



# The Image of God and the Psychology of Religion

*Richard L Dayringer, David Oler*

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What are the implications of a client's image of God?

Improve your confidence—and your practice skills—by enhancing your knowledge of how individuals are likely to perceive God, and of how those perceptions impact the way they function as human beings. Theologians have long speculated and theorized about how humans imagine God to be. This book merges theology with science, presenting empirical research focused on perceptions of God in a variety of populations living in community and mental health settings. Each chapter concludes with references that comprise an essential reading list, and the book is generously enhanced with tables that make data easy to access and understand.

- “Liberating Images of God” discusses the constriction and impoverishment of God images due to the traditional restrictions of God images to those that are male and personified. This chapter examines the potential for the client and counselor's co-creation of images of God which embrace the feminine as well as the masculine, the nurturer as well as the warrior, and the natural world in all its dimensions as well as the human world, to liberate, enrich, sustain, and transform the client's relationships with God and with him/herself.
- “Attachment, Well-Being, and Religious Participation Among People with Severe Mental Disorders” examines the relationship between attachment states of mind and religious participation among people diagnosed with severe mental illness.
- “Concepts of God and Therapeutic Alliance Among People with Severe Mental Disorders” explores the transference aspects of God representation among severely mentally ill adults. It highlights research on the relationship between a patient's image of God and that patient's working relationship with his/her case manager, and discusses the implications for clinical practice of those findings.
- “The Subjective Experience of God” presents a theory about the psychological basis for the experience of God that argues that this experience is essentially a form of projection and as such is an internal event that does not exist independent of an individual's psyche. This chapter draws a distinction between faith in a particular belief—namely, faith in the existence of a loving, omnipotent God—and an attitude of faith, which is the basis for experiences of transcendence.
- “Relationship of Gender Role Identity and Attitudes” presents the results of a study in which nearly 300 Catholic attendees at three university Catholic centers completed the Bern Sex Role Inventory, the Attitudes Toward Women Scale, and the Perceptions of God Checklist. This chapter looks at images of God as masculine or feminine, and at the connection for people between the way they perceive God and the way they relate towards men and women.
- “Reflections on a Study in a Mental Hospital,” brings you groundbreaking new research on perceptions of God in an inpatient population. This chapter examines the positive effects (as opposed to the negative effects previously portrayed by the psychological community) of religious belief and practice for residential care patients in a psychiatric hospital.

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