



The Problem with Interreligious Dialogue: Plurality, Conflict and Elitism in Hindu-Christian- Muslim Relations (Bloomsbury Advances in Religious Studies)

Muthuraj Swamy

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Muthuraj Swamy provides a fresh perspective on the world religions paradigm and 'interreligious dialogue'. By challenging the assumption that 'world religions' operate as essential entities separate from the lived experiences of practitioners, he shows that interreligious dialogue is in turn problematic as it is built on this very paradigm, and on the myth of religious conflict.

Offering a critique of the idea of 'dialogue' as it has been advanced by its proponents such as religious leaders and theologians whose aims are to promote inter-religious conversation and understanding, the author argues that this approach is 'elitist' and that in reality, people do not make sharp distinctions between religions, nor do they separate political, economic, social and cultural beliefs and practices from their religious traditions.

Case studies from villages in southern India explore how Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities interact in numerous ways that break the neat categories often used to describe each religion. Swamy argues that those who promote dialogue are ostensibly attempting to overcome the separate identities of religious practitioners through understanding, but in fact, they re-enforce them by encouraging a false sense of separation. *The Problem with Interreligious Dialogue: Plurality, Conflict and Elitism in Hindu-Christian-Muslim Relations* provides an innovative approach to a central issue confronting Religious Studies, combining both theory and ethnography.

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