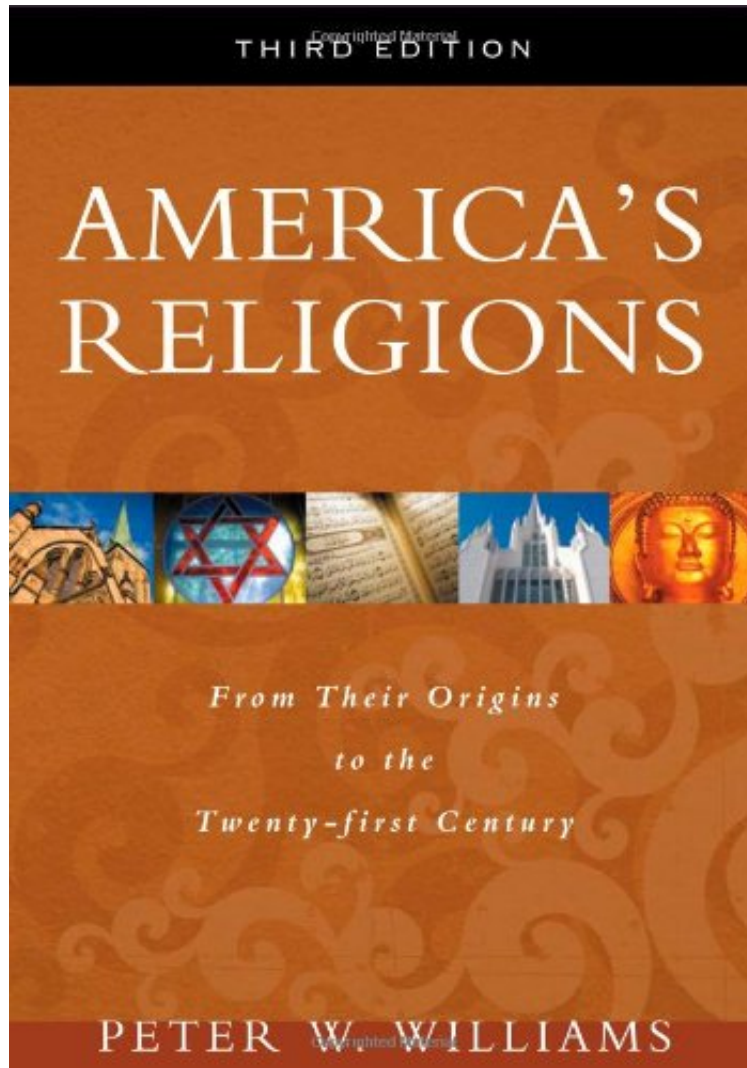


[Download pdf] America's Religions: From Their Origins to the Twenty-first Century

# America's Religions: From Their Origins to the Twenty-first Century

*Peter W. Williams*

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**Peter W. Williams : America's Religions: From Their Origins to the Twenty-first Century** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised America's Religions: From Their Origins to the Twenty-first Century:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Very interesting... for a textbook By Luke I had to get this book for my REL 320 class and the first few weeks of reading in it I was bored with it, but as the class progressed I saw how great this book was written. The author Williams was really able to give information about the religions from a mostly

unbiased view point, and not to mention in a rather easy to read style. Key terms are italicized, and usually have a short definition in parenthesis following the word. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Freddy Kabambathanks 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Outstanding -By Larry Burden It is the text for the American Religions course at the College of Wooster. It appears to be the definitive work on the subject. Easy to peruse, great contents; It makes an excellent gift for people interested in American religions and cultures.

In this comprehensive survey, Williams offers concise descriptions of the background, beliefs, practices, and leaders of America's most influential and distinctive religious movements and denominations. Thoroughly revised and updated, this third edition of *America's Religions* incorporates the latest scholarship on religion and considers timely issues such as status of Muslims in the United States after September 11, 2001; the impact of religion on American politics, especially concerning the emergence of the Religious Right; and the intense battles fought within the Catholic Church and other denominations over the status of gay marriage and accusations of clergy members' sexual abuse. This edition also includes thirty-eight new illustrations of key persons in American religious history and notable places of worship.

From Publishers Weekly Over the past decade, scholars of American religion have undergone a crisis of narrative. Recognizing that earlier generations of historians have focused their work too narrowly on the experiences of white, male, middle-class Protestants, they have struggled to find a means of representing the incredible variety of spiritual expression that has always existed throughout an ever-diverse population. The solution offered here by Williams, a professor at Miami University (Ohio) and the editor of *The Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience*, is to abandon narrative altogether. The result, regrettably, is not altogether satisfactory. This volume is astounding in its breadth; 11 of its 55 chapters offer cursory surveys of the major religious traditions. The remaining chapters digest the progress, since 1492, of dozens of spiritual movements and hundreds of religious leaders across a wide spectrum of ethnic and regional identity. However, Williams's resolute dedication to pluralism comes at the expense of both coherence and balance he devotes almost as much space to Victorian Anglicanism as he does to the Second Great Awakening. Although Williams intends this as a college textbook, he takes pains to italicize and define even such familiar terms as "popes," and offers too many simplistic generalizations. His methodological framework, built on the assumption that each group has its own distinct tradition, prevents him from examining crucial processes of cultural contact and exchange. The final product resembles more a collection of brief, loosely related essays than a mature work of synthetic analysis. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Intended as a textbook for beginning students interested in religion in the United States, this volume reads like a catalog lacking thematic or interpretive unity. Williams (religion and American studies, Miami Univ., Ohio), whose book was originally published by Macmillan in 1989 and republished by the University of Illinois in 1998 as *America's Religions: Traditions and Cultures*, offers a newly revised edition that adds some 60 pages, owing largely to an expanded and comprehensive bibliography of 56 pages. As the bibliography demonstrates, the revisions are intended to increase coverage of African American, Native American, Jewish, Islamic, and Asian traditions. Nevertheless, Williams, who studied under the late Sydney E. Ahlstrom at Yale University and wrote the highly respected *A Religious History of the American People*, makes no effort to hide his preference for the Lutheran tradition and hence greatly reduces the value of his book for readers with other religious convictions. As with other books of this ilk, the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant tradition receives the bulk of his attention; the Library of Congress correctly catalogs this book under religious thought rather than American religious history. The book ends with the curious statement that although the content of religion in the United States changes, the process of religion doesn't. Those who feel that we are currently in the midst of a religious cultural war might disagree. Recommended for large academic libraries. James A. Overbeck, Atlanta-Fulton P.L., GA Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Although this survey may be most useful to students, it is accessible to general readers. Its size may be daunting, but its subject demands nothing smaller. Details sometimes get lost in the sweep of history, as do distinctions that make a difference to members of the groups under consideration. But such is forgivable in an introductory text, and Williams' bibliography directs readers to resources that fill in gaps and expand on simply described complexities. Williams cites postmodern influences, but the text is a conventional narrative that nods at Native American traditions and then undertakes a long march of denominationalism that perhaps confirms Williams' claim that the process of American religion has remained stable throughout dramatic changes in content. Williams' casual explanation of the Sunday morning segregation of Christian churches as "a voluntary affirmation by African Americans of institutions that are uniquely their own, even though they are actively welcomed at many predominantly white churches" verifies that stasis in change. Steven Schroeder Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved