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## Review of: The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Heritage in Contemporary Europe, edited by Todd H. Weir and Lieke Wijnia

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## Review of: *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Heritage in Contemporary Europe*, edited by Todd H. Weir and Lieke Wijnia

Weir, T.H. & Wijnia, L. (Eds.) (2023) *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Heritage in Contemporary Europe*, Bloomsbury Publishing, United Kingdom, 472 pages, £117 (Hardcover), ISBN: 978-1350251380.



*The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Heritage in Contemporary Europe* is a pivotal and comprehensive text that delves into the interplay between religion, heritage, and tourism within Europe's diverse cultural fabric. This volume stands out due to its multidisciplinary approach, intertwining history, religious studies, sociology, and art history. The book goes beyond presenting theoretical perspectives, extending into the practical realm by focusing on applications by university scholars, museum practitioners, government agencies, and religious institutions.

The handbook's exploration of the evolving role of sacred texts and the dynamic boundaries between religion, heritage, and secularisation is noteworthy. This approach addresses challenges and controversies in religious heritage, such as inclusion, representation, and the potential marginalisation of minority communities. A central theme is the concept of diversity in European societies. This theme examines how religious heritage is reinterpreted in an era of increasing cultural pluralism and secularisation, especially through the repurposing of religious buildings and texts for interfaith dialogue and understanding.

Originating from the 2019 conference '*Religious Heritage in a Diverse Europe*', this handbook encapsulates the convergence of scholarship and practice, driven by recent developments that position heritage as a core

concept in the study of religion. Featuring contributions on various European regions, including Central Europe, Scandinavia, the British Isles, North-Western Europe, South-Eastern Europe, and the Mediterranean, the text highlights significant regional differences.

The volume is organised into three categories: Heritage and Diversity, Heritage between Religion and the Secular, and Heritage and Creativity. This structure facilitates a comprehensive discussion of these themes, enriched by individual chapters that begin with challenges presented by experts, followed by in-depth analyses and case studies. This approach makes the book an invaluable resource for professionals, scholars, and students.

The book notably explores the future maintenance of religious heritage and the implications for heritage professionals in interpreting these elements. It presents practical applications for enhancing religious tourism, such as the creation of Muslim heritage trails in Southern England and the exploration of Jewish heritage in Lincoln Cathedral. These initiatives underscore the book's relevance in promoting cultural awareness and the development of religious tourism.

Furthermore, the book's discussion on the role of religious heritage sites in interreligious educational projects, such as the School Church project in Garmerwolde, the Netherlands, exemplifies innovative methods for

engaging visitors with religious cultures. The School church project aligns with the book's overarching aim of exploring different facets of religious tourism and heritage, particularly in making heritage sites relevant to diverse audiences.

*The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Heritage in Contemporary Europe* is a key resource, offering insights into the complex relationship between religion, heritage, and tourism. The book is a substantial contribution to the field, prompting reflection on the position of religion and its heritage in contemporary Europe. It is not only academically enriching but also practical, making it a must-read for those engaged in the study and practice of religious tourism and heritage management.

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