The Study of Religion	1
Our Purpose	2
Origins	2
What is Religion?	5
Our Place in the World	8
The Nature of Our Being	8
Our Human Purpose	11
Our Essential Task	12
The Nature of Time	13
The Study of Religion	14
Archaeological Study of Religion	15
Comparative Study of Religion	15
Philosophy of Religion	15
Psychological Study of Religion	15
Sociological Study of Religion	15
Theological Study of Religion Study of Mythology	16 16
2	
Indigenous and Native Religions	19
The Indigenous World	20
Comprehending the World through Myth	20
Primal Communities and Religious Thought	21
The Seeds of Religious Expression	23
The Common Traits of Indigenous Religion	24
Animism	25
Totems	26
Taboos	28
Ancestor Worship	29
Connection with Nature	30

Oral Transmission	31
Sacred Time and Sacred Space	31
Shaman	34

The Mythology of the Bull	38
The Hindu Vision	38
What is Hinduism?	39
The Story of Hinduism	40
Communal Origins	40
Early Religious Vision	42
The Upanishads	44
The Gods of India	50
The Trimurti	50
Goddess Worship	52
Primary Hindu Sects	53
Puja and Hindu Worship	53
The Role of Stories in Hinduism	56

Buddhism	59
The Curiosity of Buddhism	60
The Life and Vision of the Buddha	61
The Middle Way	62
The Insight of the Buddha	63
Myth as Metaphor	64
Three Marks of Dharma	64
Impermanence (Sanskrit: anitya)	65
No Self (Sanskrit: Anatman)	67
Suffering (Sanskrit: Duhkha)	67
Dependent Arising	67

The Four Noble Truths	68
The First Noble Truth – Life Is Suffering	68
The Second Noble Truth – Suffering Is Caused by Craving	69
The Third Noble Truth – The End of Suffering Is Nirvana	69
The Fourth Noble Truth – The End of Suffering Can Be Achie Adherence to the Eightfold Way	ved by 69
The Death of the Buddha	70
The Teaching of the Elders	73
The Great Vehicle	74
The Diamond Vehicle	77
5	
Sikhism	83
The Sikh Vision	84
The Ideal of the Guru	85
The Sant Tradition	85
The First Guru of Sikhism	87
The Successors to Nanak	90
Life beyond Ritual	93
Life in the Physical World	94
The Place of the Gurus	94
The Nature of Human Existence	95
Social Inequality	95
Other Faiths	96
Common Bonds	96
The Khalsa	96
The Spread of Sikhism	97
The Spread of Sikhishi	31
6	
Taoism	101
The Sage and the Tao	102
The Taoist Way	103
,	

The Beginnings of Taoism	103
Key Taoist Themes	105
The Tao	105
The Material World	106
The Human Self	106
Excess	109
Balance	109
Taoism and the Ruling Elite	110
Religious Taoism	111
The Future of Taoism	113

Other Asian Faiths	117
Life's Ritual	118
The Confucian Way	119
The Vision of Confucius	120
Relationship	120
On Ritual	121
Duty to Elders	122
Ancestor Worship	122
Confucianism as Religion?	124
The Way of Shinto	125
Interpreting the World	126
Ritual Life	129
The Evolution of Shinto	130

Religions of the Near East	133
Of Gods, Kings and Commoners	134
The Ancient Near East	134
The Earliest Religions	135
The Image of God	136
Rites and Rituals	137

Ancient Egyptian Religion	138
The Care of the Gods	139
Osiris and the Regeneration of the Community	141
Zoroastrianism	142
Zoroastrian Mythology	142
Key Zoroastrian Themes	143
Zoroastrianism and Other Faiths	144
Greco-Roman Religion	146
The Greco-Roman Image of Divinity	147
Greco-Roman Beliefs	148
Creation	148
Life and Afterlife	148
Divine and Human Relations	149
Further Reflections and Conclusions	149

Juda	ism	153
	The Power of Stories	154
	The Mythic Origins of the Faith of Israel	154
	The Story of Judaism	155
	Abraham as Founding Father	155
	Jacob and His Sons	157
	Out of Egypt	157
	Judaism in History	159
	A Kingdom Divided	161
	The Israelite Prophets	162
	The Birth of Rabbinic Judaism	164
	Judaism in the Modern Era	165
	Modern Divisions within the Community	165
	Reform Judaism	165
	Orthodox Judaism	166
	Conservative Judaism	167
	The Ritual of Life	168
	Rosh Hashanah	168
	Yom Kippur	168
	Sukkot	169
	Hanukkah	169
	Pesach	169

Judaism in the Modern World	170
The Holocaust	170



Christianity	175
Jesus as Founding Figure of the Faith	176
Jesus as Teacher	177
Of Jesus and God	181
Jesus as Messiah	182
Community Division	182
The Role of Paul	183
The Doctrine of the Trinity	184
Continuing Controversy	185
The Origins of the Christian Scripture	186
An Evolving Church	189
The Christian Community and Rome	189
New Divisions	191
The Split of the Church East and West	191
The Crusades	192
The Protestant Reformation	192
Luther's Challenge	193



Islam	199
An Unlikely Teacher	200
The Breadth of Islamic Society	200
A Life of Submission	201
The Legacy of Abraham	202
Arabia in the Era before Islam	204
The Message of the Prophet	207

The Making of a Prophet	208
After Muhammad	211
The Way of Muhammad	212
The Organization of the Qur'an	213
Major Themes of the Qur'an	213
The Nature of Divinity	213
Issues of Inequality and Disadvan	tage 214
On War and Warfare	215
Key Mythic Figures	215
The Path of Practice	216
A Community Divided	218
The Sunni	218
The Shi'a	219
Sufism	219
Women in Islam	222

Modern Religious Expressions	225
The Rise of New Religions	226
Pagan Traditions	226
Wicca	226
Druidry	229
Christian-Influenced Traditions	231
Mormonism	231
Neo-Ebionite Practice	234
Asian-Influenced Traditions	235
Scientology	235
Theosophy	237
Baha'i	238
Glossary	243
Index	249