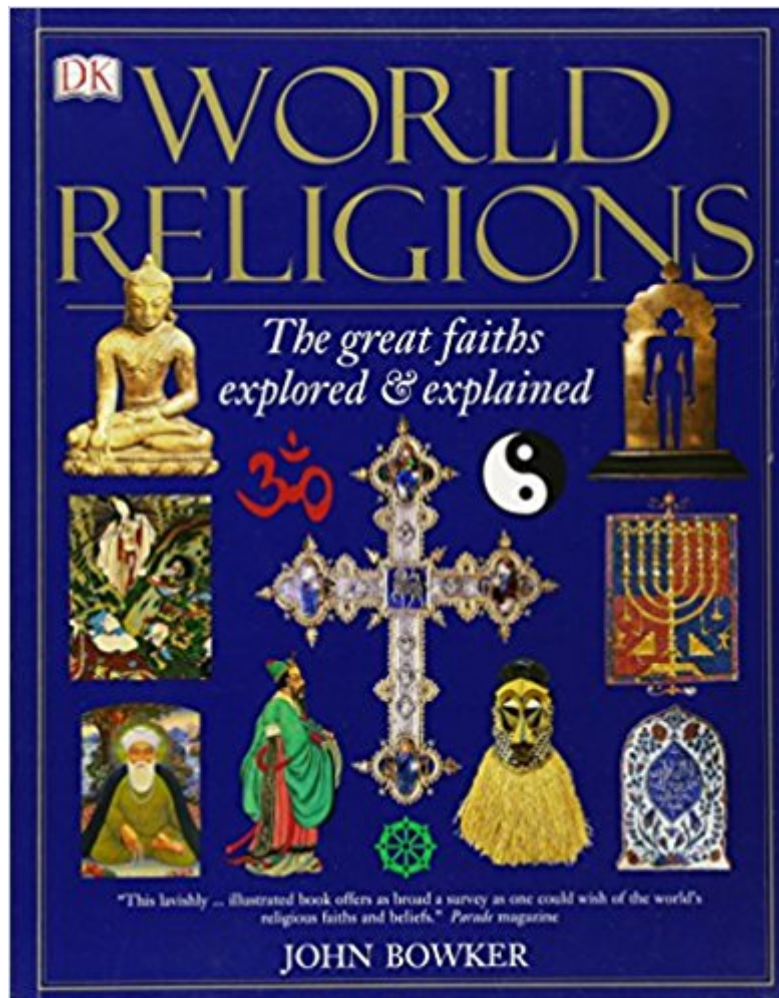




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# World Religions: The Great Faiths Explored & Explained



## Synopsis

Taking a refreshing new approach toward understanding different faiths, *World Religions* looks at the beliefs and practices of many different religions, including Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Islam. Explained through detailed annotation of sacred texts, religious artifacts, paintings, and architecture, this book will engage the whole family.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

YA. An easy-to-follow, pictorial resource that is overflowing with information. Colorful pictures enhance each page with virtually every detail identified via arrows and described in a detailed caption. Each chapter begins with a succinct introduction and is followed by one-or-two page sections that explain the basic tenets of the faith, symbols, events, people, buildings, works of art, and the differences and similarities to other religions. Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are included as are Jainism, Sikhism, Chinese and Japanese religions, and Native religions. The time line places key figures and events of one faith in relation to important people of another belief. Maps identify locations of sacred sites and the spread of the religion. Pages that include tall pictures are printed sideways across the double-page spread. This means the illustrations can be larger and clearer, but it is awkward for readers, who must constantly turn this oversized volume around. However, this is a visual feast that will be useful in most collections. --Anita Short, W. T. Woodson High School, Fairfax, VA  
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Bowker (divinity, Gresham Coll., London) has produced two very different books, though both are focused on world religion. The Oxford Dictionary, whose entries often lack information on etymology and pronunciation, is actually a one-volume desktop encyclopedia for ready reference. Combining brevity of exposition with a massive number of entries in an attempt to be dictionary-like, the work suffers from trying to be comprehensive in breadth of coverage instead of depth. The psychology of religion is discussed in a half-page, for instance, and the Church Fathers get only two sentences. In addition, the entries are uneven in quality; one has the feeling that the 80 contributors are each writing according to his or her own personal interests and styles. Despite these idiosyncracies, the work is a solid reference source for people who want to know only the barest of facts about any religious topic. In *World Religions*, on the other hand, one has the feeling that Bowker, now the author, is finally freed to range over what he wants to say and how he wants to say it. This book is a bold attempt to meld religious information with expressive art and to use the art as a tool for pedagogy. Each religion is represented by a few brilliantly illustrated icons, paintings, or sculptures, which the author painstakingly annotates to illuminate their theologies and deepen one's insight. Whether he is using Michelangelo's *Final Judgment* to explain Christian eschatology or a handscroll of Chou Ch'en to explain Taoist concepts of immortality, the emphasis upon the visual makes these religions vibrant and intriguing. There are surprising discrepancies between the two works. *World Religions* has generous discussions of the ancient Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Norse, and Celtic religions, topics not even included in the Oxford Dictionary. There are also variations of names. Ultimately, *World Religions* is the more commendable publication, though both books are recommended for most libraries. ?Glenn Masuchika, Chaminade Univ. Lib., Honolulu Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is a good book, but not the best introduction to world religion. Amongst its outstanding attributes is 1) its intensely visual and easily accessible introduction to world religion, 2) the diversity of cultural elements that it describes in each religion, and finally 3) its academic depth, uncovering some terms and ideas not found in all introductory texts. So three stars for those good things I can name about it. It has at least two strikes against it. First, the sections are short and not integrated in a continuous narrative, but mostly main ideas and tidbits thrown in together. Second, it slips in several places in its description of certain religious persons or ideas (not good on Dietrich Bonhoeffer of radical Islamic jihad, for example, and in the introduction slightly pejorative towards atheism or those with no religious belief). So while I might say this would make an awesome coffee table book or an gift for the curious reader, it is not something I would use as a main text in class, or

a primary introduction. It serves best as a supplementary visual introduction to world religions.

Do not expect great depth from this book, but if you are looking to have an overview of the great faiths of the past and present, this book is for you. The artwork is beautiful, printed in high quality paper. I would have wished it included a chapter or two on neo pagan religions, but you can't have it all. A common failing of short works of comparative religion is the bias towards Christianity and monotheism in general. This book comes out reasonably well in this area. The exposition on Islam is mainly western, but makes a reasonable attempt at being non judgmental. I would have avoided the references to "terrorism". Both the "Ancient Religions" and "Native Religions" chapters deal with what is now called paleo paganism, and in my view are too short and superficial. The religious timeline is very helpful if you are new to the study of religions.

I was very curious about various religions although I thought I was kind of an atheist. Born and raised in the Lutheran religion I felt kind of "scammed". After looking through this book I fell in "like" with the Buddhist way. They have no "god" figure, but simply teach kindness and self awareness through enlightenment. No I am not a Buddhist, but the lite coverage of all major religions is exceptional. If you are interested in one you read about, you will have to do your own research. This book only introduces you to the subject.

Best reference I have for this subject

Interesting book about all the different religions of the world.

Disappointing. Boring. I thought this would be a synopsis of the biggest religions with a general description of beliefs and rituals and their origins. Instead, I got whole lot of useless information and pictures/drawings that were a waste of time and money for me. I didn't learn any more about them than before I bought the book.

Mr. Bowker's book leaves a lot to be desired as he's obviously focused on the Easter religions, and sadly doesn't offer a broader perspective on the major religions. His treatment of "New World" indigenous religions also leaves the reader wanting more on this. I would not use it as a required text on "World Religions"

I read through the first 50 or so pages. The section(s) on the Norse and Celtic was pathetic. Two pages for European polytheism yet entire swaths of the book are written about Eastern mysticism? Absurd.

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