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How Different Religion View Death and Afterlife

C. Margaret Hall
Georgetown University

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to the possibility of narrow and rigid opinions that will result in unexamined choices (we already know that) but in the "value" of solving problems through an analysis that finds solutions from equally-weighted different approaches.

My advice? Grab Lewis for the next plane trip and keep Bruhn and Henderson with its rich references on a nearby shelf!

How Different Religions View Death and Afterlife, edited by Christopher Jay Johnson and Marsha G. McGee. Philadelphia: The Charles Press, 1991. 352 pp., \$14.95 paper. ISBN 0-914783-55-6.

C. Margaret Hall

Georgetown University

This is a compendium of specialist surveys of varied religions—Assemblies of God, Baha'i, Baptist, Buddhist, Churches of Christ, Mormon, Hindu, Islam, Judaism, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, Unitarian, and Methodist—with attention to their perspectives on death. The editors describe their analytic interests in an introduction and conclusion.

The Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data show that *How Different Religions View Death and Afterlife* is a reprint of *Encounters with Eternity* (1986). As a consequence, this book is not as clearly focused as its title suggests. Although each religion needs general description, in order to put views on death in perspective, the end result is encyclopedic rather than thematic.

The arrangement of chapters also detracts from the central topic of contrasting beliefs. The editors describe their selected religions as falling into three groups—"America's most heavily populated organized Christian denominations; smaller but rapidly growing or sociologically and theologically interesting Christian groups; and the largest non-Christian denominations represented in American society" (p. 12)—but arrange their chapters in alphabetical order. Although objective, systematic orderliness may enhance quick-and-easy reference usefulness, it offers no substantive guide to readers. This book would have been more comprehensible if the editors had grouped religions according to similarities or contrasts in belief and practices, or had placed their chapters in thematic sections with formal introductions.

How Different Religions View Death and Afterlife could be used as a resource text for undergraduate, graduate, or professional courses which examine the influence of religious beliefs on qualities of life and death. However, in spite of its

scope of study, and the inferences that clinical sociologists and sociological practitioners could make about specific religions and behavior, this book is essentially catalogued information. More substantive analysis by the editors (and others) is badly needed, and the introduction and conclusion are too sparse to give readers a firm grasp of issues raised. The appendix—key questions about death and afterlife, with answers from all fifteen religions—moves toward accomplishing the task, but an appendix cannot substitute for direct analysis and discussion.

The quality of specialist contributions is uneven, and their varied formats distract rather than aid the absorption of complex data. Although brevity is necessary and appropriate for analytic purposes, some distinctions must be maintained. For example, the editors note that a Reform perspective is used in the review of Judaism, but this author does not comment about substantive differences among Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jews, or identify himself with Reform Judaism. In addition, the editors should have assumed responsibility for the consistent use of inclusive language.

How Different Religions View Death and Afterlife provides some valuable information for making connections between beliefs and behavior, and may meet the editors' stated purpose of broadening readers' understanding and empathy by clarifying their own religious views. As religion is a significant clinical variable—at individual, family, community, and social levels—sociological practitioners can benefit from the substance of this book.

Timing the De-escalation of International Conflicts, by Louis Kriesberg and Stuart J. Thorson. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991. 304 pp.

Dennis O. Kaldenberg
Oregon State University

The ancient aphorism reminds us that "To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Applied to conflict resolution, it would suggest that there is a time to intervene in a conflict and a time to refrain from intervening. "This book offers assessments of when the time is actually right for a de-escalatory effort" (p. 1). The authors use an introduction and eleven major essays to speak to the issue of timing in international conflict de-escalation. The articles in the book were chosen to address three sets of issues in timing de-escalation: 1) the conditions conducive to de-escalation, 2) the effectiveness of various strategies in various conditions, and 3) the consequences of acting or failing to act at either the