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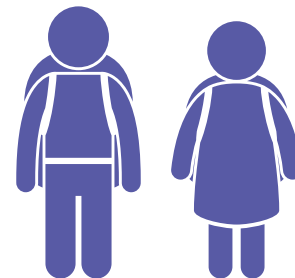
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Religion and Popular Culture in America, Third Edition
Bruce David Forbes and Jeffrey H. Mahan

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This book is organized around four potential relationships between religion and popular culture. Essays in the first section look at one of the most obvious relationships between religion and popular culture, which is that sometimes religion appears as a subject in popular culture. When I tell people that I study religion and popular culture, they almost always imagine this relation between the two. They want to discuss the portrayals of Hindus or Evangelical Christians in television's longest running cartoon series *The Simpsons* (1989—present), or to examine the ideas about Mormons and Mormonism in the highly successful Broadway musical *The Book of Mormon* (2011—present), and they still want to tell me why they liked or hated Mel Gibson's 2004 film *The Passion of the Christ*. The most obvious relationship between religion and popular culture is that particular religions of the world, represented by religious figures, symbols, rituals, and stories are often elements of the stories popular culture tells. This presence of religion can be quite explicit, as when a character wears a burka to signal that she is a Muslim. They can also be more subtle, as in the implicit nature worship in *Avatar* (2009). If you accept the premise that the stories we tell are important, that they are not simply entertainment but an important way to make sense of the world, then you can see why people would read them carefully, seeking to understand their structures and clarify

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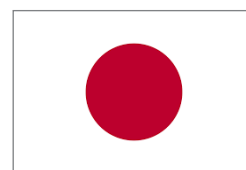
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