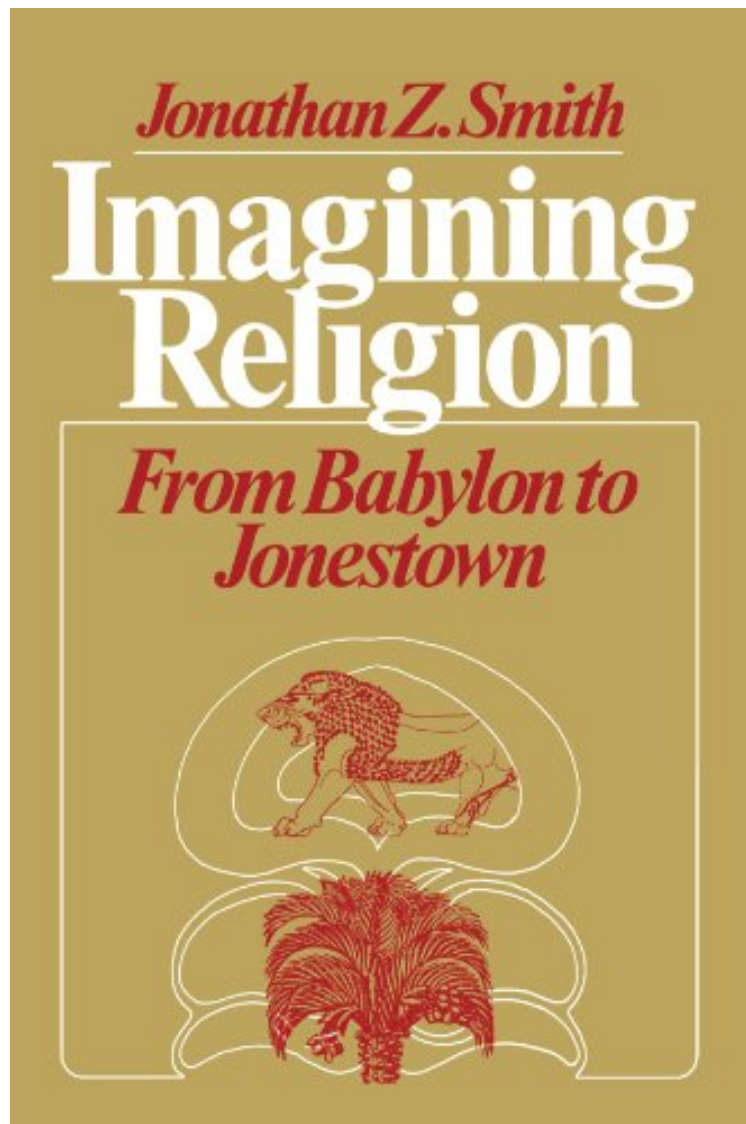


[Mobile ebook] *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism)

## **Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown (Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism)**

*Jonathan Z. Smith*

*\*Download PDF | ePub | DOC | audiobook | ebooks*



DOWNLOAD



READ ONLINE

#262234 in Books Jonathan Z Smith 1988-05-15 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.00 x .60 x 6.00l, .56  
#File Name: 0226763609180 pages Imagining Religion From Babylon to Jonestown | File size: 17.Mb

**Jonathan Z. Smith : Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown (Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown (Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism)*:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Scholarship RulesBy Kindle CustomerSimply an outstanding

collection of essays. I knew nothing about the field, and am not an academic and read this by chance. In a sense the joy of this book is not necessarily due to the subject matter but the opportunity to observe a rigorous and intelligent scholar at work. 0 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Interesting Read By Roya Rostamian The book has several interesting articles. This is a collection of several articles, a few of them in particular are very interesting. 43 of 49 people found the following review helpful. Analytical genius By Christopher I. Lehrich Jonathan Z. Smith is the enfant terrible of the History of Religions discipline, although he's no longer young. From his first essays (collected in *Map Is Not Territory*) to his more recent musings in *To Take Place* and *Drudgery Divine*, he has outraged, stimulated, challenged, and restructured the study of religion in the modern academy. Each essay here is a little gem, and should be read and savored by any serious student. Right at the start, in "Fences and Neighbors", Smith shows his true colors: he talks about the taxonomy of walnuts, and uses this as a startlingly perfect demonstration of the strengths and weaknesses of various ways of defining and categorizing religion, religions, and religious groups. "In Comparison a Magic Dwells" points out that most comparison falls into Frazer's homeopathic/contagious magic division, and demonstrates the various pitfalls of the comparative endeavor. I could go on, right through the devastating and terrifying analysis of the Jonestown White Nights mass suicide, in which Smith argues that to study religion seriously, we have a duty to recognize that it is not always "nice," not always about love and peace, and that sometimes awful things are done because of religious feeling, but that nevertheless we are required to try to make sense of it -- a lesson that has renewed force in the wake of 9/11. Smith does have one real flaw, though, which is that he assumes that everyone is as intelligent and careful as he is. He thinks that every reader will read all the endnotes, for example, and think about their implications for his arguments. And he assumes that every reader will hang onto a certain common-sense perspective on human nature, and interpret his arguments in that light. Unfortunately, this isn't always the case. "In Comparison a Magic Dwells," for example, argues the need for a radical rethinking of how comparison should be done; many readers, however, think that he is anti-comparison in general. "The Bare Facts of Ritual," which tries to uproot an old sympathetic-magic reading of certain kinds of hunting rituals, and by implication a broader range of apparently instrumental rituals, has been interpreted as a failed attempt at a complete theory of ritual. In short, this whole book needs to be read again and again, notes and all, with extraordinary care. If you're not willing to put in a great deal of effort, just don't bother--you're going to come out thinking that Smith has nothing constructive to say. In *Imagining Religion*, Smith is by turns devastating and hilarious, and always brilliant. Not all of it can withstand every possible criticism, but what can? A seminal work, *Imagining Religion* marks a place at which the History of Religions must either turn or turn back; the very possibility of the study of religion depends upon our turning.

With this influential book of essays, Jonathan Z. Smith has pointed the academic study of religion in a new theoretical direction, one neither theological nor willfully ideological. Making use of examples as apparently diverse and exotic as the Maori cults in nineteenth-century New Zealand and the events of Jonestown, Smith shows that religion must be construed as conventional, anthropological, historical, and as an exercise of imagination. In his analyses, religion emerges as the product of historically and geographically situated human ingenuity, cognition, and curiosity simply put, as the result of human labor, one of the decisive but wholly ordinary ways human beings create the worlds in which they live and make sense of them. "These seven essays . . . display the critical intelligence, creativity, and sheer common sense that make Smith one of the most methodologically sophisticated and suggestive historians of religion writing today. . . . Smith scrutinizes the fundamental problems of taxonomy and comparison in religious studies, suggestively re-describes such basic categories as canon and ritual, and shows how frequently studied myths may more likely reflect situational incongruities than vaunted mimetic congruities. His final essay, on Jonestown, demonstrates the interpretive power of the historian of religion to render intelligible that in our own day which seems most bizarre." Richard S. Sarason, *Religious Studies Review*

About the Author Jonathan Z. Smith is the Robert O. Anderson Distinguished Service Professor of the Humanities at the University of Chicago where he is also a member of the Committee on the History of Culture. Among his numerous books are *To Take Place*, *Drudgery Divine*, and *Map Is Note Territory*, all published by the University of Chicago Press.