

MOURNING AND AFFIRMATION: RECUPERATING RELIGIOUS PLURALISM THROUGH “FAITH AND DOUBT AT GROUND ZERO”

Christine Muller

University of Maryland, United States of America. E-mail: cmuller1@um.edu

Recibido: 17 Abril 2010 / Revisado: 12 Mayo 2010 / Aceptado: 19 Mayo 2010 / Publicación Online: 15 Junio 2010

Abstract: Televised one year after the September 11 attacks, the Public Broadcasting Service’s *Frontline* documentary “Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero” focuses specifically on how that day has affected attitudes toward religion. With its form as a dramatic narrative framing its content of individuals’ struggles with faith, the documentary lends itself readily to a dramatistic rhetorical critique. Set within the scene of an ostensibly neutral, but contextually positioned, public affairs program, the act of the documentary depends upon the agencies of premise, tone, and editing to facilitate the agents’ – the viewers’ – participation in the interviewees’ meditations, an invitation based on ecumenical inclusivity. In this way, viewers, recognized as witnesses to September 11, join those more directly affected by that day in confronting what might have been lost and considering what might be recovered in terms of religious commitments within the United States. Ultimately, this film posits religious pluralism as a healing force and an affirmative enactment of American identity in response to the religious absolutism credited with instigating the September 11 attacks and provoking agonizing and divisive crises of faith.

Keywords: 9/11, crises of faith, religious pluralismo, American identity.

that mark daily life throughout the United States, if not around the globe, most people will likely be able to answer it. Such specificity in the act of recall over time, ordinarily considered unlikely, can occur for memories of deep personal significance, such as the moment when a loved one suddenly died, as well as for certain public events, such as the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Why and how does a public event, encountered by most through the media, become enduringly meaningful for those apparently not intimately connected to its horrors and its fallout? A total of 2,752 people who were at the World Trade Center (WTC) on September 11, 2001 have died, almost all of them in the less than two hours it took for hijackers to fly a commercial aircraft into each of the twin towers and for both of those buildings to collapse.² Television cameras projected across the nation and around the world live coverage of the towers burning, with individuals stranded above the impact zones visibly contending with their last moments of life: an estimate of 200, or seven to eight percent of the victims, jumped from the buildings, images so troubling that the American media eventually chose to stop showing them.³ What cultural fractures does such a trauma expose and how are these ruptured seams sutured back together?

INTRODUCTION

Where were you on September 11? This question forms the premise and the domain name of three separate contemporary websites.¹ This question, often asked with the year omitted, presupposes that regardless of the multiple unique circumstances

Televised the following year, the Public Broadcasting Service’s (PBS) *Frontline* documentary “Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero” focuses specifically on how that day’s attacks have affected attitudes toward religion by pursuing an “intimate and profound investigation of the spiritual aftershocks of September 11th.” Producer Helen Whitney

describes the overall production as a “drama of faith.”⁴ Indeed, five segments termed “Acts” structure the film’s progression, which includes contemplations of personal experiences and questions of religious belief by survivors, victims’ grieving relatives and friends, professors, writers, and others who have not lost loved ones in the attack, and representatives from diverse, as well as no, religious traditions.⁵ With its form as a dramatic narrative framing its content of individuals’ struggles with faith, the documentary lends itself readily to a dramatic rhetorical critique.⁶ Set within the scene of an ostensibly neutral, but contextually positioned, public affairs program, the act of the documentary depends upon the agencies of premise, tone, and editing to facilitate the agents’ – the viewers’ – participation in the interviewees’ meditations, an invitation based on ecumenical inclusivity. In this way, viewers, recognized as witnesses to September 11, join those more directly affected by that day in confronting what might have been lost and considering what might be recovered in terms of religious commitments within the United States. Ultimately, this film posits religious pluralism as a healing force and an affirmative enactment of American identity in response to the religious absolutism credited with instigating the September 11 attacks and provoking agonizing and divisive crises of faith.

1. THE DAY AND ITS AFTERMATH

On September 11, 2001, hijackers piloted airliners into the WTC’s North and South Towers and the Pentagon, and crashed a fourth passenger jet into a Pennsylvania field. However, in contrast to the Pentagon and the Pennsylvania field, the WTC complex occupied a densely-populated urban area easily accessible to media coverage. Consequently, American television viewers could watch live and frenetically replayed footage of those buildings while people remained trapped, as well as during their collapse and the resulting search-and-recovery efforts at what became known as Ground Zero, framing viewers’ perspectives of September 11 primarily in terms of the Manhattan crash site. As a result, for the American viewing public, the horrors that rapidly and disastrously developed at the WTC dominantly comprise what the term “September 11” connotes. Similar to surviving trauma, witnessing trauma necessitates a recovery process,⁷ which first involves re-establishing a sense of safety by restoring an individual’s

feeling of power and control.⁸ Next, the individual turns the trauma into a narrative; by telling this story, s/he ultimately can incorporate an unfamiliar, unwanted, unbearable phenomenon into a framework more amenable for the return to daily living.⁹ Then, the individual can confidently pursue new relationships with others.¹⁰ The attack on the WTC directly affected approximately 160,000 people in the New York area¹¹ but induced post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in an estimated 530,000 New Yorkers.¹² Hundreds of the city’s firefighters and police officers, groups that suffered unprecedented casualties that day, were no longer active two years later.¹³ In addition, psychotropic medication use among those who already had prescriptions¹⁴ and alcohol and cigarette consumption¹⁵ – considered forms of coping through self-medication – rose in the city as well. Comparable rates of increase did not occur in Washington, DC.¹⁶ However, others estimated that as many as 20 percent of Americans knew someone injured or killed that day¹⁷ and PTSD-associated symptoms were connected to the amount of time national television viewers watched coverage of September 11.¹⁸ Moreover, church and synagogue attendance rose by as much as 20 percent.¹⁹ Such numbers indicate the extent to which the attacks on New York produced psychological distress and necessitated a process of recovery from trauma not only for New Yorkers, but also for national television viewers.

Public accounts reported,²⁰ which the 9/11 Commission later affirmed,²¹ that the perpetrators of the September 11 hijackings were affiliated with al Qaeda and were motivated by religious extremism.

Indeed, instructions for the attacks found in some of the hijackers’ luggage emphatically and intricately linked the success of a homicidal and suicidal mission with Quaranic devotion,²² a tendency characteristic not of Islam generally, but rather of “an extremely militant reformulation of maximalist currents within Islam.”²³

As a result, the massive devastation of September 11 came to be understood as the ultimate consequence of fundamentalist religious fervor. Accordingly, religion’s role, value, and responsibility within contemporary culture loomed complexly among the fissures to which post-traumatic narratives needed to attend.

2. RECUPERATION THROUGH RELIGIOUS PLURALISM: PBS AS THE DRAMATISTIC SCENE

For Kenneth Burke, scene consists of “the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred.”²⁴ In effect, the WTC’s televised images form the shared memory of September 11, serving as the site of the trauma’s cultural production through which American viewers negotiate a sense of the event’s meaning²⁵ and relation to national identity.²⁶ Accordingly, the television can serve as the medium through which a shared memory of recovery develops as well. As an alternative to the passive programming available through the major television networks, PBS began as an endeavor to educate viewers and thereby enhance their ability to participate in American civil society.²⁷ In this sense, PBS has a tradition of offering content that self-consciously motivates particular viewer responses; specifically, PBS programming has sought to provoke viewer responses constrained within, rather than liberated from, the parameters of dominant American cultural values and practices.²⁸ Such arguments characterize PBS as a scene for traumatic recovery constituted by partiality for the practice of consensus rather than dissension and the value of religious pluralism rather than extremism.²⁹

For 22 years, PBS has considered *Frontline* its “flagship public affairs series.”³⁰ B. J. Bullert asserts, “*Frontline* programs are routinely reviewed in the nation’s newspapers, and they often become part of public debate. These programs set the standard against which other PBS public affairs documentaries – including independently produced documentaries – are often measured.”³¹ According to *Frontline*’s self-reported history, “By casting a national spotlight on complex and compelling issues, *Frontline* not only illuminates them, but also serves as a catalyst for change, extending a documentary’s impact far beyond its initial broadcast.”³² This statement underscores *Frontline*’s commitment to producing documentaries that engage and shape viewer deliberation and action on issues of national concern.

Who are these viewers? Based on research analyses, *Frontline* characterizes them as “social capitalists as PBS has defined them: Americans who are engaged in, contributing to, and participating in their communities. They are

civic-minded and active in public affairs.” They are likely “affluent and well-educated. They are more likely to hold executive or professional employment positions than the general population and the average public television viewer,” and they tend to be younger (35- to 49-years-of-age) than PBS’s typical audience and the typical audience for other, similar national programs.³³ Essentially, PBS’s *Frontline* engages those with the initiative and the financial, educational, and professional resources and status to respond to public concerns through mainstream civic activism. In other words, *Frontline* viewers are able and likely to address social disruption or injustice, but they do so within existing structures of redress, rather than by challenging the structures that in fact sustain their own resources and status. This recuperative tendency suggests that *Frontline*’s exploration of religious belief in terms of September 11 would favor a progressive view of religious tolerance.³⁴ Such a view would link American identity with religious pluralism as a constructive response to and possible mode of traumatic recovery from the threat of religious extremism posed by the September 11 attacks.

3. HOW TO TALK ABOUT RELIGION IN AMERICA: CHOICES FOR DRAMATISTIC AGENCY

To produce a documentary on religion after September 11, *Frontline* approached New Yorker Helen Whitney. In her Producer’s Notes, Whitney remarks that her home’s proximity to Ground Zero rendered her particularly troubled by the attacks; in addition, she acknowledges that “Religious questions have preoccupied me at a deep level over the years,” making the offer of this project appealing to her. However, she admits, “I was daunted by the enormity of the event, the babble of voices, the rawness of the emotion, and the magnitude of the pain and loss.” She adds, “The contentiousness of the debate among intellectuals and policy-makers made me apprehensive as well.” As she took time to consider the challenges inherent in her assignment, she found that “The political debate rose in intensity, but there seemed to be more heat than light in the arguments...The pieties of both the left and the right were being challenged. It seemed like a minefield to me.”³⁵ For Whitney as the documentary’s producer and in that sense the foremost shaper of rhetorical

choices, a principle obstacle consisted of how to negotiate in a meaningful way a subject – religion – which even in ordinary circumstances is charged by emotion, politics, and ideology. Who would speak, from what positions, and to what ends, under conditions fueling passion and turmoil?

Yet Whitney also perceived that circumstances seemed to call for such an endeavor. “I detected...a recognition that however important the language of politics and economics, it no longer sufficed. The debate – in the most unlikely secular places in New York – turned metaphysical as well.”

She acknowledges choosing to focus her production on New York as the “epicenter of this tragedy,” rendering the city for viewers a signifier of both the trauma of September 11 and of secular-based conversations on religion. Likewise, when she asserts, “I was struck by how insistently death seemed to be the text and the subtext of many of my conversations. Not only the deaths of the thousands trapped in the towers but one's own death,” she points to another framework: the identification of witnesses with the victims of September 11 and the need of these witnesses for a process of post-traumatic recovery.³⁶ In this way, Whitney locates New York as both the origin of trauma and the context for working through that trauma for witnesses as well as victims.

Burke considers significant the rhetorical impact of drawing an audience onto an agent's terms. He avows, “You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by...*identifying* your ways with his.”³⁷ Similarly, he notes, “Longinus refers to that kind of elation wherein the audience feels as though it were not merely receiving, but were itself creatively participating in the poet's or speaker's assertion. Could we not say that, in such cases, the audience is exalted by the assertion because it has the feel of collaborating in the assertion?”³⁸ Burke contends that this identification of separate individuals with one another through rhetoric can unify them around shared goals, feelings, and ideas in a state he terms “consubstantiality.”³⁹

Indeed, Whitney premises “Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero” as a meditation on religious belief among members of a cohesive whole: documentary participants and viewers united as Americans.⁴⁰ In this way, Whitney positions the

film as a rhetorical act that evokes viewers' engagement in an American community seeking traumatic recovery together.

4. THE DRAMA OF FAITH AND DOUBT: VENTURING THROUGH ACTS OF SPIRITUAL INTERROGATION

According to Burke, “It is a principle of drama that the nature of acts and agents should be consistent with the nature of the scene.”⁴¹ The documentary “Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero” as the act functions in the context of PBS as the scene and viewers as the agents, fostering viewers' mourning over and recuperation from the trauma of September 11 through the enactment of an ecumenical American identity. The *Frontline* Web site introduces the film by locating the audience needs it will address: For many Americans, those images called more into question than just their own physical safety. For many people, the most difficult questions were not about politics, military strategy, or homeland security. They were questions about God, about evil, and about the potential for darkness within religion itself. And for many, those questions haven't gone away.

As the country prepares to commemorate the victims and heroes of September 11th, *Frontline* returns to Ground Zero, both literally and metaphorically, and explores these fundamental spiritual questions. What was it we saw on September 11th?⁴²

This introduction resonates with Judith Herman's description of trauma and the stages of post-traumatic recovery.⁴³ *Frontline* characterizes the “images” of September 11 as threatening to audience members' “physical safety” as well as to other “difficult questions” for them that “haven't gone away.” In other words, by watching the televised portrayal of September 11, viewers witnessed an event that overwhelmed their ordinary adaptive capacities – essentially, a traumatic event – and as a result have experienced symptoms that consist of unanswered questions – in effect, an inability to come to terms with what was witnessed. The documentary purports to address the question, “What was it we saw on September 11th?” and thereby to render the event in some form intelligible – essentially, to enact Herman's second stage of recovery in which the traumatic story is recounted to subdue its overpowering effects and enable those it has affected to mourn and move forward. Again, the use of “we” in

this question unites the production with the viewer, forming a single entity (implicitly “Americans”) in dialogue with the issues raised in the program. In this way, the Web site introduction invokes a consubstantiated audience’s participation in the documentary’s investigation of American spirituality, inviting them into the process of collective mourning and traumatic recovery through recuperation of a national community.

On the documentary’s *Frontline* Web site, producer Helen Whitney outlines the structure of “Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero.” She uses Act One to “suggest all of the major themes” while “recapitulat[ing] the major events of the first day in order to bring us back emotionally to that time and place. The act ends with witnesses remembering their helplessness and terror as they watched people jumping from the towers, and the drama of faith begins.” In this way, she frames what follows from the perspective of witnesses to trauma, who can work through that trauma by engaging the discourse on “The Face of God,” “The Face of Evil,” and “The Face of Religion” as portrayed in Acts Two, Three, and Four, as well as the Epilogue’s meditation on whether and how to form meaning from the horror of the day.⁴⁴ By engaging in the spiritual interrogation manifested by the documentary, viewers participate in a difficult and profound attempt to make sense of the trauma of September 11 and incorporate that experience into a framework of understanding amenable for the return to ordinary life.

The recognition of viewers as witnesses recovering from trauma and the summons for them to participate in the act of the documentary occurs as early as the *Frontline* introduction preceding the actual documentary. Images of the WTC attacks accompany the announcer as he says, “And there are still so many questions.” The footage is edited so television viewers see on the right of their screens the faces of on-site witnesses staring captivated at the towers; to the left, superimposed, viewers see the second plane approaching the South Tower – in this visual arrangement, it seems as if the plane is actually flying into those bystanders. In this way, witnesses are presented as incorporated in the experience of trauma and the necessity for recovery. Likewise, as the introduction continues, an unidentified female voice asks, “If there is a God, what is happening?” as viewers watch images of people running away from the debris cloud of a collapsing tower, with the

foreground focusing on a woman’s face, eyes wide and mouth open in terror, as she looks back over her shoulder at what she is running from. Another unidentified male speaker asks, “How could God be in the horror of what I saw?” as viewers see a tower caving in from the top down, knowing there are people still inside. With a universality intimated by disembodied anonymity, these voices seem to speak for viewers as well as they pose questions about the existence of God in the presence of overwhelmingly painful and terrifying circumstances. This technique is used in the beginning of the documentary itself as well; unidentified voices exclaim, “It was hell on earth,” “It’s nothing to do with God,” “This is what evil looks like,” and, “If people can kill for God in this way, this is the best reason never to believe in God!”⁴⁵ forcing the viewer to receive and absorb the responses as abstract representations of generalizable thoughts and feelings, on which the viewer him/herself can reflect in the context of the Ground Zero visuals attending the audio elements.

As the documentary continues, the subdued, benevolent voice of the female narrator begins to speak: “Almost everyone has a moment when they feel lost in darkness, a loved one snatched away, disease, natural disaster, human cruelty. Almost everyone at some point asks the question, ‘Why me? Why her? Why, God?’” However, as she explains, “What made September 11 different from other dark nights was that so many Americans came away from it asking these fundamental questions at the same time, not only those who witnessed the slaughter at Ground Zero but those who watched in horror at a distance.” In effect, as the ominous introduction preceding her comments intimated, she asserts that an entire community – not just New Yorkers, but Americans elsewhere as well – have all been exposed to the same crisis, and thus have all the same need to confront the existential challenges it poses. From this need, the narrator advances a rationale for the broadcast, for “document[ing] this national conversation.” As the video complements these words with imagery of the sun peaking through dark, smoky buildings, and vibrant rays pushing past Manhattan’s skyline, the documentary proffers light to the viewers as something sublime penetrating through shadowy, earthly forms.⁴⁶ Together, words and images communicate the multiple levels on which the documentary conversation will transpire: as a linear investigation of religion in the

contemporary world and as a more amorphous process for interviewees and viewers alike to work through their own spiritual introspection.

“Act One: September 11th” begins with images and comments that recall the sense many experienced that day of sudden unforeseen calamity tearing asunder the pace and expectations of ordinary life – that is, the experience of traumatic disruption. The personal accounts that follow in this section further elaborate the shock and horror of this disruption, contextualizing the trauma within the testimony of those most directly affected by it. With the exception of one couple who sit closely together, each individual speaks alone, facing the camera but directing his/her attention to the right, off-camera, never intimating that any interviewer is present or any questions have been asked.⁴⁷ Consequently, their words appear like unprompted admissions to the thoughts and feelings that their predicaments incite. This arrangement for speakers continues throughout the documentary, evidencing a consistent effort to produce a confessional atmosphere of internal reflection and personal struggle that invites viewers to commiserate and in turn, self-reflect.

The narrator singles out the “terror of those who jumped” for consideration as a particularly problematic phenomenon. While still and video images show people clustered at ledges and others falling through the air, Luca Babini, a photographer, admits, “I have actually visualized myself in that situation since that happened, and I can’t even imagine how to do that!”⁴⁸ His subsequent comments evidence the challenge for witnesses of trying to understand how the particular circumstances of being trapped at the highest levels of the towers prompted a number of people to choose to die by jumping out of the building rather than by remaining inside, raising important questions: why jump? Was it an act merely of blind desperation? What else could they do? What does this moment say about the ultimate value of spiritual belief in confronting the brink between life and death? What would I do in the same situation? With the live coverage of the twin towers, the subsequent media repetitions of the coverage, and this documentary, the attack does not just affect those it physically harmed; the attack threatens all viewers who, from apprehending these plights, not only sympathize with the victims, but also recognize that those victims could just as easily have been themselves. By the end of “Act One,” with the

figures of the jumping office workers emblemizing the horror of September 11, viewers grasp what is at stake for themselves when negotiating their own issues of faith and doubt.

To begin “Act Two: The Face of God,” the narrator asks, “Where was God on September 11th? For some, he was among the missing. For others, he was right there at Ground Zero.” Retired police officer Kim Coleman, who lost her daughter, and teacher Showkatara Sharif Chowdhury, who lost both her daughter and her son-in-law, exhibit inclinations toward acceptance. For these individuals of diverse religious traditions, faith offers comfort, or at least an explanation for why someone they love has died tragically. Yet others have been able to find neither comfort nor explanations. Marian Fontana, a writer who lost her firefighter husband, remembers a particular moment when she realized she no longer could comprehend the possibility of a God who can both create beauty and allow horror. She speaks haltingly and heavily of how “I felt that my faith was so weakened by the 11th. And so I felt like God was just not present in me the way it had been.” Her difficulty in actually speaking these words indicates the sorrow her diminished faith, essentially an additional lost relationship, causes her, suggesting that losing faith has compounded her suffering. Similarly, Tim Lynston, a security guard, plainly says, “Right now, God’s not giving me that comfort.” He remembers going to the beach to “let loose at God...I cursed him. I damned him.” Filled with rage, Lynston is unable to consider faith a resource.⁴⁹ For the bereaved, the struggle for spiritual understanding figures critically for how they contend with their losses. Indeed, viewers might feel an intensified sense of compassion – or judgment – while observing the heightened anguish evoked by those who found their beliefs undermined by September 11.

However, the narrator adds, “For many people who did not lose loved ones, the questions were also urgent and personal. Something about September 11 powerfully changed their beliefs.” According to Kanan Mikaya, a professor of Middle Eastern Studies, “September 11th is harder for an atheist like myself than for a believer because it shook my belief in the one last foundation of everything, in the human race...And then that does leave you very, very isolated, not knowing where to turn. You can’t hope anymore the same way.”⁵⁰ However, “Act

Two” concludes with Rabbi Irwin Kula, a conservative rabbi, who found that September 11 in a sense confirmed his beliefs; that the acts of firefighters self-sacrificing to save the lives of strangers enacted an underlying spiritual connectedness among all living beings. In honor of this principle, Rabbi Kula has formulated his own prayer from the last moments of those who died that day, a litany of voice mail- and answering machine-recorded good-byes from the dying to the loved ones they would leave behind. The last image in “Act Two” shows the back of Rabbi Kula as he faces the window of a spare apartment and chants his prayer, “Honey, something terrible is happening. I don’t think I’m going to make it. I love you. Take care of the children.” When he finishes, the camera lingers on his image in silence.⁵¹ The lasting impression is complex: his final words are horrifying, yet transformed into a sacred text, they also seem to transcend the horror from which they came. Should they? Is there a spiritual component to the material conditions of human life, pain, loss, fear, and death, through which these horrors can be redeemed? Or is he wrong to presume so and therefore guilty of exploiting this language of devastation? The documentary – specifically, its narrator – never raises these particular questions and so never comments either way. However, the silence that follows his final chant gives viewers time to consider for themselves the impact and implications of his choice to ritualize agonized good-byes among loved ones – indeed the impact and implications of September 11 for belief in any natural or supernatural positive force.

In “Act Three: The Face of Evil,” the narrator asks, “What is it we talk about when we talk about evil?” and commences an alternation of viewpoints that function almost like a debate. Fr. George Rutler, a Catholic priest, describes a personified evil by noting that Jesus “spoke very vividly and intimately of evil, of Satan. He doesn’t talk in abstract terms about evil. He addresses evil as a person.” Margot Adler, a correspondent for National Public Radio (NPR), speculates that evil functions through “an estrangement from your connection that these other human beings, the ones that are jumping out the window to the bottom, are just like you.”⁵² However, author Ian McEwan states with certainty, “I don’t really believe in evil at all...I think there are only people behaving, and sometimes behaving monstrously.” Yet almost as a counterpoint, Kanan Makiya then asserts

not only that evil exists, but also that the term evil categorizes motivations that politics and psychology alone cannot fully explain. Once acknowledged, Mikaya argues, the word “evil” can function productively to compel action against itself. Dasha Rittenberg, a Holocaust survivor, affirms with the authority of experience, “I can only describe evil by giving you what I remember...what I, my own eyes and ears heard and saw evil [sic].” Footage of concentration camps accompanies her recollections of the evils of the Holocaust, gesturing toward a historical event that 60 years later continues to elude full comprehension in terms purely of ordinary behavioral and political explanations.⁵³ As these and other successive opinions regarding the notion of evil progress, elements of different speakers’ reflections recur in others’ accounts to encounter either support or contradiction without any authoritative resolution from the narrator. In this way, the documentary provides varying perspectives that invite viewers to decide for themselves.

“Act Four: The Face of Religion” explores the potential for religion to accomplish both good and harm.⁵⁴ Unsettled by the “whole different order of absolutism” exhibited by the September 11 hijackers, former Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) curator Kirk Varnedoe posits art as “a substitute religion.” He explains, “I came to think that art is exactly not what religion is, that it’s not about absolutes and it has to do with the condition of being human, which is not ever to be able to deal with absolutes, that we deal in a world of doubts, a world of uncertainties, a world of ironies.” Yet, as the narrator notes, “there is another face of religion that celebrates mystery and offers solace. In this time of questioning, that power of religion endures.” For attorney Terry McGovern, who once considered herself estranged from the Catholic Church in which she was raised, this function was important. After unexpectedly finding her mother’s memorial service comforting, she reevaluated her spiritual disillusionment. As she finishes speaking, video of the September 14, 2001 national memorial service at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC features opera singer Denyce Graves performing the “Our Father” hymn. The song lingers, with Graves singing, “thy kingdom come/thy will be done/on Earth/as it is in Heaven” as the last video images show the cathedral full of mourners from the perspective of a back balcony looking forward to the altar.⁵⁵ As the conclusion of “Act Four,” this segment contributes a ritualized tone, set in

a space of worship with sacred lyrics supplicating for grace from a higher power, evoking the fundamental need for comfort that religion addresses, in spite of its shortcomings. Without hearing further commentary from the narrator or other speakers, viewers are left to contemplate this dynamic as if they themselves occupy the visualized church interior.

“Act Five: Ground Zero” takes the viewer back to the root cause for so much anguished introspection by returning discussion to the site of the initial trauma, which has now metamorphosed from the catastrophic spectacle of September 11 to a more grimly subdued space of toil and mourning. Joel Meyerowitz, a photographer, calls it “hallowed ground,” a location to which recovery workers return daily simply to honor the dead by excavating whatever remains they can find to bring home to the bereaved. The video that accompanies his account depicts workers carrying flag-draped stretchers of incomplete human remains, who pause with helmets removed to pay respects to the dead they have found and must send to grieving families. Later, Helen Tworikov the Buddhist editor of *Tricycle* magazine, also recalls that “there was something very compelling about being in that space, and it had to do with the way people were relating to each other. There was so much kindness and so much tenderness.” The video that accompanies her words includes still photos of rescue and recovery workers hugging that seem to evidence the compassion to which she refers.⁵⁶ In the moments thus presented through Meyerowitz’s and Tworikov’s words and the documentary’s imagery, viewers themselves perceive a transformation from the WTC site manifested at the beginning of the film: the loud, sudden, and rapidly-developing horror has now become the quiet focus of slow and agonizing work, an aftermath that mirrors the spiritual and emotional aftermath traced in this film. Tracing this narrative progression, viewers can trace their own progression from witnessing trauma, to confronting the spiritual implications of that trauma, to incorporating those implications within their now-changed sense of daily life.

In what it terms the “Epilogue,” the documentary concludes by returning for meditation to the figures of two jumpers who were seen holding hands. To conjure the mood for meditation, the ethereal image of the twin beams of light becomes the focus of the video, while unidentified voices – although mostly

recognizable from contributions to previous film segments – offer their interpretations of the jumpers’ behavior. Although reactions range from horror to a kind of hope, the final words on the subject and the documentary itself challenge the viewers to form their own interpretations, asserting, “It is, finally, our choice.”⁵⁷ Thus, the “Epilogue” functions both to salvage some intelligibility from the initially overwhelming terror – which marks the post-traumatic recovery stage of mourning – and to summon, with the word “our,” a recuperated sense of self as participating in the collective action of viewers and film to (re)construct a pluralist American identity.

5. ENACTING A PLURALIST RESPONSE TO RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

Informed by his study of world religions, Joseph Campbell acknowledges within all human beings and within all religions the potential to cause harm. Consequently, he cautions that while a “realization of the inevitable guilt of life may so sicken the heart that...one may refuse to go on with it,” a converse danger exists wherein “one may invent a false, finally unjustified, image of oneself...not guilty as others are, but justified in one’s inevitable sinning because one represents the good.”⁵⁸ This caution resonates with the tenor of “Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero,” in which destructive tendencies are located within different religious traditions and religious pluralism is enacted as the constructive alternative to fundamentalism. Whitney’s selection of interviewees, from theologians who typically would be considered experts on religion, to artists and grieving family members, cultivates a sense of egalitarian respect for all voices commenting on the theme of spiritual struggle. Moreover, the inclusion of Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, atheist, and agnostic perspectives in a discussion of spiritual experience in the United States contributes to the tone of religious tolerance.⁵⁹ Yet also contributing to this tone is the absence of less tolerant views. No one interviewed criticizes how others practice, or fail to practice, a faith, with the exception of a Lutheran minister, Reverend David Benke,⁶⁰ who reacts to those within his own religion who take action against him for participating in an interfaith September 11 memorial service at Yankee Stadium.⁶¹ He recalls, “When I shared the podium with representatives of all the major faiths and prayed, that prayer became the center of a major controversy. The very next day, I began to get

messages filled with hate...from within my tradition," which ultimately led to charges of heresy for insinuating, with this ecumenical gesture, that other religions share with Lutheranism equal claims to credibility. His outrage at their intolerance of his inclusive gesture receives no counterpoint, allowing his account's criticism of absolutism to stand unchallenged, and therefore presumably supported, by the film.⁶²

In fact, multiple interviewees attribute to religious fundamentalism, or the assertion of one's faith as absolute, the impulse that motivated the hijackers to act. The narrator introduces "Act Four: The Face of Religion" with the observation, "Throughout time, religion has been a source of grace and consolation, and also of violence and divisiveness," framing the subsequent interviews as interrogations of religion's capacity for harm. Orthodox Rabbi Brad Hirschfield asserts, "It's amazing how good religion is at mobilizing people to do awful, murderous things. There is this dark side to it, and anyone who loves religious experience, including me, better begin to own there is a serious shadow side to this thing." Likewise, Monsignor Lorenzo Albacete, a Catholic priest who immediately recognized religion as the motivation for the September 11 attacks, says, "I knew that that force could take you to do great things, but I knew that there was no greater and no more destructive force on the surface of this earth than the religious passion." Later, Khaled El-Fadl, a professor of Islamic law, speaks earnestly: I am fighting for the soul and identity of Islam itself. I did speak out, but did I do enough? Did I do enough to prevent this? I really don't think that you can be – you can hold your head high and have a sense of dignity about yourself if you can't clearly confront the fact that this remarkable amount of ugliness was committed in the name of the faith that you believe in... What I think is the most dangerous is –there are few that are as arrogant or self-righteous as bin Laden within the Muslim world. But the most dangerous is a type of thinking that would allow a person to think they speak authoritatively and decisively for God. And that type of thinking is more widespread in contemporary Islam than bin Laden.⁶³

Each of these men of different faiths contend that religion can function so powerfully, it can absorb individuals within a spiritual experience that in fact inures them to the humanity of others outside that experience, forming the conditions

that make brutality against those others possible. By featuring these critiques of religion from those who remain most committed to their faiths, in effect positioning these accounts as reluctant testimony, the film presents a forceful argument against the religious absolutism that makes destruction such as September 11 possible.

6. VIEWER RESPONSES TO "FAITH AND DOUBT AT GROUND ZERO"

Reviewing viewer responses to the documentary provides one way of assessing the extent to which this argument succeeds. On the documentary's *Frontline* Web site, a link explicitly invites viewers to "Join the Discussion," which leads to two other links: "Reactions to the Film" and "Share Your Stories." On each of these pages, the same disclaimer prefaces responses, We have received an unusually large number of letters in response to "Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero," and we anticipate many more as the film continues to air nationally on PBS. As always, we welcome and appreciate your feedback, yet because of the large volume, we hope our viewers will understand that we can only post a fraction of the letters received, striving to represent the range of responses to the film.⁶⁴

Although a "Join the Discussion" link appears on other *Frontline* program Web sites, this disclaimer does not,⁶⁵ suggesting that, as stated, "Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero" did in fact prompt an exceptionally substantial viewer response. The "Reactions to the Film" link features five Web pages of replies to the question, "What did you think of 'Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero'? Share your reactions to the film and its treatment of the central themes of God, evil, and religion." These responses, from men and women who self-identify as practicing varying, or no, faiths from throughout the United States and Canada, differ widely in tone and content. However, certain themes do emerge. Among the critical postings, a slight majority find fault with the film for what they perceive as its selectively liberal stance, as indicated by the comments of "Joshua Corey, Brooklyn, NY": How appalling that not once in a 2 hour film was there a depiction of a synagogue in the inside, an Orthodox Rabbi who enjoyed a much larger range of acceptance for expressing genuinely/authentically Torah observant positions other than the pony-tailed

Tikkun, leftist extremist Rabbi "Brad" Hirschfield or the Rabbinical student Josh Simon or the Conservative Rabbi Irwin Kula. Come on folks, it's high time to show a real Jewish expression to your audience, not a left-wing politically correct version; take Rabbis Meir Fund, Avi Shafran, Jonathan Rosenblum, Berel Wein, Dr. Abraham Twerski, to name a few.

Likewise, "Wanda Stone, Baxley, Georgia," writes, I was disappointed that more Christians weren't interviewed that had a deep relationship with Jesus Christ. Being a Christian myself, I know that when you have a sincere and deep relationship with the Lord Jesus as well as a deep understanding of the Word of God, then when crisis like 9-11 arise, they are not as devastating because you know that God is and has always been faithful and that this world is just a place that we're passing through. Heaven is our real home. It is never easy to lose loved ones, but if you have put the Lord first in your life, then when hard times come, you will hold on to Him and He will see you through. Jesus himself said in the Word of God, that we would always have tribulation in this world. The Bible is full of terribly hard times that the nations of Israel has gone through, but God has a purpose and a plan for each and every life on earth, if they will only seek Him and salvation through His son. This country has been blessed because it was founded on biblical principals. Unfortunately, the gospel has been watered down and many Christians have allowed the enemy of their souls to draw them away from the author and finisher of their faith. Job in the Old Testament underwent a huge test of his faith, but He remained faithful to the Lord and the Lord restored to him everything and more that had been taken from him.

However, the majority trend celebrates the production as an opportunity for national reflection and discussion, as indicated by the comments of "John G, Burdett, NY": I can agree as well as disagree with many of the statements made here by your respondents. But agreement or disagreement is not the issue in the critical search for understanding, compassion, inclusivity [sic], and progress toward building a more just and peaceful world. Listening to one another, withholding judgment, feeling one another's pain, transcending our ego and our faith or no-faith position, working toward solutions cooperatively, and expending one's self in caring for others are so much more useful

in the attainment of the kind of wisdom we need in the face of life's difficulties and challenges and yes, tragedies.

This reaction expresses a value of tolerant community over dogmatic consensus on issues of faith. Similar responses share this ecumenical perspective and credit PBS and *Frontline* for providing the opportunity for collective meditation and mourning. In some instances, responses within this trend fault religious fervor – such as the action against Lutheran minister Reverend Bencke – for creating at least discord and at most events like September 11.⁶⁶ Although responses did not uniformly express these sentiments, as evidenced by the critical postings, the majority presented on this section of the Web site did signal a general view of the film as a medium for recuperating a sense of American community through common grief and religious tolerance. Indeed, even those of the criticisms that faulted the documentary for its liberal bias in that way evidence its endeavor to foster the liberal value of religious pluralism as American identity.

CONCLUSION

As Josh Simon, a rabbinical student, begins to speak about how his faith used to connect with patriotic themes, a formal, operatic female voice sings "America the Beautiful" and video shows images filled with American flags at large-scale memorial services: I cling to a very noble image of God, a majestic God. Our anthems are basically hymns to this majestic God who blesses America with everything. But September 11th killed that God for me because there was no way to have a majestic God, a God who controlled everything. There was no way to have a God who understood reward and punishment, fair or unfair, who felt that America should be blessed above all other nations because we were good people. There was a God on September 11th who didn't even mind that God's own name could be used as the final prayer of a suicide hijacker as he plowed into a building. We needed, and I know I needed, to have another God to turn to at that moment, or there was going to be no God.⁶⁷

Juxtaposing the imagery of people turning to patriotic symbols with Simon's narrative of no longer finding them spiritually meaningful allows the documentary to illustrate that there

are no easy, absolute answers that suit everyone, and there is space for viewers to locate themselves within this range of responses. Nevertheless, the question Simon articulates is fundamental: what kind of God can there be in the context of September 11, and how does that God relate to those who consider themselves American?

“Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero” seeks to generate a national discourse on religion that ostensibly arrives at no conclusions and provides no definitive answers. On these terms, characterized by a meditative tone that invites viewers’ self-reflection and mourning and structured as a dramatic struggle for meaning, the program provides a context for viewers’ personal recovery from the trauma they have witnessed. Yet the program also addresses the need for a collective recuperation from this collectively-witnessed trauma. Accordingly, the film in fact advances a particular view of how religion fits within American culture. Within the critical framework of Kenneth Burke’s dramatism, this film functions rhetorically as a process for viewers to move through the treacherous field of post-traumatic spiritual interrogation toward re-engagement with an American identity of religious pluralism, a response to – a rejection of – the absolutism motivating the September 11 attacks.

NOTES

- ¹ Where Were You on 9/11. 2002. Web. 25 Nov. 2009. <<http://www.wherewereyouon911.com/main.asp>>; Where Were You...September 11th Two Thousand One. 15 Sept. 2001-Sept. 15, 2002. Web. 25 Nov. 2009. <<http://www.wherewereyou.org/>>; Where Were You on 9/11?. 2006. Web. 25 Nov. 2009. <<http://wherewereyou911.net/>>.
- ² Dunlap, David W. “Sept. 11 Death Toll Rises by One, to 2,752.” *New York Times*. 16 Jan. 2009. Web. 25 Nov. 2009. <<http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/01/16/sept-11-death-toll-rises-by-one-to-2752/>>.
- ³ Junod, Tom. “The Falling Man.” *Esquire*, Sept. 2003, 177-199. Print.
- ⁴ Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero. 3 Sept. 2002. Web. WGBH Educational Foundation. 26 Oct. 2005. <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/faith/>>.
- ⁵ Helen Whitney Productions and *Frontline*, prod. *Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero*. PBS Home Video, 2002. Video.

- ⁶ Burke, Kenneth. *A Grammar of Motives*. 1945. Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1962. xvii. Print.
- ⁷ Herman, Judith. *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – from Domestic Abuse To Political Terror*. 1992. New York: Basic Books, 1997. 2. Print.
- ⁸ *Ibid*, 159.
- ⁹ *Ibid*, 175-195.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid*, 196-236.
- ¹¹ Rosack, Jim. “Post-9/11 ‘Symptoms’ Don’t Add Up to Disorders.” *Psychiatric News*. 37.21 (Nov. 1, 2002). Web. 25 Nov. 2009. <<http://pn.psychiatryonline.org>>.
- ¹² Rosack, Jim. “Psychiatric Symptoms Tied to 9/11 Resolving, But Long-Term Impact Still Unclear.” *Psychiatric News*. 37.17 (Sept. 6, 2002). Web. 25 Nov. 2009. <<http://pn.psychiatryonline.org>>.
- ¹³ Lipton, Eric, and Mike McIntire. “Two Years Later: Jobs, Tourists and Nail-Biters: Taking the City’s Pulse after 9/11.” *New YorkTimes*. 11 Sept. 2003, late ed.: A21+ Web. 13 Dec. 2005.
- ¹⁴ Rosack, Jim. “9/11 Didn’t Produce Jump in Psychoactive Drug Use.” *Psychiatric News*. 39.17 (Sept. 3, 2004). Web. 25 Nov. 2009. <<http://pn.psychiatryonline.org>>.
- ¹⁵ Templeton, Tom, and Tom Lumley. “9/11 in Numbers.” *Guardian Unlimited*. 18 Aug. 2002. The Observer. Web. 14 Dec. 2005. <<http://observer.guardian.co.uk/waronterrorism/story/0,1373,776451,00.html>>.
- ¹⁶ Rosack, Jim. “Psychiatric Symptoms Tied to 9/11 Resolving, But Long-Term Impact Still Unclear.” *Psychiatric News*. 37.17 (Sept. 6, 2002). Web. 25 Nov. 2009. <<http://pn.psychiatryonline.org>>.
- ¹⁷ “9/11 by the Numbers.” *New York: nymag.com*. 2005. New York Metro, Llc. Web. 14 Dec. 2005. <<http://www.newyorkmetro.com/news/articles/wtc/1year/numbers.htm>>.
- ¹⁸ Rosack, Jim. “Psychiatric Symptoms Tied to 9/11 Resolving, But Long-Term Impact Still Unclear.” *Psychiatric News*. 37.17 (Sept. 6, 2002). Web. 25 Nov. 2009. <<http://pn.psychiatryonline.org>>. Researchers were careful to distinguish qualitatively between the disorder of PTSD, prevalent among those with more direct experiences of trauma, and normal reactions to a crisis, evident among those more distant from the traumatic event (Rosack, Jim. “Post-9/11 ‘Symptoms’ Don’t Add Up to Disorders.” *Psychiatric News*. 37.21 (Nov. 1, 2002). Web. 25 Nov. 2009. <<http://pn.psychiatryonline.org>>).
- ¹⁹ Templeton, Tom, and Tom Lumley. “9/11 in Numbers.” *Guardian Unlimited*. 18 Aug. 2002. The Observer. Web. 14 Dec. 2005. <<http://observer.guardian.co.uk/waronterrorism/story/0,1373,776451,00.html>>.

²⁰ Grunwald, Michael. "Terrorist Hijack 4 Airliners, Destroy World Trade Center, Hit Pentagon; Hundreds Dead; Bush Promises Retribution; Military Put on Highest Alert." *Washington Post*. 12 Sept. 2001. p. A01. Web. 25 Nov. 2009.

²¹ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2004. 49-52. Print.

²² Lincoln, Bruce. *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003. 8-18. Print.

²³ *Ibid*, 16.

²⁴ Burke, Kenneth. *A Grammar of Motives*. 1945. Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1962. xvii. Print.

²⁵ Sturken, Marita. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997. 8-10, 257. Print.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 13, 24.

²⁷ Ouellette, Laurie. "TV Viewing as Good Citizenship? Political Rationality, Enlightened Democracy and PBS." *Cultural Studies* 13.1 (1999): 62-90. 63.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 72-73.

²⁹ Tonn has noted how a Bill Moyers' PBS series on religion excluded the Christian fundamentalist perspective from its interfaith dialogue due to its tendency toward rigid divisiveness rather than tolerant inclusiveness (Tonn, Mari Boor. "Taking Conversation, Dialogue, and Therapy Public." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 8.3 (2005): 405-430. 416).

³⁰ Celebrating Twenty Years of Frontline. 1995-2005. WGBH Educational Foundation. Web. 26 Oct. 2005 <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/twenty/>>.

³¹ Bullert, B.J. *Public Television: Politics and the Battle over Documentary Film*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997. 26. Print.

³² Celebrating Twenty Years of Frontline. 1995-2005. WGBH Educational Foundation. Web. 26 Oct. 2005 <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/twenty/>>.

³³ *Ibid*.

³⁴ Broadly speaking, a prevalent understanding of the place of religion in American culture is predicated on modernist notions of the self as a volitional agent capable of and responsible for religious choice, conviction, and conduct. Within this framework, "we should expect to find the self actively engaged in a process of seeking and meaning making around questions of religion" (Hoover, Stewart M. "The Culturalist Turn in Scholarship on Media and Religion." *Journal of Media and Religion*. 1.1 (2002): 25-36.). Such a framework both recognizes the right of individuals to the free exercise of their religious beliefs while requiring of them respect for

and tolerance of the religious beliefs of others. Commitment to this framework informed the widespread rebukes of the Rev. Jerry Falwell's post-September 11 comments attributing the devastation on U.S. soil to national lapses in Christian piety (Lincoln, Bruce. *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003. 36). These rebukes point to a conventional preference for social cohesion over dogmatic justification.

³⁵ Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero. 3 Sept. 2002. WGBH Educational Foundation. Web. 26 Oct. 2005. <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/faith/>>.

³⁶ *Ibid*.

³⁷ Burke, Kenneth. *A Rhetoric of Motives*. 1950. Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1962. 579.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 581-582.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 545-546.

⁴⁰ Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero. 3 Sept. 2002. WGBH Educational Foundation. Web. 26 Oct. 2005. <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/faith/>>. In her discussion of the considerations informing her approach to the documentary, Whitney repeatedly uses the terms "we," "us," and "our" to conjure a sense of the common needs and a common effort uniting the production and American viewers into a cohesive collective: "The catastrophe that turned the bottom of Manhattan into a gaping wound was an explosive encounter with our mortality. The visual impact of the planes hitting the towers and all the subsequent scenes only heightened our fevered sense of reckoning. The last words of the victims saying goodbye on their cell phones and in email fused with these images of destruction – and were seared into our psyches. The compelled us to imagine our own deaths. What would we say? What do we believe?"

⁴¹ Burke, Kenneth. *A Grammar of Motives*. 1945. Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1962. 3. Print.

⁴² Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero. 3 Sept. 2002. WGBH Educational Foundation. Web. 26 Oct. 2005. <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/faith/>>.

⁴³ Herman, Judith. *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – from Domestic Abuse To Political Terror*. 1992. New York: Basic Books, 1997. 33. Print.

⁴⁴ Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero. 3 Sept. 2002. WGBH Educational Foundation. Web. 26 Oct. 2005. <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/faith/>>.

⁴⁵ Helen Whitney Productions and *Frontline*, prod. *Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero*. PBS Home Video, 2002. Video.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*.

⁵⁰ As he speaks, images of the solitary North Tower standing in the dust of its twin's collapse evidence

the calamity that prompts Mikaya's philosophical turmoil. At the same time, these images embody the isolation and hopelessness to which he refers, reinforcing for viewers the powerful challenge September 11 poses for faith of any kind (Helen Whitney Productions and *Frontline*, prod. *Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero*. PBS Home Video, 2002. Video.).

⁵¹ Helen Whitney Productions and *Frontline*, prod. *Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero*. PBS Home Video, 2002. Video.

⁵² For Adler, "the deepest religious perception that liberal religious tradition puts forward [is] that we are...all human beings together on this planet in the same way, with certain kinds of values. And that's clearly what was lost" (Helen Whitney Productions and *Frontline*, prod. *Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero*. PBS Home Video, 2002. Video.). This characterization of evil as violating humanist values of the preeminent worth of human life accords with the documentary's overall pluralist tone.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ I explore at greater length the harms fostered by religion in the next section, "Enacting a Pluralist Response to Religious Extremism."

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid. As the accented voice of Fr. Albacete offers these last words, the video moves from a smoky image of the latticework wreckage at Ground Zero, back to the twin beams of light, then into a view of the blackness, stars, and nebulae populating the universe that encompasses planet Earth. In this visual movement, the specific subject of contemplation, the WTC attack on September 11, becomes fully sublimated to a larger picture, a grander scale – as images of the vastness of the universe suggest – that transcends the particulars of time, place, and unique circumstance. While it seems that such a movement might betray the otherwise diligently noncommittal film as arriving at a definitive conclusion – that this aura of transcendence in effect unequivocally affirms the presence and the significance of a higher power – instead, the last impression remains one simply of incomprehensibility, even awe, at the attempt to articulate anything certain out of the infinite scope of metaphysical and existential possibility. With this open-ended finish, viewers remain behind to reflect on the questions that have been raised, the answers that have been proffered, and their own position within the effort to confront belief in the wake of September 11.

⁵⁸ Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1949. 238. Print.

⁵⁹ Statistics report that 76.5 percent of Americans consider themselves Christian, 44 percent "Born Again" or Ecumenical, 1.3 percent Jewish, .5 percent Muslim, .5 percent agnostic, and .4 percent atheist ("Composite U.S. Demographics." 15 Nov. 2005. Adherents.com. 14 Dec. 2005

<http://www.adherents.com/adh_dem.html>.). Such numbers provide some sense of the extent to which selected interviewees could be considered representative of the general U.S. population.

⁶⁰ Helen Whitney Productions and *Frontline*, prod. *Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero*. PBS Home Video, 2002. Video.

⁶¹ Hopkins, Nick. "At Yankee Stadium, a Tearful Farewell to Victims." *Guardian Unlimited* 24 Sept. 2001. The Guardian. Web. 19 Dec. 2005 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/waronterror/story/0,1361,557073,00.html>>.

⁶² Helen Whitney Productions and *Frontline*, prod. *Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero*. PBS Home Video, 2002. Video.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ *Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero*. 3 Sept. 2002. WGBH Educational Foundation. Web. 26 Oct. 2005. <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/faith/>>.

⁶⁵ *Frontline: Previous Reports: 2005. 1995-2005*. WGBH Educational Foundation. Web. 31 Oct. 2005.

<<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/programs/>>.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Helen Whitney Productions and *Frontline*, prod. *Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero*. PBS Home Video, 2002. Video.