

# Death And Afterlife Perspectives Of World Religions

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**The Modern Book of the Dead** - Ptolemy Tompkins  
2013-03-19

A modern, all-encompassing exploration of what happens after death combines spirituality with philosophy, history, and science, all of which guide readers toward the timeless truth that human consciousness lives on after death.

*The Routledge Handbook of Death and the Afterlife*  
- Candi K. Cann 2018-06-27

This Handbook traces the history of the changing notion of what it means to die and examines the many constructions of afterlife in literature, text, ritual, and material culture throughout time. The Routledge Handbook of Death and the Afterlife is an outstanding reference source to the key topics, problems, and debates in this exciting subject. Comprising twenty-nine chapters by a team of international contributors, the Handbook is divided into three parts and covers the following important themes: The study of dying, death, and grief  
Disposal of the dead: past, present, and future  
Representations of death: narratives and rhetoric  
Youth meets death: a juxtaposition  
Questionable deaths and afterlives: suicide, ghosts, and avatars  
Material corpses and imagined afterlives around the world  
Within these sections, central issues, debates, and problems are examined, including: the world of death and dying from various cultural viewpoints and timeframes, cultural and social constructions of

the definition of death, disposal practices, and views of the afterlife. The Routledge Handbook of Death and the Afterlife is essential reading for students and researchers in religious studies, philosophy, anthropology, and sociology.

*Death, Resurrection, and Human Destiny* - David Marshall 2014-04-29

Death, Resurrection, and Human Destiny: Christian and Muslim Perspectives is a record of the 2012 Building Bridges seminar for leading Christian and Muslim scholars, convened by Rowan Williams, then Archbishop of Canterbury. The essays in this volume explore what the Bible and Qur'ān—and the Christian and Islamic theological traditions—have to say about death, resurrection, and human destiny. Special attention is given to the writings of al-Ghazali and Dante. Other essays explore the notion of the good death. Funeral practices of each tradition are explained. Relevant texts are included with commentary, as are personal reflections on death by several of the seminar participants. An account of the informal conversations at the seminar conveys a vivid sense of the lively, penetrating, but respectful dialogue which took place. Three short pieces by Rowan Williams provide his opening comments at the seminar and his reflections on its proceedings. The volume also contains an analysis of the Building Bridges Seminar after a decade of his leadership.

**The Science of Near-Death Experiences** - John C. Hagan 2017-01-30

What happens to consciousness during the act of dying? The most compelling answers come from people who almost die and later recall events that occurred while lifesaving resuscitation, emergency care, or surgery was performed. These events are now called near-death experiences (NDEs). As medical and surgical skills improve, innovative procedures can bring back patients who have traveled farther on the path to death than at any other time in history. Physicians and healthcare professionals must learn how to appropriately treat patients who report an NDE. It is estimated that more than 10 million people in the United States have experienced an NDE. Hagan and the contributors to this volume engage in evidence-based research on near-death experiences and include physicians who themselves have undergone a near-death experience. This book establishes a new paradigm for NDEs.

**Life After Death Today in the United States, Japan, and China** - Gordon Mathews 2023-01-24

This book is about contemporary senses of life after death in the United States, Japan, and China. By collecting and examining hundreds of interviews with people from all walks of life in these three societies, the book presents and compares personally held beliefs, experiences, and interactions with the concept of life after death. Three major aspects covered by the book include, but are certainly not limited to, the enduring tradition of Japanese ancestor veneration, China's transition from state-sponsored materialism to the increasing belief in some form of afterlife, as well as the diversity in senses of, or disbelief in, life after death in the United States. Through these diverse first-hand testimonies the book reveals that underlying these changes in each society there is a shift from collective to individual belief, with people developing their own visions of what may, or may not, happen after death. This book will be valuable reading for students of Anthropology as well as

Religious, Cultural, Asian and American Studies. It will also be an impactful resource for professionals such as doctors, nurses, and hospice workers.

**Beyond the Threshold** - Christopher M. Moreman 2008-09-18

Beyond the Threshold is the first book to seriously consider the interplay between traditional world religions and metaphysical experiences in exploring the timeless question of what happens when we die. Christopher M. Moreman examines and compares the beliefs and practices of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, as well as psychic phenomena such as mediums and near-death experiences. While ultimately the afterlife remains unknowable, Moreman's unique, in-depth exploration of both beliefs and experiences can help readers reach their own understanding of the afterlife and how to live.

**Understanding Death** - Angela Sumegi 2013-06-21

A comprehensive survey of how religions understand death, dying, and the afterlife, drawing on examples from Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, and Shamanic perspectives. Considers shared and differing views of death across the world's major religions, including on the nature of death itself, the reasons for it, the identity of those who die, religious rituals, and on how the living should respond to death. Places emphasis on the varying concepts of the 'self' or soul. Uses a thematic structure to facilitate a broader comparative understanding. Written in an accessible style to appeal to an undergraduate audience, it fills a major gap in current textbook literature.

**Death and Immortality in the Religions of the World** - Paul Badham 2023-05-23

Most of the world's religions hold a belief in some form of life after death. The editors of this major anthology seek a global perspective on the importance of these beliefs, based on religion, psychical research, and the natural sciences. Eleven chapters explore the afterlife teachings of religions around the world. In order to emphasize the

diversity beliefs - even across particular belief systems - some contributors write from within the traditions, while others offer critical and alternate views. The chapters cover afterlife beliefs in African religions, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism while raising a number of important questions. Is a belief in an afterlife necessary to provide meaning to the here and now? Can science provide the means of affirming such beliefs? A further four contributions address these questions directly, and critique the belief systems from the perspectives of philosophy and psychological research. The final chapter highlights the importance of research into states of consciousness during near-death and other mystical experiences. Taken as a whole, the book constitutes the most valuable resource on the subject to date. The editors conclude that in some respects, a global perspective does emerge - particularly that human beings are more than just our bodies, but are "composed of a physical and nonphysical element." The contributors are all prominent international scholars, including Kofi Asare Opoku, Daniel Cohn-Sherbok, Thomas McGowan, Sulayman S. Nyang, Salih Tug, Mariasusai Dhavamony, R. Balasubramanian, Saeng Chandra-Ngarm, Bruce R. Reichenbach, Antony Flew, Arthur S. Berger, David Lorimer, and the editors themselves.

Death and Religion: The Basics - Candi K. Cann  
2022-12-30

Death and Religion: The Basics provides a thorough and accessible introduction to dying, death, grief, and conceptions of the afterlife in world religions. It leads readers through considerations of how we understand meanings of death and after-death, and the theories and practices attached to these states of being, with recourse to various religious worldviews: Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Chinese Religions, and Native American belief systems. This inter-religious approach provides a rich, dynamic survey of varying and evolving cultural attitudes to death. Topics covered include: Religious perspectives of

"the good death" Grief, bereavement, and mourning Stages and definitions of death Burial, cremation, and disposition Remembrance rituals Religious theories of the afterlife Death and technology Featuring a glossary, suggestions for further reading in each chapter and key terms, this is the ideal text for students approaching the intersection of death and religion for the first time, and those in the fields of religious studies, thanatology, anthropology, philosophy, and sociology.

**World Religions in Practice** - Paul Gwynne  
2017-05-30

A new and expanded edition of a highly successful textbook on world religions with a comparative approach which explores how six major religions are lived and expressed through their customs, rituals and everyday practices. A new edition of this major textbook, exploring the world's great religions through their customs, rituals and everyday practices by focusing on the 'lived experience' This comparative study is enriched and broadened with the inclusion of a sixth religion, Daoism Takes a thematic, comparative and practical approach; each chapter explores a series of key themes including birth, death, ethics, and worship across all six religions at each time Broadens students' understanding by offering an impartial discussion of the similarities and differences between each religion Includes an increased range of student-friendly features, designed to allow students to engage with each religion and extend their understanding

**Dying to Eat** - Candi K. Cann 2018-01-05

Food has played a major role in funerary and memorial practices since the dawn of the human race. In the ancient Roman world, for example, it was common practice to build channels from the tops of graves into the crypts themselves, and mourners would regularly pour offerings of food and drink into these conduits to nourish the dead while they waited for the afterlife. Funeral cookies wrapped with printed prayers and poems meant to comfort mourners became popular in Victorian

England; while in China, Japan, and Korea, it is customary to offer food not only to the bereaved, but to the deceased, with ritual dishes prepared and served to the dead. *Dying to Eat* is the first interdisciplinary book to examine the role of food in death, bereavement, and the afterlife. The contributors explore the phenomenon across cultures and religions, investigating topics including tombstone rituals in Buddhism, Catholicism, and Shamanism; the role of death in the Moroccan approach to food; and the role of funeral casseroles and church cookbooks in the Southern United States. This innovative collection not only offers food for thought regarding the theories and methods behind these practices but also provides recipes that allow the reader to connect to the argument through material experience. Illuminating how cooking and corpses both transform and construct social rituals, *Dying to Eat* serves as a fascinating exploration of the foodways of death and bereavement.

**Hell and its Afterlife** - Margaret Toscano 2016-04-22

The notion of an infernal place of punishment for 'undesired' elements in human culture and human nature has a long history both as religious idea and as cultural metaphor. This book brings together a wide array of scholars who examine hell as an idea within the Christian tradition and its 'afterlife' in historical and contemporary imagination. Leading scholars grapple with the construction and meaning of hell in the past and investigate its modern utility as a means to describe what is perceived as horrific or undesirable in modern culture. While the idea of an infernal region of punishment was largely developed in the context of early Jewish and Christian religious culture, it remains a central belief for some Christians in the modern world. Hell's reception (its 'afterlife') in the modern world has extended hell's meaning beyond the religious realm; hell has become a pervasive image and metaphor in political rhetoric, in popular culture, and in the media. Bringing together scholars from a variety of fields to contribute to a wider

understanding of this fascinating and important cultural idea, this book will appeal to readers from historical, religious, literary and cultural perspectives.

**The Encyclopedia of World Religions** - Robert S. Ellwood 2008

Contains nearly 600 brief entries on the world's religious traditions.

**Life After Death** - Farnáz Ma'súmián 2002

**Chasing Immortality in World Religions** - Deborah M. Coulter-Harris 2016-07-29

Humans have been chasing immortality since the beginning of history, seeking answers to sickness and aging, death and the afterlife, and questioning the human condition. Analyzing ideas from ancient Sumer, Egypt, Greece and India, as well as the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, this study explores how early religious models influenced later beliefs about immortality, the afterlife, the human soul, resurrection, and reward and punishment. The author highlights shared teachings among the most influential religions and philosophies, concluding that humankind has not substantially changed its conceptions of immortality in 6,000 years. This continuity of belief may be due to chromosomal memory and cultural inheritance, or may represent a fundamental way of conceptualizing the afterlife to cope with mortality. Instructors considering this book for use in a course may request an examination copy here.

**Russell on Religion** - Bertrand Russell 1999

Bertrand Russell's religious convictions were controversial, and one of his best selling titles is 'Why I am not a Christian'. This is a comprehensive and coherent survey of Russell on religion, with notes for students.

**Death & Dying, Life & Living** - Charles A. Corr 2018-01-01

Practical and inspiring, *DEATH & DYING, LIFE & LIVING*, 8th Edition helps students learn how to navigate encounters with death, dying, and

bereavement. The authors integrate classical and contemporary material, present task-based approaches for individual and family coping, and include four chapters devoted to death-related issues faced by children, adolescents, young and middle-aged adults, and older adults. They also discuss a variety of cultural and religious perspectives that affect people's understanding and practices associated with such encounters. Practical guidelines for constructive communication encourage productive living in the face of death. You can use this book as a primary textbook for undergraduate and graduate courses in death, dying, and bereavement; as a supplementary text in related courses; or as a general resource. Important Notice: Media content referenced within the product description or the product text may not be available in the ebook version.

**How Different Religions View Death & Afterlife** - Christopher Jay Johnson 1998

This new second edition presents a clear, concise and comparative overview of the teachings and the death beliefs of the largest and fastest-growing religions in North America. Unlike many books on the subject of religious beliefs, the discourse here is refreshingly objective and nonproselytizing.

Furthermore, each chapter is written by a different expert or scholar who is internationally recognized as an authority on a particular faith. - Back cover.

**Encyclopedia of Satanism** - James Lewis

**The Palgrave Handbook of the Afterlife** - Yujin Nagasawa 2017-10-12

This unique Handbook provides a sophisticated, scholarly overview of the most advanced thought regarding the idea of life after death. Its comprehensive coverage encompasses historical, religious, philosophical and scientific thinking. Starting with an overview of ancient thought on the topic, *The Palgrave Handbook of the Afterlife* examines in detail the philosophical coherence of the main traditional notions of the nature of the afterlife including heaven, hell, purgatory and

rebirth. In addition (and breaking with traditional conceptions) it also explores the most recent exciting advance – digital models. Later sections include analysis of various possible metaphysical accounts that might make sense of the afterlife (including substance dualism, emergent dualism and materialism) and the science of near death experiences as well as the links between human psychology and our attitude to the afterlife. Key features: • Grounded in the most advanced philosophical, theological and scientific thinking • Contributions by eminent scholars from the world's top universities • Balanced treatment of fundamental issues that are relevant to everyone • Diverse approaches ranging from the religious to the scientific, from the optimistic to the pessimistic • A major section on the meaning of the afterlife which includes chapters on fear, purpose, evil, and issues regarding identity *The Palgrave Handbook of the Afterlife* is essential reading for scholars, researchers and advanced students researching attitudes to and effects of beliefs about death and life after death from philosophical, historical, religious, psychological and scientific perspectives.

*Christian Beliefs about Life After Death* - Paul Badham 1976

**The Everything World's Religions Book** - Kenneth Shouler 2010-03-18

An easy-to-use and comprehensive guide that explores the intriguing dogma and rituals, cultural convictions, and often-checkered backgrounds and histories of the world's religions.

**Encyclopedia of Reincarnation and Karma** - Norman C. McClelland 2018-10-15

Featuring over 1,200 topical entries arranged alphabetically, this encyclopedia provides diverse and detailed coverage of the related subjects of reincarnation and karma. Its in-depth examination ranges from ancient beliefs to those of the present, incorporating all relevant world cultures. A series of broad thematic entries cover foundational aspects while over a thousand highly focused entries deal

with various societies and organizations which support the concepts of reincarnation and karma; specific religious groups, sects, and associations; key individuals both historic and modern; and related beliefs, concepts, and practices.

### **Integrating Spirituality into Multicultural**

**Counseling** - Mary A. Fukuyama 1999-07-28

This is a very helpful book for mental health professionals providing therapy, counselling and health and social care services, as it explores and integrates multicultural and spiritual perspectives in a practical and informative manner. It highlights the fact that spiritual dimension has an enormous relevance to multicultural counselling' -

**Transcultural Psychiatry** This book challenges practitioners with the proposal that integrating spiritual values in multicultural counselling and exploring spirituality from multicultural perspectives are synergistic and mutually reciprocal processes. Chapter topics include: developmental models of the spiritual journey; integrating spiritual and mul

**Beyond the Threshold** - Christopher M. Moreman 2018

Beyond the Threshold explores afterlife beliefs and practices in world religions, including discussions of afterlife and metaphysical experiences. The second edition features a new chapter on African spiritual perspectives, as well as updated research on paranormal phenomena, updated statistics and research, and more.

**A Traveler's Guide to the Afterlife** - Mark Mirabello 2016-09-15

A grand survey of the world's death and afterlife traditions throughout history • Examines beliefs from many different cultures on the soul, heaven, hell, and reincarnation; instructions for accessing the different worlds of the afterlife; how one may become a god; and how ethics and the afterlife may not be connected • Explores techniques to communicate with the dead, including séance instructions • Includes an extensive bibliography of more than 900 sources from around the world

Drawing on death and afterlife traditions from cultures around the world, Mark Mirabello explores the many forms of existence beyond death and each tradition's instructions to access the afterlife. He examines beliefs on the soul, heaven, hell, and reincarnation and wisdom from Books of the Dead such as the Book of Going Forth by Day from Egypt, the Katha Upanishad from India, the Bardo Thodol from Tibet, the Golden Orphic Tablets from Greece, Lieh Tzu from China, and Heaven and its Wonders and Hell from Things Heard and Seen from 18th-century Europe. Considering the question "What is Death?" Mirabello provides answers from a wide range of ancient and modern thinkers, including scientist Nicholas Maxwell, the seer Emanuel Swedenborg, 1st-century Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna, and Greek philosopher Euripides, who opined that we may already be dead and only dreaming we are alive. He explores the trek of the soul through life and death with firsthand accounts of the death journey and notes that what is perceived as death here may actually be life somewhere else. He reveals how, in many traditions, ethics and the afterlife are not connected and how an afterlife is possible even without a god or a soul. Sharing evidence that consciousness is not simply a product of the brain, he offers a strong rebuttal to nihilists, materialists, and the Lokayata philosophical school of India who believe in the "finality" of death. He explains how specters and ghosts are produced and offers techniques to communicate with the dead as well as instructions for an out-of-body experience and the complete procedure for a séance. With an extensive bibliography of more than 900 sources, this guide offers comprehensive information on afterlife beliefs from the vast majority of cultures around the world and throughout history--a veritable "traveler's guide" to the afterlife.

**Religion in 50 More Words** - Aaron W. Hughes 2021-11-29

Religion in 50 More Words: A Redescriptive Vocabulary provides a succinct historical, social, and

political examination of some of the key words used in the modern study of religion. Differing from the first volume's more theoretical focus, this volume analyzes more common first order descriptive terms that are used throughout the field, inviting readers to theorize their traditional vocabulary. Topics covered include: • Atheism/Theism • Conversion • Cult • Evil • Fundamentalism • Idol • Magic • Pilgrimage • Ritual • Sacrifice Religion in 50 More Words submits such terms to a critical interrogation and subsequent redescription. This paves the way for a collective and more critical reframing of the field. The volume, along with Religion in 50 Words, provides an indispensable resource for students and academics working in the field of religious studies and cognate disciplines.

**Ultimate Journey: Death and Dying in the World's Major Religions** - Steven Rosen 2008-10-30

Like taxes, death is inevitable. Everyone experiences it sooner or later. This book offers perspectives on death and dying from all major religions, written by experts in each of those religions. Focusing on the major world traditions, it offers important information about what death and dying means to those practicing these faiths. The second part of the book adds a necessary and truly unique perspective - a personal look at how people actually die in the various world religions, as told by a hospital chaplain, with anecdotes and experiences that bring the death process to life, so to speak. Each chapter engages the theology of each religion, giving quotes from the literature of their respective scriptural traditions, to explain the process of dying, death, and the afterlife. In doing so, each author draws on the history of his respective tradition and looks at real-life figures, exemplars of the tradition, showing how practitioners view death and hope to one day engage the death process themselves.

**Death and Eternal Life** - John Hick 1994-01-01

In this cross-cultural, interdisciplinary study, John Hick draws upon major world religions, as well as biology, psychology, parapsychology, anthropology,

and philosophy, to explore the mystery of death. He argues that scientific and philosophical objections to the idea of survival after death can be challenged, and he claims that human inadequacy in facing suffering supports the basic religious argument for immortality.

**Satanism Today** - James R. Lewis 2001

A compendium of information on contemporary Satanism covers such topics as Satanic childbearing, the anticult movement, Hell's Angels, Charles Manson, and heavy metal music.

**Death and Religion in a Changing World** -

Kathleen Garces-Foley 2014-12-18

This comprehensive study of the intersection of death and religion offers a unique look at how religious people approach death in the twenty-first century. Previous scholarship has largely focused on traditional beliefs and paid little attention to how religious traditions evolve in relation to their changing social context. Employing a sociological approach, "Death and Religion in a Changing World" describes how people from a wide variety of faiths draw on and adapt traditional beliefs and practices as they deal with death in modern societies. The book includes coverage of newly emerging social and religious phenomena that are only just beginning to be analyzed by religion scholars, such as public shrines, the role of the media, spiritual bereavement groups, and the use of the Internet in death practices.

**Religion, Death, and Dying** - Lucy Bregman 2010

What do various spiritual and ethical belief systems have to say about modern medicine's approach to the end of life? Do all major religions characterize the afterlife in similar ways? How do funeral rites and rituals vary across different faiths? Now there is one resource that gathers leading scholars to address these questions and more about the many religious, ethical, and spiritual aspects of death, dying, and bereavement in America. "Religion, Death, and Dying" compares and contrasts the ways different faiths and ethical schools contemplate the end of life. The work is organized into three thematic volumes:

first, an examination of the contemporary medicalized death from the perspective of different religious traditions and the professions involved; second, an exploration of complex, often controversial issues, including the death of children, AIDS, capital punishment, and war; and finally, a survey of the funeral and bereavement rituals that have evolved under various religions."

Death and Dying in World Religions - Lucy Bregman 2009

**Rethinking Ghosts in World Religions** - Muzhou Pu 2009

The central theme of this volume is to re-examine the received concepts and images of ghosts in various religious cultures ranging from the Ancient Near East and Egypt to the Old Testament, the Classical Era, Early Medieval and Early Modern Europe, Early India, and Medieval China. As a religious phenomenon, the realm of ghosts has been less studied than the realm of the divine. Through a collaborative effort by scholars from different disciplines, this volume proposes a multi-cultural approach to construct a wider and complicated picture of the phenomenon of ghosts and spirits in human societies and to have a grasp of the various problems involved in understanding the phenomenon of ghost.

*Teaching Death and Dying* - Christopher M. Moreman 2008

The academic study of death rose to prominence during the 1960s. Courses on some aspect of death and dying can now be found at most institutions of higher learning. These courses tend to stress the psycho-social aspects of grief and bereavement, however, ignoring the religious elements inherent to the subject. This collection is the first to address the teaching of courses on death and dying from a religious-studies perspective. The book is divided into seven sections. The hope is that this volume will not only assist teachers in religious studies departments to prepare to teach unfamiliar and emotionally charged material, but also help to unify

a field that is now widely scattered across several disciplines.

The Routledge Companion to Death and Dying - Christopher M Moreman 2017-05-18

Few issues apply universally to people as poignantly as death and dying. All religions address concerns with death from the handling of human remains, to defining death, to suggesting what happens after life. The Routledge Companion to Death and Dying provides readers with an overview of the study of death and dying.

Questions of death, mortality, and more recently of end-of-life care, have long been important ones and scholars from a range of fields have approached the topic in a number of ways. Comprising over fifty-two chapters from a team of international contributors, the companion covers: funerary and mourning practices; concepts of the afterlife; psychical issues associated with death and dying; clinical and ethical issues; philosophical issues; death and dying as represented in popular culture. This comprehensive collection of essays will bring together perspectives from fields as diverse as history, philosophy, literature, psychology, archaeology and religious studies, while including various religious traditions, including established religions like Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism as well as new or less widely known traditions such as the Spiritualist Movement, the Church of Latter Day Saints, and Raëlianism. The Routledge Companion to Death and Dying is essential reading for students and researchers in religious studies, philosophy and literature.

**Travels in the Netherworld** - Bryan J. Cuevas 2008-04-02

In *Travels in the Netherworld*, Bryan J. Cuevas examines a fascinating but little-known genre of Tibetan narrative literature about the *delok*, ordinary men and women who claim to have died, traveled through hell, and then returned from the afterlife. Providing a clear, detailed analysis of four vivid return-from-death tales, including the stories

of a Tibetan housewife, a lama, a young noble woman, and a Buddhist monk, Cuevas argues that these narratives express ideas about death and the afterlife that held wide currency among all classes of faithful Buddhists in Tibet.

**Death and Afterlife** - Hiroshi Ōbayashi 1992

Examines the subject of death and immortality in Africa, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece. Also from the point of view of the Old Testament, New Testament, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Tibetan Trantric and Chinese religions.

**Beyond Death** - D. Cohn-Sherbok 1995-03-01

'In a book of such varied contents, it is certain that everyone will find something which will challenge and inform - and indeed, on occasion, inspire.' - John Bowker, Church Times Throughout history human beings have been preoccupied with personal survival after death. As a consequence, most world religions proclaim that life continues beyond the grave, and they have depicted the Hereafter in a variety of forms. These various conceptions constitute answers to the most perplexing spiritual questions: Will we remember our former lives in the Hereafter? Will we have bodies? Can bodiless souls recognize each other? Will we continue to have personal identity? Will we be punished or rewarded, or absorbed into the Godhead? These issues serve as the basis of this collection of essays which provide a framework for understanding traditional conceptions of the Hereafter as well as new perspectives.

**The Early History of Heaven** - J. Edward Wright  
2002-03-28

When we think of "heaven," we generally conjure up positive, blissful images. Heaven is, after all, where God is and where good people go after death to receive their reward. But how and why did Western cultures come to imagine the heavenly realm in such terms? Why is heaven usually thought to be "up there," far beyond the visible sky? And what is the source of the idea that the post mortem abode of the righteous is in this heavenly realm with God? Seeking to discover the roots of these familiar notions, this volume traces the backgrounds, origin, and development of early Jewish and Christian speculation about the heavenly realm -- where it is, what it looks like, and who its inhabitants are. Wright begins his study with an examination of the beliefs of ancient Israel's neighbors Egypt and Mesopotamia, reconstructing the intellectual context in which the earliest biblical images of heaven arose. A detailed analysis of the Hebrew biblical texts themselves then reveals that the Israelites were deeply influenced by images drawn from the surrounding cultures. Wright goes on to examine Persian and Greco-Roman beliefs, thus setting the stage for his consideration of early Jewish and Christian images, which he shows to have been formed in the struggle to integrate traditional biblical imagery with the newer Hellenistic ideas about the cosmos. In a final chapter Wright offers a brief survey of how later Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions envisioned the heavenly realms. Accessible to a wide range of readers, this provocative book will interest anyone who is curious about the origins of this extraordinarily pervasive and influential idea.