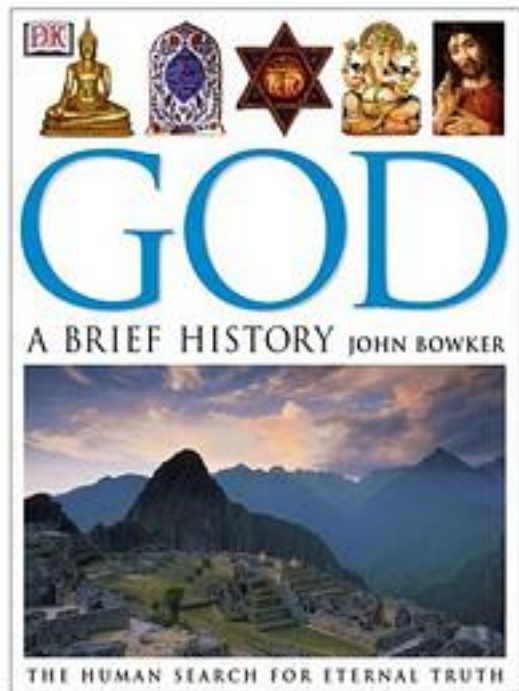


# God: A Brief History



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著者:John Bowker

出版者:

出版时间:May 1, 2002

装帧:Hardcover

isbn:9780789480507

From Publishers Weekly

Having already written a lushly illustrated overview of the beliefs and practices of the world's religions (World Religions, also from DK), Bowker turns his attention to God and produces a book chock-full of facts, stories, legends and illustrations about the ways that religious traditions have developed their beliefs in God. Bowker first examines the ideas of Nietzsche, Feuerbach, Freud and others to demonstrate that all individuals and societies grapple with the meaning of God. In roughly chronological order, Bowker surveys the history of belief in God in animistic religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese

religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. He explores various aspects of this belief, such as the meaning of dharma, the concept of wisdom and the nature of pilgrimage. Yet Bowker's book contains numerous problems. First, he never explains what he means by God. Is God the same as the Sacred or the Divine? Without a clearer explanation, many of the religions that he examines Buddhism, for example cannot be said to have a God. Second, does God indeed have a history? That implies that God would have had a beginning and will have an end, which runs counter to the notion that God is eternal and ahistorical. Third, because he does not provide a clear definition of God, Bowker levels the differences among the world's religions so that it appears that the God of Judaism is the same as the God of Hinduism. At best, Bowker provides a superficial overview of the history of belief in God for the "religion lite" crowd.

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From Library Journal

The former dean of Trinity College, Cambridge University now at Gresham College, Bowker (The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions) quotes a poem by R.S. Thomas to explain the purpose of his book: "the better ventilating of the atmosphere of the closed mind." Throughout, he opens doors to many spiritual and religious traditions, describing ways in which people "have made their own discoveries of God and have developed and changed our understanding of who and what God is, and of how God became real to them." The result is a fascinating, all-purpose book, beautifully illustrated in the DK manner. After the introductory material, the text is divided into sections on the religions of India, the religions of other Asian countries, and the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). With articles like "Jihad and Martyrdom," "Temples of India," "From Tagore to Gandhi," "Sex and Tantra," "Kabbalah," "Theology (feminist theology)," and "Celtic Christianity," the range is obviously wide. The maps, time lines, and comprehensive index are also helpful, and readers are encouraged to explore further with the help of a very good bibliography. Though similar information can be found in many introductory books on world religions, including the more traditional The Cambridge Illustrated History of Religions (edited by Bowker; see review below), this work lends itself more to pleasure reading than reference and will appeal to the casual reader interested in the variety of colorful religious rituals and symbols presented here. Highly recommended for high school and public libraries as well as undergraduate collections in academic libraries. Gary P. Gillum, Brigham Young Univ., Provo, UT

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作者介绍:

John Bowker

John Westerdale Bowker (born July 30, 1935) is a professor of religious studies who has taught at the universities of Cambridge, Lancaster, Pennsylvania and North Carolina. He is an Honorary Canon of Canterbury Cathedral, a consultant for UNESCO, as well as a BBC broadcaster and author and editor of several books.

Life

Bowker was educated at St John's School Leatherhead, Worcester College, Oxford and

Ripon Hall, Oxford. After national service in RWAAF N Nigeria he became Henry Stevenson Fellow at the University of Sheffield in 1961. He then moved to Cambridge University where he was Dean of Chapel of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge (1962) and Assistant Lecturer (1965) and Lecturer (1970). In 1974 he was appointed Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Lancaster, and in 1984 moved back to Cambridge as Dean of Chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge (1984-91) and a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge (1984-93), also teaching, supervising and researching at the University. From 1992 to 1997 he was Gresham Professor of Divinity at Gresham College, London.

He was appointed Adjunct Professor at the University of Pennsylvania and at North Carolina State University in 1986.

He gave many invited lectures including the Wilde (University of Oxford), Riddell Newcastle University, Boutwood Cambridge University, Scott Holland London University, Bicentary University of Georgetown.

He served on various commissions including the Archbishops' Commission on Doctrine (1977-86). He was appointed Vice-President of the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science in 1980.

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