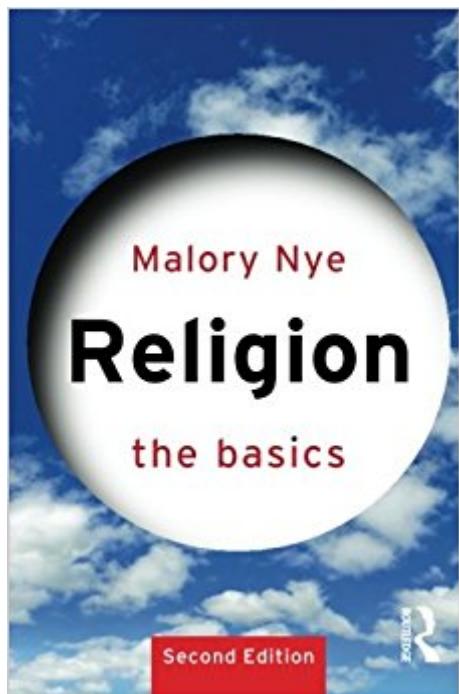


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# Religion: The Basics



## **Synopsis**

From the local to the global level, religion is a more than ever an important and hotly debated part of modern life in the twenty-first century. From silver rings to ringtones and from clubs to headscarves, we often find the cultural role and discussion of religion in unexpected ways. Now in its second edition, *Religion: The Basics* remains the best introduction to religion and contemporary culture available. The new edition has been fully revised and updated, and includes new discussions of: the study of religion and culture in the twenty-first century texts, films and rituals cognitive approaches to religion globalization and multiculturalism spirituality in the West popular religion. With new case studies, linking cultural theory to real world religious experience and practice, and guides to further reading, *Religion: The Basics* is an essential buy for students wanting to get to grips with this hotly debated topic.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Malory Nye is Acting Principal and Professor of Multiculturalism at the Al-Maktoum Institute, Scotland. He has written a number of books on religion and multiculturalism, and is the founding editor of the journal *Culture and Religion*.

Good book that gives the break down of most common religions in the world. Great way to start if your in search of the right one.

This book works well with my Intro to Religious Studies class

Informative content.

True writing

Seems very basic and does not seem to bring in some of the classic anthropologists into the picture like Kant and Durkheim

Christianity more often is defined or described as a culture. Unlike culture, which can only instruct us in how to interact with others in our group, Christianity answers our deeper need: to know that we possess intrinsic value. There is a long-standing misconception that Christianity and Western culture are inextricably bound together. It is true that much that is excellent and lasting in the cultures of Europe and America owes a great debt to biblical precepts; however, it does not therefore follow that Western culture and Christianity are two sides of the same coin. The claims that Jesus made and the gospel that He taught (or, rather, effected) have little, if anything, to do with culture. One of the greatest innovations in modern missions indeed was inspired by the recognition that the gospel of Christ transcends the narrow confines of race and culture. Once he or she has shared with the native population the good news that Jesus died for their sins and rose again, the modern missionary seeks to set up indigenous churches that will eventually be led and managed by the native peoples themselves. His goal is not to convert the natives to a Christian culture, but to "let them in" on the news that God's love for the people of the world was so great that He left behind His heavenly throne to become one of these people. This is indeed great news, a message that has relevance for all nations and for all cultures. Our cultural heritage and the rich traditions on which this heritage is founded are what direct us to the questions and the problems that have most plagued our ethnic forebears, that let us know when it is proper to laugh or cry, to sing or dance, to love or hate, and that provide us with a strategy for dealing with the joys and the hardships of life. Culture helps to make life a comprehensible and manageable experience by setting down rules that everybody (at least everybody in our "group") agrees to play by, and by helping us to find our own place within certain boundaries. But there is at least one thing, however, that culture cannot do for us: it cannot assure us that we possess intrinsic value apart from our culture, race, profession, class, or gender. Christianity shares with some (though far from all) other religions, that

we know we have intrinsic value because we were created in the image of God. I would argue, however, that this answer is not, on its own, a sufficient ground for securing our full value and worth. It is not enough for children to know the identity of their biological father; if they do not also know that he desires a relationship with them and that he accepts and loves them unconditionally, they may doubt their own value as human beings. We need something more than the knowledge that we were created in the image of God, and that something more is to be found only in Christianity. Beyond our need for acceptance in the cultural group is the universal, transcultural need to be loved unconditionally, to be accepted for who we are as individuals, to be judged worthy by the one who created us. Jesus died for us while we were still sinners, while there was nothing in us to love. We were not worthy (hence our innate yearning for love and acceptance), but Jesus made us worthy by providing a way by which we could take upon ourselves (and into ourselves) the very holiness of Christ. In this life-giving and worth-affirming exchange, we (as fallen human beings of whatever culture or race) cast our sins and our burdens on Christ, and He, in return (as the Savior of all peoples), ascribes to us His own glory and worthiness. This, rather than culture, is the ultimate basis of human value and worth.

This text is a good overview of the academic study of religion from the Cultural Studies perspective. It clearly and explicitly describes issues and patterns in this field. It distinguishes itself from and orients itself adequately in relation to historical, comparative, or theological study of religion. Recommended to offer a fresh perspective to anyone not familiar with the cutting edge of this field, or to anyone previously limited to theological or bible-study experience.

After I finished *A Brief History of Theology* I wanted to read more about Religion in general, not from an evolutionary point of view like in *Breaking the Spell* but more from the cultural perspective. So I bought this book in a local bookshop and read from cover to cover. I like the book, in fact some ideas I encountered there are similar to my own philosophy of Memoidealism and Memorianity (Memory religion) and now I understand better even my own private religion. Recommended for scientists with reductionist background or having narrow views about religion like I had before reading this book. Thanks, Dmitry Vostokov Founder of Literate Scientist Blog

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