



# Spirituality: A Guide for the Perplexed (Guides for the Perplexed)

By Philip Sheldrake

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**Spirituality: A Guide for the Perplexed (Guides for the Perplexed)** By Philip Sheldrake

'Spirituality' is a word that is used increasingly these days yet it is often ill-defined. What exactly is spirituality? Is it distinct from religion and can we separate it from beliefs and traditions? Does spirituality mainly focus on spiritual experiences and practices or is it something more? This book suggests that, while there may be common features in the use of the word, 'spirituality' is not a single reality. Different 'spiritualities' reflect particular religious or philosophical viewpoints, as well as the cultural contexts in which they arise and develop.

*Spirituality: A Guide for the Perplexed* provides students and general readers with a reliable and comprehensive guide to 'spirituality' as an area of study, religiously, historically, philosophically and in the social sciences. It explores the tools that are used to study the subject and to interpret spiritual classics (whether these are written texts or other forms such as art) from different times and cultures. Attention is paid to spirituality in a variety of religious and non-religious forms in their own terms and comparatively. However, for the sake of simplicity greatest attention is given to the study of spirituality within a religious perspective with illustrations drawn from texts, personalities and themes associated with five major world religions, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. The book concludes with an exploration of spirituality in contemporary perspective - in particular how spirituality is currently employed in areas such as health-care, education and business among other examples.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

Philip Sheldrake offers here the type of distilled overview of spirituality which only an exceptionally accomplished expert can provide. He ranges from the more classical forms of spirituality that are associated with religious traditions - Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, to those which are more hidden or "esoteric" - Anthroposophy, Theosophy, Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry, non-traditional Kabbalah, Spiritualism and on to those which are secular or atheist. The result is an invaluable resource that will empower those who wish to critically discuss spirituality in the academy, the public square or the temple. -- Bernadette Flanagan, Co-Editor of *Spiritual Capital* (2012), Director of Research, All Hallows College, Dublin City University, Ireland You are not alone if you confess to being perplexed by the ubiquitous but ambiguous term "spirituality." To your rescue now comes Philip Sheldrake who, in his lucid yet deeply informed way, masterfully surveys the disparate current uses of the term and clarifies the "aspirational" commonalities that unite them. Sheldrake's global and cross-disciplinary tour familiarizes his reader with both religious and non-religious forms of spirituality. It includes a brilliant summary of the spiritual vision of five major world faiths, discussions of spiritual practice, mysticism, and the emerging field of academic study, as well as secular understandings of spirituality within philosophy, psychology and communities such as science, health care, business, and urban planning. His balanced approach affirms the universal human quest for transcendent or fully actualized living. -- Wendy M Wright, Professor of Theology, Creighton University, USA Of interest to students and scholars alike, Philip Sheldrake's latest book gives us an authoritative overview of spirituality in all its manifestations. Scholarly yet accessible, it will truly be a 'guide for the perplexed' to all who want to learn about this fascinating topic. -- Peter Tyler, Reader in Pastoral Theology and Spirituality, St Mary's University, London, UK This book provides us with something rare and valuable: a lucid, intellectually vibrant and moving account of where spirituality has been and where it is going. Philip Sheldrake is an authoritative, thoughtful and always-companionable guide to the strange and wondrous world of contemporary spiritual thought and practice. -- Douglas E. Christie, Professor of Theological Studies Co-Director, Loyola Marymount University, USA, and Universidad Católica de Córdoba, Argentina

#### About the Author

**Philip Sheldrake** is Senior Research Fellow at the Cambridge Theological Foundation, UK, and Director at the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Spirituality at Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, USA. He is author of a dozen books, editor of the *New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (2005) and is a Past President of the International Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality.

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