

Religion



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Religion: A Humanist Interpretation represents a lifetime's work on the anthropology of religion from a rather unusual viewpoint. Raymond Firth treats religion as a human art, capable of great intellectual and artistic achievements, but also of complex manipulation to serve human interests of those who believe in it and operate it. Religion may also be used as a symbol or cloak for violence, with political or economic aims. The study is comparative, drawing material from a range of well-known and lesser-known religions around the world, and giving the results of much anthropological research. Its findings are a challenge to established beliefs. The book explores notions of the divine, both as a single person and in a multiplicity of gods. It considers ideas and practices of communication with the supernatural, as in spirit possession, the roles of religious leaders, the function of prayer, offering and sacrifice. Thoughts on the relation between religion and politics include a critique of Karl Marx's idea of religion as "spiritual opium". Examples are given of the subtleties of theological controversy, and of the difficulties faced by religious organizations in coming to terms with modern economic and political developments.

作者介绍:

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