

RELIGION

Like 'family' or 'work', religion is inseparable from human life in almost every age and place. Yet religion scarcely ever appears in social history museums, unless as a cultural identifier of minority groups, or because of its big buildings.

We have in Europe an odd perspective on religion. Almost uniquely here, religion (at least as traditionally defined) is playing a smaller and smaller part in our lives. In the past, on the contrary, it dominated the lives of everyone, and in most of the world it continues to do so today.

Warning

'Religion, I think, suffers from being one of two things: very very very boring, or much too exciting. Either one displays gloomy artefacts, retreating into art history just to bring some life into it, or one finds oneself confronting emotion in the raw' (Tony Buckley).

Bibliographic references

There are millions of books about religion. The following is an initial selection of a few that might be helpful to a secular curator planning an object-based project on some aspect of religion. There are lots of gaps, notably on Nonconformity and its chapels in England, and on Scotland, Wales and Ireland generally. Please add any references you may have found helpful.

Religion in general

- Armstrong, Karen. 1999. *A History of God*. London: Vintage.

Karen Armstrong, an English ex-nun, is a very readable and generally reliable writer on religion. This book outlines the development of the three great monotheist religions. Her *The Battle for God*, which tries to explain the growth of 'fundamentalism' throughout the world, and *Islam: a Short History* are also worth reading.

- Bocock, Robert & Thompson, Kenneth (Eds) 1985. *Religion and Ideology*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

An Open University Reader containing many of the classic texts on religion: Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Freud etc.

- Hinnells, John R. (Ed.) 2000. 2nd edn. *The New Penguin Handbook of Living Religions*. London: Penguin Books.

Scholarly and clear introduction to most of them, from African Religions to Zoroastrianism.

- Connolly, Peter. 1998. *Approaches to the Study of Religion*. London: Cassell.
A series of essays outlining some of the approaches that go to make up 'religious studies': anthropological, feminist, phenomenological, psychological, sociological and theological.
- Smart, Ninian. 1989. *The World's Religions: Old Traditions and Modern Transformations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Popular introduction by a leading scholar of religious studies.

Religion in modern Britain

- De-la-Noy, Michael. 1993. *The Church of England: a Portrait*. London: Simon & Schuster.

A very personal, but well-informed, view.

- Eary, Mark & Myers, Gilly. (Eds.) 2001. *Common Worship Today: an Illustrated Guide to Common Worship*. London: HarperCollins.

Illustrated popular guide to worship in the Church of England.

- Francis, Leslie J. 1996. *Church Watch: Christianity in the Countryside*. London: SPCK.
- Mulgan, Geoff & Jupp, Ben (Eds.) 'Keeping the faiths: the new covenant between religious belief and secular power', *Demos Quarterly* 11, 1997.

A valuable collection of essays about religion in Britain in the '90s.

- Ryan, Maurice. 1996, *Another Ireland: an Introduction to Ireland's Ethnic-Religious Minority Communities*. Belfast: Stranmillis College.

The equivalent to Weller for Ireland.

- Weller, Paul. 1997. Ed. *Religion in the UK: a Multi-Faith Directory*. Derby: University of Derby & Inter Faith Network for the UK.

Comprehensive directory of national and local religious organisations, from Church of England dioceses to the Rastafarian Society, with useful descriptions of the principal – and many smaller - faith communities.

Experiencing religion

Three books, based on interviews, give a flavour of what it is like to believe:

- Danziger, Danny. 1989. *The Cathedral: Behind Open Doors – Talking with People Who Give their Lives to a Cathedral*. London: Viking.
- Loudon, Mary. 1992. *Unveiled: Nuns Talking*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Loudon, Mary. 1994. *Revelations*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

History of religion in Britain and Ireland

- Bettey, J. H. 1987. *Church and Parish: a Guide for Local Historians*. London: Batsford.

Useful but dry guide for local historians in England; emphasis on organisational matters.

- Duffy, Eamon. 1992. *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c.1400-c.1580*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

At once a highly scholarly account of the period, a paean of praise for late-Medieval religion as ordinary people experienced it, and a fascinating analysis of how an elite group used state power to impose an utterly different religion.

- Kenny, Mary. 1997. *Goodbye to Catholic Ireland: a Social, Personal and Cultural History from the Fall of Parnell to the Realm of Mary Robinson*. London: Sinclair-Stevenson.

A highly personal account of the decline of religion in Ireland, by an Irish feminist struggling with a love-hate relationship with the Church.

- McLeod, Hugh. 1995. *European Religion in the Age of Great Cities, 1830-1930*. ??

Has religion declined in the West, and if so, how, and above all why? There is a huge literature on the 'secularization' debate. This collection of essays, edited by one of the principal scholars in the field, makes a good introduction.

- Williams, Sarah. 'The Problem of Belief: the Place of Oral History in the Study of Popular Religion'. In: *Oral History* 24.2. Autumn 1996. 27-34.
- Wilson, Stephen. 2000. *The Magical Universe: Everyday Ritual and Magic in Pre-Modern Europe*. London: Hambledon & London.

'Official' and 'unofficial' religion have always had an uncomfortable relationship, feeding and feeding off each other in a constantly changing pattern. This magisterial survey of 'unofficial' religion shows how pre-modern people coped with life's uncertainty, and puts sensational aspects of magic, like witchcraft, in a wider context.

Churches & chapels

Books about churches and chapels are mostly written from the point of view of architectural history. These are a few which take more account of their *function*.

- Brooks, Chris and Saint, Andrew. 1995. *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society*. Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press.

Nine essays on churches and chapels in Britain and Ireland: how they came to be built and their place in a fast-changing society.

- Rodwell, Warwick. 1989. *The English Heritage Book of Church Archaeology*. London: B. T. Batsford/English Heritage.

Excellent introduction by the *doyen* of church archaeology in Britain.

- Jones, Anthony (1984) *Welsh Chapels*. Cardiff: National Museum of Wales.

Heavily-illustrated booklet gives a valuable introduction.

- Yates, Nigel. pb 2001. *Buildings, Faith and Worship: the Liturgical Arrangement of Anglican Churches 1600-1900*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

A substantial study by the one-time head of museums and archives in Kent.

The material culture of religion

- Morgan, David and Promey, Sally M. 2000. *Exhibiting the Visual Culture of American Religions*. Valparaiso: Brauer Museum of Art.

The study of the material culture of religion is much more developed in the US than in the UK. The introductory essays to this exhibition catalogue offer a good brief introduction to it. Valuable bibliography.

Religion in museums

- Paine, Crispin, ed. 2000. *Godly Things: Museums, Objects and Religion*. London: Leicester University Press.

Fourteen varied essays on how museums handle and present religion.

- Boily, Danielle et al. 1994. *Religious Objects: User's Guide and Terminology*. Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux.

Thesaurus in English and French of Roman Catholic liturgical objects.

Sacred Places and tourism

- Shackley, Myra. 2001. *Managing Sacred Sites*. London: Continuum.

An excellent first study, from an international perspective.

Judaism

- Cohn-Sherbock, Dan. 1996. *Modern Judaism*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.
- Video: *Sabbaths and Festivals* and *From the Cradle to the Grave*. The Jewish Museum.

Hinduism

- Blurton, Richard. 1992. *Hindu Art*. London: British Museum Press.

Excellent introduction to the visual culture of Hinduism.

- Kanitkar, V. P. (Hemant) & Cole, W. Owen, 1995. *Teach Yourself Books*. London: Hodder Headline.

Gives a good idea of what it is like to be a Hindu in Britain today.

- Knott, Kim. 1997. *Hinduism: a Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: OUP.

Islam

- Geaves, Ron. 2000. *The Sufis of Britain: an exploration of Muslim identity*. Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press.

Not only fascinating in itself, but a crucial reminder that other faiths in the UK are no more monolithic than is Christianity.

- Geaves, Ron. 1996. *Sectarian Influences within Islam in Britain, with Reference to the Concepts of 'Ummah' and 'Community'*. Community Religious Project Monograph Series. Leeds: University of Leeds.

Sikhism

- Cole, Owen W. 1994. *Teach Yourself Sikhism*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

A readable introduction by the scholar who largely introduced Sikhism to a wider UK public. Concentrates on orthodox, *Khalsa*, Sikhism.

- McLeod, Hew. 1997. *Sikhism*. London: Penguin Books.

Introduction by the leading scholar of Sikhism.

- Singh, Nikky-Guninder Kaur (trans.) 1996. *The Name of My Beloved: Verses of the Sikh Gurus*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.

Beautiful translation of the principal parts of the Sikh Holy Book.

- Tatla, Darshan Singh and Nesbitt, Eleanor M. 1994. (2nd edn.) *Sikhs in Britain: an Annotated Bibliography*. Coventry: Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations.

Buddhism

- Erricker, Clive. 1995. *Buddhism*. Abingdon: Teach Yourself Books.

- Keown, Damien. 1996. *Buddhism: a Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: OUP.

- Waterhouse, Helen. 1997. *Buddhism in Bath: Adaptation and Authority*. Community Religions Project Monograph Series. Leeds: University of Leeds.

New Age Religion

- Heelas, Paul. 1996. *The New Age Movement: the Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

- Sutcliffe, Steven and Bowman, Marion. 2000. *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

14 essays on alternative religious movements from Theosophy to Mind-Body-Spirit.

Important museum collections

Virtually every museum in Britain must hold 'religious' objects. Most of them, though, are seen as works of art or ethnographic items, and there are virtually no collections of British social history material which can be identified as 'religious'. A very few social history museums do include significant displays on religion, for example the Museum of Scotland, and a few cathedral and other religious sites have museums attached.

However, there is only one museum of religion in the UK:

St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art

2 Castle Street
Glasgow G4 0RH
0141 553 2557

Curator: Harry Dunlop

Film, photographic and oral history collections

Specialist groups and their journals

There are dozens, if not hundreds of groups and journals devoted to religion. Most are far too specialised for an introductory page like this. The following may be helpful:

- Society for Church Archaeology
- An attempt is being made - if a publisher can be found - to set up a new international journal, provisionally entitled *Material Religion: a Journal on the Study and Exhibition of the Material Culture of Religions*. Contact Crispin Paine for details: crispin@soton.ac.uk.
- *Kindred Spirit* is the principal glossy monthly of the New Age movement in Britain.

Universities

Many universities have departments of theology (usually meaning Christian theology), or religious studies, or both. History and Sociology departments, too, often contain people who are interested in religion. Their websites will usually reveal the names of staff who might be helpful.

Websites

Gateways

Three UK-based gateways are good places to start:

- www.philtar.ucsm.ac.uk
A Gateway to electronic sources and resources for teaching and learning in the academic areas of Philosophy, Theology and Religion, maintained by St Martin's College, Lancaster.
- <http://www.multifaithnet.org>
A Gateway maintained by the Religious Resource and Research Centre at the University of Derby
- <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/gthursby/rel/>

Religion Religions Religious Studies: information and links for study and interpretation of religions. A list of religion resources, including links to a huge range of essays on different religions, to electronic journals, and to online reference sources and libraries.

Some sites

- http://www.cofe.anglican.org/site_guide.html
Site of the Anglican Church.
- <http://www.stir.ac.uk/Departments/Arts/ReligiousStudies/C&R/c&rguide.htm#top>
Site of the journal *Culture and Religion*.
- <http://www.anglocatholicism.org/>
Anglo-Catholic socialism: lots of essays, pictures and resources.