

Huston Smith, author of world religions text, dies at age 97

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Huston Smith, author of the popular textbook *The World's Religions*, died December 30 at age 97. He died at home in Berkeley, California, "after a long illness," according to his website.

Initially published in 1958, his textbook has sold 3 million copies.

"What Smith . . . brought to the discipline of religious studies was both a deep respect for religious traditions other than his own Methodist version of Christianity, and great humility about what can be known in any final way and what, by contrast, requires faith," wrote Bill Tammeus, a religion journalist and former columnist for the *Kansas City Star*, in a commentary for Religion News Service. "Smith sought to understand religions by getting inside of them and seeing what makes them tick."

Smith was born in 1919 in China, where he lived until age 17 while his parents served as Methodist missionaries. Ordained a Methodist minister, he initially thought he would follow in their footsteps but instead studied several Eastern faiths "from within the religion at the feet of a master in that tradition," according to his website.

He authored more than a dozen other books, including an autobiography, *Tales of Wonder: Adventures Chasing the Divine*, and *The Soul of Christianity: Restoring the Great Tradition*.

He wrote of the latter book, "I have tried to describe a Christianity which is fully compatible with everything we now know, and to indicate why Christians feel privileged to give their lives to it."