



# Being Religious: Cognitive and Evolutionary Theories in Historical Perspective

*Mladen Turk*

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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 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 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 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 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 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. "Religions have promoted survival and cultural development by fostering morality, meaning-making, and group cohesion, using symbol, ritual, story, and hard-to-fake commitment. Mladen Turk has collected, compared, and integrated the heart of such work in one useful volume. This resource is an impressive work of scholarship." --Carol Rausch Albright, Visiting Professor of Religion and Science, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago "Mladen Turk provides an able summary and analysis of the most influential thinkers in the cognitive science of religion. Turk's often sharp and incisive critique reveals some of the important weaknesses in current theorizing while also pointing towards an approach that takes seriously the thickness and particularity of religious traditions and their theological elaborations." --Greg Peterson, Professor of Philosophy and Religion, South Dakota State University

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