

# [PDF] God Is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run The World

**Stephen Prothero - pdf download free book**

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## **Description:**

### **Amazon Exclusive: A Letter from Stephen Prothero**

On my last visit to Jerusalem, I struck up a conversation with an elderly man in the Muslim Quarter. As a shopkeeper, he seemed keen to sell me jewelry. As a Sufi mystic, he seemed even keener to engage me in matters of the spirit. He told me that religions are human inventions, so we must avoid the temptation of worshipping Islam rather than Allah. What matters is opening yourself up to the mystery that goes by the word God, and that can be done in any religion. As he tempted me with more turquoise and silver, he asked me what I was doing in Jerusalem. When I told him I was researching a book on the world's religions, he put down the jewelry, looked at me intently, and,

placing a finger on my chest for emphasis, said, "Do not write false things about the religions."

As I wrote *God is Is Not One*, I came back repeatedly to this conversation. I never wavered from trying to write true things, but I knew that some of the things I was writing he would consider false.

Mystics often claim that the great religions differ only in the inessentials. They may be different paths but they are ascending the same mountain and they converge at the peak. Throughout this book I give voice to these mystics: the Daoist sage Laozi, who wrote his classic the *Daodejing* just before disappearing forever into the mountains; the Sufi poet Rumi, who instructs us to "gamble everything for love"; and the Christian mystic Julian of Norwich, who revels in the feminine aspects of God. But my focus is not on these spiritual superstars. It is on ordinary religious folk—the stories they tell, the doctrines they affirm, and the rituals they practice. And these stories, doctrines, and rituals could not be more different. Christians do not go on the hajj to Mecca; Jews do not affirm the doctrine of the Trinity; and neither Buddhists nor Hindus trouble themselves about sin or salvation.

Of course, religious differences trouble us, since they seem to portend, if not war itself, then at least rumors thereof. But as I researched and wrote this book I came to appreciate how opening our eyes to religious differences can help us appreciate the unique beauty of each of the great religions--the radical freedom of the Daoist wanderer, the contemplative way into death of the Buddhist monk, and the joy in the face of the divine life of the Sufi shopkeeper.

I plan to send my Sufi shopkeeper a copy of this book. I have no doubt he will disagree with parts of it. But I hope he will recognize my effort to avoid writing "false things," even when I disagree with friends. --Stephen Prothero

--This text refers to the edition.

**From Publishers Weekly** Expressing his astonishment, Prothero (*Religious Literacy*) arrives late at the party that has been celebrating for years the diversity and plurality of the world's religions. Although he is correct in asserting that an entire generation of scholars, teachers, and interested readers have claimed in the interest of religious tolerance that the world's religions were simply different paths to the same one God, such a claim functions as little more than a red herring in what is otherwise a useful introduction to the world's religions. Once past that assertion, Prothero sets up a helpful model for examining each religion on its own terms: he explores a problem that dominates the religion, the religion's solution to the problem, the technique the religion uses to move from problem to solution, and the exemplar who charts a path from problem to solution. For example, in Buddhism the problem is suffering; the solution is nirvana; the technique is the Noble Eightfold Path; and the exemplars are the arhats, bodhisattvas, and lamas. Despite his naïveté about contemporary interreligious dialogue, Prothero's survey is a useful introduction to eight of the world's great religions.

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