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978-1-107-01114-4 - Children, Adults, and Shared Responsibilities: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives

Edited by Marcia J. Bunge

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CHILDREN, ADULTS, AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES

This collection of essays by Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scholars underscores the significance of sustained and serious ethical, inter-religious, and interdisciplinary reflection on children. Essays in the first half of the volume discuss fundamental beliefs and practices within the religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam regarding children, adult obligations to them, and a child's own obligations to others. The second half of the volume focuses on selected contemporary challenges regarding children and faithful responses to them. Marcia J. Bunge brings together scholars from various disciplines and diverse strands within these three religious traditions, representing several views on essential questions about the nature and status of children and adult-child relationships and responsibilities. The volume not only contributes to intellectual inquiry regarding children in the specific areas of ethics, religious studies, children's rights, and childhood studies, but also provides resources for child advocates, religious leaders, educators, and those engaged in inter-religious dialogue.

MARCIA J. BUNGE is Professor of Humanities and Theology at Christ College, the Honors College of Valparaiso University (Indiana); Director of the Child in Religion and Ethics Project; and the University's W. C. Dickmeyer Professor. She is the translator and editor of selected texts by J. G. Herder entitled *Against Pure Reason: Writings on History, Language, and Religion* (1993). She has also edited and contributed to *The Child in Christian Thought* (2001); *The Child in the Bible* (2008, co-edited with Terence Fretheim and Beverly Roberts Gaventa); and *Children and Childhood in World Religions: Primary Sources and Texts* (2009, co-edited with Don S. Browning).

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*With gratitude
for the many joys and insights
Isaac and Anja
bring to my family and our community
and
for the amazing gifts and strengths
children and young people
bring to families and communities around the world*

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This volume evolved out of a larger project entitled the “Child in Religion and Ethics.” The overall aim of the project is to strengthen religious understandings of children and our obligations to them. This project began in 2004 and was supported by a generous grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc. I wish to express my deep appreciation to the Lilly Endowment, Inc. for its support, which enabled the contributors to all of the project’s publications, including this one, to meet in person. I especially want to thank Christopher Coble (Program Director for Religion) and Craig Dykstra (Senior Vice President for Religion) for their encouragement and for their own abiding commitment to children and young people.

Valparaiso University also contributed to the project in a variety of ways. Mel Piehl, Dean of Christ College (the Honors College of Valparaiso University), provided office space for the project. Vicki Brody, Administrative Assistant for the project, enthusiastically embraced its vision and offered outstanding assistance, greatly strengthening every aspect of the project. Several students in the Honors College served as exceptional research assistants over the course of the project: Emily German, Halina Hopkins, Andrew and Daniel Jarratt, Bonnie Keane, Melanie Mosher, and Megan Muta. Working with these intelligent, responsible, and good-natured young people has been one of the highlights of my professional career.

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traditions but also a heartfelt concern for the well-being of children. Contributors are listed on pp. x–xiii, and consultants included Karen Robinson (Amnesty International), Pamela Couture (Emmanuel College, Toronto), Zayn Kassam (Pomona College, Claremont), Gene Roehlkepartain (Search Institute, Minneapolis), and Sondra Ely Wheeler (Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, DC). All of us grieved when Don S. Browning, who served as both a contributor and consultant to the project, died on June 3, 2010. Although I did not study with Don when I was a student at the University of Chicago, he became one of my primary mentors and a dear friend during the course of this project. Recently, we also mourned when Lily Zakiyah Munir, both a scholar and child advocate, died suddenly of cancer on May 27, 2011.

All three religious traditions examined in this book speak about children as “gifts” of God. My own children, Isaac (18) and Anja (11), have truly been gifts and blessings in my life, and I thank God every day for them. My deep love and respect for them are intimately tied to my appreciation of and concern for other children and to my interest in and passion for mining wisdom from the world’s religions about children and childhood.

I sincerely hope that by examining beliefs and practices regarding children in these three specific religious traditions, this book can enrich our appreciation of the many strengths and vulnerabilities of children and prompt all of us – whatever our nationalities and whatever our religious or non-religious commitments – to work together more whole-heartedly to serve children in our midst and around the world.

MARCIA J. BUNGE