



Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion (6th Edition)

By James C. Livingston Emeritus

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For one-semester, undergraduate courses in Introduction to Religion and Comparative Religion, and more advanced courses dealing with issues in the theoretical study of religion.

This comprehensive introduction to the nature and variety of religious phenomena, belief, and practice (1) explores the issues in religious studies, (2) examines the universal forms of religious experience, (3) offers a cross-cultural study of a broad range of classic types of religious belief and practice in terms of the seven basic concepts of a religious world view, and (4) surveys the challenges faced by religions today.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Three strengths (of the text are): 1) The global perspective, incorporating examples from many world religions and setting them side by side to consider in relation to one another without making any judgments; 2) The clear, comprehensive, beautifully written prose in the areas of summary and general commentary on religions and religious phenomena; 3) The introductory material with a fascinating and thorough coverage of various definitions of religions, perspectives on religion, and ways of studying religion. This material is extremely helpful." — Linda J. Tessier, *Youngstown State University*

"...It (Anatomy of the Sacred) is the best text in the field." — Steven W. Godby, *Broward Community College*

"It (Anatomy of the Sacred) covers some of the basic theories of religion and then illustrates these theories by delineating various themes in the global history (phenomenology) of religion. This is a very helpful way to construct an introductory textbook... I am impressed by Professor Livingston's erudition ...Livingston is respectful of all Religions." — Winston Davis, *Washington and Lee University*

From the Back Cover

For one-semester, undergraduate courses in Introduction to Religion and Comparative Religion, and more advanced courses dealing with issues in the theoretical study of religion. This comprehensive introduction to the nature and variety of religious phenomena, belief, and practice (1) explores the issues in religious studies, (2) examines the universal forms of religious experience, (3) offers a cross-cultural study of a broad range of classic types of religious belief and practice in terms of the seven basic concepts of a religious world view, and (4) surveys the challenges faced by religions today.

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Anatomy of the Sacred is a comprehensive introduction to the nature and variety of religious belief and practice. Designed primarily for those who have not had a previous course in religion, it provides the student with an understanding of what religion is, of the universal forms of religious experience, and of the basic concepts that make up a religious worldview. By employing a comparative analysis across a rich range of ancient and modern religious traditions, this introduction allows students to see the ways in which certain classic forms of religious life appear in different societies over time, as well as to recognize the incredible diversity of human religious expression and belief.

The book is divided into four parts. Part I is concerned with such questions as the problem of defining religion, why it is important to study religion, and how one goes about the task, including the several disciplines or methods used in the study of religion. Each method is illustrated with specific examples from the work of eminent scholars in the field.

Part II is an introduction to the universal forms of religious experience and expression and includes discussions of the sacred and holy; religious symbolism, myth, and doctrine; sacred ritual; sacred scripture; and the social dimensions of religion.

Part III, which constitutes more than half of the book, consists of a comparative analysis of seven concepts, each one representing a fundamental structure or component of a religious worldview. A religious worldview is holistic, that is, it sees nature, human life, and the divine as interrelated and as forming a comprehensive vision of the world. A religion, therefore, includes a conception of sacred power and of an exemplary natural and social order. It offers an analysis of the breakdown or corruption of that order and of the human problem, but it also provides an answer to the ever-present threat of evil and chaos. Finally, a religious worldview affords an ethical pattern of action, a way of achieving liberation or enlightenment, and an ideal vision of the goal or end of human life. Part III thus includes analyses of such concepts as deity, cosmogony, the human problem, theodicy, ethics, the ways to salvation or liberation, and the end or goal of salvation. Again, each theme is illustrated by examples drawn from a wide variety of religious belief and behavior, ranging from primal and archaic cultures through the religions of the present.

Part IV addresses the question, What impact has Modernity, that is, the immense changes that have occurred in our social, political, legal, and economic institutions, as well as the wider access to education, the influence of science, technology, and mass communications, had on religious life and institutions today? It then examines the secularization thesis and raises questions about its validity. Finally, it explores contemporary religious Fundamentalism and the changing roles of women in religion and society as two different responses to these modern challenges facing religion today and in the future.

In preparing a new edition of this book I am especially aware of my debt to those teachers who were asked to evaluate the fourth edition and who offered excellent advice. I am, of course, also in the debt of many scholars whose highly specialized studies I was required to consult in updating substantive discussions in the text as well as the notes and suggestions for further reading. The important additions and revisions incorporated in this edition include an entirely new chapter on the response of religion to modernity; an extensive new discussion of the changing roles of women in religion; a new, substantive discussion of New Age religious movements and their significance; more illustrative material from contemporary religious life (e.g., an extended discussion of science and religion), and an extensive updating of the review questions and the suggestions for further reading. I would also like to thank the following reviewers: Linda J. Tessier, Youngstown State University; Scott Jansen, Chaffey College; Steven W. Godby, Broward Community College; Clark M. Brittain, Greenville Technical College; and Winston Davis, Washington and Lee University.

In preparing this edition I am particularly indebted to three individuals for their expert assistance: Tammy Cooper, secretary for the Department of Religion at the College of William and Mary, who kindly assisted with the preparation of early drafts; my wife Jackie, who, as always, has given me invaluable help as a copy editor; and my daughter Susannah, a professional editor, who assisted me in the final process of preparing the text. Her time and expertise were indispensable. I also thank Wendy Yurash, assistant editor at Prentice Hall, for her valuable assistance and her patience over many months, and Karen L. Berry for her excellent work and help. I am delighted to dedicate this edition to my grandchildren: Max, Peter, Maria, and James, young students on their way.

J. C. L.

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