

“*World Religions in Dialogue* is that unique textbook that combines competent introduction, accessibility, and a thoughtful dialogue of insiders and outsiders in conversation. It will be a much-appreciated text for the introductory course on world religions, showing both the *what* of religions and the *how* of learning religions in an ongoing conversation.”

—Francis X. Clooney, SJ
Parkman Professor of Divinity
Director of the Center for the Study of World Religions
Harvard University

“The unique feature of Pim Valkenberg’s *World Religions in Dialogue* is in providing an ‘insider’s,’ as well as an ‘outsider’s,’ perspective on five major religious traditions of the world, toward a deeper appreciation of the complexities of these traditions, as well as of their underlying common themes that call for ongoing dialogue. This is a very insightful approach highly suited for use in college courses and appealing for general readers.”

—Ruben L. F. Habito
Perkins School of Theology
Southern Methodist University

“Pim Valkenberg’s *World Religions in Dialogue* is an excellent introduction to help students of Christian theology better understand other religious traditions and to deepen their understanding of Christian traditions.”

—Amir Hussain
Loyola Marymount University

EDITOR ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The title of this book is *World Religions in Dialogue*, yet dialogue is always between human beings, not between religions. Dialogues with many fabulous human beings inspired me to develop this book. Ali from Ghana was the first who addressed me in dialogue, and being a former Christian he knew what he was talking about, so we had a lot to discuss. Many others followed, including the shoe salesman in Istanbul and the post office clerk in Colombo who wished me the most beautiful Buddhist blessing—the triple gem.

Catholic schools living their mission and students willing to go beyond their protected bubbles showed me how to teach world religions in an engaging fashion. Often, I have been just a facilitator for the real work that students have done with such excellent teachers in the field as Earl, Donna, Bashar, Kim, Megan, Robin, and so many others in Baltimore. The Catholic Theological Society of America's Comparative Theology section gave me the opportunity

to collaborate with the excellent colleagues who have written the main parts of this book: Philip and Jan, Rita and Zeki, Aimee and Madhuri, Peter and Heng Sure. Then when developing this enhanced edition of the text, I had the pleasure of working with Kristin Largen and Whitney Bauman. What I like most about everyone's work is that the joy of authentic dialogue shines through in their writing. Finally, the staff of Anselm Academic helped to generate this book like the wise midwife with her maieutic techniques, beginning with Jerry Ruff and ending with Maura Hagarty. In between, there was Kathleen Walsh, who was like a rock in the maelstrom of the entire project. Some of her exchanges with my colleagues made me realize how often I am but a bystander in relationships that are so much stronger than I can tell. Some of these relationships allow us to sense the divine presence in humans. Thanks to all of you, and especially to Dorris, for making me aware of that, time and again.

Publisher Acknowledgments

Thank you to the following individuals who reviewed this work in progress:

Frank Berna
La Salle University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Elizabeth Drescher
Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, California

Cristóbal Serrán-Pagán y Fuentes
Valdosta State University, Valdosta, Georgia

Linh Hoang
Siena College, Loudonville, New York

Cory Wilson
John Carroll University, University Heights, Ohio

world religions in dialogue

A COMPARATIVE THEOLOGICAL APPROACH
Enhanced Edition

Pim Valkenberg, editor

The logo for Anselm Academic features a stylized, wavy line above the text "ANSELM" in a bold, serif font, with "ACADEMIC" in a smaller, spaced-out serif font below it.

ANSELM
ACADEMIC

Created by the publishing team of Anselm Academic.

Cover image: A Trappist monk and a Buddhist nun engage in conversation at the Second Gethsemani Encounter in 2002. © Notre Dame Archives.

The publisher gratefully acknowledges use of the following:

Upanishads, Oxford World's Classics, translated by Patrick Olivelle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996):

Pages 214–15 (Chandogya Upanisad 6:12–13), 36 lines

Pages 328–29 and 330, 11 lines (Mundaka Upanisad 1:1:4–8, 1:2:10–11), 30 lines

Pages 332–33 (Mundaka Upanisad 2:1:7–10, 2:2:3–6), 20 lines + 23 lines (2 different selections) Total: 43 lines

Page 335 (Mundaka Upanisad 3:1:5–9), 25 lines

By permission of Oxford University Press

Excerpts from *The Ramayana: A Shortened Modern Prose Version of the Indian Epic*, translated by R.K. Narayan (New York: Penguin Books, 1972), 161–62. Used by permission of Penguin, a division of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.

Excerpts from *The Laws of Manu*, translated by Wendy Doniger (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 12–13, 77, 115, 197, 198. Reproduced by permission of Penguin Books Ltd.

Excerpt from *The Heart of Prajna Paramita Sutra*, translated by the Chung Tai Translation Committee (from the Chinese translation by Tripitaka Master Xuan Zang, seventh century). Copyright June 2002. Reprinted with permission of the Chung Tai Zen Center.

Excerpt from chapter 25 of *The Lotus Sutra*, translated by Dharma Realm Buddhist University. Copyright 1998. Reprinted with permission of Dharma Realm Buddhist University.

Copyright © 2017 by Anselm Academic, Christian Brothers Publications, 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1320, www.anselmacademic.org. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced by any means without the written permission of the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

7078

ISBN 978-1-59982-799-5

CONTENTS

Introduction: *Exploring World Religions through Dialogue* 7
Pim Valkenberg

PART 1: CHRISTIANITY 15

Kristin Johnston Largen and Whitney Bauman

Chapter 1: An Insider's Perspective 17
Chapter 2: An Outsider's Perspective 32
Chapter 3: Texts and Commentary 47
Chapter 4: Concluding Reflections 63
Resources for Further Study 69

PART 2: JUDAISM 75

Philip A. Cunningham and Jan Katzew

Chapter 5: An Outsider's Perspective 77
Chapter 6: An Insider's Perspective 90
Chapter 7: Texts and Commentary 108
Chapter 8: Concluding Reflections 127
Resources for Further Study 132

PART 3: ISLAM 137

Rita George-Tvrtković and Zeki Saritoprak

Chapter 9: An Outsider's Perspective 139
Chapter 10: An Insider's Perspective 153

Chapter 11: Texts and Commentary	163
Chapter 12: Concluding Reflections	177
Resources for Further Study	186

PART 4: HINDUISM 191

Aimee Upjohn Light and Madhuri M. Yadlapati

Chapter 13: An Outsider's Perspective	193
Chapter 14: An Insider's Perspective	206
Chapter 15: Texts and Commentary	217
Chapter 16: Concluding Reflections	236
Resources for Further Study	243

PART 5: BUDDHISM 249

Peter Feldmeier and Heng Sure

Chapter 17: An Outsider's Perspective	251
Chapter 18: An Insider's Perspective	262
Chapter 19: Texts and Commentary	278
Chapter 20: Concluding Reflections.	297
Resources for Further Study	303

Conclusion: <i>Learning World Religions by Encountering</i> <i>Religious Others</i>	309
<i>Pim Valkenberg</i>	

Contributors	323
Index	326

INTRODUCTION

Exploring World Religions through Dialogue*

Pim Valkenberg

What Makes This Book Different?

Information about world religions is easy to get. While most students will search the Internet, teachers of world religions will often explore recently published texts. Regardless of approach, a wealth of information is available. So what makes this book worthwhile? More importantly, what makes this book different from other sources of information on world religions?

Like other sources, this book includes trustworthy information by well-informed scholars about the five world religions most relevant to the Western culture of North America and Europe—namely, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Unlike many other sources, however, this book does not approach these religions from a “neutral” or an “objective” viewpoint. Instead, it presents them from the perspective of scholars immersed in religious traditions and engaged in interreligious dialogue.

This book differs from many others mainly in that it presents dialogues between scholars who describe a religion other than their own

and scholars who describe their own religion. It builds on the basic idea that the interplay between these two viewpoints—the “outsider” perspective and the “insider” perspective—offers the best way to introduce religions. Moreover, this book takes seriously that Western culture has historically been dominated by Christianity but is now becoming more pluralistic and, in part, more secular. Therefore, the Christian tradition occupies a central point of departure in dialogue with other traditions.

In part 1 of this book, a Christian scholar brings an insider’s perspective, discussing the tradition in dialogue with a scholar who is familiar with Christianity, but no longer part of it. The perspective of a “none” (someone who does not partake in an organized religion) thus forms an “outsider” perspective on Christianity. In the parts discussing non-Christian religions, on the other hand, the Christian scholar represents the “outsider” perspective on Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Each of these parts, then, begins with a Christian scholar, who brings an outsider’s perspective, giving an overview of the religion in question. This perspective often

*This text is an enhanced version of *World Religions in Dialogue: A Comparative Theological Approach* (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2013). The 2013 edition’s four parts, on Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, appear in this version and are complemented by a new part on Christianity.

serves as the starting point for those who study other religions with a “Western,” more-or-less Christian, mind-set, and this book hopes to build on their existing notions of these other religions. Next, the scholar who is an adherent of the religion in question will challenge this mind-set by providing an insider’s perspective. Both work together to provide commentaries on basic texts and to reflect on the dialogue between the “insider” and the “outsider” perspectives.

This distinction between “outsider” and “insider” simplifies a more complex reality in which the “insider” is an “outsider” as well, and the “outsider” is an “insider.” In giving a scholarly description, “insiders” necessarily adopt an outsider’s view and distance themselves from what they describe. Conversely, “outsiders” are often well acquainted with the religions they describe and as theologians they have “insider” knowledge of their own religion as well. Yet the terms *outsider* and *insider*—or their respective equivalents in anthropology, *etic* and *emic*—nonetheless offer a shorthand characterization of the two viewpoints brought into dialogue in this volume.¹ Even though most scholars would like to have their *etic* description of a world religion recognized by that religion’s adherents, they would not go so far as to say that the *only* valid description of a given religion is one recognized by adherents of that religion. Outsiders employ a specific language to describe a religion, using categories that necessarily differ from those insiders would use. Yet, those who use dialogue as an instrument of mutual understanding will always try to ensure their discourse proves acceptable to adherents of that religion.

In the history of the study of religions, the viewpoints of insiders and outsiders have been important, but limited. Many religious insiders have written about those different from

themselves merely to defend their own religion. Therefore, they usually gave a “confessional” or “theological” viewpoint of other religions, which these “pagan” or “heretic” others generally rejected because such a viewpoint only respected criteria germane to the religion defended, not to the religion described. The image held by religious adherents of their own religion has often determined the image they have had of the other. Consequently, Muslims used to speak about Jews and Christians as the “people of scripture” (*ahl al-kitab*), because they saw themselves as people to whom God had given the final scripture. Conversely, Christians talked about Muslims as “Muhammadans,” thinking that the role of Muhammad in Islam would be similar to that of Christ in their own religion.

In the modern era, scholars have come to favor a more neutral, “objective” approach, free from such “confessional” biases. Using historical and literary methods, they attempt to describe religious phenomena without adding value judgments. Most modern books on world religions adopt this approach, often labeled as “the science of religions” (*Religionswissenschaft* in German) or “religious studies.” Even though many scholars of religion think a descriptive approach shows less bias and yields more “objective” knowledge, such scientific descriptions have often not been acknowledged or accepted by adherents of the religions described.

Although “theological” and “science of religions” approaches have been historically valuable, they describe a religion differently than would an insider-scholar of a religion. The last third of the twentieth century saw a marked rise in relationships between religions as well as an increased awareness of religious plurality. Many religions originating in non-Western cultures are now represented in the Western academic world

1. For a sophisticated overview of these different positions, see the volume edited by Russell T. McCutcheon, *The Insider / Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader* (London: Cassell, 1999).

by scholars who were either raised in or later converted to the non-Christian religions discussed in this book. Thus, they can describe their own religions in ways that open fruitful dialogue with scholars who do not share their “insider” perspectives but who may be able to translate these perspectives into worldviews more familiar to students in the West. Conversely, a scholar raised in a Christian culture but no longer practicing any form of Christianity may be able to show the value as well as the limits of certain core Christian ideas in dialogue with a Christian theologian. Many readers of this book live on the boundaries between the religion they inherited, the appeal of other religions, and the possibilities of being a “none” (nonreligiously affiliated person). These fertile dialogues between “insider” and “outsider” perspectives inform and shape the structure of this book.

The Term *World Religions*

Most every textbook on religions uses the term *world religions*, but this phrase has a complicated history. In the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, scholars of religion began to use this term with the intention to differentiate their work from the confessional approach of Christian theology, which tended to divide religions between the “true religion” (Christianity and, to a certain extent, Judaism) and “false religions”

(those of “pagans,” “heathen,” and other “unbelievers”). In this process of differentiation, the term *world religions* was coined.² Yet, most scholars who used the term to allow for a larger, more nuanced array of religions within nineteenth-century scholarship still did so from a decidedly confessional perspective: they agreed that Christianity was the highest religion and the fulfillment of all people’s religious quests.³ Even many of the scholars who insisted their approach was based on scientific and “objective” research, such as religious sciences pioneers Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900) and Cornelis P. Tiele (1830–1902) could not avoid using concepts and classifications derived from Christian theology.⁴

In the course of the twentieth century, the “scientific” approach associated with the term *world religions* gained increasing credibility, while the idea of a confessional grading, typical of a Christian theological approach to other religions, gradually disappeared. The term *world religions* became one of the hallmarks of an “objective” comparative study of religions that coincided with a new awareness of religious plurality. Yet, there is strong evidence that the term is an invention of nineteenth-century scholarship that often serves unrecognized theological objectives by paying lip service to the idea that all religions are equal paths to the same ultimate end while nonetheless maintaining that Christianity is still the best or even the only way to get there. Therefore, it is difficult to maintain an

2. See Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). Masuzawa shows that the term *world religions* was, in fact, invented to underscore the relationship between Christianity and other religions of Indo-Aryan origin (Buddhism foremost), while suppressing the relationship between these religions and the other Semitic religions (Judaism and notably Islam).

3. *Ibid.*, 75–79, mentions Frederick Denison Maurice (1805–1872) and James Freeman Clarke (1810–1888) as two early writers on world religions from the perspective of what they called comparative theology. On the relationship between this form of comparative theology and contemporary forms of comparative theology, see Francis X. Clooney, SJ, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 30–37.

4. See Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 107–20; Jonathan Z. Smith, “Classification,” in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, ed. Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon (London: Cassell, 2000), 35–44.

absolute contrast between a scientific and a theological approach to religion.⁵

Different Approaches to the Study of World Religions

In one of the most influential current readers on world religions, Ian Markham distinguishes four competing methodologies for the study of world religions. Two of these go back to the development of the scientific approaches discussed above. The first method—the historical-comparative method—is mainly interested in a comparison of religions based on the study of their most important texts in their historical contexts; while the second method—the phenomenological method—focuses on a comparative description and interpretation of religious phenomena, such as images of God, prayer, and holy scriptures. Both methods of study strive to be as objective as possible. The third method, which Markham calls the “confessional approach,” assumes the truth of one particular faith tradition and underscores its differences with other faith traditions. Markham advocates a fourth approach, which he calls an “empathetic approach.”

To characterize this methodology, Markham uses John Dunne’s famous metaphor of “passing over” to the point of view of religious “others” and of “coming back” to one’s own point of view. This implies, first, approaching the religious tradition from the “outsider” perspective; second, to show this tradition in the “best possible light,” it entails presenting the perspective

of “a fairly orthodox adherent” of the religion.⁶ After this “passing over,” there is a “coming back” to the original position in order to make a decision. Markham explains: “this will involve either an act of clarification or an act of modification. If one is not persuaded, then one will be in a position to clarify the reasons why one prefers the initial position; if one is persuaded to some degree, then one will find the initial position modified.”⁷

In this way, Markham makes clear that historical and phenomenological “outsider” approaches to world religions can be combined fruitfully with an “insider” approach. His own “empathetic” approach aims at either confirming one’s “outsider” perspective or modifying it after having been influenced by the “insider” perspective. The process of “passing over” to other perspectives and “coming back” again is similar to the “dialogical” process used in this book.

Similarly, other recent books on world religions that start from an explicitly theological perspective show that a Christian evaluation of world religions also needs to incorporate historical and phenomenological investigations of these religions.⁸ These recent approaches to world religions show that an “objective” appraisal of world religions can be integrated into a wider theological approach in which the shift of perspective between the “outsider” and the “insider” comprises a central methodological principle. The main insight behind this broader approach is that truth is best found, not with a “purely scientific” approach, nor with a “purely confessional” approach, but rather through the interplay of an

5. Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, 324–28, with reference to the German theologian Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923).

6. Ian Markham with Christy Lohr, eds., *A World Religions Reader*, 3rd ed. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 7.

7. *Ibid.*, 8.

8. See Eugene Gorski, *Theology of Religions: A Sourcebook for Interreligious Study* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2008). See also, Karl J. Becker, and Ilaria Morali, eds., *Catholic Engagement with World Religions: A Comprehensive Study* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010).

“outsider” and an “insider” approach that blends scholarship and religious engagement.

Comparative Theology and Dialogue

The increased awareness of religious pluralism in the last third of the twentieth century has led not only to new “insider” approaches in the study of world religions but also to new forms of theology—mainly Christian theology—that take comparative approaches to other religions very seriously. While the term “comparative theology” was used in the nineteenth century for “confessional” forms of Christian theology that saw Christianity as the epitome of world religions, the new comparative theology explicitly includes the “objective” comparative study of religions.

This new form of comparative theology makes it difficult to maintain the distinction between scientific and theological approaches to the world religions. Frank Clooney, a Jesuit scholar of Hinduism and one of the founders of present-day comparative theology, characterizes it as a form of theology that not only works “within the constraints of a commitment to a religious community . . . and [with] a willingness to affirm the truth and values of that tradition”⁹ but also learns from other faith traditions. Therefore, “comparative theology combines tradition-rooted theological concerns with actual study of another tradition.”¹⁰ Moreover, it includes the comparative study of religion, so that “the comparative theologian works first as an academic scholar, even if she also and more deeply intends the kind of religious and spiritual learning that characterizes theology richly conceived.”¹¹ In this manner, as the subtitle of this book indi-

cates, it is possible to use comparative theology as a new approach to world religions.

Structure of This Book

This book proceeds from the assumption that insight into a specific religion can best be provided through dialogue between a scholar who gives an outsider approach to that religion and one who responds to this description by giving an insider approach. Both scholars try to fulfill the “scientific” criteria for the comparative study of religion, while at the same time connecting their descriptions to their own religious backgrounds. In that sense, it would be simplistic to label the outsider approach as “scholarly” and the insider approach as a “believer’s.” Both approaches are scholarly, and both scholars explicitly try to relate their approach to their religious backgrounds. Yet, because one religion is the explicit subject of the comparison while the other is addressed only implicitly, some asymmetry does result.

Most theological approaches to world religions begin with the insider approach. In the case of Christianity, the discussion begins with the insider approach as well since it has determined the worldview of most readers in Western cultures thus far, even though it is increasingly challenged by the approaches of outsiders who do not identify with a specific religious tradition. In the other four parts of this book, the outsider starts the dialogue because this represents the mind-set of most Western students of Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism; the idea being that such a mind-set can best be framed and corrected through dialogue between the two points of view. In the part on Hinduism, for instance, the outsider begins by sketching how most

9. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders*, 9.

10. *Ibid.*, 10.

11. *Ibid.*, 12.

Westerners view Hinduism—noting that the term *Hinduism* itself is a Western construct. This approach highlights the preconceptions that some might bring to their study of Hinduism as a religion. The insider's reply notes where Hindus would recognize the outsider's description—for instance, because they are formed by models of Western scholarship themselves—and where they would talk about their religion in different terms, such as referring to it as *sanatana dharma* (“eternal order” or “eternal duty”) instead of *Hinduism*. As part of this exchange, the insider may discuss some of the differences between concepts of religion rooted in his or her own tradition and concepts of religion that presuppose a Western, often Christian, point of view. In this sense, the dialogue explicitly discusses the religion called “Hinduism,” while also implicitly addressing the Christian religion. This method of comparison and dialogue aims to not only help readers better understand the religions discussed in this book but also form greater insight into their own religious backgrounds.

The principles outlined above determined the content of this book. First, they led to the decision to concentrate on a small number of world religions rather than discussing a greater number in less depth. The method of seeking understanding through dialogue and changing perspectives requires an extended discussion of the religions concerned. Books on world religions may cover any number of religions since it is not at all clear what exactly a “world religion” is. Historically speaking, scholars have used the term to distinguish religions with a worldwide presence from those practiced only in a specific cultural context; so “Hinduism” would be considered a world religion, but the religion of the Yorubas in Nigeria or the Dakotas in North America would not.

The term *world religions* usually refers to those religions considered relevant in one's own cultural context, mixed with an awareness that

they are not limited to that particular cultural context. This implies that a list of world religions drawn up in Germany might differ from such a list compiled in Romania, Mexico, or South Africa. In almost all Western cultural contexts, the list of world religions will include at least Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, and it will most likely incorporate Hinduism and Buddhism as well. Although some would argue for the inclusion of at least one of the East-Asian religions, such as Confucianism and Taoism, this text limits itself to the five religions important in every Western context.

Because this book supposes that most readers have some basic acquaintance with Christianity and thus enter the study of world religions from a Christian perspective, however vaguely articulated, the text begins with a dialogue between a Christian and a “none” (not religiously affiliated) perspective. After that, it continues with the religion closest to Christianity, namely, Judaism, and then with Islam as the third member of the Abrahamic family (or, in a more objective terminology, West-Asian or Semitic religions). Finally, it discusses the two great South-Asian religions that originated in India: Hinduism and Buddhism.

In the dialogues with the Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist perspectives, the outsider approaches can be characterized as “Christian theological approaches”; however, they differ from the confessional approaches of the nineteenth century in not taking Christianity as the “absolute” or “highest” religion, but as the point of departure for the comparison for the outsider. In line with present-day comparative theology, these approaches are aware of their own provenance and context, are conscious of other approaches, and aim to engage in dialogue with them. In that sense, this book differs not only from “neutral” or “objective” approaches to world religions but also from traditional Christian textbooks on world religions.

The explorations of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism each have the same basic structure, consisting of four chapters. In the first part, on Christianity, it is the insider who starts with the first chapter, but in the other parts it is the outsider who starts with an introduction to the religion that explicitly takes the presupposed knowledge of the readership as its point of departure. Why is it important for Christians to know about this religion? The outsider begins with a short overview of Christian approaches to that religion, of what is good or problematic about these approaches, and of avenues for future dialogue. So in parts 2 through 5, the exploration begins with “pictures of the other,” which may sound strange for a world religions book, but highlights how one’s religious background often determines one’s approach.

From this point of view, the first chapter in each part discusses seven aspects of the religion, beginning with a description of what makes it unique and different from other religions. Often, this is phrased as “What basic question does this religion try to answer?” or “What is ‘the way’ this religion claims to offer?” The second aspect considers the basic written sources of that religion, with the awareness that quite different interpretations can be given of these sources and their canonical traditions. Third, the chapter gives an outline of the history of the religion. Though not comprehensive, this history surveys the religion’s most important developments, distinguishing, for instance, between its “classical” and “modern” forms. The fourth aspect explores the religion’s conceptions of the holy or the divine, and the fifth delves into its corresponding conceptions of human beings. The sixth aspect discusses typical practices in the religion (rituals and holidays as well as ethics and social justice), and the final aspect concerns the recent history of relations between the religion in question and other religions.

In the second chapter of each part, the insider (in the case of Christianity it is the outsider) responds with an introduction that shows how the self-understanding of a religion (as represented by the *emic* approach) may differ from the outsider’s approach. The response in the second chapter more or less parallels the introduction in the first chapter with its seven aspects outlined above, but it may also include some specific aspects or discussion.

The third chapter in each part consists of a selection of texts from the most important sources of the religion under discussion along with insider and outsider commentaries. Some of the texts represent the typical interests of an outsider (for instance, “Messianic expectations” for a Christian approach to Judaism), while others reflect an insider approach (for instance, “Israel”—people, land, state—for a Jewish approach).

The two partners—insider and outsider—write the final chapter together as a reflection on what they learned through the dialogical process and on the most important items to continue in dialogue. Finally, each part ends with questions for discussion, suggestions for further reading, and a glossary.

The book’s conclusion focuses on an essential element in the process of teaching Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism: learning from religious others. It discusses how the method of experiential learning—that is, learning by experiencing religious others rather than reading about them—fits well with the approach advocated in this book. The conclusion describes forms of experiential learning and presents two particular methods. The first method introduces students to religions found in their area through visits to local religious communities and subsequent reflections on these visits. The second method offers more extended experiential learning through service

in these religious communities and reflection on this service-learning in papers and group presentations.

Learning about and from Religious Others

Learning about world religions in the classical way, using textbooks and “objective” approaches to these religions, is good. However, as this book makes clear, learning not only *about* these religions but also *from* these religions and their adherents is better. One can do this by being attentive to the different possible approaches to world religions. Acknowledging the different

perspectives may help one to become aware of how one’s background can affect one’s view of other religions and the terminology one uses. A dialogue between outsiders and insiders can show not only how adherents of other religions see their own tradition differently than do outsiders but also how outsider perceptions are often shaped by Western, often Christian, influences (including the term *world religions* itself). For this reason, it makes sense to include comparative theological perspectives as well. Finally, an exploration of other religions can be even more fruitful if it includes experiential learning. Listening to or even doing service in communities of religious others is another way to learn not only about them but also from them.

PART 1: CHRISTIANITY

Kristin Johnston Lergen and Whitney Bauman

Chapter 1: An Insider's Perspective

Chapter 2: An Outsider's Perspective

Chapter 3: Texts and Commentary

Chapter 4: Concluding Reflections

Resources for Further Study

