

Can we disagree without being disagreeable? Many religious loyalties can hardly be shared outside specific believing communities. In recent years there has been a renewed identification with long-established religious traditions, and new movements have emerged in the United States. But have we become so committed to particular traditions that we close our doors on other people?

Do strong religious identities isolate us from one another? Many of us know the exhilaration of a secure sense of self-identity based on identification with race, ethnicity, gender, and religious affiliation. We also know a competing desire to transcend differences in the name of shared human aspirations. Do particular loyalties, then, blind us to each other?

Can religion be brought into politics without self-righteousness? Political involvements of religiously-motivated persons often create images of intolerant believers, quick to impose and coerce, and all too willing to deny the humanity and "Americanness" of those who do not share their vision. Can religious persons contribute to public life without endangering our freedoms?

Where must lines be drawn? Does a particular religious identity demand rejection of the religious beliefs of others? Does tolerance require that religious claims be left out of the public debate so that those with divergent views will not be affronted? the dilemmas are real. Religious tolerance is a perennial concern, particularly in pluralistic cultures like ours. Yet, tolerance has its limits. Failure to make a clear commitment can leave a person without identity, purpose, and direction.

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Religious Traditions and the Limits of Tolerance

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