



The Big Picture: What the Religions of the World Teach Us About the Nature of Ultimate Reality

Huston Smith

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The author has spent his lifetime comparing religions. A Methodist, he bows toward Mecca five times daily and practices both yoga and meditation. During his formative childhood years in Missouri and Arkansas, Smith witnessed Pentecostal testimonial meetings. His parents, Alice Longden Smith and Wesley Moreland Smith, were Methodist missionaries to China for forty-one years.

While Smith was still a young professor of comparative religion in St. Louis in the 1950s, Mayo Simon at the local public television station invited him to explain the differences and similarities between Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity to the station's viewers. Simon encouraged Smith to make his points immediately and with illustrations, lest he lose the audience's attention. Forty years later, Smith is one of America's best-known religious writers. He has expanded his lectures to include illustrations from Sikhism, Sufism, Tibetan Buddhism, and the primal religions of Australia and Native Americans. He's worked with Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers to bring a greater knowledge and tolerance of the world's great faiths to the American public.

This audio book is the culmination of the author's lifelong quest to understand the nature of ultimate reality. Combining scientific findings with the enduring truths of the world's great religions, Smith offers the hope of tolerance. His purpose is to acquaint listeners with the faiths that millions of people live by and explain the way that every religion mixes universal principles with local peculiarities. He likes to remind listeners that "The Golden Rule exists in some form in all the world's religions."

Smith's many books include: *The World's Religions* and *Why Religion Matters*. His work has long been praised for its intelligence, clear thinking, eloquence, and accessible authority. He has held teaching positions at MIT, Syracuse, and most recently, the University of California at Berkley. The greatest benefit of *The Big Picture* is that Smith truly wants to explain all the world's faiths with respect and understanding.

PAM KINGSBURY (March / April 2003)

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