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Psychology of religion is essentially as old as psychology itself, with over a hundred years of history and claiming some of psychology's most notable characters as contributors, including William James, Sigmund Freud, Gordon Allport, and Jean Piaget. In recent years, this subfield of psychology has risen in prominence. Sectarian violence, secularization, the 'culture wars', and increase in cross-cultural and cross-religious contact through migration, urbanization, and globalization have all contributed to heightened interest in questions such as: where do religious beliefs come from? Why do they seem to motivate behaviour so powerfully? Is religious belief and practice good or bad for us? Does religious belief assist or hinder morality?

Increasingly discussed by journalists and science-popularisers such as Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, A.C. Grayling, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, and Lewis Wolpert, these sorts of questions are psychological questions with psychological answers emerging through the work of psychologists of religion.

Social and cultural factors have provided some motivation for renewed interest in psychology of religion, and additional impetus has been provided by new advances in psychological subfields, particularly cognitive, developmental, and evolutionary psychology. These three areas, previously only marginal contributors to psychology of religion, have begun making more substantial contributions concerning how and why human minds come to represent certain religious ideas and beliefs.

Not surprisingly, psychology of religion is becoming a more prominent focus of psychological research and teaching.

This collection presents the most up-to-date and comprehensive presentation of the psychology of religion available. The first volume focuses on psychological explanations of religion (that is, religion as something to be explained), the second concerning religious psychology, the third representing the impact of religion on thought, feelings, and behaviour, and the final volume considering implications of religious perspectives and findings for the practice of psychology, both scientific and applied. Historical and contemporary perspectives are integrated into thematically arranged sections. An extended introduction surveying the field begins the collection and an index increases the collection's utility as a reference resource.

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