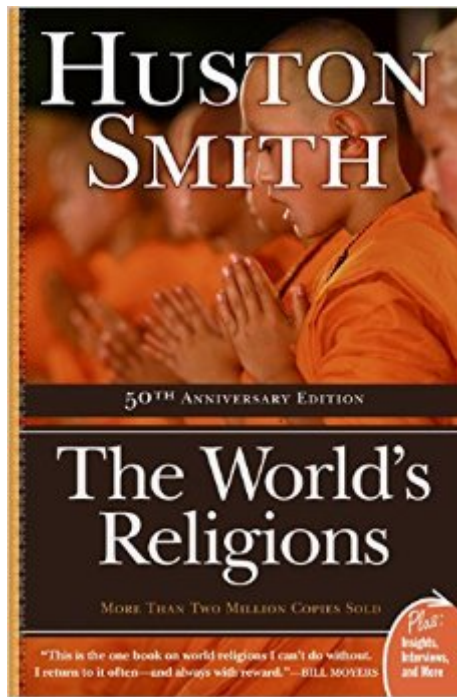


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# The World's Religions (Plus)



## Synopsis

The World's Religions, by beloved author and pioneering professor Huston Smith (Tales of Wonder), is the definitive classic for introducing the essential elements and teachings of the world's predominant faiths, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, as well as regional native traditions. This revised and updated edition provides sympathetic descriptions of the various traditions, explaining how they work "from the inside," which is a big reason why this cherished classic has sold more than two million copies since it first appeared in 1958.

## Book Information

Series: Plus

Paperback: 448 pages

Publisher: HarperOne; 50 Anv edition (May 12, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0061660183

ISBN-13: 978-0061660184

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 1 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (232 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #3,548 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #1 in [Books > Reference > Encyclopedias & Subject Guides > Religion](#) #1 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Islam > Theology](#) #1 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Religious Studies > Comparative Religion](#)

## Customer Reviews

I've ordered many copies of this book over the years; they get rag-eared and I buy a fresh copy. Not too much has changed over the years, though there's a little more in the supplementary sections. Smith does a really nice job of explaining each religion from the perspective of the faithful. This is a wonderful book for anyone who's interested in learning a little more about the most fundamental world views of the world's religions. My only disappointment: the book says nothing about Shinto.....an enormous oversight, given how many adherents there are. I'd have loved Smith's perspective. Nice summaries instead of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity; there's even a little bit on Australian beliefs.

in 2009 I wrote a letter to Huston Smith telling him that in my teens I had taken a course on world

religions at Boston University and the professor had used as textbook Smith's *The Religions of Man* (now titled *The World's Religions*). I told Smith that I had recently become an adjunct professor of world religions at FSU and that after examining a dozen textbooks I could not find one that came even close to the beauty and understanding Smith conveys in clear and eloquent prose in *The World's Religions*. Therefore, I chose to use his book as the textbook for all my comparative religion classes. Smith wrote back that my letter had arrived on his 90th birthday and he said, "I couldn't have asked for a better birthday present!"

This book was required reading for me over 20 years ago when I was in college. Huston Smith does an awesome job in covering the major religions of the world without including any bias towards one or another. I lost my original book so I purchased this new edition and will be reading it again and again and again. I highly recommend it to anyone interested in learning more about world religions.

I initially read this book in college for an intro to world religions course. That class was one of the most interesting classes I took, partly because of the charismatic Indian man who taught it and partly because of this book. Reading this book was an eye opening experience for me. The book objectively explores the metaphysical foundations and tenets of the major religions, without delving into criticism or commentary on religion's impact on human society. I can't recommend this book highly enough. For me, reading *The World's Religions* was a truly "enlightening" experience because I gained insight into the actual teachings behind many religions with which I previously had only a vague familiarity. In fact, I think that almost anyone who reads this book will come away with greater tolerance and appreciation for the various religions and cultures of our world. Even for Atheists or those who oppose religion in general, I still recommend reading this book as an insight into the various belief systems that have played such a major role in the story of humanity.

This is one of the best books I have ever read. Huston Smith presents the religions from the inside out. Each one is viewed as if he were an adherent of that religion which makes his words ring with the truth of that point of view.

As a 1-star reviewer said, "This is more a series of philosophical musings on the part of the author centering around certain elements from each religion that at some time or other have struck him as noteworthy." I believe that assessment to be mostly correct. But I do prefer to learn "noteworthy"

perspectives from scholars and Smith is one. Don't trust me, wiki Huston Smith. Also, far from being his personal opinion, the basic concepts and foundation of each religion is clearly defined in this book. After first reading this book, in 1971, I have read the sacred texts of Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Islam. And looking back, Smith's so-called "philosophical musings" were right on the mark. Some people complain that he rambles in a poetic way to make a point. Well, so do Solomon's Song, The Revelation and the Bhagavad Gita (to name a few of the least complicated "ramblings"). I have read his original edition so many times that the pages have fallen away from the binding and the book is held together by a rubber band. This book may or may not be your cup of tea. But it has certainly changed my life. Before I read it, I was a Christian. And I still am. But now with a far broader appreciation for all humans everywhere and for their personal beliefs. Smith's book opened my eyes to the way the World Religions differ and the way they intersect. And my take from this book is, they happen to intersect at precisely the right moment on the most important concepts. That all seekers everywhere have different roads to follow (as do we all as individuals) yet we discover the same gift when we reach the mountain's peak.

This is more than just a reference book on world religions. First, it is well written - clear, concise, easy to understand. But, perhaps more importantly, it makes you think. Different chapters deal with the history and basic ideas of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity and the so-called Primal Religions. Of those, the first one, on Hinduism, was probably the most interesting, especially its introductory parts ("What people want", "What people really want"), dealing with the question of why man needs religion at all. These could well serve as an extended introduction to the whole book. And reading those passages could probably make many readers better to understand the roots of their middle age crisis. But nothing is 100% ideal. The chapter on primal religions was vaguer and less informative than the others. And I skipped Islam and Confucianism - because of a total lack of interest. But as to the other chapters, the general impression was very good.

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