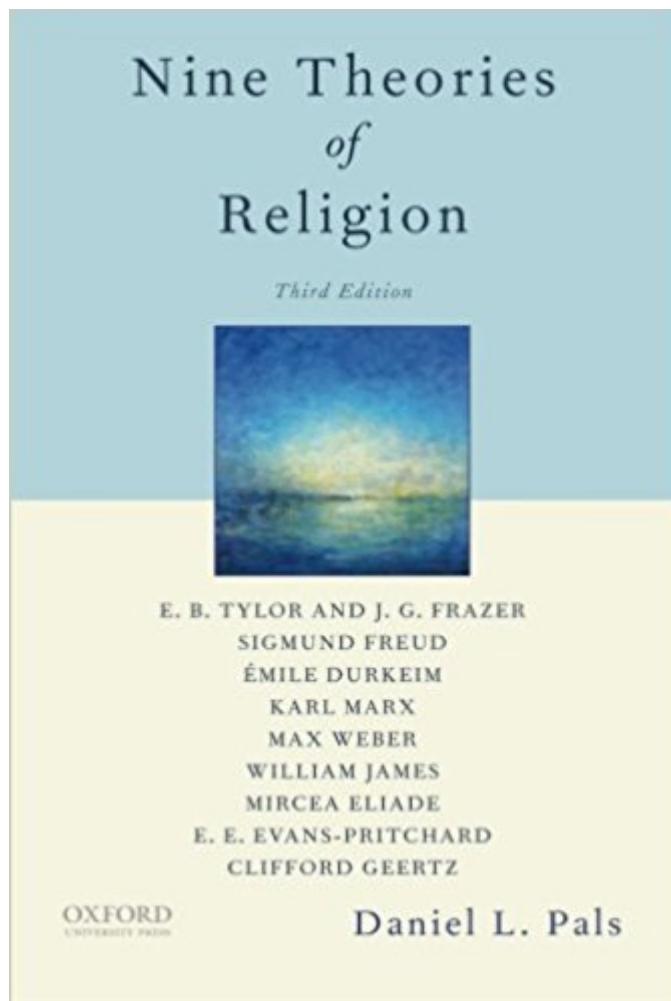


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Nine Theories Of Religion



Synopsis

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 typically call "religious" so deeply affect the human personality and so subtly weave their way through human society? Revised and updated in this third edition, *Nine Theories of Religion* considers how these fundamental questions have engaged the most important thinkers of the modern era. Accessible, systematic, and succinct, it considers the Victorian anthropology of E. B. Tylor and J. G. Frazer, the "reductionist" social science of Sigmund Freud, Emile Durkheim, and Karl Marx, the non-reductionist approaches of Max Weber, William James, and Mircea Eliade, and the alternative paradigms that have arisen from the work of E. E. Evans-Pritchard and Clifford Geertz. The third edition features a new chapter on William James. Each chapter offers biographical background, theoretical exposition, conceptual analysis, and critical assessment. Ideal as a supplementary text in introductory religion courses or as the main text in theory and method in religious studies or in sociology of religion courses, *Nine Theories of Religion*, Third Edition, offers an illuminating treatment of this controversial and fascinating subject. It can be used as a stand-alone text or with the author's companion reader, *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists*.

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Customer Reviews

"I find *Nine Theories of Religion* to be the best condensation of essential theory available. Its greatest strength is the logic of the presentation of the theories, followed by a critical appraisal

rehearsing each theory's strengths and weaknesses."--Thomas W. Martin, Susquehanna University

Daniel L. Pals is Professor of Religious Studies and History at the University of Miami. He is the author of *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists* (OUP, 2008).

Sometimes the author gives a bit TOO much information, but generally this book is worth having as a basic guide. The 9 theories are well chosen and will be very useful to any academic student of religion. A must for both undergrads and graduate students studying sociology, anthropology, psychology and religion!

Daniel Pals' *Nine Theories of Religion* comes in as his third edition of a series on Religious theories dating back to 1996. Like its predecessors, *Nine Theories* skillfully blends the often opposing features of being well researched and dense in detail while remaining a page-turner. Pals' work is designed with the student in mind. His chapters are well-ordered, offering both guiding subheads and helpful recommendations for further reading. Yet as a person who has taken an on-going interest in the question of what makes religion tick, I find myself returning time and again to the *Theories* series for thoughtful analysis. No other single book I know of gives such a thorough overview of the key players on the topic. *Nine Theories* brings several new areas of interest to the reader. First is a new chapter on William James and his views on the significance of the phenomenon of religious experience. As with previous analysis, Pals hits the nail on the head bringing his mastery of the topic to bare on one of the premier thinkers on the American landscape. Whatever you think you know about James, a close reading of Pals will only enhance that understanding. The other feature worth noting comes in the book's concluding remarks. Much research has been brought to bare on the topic of religion studies since Pals introduced *Seven Theories of Religion* back in 1996. As the landscape of opinion has shifted, so too has Pals' assessments. His earlier work seemed to suggest that he agreed with Geertz in seeing religion as a phenomenon too multifarious in nature to be pinned down to one or just a few salient scientific explanations. This view has changed. As Pals writes, "A new turn took shape, however, in the 1990s, as that decade became host to what may be the most important reorientation in anthropology since the time of either Durkheim and Malinowski. Over the course of that interval, books and symposia, journal articles, research initiatives, and even popular magazine pieces began to trace a rising tide of interest in the theoretical models of evolutionary biology and cognitive science. . . . Whether theorems of this kind will stand up to close scrutiny over

time is unclear . . . if religion truly is coded into our genes, then the prophecies of secularization theories about the death of God or the end of faith will appear to have been either decidedly premature or fundamentally mistaken about the nature of the human species.ÃƒÂ¢Ã ¬Ã Ã•In light of these exciting new developments, I look forward to Pals considered analysis with the inevitable Ten Theories!

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I would like to see a feminist theory as well, but awesome collection and articulate review!

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Very clean crisp books! Thank you very much

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