



Death and Dying in World Religions: An Anthology

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Religions have always concerned themselves with questions of death and afterlife. It defines what makes us human to be aware of our own future deaths, and to prepare for them and ritualize the deaths of our fellow humans. Religious traditions have held sway over the activities since the start of human prehistory. Yet this answer needs explanation and qualification. When the modern American "death and dying" movement started in the 1960s, it focused on the psychological experiences of dying in large hi-tech hospitals. The other topic of major concern was the sequence or "stages" of bereavement, or "the grief process." In this anthology we have focused on stabilities more than change, and on the core mainstream sacred texts or major practices of each tradition. We want to show how these have continued to operate to define the religious space given to death-related topics. The presentations of each religion are deliberately intended to be non-innovative and non-idiosyncratic. Each chapter includes a set of references or sources, and some have a glossary. We have kept end-notes to a minimum, and have aimed for accessibility without sacrifice of intellectual rigor and scholarly quality.

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