

*Memoirs of the Spirit*, by Edwin S. Gaustad

reviewed by [Hal W. LeMert Jr.](#) in the [April 19, 2000](#) issue

Edwin Gaustad presents 26 people from various traditions and religions who have contributed to American spirituality. An excerpt from the writing of each follows a brief biographical introduction.

The book begins with the 1676 account of Mary Rowlandson, who manifested remarkable power of spirit during her captivity by Native Americans on the Massachusetts frontier. Jonathan Edwards, Frederick Douglass, Dorothy Day and Reinhold Niebuhr speak powerfully from these pages. The book draws us into the struggles of Rabbi Isaac Wise to reform Judaism for Americans and traces the route of an Anglican priest who discovers Buddhism.

Gaustad looks at America's spirituality through his own filters, however. That filter excludes Christian Science, Scientology, Mormonism and Islam, a growing presence in this country. But it does admit the privileged Catholicism of William Buckley and a young woman's struggle with Seventh-day Adventism.