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This history-based introduction to the study of religion introduces the main methods, theories and theorists in the field. Introduces the main

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methods, theories and theorists in the field. Engages with leading figures from the history of anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy and theology who have influenced the study of religion. Reveals

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how the study of religion evolved in response to great cultural conflicts and major historical events. Also considers the influence of inner experience, tackling issues such as human survival and wish-fulfilment.

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Table of contents

A cutting-edge introduction to contemporary religious studies theory, connecting theory to data
This innovative coursebook introduces students to interdisciplinary theoretical tools

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for understanding contemporary religiously diverse societies—both Western and non-Western. Using a case-study model, the text considers: A wide and diverse array of contemporary issues, questions,

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and critical approaches to the study of religion relevant to students and scholars A variety of theoretical approaches, including decolonial, feminist, hermeneutical, poststructuralist, and phenomenological analyses

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***Current debates on whether the term "religion" is meaningful
Many key issues about the study of religion, including the insider-outsider debate, material religion, and lived religion Plural and religiously diverse societies,***

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including the theological ideas of traditions and the political and social questions that arise for those living alongside adherents of other religions Understanding Religion is designed to provide a strong foundation for instructors

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to explore the ideas presented in each chapter in multiple ways, engage students in meaningful activities in the classroom, and integrate additional material into their lectures. Students will gain the tools to apply specific

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methods from a variety of disciplines to analyze the social, political, spiritual, and cultural aspects of religions. Its unique pedagogical design means it can be used from undergraduate- to postgraduate-level courses.

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Many aspects of religion are puzzling these days. This 2003 book looks at ways of improving our understanding of religious change by strengthening the links between social theory and the social scientific study of

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religion. It clarifies the social processes involved in constructing religion and non-religion in public and private life. Taking illustrations of the importance of these boundaries from studies of secularisation,

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religious diversity, globalisation, religious movements and self-identity, Beckford reviews social scientific knowledge about religion and assesses the strengths and weaknesses of a wide range of theoretical

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attempts to account for religious change and continuity. The discussion goes in two directions. The first is towards identifying ways in which studies of religion would benefit from taking better account of themes

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in recent social theory. The second is towards identifying reasons for social theorists to pay more attention to the findings of empirical investigations of religion. Cultural Approaches to Studying

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Religion

Religion and Social Theory

Religion, Theory, Critique

An Introduction

More Than Belief

Nine Theories of Religion

" "Why theories of

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religion?" After raising and answering this question the author begins his examination of theories of religion by first looking at the explanations given by

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religious believers
(Revelation and
Religious experience).
He then considers the
view of thinkers who
have sought to transform
religion into philosophy

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(Plato, Kant and Hegel),
before reviewing the
theories of those who
have seen religion as
arising out of errors in
primitive thinking
(Tyler, Frazer and Levy-

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Bruhl) and those 'masters of suspicion', as Paul Ricoeur has called them, (Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Marx and Freud) who offered what they believed to be

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exhaustive psychological and sociological theories of the origin and nature of religion--publisher's description.

This is the first book

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to provide an introduction to contemporary cultural approaches to the study of religion. This book makes sophisticated ideas accessible at an

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introductory level, and examines the analytic tools of scholars in religious studies, as well as in related disciplines that have shaped the field

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including anthropology, history, literature, and critical studies in race, sexuality, and gender. Each chapter is written by a leading scholar and includes: .

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the biographical and historical context of each theorist · their approaches and key writings · analysis and evaluation of each theory · suggested

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further reading. Part One: Comparative Approaches considers how major features such as taboo, texts, myths and ritual work across religious traditions by

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exploring the work of Mary Douglas, Phyllis Trible, Wendy Doniger and Catherine Bell. Part Two: Examining Particularities analyzes the comparative approach

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through the work of Alice Walker, Charles Long and Caroline Walker Bynum, who all suggest that the specifics of race, body, place and time must be considered.

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Part Three: Expanding Boundaries examines Gloria Anzaldúa's language of religion, as well as the work of Judith Butler on performative, queer

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theories of religion,
and concludes with Saba
Mahmood, whose work
considers postcolonial
religious encounters,
secularism, and the
relationship between

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“East” and “West.”

Reflecting the cultural turn and challenging the existing canon, this is the anthology instructors have been waiting for. For primary

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texts by the theorists discussed, please consult *The Bloomsbury Reader in Cultural Approaches to the Study of Religion*, edited by Sarah J. Bloesch and

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Meredith Minister.

Unlike some other reproductions of classic texts (1) We have not used OCR (Optical Character Recognition), as this leads to bad

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quality books with introduced typos. (2) In books where there are images such as portraits, maps, sketches etc We have endeavoured to keep the

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quality of these images, so they represent accurately the original artefact. Although occasionally there may be certain imperfections with these old texts, we

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feel they deserve to be made available for future generations to enjoy.

Religion is central to Durkheim's theory of society, and his work

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laid most of the foundations of the sociology of religion. Daring and brilliant though his analysis was, its bold claims and questionable premises

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has made it the subject of ongoing academic debate. Durkheim's work on the subject reached a peak with the publication in 1912 of what turned out to be a

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classic in its field,
The Elementary Forms of
the Religious Life. No
other book has explained
Durkheim's views on
religion using the whole
corpus of his writings.

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Dr Pickering shows how Durkheim's position developed and explains the themes and theories that run through Durkheim's work. This includes Durkheim's

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attitude towards secularisation and Christian churches, as well as his notion of the contemporary cult of the individual.

Theory for Religious

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Studies

Euhemerism from

Antiquity to the Present

Theory of Women in

Religions

An Introduction to

Theories and Methods

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Theory of Religion Toward a Semiotics of the Event

p.57-68; Religious beliefs of
Aborigines - quotes Durkheims
theory.

While the academic study of

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religion has increased almost exponentially in the past fifty years, general theories of religion have been in significant decline. In his new book, Carl Raschke offers the first systematic exploration of how the postmodern philosophical

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theories of Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Alain Badiou, and Slavoj Zizek have contributed significantly to the development of a theory of religion as a whole. The bold paradigm he uses to articulate the framework for a revolution in

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religious theory comes from semiotics—namely, the problem of the sign and the "singularity" or "event horizon" from which a sign is generated.

Religion is universal human culture. No phenomenon is more widely

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shared or more intensely studied, yet there is no agreement on what religion is. Now, in *Faces in the Clouds*, anthropologist Stewart Guthrie provides a provocative definition of religion in a bold and persuasive new theory. Guthrie

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says religion can best be understood as systematic anthropomorphism--that is, the attribution of human characteristics to nonhuman things and events. Many writers see anthropomorphism as common or

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even universal in religion, but few think it is central. To Guthrie, however, it is fundamental. Religion, he writes, consists of seeing the world as humanlike. As Guthrie shows, people find a wide range of humanlike beings

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plausible: Gods, spirits, abominable snowmen, HAL the computer, Chiquita Banana. We find messages in random events such as earthquakes, weather, and traffic accidents. We say a fire "rages," a storm "wreaks vengeance," and

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waters "lie still." Guthrie says that our tendency to find human characteristics in the nonhuman world stems from a deep-seated perceptual strategy: in the face of pervasive (if mostly unconscious) uncertainty about what we see, we

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bet on the most meaningful interpretation we can. If we are in the woods and see a dark shape that might be a bear or a boulder, for example, it is good policy to think it is a bear. If we are mistaken, we lose little, and if we

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are right, we gain much. So, Guthrie writes, in scanning the world we always look for what most concerns us--livings things, and especially, human ones. Even animals watch for human attributes, as when birds avoid scarecrows. In

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short, we all follow the principle--better safe than sorry. Marshalling a wealth of evidence from anthropology, cognitive science, philosophy, theology, advertising, literature, art, and animal behavior, Guthrie offers a

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fascinating array of examples to show how this perceptual strategy pervades secular life and how it characterizes religious experience. Challenging the very foundations of religion, *Faces in the Clouds* forces us to take a new look at this

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fundamental element of human life. An introduction to the study of women in diverse religious cultures While women have made gains in equality over the past two centuries, equality for women in many religious traditions remains

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contested throughout the world. In the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints women are not ordained as priests. In areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan under Taliban occupation girls and women

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students and their teachers risk their lives to go to school. And in Sri Lanka, fully ordained Buddhist nuns are denied the government identity cards that recognize them as citizens. Is it possible to create families, societies, and religions in

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which women and men are equal? And if so, what are the factors that promote equality? Theory of Women in Religions offers an economic model to shed light on the forces that have impacted the respective statuses of women and

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men from the earliest developmental stages of society through the present day. Catherine Wessinger integrates data and theories from anthropology, archaeology, sociology, history, gender studies, and psychology

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into a concise history of religions introduction to the complex relationships between gender and religion. She argues that socio-economic factors that support specific gender roles, in conjunction with religious norms and ideals,

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have created a gendered division of labor that both directly and indirectly reinforces gender inequality. Yet she also highlights how as the socio-economic situation is changing religion is being utilized to support the

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transition toward women ' s equality, noting the ways in which many religious representations of gender change over time.

An Ancient Theory of Religion
Social Theory and Religion
Cognitive and Evolutionary

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Theories in Historical Perspective
Religion in Personality Theory
Summary and Assessment
Modern Theories of Religion
*'Theory for Religious Studies' takes
major theoretical writers in the
humanities & social sciences, &*

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explains their relevance to the study of religion.

Religion, Theory, Critique is an essential tool for learning about theory and method in the study of religion. Leading experts engage with contemporary and classical theories

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as well as non-Western cultural contexts. Unlike other collections, this anthology emphasizes the dynamic relationship between "religion" as an object of study and different methodological approaches and openly addresses the question of the

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manifold ways in which "religion," "secular," and "culture" are imagined within different disciplinary horizons. This volume is the first textbook which seeks to engage discussion of classical approaches with contemporary cultural and critical

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theories. Contributors write on the influence of the natural sciences in the study of religion; the role of European Christianity in modeling theories of religion; religious experience and the interface with cognitive science; the structure and

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function of religious language; the social-scientific study of religion; ritual in religion; the phenomenology of religion; critical theory and religion; embodiment and religion; the impact of colonialism and modernity; theorizing religion in terms of race

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and ethnicity; links among religion, nationalism, and globalization; the interplay of gender, sex, and religion; and religion and the environment. Each chapter introduces the topic, identifies key theorists and issues, and respects the pluralistic nature of the

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scholarship in the field. Altogether, this collection scrutinizes the explicit and implicit assumptions theorists make about religion as an object of analysis.

Religion in Personality Theory makes clear the link between theory and

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research and personality and religion. Presently, most personality texts have a limited discussion of religion and reference few theorists other than Freud and Maslow in relation to the subject. This book reviews the theory and the empirical literature on the

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writings of 14 theorists. Every chapter concludes with a summation of the current research on the theorist's proposals. Reviews: "Frederick Walborn has written an excellent text that explores the degree to which classical personality theorists were

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personally influenced by and focused upon religion in developing their personality theories. Each theorist is presented in sufficient detail so that their personal views of religion are seen to influence the theories they developed. In addition, the current

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status of the empirical evidence in the psychology of religion is explored in the context of the theorist and theory to which the data is most relevant. Current and up to date, this text is appropriate for either a course in Personality or as an introduction to

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the Psychology of Religion. The author's own comprehensive theory of religion and spirituality creatively integrates the positive contributions of the classical personality theorist to the contemporary psychology of religion." -Ralph W. Hood Jr.,

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Professor of Psychology, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga "In this interesting and accessible book, Frederick Walborn thoughtfully probes the place of religion and spirituality in the writings of a broad range of classical psychological

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thinkers and offers an insightful critique of current empirical research on the complex relation of religion and spirituality to individual well-being." -Michele Dillon, Ph.D., Professor and Chair, Department of Sociology, University of New

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Hampshire, Durham, New Hampshire Identifies what major personality theorists say about religion Investigates whether evidence supports or refutes predictions made by different theories Concludes with a comprehensive integrative theory on

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religion and spirituality

Rational Choice Theory and Religion

considers one of the major

developments in the social scientific

paradigms that promises to foster a

greater theoretical unity among the

disciplines of sociology, political

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science, economics and psychology. Applying the theory of rational choice--the theory that each individual will make her choice to maximize gain and minimize cost--to the study of religion, Lawrence Young has brought together a group

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of internationally renowned scholars to examine this important development within the field of religion for the first time.

The Modern Theories

Rational Choice Theory and Religion

A Materialist Theory of Religion

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A Theory of Religion

A New Theory of Religion

Theories, Themes, and Methodologies

***An Ancient Theory of Religion
examines a theory of religion put
forward by Euhemerus of
Messene (late 4th—early 3rd***

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century BCE) in his lost work Sacred Inscription, and shows not only how and why euhemerism came about but also how it was—and still is—used. By studying the utilization of the theory in different periods—from

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the Graeco-Roman world to Late Antiquity, and from the Renaissance to the twenty-first century—this book explores the reception of the theory in diverse literary works. In so doing, it also unpacks the different adoptions

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and misrepresentations of Euhemerus's work according to the diverse agendas of the authors and scholars who have employed his theory. In the process, certain questions are raised: What did Euhemerus

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actually claim? How has his theory of the origins of belief in gods been used? How can modern scholarship approach and interpret his take on religion? When referring to 'euhemerism,' whose version

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are we employing? An Ancient Theory of Religion assumes no prior knowledge of euhemerism and will be of interest to scholars working in classical reception, religious studies, and early Christian studies.

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Over the course of the twentieth century, thinkers from Marx and Weber to Freud, Jung, and Campbell have transformed the way we understand the religious experience. Within the field of religious studies, various

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intellectual approaches -- from feminism to phenomenology -- have further shaped the ways in which scholars examine rituals, symbols, and belief systems. In Religion: The Modern Theories, Seth D. Kunin provides an

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accessible yet comprehensive introduction to the social-scientific theories of religion that developed during the twentieth century, explaining the most significant theories of religion and their precursors. Kunin

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begins with a detailed discussion of the century's major theorists of religion, their ideas, and their influence, among them Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Freud, Jung, and Otto. He next explores how various disciplines -- sociology,

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psychology, phenomenology, gender studies, and anthropology -- have affected the study of religion. Kunin then analyzes the constituent elements of religion itself: ritual, symbolism, and myth.

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Throughout, the author emphasizes the need to question and reassess accepted theories and definitions of religion, and he concludes with suggestions for framing new definitions of religion that provide more

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culturally sensitive and open-ended ways of understanding. Argues that religion is the search for lost intimacy, discusses its connection to the general economy, and examines the sacrifice of war

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Featuring comprehensive updates and additions, the second edition of Understanding Theories of Religion explores the development of major theories of religion through the works of classic and contemporary

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figures. • A new edition of this introductory text exploring the core methods and theorists in religion, spanning the sixteenth-century through to the latest theoretical trends • Features an entirely new section covering

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***religion and postmodernism;
race, sex, and gender; and
religion and postcolonialism •
Examines the development of
religious theories through the
work of classic and
contemporary figures from the***

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history of anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, and theology • Reveals how the study of religion evolved in response to great cultural conflicts and major historical events • Student-

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friendly features include chapter introductions and summaries, biographical vignettes, a timeline, a glossary, and many other learning aids

Group Theories of Religion and the Individual

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***Postmodernism and the
Revolution in Religious Theory
Ten Theories of Religion
Faces in the Clouds
Theories and Methods for
Studying Religiously Diverse
Societies***

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The Promise of Salvation
A critical study of the role of religion in human life and culture brings together seven divergent views by such philosophers as Karl Marx, Sigmund

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Freud, James Frazer, Mircea Eliade, E. E. Evans-Prichard, Clifford Geertz, and E. B. Tylor. UP. A Systems Theory of Religion, still unfinished at Niklas Luhmann's death

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in 1998, was first published in German two years later thanks to the editorial work of André Kieserling. One of Luhmann's most important projects, it exemplifies

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his later work while redefining the subject matter of the sociology of religion. Religion, for Luhmann, is one of the many functionally differentiated social

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systems that make up modern society. All such subsystems consist entirely of communications and all are "autopoietic," which is to say, self-organizing and self-

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generating. Here, Luhmann explains how religion provides a code for coping with the complexity, opacity, and uncontrollability of our world. Religion functions

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to make definite the indefinite, to reconcile the immanent and the transcendent. Synthesizing approaches as disparate as the philosophy of language, historical

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linguistics, deconstruction, and formal systems theory/cybernetics, A Systems Theory of Religion takes on important topics that range from religion's

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meaning and evolution to secularization, turning decades of sociological assumptions on their head. It provides us with a fresh vocabulary and a fresh philosophical and

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sociological approach to one of society's most fundamental phenomena. Religion lies near the heart of the classical sociological tradition, yet it no longer occupies

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the same place within the contemporary sociological enterprise. This relative absence has left sociology under-prepared for thinking about religion's continuing importance in

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new issues, movements, and events in the twenty-first century. This book seeks to address this lacunae by offering a variety of theoretical perspectives on the study of religion

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that bridge the gap between mainstream concerns of sociologists and the sociology of religion. Following an assessment of the current state of the field, the

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authors develop an emerging critical perspective within the sociology of religion with particular focus on the importance of historical background. Re-assessing

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the themes of aesthetics, listening and different degrees of spiritual self-discipline, the authors draw on ethnographic studies of religious involvement in Norway and

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the UK. They highlight the importance of power in the sociology of religion with help from Pierre Bourdieu, Marx and Critical Discourse Analysis. This book points to emerging

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currents in the field and offers a productive and lively way forward, not just for sociological theory of religion, but for the sociology of religion more generally.

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This book provides a comprehensive selection of readings that relate to and explore the definition of religion. The texts come from a wide range of approaches, unified both

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by the questions they address and their broadly social scientific perspective. The disciplines covered include anthropology, phenomenology, psychology

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and sociology. The editors have also included some key texts relating to the feminist approach to and critique of religion. The initial section of the book includes some of the

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foundational texts, such as materials by Marx, Freud, and Durkheim. The remaining sections look at more recent discussions of the issues from the different disciplinary

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perspectives. Each reading is introduced by a biographical sketch of the author. The book also includes introductory discussions to each section that both raise

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the key issues developed in a particular discipline and address the disciplinary approaches from a more critical stance. Theories of Religion: A Reader is an

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invaluable critical resource, accessible to a broad audience as well as students of theology and religious studies. Seth D. Kunin, dean of Faculty of Arts and Humanities,

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University of Durham, is author of Religion: the Modern Theories, coeditor of A Companion to Religious Studies and Theology, and editor of Themes and Issues in

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Judaism. Jonathan Miles-Watson is lecturer in anthropology at the University of Wales Swansea.

Thinking about Religion Interpretive Theories of

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Religion

Understanding Religion

Current Perspectives

Religion

Understanding Theories of Religion

Nine Theories of Religion, third

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edition, considers nine of the most important religious theories that have been put forward since the scientific approach to religion first caught the imagination of nineteenth century scholars. In each case, the theory is presented by discussing the background of its

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major spokesman, discussing key ideas as they are presented in text, noticing its distinctive features in comparison with other theories, and recording the main objections raised by its critics.

Interest in theories of religion has never been greater. Scholars debate

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single theoretical approaches in different scholarly journals, while the 'new atheists' such as Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett criticize the whole idea of religion. For everyone eager to understand the current state of the field, Contemporary Theories of Religion

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surveys the neglected landscape in its totality. Michael Stausberg brings together leading scholars of the field to review and discuss seventeen contemporary theories of religion. As well as scholars of religion, it features anthropologists, archaeologists, classicists,

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evolutionary biologists, philosophers and sociologists. Each chapter provides students with background information on the theoretician, a presentation of the theory's basic principles, an analysis of basic assumptions, and a review of previous critiques.

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Concluding with a section entitled 'Back and Forth', Stausberg compares the different theories and points to further avenues of discussion for the future.

This book surveys the major theorists in the psychology of religion—Sigmund Freud, C.G. Jung,

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William James, Erich Fromm, Gordon Allport, Abraham Maslow and Viktor Frankl—who are all seminal thinkers and represent the classical theories in this field. Each of these theorists presents a more or less comprehensive theory of religion, which attempts to give an

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account of the psychological origin and/or value of religion. The approach of the book, in each case, shows how the theory of religion emerges not only from the theorist's psychological theory, but also from his own life experience. Each chapter contains an

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introductory overview of the theory, biographical material on the theorist, his theory of personality, his theory of religion, and an evaluation of the theory of religion. This consistent chapter format discusses the theorists' influence on the field, points out some

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developments from and reactions to the theory, and raises certain questions in order to stimulate readers' own critical responses. For individuals who wants to view—and better understand—religion from the psychological perspective.

Since its founding by Jacques

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Waardenburg in 1971, Religion and Reason has been a leading forum for contributions on theories, theoretical issues and agendas related to the phenomenon and the study of religion. Topics include (among others) category formation, comparison, ethnophilosophy,

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hermeneutics, methodology, myth, phenomenology, philosophy of science, scientific atheism, structuralism, and theories of religion. From time to time the series publishes volumes that map the state of the art and the history of the discipline.

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Contemporary Theories of Religion
Durkheim's Sociology of Religion
Sociological Theory and the
Question of Religion
Eight Theories of Religion
The Classical Theories
Themes and Theories
The second edition of this major

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book on the social analysis of religion incorporates a substantial new introduction by Bryan S Turner. Religion and Social Theory assesses the different theoretical approaches to the social function of religion. Turner discusses at length

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the ideas of key contributors to these approaches (including Engels, Durkheim, Weber, Nietzsche, Freud, Parsons, Marcuse, Habermas and Foucault). In so doing, he develops a distinctive perspective on the role of religion as an institutional link

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between economic and human reproduction. Social theories of religion are explored through a resolutely comparative and historical analysis of the Abrahamic faiths - Judaism, Islam and Christianity. Relating c

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This book challenges the traditional idea that religions can be understood primarily as texts to be interpreted, decoded, or translated. In *More Than Belief*, Manuel A. Vásquez argues for a new way of studying religions, one that sees

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them as dynamic material and historical expressions of the practices of embodied individuals who are embedded in social fields and ecological networks. He sketches the outlines of this approach through a focus on body,

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practices, and space. In order to highlight the centrality of these dimensions of religious experience and performance, Vásquez recovers materialist currents within religious studies that have been consistently ignored or denigrated. Drawing on

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state-of-the-art work in fields as diverse as anthropology, sociology, philosophy, critical theory, environmental studies, cognitive psychology, and the neurosciences, Vásquez offers a groundbreaking new way of looking at religion.

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What makes us religious? What is religion? This book presents relevant research and theoretical proposals for evolutionary theories of religion and socially and ecologically adaptive theories of religion. Most attempts to study

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religious behaviors through evolutionary biology and related disciplines are still very fragmentary. Mladen Turk brings those theoretical approaches in dialogue with religious studies and theology through interpretation and critique

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that centers on revealing hidden theological assumptions and interpreting theoretical leaps of those approaches to religion. In *Being Religious* Turk expounds understanding of religion as a complex interplay of various

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capacities arising from and influencing our biological and cultural makeup. Our religious behaviors can influence our relationship towards each other and towards our environment in significant ways. He shows how

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some aspects of complex religious behaviors can be understood better in light of human cognition and evolutionary biology. At the same time he interprets this knowledge as being preliminary and at times inadequate in its claims of

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completeness and exhaustiveness because religious behaviors are niched within other religious behaviors and dependent on factors that various mono-causal theoretical approaches cannot fully conceptualize.

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This book examines key themes and concepts pertaining to religious and sexual identities and expressions, mapping theoretical, methodological, and empirical dimensions. It explores the ways in which debates around sexuality and

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religion have been framed, and what research is still needed to expand the field as it develops. Through the deployment of contemporary research, including data from the authors' own projects, *Religion and Sexualities* offers an encompassing

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account of the sociology of sexuality and religion, considering theoretical and methodological lenses, queer experiences, and how sexuality is gendered in religious contexts. This comprehensive text will act as an essential accompaniment to

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scholars and students across the social sciences and humanities, whether they have a general interest in the field or are embarking on their own research in this area.

A Systems Theory of Religion
An Historical Introduction to

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Theories of Religion

Psychological Theories of Religion

Secular Theories on Religion

A Reader

Theories of Religion

Scholars of religious studies from Europe and North America

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explore what a secular, or scientific, study of religion should be like, what methods it should apply, what aims, and what kind of scientific thinking should be pursued. They also consider scholars as public intellectuals operating within and influenced

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by general societal developments. The 18 essays provide a survey of current thinking in the field. Distributed in the US by ISBS. c. Book News Inc.

Why do human beings believe in divinities? Why do some seek

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eternal life, while others seek escape from recurring lives? Why do the beliefs and behaviors we typically call "religious" so deeply affect the human personality and so subtly weave their way through human society? Revised and updated in this second

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edition, *Eight Theories of Religion* considers how these fundamental questions have engaged the most important thinkers of the modern era. Accessible, systematic, and succinct, the text examines the classic interpretations of religion

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ethnographer E. E. Evans-Pritchard and the interpretive anthropology of Clifford Geertz. Each chapter offers biographical background, theoretical exposition, conceptual analysis, and critical assessment. This common format allows for close

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holidays, conversion stories, prophetic visions, and life-cycle events. In analyzing these practices, his scope is appropriately broad, taking into consideration traditions in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Daoism, and Shinto.

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Ultimately, Riesebrodt argues, all religions promise to avert misfortune, help their followers manage crises, and bring both temporary blessings and eternal salvation. And, as *The Promise of Salvation* makes clear through abundant empirical evidence,

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religion will not disappear as long as these promises continue to help people cope with life. Why do human beings believe in divinities? Why do some seek eternal life, while others seek escape from recurring lives? Why do the beliefs and behaviors we

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typically call religious so deeply affect the human personality and so subtly weave their way through human society? Ideal as a supplementary text in introductory religion courses or as the main text in theory and method in religious studies or in

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