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# Notes on Recent Publications

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*Editor's Note: Listed below (in the order of appearance) are the section titles in which notes appear. No single issue of RSR will likely include every section; however, those sections that are included will always appear in this order.*

Texts, Tools, and Media  
 Comparative Studies  
 Methodology and Theory  
 Psychology of Religion  
 Sociology and Anthropology of Religion  
 Gender Studies  
 Religion and Science  
 Ritual, Cult, Worship  
 Philosophy of Religion  
 Theology  
 Ethics  
 Arts, Literature, Culture, and Religion  
 Ancient Near East  
 Greece, Rome, Greco-Roman Period  
 Zoroastrianism  
 Christian Origins  
 History of Christianity  
 History of Christianity (through Early Modern Period)  
 Modern European Christianity  
 Jewish Thought  
 Judaism: Hellenistic through Late Antiquity  
 Judaism: Medieval  
 Judaism: Modern  
 Islam  
 Africa  
 The Americas: Central and South America  
 The Americas: Canada  
 The Americas: U.S.A.  
 South Asia  
 East Asia  
 Buddhism  
 Inner Asia  
 Australia and the Pacific

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## Texts, Tools, and Media

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**WORLD RELIGIONS: WESTERN RELIGIONS.** Edited by Willard G. Oxtoby. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996. Pp. 597. \$27.95.

**WORLD RELIGIONS: EASTERN RELIGIONS.** Edited by Willard G. Oxtoby. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996. Pp. 554. \$27.95.

Now into its third edition, *World Religions* has established a reputation as a solid and versatile textbook. Draft chapters were tested on students in University of Toronto world religions courses. Printed in a "light" typeface in grayscale ink on acid free paper, the text gives a daunting

first impression, made less formidable by an easy, narrative style. Both production and editing combine to achieve readability, without sacrifice to thoroughness in a text that succeeds as a global overview of the world's religions. The Western volume covers Judaism (A. Segal), Zoroastrianism (W. Oxtoby), Christianity (Oxtoby), and Islam (M. Ayoub), framed by Oxtoby's introductory and closing essays. In the penultimate essay, "Rivals, Survivals, Revivals," Oxtoby instances the Baha'i Faith as a "rival" of Islam, treats African traditional religion and Amerindian spirituality as "survivals," and interprets witchcraft and New Age movements as "revivals." The closing essay deals with basic structures of monotheism, dualism, and polytheism, and typologizes the conflicting interests of mission, competition, and pluralism. The Eastern volume covers Hindu and Jain traditions (V. Narayanan), Sikh (Oxtoby), Buddhist (R. C. Amore and J. Ching), East Asian (Ching), and adjoining aboriginal and Pacific traditions (Oxtoby). The editor's closing essay, "The Nature of Religion," discusses problems of Eurocentrism in category formation, and reviews methodologies and theories of religion. "Key Dates" and "Key Terms" brace each of the major chapters. Sidebars and photos enrich the text. Transliteration is meticulous. A companion multimedia CD-ROM is now under development. Revised edition planned. Recommended for survey courses.

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## Comparative Studies

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**MEDIATORS: NINE STARS IN THE HUMAN SKY, FROM MOSES TO MUHAMMAD.** By John Macquarrie. New York: Continuum, 1996. Pp. viii + 171. \$19.95, ISBN 0-8264-0887-7.

Written by a former Professor of Divinity at Oxford, the book is addressed "primarily to Western and Christian readers, as a way into the current dialogue among the great religions of the world." Written from a Christian point of view, with the intention of learning from other traditions, his meditations on the uses and limitations of interreligious dialogue are of special interest. The mediators are broadly defined as human figures—"spiritual geniuses"—who have communicated a conception of a holy being to their people; they are, besides the two of the title, Zoroaster, Lao-zu, Buddha, Confucius, Socrates,

Krishna, and Jesus. Nine brief and elegant biographies of these figures, accessible to a general reading public, form the main part of the work. The author is interested in mediators as human beings who have lived in history, an approach that frequently involves him in distinguishing between legend and history—though the "symbolic truth" of legend is also acknowledged. The ecumenical spirit of mediators is very occasionally marred by dubious or ungenerous judgments, several in the chapter on Muhammad, for instance.

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## Methodology & Theory

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**RELIGIOUS STUDIES: THE MAKING OF A DISCIPLINE.** By Walter H. Capps. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. ISBN 0-8006-2535-8.

Capps joins the congeries of authors intent upon legitimizing religious studies by articulating a history of the ideas which shape the field. He provides overviews of a vast array of thinkers who have influenced the academic study of religion; the book is a useful reference tool, despite its failure to provide footnotes for quotations. Capps's aim is to identify the "single argument," the "continuous narrative" which constitutes religious studies *qua* discipline. Second-order traditions are key to discipline formation and maintenance; it is just this second-order tradition which Capps seeks to "compose" and "narrate." Beginning with Descartes and Kant, he understands religious studies as an Enlightenment product. His narrative groups the academic study of religion around key questions: What is religion? How did religion come into being? How shall religion be described? What is the function or purpose of religion? In addition to presenting successive and parallel renditions of these questions and their answers, Capps addresses himself to how religion is expressed, to relations between religions in a discussion of comparison and the question of whether all religions are true, and to the future of the field.

Capps's conclusions emphasize multiplicity and commonality. On the one hand, "the subject is multiple, and the methods of approach are numerous." On the other hand, religious studies reveals throughout "the same intention, namely, to make religion intelligible." Capps's history of ideas is indeed a legitimizing history, offering