



# **The Soul of Christianity: Restoring the Great Tradition (Plus)**

*Huston Smith*

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"I have tried to describe a Christianity which is fully compatible with everything we now know, and to indicate why Christians feel privileged to give their lives to it."

—Huston Smith

In his most personal and passionate book on the spiritual life, renowned author, scholar, and teacher of world religions Huston Smith turns to his own life-long religion, Christianity. With stories and personal anecdotes, Smith not only presents the basic beliefs and essential teachings of Christianity, but argues why religious belief matters in today's secular world.

Though there is a wide variety of contemporary interpretations of Christianity—some of them conflicting—Smith cuts through these to describe Christianity's "Great Tradition," the common faith of the first millennium of believers, which is the trunk of the tree from which Christianity's many branches, twigs, and leaves have grown. This is not the exclusivist Christianity of strict fundamentalists, nor the liberal, watered-down Christianity practiced by many contemporary churchgoers. In exposing biblical literalism as unworkable as well as enumerating the mistakes of modern secularists, Smith presents the very soul of a real and substantive faith, one still relevant and worth believing in.

Smith rails against the hijacked Christianity of politicians who exploit it for their own needs. He decries the exercise of business that widens the gap between rich and poor, and fears education has lost its sense of direction. For Smith, the media has become a business that sensationalizes news rather than broadening our understanding, and art and music have become commercial and shocking rather than enlightening. Smith reserves his harshest condemnation, however, for secular modernity, which has stemmed from the misreading of science—the mistake of assuming that "absence of evidence" of a scientific nature is "evidence of absence." These mistakes have all but banished faith in transcendence and the Divine from mainstream culture and pushed it to the margins.

Though the situation is grave, these modern misapprehensions can be corrected, says Smith, by reexamining the great tradition of Christianity's first millennium and reaping the lessons it holds for us today. This fresh examination of the Christian worldview, its history, and its major branches provides the deepest, most authentic vision of Christianity—one that is both tolerant and substantial, traditional and relevant.

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