

**An Outline Review
of
Huston Smith's
The World's Religions
(Our Great Wisdom Traditions)**

Introductions

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Foreword

"Not of my doing! It all came from Above."

Preface to the Second Edition

The Book's aim: "to carry intelligent laypeople into the heart of the v

to the point where they might see, and even feel, why and how they exist of those who live by them."

Acknowledgments

the chief support ... "a wife's help"

Chapter I. Point of Departure

There are God-seekers in every land. Does one faith carry the lead? do is try to listen. Such listening, listening for well defined themes d book.

A. What this book is not:

1. This book is not a textbook in the history of religions.
2. Even in the realm of meanings the book does not attempt to give religions considered.
3. This book is not a balanced account of its subject but of religious empowering theological and metaphysical truths of the world's re prepared to argue, inspired. Religious institutions are another sto sifted for those truths, a different, cleaner side appears. They becc traditions.
4. This book is not a book on comparative religions in the sense o worth.

B. What this book is:

1. It is a book that seeks to embrace the world. We have come to t we must all struggle to be a citizen of the world. The only thing th extended vision, the enlargement of one's understanding of the ulti
2. It is a book that takes religion seriously. Religion is at work on

most. Authentic religion has power to inspire life's deepest creati

3. This book makes a real effort to communicate. The author has t
relevance this material has for the problems that human beings fac

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Chapter II. Hinduism

Gandhi wrote: "Such power as I possess for working in the political
experiments in the spiritual field." In that spiritual field, he went on
sovereign principle, and the *Bhagavad-Gita* is the book *par excelle*.

Part One: Hinduism in terms of its practical import, focusing on

A. You can have what you want - The Path of Desire

1. We begin by wanting pleasure. This is natural, but it too trivi
nature.

2. The time comes when the individual's interest shift to the sec
which is worldly success with its three prongs of wealth, fame,
a worthy goal but individuals whose development is not arreste
delighting in success and the senses to the point where their att

largely outgrown.

3. Hinduism does not say that everyone in their present life will be wanting, but at some point in their reincarnations they will reach finality and transfer all allegiance to a religion of duty. This marks a turning point in religion.

4. But in the end all worldly rewards prove insufficient and in the end one turns to the Path of Renunciation. This is the moment Hinduism has reached.

B. What People Really Want - The Path of Renunciation - The Beyond

Hinduism sees the mind's hidden continents as stretching to infinity. In the infinite awareness, there is nothing beyond them that remains to be desired, joy, too, for there is nothing alien to them to mar their beatitude.

What the realization of our total being is like can no more be described than sunset to one born blind: it must be experienced.

1. Four Paths to the Goal. - The realization of our total being:

Hinduism's specific directions for actualizing the human potential are the four headings of yoga.

What is distinctive in Hinduism is the amount of attention is given to identifying basic spiritual personality types and the disciplines most likely to work for each.

The number of the basic spiritual personality types, by Hinduism, is four.

The first step on every yoga involves the cultivation of such qualities as truthfulness, non stealing, self control, contentment, self discipline, and a compelling desire to reach the goal.

The four Paths are:

a. The Way to God through Knowledge.

Jnana yoga, intended for spiritual aspirants who have reflected bent, is the path to oneness with the Godhead through knowledge. Such knowledge has nothing to do with fact; it is not encyclopedic. It is, rather, an intuitive discernment that transforms, turning the knower eventually into that which is known.

The yoga of knowledge is said to be the shortest path to realization. It is also the steepest. Requiring as it does a combination of rationality and spirituality, it is for a select few.

b. The Way to God through Love.

Bhakti yoga has countless followers, being, indeed, the most popular of the four.

The basic principles of bhakti yoga are richly exemplified in Christianity. Indeed, from the Hindu Point of view, Christianity is a great brilliantly lit bhakti highway toward God.

c. The Way to God through Work.

The third path toward God, intended for persons of action, is *karma yoga*, the path to God through work.

To such people Hinduism's says, you don't have to retire to realize God. You can find God in the world of everyday life as readily as anywhere. Throw yourself into your work with devotion; you have; but do so wisely, in a way that will bring the fruits of your work to God, not just trivia.

d. The Way to God through Psychophysical Exercises.

Raja yoga is designed for people who are of scientific way to god through psychophysical experiments.

Hinduism encourages people to test all four yogas and as best suits their needs.

2. The Stages of Life.

The preceding sections traced Hinduism's insistence that different nature call for a variety of paths toward life's fulfillment. No two differ from one another each individual moves through different paths which call for its own appropriate conduct. The stages are:

a. That of the student

b. Beginning with marriage, that of the householder

c. Eventually decline leads to the third stage - retirement - family and home and plunge into the forest solitudes to pursue self-discovery.

d. Beyond retirement, the final stage wherein the goal is a state of the *sannyasin* where "one neither hates nor loves ;

3. The Stations of Life. - The caste system

What is called for here is recognition that with respect to the contribution to society and development of their own potentialities, people are grouped; at the top being the *brahmins* (intellectual and spiritual leaders) and at the bottom the *shudras* (followers or servants).

Caste has decayed and is as offensive as any other corrupted

Part Two: Hinduism focusing on theory, the principal philosophic Hindu religion

A. "Thou Before Whom All Words Recoil." - The concept of God

Concepts of God contain so much alloy to begin with that two can be true, each from a different angle, as both wave and particles accurate heuristic devices for describing the nature of light.

On the whole India has been content to encourage the devotee of personal or transpersonal, depending on which carries the most of the mind in question.

B. Coming of Age in the Universe. - Reincarnation

The process by which an individual soul (*jiva*) passes through rebirth known as reincarnation or transmigration of the soul - Sanskrit signifies endless passage through cycles of life, death, and rebirth.

On the subhuman level the passage is through a series of incarnations until at last a human one is attained.

With the soul's graduation into a human body, this automatic ascent comes to an end. The soul has reached self-consciousness; comes freedom, responsibility, and effort.

Each thought and deed delivers an unseen chisel blow that sculpts. Everybody gets exactly what is deserved.

Never during its pilgrimage is the human spirit completely adrift. To finish its nucleus is the Atman, the God within, exerting presence in-the-box. Never seen but is the Witness; never heard but is the Thinker; never known but is the Knower.

In the end it is God's radiating warmth that melts the soul's ice capacity for God.

What happens then? Some say the individual soul passes into c with God and loses every trace of its former separateness. Other differentiation between the soul and God will still remain - a th that provides nevertheless a remnant of personal identity that se indispensable for the beatific vision.

C. The World Welcome and Farewell.

What kind of world do we have? Hinduism answers:

1. A multitude of worlds that includes innumerable galaxies ho tiers vertically, innumerable cycles temporally.
2. A moral world in which the law of *karma* is never suspended.
3. A middling world that will never replace paradise as the spi
4. A world that is *maya*, deceptively tricky in passing off its m and dualities as ultimate when they are actually provisional.
5. A training ground on which people can develop their highest
6. A world that is *lila*, the play of the divine in its cosmic dance resistless, yet ultimately beneficent with a grace born of infinite

D. Many Paths to the Same Summit.

That Hinduism has shared her land for centuries with Jains, Bu Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians may help explain the final idea clearly through her than through the other great religions; namel the various major religions are alternate paths to the same goal.

To claim salvation as the monopoly of any one religion is like c

be found in this room but not the next, in this attire but not another.

In practice India's sects have often been fanatically intolerant, but they have been open.

Part Three: Appendix on Sikhism.

Hindus are inclined to regard Sikhs as somewhat wayward members of the Hindu family. Sikhs see their faith as having issued from an original divinity that inaugurated a new religion.

The revelation affirms the ultimacy of a supreme and formless God who is always conceiving. It rejects the notion of divine incarnations, caste distinctions, idol worship, and the sanctity of the Vedas. The Sikh revelations endorse reincarnation.

Sikhs seek salvation through union with God by realizing, through meditation, that God who dwells in depths of their own being. Union with God is the ultimate goal. A God life has no meaning; it is separation from God that causes human suffering.

World renunciation does not figure in this faith. The Sikhs have no interest in asceticism, celibacy, or mendicancy.

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Chapter III. Buddhism

Part One: Buddha the Man

The Man Who Woke Up. - The Silent Sage.

Born around 563 B.C.

Heir to a throne, he deserted it at age twenty-nine.

Sensing that that a breakthrough was near, he seated himself on vowing not to arise until enlightenment was his. At morning his bubble of the universe and shattered it to naught, only, wonder miraculously restored with effulgence of true being.

Nearly half a century followed, during which the Buddha trudged India preaching his ego-shattering, life-redeeming message.

Part Two: Buddhism the Religion

A. The Rebel Saint.

Buddhism drew its lifeblood from Hinduism, but against its pre Buddhism recoiled like a whiplash and hit back - hard.

Buddha preached a religion devoid of authority, devoid of ritual speculation, devoid of tradition, a religion of intense self-effort supernatural.

Original Buddhism can be characterized in the following terms

empirical - experience was the final test of truth

scientific - quality of lived experience its final test

pragmatic - concerned with problem solving

therapeutic - "One thing I teach, suffering and the end of suffering"

psychological - begins with the human lot, its problems, and coping with them

egalitarian - women as capable of enlightenment as men; rejects system's assumption that aptitudes were hereditary

directed to individuals - each should proceed toward enlightenment by confronting his or her individual situation and predicaments

B. The Four Noble Truths. - the postulates from which the rest of Buddhism derive

1. Life is suffering, is dislocated, something has gone wrong.

2. The cause - all forms of selfishness

Instead of linking our faith and love and destiny to the whole of existence, we are strapping to puny burros of our separate selves, which are certain to give out eventually.

3. Since the cause of life's dislocation is selfish craving, its cure is the overcoming of such craving.

4. The Fourth Noble Truth prescribes how the cure can be accomplished.

The way out of our captivity is through the Eightfold Path.

C. The Eightfold Path. - it is a treatment by training - by right association with Truthwinners, converse with them, serve them, observe them, and imbibe by osmosis their spirit of love and compassion.

1. Right Views - The first step summons us to make up our mind about the problem basically is.

2. Right Intent - The second advises us to make up our hearts as we want.

3. Right Speech

first become aware of our speech

second move toward charity

4. Right Conduct

understand one's actions

change to the direction of selflessness and charity

do not drink intoxicants

5. Right Livelihood - For the lay person, Buddhism calls for endeavors that promote life instead of destroying it.

6. Right Effort - A low level of volition, a mere wish not action to obtain it - won't do.

7. Right Mindfulness

This seventh step summons the seeker to steady awareness of what is taken, and every content that turns up in one's stream of consciousness.

Special times should be allotted for undistracted introspective practice.

8. Right Concentration

This involves substantially the techniques of Hinduism's raja yoga, which has substantially the same goal.

The final climactic state is the state in which the human mind

absorbed in God.

D. Basic Buddhist Concepts. - Certain key notions in the Buddha's

1. *nirvana* - Life's goal - boundless life
2. *anatta* - The human self has no soul
3. *karma* - One's acts considered as fixing one's lot in the future
4. *anicca* - impermanence, everything finite is transitory
5. *Arhat* - a Buddhist who has reached the stage of enlightenment

Do human beings survive bodily death? - his answer is equivocal

E. Big Raft and Little. - Two main Paths in Buddhism

Buddhism divided over three questions: are people independent of the universe friendly or hostile toward creatures, and what is the self, its head or its heart.

One group says "Be lamps unto yourselves, work out your salvation"

For the other group, human beings are more social than individual. The greatest thing in the world.

The division into the two main paths is schematized as follows

THERAVADA	MAHAYANA
Human beings are emancipated by self-effort, without supernatural aid.	Human aspirations are fulfilled by supernatural powers and the grace of the Buddha.
Key virtue: wisdom	Key virtue: compassion

Attainment requires constant commitment, and is primarily for monks and nuns.	Religious practice is world, and therefore
Ideal: the <i>Arhat</i> who remains in <i>nirvana</i> after death	Ideal: the <i>bodhisatt</i>
Buddha a saint, supreme teacher, and inspirer.	Buddha a savior
Minimizes metaphysics	Elaborates metaphys
Minimizes ritual	Emphasizes ritual
Practice centers on meditation	Includes petitionary]

After Buddhism split into Thervada and Mahayana, Theravada unified tradition, whereas Mahayana divided into a number of schools. The two with the most influence in western society, Zen Tibetan Buddhism are discussed next.

F. The Secret of the Flower. - Zen Buddhism

Buddhism that Taoism profoundly influenced, *Ch'an* (*Zen* in Ja)

It makes breaking the language barrier its central concern.

Strains by every means to blast their novices out of solutions th

Zen masters are determined that their students attain the experie talk to take its place.

By paradox and non sequitur Zen provokes, excites, exasperate exhausts the mind until until it sees that thinking is never more t feeling more than feeling *for*.

It counts on a flash of sudden insight to bridge the gap between firsthand life.

Zen's object is to infuse the temporal *with* the eternal.

A condition in which life seems distinctly good

Also comes an objective outlook on one's relation to others.

The life of Zen does not draw one away from the world; it tu

An attitude of generalized agreeableness

Even the dichotomy between life and death disappears.

G. The Diamond Thunderbolt. - Tibetan Buddhism

The Tibetans say that their religion is nowise distinctive in its g
their practice is that it enables one to reach *nervana* in a single
the speed-up is effected by utilizing all the energies latent in the
of the body emphatically included, and impressing them *all* into
spiritual quest.

The energy that interests the West most is sex, but the physical e
regularly work with are the ones that are involved with speech,

Tibetan Buddhism distinctiveness also includes a unique institu

The Dalai Lama is a receiving station toward which the compa
Buddhism in all its cosmic amplitude is continuously channelec
the Tibetan people most directly, but by extension to all sentien

H. The Image of the Crossing.

Do the various Paths of Buddhism deserve to be considered as p
religion?

Yes, in two ways:

(1.) They all revere a single founder from whom they claim the

(2.) All can be subsumed under a single metaphor - the image of

Buddhism is a voyage across life's river, a transport from the shore of ignorance, grasping, and death, to the further bank of enlightenment.

Before the river was crossed the two shores, human and divine, distinct from each other, different as life and death, as day and night. After crossing has been made, no dichotomy remains. The realm of the divine is no longer a distinct place. It is where the traveler stands; and if that stands in this world, the world itself is transmuted.

Part Three: The Confluence of Buddhism and Hinduism in India.

Today Buddhists abound in every Asian land except India, the land

The deeper fact is that in India Buddhism was not so much defeated but accommodated within it.

Its contributions, accepted by Hindus in principle if not always put to renewed emphasis on kindness to all living things, on non-killing, on the elimination of caste barriers in matters religious and their reduction to their strong ethical emphasis generally.

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Chapter IV. Confucianism

Part One: The First Teacher.

Born around 551 B.C.

Prompted as if by call - "At fifty I perceived the divine mission" - he went with many a backward look and resisting footsteps, to "the long trek, from state to state proffering unsolicited advice to rulers on how to improve, seeking a real opportunity to put his ideas into practice. The opportunity

Only a small band of faithful disciples stood by him through rebuff, and starvation.

He spent his last five years quietly teaching and editing the classics and at the age of seventy-two he died.

With his death began his glorification. Within a few generations he was venerated in China as "the mentor and model of ten thousand generations."

Part Two: The Problem Confucius Faced.

By Confucius' time interminable warfare had degenerated from chivalry to the horror of the Period of the Warring States.

The old mortar that had held society together was chipping and flaking, was a thing of the past.

Part Three: Rival Answers.

As the alternative to tradition, the United States has proposed reason

inform them, and they can be counted on to behave sensibly - this is Enlightenment faith on which the United States was founded. It has not recently the world's leader in education, the United States leads like and divorce.

One option that ancient China proposed was put forward by the Realists: if people don't behave? Hit them. The Realists' philosophy of social order is an elaborate mechanism of "penalties and rewards".

A social philosophy as different from the Realists' as fire from ice emerged in Confucius' China. Known as Mohism, it proposed as the solution to social order: force but love - universal love. One should "feel toward all people" and "feel toward one's own people, and regard other states exactly as one's own".

Neither of these rival answers to the problem of social cohesion immediately rejected the Realists' answer of force because it was clumsy and expensive. In reliance on love, Confucius agreed with the Realists in dismissing the current approach to the social problem - through the cultivation of reverence. If it had he would have dismissed it as not thought through.

Part Four: Confucius' Answer.- Deliberate Tradition

Confucius was all but obsessed with tradition, he saw it as the chief of all attitudes.

Spontaneous tradition- tradition that had emerged without conscious design without dissent but could no longer be counted on.

The most appropriate solution must be continuous with the past and give a clear-eyed account of developments that rendered the old answer unworkable.

The shift from spontaneous to deliberate tradition requires a power that can get society's members to behave socially even when the law is not looking around "patterns of prestige."

The interminable anecdotes and maxims of Confucius' *Analects* were

prototype of what the Chinese hoped the Chinese character would be

A. The Content of Deliberate Tradition.

Deliberate tradition requires attention first to maintain its force the content of that education. The character of the social life Cc engender can be gathered under five key terms:

1. *Jen*.-

The ideal relationship that should pertain between people

Involves simultaneously a feeling of humanity toward others oneself

Expressed in courtesy, unselfishness, and empathy

"Do not do unto others what you would not want others to do

2. *Chun tzu* - The mature person

Opposite of a petty person, a mean person, a small-spirited p

Armed with self-respect that generates respect for others

Speech free of coarseness and vulgarity

Person who is entirely real

3. *Li* - Has two meanings:

a. Propriety, the way things should be done - Confucius taught

the Rectification of Names - the creation of a language in carry the meaning they should carry if life is to be well or

the Doctrine of the Mean - the way that is "constantly in between unworkable extremes

the Five constant Relationships - those between parent and wife, elder and junior sibling, elder friend and junior and subject - It is vital to the health of society that these be rightly constituted.

the Family - "The duty of children to their parents is the first of all virtues spring.

Age - Confucius saw age as deserving veneration by reason of worth.

b. Ritual - When right behavior is detailed to Confucian length, an entire life becomes stylized in a sacred dance, leaving little room for improvisation.

4. *Te* - the power by which men are ruled

No state, Confucius was convinced, can constrain all its citizens, even any large fraction of them a large part of the time. It must be of its will, an appreciable confidence in what it is doing.

This spontaneous consent arises only when people sense the character of their rulers, people of capacity, sincerely devoted to the common good and of a kind of character that compels respect.

For the process to work, however, rulers must have no personal interests; those are worthy to govern who would rather be excused.

5. *Wen* - The arts of peace as contrasted to the arts of war

Music, art, poetry, the sum of culture in its aesthetic and spiritual

Ultimately, victory goes to the state that develops the highest

exalted culture - the state that has the finest art, the noblest pl
grandest poetry.

B. The Confucian Project. - how life would appear to a Chinese s

As a never-ending project of self-cultivation toward the end of
human

Apart from human relationships there is no self. The self is a ce
is constructed through its interactions with others and is definec
social roles.

A notion very different from Western individualism - the human
entity.

Ascent means becoming a fully realized human being through e:
sympathy and empathy indefinitely.

The expansion is in concentric circles that begins with oneself:
to include successively one's family, one's face-to-face commu
finally all humanity.

In shifting the center of one's empathic concern from oneself to
transcends selfishness. The move from family to community tra
move from community to nation overcomes parochialism, and t
counters chauvinistic nationalism.

Inside and outside work together in the Confucian scheme.

Always the practice field is the Five Constant Relationships. M
of the five sheds light on the other roles. To improve as a paren
being a good child (of one's own parents) entails. The nuances
likewise illuminate one another.

C. Ethics or Religion?

If religion is taken in its widest sense, as a way of life woven into ultimate concerns, Confucianism clearly qualifies. Even in a narrower sense, as a concern to align humanity with the transcendent existence, Confucianism is still a religion.

To understand the total dimension of Confucianism as a religion, Confucius shifting his people's attention from Heaven to Earth and Heaven from the picture entirely.

The Confucian project of becoming fully human involves transcending egoism, nepotism, parochialism, ethnocentrism, and chauvinism (now add) isolating self-sufficient humanism.

D. Impact on China.

For over two thousand years Confucius' teachings have profoundly influenced the population of this globe. Confucian values merged with the Chinese people to the point where it is difficult to separate the

The features mentioned below pretty much blanket East Asia as Korea, and much of Southeast Asia deliberately imported Confucianism.

1. Confucius' social emphasis produced, in the Chinese, a consequential effectiveness - a capacity to get things done in a large scale which

2. Unique among the world's civilizations, China syncretized her religions. Traditionally, every Chinese was Confucian in ethics and public life and hygiene, and Buddhist at the time of death, with a health folk religion thrown in along the way.

3. The importance of the family in China - Strong family bonds also bring benefits, and these work for East Asians right down

4. East Asian respect for age borders on veneration.

5. Confucius' Doctrine of the Mean continues to this day in the (

negotiation, mediation, and the "middle man" as against resorting to statutes.

6. China honors Confucius' conviction that learning and the arts but are powers that transform societies and the human heart.

7. The East Asian economic miracle of the last forty years, shamanistic ethic, constitutes the dynamic center of economic growth in the

8. The courtesy for which Orientals have been famous echoes the

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Chapter V. Taoism

No civilization is monochrome. In China the classical tones of Confucianism are softened by the spiritual shades of Buddhism but also by the romantic hues of Taoism.

Part One: The Old Master. - Lao Tzu

Taoism, according to tradition originated with a man named Lao Tzu

A shadowy figure, born about 604 B. C.

Before his retirement from society, he left a slim volume of five thousand characters, the *Tao Te Ching*, or *The Way and Its Power*.

A testament to humanity's at-home-ness in the universe, it can be read and reread throughout one's lifetime, and remains to this day the basic text of Taoist thought.

He didn't preach he didn't organize or promote, he wrote a few paragraphs on a water buffalo, and that was it as far as he was concerned.

Part Two: The Religion He Founded - Taoism

A. The Three Meanings of *Tao*. - Literally, this word means path or way.

1. The *way of ultimate reality* - This *Tao* cannot be perceived or directly conceived, for it is too vast for human rationality to fathom.

2. It is also immanent. - In this secondary sense it is the *way of* the rhythm, the driving power in all nature, the ordering principle.

3. In its third sense *Tao* refers to the *way of human life* when it is lived in accordance with the universe as just described. Most of what follows in this chapter is the *Taoists* propose that this way of life should be.

First, however, it is necessary to point out that there have been three *Taoisms*.

B. Three Approaches to Power and the *Taoisms* That Follow. - *Tao Te Ching*, Taoism's basic text, has been translated *The Way and its Power*. The term *Way* can be taken in three senses, so can the second term **Power**.

Corresponding to the three ways *Te* or power can be approached, there are three species of Taoism so dissimilar that initially they seem to have nothing in common. More than homonyms like *blew/blue* or *sun/son*, that sound alike but have different meanings, we shall find that this is not the case.

All were engaged in vitalizing programs that were intended to fac

as it flows through human beings.

1. Efficient Power: Philosophical Taoism.

Philosophical Taoists try to conserve their *te* by expanding it. The other two "vitality" Taoists work to increase its supply.

It is essentially an attitude toward life, it is the most "exportable" of the three, the one that has the most to say to the world at large.

2. Augmented Power: Taoist Hygiene and Yoga.

These Taoists want to go beyond conserving to increasing the amount of *ch'i* they had to work with.

They worked with three things: matter, movement, and their internal energy.

They tried eating virtually everything to see if *ch'i* could be increased nutritionally.

They sought to draw *ch'i* from the atmosphere by breathing exercises.

They used programs of bodily movement such as *t'ai chi chuan*, calisthenics, dance, meditation, *yin/yang* philosophy, martial arts, and acupuncture into a synthesis that was designed to draw *ch'i* from the outside to dislodge blocks to its internal flow.

Taoist meditation, (the physical postures and concentration techniques reminiscent of Indian *reja yoga*), was designed to reach real truth, joy, and power.

The Taoist yogis recognized that they could not hope for much success with the masses, and they made no attempt to publicize their position.

3. Vicarious Power: Religious Taoism.

Reflection and health programs take time, and the average Chinese commodity. Yet they too needed help.

Taoists responded to such problems. Using the unchanging la folk religion, Religious Taoism institutionalized such activities.

Popular, Religious Taoism is a murky affair. Much of it looks like we must always keep in mind - like crude superstition; but we have little idea what energy is, how it proceeds, or the maximum extent to which) it can be augmented.

It was under the rubric of magic as traditionally conceived that dividing the territory with freelance wizards, exorcists, and a way to harness higher powers for humane ends.

C. The Mingling of the Powers.

In the interest of clarity, the lines between the above three divisions are too sharply. No solid walls separate them; the three are better represented as a common river.

Where these three things come together there is a "school", and this chapter describes it as Taoism.

D. Creative Quietude. - The object of Philosophical Taoism

The object of Philosophical Taoism is to align one's daily life with the boundless tide and delight in its flow.

The basic way to do this is to perfect a life of *wu wei*.

Creative quietude combines within a single individual two seemingly opposite conditions - supreme activity and supreme relaxation. This happens when egos and conscious efforts yield to a power not their own.

Effectiveness of this order obviously requires an extraordinary

Clarity can come to the inner eye only insofar as life attains a deep and silent pool.

E. Other Taoist Values.

The Taoists rejected all forms of self-assertiveness and competition.

People should avoid being strident and aggressive not only toward other people but also toward nature.

This Taoist approach to nature deeply affected Chinese art.

Pomp and extravagance were regarded as silly.

It was this preference for naturalness and simplicity that most distinguished Taoism from the Confucian.

All formalism, show and ceremony left them cold. What could they care for punctiliousness or the meticulous observance of propriety?

Another feature of Taoism is its notion of the relativity of all values. Each is a correlative, the identity of opposites. Here Taoism tied in with the *yin/yang* symbol.

This polarity sums up all life's basic oppositions: good/evil, active/passive, positive/negative/negative, light/dark, summer/winter, male/female. Each half is in tension, they are not flatly opposed; they complement each other. Each invades the other's hemisphere and takes up its abode in part of its partner's domain. In the end both find themselves resolved in a common surrounds them.

In the Taoist perspective even good and evil are not head-on opposites.

If this all sounds very much like Zen, it should; for Buddhism practiced Taoism became Zen.

That in China the scholar ranked at the top of the social scale not Confucius' doing, but Taoism is fully as responsible for placing him at the bottom. "The way for a vital person to go is not the way of a so-

Part Three - Conclusion.

Circling around each other like yin and yang themselves, Taoism and Confucianism represent the two indigenous poles of the Chinese character. Confucius is classical, Lao Tzu the romantic. Confucius stresses social responsibility and spontaneity and naturalness. Confucius' focus is on the human, Lao Tzu the human.

Confucius roams within society, Lao Tzu wanders beyond. Somewhere between each of these directions, and Chinese civilization would certainly not have appeared.

An Outline Review

of

Huston Smith's

The World's Religions

(Our Great Wisdom Traditions)

Chapter VI. Islam

Named after the attribute it seeks to cultivate, life's total

Part One: Background.

If asked how their religion came into being, the Muslims' answer is Muhammad in the sixth-century Arabia, but with God. "In the beginning Genesis tells us. The Koran agrees.

Like the Jews, the Arabs consider themselves a Semitic people. The Abraham. Abraham married Sarah. Sarah had no son, so Abraham, v took Hagar for his second wife. Hagar bore him a son, Ishmael, who likewise had a son, named Isaac.

Here we come to the first divergence between the koranic and biblical the Koran, Ishmael went to the place where Mecca was to rise. His Arabia, become Muslims; whereas those of Isaac, who remained in and became Jews.

Part Two: The Religion

A. The Seal of the Prophets. - Muhammad

Following Ismael's line in Arabia, we come in the latter half of the Muhammad, the prophet through whom Islam reached its definitive

Muslims believe there had been authentic prophets of God before culmination; hence he is called "The Seal of the Prophets." No va him.

He was born approximately A.D. 570.

Peering into the mysteries of good and evil, " great fiery heart, see great furnace of thought," was reaching out for God.

The desert jinn were irrelevant to this quest, but one deity was no what his name literally claimed: He was the God, One and only, (

Around 610, this prophet received his commission. It was the same earlier on Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, and Jesus. There can form of a man. The angel said to him: "Proclaim!"

Muhammad's life was no more his own. From that time forth it was humanity, preaching with unswerving purpose in face of relentless outrage, the words that God was to transmit for twenty-three years: Koran.

Muhammad claimed only one miracle, that of the Koran itself. (The revelation, the Koran will be describe in section C, below.)

At first he made few converts, by the end of a decade, only several acclaiming him as God's authentic spokesman.

B. The Migration That Led to Victory.

Muhammad was suddenly waited on by a delegation of the leading 280 miles to Mecca's north. They wished him to move his ministr

Muhammad received a sign from God to accept the charge. The ye migration, known in Arabic as the *Hijra*, is regarded by Muslims world history. Yathrib soon came to be known as Medina, "the cit

Muhammad died in A.D. 632 with virtually all of Arabia under hi basis of an empire that was soon to embrace within its far-flung b provinces of the then civilized world.

C. The Standing Miracle. - the Koran

The blend of admiration, respect, and affection that the Muslim fe impressive fact of history. Even so, they never mistake him for the faith. That place is reserved for the bible of Islam, the Koran.

So great was Muhammad's regard for its contents that he consider miracle God worked through him - God's "standing miracle," as h

The words of the Koran came to Muhammad in manageable segm years through voices that seemed at first to vary and sometimes sc bells," but which gradually condensed into a single voice that ide

The Koran continues the Old and New Testament, God's earlier revelations as their culmination: "We made a covenant of old with the Children of Israel. We have nothing of guidance until you observe the Torah and the Gospel. We have nothing of guidance until you observe the Torah and the Gospel and Christians to be included with Muslims as "People of the Book".

However the Koran claims final and infallible revelation of God's Scripture whereof there is no doubt."

In the Koran God speaks in the first person. Allah describes himself and his laws. The Muslim is therefore inclined to consider each individual revelation as a separate revelation and to experience the words thereof as a means of grace. "It is not about the truth; it is the truth."

By contrast the Jewish and Christian Bibles seem more distant from religious meaning in reports of events instead of God's direct proclamation.

D. Teachings of the Koran

1. Basic Theological Concepts.- the basic theological concepts of Islam are identical with those of Judaism and Christianity, its forerunners. The most important are:

a. God

The Koran's innovation was to remove idols from the religion and to affirm the divine in a single God for everyone. Judaism removed idols and the gods were confined to the people of Israel. Christians, for their part, affirmed their monotheism by deifying Christ.

The Koran depicts God's nature as awesome, of infinite power and majesty.

b. Creation

The world is presented as created by a deliberate act of Allah. It is the handiwork of a perfect God, the material world must likewise be perfect.

c. The Human Self - Foremost among God's creations

As koranically defined, this creation is soundly constituted. What comes to the Christian doctrine of original sin is in its concept forgetting. People do forget their divine origin, and this mistake is to be corrected.

With life acknowledged as a gift from its Creator comes two

Gratitude for the life that has been received

Surrender or commitment in which nothing is withheld from

Two more features of the human self are:

Its individuality - its uniqueness and the responsibility that comes with it; never is its distinctness more acutely sensed than on the Day of Judgment.

The issue of the soul's freedom - Whoever gets to himself on the Day of Judgment is on his own responsibility.

d. The Day of Judgment

It is the tearing away of all illusions of security that characterizes the Last Judgment and its anticipation in the Koran. Depending on the result of its Reckoning, the soul will repair to either the heavens or the earth.

God, Creation, the Human Self, and the Day of Judgment - these are the theological pegs on which the Koran's teachings hang. In spite of the fact that, however, the Koran is "a book which emphasizes deed rather than words," its sections turn to these deeds.

2. The Five Pillars.- The principles that regulate the private life of the Muslim and his dealings with God.

a. Islam's creed, or confession of faith known as the *Shahadah*.
God, and Muhammad is His Prophet."

b. The canonical prayer, in which the Koran adjures the faithful

Muslims are admonished to be constant in prayer to keep the perspective. There are five stipulated prayer times: on arising reaches its zenith, its mid-decline, sunset, and before retiring

As for prayer's content, its standard themes are praise, gratitude, supplication.

c. The third pillar of Islam is charity. Those who have much share of those who are less fortunate.

d. The fourth pillar of Islam is the observance of Ramadan, a month

e. Islam's fifth pillar is pilgrimage. Once during his or her lifetime is physically and economically in a position to do so is expected where God's climactic revelation was first disclosed.

The Five Pillars of Islam consist of things Muslims do to keep their faith. There are also things they should not do. Gambling, thieving, lying, drinking intoxicants, and being sexually promiscuous are some

3. Social Teachings.

Before Muhammad there was virtually no restraint on internal vices. Inequities in wealth and possession were accepted as the natural order. Women were regarded more as possessions than as human beings. Large-scale gambling was widespread. Thanks to Islamic law, however, there was effected a remarkable change in the moral climate on

Islamic law is of enormous scope. Its provisions are here summarized for collective life:

a. Economics

Society's health requires that material goods be widely and fairly distributed. These are the basic principles of Islamic economics that acquisitiveness and competition be balanced by fair play for the poor.

b. The Status of Women - The koranic reforms improved women

c. Race Relations - Islam stresses racial equality and has achieved a high degree of interracial coexistence.

d. The Use of Force

Far from requiring the Muslim to turn himself into a doormat the Koran allows punishment of wonton wrongdoers to the full extent they impart. The Koran does not counsel turning the other cheek.

Muhammad incorporated into his charter for Medina the principle of religious toleration. Islam's record on the use of force is no darker than that of other religions.

Muslims deny that the blots in their record should be charged to the religion whose presiding ideal they affirm in their standard greeting *'alaykum* ("Peace be upon you").

Part Three: Sufism.

Islam is not monolithic, like every religious tradition it divides. Its division is between the mainstream Sunnis and the Shi'ites which turns on an inner vertical cleavage instead a division that has universal overtones. It is the vertical cleavage of Islam, called Sufis and the remaining majority of the faith, who are not mystics.

It stands to reason that not many Muslims will have the time, the inclination to keep up with the Divine Law that orders their lives. Their fidelity to the Law and their reward will be as great as the Sufis'. But the Sufis were impatient for

the matter thus. They wanted to encounter God directly in this very li

This called for special methods. They developed three overlapping mysticisms of love, of ecstasy, and of intuition.

A. The mysticism of love - Sufi love poetry is world famous. Persia on the pangs of separation to deepen their love of God and thereby d

B. The mysticism of ecstasy

The approach to the divine presence that turns on experiences that but in kind, from usual ones

The content of what ecstatic Sufis experience engrosses them so c become trancelike because of their total abstraction from self.

Deliberate inducement of such states required practice.

C. The mysticism of intuition

Love mysticism yields "heart knowledge", and ecstasy "visual or because extraterrestrial realities are seen.

Intuitive mysticism brings "mental knowledge" obtained through a called "the eye of the heart."

To the eye of the heart, the world is God-in-disguise, God veiled.

The principal method the Sufis employed for penetrating the disgu visible objects to speak of invisible things, symbolism is the lang it is to religion what numbers are to science.

Symbolism, though powerful, works somewhat abstractly, so the *dhikr* (to remember), the practice of remembering Allah through r

On the whole, esoterism and exoterism have achieved a healthy balanc

Part Four: Whither Islam?

For long periods since Muhammad called his people to God's oneness from the spirit of the Prophet.

But having thrown off the colonial yoke, Islam is stirring with some youth.

An Outline Review of Huston Smith's The World's Religions (Our Great Wisdom Traditions) Chapter VII. Judaism

Part One: Their Passion for Meaning

One-third of our Western civilization bears the mark of its Jewish ancestry. The passage from relative obscurity to permanent religious greatness was their passion for meaning.

A. Meaning in God.

From a very early date, possibly from the very beginning of the biblical era, the Jews were monotheists.

The supreme achievement of Jewish thought was not in its monotheistic character it ascribed to the God it intuited as One. God is a God of

loving-kindness is from everlasting to everlasting and whose tend works.

B. Meaning in Creation.

Judaism affirms the world's goodness, arriving at that conclusion God created it. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the to be good.

To affirm that existence is God-created is to affirm its unimpeach

The Semantically originated religions emerge as exceptional in insi are ineradicably body as well as spirit and that this coupling is no

C. Meaning in Human Existence.

The striking feature of the Jewish view of human nature is that wit frailty, it went on to affirm its unspeakable grandeur. We are a ble

Human beings, once created, make or break themselves, forging th their decisions.

People are God's beloved children.

The ingredients of the most creatively meaningful image of human can conceive - grandeur, sin, freedom, divine parentage; it is diffi assessment.

D Meaning in History.

1. For the Bible, history is neither Hinduism *maya*, illusion or a C nature; it is the arena of God's purposive activity.

2. Second, if contexts are crucial for life, so is collective action; s

3. Third, nothing in history happens accidentally; God shapes each

experience for his people.

4. Finally, all events are important but not equally important. Each some are decisive. For India, human destiny lies outside history a contrast laid the groundwork for social protest. It is in the lands in historical perspective that the chief thrusts for social betterment h

E. Meaning in Morality.

Without moral constraints, human relations would become as snar Chicago loop if everyone drove at will. The Jewish formulation c that make men free" is contained in her Law. The Hebrew Bible c commandments that regulate human behavior. Four of these will s the four ethical precepts of the Ten Commandments, for it is throu morality has had its greatest impact.

Appropriated by Christianity and Islam, four of the Ten Command foundation of most of the Western world. There are four danger z cause unlimited trouble if they get out of hand:

1. Force - You can bicker and fight, but killing within the in-group it instigates blood feuds that shred community. Therefore *thou sha*

2. Wealth - As for possessions, you may make your pile as large a shrewd and cunning in enterprise. One thing, though, you may not directly off someone else's pile, for this outrages the sense of fair animosities that become ungovernable. Therefore *thou shalt not*

3. Sex - You can be a rounder, flirtatious, even promiscuous, and t such behavior, we will not get the law after you. But at one point ' indulgence of married persons outside the nuptial bond will not b passions the community cannot tolerate. Therefore *thou shalt not*

4. Speech - You may dissemble and equivocate, but there is one ti you tell the truth, and nothing but the truth. If a dispute reaches suc

brought before a tribunal, on such occasions the judges must know then, while under oath to tell the truth, the penalty will be severe. *witness.*

F. Meaning in Justice.

It is to a remarkable group of men we call the prophets more than civilization owes its convictions (1) that the future of any people is the justice of its social order, and (2) that individuals are responsible structures of their society as well as for their direct personal dealings.

Whereas the Pre-Writing Prophets Such as Elijah and Elisha challenged Writing Prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah challenged corrupt and oppressive institutions.

Thanks to the Prophets, what other nations would have interpreted as a squeeze, the Jews saw as God's warning to clean up their national institutions throughout the land, or be destroyed.

Stated abstractly, the Prophetic Principle can be put as follows: The political stability is social justice, for it is in the nature of things to endure.

Stated theologically the point reads: God has high standards. God with exploitation, corruption, and mediocrity.

One thing is common to all the Jewish prophets: the conviction that simply by virtue of his or her humanity, is a child of God and therefore rights that even kings must respect. Wealth and splendor count for purity, justice, and mercy.

G. Meaning in Suffering.

From the eighth to the sixth centuries B. C., during which Israel at the aggressive power of Syria, Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon, the prophets their predicament by seeing it as God's way of underscoring the d

God was using Israel's enemies against her. The experience of del the Jews the true worth of freedom.

Another lesson was that those who remain faithful in adversity wi

Stated abstractly, the deepest meaning the Jews found in their Exil vicarious suffering: meaning that enters lives that are willing to er might be spared it. "*the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us a*

H. Meaning in Messianism.

Part Two: The Hallowing of Life. - Jewish ceremonies and observa

The West, influenced by the Greek partiality for abstract reason, emp the East has approached religion through ritual and narrative.

Ritual plays a part in life that nothing else can fill. In Judaism it aim life.

The name for the right approach to life and the world is piety. The se seeing the entire world as belonging to God and reflecting God's glo

The Jews preserve this sense of the sanctity of all things through trac historically minded of all religions finds holiness and history insepa

The basic manual for the hallowing of life is the Law, the first five b

Part Three: Revelation.

The Jews in their interpretation of the major areas of human experie profound grasp of meaning than any of their Mediterranean neighbor essentials has not been surpassed.

The Jew's say they did not reach these insight on their own. They we

For the Jews God revealed himself first and foremost in actions - no

through miracles, divine intervention.

God took the imitative.

The God that the Exodus disclosed was powerful and a God of good was intensely concerned with human affairs. It followed that God was as well.

Finally, suffering must carry significance because it was unthinkable miraculously saved his people would ever abandon them completely Jews around the idea of the covenant.

Yahweh would continue to bless the Israelites if they, for their part, had been given.

Part Four :The Chosen People.

The idea that a universal god decided that the divine nature should be disclosed to a single people is among the most difficult notions to take a study of religion.

The Jews did not see themselves as singled out for privileges. They suffer the trials that service would often exact.

Isaiah's doctrine of vicarious suffering meant that the Jews were elect that would otherwise have been distributed more widely.

It is the doctrine that God's doings can focus like a burning glass on peoples - in the interest, to be sure, of intentions that embrace human

Part Five: Israel.

Judaism cannot be reduced to its biblical period. In 70 A.D. the Roman Jerusalem and the focus of Judaism shifted to Rabbinic Judaism - from Temple to the study of the Torah and its accompanying Oral Tradition. synagogues around the world.

Today, almost two thousand years later, there are four great sectors of its spiritual anatomy - faith, observance, culture, and nation.

The reasons for the establishment of the modern of Israel in 1948 present Without presuming to answer these problems, we can appreciate the conscience of this exceptionally conscientious people.

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Chapter VIII. Christianity

Nearly two thousand years of history have brought an astonishingly diverse, dazzling and often bewilderingly complex, first will be indicated the central religion, and then part two will deal with its three major divisions: Roman Orthodoxy, and Protestantism.

Part One: The central strands that unite this religion

A. The Historical Jesus. - What Jesus said about himself

1. "The Spirit of the Lord Is Upon Me."

Jesus opened his ministry by quoting this statement from Isaiah scripture has been fulfilled." We must attend to this Spirit that J

empowering him, for there can be no understanding of his life a

Not only was Spirit not spatially removed; though invisible, it c

Often it would take the initiative and announce itself. It did this Mount Sinai, but it also spoke in a small voice to Elijah, in lior prophets, and in dramatic events like the Exodus.

That Jesus stood in the Jewish tradition of Spirit-filled mediatc fact for understanding his historical career.

His immediate predecessor in this tradition was John the Bapti baptism he (John) saw "the heavens opened and the Spirit desc like a dove."

Having descended, the Spirit "drove" Jesus into the wilderness days of prayer and fasting, he consolidated the Spirit that had e done so he reentered the world, empowered.

2. "By the Spirit of God I Cast Out Demons."

The Spirit-filled personages of the Bible have power, exceptio ordinary mortals lack. The Gospels attribute these powers to Je

He used the Spirit that coursed through him not just to heal indi was his aspiration, to heal all humanity, beginning with his owr

3. "Thy Kingdom Come, on Earth."

Jesus' mission was to crack the shell of Judaism in which revel release that revelation to a ready and waiting world.

Putting it this way does not cancel the need for a continuing Jew world is regenerated, the witness of a nation of priests remain i

B. The Christ of Faith. - What his disciples said about Jesus

What they heard him say, and what they sensed him to be caused by what they had seen God in human form.

1. "He Went About Doing Good."

Almost all of his extraordinary deeds were performed quietly, and as a demonstration of the power of faith.

2. "Never Spoke Man Thus."

The teachings of Jesus have an urgency, an ardent, vivid quality, a complete absence of second-rate material.

His teachings carry an extravagance that invited people to see themselves with confidence that if they did so their behavior would change accordingly.

His teachings focused on the two most important facts about life: the love of humanity, and the need for people to accept that love and share it with others.

Jesus tried to convey God's absolute love for every single human being.

3. "We Have Seen His Glory."

But what he did and what he said would not have been enough to lead them toward the conclusion that he was divine.

It came to the point where they felt that as they looked at Jesus, they were seeing something resembling God in human form.

C. The End and the Beginning. - The way that Jesus' earthly ministry

He was crucified.

Within a short time his followers were preaching the gospel of the

His disciples were convinced of Jesus, resurrection.

He did not simply resume his former physical body; resurrection was entry into another mode of being.

Jesus' followers experienced him in a new way; as having the qua

Faith in Jesus' resurrection produced the Church and its Christolo

This faith extended ultimately to the status of goodness in the univ
was all-powerful, victorious over everything, even death itself.

D. The Good News.

Conventional love is evoked by loveable qualities in the beloved,
encountered from Christ embraced sinners and outcasts, Samaritan
prudentially in order to receive, but because giving was its nature

Once that love of Christ reached the first Christians it could not b

Three intolerable burdens had suddenly and dramatically lifted fr

The fear of death

The burden of guilt

The cramping confines of the ego

E. The Mystical Body of Christ.

The disciples went out to possess a world they believed God had
them.

Images came to mind to characterize the intense corporate identity
from Christ himself: "I am the vine, you are the branches."

Saint Paul adapted Christ's image by using the human body instead of the Church. Christ is the head; individual Christians are its cells.

In what sense there is salvation apart from the Body of Christ is a matter on which Christians differ.

F. The Mind of the Church.

It was not the disciples' minds that were first drawn to Jesus; it was their hearts.

It was only a matter of time before Christians felt the need to understand their faith in order to explain it to themselves and to others. Christian theology on the Church was head as well as heart.

Christianity's three most distinctive tenets are:

1. The Incarnation - In Christ God assumed a human body, it is affirmed that He is both God-Man; simultaneously both fully God and fully man.

2. The Atonement

Its root meaning is reconciliation. Two metaphors have dominated the Christian understanding of this occurrence.

- a. One, legalistic, runs as follows: all people sin, sin demands payment, and God made this payment through the Person of Christ and the death of the Son of God.

- b. Christendom's presiding metaphor on this topic has been reconciliation. The bondage that imprisons us is ego, an attachment to ourselves, and the trail of guilt that follows in its wake.

3. The Trinity

This doctrine holds that while God is fully one, God is also three: The Father, Christ the Son and The Holy Spirit.

"The Godhead is a Society of three divine persons, knowing an entirely that not merely can none exist without the others, but in each is what the other is."

Part Two: The three major divisions of Christianity

What has gone before is an interpretation of the points that, substantially common. For roughly half its history the church remained substantially 1054, however, great divisions began to occur. Our concern now is to perspectives of Christendom's three great branches.

A. Roman Catholicism.

The two most important concepts for the understanding of this branch

1. The Church as Teaching Authority - The Church points the way

Ultimately, this idea of the Church as teaching authority shapes infallibility.

After studying a problem that relates to faith or morals, he emerges with an answer - on these rare occasions it is not strictly speaking *an* and binding on Roman Catholics.

For such occasions the Holy Spirit protects him from the possibility

2. The Church as Sacramental Agent - The Church empowers us to live by its teachings.

Christ called his followers to live lives far above the average in this world. Help, therefore, is needed and The Church provides it by means of the Sacraments:

a. Baptism

b. Confirmation

c. Holy Matrimony

d. Holy Orders

e. the Sacrament of the Sick (extreme unction)

f. Reconciliation (confession)

g. the Mass

B. Eastern Orthodoxy.

In most ways the Eastern Orthodox Church stands close to the Roman Catholic Church. It shares the same seven Sacraments

On the teaching authority there is some difference. The Eastern Church teaches that God's truth is disclosed through "the conscience of the Church"

It stands midway between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Its distinctive features are:

1. Its exceptionally corporate view of the Church - Each Christian's salvation is inseparable from or her salvation in conjunction with the rest of the Church, not in a separate soul.
2. Its mysticism: The Eastern Church encourages the mystical life. Mysticism is a practical program even for the laity.

C. Protestantism.

The bulk of its faith and practices it shares with Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Its enduring themes:

1. Justification by Faith

When Protestantism says that human beings are justified - that is

relations with the ground of their being, and with their associates, that such restoration requires a movement of the total self, in mind, in deed, in all three.

It is a mark of the strength of the ecumenical movement in our time that Catholic theologians now increasingly understand faith in the sacraments.

Faith is a personal phenomenon. No number of religious observances, no list of good deeds, no roster of doctrines believed could guarantee that a person reach his or her desired state.

It does not mean that the Creeds or the Sacraments are unimportant; rather, these are accompanied by the experience of God's love and a response; if they are insufficient. Similarly with good works.

2. The Protestant Principle

Stated philosophically, it warns against absolutizing the relative; it warns against idolatry.

Human allegiance belongs to God. God, however is beyond nature and cannot be equated with either or any of his parts. God is infinite.

People, however, continually slip; first deifying wood and stone, then Christians fell to absolutizing dogmas, the Sacraments, the Church, and the personal religious experience.

None of them is God. They point beyond themselves to God, but when they become absolute or unreserved allegiance and it becomes diabolical.

God transcends all the limitations and distortions of finite existence. In the Protestant view, every human claim to absolute truth or finality is relative.

This brings the need for continual self-criticism and reformation of Protestantism itself.

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Chapter IX. The Primal Religi

The historical religions span less than four thousand years as compared to the religions that preceded them. This mode of religiousity is found in Australia, Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands, Siberia, and among the Indians of North America.

Tribes without writing may have retained insights and insights that industrial civilizations have allowed to fall by the wayside.

Part One: The Australian Experience.

God does not evolve; everything that we find flowering in the history of monotheism, for example - is prefigured in the primal ones in faint

The muted character of distinctions in the primal religions is nicely illustrated in the religion of the Australian aborigines.

Aboriginal religion turns not on worship but on identification, a "ritual" acting out of, archetypal paradigms. The entire life of the aborigine is ritual, and becomes authentic, is ritual.

Here there are no priests, no congregations, no mediating offician; only the Dreaming and conformance to it.

Part Two: Features that the Primal Religions Share

A. Orality, Place, and Time.

1. Orality - Literacy is unknown to the primal religions

Exclusive orality protects human memory.

It increases the capacity to sense the sacred through nonverbal virgin nature and sacred art.

Not being written, information that is useless and irrelevant is thrown out.

2. Place versus Space - Primal religion is embedded in place.

No historical religion, not even Judaism and Shinto, is embedded to the extent that tribal religions are.

The exact and rightful place is a feature of sanctity.

3. Eternal time

Primal time is a temporal; an eternal now.

For primal peoples, "past" means preeminently closer to the things. Closer-to-the-source means to be in some sense better.

B. The Primal World.

Primal peoples are embedded in their world, starting with their own tribe almost the way that a biological organ is related to its body.

The tribe is embedded in nature.

Even the line between animate and "inanimate" is broken. Rock

Everything is alive; nature extends itself to enter deeply into the order to be fathomed by them.

In the primal world there is an absence of a line separating this world that stands over and against it. In historical religions this much comes to be made of it.

Primal peoples are oriented to a single cosmos, which sustains womb.

The overriding goal of salvation that dominates the historical religions is absent from Primal people.

C. The Symbolic Mind.

A common stereotype pegs primal religions as polytheistic. The tribal peoples explicitly identify a Supreme Being who coordinates instead, whether they sense such a being whether they name and evidence suggests that they do.

The most important single feature of living primal spirituality is mentality, a vision that sees the things of the world as transparent source.

Mysticism and symbolism are more frequently utilized among the Western Europeans today. Only when we have fully grasped the meaning inherent in most activities of primitive man can we hope

This section should not end without mentioning a distinctive primal shaman. They are heavily engaged in healing, and appear to have to foretell the future and discern lost objects.

Part Three: Conclusion.

Though millions would now like to see the primal way of life continue that it will do so.

There is still time for us to learn some things from them.

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Chapter X. A Final Examinat

What have we gotten out of this inquiry? Has it done any good? Th

A. The Relation between Religions.

This book has found nothing that privileges one tradition above the c
to the kind of book it is: It eschews comparisons in principle. Nothin
of religions requires that they cross the finishing line of the reader's

There is a second position that holds that the religions are all basica
if we were to find ourselves with a single religion tomorrow, it is li
the day after.

A third conception of the way the religions are related says that for C
understood divine revelations would have had to be couched in the i
hearers.

B. The Wisdom Traditions. - What wisdom do they offer the world?

1. Ethics - The Decalogue pretty much tells the cross-cultural story: thieving, lying, and adultery.
2. Virtues - The wisdom traditions identify as basically three: humility, courage, and wisdom.
3. Vision - The wisdom traditions' rendering of the ultimate character of reality:
 - a. Things are pervaded by a grand design.
 - b. Things are better than they seem.
 - c. Reality is steeped in mystery for which the human mind has no access, but which is transformed by flashes of insight into abiding light.

C. Listening.

If one of the wisdom traditions claims us, we begin by listening to it but we listen expectantly, knowing that it houses more truth than can be grasped in a lifetime.

But we also listen to the faith of others, including the secularists. We understand that understanding can lead to love. But the reverse is also true, love brings understanding. Understanding and love are reciprocal.

God speaks to us in three places: in scripture, in our deepest selves, and in the stranger.

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Introductions

Foreword

"Not of my doing! It all came from Above."

Preface to the Second Edition

The Book's aim: "to carry intelligent laypeople into the heart of the world's great enduring faiths to the point where they might see, and even feel, why and how they guide and motivate the lives of those who live by them."

Acknowledgments

the chief support ... "a wife's help"

Chapter I. Point of Departure

There are God-seekers in every land. Does one faith carry the lead? We cannot know. All we can do is try to listen. Such listening, listening for well defined themes defines the purpose of this book.

A. What this book is not:

1. This book is not a textbook in the history of religions.
2. Even in the realm of meanings the book does not attempt to give a rounded view of the religions considered.
3. This book is not a balanced account of its subject but of religion at its best. The empowering theological and metaphysical truths of the world's religions are, this book is prepared to argue, inspired. Religious institutions are another story. When religions are sifted for those truths, a different, cleaner side appears. They become the world's wisdom traditions.
4. This book is not a book on comparative religions in the sense of seeking to compare their worth.

B. What this book is:

1. It is a book that seeks to embrace the world. We have come to the point in history where we must all struggle to be a citizen of the world. The only thing that is unqualifiedly good is extended vision, the enlargement of one's understanding of the ultimate nature of things.
 2. It is a book that takes religion seriously. Religion is at work on the things that matter most. Authentic religion has power to inspire life's deepest creative centers.
 3. This book makes a real effort to communicate. The author has tried not to lose sight of the relevance this material has for the problems that human beings face today.
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