

Psychologists of religion have constructed literally hundreds of questions and questionnaires to study different aspects of perceived religion. We must not view these efforts as ever fully describing or circumscribing religion or religiosity. Such simple indicators may point us in a meaningful direction; they can function as approximations to the religious life of the individual, but they cannot and do not treat it in its entirety. They are signs that point to those deeper, "behind the scenes" factors that often lie hidden in the personality or in social settings and relationships. Still, they are operationally definable, and everyone knows what was done. They can also show us the way to other empirical techniques that explore personal religion in greater depth.

BEING RELIGIOUS: ONE THING OR MANY?

Our passion to be efficient, to summarize the complex, to wrap it all up in "25 words or less," is often an enemy to real understanding. Words are symbols that place many things under one heading, and the term "religion" is an excellent example of this tendency. When psychologists first began research in this area, they simply constructed measures of religiousness or religiosity. Sophisticated thinkers, however, soon put aside notions that people simply vary along a single dimension with antireligious sentiments at one end and orthodox views at the other end. These proved unsatisfactory, and new ideas and indices began to appear in the research literature. We now read of "religious individualism," "religious institutionalization," "ritualism," "idealism," "mysticism," "particularism," "ethicalism," "devotionalism," "forgiveness," and a host of new religious labels.²⁷

When we examine the many schemes that have been proposed, we see that some stress the purpose of faith, whereas others look to the possible personal and social origins of religion. Although some appear to mix psychology and religion, there are also those that take their cues exclusively from psychology and focus on motivation or cognition. However, the real problem is twofold: the presence of a "hidden" value agenda that implies "good" and "bad" religion, and a lack of conceptual and theoretical clarity. There is also great overlap among the various proposals, with essentially the same idea being phrased in different words—testimony to the excellent vocabularies of some social scientists. On a surface level, we can say that most psychological researchers emphasize religious expression in belief, experience, and behavior. There is, however, one point on which all agree: namely, that even though there is only one word for "religion," there may be a hundred possible ways of being "religious." John Wilson thus notes that "religion is clearly not a homogenous whole. Individuals who are religious in one respect might not be in another . . . religion is multidimensional."²⁸

Theoretical versus Statistical Approaches

Given the many faces of religion, our concern with empirical evidence and with operational definitions leads to the question of where the many different forms or types of religion come from. Basically, there are two sources: theory and the objective analysis of data. The theoretical approach relies on concepts and ideas, invariably derived from induction. This means that people have observed and thought about religion, and from their many observations, they suggest what its multifaceted essence is. The next step is to go out and attempt to demonstrate through research whether these ideas can be confirmed. In other words, do the findings sup-

port a theory that suggests certain kinds of religion? The theory must spawn hypotheses that can be assessed objectively. Their rejection might suggest modifications in the theory. Sometimes, even though we might like to reject the entire theory, we are rarely able to do so. Grand theories that cannot be totally tested (e.g., psychoanalytic theory) often yield “mini-” views that are amenable to research assessment.

The second, or statistical, approach starts with quantitative data. Most often, objective answers are provided by a sample of people to questions or statements about religion. We apply certain statistical techniques to these data, including correlation and factor analysis, as well as a wide variety of inferential statistics used to test empirical hypotheses (see the Appendix to this chapter). Complex analyses are carried out; a certain amount of subjectivity does enter the picture; and finally the result is a claim that there are so many “dimensions” of religiosity in some reasonably well-defined group, such as Roman Catholics or Methodists. Claims are, however, made that “religion in general” is being evaluated multidimensionally. Rather frequently, after the fact, researchers find out that the new system is not appropriate for non-Christians, or that it seems to work best with conservative Protestant groups and not with more liberal denominations (or vice versa). What we really need is a combination of theory and data analysis that can be continually tested and refined.

Some Multidimensional Frameworks

An excellent example of one effort to offer a comprehensive multidimensional system was advanced by Verbit.²⁹ He suggested that religion is composed of six components, each of which contains four dimensions. These are optimistically said to be best understood relative to Verbit’s definition of religion as “man’s relationship to whatever he conceives as meaningful ultimacy.”³⁰ The proposed components are as follows:

1. *Ritual*: private and/or public ceremonial behavior.
2. *Doctrine*: affirmations about the relationship of the individual to the ultimate.
3. *Emotion*: the presence of feelings (awe, love, fear, etc.).
4. *Knowledge*: intellectual familiarity with sacred writings and principles.
5. *Ethics*: rules for the guidance of interpersonal behavior, connoting right and wrong, good and bad.
6. *Community*: involvement in a community of the faithful, psychologically, socially, and/or physically.

Each of these components is said to vary along the following four dimensions:

1. *Content*: the essential nature of the component (e.g., specific rituals, ideas, knowledge, principles, etc.).
2. *Frequency*: how often the content elements are encountered or are acted upon.
3. *Intensity*: degree of commitment.
4. *Centrality*: importance or salience.

This scheme might be a good theoretical guide for analyses of either institutional or personal religion, but it contains a number of potential problems. Obviously, there must be some overlap among both the components and the dimensions. For example, if we study the component of ritual, there is a high likelihood that the more frequently a ritual is carried

out, the more likely it is to be central to the religion and to elicit considerable feeling. To state this problem differently, the dimensions sound good conceptually, but the relationships among frequency, intensity, and centrality may be so strong as to suggest that analyzing them independently would be redundant; they may all reduce to one dimension, which we could call something like "importance of religion." Another difficulty concerns the components. There is a good chance that each is in itself multidimensional, meaning that they possess a number of different facets relative to the way people perceive and act upon them. Finally, despite the construction of this potentially useful grand scheme (which is supposed to cover all religions), this framework does not appear to have ever been directly operationalized and evaluated in research.

The search for dimensions of religion often takes on the appearance of a game. Sometimes it is manifested as an exercise in complex statistics without any theoretical backing. In other cases there is good conceptual thinking, but no research support. This has become the psychology of religion's "gold rush," and there is reason to believe that some gold has been found. The valuable metal is evident in its stimulating effect on scholars, whose questions and arguments are leading to better definitions and improved theories along with theoretically guided research. Less and less of the time, however, are workers in the field succumbing to the lure of new "forms" of faith with appealing labels. Even an older, well-established scheme such as Allport's "intrinsic-extrinsic" distinction is being increasingly distrusted.³¹ Despite challenges to the validity of these ideas, multidimensional constructions of religion are likely to continue and become more subtle and refined. Table 1.1 presents a sampling of some of the better-known of these frameworks.

We should not overlook the fact that there is overlap among the multidimensional schemes that different scholars have proposed. Some idea of this problem can be observed in Table 1.2.

Mention should be made of a shift in emphasis when forms of faith are conceptualized. For example, the distance between defining intrinsic and extrinsic religion and referring to people as "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" does not appear to be great. In reality, however, the criteria for placing individuals in one or the other of these categories are often quite debatable. This kind of terminology implies "pure types," and though these idealized images make for interesting discussion, in real life they are rare to the point of nonexistence. Still, both as scientists and as human beings, we like the appearance of unchallengeable certainty that classifications offer us. To be able to define everyone as a saint or a sinner would greatly simplify our lives. In our own eyes we might identify with the former; unhappily, others might see more of the latter in us. Such patternings of people are, however, quite commonly offered. Roof has recently looked at the religious propensities of the baby boom generation and come up with four types he terms the "loyalists," the "returnees," the "believers-but-not-belongers," and the "seekers."³² When Benson and Williams studied religion in the U.S. Congress, they distinguished six kinds of religionists, which they called "legalistic," "self-concerned," "integrated," "people-concerned," "nontraditional," and "nominal."³³ All of these schemes point to the complexity of religious faith, as well as the uses to which it may be put. Let us be aware of the fact that there is invariably overlap among these categories, and that clear operational indicators of how their creators arrive at their designation are needed. Simple lines cannot be drawn from forms of faith to types of people. The usefulness of identifying types is a matter of debate in the contemporary psychology of religion.³⁴

As already noted, some of these classifications are based on theory, whereas others are the product of sophisticated statistical analyses, particularly what is termed "factor analysis"

TABLE I.1. Some Multidimensional Approaches to the Study of Individual Religion

<u>Allen and Spilka (1967)</u>	
Committed religion	“Utilizes an abstract philosophical perspective: multiplex religious ideas are relatively clear in meaning and an open and flexible framework of commitment relates religion to daily activities” (p. 205).
Consensual religion	“Vague, non-differentiated, bifurcated, neutralized” (p. 205). A cognitively simplified and personally convenient faith.
<u>Allport (1966)</u>	
Intrinsic religion	“Faith as a supreme value in its own right . . . oriented toward a unification of being that take seriously the commandment of brotherhood, strives to transcend all self-centered needs” (p. 455).
Extrinsic religion	“Religion that is strictly utilitarian; useful for the self in granting safety, social standing, solace, and endorsement of one’s chosen way of life” (p. 455).
<u>Batson and Ventis (1982)</u>	
Means religion	“Religion is a means to other self-serving ends” (p. 151).
End religion	“Religion is an ultimate end in itself” (p. 151).
<u>Clark (1958)</u>	
Primary religious behavior	“An authentic inner experience of the divine combined with whatever efforts the individual may make to harmonize his life with the divine” (p. 23).
Secondary religious behavior	“A very routine and uninspired carrying out . . . an obligation” (p. 24).
Tertiary religious behavior	“A matter of religious routine or convention accepted on the authority of someone else” (p. 25).
<u>Fromm (1950)</u>	
Authoritarian religion	“The main virtue of this type of religion is obedience, its cardinal sin is disobedience” (p. 35).
Humanistic religion	“This type of religion is centered around man and his strength . . . virtue is self-realization, not obedience” (p. 37).
<u>Glock (1962)</u>	
Experiential dimension	“The religious person will . . . achieve direct knowledge of ultimate reality or will experience religious emotion” (p. S-99).
Ideological dimension	“The religious person will hold to certain beliefs” (p. S-99).
Ritualistic dimension	“Specifically religious practices [are] expected of religious adherents” (p. S-99).
Intellectual dimension	“The religious person will be informed and knowledgeable about the basic tenets of his faith and its sacred scriptures” (p. S-99).
Consequential dimension	“What people ought to do and the attitudes they ought to hold as a consequence of their religion” (p. S-99).
<u>Hunt (1972)</u>	
Literal religion	Taking “at face value any religious statement without in any way questioning it” (p. 43).
Antiliteral religion	A simple rejection of literalist religious statements.
Mythological religion	A reinterpretation of religious statements to seek their deeper symbolic meanings.

(cont.)

TABLE 1.1 (cont.)

<u>James (1902/1985)</u>	
Healthy-mindedness	An optimistic, happy, extroverted, social faith: "the tendency that looks on all things and sees that they are good" (p. 78).
Sick souls	A faith of pessimism, sorrow, suffering, and introverted reflection: "the way that takes all this experience of evil as something essential" (p. 36).
<u>Lenski (1961)</u>	
Doctrinal orthodoxy	"Stresses intellectual assent [to] prescribed doctrines" (p. 23).
Devotionalism	"Emphasizes the importance of private, or personal communion with God" (p. 23).
<u>McConahay and Hough (1973)</u>	
Guilt-oriented, extrapunitive	"Religious belief centered on the wrath of God as it is related to other people . . . emphasizes punishment for wrong-doers" (p. 55).
Guilt-oriented, intropunitive	"A sense of one's own unworthiness and badness . . . a manifest need for punishment and a conviction that it will inevitably come" (p. 56).
Love-oriented, self-centered	Belief "oriented toward the forgiveness of one's own sins" (p. 56).
Love-oriented, other centered	Belief that "emphasizes the common humanity of all persons as creatures of God, and God's love . . . related to the redemption of the whole world" (p. 56).
Culture-oriented, conventional	"Values which are more culturally than theologically oriented" (p. 56).

(see the Appendix to this chapter). Many of these schemes remain isolated and untested in the literature, but they are suggestive formulations that merit further study. Some stress the motives of religious people; others imply an emphasis on cognition and thinking; still other patterns refer to personality traits in relation to faith. Though these breakdowns are cited now for illustrative purposes, we expect to come back to them and show how they have been employed by workers in the psychology of religion.

Even though religion has been shown to be complex, we need to recognize one of those "behind the scenes" variables that is obviously of very great significance. This has been called "salience," or "the importance an individual attaches to being religious."³⁵ The connection between religious belief or experience and religious and nonreligious behavior may in part be a function of salience. In other words, the more important religion is to a person, the greater the likelihood that it will influence how that person responds in everyday life.

WHY ARE PEOPLE RELIGIOUS?

"Why are people religious?" is probably the most basic of all questions concerning faith. Some people find answers that cancel all doubt; others live in uncertainty and turmoil. To many, the presence of religion is all the proof they need that there is a deity. A man told one of us that the fact that he existed presupposed the existence of God—an argument that others might claim possesses a few fundamental weaknesses. Not a few claim that the existence of the Bible is all they require; in Islamic cultures, it may be the Koran. There is reason to believe that other peoples will respond similarly with reference to their own sacred writings. By

TABLE 1.2. A Comparison of Some Multidimensional Schemes for Studying Religion

Verbit (1970)	Glock (1962)	Fukuyama (1961)	Davidson (1975)*
Ritual	Ritualistic Ritual commitment Devotionalism	Cultic	Practice Public Private
Doctrine	Ideological Orthodoxy Particularism Ethicalism	Creedal	Belief Vertical Horizontal
Emotion	Experiential	Devotional	Experiential Desirability Frequency
Knowledge	Intellectual	Cognitive	Intellectual Religious knowledge Intellectual scrutiny
Ethics Community	Consequential		Consequential Personal Social

*In this system, the designations "public," "vertical," "desirability," "religious knowledge," and "personal" are regarded as conservative ends of the dimensions in question, while "private," "horizontal," "frequency," "intellectual scrutiny," and "social" constitute the liberal positions.

contrast, there are those whose personal religious orientation drives them on an unending search for truth and knowledge. They continually speculate on whether or not there is a God, and, if so, what God's nature is. When we phrase the question "Why religion?" it is to determine the psychological foundations for (1) religious behavior in general, wherever it exists and regardless of the form it takes; and (2) the development of and expression of faith by the individual. It is also obvious that these goals are closely related. Our immediate concern is with the first of these issues, and we again show that this is a field with few simple answers.