

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO  
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

For centuries, theologians and philosophers, among others, have examined the nature of religious experience. Students and scholars unfamiliar with the vast literature face a daunting task in grasping the main issues surrounding the topic of religious experience. *The Cambridge Companion to Religious Experience* offers an original introduction to this topic. Going beyond an introduction, it is a state-of-the-art overview of the topic, with critical analyses of and creative insights into its subject. Religious experience is discussed from various interdisciplinary perspectives, from religious perspectives inside and outside traditional monotheistic religions, and from various topical perspectives. Written by leading scholars in clear and accessible prose, this book is an ideal resource for undergraduate and graduate students, teachers, and scholars across many disciplines.

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Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-47217-3 — The Cambridge Companion to Religious Experience  
Edited by Paul K. Moser , Chad Meister  
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Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-47217-3 — The Cambridge Companion to Religious Experience  
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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO  
**RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE**

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[More Information](#)

## CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,  
New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

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[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108472173](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108472173)

DOI: 10.1017/9781108575119

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First published 2020

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd, Padstow Cornwall

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

NAMES: Moser, Paul K., 1957– editor. | Meister, Chad V., 1965– editor.

TITLE: The Cambridge companion to religious experience / edited by Paul K. Moser,

Loyola University Chicago, Chad Meister, Bethel College and Seminary, Minnesota.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY, USA : Cambridge University Press, 2020. | Series: Cambridge companions to religion | Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2020012999 (print) | LCCN 2020013000 (ebook) | ISBN 9781108472173 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108459112 (paperback) | ISBN 9781108575119 (epub)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Experience (Religion)

CLASSIFICATION: LCC BL53 .C2545 2020 (print) | LCC BL53 (ebook) | DDC 204/.2–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020012999>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020013000>

ISBN 978-1-108-47217-3 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-45911-2 Paperback

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## Contents

*List of Figures* page ix  
*List of Contributors* xi  
*Preface* xiii

Introduction: Religious Experience 1  
 PAUL K. MOSER AND CHAD MEISTER

### **Part I** *Characterizing Religious Experience: Interdisciplinary Approaches*

- 1 Psychology of Religion Approaches to the Study of Religious Experience 25  
ANN TAVES
- 2 Philosophy of Religion Approaches to the Study of Religious Experience 55  
PHILLIP H. WIEBE
- 3 Theology, Religious Diversity, and Religious Experience 76  
GWEN GRIFFITH-DICKSON

### **Part II** *Religious Experience in Traditional Monotheism*

- 4 Illumined by Meaning: Religious Experience in the Book of Job 99  
HOWARD WETTSTEIN
- 5 Religious Experience in Early Christianity 116  
JAMES D. G. DUNN
- 6 Religious Experience in Traditional Islam 134  
WILLIAM C. CHITTICK

### **Part III** *Religious Experience outside Traditional Monotheism*

- 7 Religious Experience in Ancient Confucianism and Daoism 159  
XINZHONG YAO

*viii Contents*

- 8 Religious Experience in Buddhism 187  
 DAVID BURTON
- 9 Rāmānuja's Eleventh Century Hindu Theology of  
 Religious Experience: An Informative, Performative,  
 Transformative Discourse 208  
 FRANCIS X. CLOONEY, SJ
- Part IV *Prominent Themes and Challenges***
- 10 Exploring the Nature of Mystical Experience 239  
 STEVEN T. KATZ
- 11 Miraculous and Extraordinary Events As  
 Religious Experience 261  
 FIONA BOWIE
- 12 Evil, Suffering, and Religious Experience 284  
 MICHAEL L. PETERSON
- 13 Naturalism and Religious Experience 303  
 WILLEM B. DREES
- 14 Meaning and Social Value in Religious  
 Experience 319  
 MARK OWEN WEBB
- Index* 335



## Figures

- 1.1 Types of experience by dimension (internal/external, sudden/gradual) *page 28*
- 1.2 Phenomenological overlap between self-reported experiences characterized as religious, anomalous, and pathological 40
- 2.1 Production of a lambda-baryon particle 65

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-47217-3 — The Cambridge Companion to Religious Experience  
Edited by Paul K. Moser , Chad Meister  
Frontmatter  
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Frontmatter  
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## Preface

Scholars and teachers from various disciplines have recently renewed the academic interest in religious experience, or at least in experience that some people take to be religious. This book presents that renewed interest in an interdisciplinary manner accessible to college students and helpful to their teachers. The disciplines represented include religious studies, the psychology of religion, the sociology of religion, the philosophy of religion, Biblical studies, theology, and the history of religion. The chapters make original contributions, while avoiding technical discussions available only to scholars. Each chapter takes a point of view that engages its intended readers.

In a university, college, or seminary setting, this book could be used as either required or supplementary reading in such courses as the following: Introduction to Religion; World Religions; Philosophy of Religion; Psychology of Religion; Introduction to Theology; Philosophical Theology; Religious Epistemology; and Foundations of Theistic/Christian Belief.

The book is divided into four main parts. Part I, "Characterizing Religious Experience: Interdisciplinary Approaches," focuses on influential methodological approaches to religious experience from the psychology of religion, the philosophy of religion, and the theology of religion. Part II, "Religious Experience in Traditional Monotheism," discusses the major monotheistic traditions of classical Judaism, early Christianity, and traditional Islam. Part III, "Religious Experience outside Traditional Monotheism," examines four influential religious traditions outside traditional monotheism: ancient Confucianism and Daoism, classical Buddhism, traditional Hinduism, and traditional African religion. Part IV, "Prominent Themes and Challenges," attends to some controversies regarding religious experience: the role of mysticism, the function of evidence, the role of miracle, the challenge of evil, the bearing of naturalism, and the question of meaning and social value.

*xiv Preface*

We thank the contributors of this volume for writing their chapters and for their collegiality. Their first-rate scholarship and creative insights have made our editorial task gratifying. We also thank the referees for Cambridge University Press for their helpful suggestions, and the editorial staff at Cambridge University Press for their support of our project. In particular, we thank our publisher Beatrice Rehl for guiding this book to publication.