



The Role of Religion in History

George Walsh

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This comprehensive survey of religion and its profound effects on history provides a historical context for in-depth analysis of theological, social, and political themes in which religion plays a major role.

George Walsh first traces the rise and impact of primitive religions. He looks at Indian traditions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism and analyzes the Semitic tradition of Judaism and Christianity and the evolving conception of a personal God. He discusses the history and chief doctrines of Islam as well, with its fundamental respect for desert tribal values and its emphasis on both the authority of God and the brotherhood of believers. Walsh then compares Judaism and Christianity. He sees Judaism as marked by a profound ambivalence between the values of tribal, nomadic desert life and the values of urban civilization, individualism, and collectivism. Judaism is “this-worldly,” but the Christian worldview is “other-worldly.”

Walsh closes with a timely discussion of the ethical, political, and economic teachings of the Judeo-Christian tradition, focusing specifically on their differing attitudes toward sex, reproduction, and marriage; their basic views of mind and body; and man’s relation to God.

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