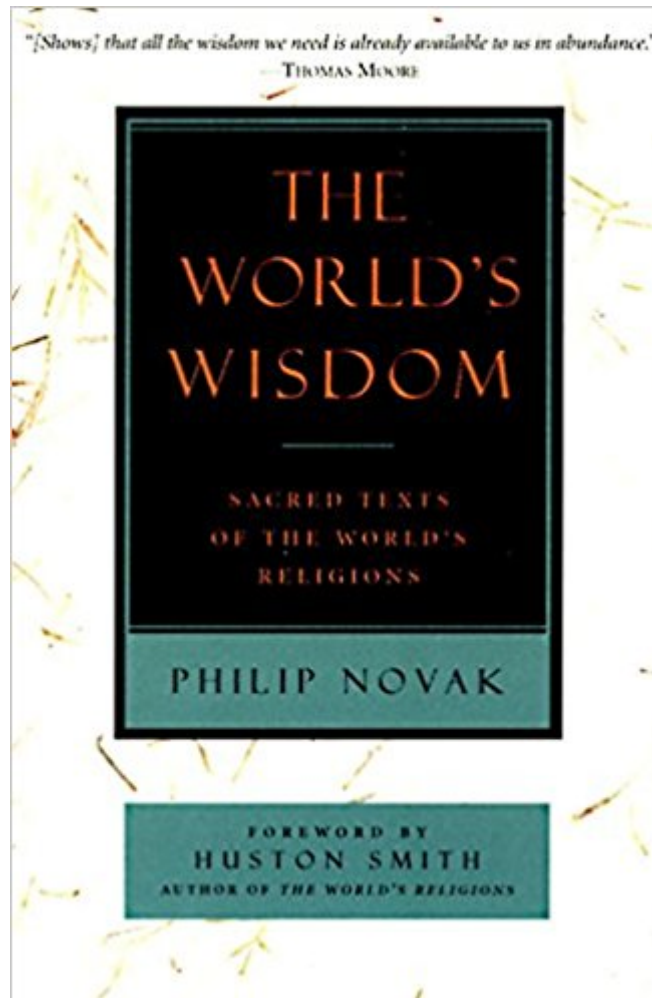




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# **The World's Wisdom: Sacred Texts Of The World's Religions**



## Synopsis

A world Bible for our time from Buddhist, Hindu, Confucian, Taoist, Jewish, Christian, Islamic, and primal religion sources! In this perfect companion to Huston Smith's bestselling *The World's Wisdom*, Philip Novak distills the most powerful and elegant expressions of the wisdom of humankind. Authentic, poetic translations of key texts are coupled with insightful introductions and "grace notes."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a compendium of sacred texts of the religions of the world, written as a companion for Huston Smith's classic *The Religions of Man*. Chapters cover Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Primal religions (e.g., Native American, African, etc.). The intent of the book is clearly to whet the appetite of the first-year college student by offering tidbits from the New Testament, Tao Te Ching, Qur'an, Hebrew Bible, etc., in small, tasty portions, easily consumed without any need for deep reading or reflection. The narratives accompanying the texts are informative but are sometimes woven into the texts, occasionally making it difficult to tell where the narrative leaves off and the texts actually begin. There is a lack of ample citations that would allow the interested student to track down the actual location of an excerpt in the original sacred manuscript. Yet when Novak's book is used jointly with Huston's, it will serve as a good text and supplementary reader for any college introductory class in religious studies. Recommended for undergraduate libraries. Glenn Masuchika, Chaminade Univ. Lib., Honolulu Copyright 1994 Reed

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"[Shows] that all the wisdom we need is already available to us in abundance."-- Thomas Moore  
Phillip Novak's loving and imaginative presentation of key texts from several traditions offers an excellent resource . . . showing that all the wisdom we need is already available to us in abundance."-- Thomas Moore, author of "Care of the Soul" and "Soul Mates"  
"I do not know where I could turn to find a richer harvest."-- Huston Smith, author of "The World's Religions"  
"A superb collection from the most entrancing literature ever to find expression in human language, literature that emerges from the mysterious depths of the soul where the primordial world of the sacred manifests itself most clearly."-- Thomas Berry, author of "The Dream of the Earth"  
"Beautifully organized . . . the volume is a major contribution to both the lay and professional studies of religion."-- "Publishers Weekly

Please understand the rating strictly applies to the Kindle formatting of this volume. First to content: this is the best anthology of the world's religious texts. I have been using it with great satisfaction for years in my comparative religions classes. That it is cheap is an added bonus for students. Sometimes the editor puts material in his own idiosyncratic order, rather than conceptually, in a way that can be easily taught--a major problem esp. in Buddhism and Christianity. E.g., he places the quasi-biography of Siddhartha's coming-to-enlightenment on pp. 50-57, the four noble truths on p. 65 (I want to teach the truths directly after the enlightenment), the nature of nibbana on p. 75 (which follows logically from the 3rd truth). Another negative about the text is the "Grace Notes" subsection in each chapter, which consists of mostly irrelevant developments in the later post-scriptural traditions, especially mystical re-interpretations. Most of those should be eliminated and replaced with more from the canonical core of the tradition. His selections from the Muslim Hadith are not representative: hadiths (technically, ahadith) are largely legal in nature; his selection is historical and moral. On the plus side, he does an excellent job covering including the Oral Torah in Judaism (unlike his mentor, Huston Smith). Now to my critique of the Kindle edition: I was hoping that I could replace my well-worn paper copies with the Kindle edition. Alas, can't happen. Although it displays page numbers, THEY CANNOT BE TRUSTED. Sometimes they are as much as a full page off. I'm used to pointing out a text by say, "p. so-and-so, top of the page (...in the middle, at the bottom, etc.)." There is also far too much white space, esp. between stanzas of poetry (e.g., the selections from the Rig Veda at the beginning of the chapter on Hinduism). This makes it difficult to grasp the whole of the reading. Tightening up the presentation would have made it much easier to preserve

pagination. A major disappointment in Kindle presentation.

To begin, Novak assembled this book as a compendium to accompany Huston Smith's book on world religions, so you may want to give both of them a shot at the same time, reading Novak's sections after the corresponding Smith sections. Concerning the book itself, it is a fantastic collection of original sources and it looks like you can get a used copy + shipping for less than \$10. For me, that says a lot. Concerning what was selected, there is no doubt that Novak put some serious effort in selecting what he did. The reader will get a very nice exposure to many elements within each religious tradition. However, the translations chosen are not so impressive, but there may be issues beyond the author's control here, so I cannot fault him too much. For example, the Dao Dejing was translated by Stephen Mitchell, who did an alright job, but his is hardly considered to be the authoritative translation. The good news is that it is nearly published in its entirety! On a similar positive note, the citations in the back are often quite informative. With a flip to the back, you will be brought to the original source. Now, I don't want to say that this book is showing its age, but many of the sources seem a bit dated. My suspicion is that this was how the price of the book was kept to a minimum. Also, in the last fourteen years since this was published, a lot of good translation work has come from Chinese philosophy. I worry that some of the older translations may give false impressions as to the state of the research today. With this book, you have to take the good with the bad, and the best part seems to be the affordability. You will not be able to find a collection as thorough as this for anywhere near the price.

got this book for my world's religion class and must say I kept it after the class was done to be able to re-read it in the future!

This was an optional book for my World Religions bachelors program class. I found the explanations of the religions easy to read and follow. There are excerpts of sacred text in each chapter that were useful in comprehending the many different religious viewpoints of the world.

I wish this book was a little bit more concise with its selections of sacred texts instead of the little bits & pieces scattered here and there. For such complex religions as Hinduism and Christianity, you need a little more. I know most are buying this as a part of college courses (like me), which is a shame as this isn't anything I didn't read in HS.

This is a good collection of primary texts from the world religions. I like the features of the book--a section called "grace notes." It is one of the rare collections that is affordable.

This book, filled with excerpts of sacred texts of many of the major world religions, is a planned companion in structure to Huston Smith's masterpiece, *World Religions*. It offers the sacred texts without commentary or judgement to support the reader in simply BE-ing with the texts and finding their own interpretation of the essence of the writings. "The World's Wisdom" is a book I will continue to reference throughout my ministry - and that I will share with interfaith students as a valuable source of inspiration and comparison.

Great informative book that gives little known facts, and basic information everybody wants to know about the world religions.

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