



Religion in America: A Very Short Introduction

Timothy Beal

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It's hard to think of a single aspect of American culture, past or present, in which religion has not played a major role. The roles religion plays, moreover, become more bewilderingly complex and diverse every day. For all those who want--whether out of curiosity, necessity, or civic duty--a vivid picture and fuller understanding of the current reality of religion in America, this Very Short Introduction is the go-to book they need.

Timothy Beal describes many aspects of religion in contemporary America that are typically ignored in other books on the subject, including religion in popular culture and counter-cultural groups; the growing phenomenon of "hybrid" religious identities, both individual and collective; the expanding numbers of new religious movements, or NRMs, in America; and interesting examples of "outsider religion," such as Paradise Gardens in Georgia and the People Love People House of God in Ohio. He also offers an engaging overview of the history of religion in America, from Native American traditions to the present day. Beal sees three major forces shaping the present and future of religion in America: first, unprecedented religious diversity, which will continue to grow in the decades to come; second, the information revolution and the emergence of a new network society; and third, the rise of consumer culture. Taken together, these forces offer the potential to create a new American pluralism that would enrich society in unimaginable ways, but they also threaten the great ideal of *e pluribus unum*.

With visual aids that help readers navigate America's diverse religious landscape, this informative, thoughtful, and provocative book is a must-read in the emerging public conversation concerning religion in America.

About the Series: Combining authority with wit, accessibility, and style, **Very Short Introductions** offer an introduction to some of life's most interesting topics. Written by experts for the newcomer, they demonstrate the finest contemporary thinking about the central problems and issues in hundreds of key topics, from philosophy to Freud, quantum theory to Islam.

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