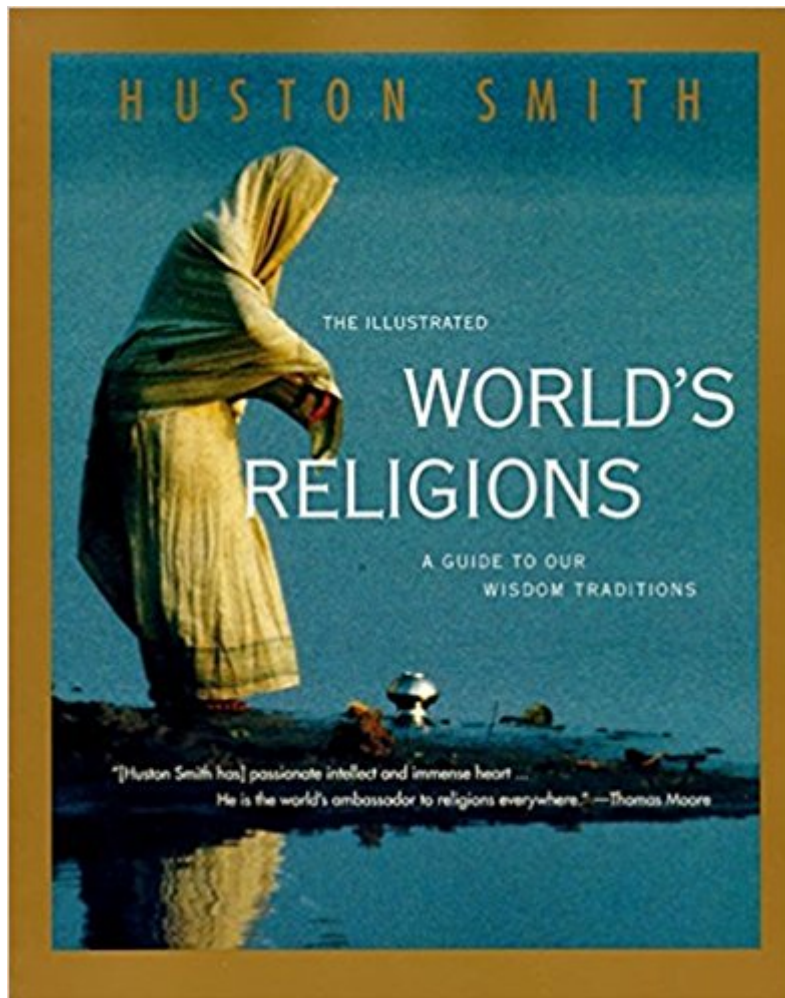




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# The Illustrated World's Religions: A Guide To Our Wisdom Traditions



## 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

In lucid and captivating prose, Smith, the dean of world religionists, conducts readers on a whirlwind tour of the beliefs, practices and experiences of the world's religious traditions. Smith explores the major features of these religions by combining his own worlds with passages from the sacred texts of each. In addition, beautifully arresting images of icons, religious practitioners, sacred texts and sacred art accompany Smith's lyrical writing. The words and images of this book continually remind us that the world's faiths are not stagnant pools of decaying values but dynamic and vibrant waters from which their practitioners daily drink. The book also brings within range of our American hearing the voices of a wide variety of people for whom religion is the central fact of social and cultural life. If

one buys only one of the number of recent introductions to world religions, this should be it.

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Much is gained and lost in this third incarnation of a highly readable work first published in 1958 as *The Religions of Man*, which spoke without arcane religious jargon about seven major world religions. The title has been changed to eliminate gender bias, and the book itself is lavishly illustrated, with photographs that add a powerful visual dimension to the text and make the reader more aware of the importance of art in presenting religious ideas. What is lost is a great deal of text. Now whittled down by a third, this fine introductory-level college text has been reduced to a lightweight primer. Luckily for deeper readers, the second incarnation, *The World's Religions* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), is still available. Appropriate for public libraries. Glenn Masuchika, Chaminade Univ. Lib., Honolulu

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This book is well researched but hard to read. I easily read at a post-graduate level, and I struggled with the prose. It's not that the words are incomprehensible, it's that the author's writing style is... tortured. It almost seems intentional. That is, the author could have used more plain language but chose to make the language thick and heavy as possible. There is a wealth of information

•my professor insisted that it is the authoritative text for comparative religions

•but you'll want to be well rested before beginning each chapter.

I purchased this book by Huston Smith for my world religions class. It does not read like a classic "text" book. This may please you, or it may drive you crazy. Mr. Smith has a very compact way of writing. He fits his descriptions into as little space as possible and uses a lot of little-known words. However, he has a very magical sense about him that just begs to be quoted. If you prefer a traditional text book, this book is not for you. I enjoyed reading it but couldn't help more than a few times to feel like I was missing out on a lot of information in the name of brevity and eloquence. I'd like to give this book a 3.5-star rating, but that's not a choice. 3 is unfair, so I chose 4 mainly because it's very inexpensive and that's good for us college students.

I needed to read this for a theology class at my university, and I'm fully confident that my fellow students could agree on one thing, if nothing else: *World's Religions* was an awful, awful text. It's composed of flowery purple prose and twisted continuity. When the author states that there are X

number of items in a list, be prepared for him to mention only half before moving onto an entirely different subject-- only to return to the list when you're already beginning to wade your way through his next inane set of information.

In his intro he writes that the book "respects" religion. He does a great job of explaining the beauty of the different religions and the underlying rationale for them and what we might take away from each (even if you don't care to practice that religion per se -- he gets to each's "wisdom"). He steers away from the ways in which actual implementation of the religions cause problems. For instance, he covers why a caste system could theoretically make sense, if implemented the way the religion had intended it to be -- but points out only briefly that it is not. In all this is an excellent overview of the major religions, put in a way that an adherent to any religion would likely like seeing their religion explained to others. He does seem to have a view that there are a few common themes among the religions (e.g., achieving happiness by losing the separate self in compassionate service to others).

Bought this a few years ago, and can I just say that I never finished a religion textbook before than this. I ended up using this a guide for 3 of my other classes and I love how it summarizes the religions quite well.

The book is a good basic introduction to the world religions covered. Its dealing with the fundamental beliefs and practices of the faiths covered is clear, concise, well organized, and well thought out. One draw back for the person looking for more detail is that it isn't there. But this is not an effort to be comprehensive. It can serve to open your eyes and your mind to the positives of each faith and launch you on the road to further study. The pictures are nice. They do give a feel for the lifestyles of those who live the faiths. But there is no real tie in to the text as interesting as they are. I would recommend this book as a beginning reader to comparative religious thought and a basic introduction to the religions of the world.

This book is written very well and is superb at giving you the beside of every major religion. I think if people took the time to read things like this and understand each other the world would be a better place.

Very good.

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