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0521550114 - Knowledge and Belief in America: Enlightenment Traditions and Modern Religious Thought

Edited by William M. Shea and Peter A. Huff

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The Enlightenment values of individual autonomy, democracy, and secularizing reason appear to conflict with the religious traditions of community, authority, and traditional learning. Yet in American history the two heritages have been intertwined since the colonial era: The development of the Enlightenment has been influenced by community-based thinking, and religious institutions have adopted to some extent critical methods and a democratic ethos even within their own walls.

This volume brings together the work of a distinguished group of theologians, intellectual historians, literary critics, and philosophers to explore the interaction between Enlightenment ideals and American religion. The Enlightenment's effect on the major religious traditions, including the Catholic Church, evangelical Protestantism, and Judaism, is examined. Also highlighted is religion in the thinking of such representative figures as Edwards, Franklin, Emerson, Lincoln, Santayana and the pragmatists, Stevens, and Eliot. The collection concludes with a three-part discussion of the nature of the "post-Enlightenment."

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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York NY 10011-4211, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 1995

First paperback edition 2002

“Enamored against Thee by These Strange Minds,” by Giles Gunn, was first published in *Thinking across the American Grain: Ideology, Intellect, and the New Pragmatism*, ed. Giles Gunn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 119–151.

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
Knowledge and belief in America: enlightenment traditions and modern
religious thought / edited by William M. Shea and Peter A. Huff.

p. cm. — (Woodrow Wilson Center series)

Includes index.

ISBN 0 521 55011 4 hardback

1. United States—Religion. 2. Enlightenment—Influence.
I. Shea, William M., 1935– . II. Huff, Peter A. III. Series.

BL2525.K66 1995

277.3—dc20 95-6531

CIP

ISBN 0 521 55011 4 hardback

ISBN 0 521 53328 7 paperback

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Woodrow Wilson Center Press
Editorial Offices
370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W., Suite 704
Washington, D.C. 20024-2518
telephone: (202) 287-3000, ext. 218

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Foreword



This book is the result of a Woodrow Wilson Center project on the place of religion in modern American culture and intellectual life. Thanks are due to many whose patient cooperation made possible the completion of this volume—first among them the scholarly contributors. A planning committee composed of Richard J. Bernstein, James T. Kloppenberg, William M. Shea, John E. Smith, and David Tracy sketched out the basic rationale and terms of reference for the collaborative effort. The Center is pleased to acknowledge the support of the Exxon Education Fund, without which the undertaking of the project would not have been possible. Finally, a special word of gratitude is due to William M. Shea, the senior editor of this book. He had more to do with bringing it into being than anyone else, and when occasionally the project faltered, he steadied it. The volume’s writers and readers equally are in his debt.

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Woodrow Wilson Center