

# A History of the World's Religions

By David S. Noss, Blake Grangaard

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Refined by over forty years of dialogue and correspondence with religious experts and practitioners around the world, *A History of the World's Religions* is widely regarded as the hallmark of scholarship, fairness, and accuracy in its field. It is also the most thorough yet manageable history of world religion available in a single volume, treating many subjects largely neglected in other texts.

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### Editorial Review

#### About the Author

**David S. Noss** taught in the Religion and Philosophy Department of Heidelberg College from 1950 until his retirement in 1989, although he continued teaching students and advising faculty until his passing in 2010.

**Blake Grangaard** earned his B.A. from St. Olaf College, M.Div. from Luther Theological Seminary and Ph.D. from Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. He was a church pastor for almost 10 years before turning to academia.

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Preface ¶ Get the Noss book, ¶ a teacher told me years ago. It was good advice then, and I hope it will continue to be good advice. Now in its thirteenth edition, *A History of the World's Religions* has a history of its own. John Noss spent more than a decade researching and writing the first edition, published in 1949 as *Man's Religions*. His much younger brother, David, played a small part, typing one of the chapters. That was not the end of David's association with the book. When John died, in 1980, the seventh edition was in preparation. David had already consulted on previous editions, and the seventh included his name on the title page. Through subsequent editions he reworked prose, emended and added material, and broadened the scope of the book to give special attention to the role of religion in social conflicts and international tension. By the tenth edition the publisher convinced him the book had become ¶ his, ¶ so his name alone would be on the title page. I was relieved when David told me his first intention upon taking on this book was ¶ not to mess it up. ¶ I feel the same way. So it is appropriate to be mindful of the book's purpose, i.e., to be a one-volume history of religion, directed to teachers and students. As David expressed it in the most recent editions:

My elder brother, John B. Noss, spent ten years preparing the first (1949) edition of this book. At that time he found that most publications in the field tended to focus on the biographies of the founders and then jumped to comparing and evaluating their contemporary practices. His preface to the first edition spoke of two special needs to be met: the first was to include ¶ descriptive and interpretative details from the original source materials, ¶ and second ¶ to bridge the interval between the founding of religions and their present state. ¶ *Italics mine.*

Those who have used successive editions will recognize an increasing attentiveness to those needs. Primary source materials are not spliced in as undigested chunks but carefully introduced with interpretative introductions. As color-highlighted quotations, primary sources gain even more of the prominence they deserve. Key quotations are highlighted in color-framed brackets. Illustrations now play a larger part: in addition to samples of classic art and architecture, new photographs furnish more samples from pop art, depictions of ceremonial regalia, explanations of ritual practices, and scenes of believer engagement toward social betterment. Extended ¶ teaching captions, ¶ go beyond perfunctory identifications of the subject.

#### WHAT'S NEW TO THIS EDITION

\* The current edition has been emended to aid comprehension. \* New terms replace obsolete expressions. \* Information is updated to reflect current scholarship. \* A clearer hierarchy of headings and subheadings helps the reader follow the flow of the narrative. \* Interruptions to the flow of the historical narrative now

appear in shaded sidebars. \* The Bardo Thodol, the much-heard-of Tibetan Book of the Dead, receives attention. \* A new full-color design enhances the reading experience \* MyReligionLab provides additional activities for both students and instructors SUPPORT FOR INSTRUCTOR'S AND STUDENTS \* MyReligionLab.(020518068X) MyReligionLab logo goes here is an interactive and instructive multimedia site designed to help students and instructors save time and improve results. It offers access to a wealth of resources geared to meet the individual teaching and learning needs of every instructor and student. Combining an ebook, video, audio, multimedia simulations, research support and assessment, MyReligionLab engages students and gives them the tools they need to enhance their performance in the course. Please see your Pearson sales representative or visit [www.myreligionlab.com](http://www.myreligionlab.com) for more information. \* Instructor's Manual with Tests. (0205178790) For each chapter in the text, this valuable resource provides a detailed outline, list of objectives, discussion questions, and suggested readings and videos. In addition, test questions in multiple-choice, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer formats are available for each chapter; the answers are page-referenced to the text. For easy access, this manual is available within the instructor section of MyReligionLab for A History of the World's Religions, or at [www.pearsonhighered.com/irc](http://www.pearsonhighered.com/irc). \* MyTest. (0205178812) This computerized software allows instructors to create their own personalized exams, edit any or all of the existing test questions, and add new questions. Other special features of the program include random generation of test questions, creation of alternate versions of the same test, scrambling question sequence, and test preview before printing. For easy access, this software is available at [www.pearsonhighered.com/irc](http://www.pearsonhighered.com/irc). \* PowerPoint Presentation Slides. (0205178820) These PowerPoint slides combine text and graphics for each chapter to help instructors convey philosophical principles in a clear and engaging way. For easy access, they are available within the instructor section of MyReligionLab for A History of the World's Religions, or at [www.pearsonhighered.com/irc](http://www.pearsonhighered.com/irc). Thank you to the following manuscript reviewers who made good suggestions for improving the book: Jeffrey Robbins, Lebanon Valley College; Pasquale Simonelli, Monmouth University; Jeanne Kusina, University of Toledo; Timothy Fobbs, Tidewater Community College; Hong Qu, Iowa State University; Patrick Nnoromele, Eastern Kentucky University. I encourage other readers to contact me with suggestions or corrections. Thank you also to Nicole Conforti and her associates at Pearson Education for their help and consultations. And, of course, I am ever grateful to John B. Noss and David S. Noss for passing to me such a splendid text. Blake R. Grangaard [bgrangaa@heidelberg.edu](mailto:bgrangaa@heidelberg.edu) Acknowledgments

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