

World Religions Western Traditions

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world religions western traditions fifth edition provides students with a thought provoking survey of jewish christian muslim ancient indigenous and new religious traditions the expert contributors offer an authoritative examination of the origins central teachings divisions and branches rituals and practices influences on culture and responses to modern challenges for each tradition ideal for courses in western religions and comparative religions world religions western traditions fifth edition combines a historically descriptive perspective with a spirit of sympathetic fascination

a wide ranging and thought provoking survey that reconsiders the diverse traditions behind the monolithic labels of the major western faiths for each set of traditions a specialist explores not only origins central teachings divisions and branches and rituals and practices but also cultural interactions and responses to modern challenges accessible and engaging this contributed volume is widely considered to be the definitive introduction to the subject

for use as a core text for introductory and upper level courses in western religions and introduction to world religions courses can also be used as supplemental reading for individual religion courses living religions western traditions is a highly readable and stimulating survey of the major global religions and new religious movements that originated in the west the social context origins teachers scriptures and historical development of each faith are carefully explored with emphasis on how practitioners themselves understand their traditions evocative illustrations first person interviews of ordinary people and boxes uncovering the spiritual roots of public figures bring this text to life

globalization and high speed communication put twenty first century people in contact with adherents to a wide variety of world religions but usually valuable knowledge of these other traditions is limited at best on the one hand religious stereotypes abound hampering a serious exploration of unfamiliar philosophies and practices on the other hand the popular idea that all religions lead to the same god or the same moral life fails to account for the distinctive origins and radically different teachings found across the world s many religions understanding world religions presents religion as a complex and intriguing matrix of history philosophy culture beliefs and practices hexham believes that a certain degree of objectivity and critique is inherent in the study of religion and he guides readers in responsible ways of carrying this out of particular importance is hexham s decision to explore african religions which have frequently been absent from major religion texts he surveys these in addition to varieties of hinduism buddhism judaism christianity and islam

this is the first work to address the legacy of wilfred cantwell smith 1916 2000 whose intellectual and institutional contributions helped shape the field of religious studies in the latter half of the twentieth century as a young scholar smith taught indian and islamic history in lahore for several years and witnessed the partition of india upon his return to north america he obtained his phd at princeton university before embarking upon a long and distinguished career he founded the institute of islamic studies at mcgill university and served as director of the center for the study of world religions at harvard university smith emphasized the place of the scholarly study of islam in the western academy long before islam occupied its current position at the center of global politics challenged the notion of monolithic world religions and argued for the importance of dialogical processes and a personalist approach to the study of religion contributors to this volume many of whom were smith s students provide a wide ranging exploration of his influence and legacy

the concept of religious freedom is the favoured modern human rights concept with which the modern world hopes to tackle the phenomenon of religious pluralism as our modern existence in an electronically shrinking globe comes to be increasingly characterised by this phenomenon to begin with the concept of religious freedom as embodied in article 18 of the universal declaration of human rights seems self evident in nature it is the claim of this book however that although emblematic on the one hand the concept is also problematic on the other and the implications of the concept of religious freedom are far from self evident despite the ready acceptance the term receives as embodying a worthwhile goal this book therefore problematizes the concept along legal constitutional ethical and theological lines and especially from the perspective of religious studies so that

religious freedom in the world could be enlarged in a way which promotes human flourishing

this fast paced inspiring and original work proposes that if religions fade then secular law provides a much more comprehensive moral regime to govern our lives backed by potent and haunting images it argues that the rule of law is the one universal framework that everyone believes in and that the law is now the most important ideology we have for our survival the author explores the decline of religions and the huge growth of law and makes predictions for the future of law and lawyers the book maintains that even though societies may decide they can do without religions they cannot do without law the book helpfully summarises both the teachings of all the main religions and the central tenets of the law governing everything from human relationships to money banks and corporations it shows that without these legal constructs some of them arcane our societies would grind to a halt these innovative summaries make complex ideas seem simple and provide the keys to understanding both the law and religion globally the book will appeal to both lawyers and the general reader the book concludes with the author's personal code for a modern way of living to promote the survival of humankind into the future vividly written by one of the most important lawyers of our generation this magisterial and exciting work offers a powerful vision of the role of law in centuries to come and its impact on how we stay alive

the revised essays collected here four of which are published for the first time continue a longstanding argument made by mccutcheon and others that the study of religion would benefit from self conscious scrutiny of its tools the interests that may drive them and the effects that might follow their use the chapters examine a variety of contemporary sites in the modern field where this thesis can be argued whether involving the anachronistic use of the category religion when studying the ancient world to current interest in so called critical religion or critical realist approaches moreover contrary to some past characterizations of such critiques a constructive way forward for the field is once again recommended and at several sites exemplified in detail redescribing not only religion as something ordinary but also our tendency to create the impression of exceptional and thus set apart things places and people aimed at scholars and students alike the book is an invitation to examine our own scholarly practices and thereby take a more active role in shaping the field in which we carry out our work as scholars of this thing we call religion

concepts of heaven and hell are among the oldest most widespread religious beliefs in history in western literature they are frequently embedded in stories of underworld explorations and celestial journeys stories examining the nature of the universe life on earth and the existence of the gods the author analyzes tales of wonder in both ancient and medieval european literature other worldly narratives appeared in literary contexts in the ancient world including mythology poetry and philosophical writings in medieval times they remained a popular form of literary expression these stories are primarily religious in nature describing fantastic worlds filled with miracles and supernatural beings

this new edition of volume ii last published in 1994 has been extensively expanded and revised in all areas fully updated the new edition includes major changes and covers a span of topics

from archaeology through medieval history to statistics it includes philosophy psychology religion social sciences geography biology and history all areas have been completely updated with additional material in economics business and management

an authoritative guidebook to u s religious groups

an introduction to western religions judaism christianity and islam covering their history beliefs structure and practices richly illustrated with colourful photos illustrations maps and charts as well as audio files and a selection of relevant ancient texts this ebook provides a solid jargon free introduction to western religious traditions for college level classes or for any reader seeking a neutral presentation of judaism christianity and islam by an author who has taught extensively in the field of religion for over three decades

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Introduction

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