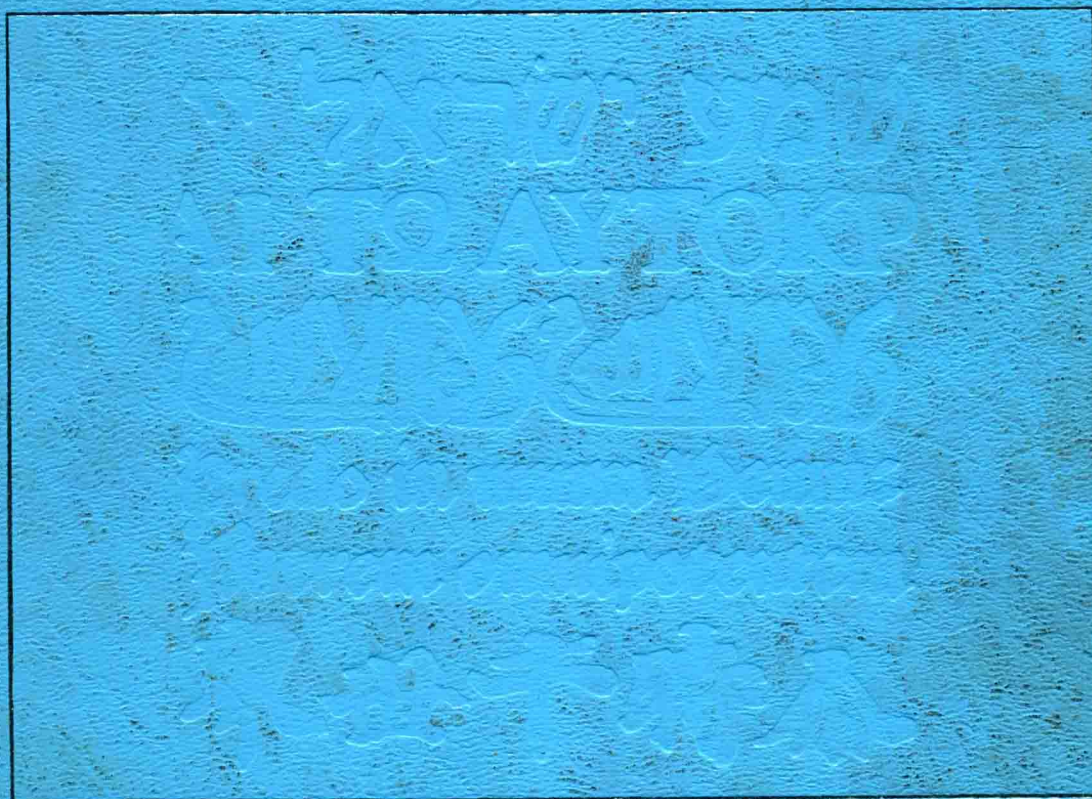


# RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

*SECOND EDITION*



NIELS C. NIELSEN, JR. NORVIN HEIN FRANK E. REYNOLDS  
ALAN L. MILLER SAMUEL E. KARFF ALICE C. COWAN  
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Second Edition

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# Preface

The study of religion probes into the most intimate details of a civilization. The first edition of *Religions of the World* was an ambitious project that introduced students to all the major living world religions, as well as to the influential religions of the past. Comprehensive in scope and detailed in its treatment of theologies and traditions, the text set each tradition firmly in its social, cultural, and geographical context, so that students, anchored in the rich history of a particular religion, would find it easier to understand the development of particular beliefs and institutions.

We were very pleased with the reception given by students and faculty to the first edition of *Religions of the World*. This second edition retains the authoritative writing of its predecessor, and it contains extensively updated scholarship; with each religion treated by a scholar who specializes in its study. Not only the philosophy and history of a religion are covered, but also its social and political aspects. Furthermore, the attention given theological issues is balanced with discussions of myth, ritual, and folk traditions.

We believe that the study of religion is an inherently fascinating endeavor. However, in order to make the contents of our book even more accessible to students, this new edition has been streamlined, and its text has been given more unity in style and approach. There are now seven parts, rather than eight, and the original 50 chapters have been reorganized into 26. All of the following changes, we believe, make the experience of teaching and learning from the book even more appealing.

A new introductory chapter focuses on the problem

of how to define religion and the functions it performs. This sets the stage for presentations that combine both the theoretical and practical issues that guide the study of each tradition.

A new Part One devotes two chapters to the religions of antiquity (Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, Persia, Tribal Europe), and a new third chapter to primal religions that are very much alive in the modern world. The chapter uses as examples the Dogon of Mali, the Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria, Umbanda in Brazil, and the cargo cults of Melanesia.

Part Two presents five chapters on Hinduism, from its origins to the modern religion and its role in Indian nationalism. Part Three, Buddhism, devotes two chapters to the rise of the teaching and its main traditions; a third chapter focuses on the historical spread of Buddhism as a world religion and on its situation today. The five chapters of Part Four sweep across East Asia from Japan to India; they cover, within their historical settings, the religious traditions of China (Confucianism, Daoism), Japan (Shintō, the new religions, the influences from China), and India (Jainism and Sikhism).

With Part Five the text turns to traditions perhaps more familiar to the student. This part presents the panorama of Judaism from its beginnings in antiquity to the Holocaust and rebirth of Israel in the twentieth century. The next section, Part Six, focuses on Christianity from the early church to the modern ecumenical era. The final section, Part Seven, is a detailed presentation of the philosophy, traditions, history, and political context of Islam, which, like Hinduism,

is a major world religion caught in a ferment of militant revivalism and political change.

Throughout the text, complex and unfamiliar traditions and concepts have been made easier for the student to grasp. However, all the chapters of this revised edition remain rich in relevant historical and political detail. Because much can be learned about religions from their manifestations in everyday life and from the works of art they have inspired, this edition, too, offers an abundance of photographs and other illustrations. The maps and time lines showing the evolution of traditions remain to help students keep their geographical and chronological bearings. Boxed features contain descriptions of special rites and ceremonies as well as examples of primary source materials such as sacred writings. Annotated bibliographies, updated to reflect the latest scholarship, appear at the end of the text. These suggest both primary and secondary sources for students who wish to do additional research. An Instructor's Manual is available upon request.

The contributors to *Religions of the World*, second edition, divided the work as follows: Niels C. Nielsen, Jr., is the general editor; he is also responsible for the material on Zoroastrianism in Part One and on Jainism and Sikhism in Part Four. Norvin Hein contributed the presentation on Hinduism, Part Two, and Frank E. Reynolds that on Buddhism, Part Three. The chapters on the religions of China and Japan in Part Four were provided by Alan L. Miller. Rabbi Samuel E. Karff is the author of the

chapters on Judaism, Part Five; Alice C. Cowan of those on Christianity, Part Six; and Paul McLean of those on Islam, Part Seven. Timothy Paul Erdel, who provided the Introduction and the chapter on primal religions in Part One, is a new contributor to this edition.

We are deeply indebted to reviewers and users of the first edition, whose criticisms, suggestions, and encouragement were indispensable. They include Raymond Adams, Fordham University; Wendell C. Beane, University of Wisconsin—Oshkosh; Howard Burkle, Grinnell College; Fred W. Clothey, University of Pittsburgh; John Evden, Williams College; Nancy Falk, Western Michigan University; Anne Feldhaus, Arizona State University; Amos N. Farquharson, Broward Community College; Richard D. Hecht, University of California—Santa Barbara; John C. Holt, Bowdoin College; C. Warren Hoving, Oregon State University; Howard McManus, Mercer University; Harry B. Partin, Duke University; Sonya A. Quitslund, George Washington University; Lynda Sexson, Montana State University; Robert C. Williams, Vanderbilt University; Glenn E. Yocum, Whittier College; and Grover A. Zinn, Oberlin College.

Finally, we wish to thank the people at St. Martin's Press. We are especially grateful to Jeannine Ciliotta, our development editor, who, with rare skill, organized and edited the second edition; to Emily Berleth, who guided the book through development and production; and to June Lundborg, who researched the photos for the second edition.

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