

Religion



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What do we talk about when we talk about "religion"? Is it an array of empirical facts about historical human civilizations? Or is religion what is in essence unpredictable - perhaps the very emergence of the new? In what ways are the legacies of religion - its powers, words, things, and gestures - reconfiguring themselves as the elementary forms of life in the twenty-first century? Given the Latin roots of the word religion and its historical Christian uses, what sense, if any, does it make to talk about "religion" in other traditions? Where might we look for common elements that would enable us to do so? Has religion as an overarching concept lost all its currency, or does it ineluctably return - sometimes in unexpected ways - the moment we attempt to do without it? This book explores the difficulties and double binds that arise when we ask "What is religion?" Offering a marvelously rich and diverse array of perspectives, it begins the task of rethinking "religion" and "religious studies" in a contemporary world. Opening essays on the question "What is religion?" are followed by clusters exploring the relationships among religion, theology, and philosophy and the links between religion, politics, and law. Pedagogy is the focus of the following section. Religion is then examined in particular contexts, from classical times to the present Pentecostal revival, leading into an especially rich set of essays on religion, materiality, and mediatization. The final section grapples with the ever-changing forms that "religion" is

taking, such as spirituality movements and responses to the ecological crisis. Featuring the work of leading scholars from a wide array of disciplines, traditions, and cultures, "Religion: Beyond a Concept" will help set the agenda for religious studies for years to come. It is the first of five volumes in a collection entitled "The Future of the Religious Past", the fruit of a major international research initiative funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research.

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