Religious Views of Vaccination At-A-Glance

• While there is a minority of Amish parents who do not vaccinate their children, vaccination is not prohibited by their religion.¹

• In 2010, Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader and Nobel laureate the Dalai Lama helped vaccinate and launch a polio eradication drive in India.²

• There are some faith-healing groups—of which the Church of Christ, Scientist (Christian Science) is the most prominent—that believe they can heal all things through prayer rather than through medicine. Therefore, many of these worshippers strongly oppose vaccinations.³, ⁴, ⁵

• The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has supported childhood vaccination for over 30 years. In July 1978 they stated, “We urge members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to protect their own children through immunization. Then they may wish to join other public-spirited citizens in efforts to eradicate ignorance and apathy that have caused the disturbingly low levels of childhood immunization.”⁶

• There is no formal statement from Hindu authorities on vaccination, as Hinduism has several hundreds of sects, each with its own traditions and rules. Many areas of the world with large Hindu populations, such as India which is 80.5% Hindu, have taken proactive efforts to eradicate vaccine-preventable diseases like polio.⁷, ⁸

• Many imams and other Islamic leaders have issued clear statements commenting that vaccination is consistent with Islamic principles.⁹, ¹⁰, ¹¹ In particular, a 1995 conference of Islamic scholars concluded, “The transformation of pork products into gelatin alters them sufficiently to make it permissible for observant Muslims to receive vaccines containing pork gelatin.”¹² However, some specific select Muslim communities throughout the world have opposed vaccinations, including the Nation of Islam, whose leader Minister Louis Farrakhan once said that the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine was designed to kill people.¹³

• According to The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, the main legal entity that organizes worldwide activities by Jehovah’s Witnesses, “We have no objection to vaccines in general.”¹⁴

• While there is no single voice for Jewish communities, many rabbis have spoken out in favor of vaccinations noting the importance of preserving life (pikuakh nefesh) and that, according to Jewish law, there is no objection to porcine or other animal-derived ingredients in vaccines.¹⁵

• There is no official statement on immunization from Sikh authorities. But generally, Sikhs do not have religious or societal issues against vaccination.
• The Roman Catholic Church recognizes the importance of vaccinations and their use in the fight against infectious disease to protect both individuals and the larger community. It advocates use of alternatives, if available, of certain viral vaccines manufactured in cell lines with remote fetal origins. However, “as regards the vaccines without an alternative, the need to contest so that others may be prepared must be reaffirmed, as should be the lawfulness of using the former in the meantime insomuch as is necessary in order to avoid a serious risk not only for one's own children but also, and perhaps more specifically, for the health conditions of the population as a whole - especially for pregnant women; the lawfulness of the use of these vaccines should not be misinterpreted as a declaration of the lawfulness of their production, marketing and use, but is to be understood as being a passive material cooperation and, in its mildest and remotest sense, also active, morally justified as an extrema ratio due to the necessity to provide for the good of one's children and of the people who come in contact with the children (pregnant women).”16
