



Boston College  
Boisi Center for Religion  
and American Public Life  
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## Calendar of Events

### September

**12** Professor Jonathan Bloom,  
Art History, "Presenting Islam"

12-1:15  
*The Boisi Center*  
24 Quincy Road

**18** Gary Hart, Former U.S.  
Senator, "Restoration of the  
Republic: The Jeffersonian Ideal in  
the 21st Century."

4:00-5:30  
Room TBA

Islamic Perceptions of America  
TBA

### October

Islamic Perceptions of America  
TBA

**30** Professor James Bernauer,  
Philosophy, "The Holocaust and the  
Catholic Church's Current Search  
for Forgiveness."

12-1:15  
*The Boisi Center*  
24 Quincy Road

### November

**12** Professor Nancy Schultz, Salem  
State College, English "Fire and  
Roses: The Burning of the  
Charlestown Convent, 1834"

12-1:15  
*The Boisi Center*  
24 Quincy Road

Professor Peter Singer, Professor of  
Bioethics, University Center of  
Human Values, Princeton University  
TBA

To attend any Boisi Center Lunch Event please RSVP Susan Richard at 617-552-1860 or richarsh@bc.edu  
For calendar updates please see our website: [www.bc.edu/boisi](http://www.bc.edu/boisi)

# The BOISI CENTER Report

VOL. 2 NO. 2

THE BOISI CENTER FOR RELIGION AND AMERICAN PUBLIC LIFE

MAY 2002

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

This has been an unusually busy spring. In February, I spoke at two meetings of college and university administrators, the American Association of Colleges and Universities and the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities. The former talk was on the topic "Religion on Campus" and involved a discussion with the authors of a recent book on that topic. For the latter event, which was a keynote address, I discussed the ways in which a non-Catholic like myself relates to the Catholic intellectual tradition. The talk will eventually be published, and news about its publication will follow in the next newsletter.

One week in particular stands out as I think about the past

semester. That week featured a discussion of Jews and the American public square at the Boisi Center, a discussion of student moral formation at Wheaton College in Illinois (a conservative Protestant institution), and a talk at Loyola College in Maryland on religious diversity and the common good. The last of these events, which took place on Maryland Day, was a special honor for me, as I received an honorary doctorate from that very impressive institution.

When not attending events at the Boisi Center, teaching my graduate class on religion and politics, or speaking at various colleges, I have tried to find some time to continue writing my book on the ways in which Americans actually practice their faith. Hopefully the book will be done by late summer or early fall and published a year after that. In

connection with the book, the Boisi Center will be hosting a conference in June on lived religion. Nancy Ammerman, R. Marie Griffith and I will be working with a group of advanced graduate students and beginning assistant professors who are engaged in ethnographic studies of American religious practice.

Finally, the U. S. State Department has asked us to submit a proposal for a month long residency seminar for fifteen scholars from Muslim majority countries next fall, in which we would lead seminars and discussions on American religious pluralism and the separation of church and state. If we receive the grant, I will have more to say about this in the next newsletter.

~ Alan Wolfe

## Banuazizi Proposes a Typology of Political Islam

According to Ali Banuazizi, understanding political Islam depends on finding a "middle way" between the extremes of a "clash of civilizations" approach, where Islam is seen as intrinsically political and on a collision course with the West, and the opposing view that Islam has nothing at all to do with extremist politics. Banuazizi, a professor of Psychology at Boston College and the director of the

Minor in Middle Eastern Studies, argues that terrorist movements do have something to do with Islam, but that exploring the connection between terrorism and Islam is not so much a theological as it is a political and historical inquiry.

At a luncheon seminar at the Boisi Center on January 23, Banuazizi outlined the historical roots of contemporary Islamist movements, and proposed a three-fold typology of these movements as a way of getting at the complexities underlying political Islam. According to Banuazizi, the roots of modern Islamist movements are found in the largely negative encounter between Muslims and the West through the experience of colonial exploita-

tion. Indigenous political movements originating in the late 19th and early 20th centuries began to recognize that they could use Islamic symbols and identity as a way of resisting European colonialism. Over the course of the 20th century, these movements have developed in three different directions. "Liberal Islam" seeks to reform Islamic societies and states and to move them toward

democracy. Ruling elites in most Middle Eastern countries have generally suppressed liberal Islamic movements, often with the explicit or tacit support of the United States and other Western governments.

"Revolutionary Radical Islam," on the other hand, espouses something like a liberation theology, attracting masses of young people with the goal of developing a more egalitarian, democratic society. Such movements are anti-clerical and have been influenced by Marxism and other Third World initiatives. The third form of political Islam is "Theocratic;" movements of this kind are religiously conservative, seeking to seize the state apparatus and establish an Islamic government.

*"...EXPLORING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN TERRORISM AND ISLAM IS NOT SO MUCH A THEOLOGICAL AS IT IS A POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL INQUIRY...ISLAMIC SYMBOLS AND IDENTITY [WERE USED] AS A WAY OF RESISTING EUROPEAN COLONIALISM..."*

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## Hehir Explores the Prophetic Role of the Catholic Church

On April 1, 2002, in the inaugural lecture of the Boisi Center's series on "The Prophetic Voices of the American Churches," the Rev. J. Bryan Hehir, President of Catholic Charities USA and an advisory board member of the Boisi Center, offered his perspective on what the prophetic role means for Catholicism in the United States today.

In the Catholic Church, said Hehir, the prophetic vision comprises two distinct yet complementary styles, what he called the "pedagogical" and the "prophetic." The "pedagogical" style corresponds to a perspective that sees the Church as having a universal calling and a responsibility for the whole society. As a tolerant yet firm teacher, this Church accepts the reality of social pluralism and seeks to effect change by collaborating with the institutions of society in a long, incremental process.

The "prophetic" style, on the other hand, is more about witness and conversion. The Church in this mode addresses social issues with great clarity and urgency, demanding action and situating itself as a community in contrast to the established institutions of society.

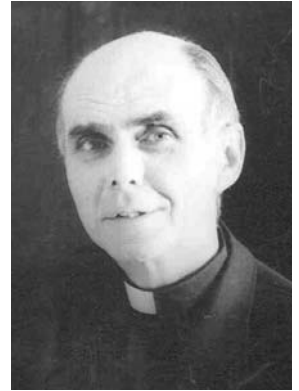
Hehir asserted that the Catholic Church incorporates both styles in defining how it relates to American society. Whether it takes a pedagogical or prophetic approach depends on the particular issue at stake. On questions of war, for example, the Church has changed its position in significant ways over the course of the 20th century. In 1956, Pope Pius XII claimed the just war tradition as a basis for denying the legitimacy of conscientious objection for Catholics. But this view was modified in the 1965 Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes*, which

allowed room for conscientious objection and greater dialogue. The Church's subsequent reflection on the morality of nuclear weapons relied on the same just war tradition to arrive at a pacifist position with respect to nuclear war. Today in the United States, the issues of humanitarian intervention and self-defense against terrorism raise new questions for the style of the Church's prophetic role.

Another example of the Catholic Church's mixed approach to social issues is in the area of health care policy. Historically adopting a primarily pedagogical orientation by forming large social institutions in close collaboration with the state, the Church has discovered that its support for universal health care coverage has actually become a prophetic stance in American society. Its positions on abortion and capital punishment are similarly prophetic, which means the Church has had to learn to negotiate with the larger society on these issues in the same way that traditional peace churches like the Mennonites have done.

Hehir concluded his lecture by reflecting on the implications of the current sexual abuse crisis for the Catholic Church's prophetic role. Framing the crisis in terms of five key dimensions—moral, legal, administrative, theological/juridical, and pastoral—he emphasized

*Continued on page 6*



## Helmick Evaluates Possibilities for Peace in the Middle East



Raymond Helmick, S.J., challenged an animated audience at the Boisi Center with a lunchtime presentation on what he sees as the obstacles confronting peace in the Middle East between the State of Israel and its Arab neighbors. Helmick, a professor who teaches conflict resolution in the Boston College Theology Department, argued that

renewal of the peace process amidst the violence in the Middle East is possible only if the current radical disparity of power between the Israelis and Palestinians is addressed. Claiming that the United States and the international community have allowed the State of Israel to

exempt itself from basic aspects of international law, such as Article 2 of the UN Charter, which prohibits the acquisition of land by force, Helmick asserts that the peace process will be stymied until Israel complies with such law.

Members of the Boston College community met Father Helmick's claims with some skepticism. Boisi Center Director Alan Wolfe argued that peace accords must be grounded in the political culture and reform of the societies in question rather than superimposed from outside by international bodies. Center for Christian-Jewish Learning Executive Director Phillip Cunningham questioned whether Israel had indeed exempted itself from international law, and argued that the matter was complicated by the circumstances related to the establishment of Israel in the aftermath of the Second World War and during the rivalry of the Cold War.

## Debating the Role of Jews in the Public Square

The rabbinic tradition of scholarly investigation and cordial disputation proved to be alive and well on March 12 among the scholars who came to Boston College to reflect on the theme of “Jews in the Public Square.” As part of a broader program sponsored by the Pew Charitable Trusts, designed to explore how major religious traditions understand their role in civil society, this event featured presentations from David Novak of the University of Toronto, Michael Broyde of Emory University, and Michael Gottsegen of Harvard University. Kevin Hasson, of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, was the respondent.

Novak argued that the central problem for Jewish public philosophy involved clarifying issues of loyalty. The only absolute claims Jews ought to recognize come from the Jewish people as a body, not from the democracies of which they are citizens, and not even from the state of Israel, because “no humanly-created polity can make absolute claims on a person.” Given that Jews ought not to understand the democratic polity as competing for their absolute loyalty, a certain level of public policy involvement is thus warranted. Novak outlined three criteria for articulating an appropriate Jewish public policy: First, such policy must be consistent with the Torah and Jewish tradition. Second, it ought to consider the self-interest of the Jewish people. Third, public policy must reflect standards of general morality recognized to be binding on all people. Apparent conflicts among these criteria are resolved by the fact that they are listed in order of priority; hence, Novak argued that tradition will always trump self-interest, and self-interest, which is founded on a stricter set of moral codes than those of general morality, will not be in conflict with those codes.

Michael Broyde presented a strikingly different perspective on the role of Jews in the public square. In his view, Jewish law must be observed where possible, but it does not obligate Jews to try to influence the morality of the outside world. On social issues, the overriding Jewish concern should be to develop a “Realpolitik” that will further the long-term interest of the Jewish community. Such a practical politics might dictate that Jews support social policies diametrically opposed to Jewish law, but which preserve other values essential for Jewish flourishing in society. For example, although physician-assisted suicide is prohibited within the Jewish community as a sinful violation of Jewish law on the part of both doctor and patient, Jews might nevertheless support legislation advocating this practice as a way of upholding the larger value of freedom on which their community depends.

For Michael Gottsegen, the central question was whether religion—and Judaism in particular—could be a force for the renewal of American public life. Gottsegen pointed out that Jews have been ambivalent about the return of religion to the public square: While they applauded the nomination of Joseph Lieberman as a vice presidential candidate in 2000, many were also anxious that a renewed emphasis on public religion would mean the return of Christianity alone, rather than a plurality of traditions. For Jews, Gottsegen noted, the secularization of the public square has been largely advantageous. Nonetheless, the down-side of secularization has been a loss of appreciation for the common good and for the “nobility of public life.” Gottsegen argued that politics needs to be returned to a “quasi-religious calling,” and that this can only be done with the support of existing communities of faith.

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## Cahill Advocates Bringing the Common Good into the Genetics Debate



According to Lisa Cahill, Monan Professor of Christian Ethics at Boston College, public debate about genetic research and technology has tended to focus too narrowly on questions of individual rights—such as privacy, autonomy, and economic opportunity—and has neglected broader social justice questions about access to technology and the economic bases of health and disease. In a luncheon discussion at the Boisi Center on February 6, Cahill argued that religion has a role to play in enhancing this social justice dimension of

public debate. This role demands that religions take a broad perspective that attends to the multiple dimensions of biotechnology issues. Exclusive focus on a single dimension, such as the status of the early embryo in debates about cloning and stem cell research, has the effect of marginalizing religious traditions and distorting public understanding of the ethical issues at stake in these technologies.

Cahill believes religion can expand, rather than constrict the scope of debate about genetics by introducing concepts like solidarity and the preferential option for the poor. She is particularly interested in how language about the common good—reinterpreted for a world where power is transnational and decentralized—can contribute to public debate.

## Hehir Explores the Prophetic Role of the Catholic Church

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the reality of objective evil involved in the cases as well as the Church's responsibility to the wider civil society. From an administrative perspective, he argued, the Church needs to develop a "universal, transparent system," possibly in the form of independent commissions, for dealing with future problems; on the theological side, the Church must also address current confusion in its teachings about sexuality.

According to Hehir, the crisis poses a serious threat to the kind of public trust that is essential for the Catholic Church to play a role in public moral discourse. Hehir believes that its hope of restoring that trust and credibility actually lies in a strengthening of its prophetic witness as protector of the vulnerable and caretaker of the needy.

## Staff Notes

**Alan Wolfe** serves as the director of the Boisi Center and is a professor of political science at Boston College. Professor Wolfe is the author or editor of more than ten



books, including *One Nation, After All* and most recently, *Moral Freedom: The Search for Virtue in a World of Choice*. Professor Wolfe is a contributing editor of *The New Republic* and *The Wilson Quarterly*. He also writes frequently for *The New York Times*, *Commonweal*, *Harpers*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Washington Post*, and other publications. Professor Wolfe has been a Fulbright Professor of American Studies at the University of Copenhagen. In the

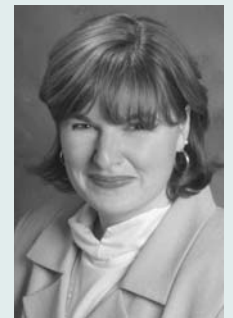
coming year Professor Wolfe will be teaching Religion and Politics in the fall and Religion and the American Culture Wars in the spring.

**Patricia M.Y. Chang** serves as the assistant director for the Boisi Center and is an associate research professor in the sociology department at Boston College. Professor Chang specializes in research that examines the organizational aspects of religion. Her past work has focused on the institutional aspects of gender inequality among Protestant clergy. She is currently working on a book that examines how theological



understandings of authority affect practices of democratic participation in Protestant denominations. In addition to her work at the Center, Professor Chang teaches a course in the Sociology of Religion in the fall and The Institutional Ecology of Faith Based Organizations in the spring.

**Susan Richard** serves as the Center's administrative assistant. Prior to coming to Boston College in September 1999, Susan worked at Boston University for eight years;



serving for five years as the Department Administrator for the sociology department.

## Sells Reflects on “The Struggle for the Soul of Islam”

Michael Sells, a noted scholar of Islam and Professor of Religion at Haverford College, asserted in a March 13 lecture at Boston College that what the Taliban and other conservative Islamic movements are really fighting is a war against the TV set, and what it represents: a culture of global advertisement and the idolatry of images. It was no accident, he argued, that the September 11 attacks were “choreographed” to ensure that the second plane crashing into the World Trade Center would be captured on TV; this was all part of Osama bin Laden’s plan to defeat the United States by what he believed was Americans’ enslavement to images.

Sells sought to convey a sense of the ideology motivating radical Islamic groups, and to contrast these movements with the much broader Islamic cultural tradition that is often hidden behind its politicized face. While some interpret the actions of groups like the Taliban, and the attacks of September 11, as a vindication of the “clash of civilizations” theory, Sells argues that the theory offers too limited a view, because it fails to recognize that elements of Islamic culture have something to contribute to the West.

In identifying three things that are “right” in Islam—its sense of time, its poetry, and the Qur’an—Sells sought a way to “translate” these elements for his

Western audience. The Islamic sense of time, for example, grows out of the experience of a lunar calendar with no fixed dates, and a daily system of five calls to prayer based on natural observations and an orientation to Mecca. In addition to its implications for the development of Muslim astronomy and mathematics, this system has helped to create a



“non-transactional” experience of time in Islamic society; people are less concerned about getting where they need to go and more interested in developing relationships along the way. Sells notes that this notion of time is “not terribly efficient,” but might have something to teach us nonetheless. In a similar way, Americans

could benefit by learning more about how traditions of shared poetry and the aural experience of the Qur’an have contributed to a rich culture. In sum, the present crisis demands what Sells calls an “apophatic” politics, one that resists fixed cultural categories and strives for an inclusive, non-oppositional perspective.

## Delbanco Details Melville’s Moral and Religious Questions



As part of the Lowell Lectures in the Humanities with co-sponsorship by the Boisi Center, Columbia English Professor Andrew Delbanco addressed the religious and moral questions raised by the work of author Herman Melville in a lecture entitled “Melville, our Contemporary.” Delbanco, whom *Time* Magazine recently named as “America’s Best Social Critic,” is the author of numerous books and articles, including his most recent work, *The Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost their Sense of Evil*. He brought a close reading of a number of Melville’s works, including *Moby Dick*, to bear on moral issues which have a particular urgency for American society in our times.

Delbanco argued that Melville was very much preoccupied with the human capacity for cruelty, and with the human appetite for belief. He was a writer who understood the power of demagoguery, and, like Dostoevsky, he was deeply aware of how compassion and cruelty can become intermingled, with devastating results.

With respect to the thematic elements of Melville’s work, Delbanco identified four characteristics which seem to make Melville especially appropriate for contemporary post-modern readers. First, Melville viewed knowledge as a social construction. Secondly, according to his correspondence with Nathaniel Hawthorne, Melville believed language was inadequate to capture our experience, but rather could only evoke or point to that which is ineffable. Thirdly, Melville’s plots tend to be non-linear, with digressions rather than consecutive plot developments, which suggests a less structured view of our experience of time. Lastly, Melville was a brash and exuberant individual who rejected the prudish ways of his own time.

In the aftermath of September 11, Delbanco (who works and lives in New York City) pondered what elements in Melville could speak to the “working class heroes” like the firemen and policemen who rushed into the World Trade Center. He suspected that the events of September 11 might signal the end of post-modern irony.

## Soroush Offers An Islamic Perspective on Reason in Society

According to Islamic scholar Abdolkarim Soroush, the distinctively human capacity to reason is intimately connected to freedom—in fact, “the only free thing in the world is reason.” Yet the capacity for reason is also in tension with other important aspects of human experience—revelation, revolution, and love. Soroush, a visiting professor this year at Harvard Divinity School, explored these tensions of reason in a lecture at Boston College on March 25.

As a challenge to revelation, or religious experience, reason as an independent human achievement is epitomized in the case of Galileo and his conflict with the Church in the 16th century. For Soroush, this tension remains intractable, and “Islam has found no better solutions than Christianity to this question.”

The tension between reason and revolution, on the other hand, was illustrated strikingly for Soroush in the Iranian Revolution of 1979, and still plays a role in Iran today. Revolutions, because they involve the “eruption of emotions,” are “very far from rationality.” People taking part in revolution need to be guided to

find a balance between reason and emotion, and Soroush sees this as the task of intellectuals.

Finally, Soroush looks to the great Sufi mystic Rumi to exemplify the third great tension—between reason and love. Sufism teaches the elevation of love

and the disdain for reason; as Rumi says, “reason is a businessman, always following its own interest.”

Soroush concluded by exploring ways in which these tensions can be addressed, if not resolved. Reason and revelation can relate in several ways—through understanding, analysis, theology, and critique—all of which can be helpful, but problematic as well. In the Muslim community,

Soroush argued, there is great resistance to the idea that reason can critique religion, but it is a step the community needs to take. Rather than adopting the posture of a weak belief threatened by external critique, the Islamic community needs to develop its own qualified scholars who can participate actively in the wider scholarly community.



## Banuazizi Proposes a Typology of Political Islam

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Such movements are actually new in Islam; for most of its history, Islamic rule has been characterized by a separation of spiritual and political rule. Only in the 1960's and 70's did the idea of an Islamic state develop.

While justice is the overriding ideological goal of these movements, exactly what each means by justice (in general and as it pertains to women) is quite different: the liberals, for example, understand justice in terms of the French model of equality before the law and espouse a fairly moderate view of women's freedom and social roles. Revolutionaries, on the other hand, interpret justice as messianic, involving the equal distribution of resources to all, and espouse a correspondingly egalitarian view of women's place in society. Finally, conservatives espouse an Aristotelian notion of justice as impartial and involving the proportionate treatment of unequal parties; in this scheme, women are in an inferior position and therefore receive different treatment than men under the law.

Banuazizi notes that the typology outlined above cuts across the traditional Sunni/Shi'ite divide in Islam; at the same time, it does not include the many non-political orientations in Islam, ranging from the world-denying Sufis to “ordinary, apathetic” Muslims. The typology also makes the study of terrorism more complex, because it demonstrates the difficulty of fitting terrorist movements into any one category. But on the whole, terrorist groups tend to be peripheral in Islamic societies, and their methods are rejected by most Islamic governments.

Banuazizi argues that limiting the spread and influence of such terrorist groups demands a two-fold political strategy. First, the debate between political groups in the Muslim world needs to be allowed to flourish. At the same time, the United States and its allies should promote democratic institutions in Islamic society through a measured process of influencing governments and enunciating the U.S. values of pluralism and tolerance.



## Waterman Asks if Economists are Human



On January 30, The Boisi Center's Spring 2002 visiting scholar A.W.C. Waterman, Professor of Economics at the University of Winnipeg, detailed his current research program at a luncheon presentation entitled "Economists versus Human Beings?" Waterman explained that his involvement with public policy advocacy in the Canadian Anglican Church in the 1970's

brought to his attention a gap between the methodological presuppositions and orientation of Christian social thinking and those of his own vocation as an economist. Waterman proposes in his research a critique of Christian social thinking that does justice both to the "spontaneous order" that economists recognize in human society, and to the organicism deeply imbedded in Christian ecclesiology.

As background to his project, Waterman explained that the divide between "economists" and "human beings" first arose at the beginning of the 19th century in the works of Thomas Malthus, who argued that scarcity of resources in the world posed fundamental problems which called into question the goodness of

God's creation. Subsequent work in political economy proceeded on the assumption of a methodological individualism which denied the possibility of recognizing a "common good" or collectively optimal course of action, but such an understanding of human society was in conflict with Christian social thinking's understanding of the world as an organism or "Body Politick" modeled on the Pauline notion of society as the mystical body of Christ. Thus Waterman traced the hostility of Christian social thought towards the science of political economy to the foundation of economics as a modern science.

During his time at the Boisi Center, Waterman plans to learn more about how American Christians themselves understand their tradition's social teachings so that he can account for not only the social thinking of those in the pulpit, but also of those in the pews. Once he has established what exactly is Christian social thinking today amongst both clergy and the laity, he plans to subject the doctrine first to the critical examination of the canons of economics, and secondly, to trace its departures from the traditional Christian social thinking of the 19th Century. Ultimately, he hopes to discover if the Christian tradition of inquiry concerning social questions can learn from the modern science of economics, or if the two versions of inquiry must ultimately be in conflict.

## Davidman Discusses "Unsynagogued" Jews

Wherein consists the self-identity of secular "unsynagogued" American Jews? Lynn Davidman, Professor of Judaic Studies at Brown University and former Visiting Scholar at the Boisi Center, addressed this and other questions related to her current sociological work on Jews "outside the synagogue." Davidman has concluded that the self-identity of secular Jews consists more in viewing themselves as "other" in opposition to the prevailing cultural identities in modern America than in viewing themselves as united in support of a specific cultural trait. Her research, based on in-depth interviews with 30 unsynagogued Jews, focuses on their lived religion in everyday life by analyzing the ways that Jewish identities, practices and meanings are established outside of institutional settings.

Professor Davidman found that the religious traditions of unsynagogued Jews were relatively thin: she recounted the stories of Jews who had returned home for quasi-traditional seders that featured pasta and other non-kosher dishes. If such traditions were thin with respect to religious content, she reasoned, then perhaps there were other traits around which secular Jews had preserved their identities.

Oddly enough, her interviews suggested that many Jews located their cultural identity in concepts such as "race," which in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the "Final Solution" seemed paradoxical. But upon further probing, she learned that



in fact secular Jews were the "first post-modern" people who denied any sort of essence but instead defined themselves by what they were not. Thus whereas Orthodox Jews (whom Davidman had previously studied and documented in her 1991 book *Tradition in a Rootless World: Women Turn to Orthodox Judaism*) did not identify themselves primarily in opposition to the prevalent American mainstream culture, unsynagogued Jews did. Davidman suggested that they sought to

embrace Jewish identity—with its proud heritage and history—but wished to reject the authority of rabbis or religious officials.