



## The World's Religions

*Huston Smith (Author and Foreword)*

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# The World's Religions

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## The World's Religions Huston Smith (Author and Foreword)

*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.

## The World's Religions Details

Date : Published 1991 by Harper One / Harper Collins Publishers (first published 1958)

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Author : Huston Smith (Author and Foreword)

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## From Reader Review The World's Religions for online ebook

### Paul says

No doubt a popular book in terms of numbers of copies sold. The author is a highly respected scholar on world religions who has taught at some of the most prestigious universities in America. He also grew up in China and has imbibed the rituals of most of the religions he's studied. So why the two stars:

\* Smith is a pluralist. I find this position doesn't allow for the most rigorous and critical analysis of the religious positions presented.

Indeed, I find this position ironically gives the least respect to other religions. When everyone become special and unique, no one is special and unique.

\* Smith barely delves into the *doctrines* of the world's religions, and this is what I'm interested in leaning and knowing.

This, of course, helps out with the pluralism. If we mainly look at the moral aspects of religions, well, they seem quite similar. Confucius say nice things and Jesus does nice things too. After all, WWJD, baby!

\* Smith was raised a Christian (well, a moralist), but ironically he seems to know the least about Christianity.

He reads the OT prophets as proto advocates of a social gospel, and he reads the NT like a liberal protestant.

But if that weren't enough, he tries to "defend" the trinity by comparing the triune God of the Bible water's three stages. But the good doctor fails to see that this is simply the modalist heresy.

And if that weren't enough, he misquotes the Bible more than once.

\* The book is depressing, but upon reflection, uplifting. One is sad for the adherents of the other religions and the constant *working* they do so as to "get saved" (however that is cashed out in their particular religion). How tiring. How impossible a task.

But then the Christian reflects. Christianity is based on something it claims actually happened in history. This is Jesus, the God-man, who fulfilled the demands of the law, and then took the punishment due lawbreakers, and then rose from the dead. By faith the Christian believes that these things were done for him and he simply rests and trusts in the work of another. How utterly beautiful is the gospel of Christianity to the ears of weary sinners tired of doing what Confucius say, or bending and contorting their bodies in hopes that the yogic rituals will make them ready to enter nirvana.

I would not recommend this book for anyone who wants to take a serious looks at the beliefs of the world's religions and wants to know why the adherents of those religions find those beliefs compelling and true.

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### ?????? ????? says

## Deena Katma says

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## Nathaniel says

The seminal inaccurate "world religions" volume for the ages. While Smith's coverage of the Judeo-Christian tradition is excellent and his treatment of Islam is adequate, he has a hard time getting away from the Middle

Eastern/monotheistic perspective and allows it to color his writing. Consequently this book becomes less and less accurate the farther East he gets and the more different from the Judeo-Christian tradition the religions become. His handling of Buddhism and Taoism is particularly slipshod, coming at the traditions empirically without having truly experienced them. It's possible that he's finally remedied this in the newer editions, but the 1985 printing that I read had the same glaring holes that were in the 1960's original. This book dominated Western religious studies classes for decades, but in this globalized world its time is long past. Maybe look at the chapters on Western/Middle Eastern religions, especially if you're doing research in Judeo-Christian studies and want to build on Smith's widely-recognized work. However, any other chapters in this volume are so misleading that they are worse than useless.

**areejabduul says**

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**Fadwa! says**

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Imane says

Tim says

I hope to have time to reflect more on this one in writing. For now, a quote:

"But we also listen to the faith of others, including the secularists. We listen first because, as this book opened by noting, our times require it. The community today can be no single tradition; it is the planet. Daily the world grows smaller, leaving understanding the only place where peace can find a home. We are not prepared for the annihilation of distance that science has effected. Who today stands ready to accept the solemn equality of peoples? Who does not have to fight an unconscious tendency to equate foreign with inferior? ...Those who listen work for peace, a peace built not on ecclesiastical or political hegemonies but on understanding and mutual concern...Understanding, then, can lead to love. But the reverse is also true. Love brings understanding; the two are reciprocal. So we must listen to understand, but we must also listen to put into play the compassion that the wisdom traditions all enjoin, for it is impossible to love another without hearing that other." (390)

Jamie says

Huston provides a powerful punch of wonderous delight for the world's historical religions. I was left in awestruck wonder at how beautiful, pragmatic, and well thought out information that he articulates in this excellent book. This is an unbias fact base book that adhears to the positive side that religion provides (aside from the negativity that is obviously present within every religion, he bypasses that notion and delves into the heart and soul of each practice.)

I sat on my comfy sofa feeling the flecks of Eurika moments when my Westernized lacking of the Eastern

religious became known to my clear conscious. For example I erroneously never knew that Hinduism was in actually embodiments of God (Brahmin), and never claimed to be attached to the polytheistic concept of gods. I never knew Buddhism claimed a 'non-soul' formation rather than obtaining a diety or type of heaven. Buddhism is self expansion. However my lacking of the Eastern practices which I found finally enlightened thorough Huston, the most embarrassing Western religion that I found myself quite ignorant on was Islam. I thought of Islam from what I was known from the bias media, other religion's agendas, and through a lack of educational enlightenment. Islam was the most enlightening and inspiring for me that I had to tell the world about how 'surrendering' Islam really is. Violence towards Islam coupled with Islam's faith is quite misunderstood, and completey wrong. Of course no one is discounting that there is domestic violence in Arab countries, but on the same coin there is also domestic violence towards women in America. The secret is that American's tend to 'shovel it under the rug'.

This book will provide a strong foundational backbone for anyone interested in learning about the world's religions. There is also a special chapter towards the end that talks about early man's 'primitive' or 'tribal' religions, before man became established on this earth (during prelithic and neolithic periods). This chapter alone is worth reading this book. Also on a side note, this book goes real well with Robert Van Voorst Anthology of World's Scriptures. For Huston skims over religion's doctrines and cultural rituals, where Voorst delves more into these aspects.

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### **Hesham Khaled says**

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## **Paul says**

Huston Smith's "The World's Religions" is one of the most significant books I've ever read. Smith digs underneath the rituals, theology, and cold historical facts to capture why some of these major religious traditions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity, are so deeply and meaningfully profound to billions and billions of people. One may disagree about whether any of these religious faiths speak the the absolute or partial truth regarding the meaning of our existence or reality, but each faith does speak directly to our human condition and try to sustain meaning in a world that often feels cold or hostile to us. This book is not an attempt to convert, but to appreciate the richness of traditions and thought found in religions to answer the fundamental questions posed from the very depths of our lives. Using an analogy popularized by John Hick, we are all simply people blindfolded and feeling this great elephant in the room and just trying to figure out what it is.

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## **Heba says**

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### **Grace says**

I picked up this book thinking that this would be a good refresher, after all I'm a worldly woman who knows so much about other religions! Right? Yeah, I'm embarrassed about how smug that sounds, too. After perusing (in the truly correct use of that word) its pages, I honestly cannot believe how little I knew. And to be completely honest, I am still struggling to grasp all of the information presented by Smith.

This book is amazing. Smith readily admits that his work is not comprehensive (and really, how could it be?), but what I really appreciated was how effectively he ties in the history of each religion with its spirit. He delves into the core beliefs of each major religion, beginning with Hinduism and ending with Christianity, with a chapter at the end on the primal religions.

His parting advice to us is simply to listen. That in listening we are communicating, and in communicating we are loving. It doesn't get more beautiful than that.

It took me much longer to read than I initially assumed it would, so give yourself some time. But it was totally worth it, and I will read it again.

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