



Rationality and the Study of Religion

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Does rationality, the intellectual bedrock of all science, apply to the study of religion?

Religion, arguably the most subjective area of human behaviour, has particular challenges associated with its study. Attracting crowd-healers, conjurers, the pious and the prophetic alongside comparativists and sceptics, it excites opinions and generalizations whilst seldom explicitly staking out the territory for the discussions in which it partakes. Increasingly, scholars argue that religious study needs to define and critique its own field, and to distinguish itself from theology and other non-objective disciplines. Yet how can rational techniques be applied to beliefs and states of mind regarded by some as beyond the scope of human reason? Can these be made empirically testable, or comparable and replicable within academic communities? Can science explicate religion without reducing it to mere superstition, or redefine its truth in some empirical but meaningful way?

Featuring contributions from leading international experts including Donald Wiebe, Roger Trigg and Michael Pye, *Rationality and the Study of Religion* gets under the surface of the religious studies discipline to expose the ideologies beneath. Reopening debate in a neglected yet philosophically significant field, it questions the role of rationality in religious anthropology, natural history and anti-scientific theologies, with implications not only for supposedly objective disciplines but for our deepest attitudes to personal experience.

'Interesting and important. Religion has long been associated with irrationality, both by its defenders and its critics, and the topic of rationality has been unjustly neglected. The book certainly deserves to be widely circulated.'

Greg Alles, Western Maryland College

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