



Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion

By Thomas A. Tweed

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Beginning with a Cuban Catholic ritual in Miami, this book takes readers on a momentous theoretical journey toward a new understanding of religion. At this historical moment, when movement across boundaries is of critical importance for all areas of human life—from media and entertainment to economy and politics—Thomas Tweed offers a powerful vision of religion in motion, dynamic, alive with crossings and flows.

A deeply researched, broadly gauged, and vividly written study of religion such as few American scholars have ever attempted, *Crossing and Dwelling* depicts religion in place and in movement, dwelling and crossing. Tweed considers how religion situates devotees in time and space, positioning them in the body, the home, the homeland, and the cosmos. He explores how the religious employ tropes, artifacts, rituals, and institutions to mark boundaries and to prescribe and proscribe different kinds of movements across those boundaries; and how religions enable and constrain terrestrial, corporeal, and cosmic crossings.

Drawing on insights from the natural and social sciences, Tweed's work is grounded in the gritty particulars of distinctive religious practices, even as it moves toward ideas about cross-cultural patterns. At a time when scholars in many fields shy away from generalizations, this book offers a responsible way to think broadly about religion, a topic that is crucial for understanding the contemporary world. Lucid in explanations, engaging in presentation, rich in examples, *Crossing and Dwelling* has profound implications for the study and teaching of religion in our day.

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Editorial Review

Review

Thomas Tweed's new book is impressive in its synthetic originality, its comprehensiveness and its communicative style. It brings together many strands of contemporary theory that otherwise would not end up in the same book. It is compelling for its inventive exploration of a particular model of religion...

Crossing and Dwelling constructs a remarkably thoughtful synthesis that will stimulate much discussion. It thoroughly de-essentialises religion while valiantly reinstating the pragmatic and extendable value of the category. The endnotes themselves are extraordinarily rich and extensive, with wide referencing to relevant literature outside religious studies, and the text is enhanced with twenty-four illustrations. For its combined scholarship, ingenuity and wide interest, the book will deservedly find its way onto many reading lists.

(William E. Paden *Religion* 2007-06-01)

An engaging, original, and insightful approach to theorizing the transnational face of twenty-first-century religion. (Steven Engler *Religious Studies Review* 2007-01-01)

Tweed's contrast of religion in stasis and in motion helps illuminate the vexing issue of religious pluralism. (Roger S. Gottlieb *Tikkun* 2006-07-01)

Thomas Tweed has written the most important theoretical book of this decade, and maybe this generation, for geographers of religion... While Tweed's theory is philosophically detailed, readers will be impressed with the wide array of religions and nationalities represented in the analysis... Any scholar interested in either religion or geography will find this volume a refreshing and enlightening study. Those interested in both religion and geography will soon find themselves woefully behind in their scholarship if they have not yet digested it. (Michael Ferber *American Religious Experience website*)

Thomas Tweed's provocative, thoughtful, and meaningful insights into what it means to be religious are outlined in his new book... Tweed's work is most welcome to those of us who understand that being human has much to do with our imagining and making places... Cultural and social geographers will find Tweed's ideas useful in their work and in the classroom whether or not the actual subject material is related to the religious realm. (*Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 2007-03-01)

Beginning with his reflections on the Cuban Catholic community in Miami, **Tweed** develops a dynamic and relational theory of religion he feels has been lacking. He sees the key ideas of religion as being place (dwelling) and travel and exile (crossing) and uses the concept of itinerary to examine both Eastern and Western religions. As Tweed sees it, religion acts like a compass, helping to situate people in the body, the home, the homeland, and the cosmos. At the same time, we are all crossing boundaries: terrestrial, corporal, and cosmic. He offers a thoughtful analysis of the nature of religion and speaks of the limitations of his theory as well as of its potential. This well-thought-out work, accessible to scholars and lay readers alike, is a worthy successor to Mircea Eliade's *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*, which remains the classic text on the subject. (Augustine J. Curley *Library Journal* 2006-02-15)

This is a masterpiece. It belongs on everyone's shelf next to William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. **Tweed's** book is at once elegant and informed, a thorough intellectual sighting of religion. (Bruce B. Lawrence, Duke University)

Tweed boldly offers here a new and differently devised definition of religion. And he anchors that definition

in widely disparate phenomena of religious life around the globe. It is refreshing to see an analysis that moves wisely beyond the insularity of past debates. This book will stir some still waters and elicit a profitable exchange of ideas. (Daniel Pals, University of Miami)

Crossing and Dwelling provides a strikingly new and compelling theory of religion. Religions, **Tweed** argues, are much like watches and compasses: they help people find their bearings. Throughout he offers numerous examples from a variety of traditions and contexts to illustrate the way that his theory works. Tweed's engaging writing style should make the book accessible to a wide range of readers. (Ann Taves, University of California, Santa Barbara)

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About the Author

Thomas A. Tweed is W. Harold and Martha Welch Endowed Chair in American Studies at the University of Notre Dame.

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