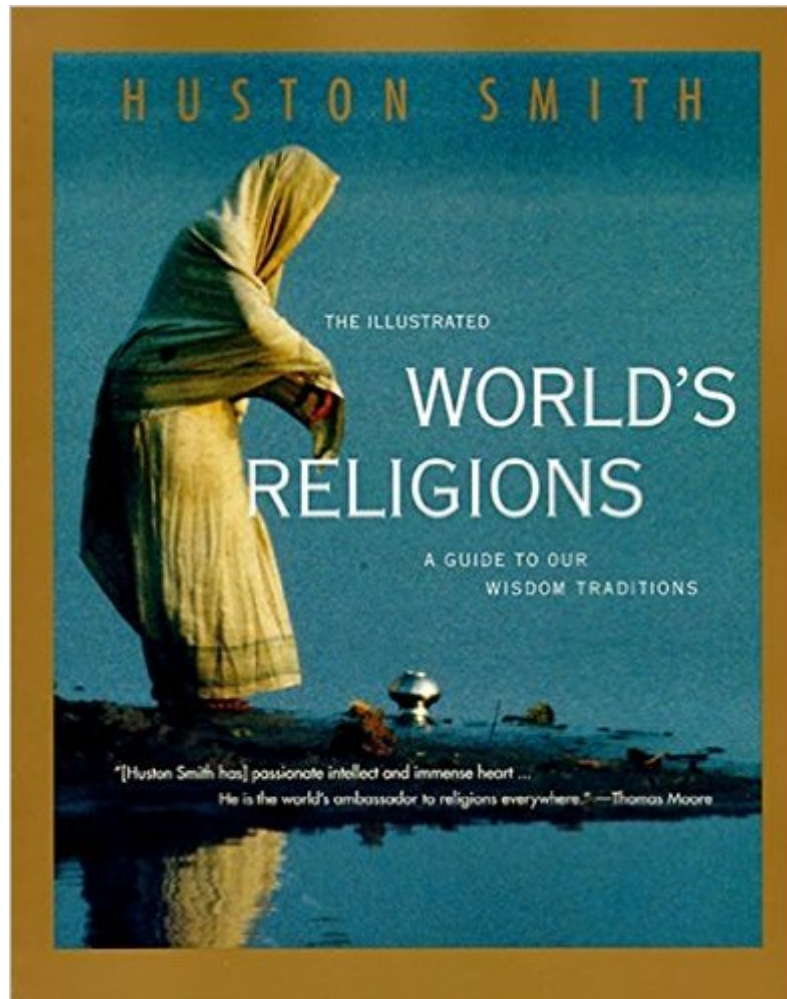


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# The Illustrated World's Religions: A Guide To Our Wisdom Traditions



## Synopsis

Retaining all the beloved qualities of Huston Smith's classic *The Religions of Man* and the current fully revised and updated *The World's Religions*, this stunning pictorial presentation refines the text to its wonderful essentials. In detailed, absorbing, richly illustrated, and highly readable chapters on Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity and primal religions, we find refreshing and fascinating presentations of both the differences and the similarities among the worldwide religious traditions. The approach is at once classic and contemporary, retaining all the empathy, eloquence and erudition that millions of readers love about the earlier editions, while being edited and designed for a contemporary general readership. This delightful marriage of winsome text and remarkable pictures vividly brings to life the scope and vision of Huston Smith's expertise and insight.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book has deep respect for the wisdom traditions and Huston Smith has lived this. A practicing Methodist, Smith had discussions with the Vedanta Society, does Hatha Yoga, and prays five times a day like the Muslims. His perspective is not one looking for divisions within a religion, but as an outsider wanting to understand the experiences. For example, in discussing Islam, he talks about the Sufis, but not about the division between Sunnis and Shi'ites. This book is less about details, facts, and religious holidays, and more about the underlying meaning and unique insight of each religion. E.g., in discussing Hinduism he looks at "What people really want", about a wearing out of the material world. In the chapter of Judaism he discusses meaning in history and justice. The

illustrations complement the text with a symbolic sense of the culture and beliefs. Looking at a sculpture of a very sensual Shiva with consorts helps one realize that the Hindu view of pleasure may be different than your own. The Buddhist and Taoism paintings project a sense of peace. The photographs of the worshippers are very respectful.

In this book Huston discusses many of the major world religions, or systems of belief: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Animism, etc. The Neutrality in his approach to these religions is refreshing. He's able to discuss the beliefs and practices of each of these religions without saying that one, or the other is necessarily correct. Thus, the book doesn't get bogged down in discussing the truth claims of any one religion. Huston has obviously done a great deal of research in the area of World religions. This work is an interesting and informative guide to understanding why people believe what they believe. In each section he gives a brief discussion of the history of each system of belief (for instance, he talks about Siddhartha's life in the section about Buddhism). He then continues to discuss the main points, or fundamental beliefs, of each religion. In these discussions, Huston is concise and incredibly informative. Again, it's very obvious that he's done his homework. I found all of these sections very illuminating. All of the major branches of religion are represented here (both oriental and occidental thought). That doesn't necessarily mean that all of the offshoots of any particular religion are represented --that would probably lead to a much larger, more cumbersome work. With this in mind, Huston's book is an excellent source of information on the various world religions. I would recommend the book to anybody with an interest in religion. It is an excellent tool to help you understand the world, and is well worth the read.

For those wanting to understand the core beliefs of world religions, this book is an excellent place to start. Author Smith includes chapters on Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and the "Primal Religions," or early tribal beliefs. While each section is remarkably detailed, this book remains an introduction, not a comprehensive examination. The explanations are straightforward and clear without being overly simplified. The illustrations and photographs, most in color, illuminate moments of each religion's faithful. For students and scholars and the curious, this is a good reference book to own, if for no other reason than to expand your understanding of world beliefs. If you are looking for in-depth analysis, you would be better off looking elsewhere.

When I was 16, I started questioning my beliefs as an atheist. Never before had I questioned the

fact that there was "something else," and I never had any idea of the rest of the world's religions. Then I ran across this book, and it opened up a whole new world to me. No longer was I smug in my avowment that there was no God. I actually began to understand why and how people could follow their faith, even to levels that would seem in excess to most people in the Western world. This book is a must read for those who are Searching, and for those who are even a little curious about other spiritual beliefs.

I'd never taken a class on any religion other than Christianity. And I live in a predominately Christian area of the US. So, I've always hungered for a different voice. Not to negate the faith around me, but to add scope to the human experience. But I didn't really know where to start. There are so many books out there that attempt to give an overview of the major world religions. And while I certainly haven't read them all, I can tell you that I can easily recommend this book to start your religious education. Mr. Smith has an obvious love and respect for religion that he wishes to impart onto his readers. He does this with a conversational tone that he embellishes with beautiful sacred art. I particularly enjoy that this book is straight-forward and easy to read without being condescending. And though Smith holds religion in such high regard, I feel he wants us to treat it with reverence but not passivity. I feel that his goal is invite the reader to treat religion as an ancient spiritual tribe that everyone has the power to join in today, not the human-driven institutions that disenchant so many today. Read this as a jumping off point for your own explorations, and you'll begin this journey well-informed.

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