



# Engaged Spirituality: Social Change and American Religion

*Gregory C. Stanczak*

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In *Engaged Spirituality*, Gregory C. Stanczak challenges this assumption, arguing that spirituality plays an important social role as well. Based on more than one hundred interviews with individuals of diverse faith traditions, the book shows how prayer, meditation, and ritual provide foundations for activism. Among the stories, a Buddhist monk in Los Angeles intimately describes the physical sensations of strength and compassion that sweep her body when she recites the Buddha's name in times of selfless service, and a Protestant reverend explains how the calm serenity that she feels during retreats allows her to direct her multi-service agency in San Francisco to creative successes that were previously unimaginable.

In an age when Madonna studies Kabbalah and the internet is bringing Buddhism to the white middle-class, it is clear that formal religious affiliations are no longer enough. Stanczak's critical examination of spirituality provides us with a way of discussing the factors that impel individuals into social activism and forces us to rethink the question of how "religion" and "spirituality" might be defined.

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