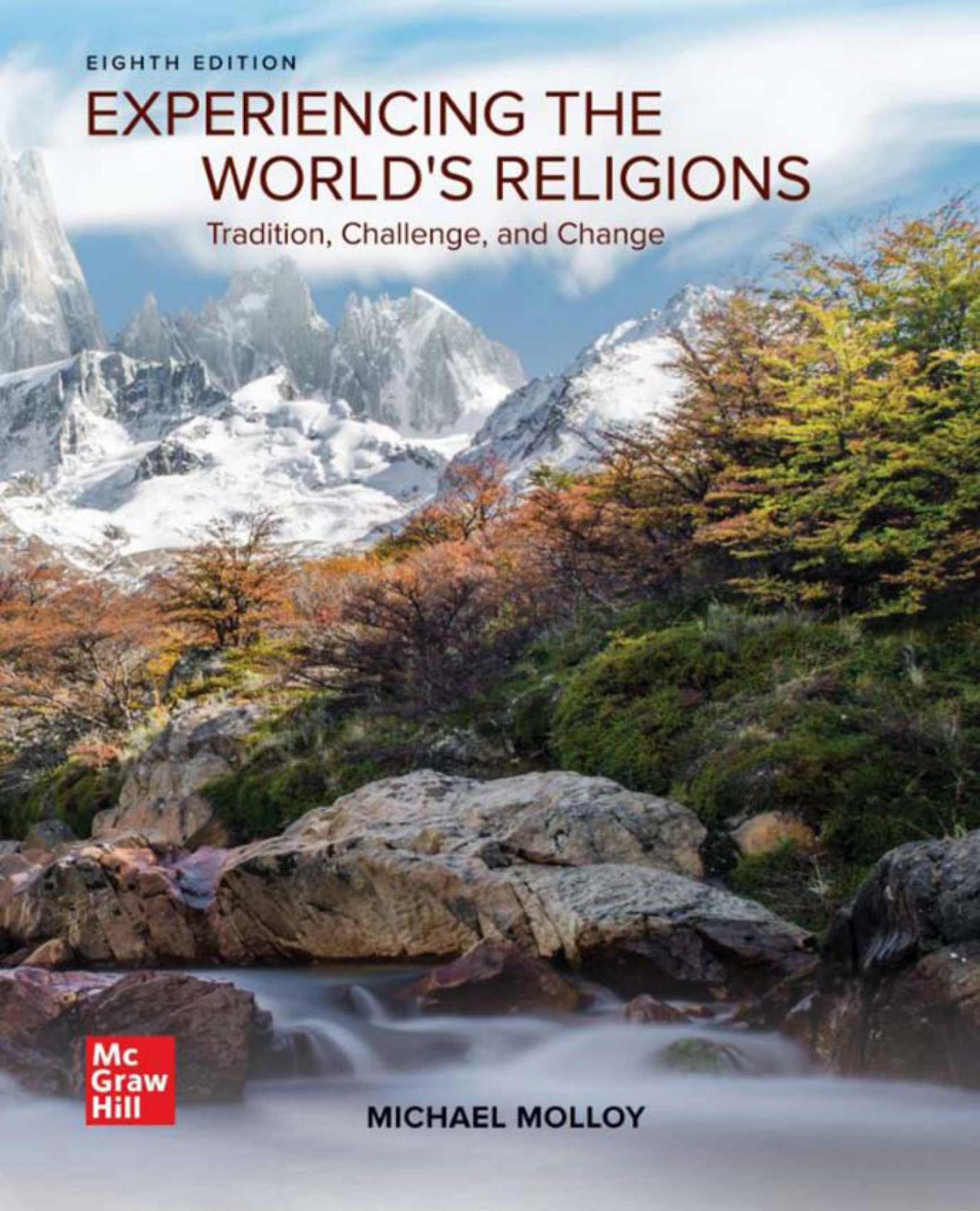
EIGHTH EDITION
EXPERIENCING THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS
Tradition, Challenge, and Change
Mc Graw Hill
MICHAEL MOLLOY

Experiencing the World's Religions

EIGHTH EDITION

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TRADITION, CHALLENGE, AND CHANGE

Michael Molloy

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EXPERIENCING THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS: TRADITION, CHALLENGE AND CHANGE, EIGHTH EDITION

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About the Author

Michael Molloy has made the study of religion his life's work. Fascination with religion began with interest in the architecture of temples, mosques, churches, and shrines. Experience of ceremonies at those places led to love of religious music and art. In his early graduate work, he focused on the imagery of cloud and darkness in mystical literature. In his doctoral work, he examined the mystical thought of Aldous Huxley, after Huxley had been influenced by Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism. To do this, he interviewed Huxley's wife Laura, Huxley's sister-in-law, and friends of Huxley.

Molloy received a grant from the East-West Center in Hawai'i to study there, and he received his doctorate from the University of Hawai'i. During this time, he studied in Japan with Abe Masao in Kyoto and with Sobharani Basu at Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi. He practiced Zen meditation at Bushinji in Shikoku and later received a certificate from the Omoto School of Traditional Japanese Arts in Kameoka, Japan. He has written *Experiencing the World's Religions* (McGraw-Hill) and *The Christian Experience* (Bloomsbury). Currently he is writing a memoir of his grandparents and parents and their religious background.

Molloy has taught many philosophy and religion courses, including World Religions, Asian Philosophies, Western Mysticism, Greek and Roman Philosophy, Ethics, Nietzsche, Religion and the Meaning of Existence, and Indian Philosophy. He is a Professor Emeritus of the University of Hawai'i. To complement his academic work, he has had three exhibitions of his paintings—"Landscapes of the Mind," "Luminous Darkness," and "Renaissance." He codirected two radio series of interviews with musicians, writers, and artists on KAIM-FM and Hawai'i Public Radio. He worked on the Inari Shrine Preservation Committee to move the shrine to a new location and then to renovate it.

To Jennie Meyer and Linming Qiu

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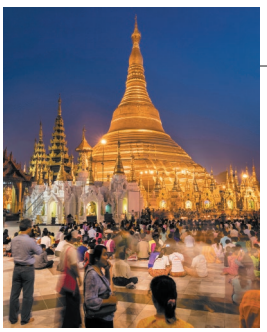

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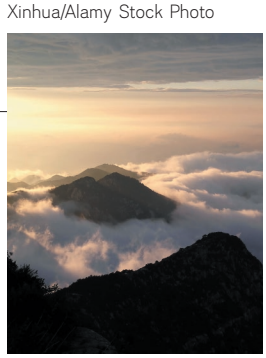

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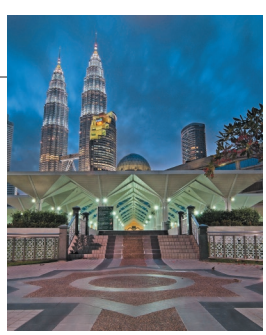

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11 Alternative Paths *449*

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Preface

Not long ago, most towns and cities had restaurants with the same kinds of food, and there was little choice, except for the decor. Now you find not only Chinese food, but also Italian, French, Mexican, Greek, Japanese, Indian, Vegetarian, Vietnamese, and Thai. In even larger cities, the possibilities expand like a waistline—even to Moroccan and Ethiopian.

The same thing is happening in our experience of religions. We encounter other religions effortlessly. I realized this when I had arrived by plane in Denver. I took a taxi from the airport to my hotel downtown. As I got in the taxi, I noticed what looked like a religious book on the passenger seat, next to the driver. As we were driving into town, I asked the driver about it.

"It is an Ethiopian book on the Psalms," he said. "I am using it for my own study of the Bible."

"Do you go to church here in Denver?" I asked.

"Oh, yes. I go to one church in particular, since it is in my neighborhood. But there are several Ethiopian churches in the city."

This was a surprise to me. I had no idea that there were a good number of Ethiopians in Denver.

"Would you like to come to our service this weekend?" he asked.

"I would love to do that. Please write down the name of your church, its address, and the time of the service, and I'll be there."

And so it happened that I took part in a service where women and men sat on opposite sides of the church, the altar area was hidden behind veils, and everyone wore white clothes. During the time there, an altar server carried around a gospel book, which each person kissed reverently. No one wore shoes. After the service, people put their shoes back on, gathering them from just outside the doors. They did not immediately drive home, but congregated instead under the nearby trees, where they talked with their relatives and friends.

The taxi driver saw me and waved. He looked deeply pleased that I had come to his church.

As I drove back to my hotel, I thought about the future. Would the children and grandchildren of these Ethiopian Christians continue their traditions, or would they mix them with other religious traditions in the city? Changes are inevitable, as the cover of this book suggests. Flowing water moves and cleanses but does not stay the same.

This book is meant to help you find, learn about, and experience some of the religions that we nowadays find flourishing—and changing—all around us.

Boxed Features

CONFLICT IN RELIGION

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Although the core of religions remains fairly constant, change is always happening. Followers of different religions split and form new branches, religious values change, new leaders arise. These transitions are reflected in the new edition. New reading selections have been added to most chapters.

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Chapter 1, Understanding Religion

- New First Encounter
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Chapter 3, Hinduism

- New First Encounter
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- New Reading: "Spiritual Greatness"

Chapter 4, Buddhism

- New First Encounter
- New Text Box: "The Mustard Seeds"
- New Reading: "The Wonder of Tea"

Chapter 5, Jainism and Sikhism

- New Reading: "God Is Found in Every Direction"

Chapter 6, Daoism and Confucianism

- New First Encounter

Chapter 7, Shinto

- New First Encounter
- New Reading: "The Heian Shrines at Nikko"

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- New Personal Experience: "A Visit to a Kibbutz in the North"
- New Reading: "Liberation"

Chapter 9, Christianity

- New Reading: "Discovering the Next Step"

Chapter 10, Islam

- New Reading: "Most High"

Chapter 11, Alternative Paths

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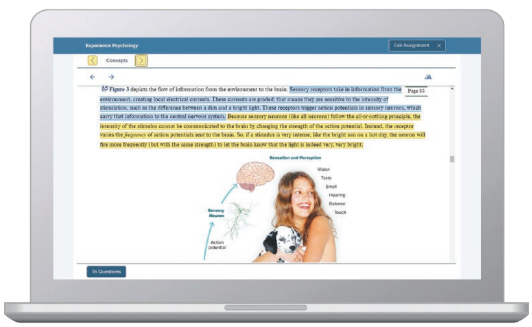

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Acknowledgments

We are all the product of kindness and insight shared with us by others. When I look back on the people of the religions and cultures that shaped me, I feel amazement and am full of gratitude. In some cases, though, I feel apologetic. At the time when I was receiving the gifts from these people, I was often not aware of the quality of the gifts and the generosity of the givers. One example will illustrate this. In high school I took a Latin course. The teacher, who loved to travel, had just been to Rome. One day, instead of teaching the regular material, he spent the time projecting large photos of the Roman Forum and he talked with enthusiasm about the Roman Empire. He said that it had spread roads, bridges, aqueducts, architectural patterns, law, writing, and ideas to as far away as Britain, Syria, and Egypt. Behind my hand, I yawned. Years later, though, I stood in the Roman Forum under a ceremonial arch. I looked at the stone road underneath my feet and the pillars around me. I remembered that teacher and that class. At last, I understood the lesson.

Another example occurred in Asia. My teacher in Japan arranged for me to live for a while in a Zen Buddhist temple in Shikoku. It was headed by a middle-aged monk with kind eyes and a brilliant smile. We meditated every morning before breakfast and every evening after supper. During the daytime, I cleaned the temple floors, moved rocks, and planted trees. The food was vegetarian, and we had a rough and unfussy tea ceremony every day after lunch. At night, I slept in the meditation hall, in the same place where I meditated. The large doors at each end of the hall were kept open all night.

To keep me warm, I was given two white comforters to use as blankets. They were so short, though, that I had to cover the top part of my body with one comforter, and the lower part of my body with the other. Every night, though, they came apart and the middle part of my body froze with cold.

After a few weeks, I told the monk that I had to leave. He looked shocked.

"Don't go. I can tell that you are the type."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

He answered with a soulful look in his eyes. "If you stay here just ten years, I guarantee that you will reach enlightenment."

I thought to myself that, from his way of viewing life, this was a great compliment. I was tempted to say, "But in ten years I will have frozen to death." I stayed silent.

"Is there something wrong here?" he asked.

"No," I answered. "It has been wonderful, and so have you." Then I added, "But I must go. You see, the whole world is my temple."

He smiled and nodded that he understood.

To him I now apologize.

Thanks are due to some exceptional teachers. Among them have been Rev. Arthur Daspit, Dr. Jerome Theisen, Dr. Sobharani Basu, Dr. Winfield Nagley, and Dr. Eliot Deutsch. Because a book is not by a single person but is more like a quilt with many parts, thanks go to the development team at Lumina Datamatics, Inc. led by editor Mel Stafford and the production team at SPi Global, led by

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The book is far better as a result of their reviews. Although it is a truism, this book has also been influenced by hundreds of other people who are also owed my sincere thanks. They planted in me seeds that I hope have come to flower.


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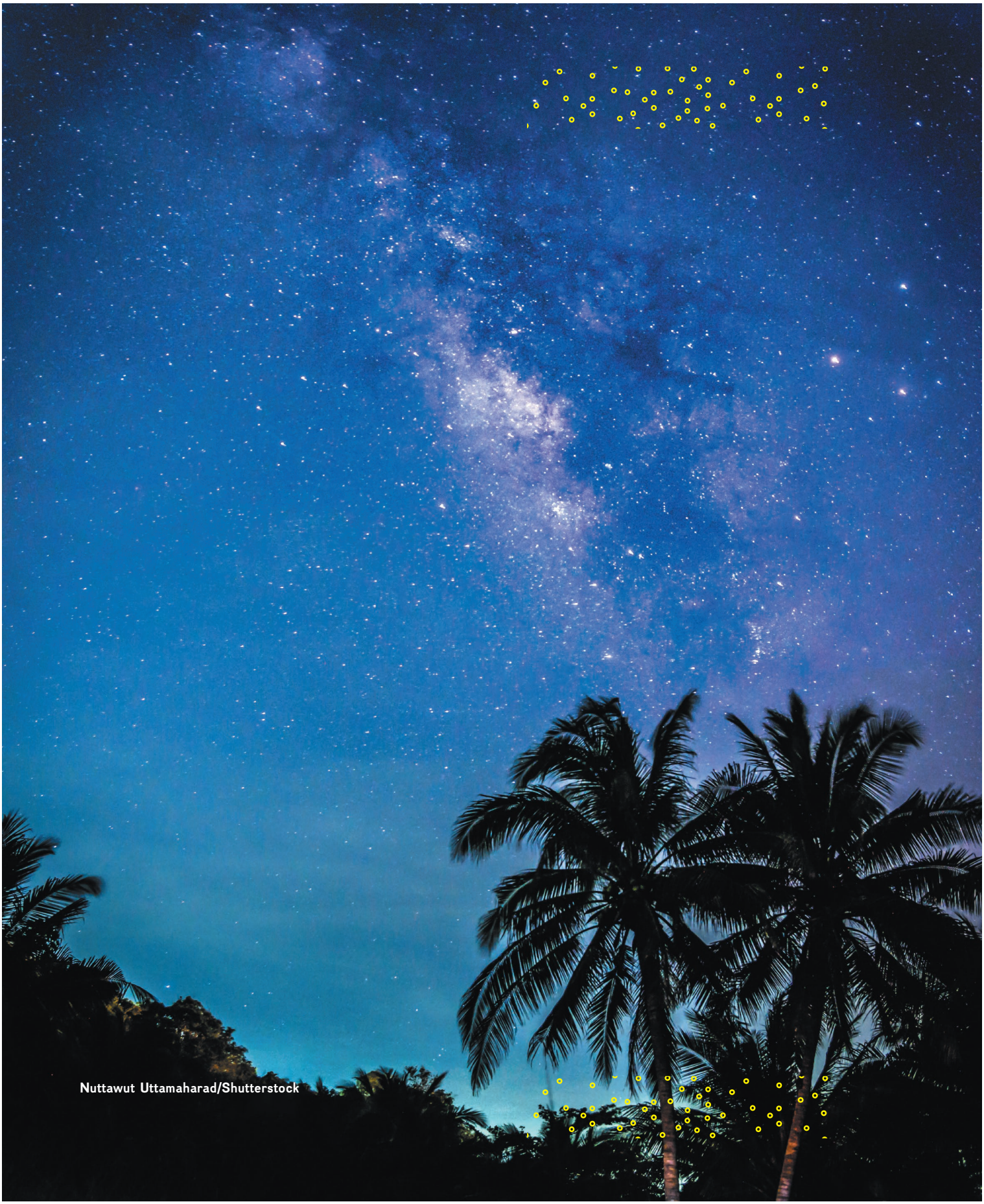

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CHAPTER 1

Understanding Religion

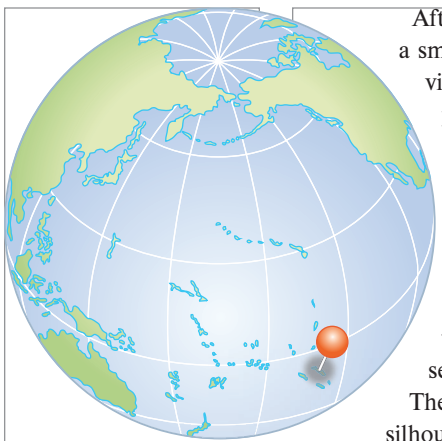
FIRST ENCOUNTER

You have heard from friends how beautiful Tahiti and the Marquesas are. One friend who was there last summer gives you some details.

"You should visit Papeete. I was there for Bastille Day on July 14. People gathered on the long mall near the ocean. There are food stalls all along the waterfront and small tables where you can sit. The stalls sell crepes filled with fruit jam, and they make thin waffles rolled with custard inside, and the people stay up all night listening to guitar music and singing. The cathedral is not far away and has some beautiful stained glass. The island of Moorea has wonderful views of the ocean. And the island of Bora Bora has one of the most beautiful volcanic mountains in the world. It is like Shangri-La. A road runs next to the ocean, and you can use it to bicycle around the island."

"Have you been to the Marquesas, too?" you ask.

"Not yet. I hope to do it, though. I hear that the Marquesas are like what Tahiti was fifty years ago—quiet and peaceful."



After this description, you decide to go first to the Marquesas. You take a small ship to one island, with a plan to stay there a week. Next, you will visit two more of the islands of the Marquesas and visit the tomb of the painter Gauguin. At the end of that tour, you will finally see some of the islands of Tahiti.

The first night in the Marquesas you go out walking after supper. Beyond the small town and its few lights, darkness is intense. You are overcome by the beauty and great number of stars overhead. Turning around, you almost lose your balance. You sit down under a palm tree in order to enjoy the sight. You sit with your back against the tree trunk. The sky is bright blue-black—but so dark that all you see is stars. The only thing close to you is one branch of the palm tree. The branch hangs down in front of you, blocking out some stars. It is a silhouette—a completely black palm branch in front of a starry sky. You stay for an hour, looking in all directions, entranced.

WHAT IS RELIGION?

The painting *Café Terrace at Night* depicts an outdoor café in the evening. About a dozen small round tables stand on an outdoor porch, facing the street. Customers sit at a few of the tables, while most tables are empty. At the back, a waiter in a long white apron stands ready to help. A few passersby walk in the cobblestone street. It is an ordinary evening. Overhead, though, the dark blue sky is crowded with luminous stars. Your eye is immediately drawn to them. Four or five of the stars are so large that they make you think that they seem like flying saucers that come from another world. On this ordinary night, the real world is above.

Vincent van Gogh's *Café Terrace at Night* offers a startling perspective. The world of everyday human life goes on against the background of a vast, starry cosmos.
Universal History Archive/Universal Images Group/Getty Images

Painted near the end of its creator's life, the work summarizes the vision of Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890). Van Gogh was an intensely religious man who had planned to be an ordained minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, as was his father. But he struggled with his studies and had a falling-out with church authorities. For a time, he lived as a lay preacher, working with poor miners. When he was 27, his brother Theo, an art dealer, encouraged him to take up painting. Vincent did this with great energy.

Despite this new career in painting, van Gogh continued to think of himself as a minister. If he could not preach in words, he would preach in pictures. His subjects were the simple things of life: trees, sunflowers, a wicker chair, a bridge, his postman, a farmer sowing seeds, peasants eating a meal, workers

bringing in the harvest. His paintings express a quiet awe before the wonder that he sensed in everyday objects and ordinary people. It was his special sense of the sacredness he saw all around him that he wanted to share. Almost as a reminder, in *Café Terrace at Night,* van Gogh painted the simple activity of the town, but with his attention on the stars. The heavenly realm illuminates van Gogh's vision of the sacred character of the entire world.

Key Characteristics of Religion

When people begin their study of religions, they bring ideas from the religion in which they were raised or from the predominant religion of their society. They may assume, for example, that every religion has a sacred book or that it worships a divine being or that it has a set of commandments. Indeed, many religions do share all of these characteristics, but some do not. Shinto, for example, does not have a set of commandments, nor does it preach a moral code; Zen Buddhism does not worship a divine being; and many tribal religions have no written sacred scripture. Nevertheless, we call them all religions. What, then—if not a common set of elements—must be present for something to be called a religion?

An obvious starting point for many scholars is to examine linguistic clues: What are the linguistic roots of the term *religion?* Intriguingly, the word's Latin roots are commonly thought to be *re-,* meaning "again," and *lig-,* meaning "join" or "connect" (as in the word *ligament*).[1] Thus the common translation of *religion* is "to join again," "to reconnect." If this derivation is correct, then the word *religion* suggests the joining of our natural, human world to the sacred world. In classical Latin, the term *religio* meant awe for the gods and concern for proper ritual.[2] We must recognize, though, that the term *religion* arose in Western culture and may not be entirely appropriate when applied across cultures. *Spiritual path,* for example, might be a more fitting designation to refer to other religious systems. We will keep these things in mind when we use the long-established term *religion.*

People have constantly tried to define religion, and there are thus many notable attempts. These definitions may emphasize a sense of dependence on a higher power, awareness of the passing nature of life, the use of symbolism and ritual, the acceptance of moral rules, or the special structuring of time. Yet reading these definitions makes you aware of their limitations. The definitions often seem inadequate and time-bound, the product of a particular culture or period or discipline. Perhaps, for the time being, it is better simply to be open to many possible definitions, without as yet embracing any single one. After studying the major world religions, we will undoubtedly come closer to our own definition of religion.

The problem of how to define religion continues to plague scholars, who love definition. A definition may apply well to some religions, but not to others. A definition may apply to religions of the past, but may not be suitable for a religion of the present or of the future.

Traditional dictionary definitions of *religion* read something like this: a system of belief that involves worship of a God or gods, prayer, ritual, and a moral code. Yet there are so many exceptions to that definition that it is neither comprehensive nor accurate. So instead of saying that a religion *must* have certain characteristics,

> Religion [is] a way of life founded upon the apprehension of sacredness in existence.
>
> —Julian Huxley, biologist[3]

it is more useful to list a series of characteristics that are found in what are commonly accepted as religions. Scholars note that what we ordinarily call religions manifest to some degree the following eight elements[4]:

Belief system Several beliefs fit together into a fairly complete and systematic interpretation of the universe and the human being's place in it. This is also called a *worldview.*

Community The belief system is shared, and its ideals are practiced by a group.

Central myths Stories that express the religious beliefs of a group are retold and often reenacted. Examples of central myths include the major events in the life of the Hindu god Krishna, the enlightenment experience of the Buddha, the exodus of the Israelites from oppression in Egypt, the death and resurrection of Jesus, or Muhammad's escape from Mecca to Medina. Scholars call such central stories *myths.* The term "myth," as scholars use it, is a specialized term. It does not in itself mean (as in popular usage) that the stories are historically untrue, but means only that the stories are central to the religion.

Ritual Beliefs are enacted and made real through ceremonies.

Ethics Rules about human behavior are established. These are often viewed as having been revealed from a supernatural realm, but they can also be viewed as socially generated guidelines.

Characteristic emotional experiences Among the emotional experiences typically associated with religions are dread, guilt, awe, mystery, devotion, conversion, "rebirth," liberation, ecstasy, bliss, and inner peace.

Material expression Religions make use of an astonishing variety of physical elements—statues, paintings, musical compositions, musical instruments, ritual objects, flowers, incense, clothing, architecture, and specific places.

Sacredness A distinction is made between the sacred and the ordinary. Ceremonies often emphasize this distinction through the deliberate use of different language, clothing, and architecture. Certain objects, actions, people, and places may share in the sacredness or express it.

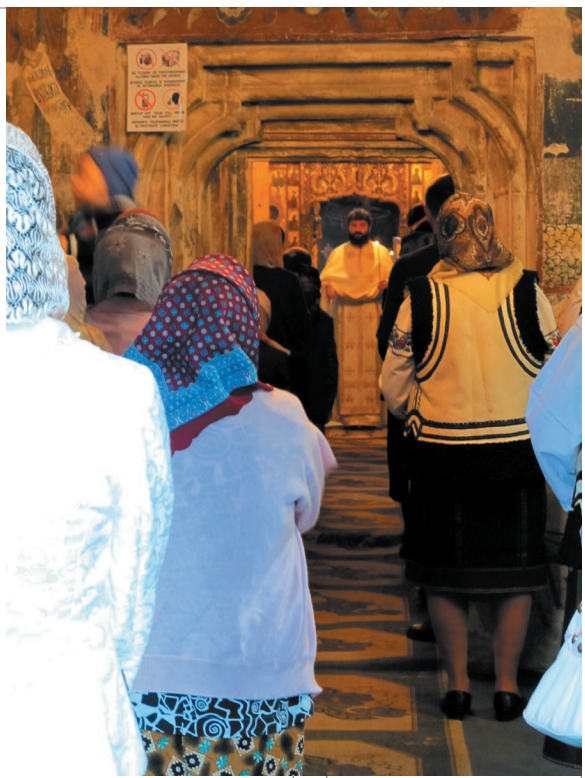
Each of the traditions that you will study in the pages ahead will exhibit most of these characteristics. Yet the religious traditions, like the people who practice them, will manifest the characteristics in different ways and at different times.

The Sacred

All religions are concerned with the deepest level of reality, and for most religions the core or origin of everything is sacred and mysterious. This sense of a mysterious, originating holiness is called by many names: Brahman, Dao, Great Mother, Divine Parent, Great Spirit, Ground of Being, Great Mystery, the Ultimate, the Absolute, the Divine, the Holy. People, however, experience and explain sacred reality in different ways, as you shall see in the chapters that follow.

One familiar term for the sacred reality, particularly in the Western world, is *God,* and **monotheism*** is the term that means a belief in one God. In some systems, the term *God* often carries with it the notion of a Cosmic Person—a divine being with will and intelligence who is just and compassionate and infinite in virtues. God is also called *omnipotent* ("having total power over the universe"). Although God may be said to have personal aspects, all monotheistic religions agree that the reality of God is beyond all categories: God is said to be pure spirit, not fully definable in words. This notion of a powerful God, distinct from the universe, describes a sacredness that is active in the world but also distinct from it. That is, God is **transcendent**—unlimited by the world and all ordinary reality.

In some religions, however, the sacred reality is not viewed as having personal attributes but is more like an energy or mysterious power. Frequently, the sacred is then spoken of as something **immanent** within the universe. In some religions, there is a tendency to speak of the universe not just as having been created but also as a manifestation of the sacred nature itself, in which nothing is separate from the sacred. This view, called **pantheism** (Greek: "all divine"), sees the sacred as being discoverable within the physical world and its processes. In other words, nature itself is holy.



Churchgoers in Romania wait to receive a blessing from a Romanian Orthodox priest. Thomas Hilgers.

Some religions worship the sacred reality in the form of many coexisting gods, a view called **polytheism.** The multiple gods may be fairly separate entities, each in charge of an aspect of reality (such as gods of nature), or they may be multiple manifestations of the same basic sacred reality.

In recent centuries, other views have become prominent. There can be a tendency to deny the existence of any God or gods (**atheism**), to argue that the existence of God cannot be proven (**agnosticism**), or simply to take no position (**nontheism**). (Such tendencies are not strictly modern; they can also be found in some ancient systems, such as Jainism; see Chapter 5.) However, if one sees religion broadly, as a "spiritual path," then even systems based on these three views—particularly if they show other typical characteristics of a religion—can also be called religions.

Religious Symbolism

Religions present views of reality, and most speak of the sacred. Nevertheless, because religions are so varied in their teachings and because the teachings of some religions,

Note: Words shown in boldface type are listed and defined in the "Key Terms" section at the end of each chapter.

when taken at face value, conflict with those of others, it is common to assert that religions express truth *symbolically.* A symbol is something fairly concrete, ordinary, and universal that can represent—and help human beings intensely experience—something of greater complexity. For example, water can represent spiritual cleansing; the sun, health; a mountain, strength; and a circle, eternity. It is common to find symbolism, both deliberate and unconscious, in religious art and ritual.

Symbols and their interpretation have long played an important part in analyzing dreams. It was once thought that dreams were messages from a supernatural realm and that they could provide a key to the future. Although this type of interpretation is less common nowadays, many people still think that dreams are significant. Sigmund Freud introduced his view of the dream as a door into subconscious levels of the mind. He argued that, by understanding dreams symbolically, human beings can understand their own hidden needs and fears. For example, a dream of being lost in a forest might be interpreted as distress over losing one's sense of direction in life. A dream of flying could be interpreted as a need to seek freedom.

Carl Gustav Jung extended the symbol-focused method of dream interpretation to the interpretation of religion. Some religious leaders have been cautious about this approach—popularized by the mythologist Joseph Campbell—lest everything be turned into a symbol and all literal meaning be lost. And specialists in religion oppose the view that two religions are basically the same simply because they share similar symbols.

The mandala, according to Jung, illustrates "the path to the center, to individuation." Nujalee/Shutterstock