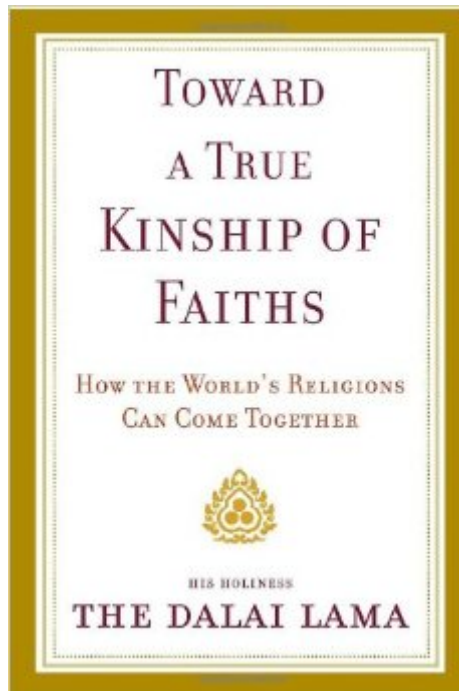


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Toward A True Kinship Of Faiths: How The World's Religions Can Come Together



Synopsis

No country, no culture, no person today is untouched by what happens in the rest of the world. Technological innovation, environmental degradation, economic gain & loss, nuclear weapons, instant communication have all created unprecedented familiarity among the world's many cultures. With this historic development, the Dalai Lama understands that the essential task of humanity in the 21st Century is to cultivate peaceful coexistence. Many believe in the inevitability of an escalating clash of civilizations. Peaceful coexistence has long been problematic with religion, and while previous conflicts over religious differences may have been significant and regrettable, they did not threaten the very survival of humanity. Now, when extremists can persuade followers with the immense emotional power of faith and have access to powerful technological resources, a single spark could ignite a powder keg of frightening proportions. Yet the Dalai Lama shows how the challenges of globalization can also move us in another direction, to a deeper plane where nations, cultures, and individuals connect through their shared human nature. All major religions confront the same perennial questions; each have distinct forms of expression. But this marvelous diversity of insight has the potential for inspiring dialogue which can enrich everyone's pursuit of wisdom. All faith traditions turn to compassion as a guiding principle for living a good life. It is the task of all people with an aspiration to spiritual perfection to affirm the fundamental value of the compassion. In this way we can truly develop a deep recognition of the value of other faiths, and on that basis, we can cultivate genuine respect. In *Toward a True Kinship of Faiths*, the Dalai Lama also explores where differences between religions can be genuinely appreciated without serving as a source of conflict. The establishment of genuine harmony is not dependent upon accepting that all religions are fundamentally the same or that they lead to the same place. Many fear that recognizing the value of another faith is incompatible with having devotion to the truth of one's own. Nevertheless, the Dalai Lama profoundly shows how a sincere believer can, with integrity, be a pluralist in relation to other religions without compromising commitment to the essence of the doctrinal teachings of their own faith. An issue of central importance for the Dalai Lama personally and for the entire world in general, *Toward a True Kinship of Faiths* offers a hopeful yet realistic look at how humanity must step into the future.

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Customer Reviews

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has become a widely respected and revered figure by many people who do not practice Tibetan Buddhism. The many writings under his name explore a variety of topics from Buddhist belief and practice to secular ethics, and to the relationship between science and religion. In his new book, "Toward a True Kinship of Faiths" (2010), the Dalai Lama expands upon ideas in many of his earlier writings to discuss the nature of religious pluralism. The book moves both on a personal and on a community, world-wide level. The issue the book addresses is how individuals and religions may be committed to their own individual faith traditions, or their secularism, while respecting the faith traditions or the secularism of other people or religions. Of course, this is a difficult, multi-leveled inquiry that has been asked and explored many times. The question is important because all too often religion becomes a means of divisiveness and anger among individuals and groups rather than a source of shared humanity. The book begins on a more personal level than usual with a work of the Dalai Lama and proceeds towards the more abstract. Thus, in 1959, when as a young man of 24 the Dalai Lama fled Tibet for India, he had experience little of religious life beyond his own Buddhism. Over the years as he learned and gradually became an international figure, the Dalai Lama's horizons broadened. Early on, beginning in 1956 with a trip to India, he came into closer contact with other Asian religions such as Hinduism and Jainism and learned to appreciate them more than he had been able to do earlier with his strictly Buddhist education.

Religion is one of the great paradoxes of human history. It has been the justification for division, strife, and even bloodshed, but also for generosity, humanitarianism, and the personal and

corporate improvement of countless people. Today we see a wide variety of opinions about religion, from those who insist everyone must confess a particular sectarian doctrine to those who believe religion ought to be abolished entirely. Both of these extremes seem unlikely: the world's six or seven billion people are not all going to come to believe the same thing, nor will they all be convinced to simply drop religious faith from their lives. Instead, people will continue to believe and practice a wide variety of spiritualities. Given this reality, is there any way for the world's religions and their adherents to peacefully coexist? In "Towards a True Kinship of Faiths," the Dalai Lama offers both a story and a possible answer that arises from that story. In the book's first several chapters, His Holiness talks about his encounters with other religions throughout his life. He says candidly that when he was young, he believed Buddhism was the only true way, and that others religions "must, at best, be so-so." Over the course of many years, however, he spoke to and became friends with representatives of many faiths, from other Indian traditions like Hinduism and Jainism to the great monotheistic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Through these meetings, he began to see that each of these religions inculcates a similar set of ethics, in which followers are enjoined to set aside their own selves in the interest of having compassion for others, and he came to appreciate the manifold and ingenious ways different traditions instilled these virtues.

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