog. While each of these recommendations may be taken individually, the possibility

of a much broader and systemic approach is implicit. For example, changes within religious education would be strengthened if changes in job opportunities, either within religious congregations or in social service organizations, allowed for challenging and spiritually inspired career outlets. Similarly, the changes in religious education may send out a new cohort of religious leaders who may effectively transform religious institutions or organizations from within especially if a changing public dialogue preempted or paralleled these leaders in local communities.

Of course, such systemic change is slow and contingent upon many other social, cultural, and economic factors. However, from our initial research we believe it is clear that the grassroots foundations are currently in place within the social and religious sectors across the country. What is missing is a critical leadership mass to tap this energy and the institutional or organizational outlets and networks for individuals already motivated by their spirituality. Public policy advocates must be careful in how this spirituality is utilized. The difficulty in implementing this variable within organizations lies in making engaged spirituality available for those who want to take part while not alienating or offending those who do not. A second barrier for broader implementation of

engaged spirituality is the danger of falling into patterns of routinization and institutionalization. Heavy handed attempts that over-bureaucratize ventures in spiritually motivated social service run the risk of routinizing this resource or politicizing its potentials in ways that diminish its experiential roots and subjectively powerful effects. To help guide public policy decisions on ways to utilize and fund spiritually motivated social service, more research should be conducted on the organizations that are currently utilizing this resource effectively.

CONTINUING RESEARCH

When we began this project we admittedly had fallen into the common conception of a private spirituality. Our research, our questions and our scope of interviews reflect our attention to individual spiritual practice. This provided a critical step in determining the effects of spirituality on social change. However our preconceived notion that we would find instances of publicly directed spirituality was naïve in its scope, breadth, diversity, and prevalence. Perhaps more surprising was that this socially directed spirituality was already beginning to take shape in and through social and religious institutions. Personal spiritual transformation is clearly associated in many cases with social transformation, but what only begins to come through in our analysis are the ways in which individuals are successfully working within organizations and institutional structures to radically transform both the organization and the world around it.

From our own research and that of others (Pulido 1998, Harris, 1999), spirituality is already being utilized as an internal motivation and sanctifying presence in labor movements, immigrant rights coalitions, ecological protests and political campaigns.

Little analysis has been done at the organizational level, but we strongly believe that it is only a matter of time until spirituality becomes a necessary variable of social science research as well as public policy assessment. A systematic exploration of the ways this is being implemented in a variety of community or organizational settings is the logical and necessary next step in determining the growing intersections of spirituality and social change.

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