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DISREGARDING (AND DISRESPECTING?) RELIGION IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY: THE CASE OF THE *THE HANDBOOK OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY* (4TH EDITION)**

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ABSTRACT

In spite of a burgeoning literature demonstrating the importance of religiousness as a determinant of a wide range of behaviors, social psychology continues to ignore this important construct. This article begins with the current spate of interest in religion in virtually the entire field of psychology, and then goes on to present a cursory history of the recent psychology of religion. Attention then turns to the most recent edition (4th) of *The Handbook of Social Psychology* (Gilbert, Fiske, & Lindzey 1998a), noting that the concept of religion is largely absent. It is concluded that there are disadvantages resulting in social psychology from this omission, including loss of explanatory power, and lack of engagement in important social issues.

These are truly exciting times in the social-scientific study of religion. Rodney Stark (Stark & Finke, 2000), one of the most prominent sociologists of religion, has announced a "new paradigm" for the area in which, under the pressure of "extensive" bodies of literature, the entire approach to the subject of religion must change. Stark (2004) noted that the theories of the sociological patriarchs Weber (1930/1985), Durkheim (1912/1995), and Marx (Marx & Engels, 1975), whose approaches continue to be the basis of much scholarship, have been found to be without empirical basis. He called for "an end to ancestor worship."

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** This paper is dedicated to the memory of Bruce Hunsberger, a social psychologist, a psychologist of religion, and a friend, who succumbed to leukemia during 2003.

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A sudden spate of interest in religion has sprung up in a variety of psychology's disciplines. Neuropsychologists have been examining the localization of religious cognition in particular areas of the brain, taking it either as evidence for reductionism (e.g., Persinger, 1999) or as evidence that, like other brain functions, religious cognition (whatever its source) has a common physiological substrate for all humans (Newberg & d'Aquili, 2001). Boyer (1994) proposed that the intercultural similarities among religious systems worldwide can be explained by the universality of the underlying cognitive processes. Lawson and McCauley (1990) employed both cognitive and linguistic perspectives in an analysis of religious ritual. The cognitive psychology of religion has become a large and growing area (Pyysiäinen & Veikko, 2002).

In clinical psychology, religion, and a related concept of unsure pedigree, spirituality, were the focus of four recent books published by the American Psychological Association (APA) as both a facet of multiculturalism in therapy (Richards & Bergin, 2000), and an adjunct to therapy (Miller, 1999; Richards & Bergin, 1997; see also Shafranske, 1996a). All four of these books appeared on the cover of the Spring 2000 APA book catalog (American Psychological Association, 2000), marking something of a watershed in the often contentious history of the relationship between religion and psychology. Spirituality, introduced as a *Psychological Abstracts* index term in 1988, sprang to rapid prominence. From 2001 to 2004 nearly as many citations were listed under "Spirituality" as under the two keywords "Religiosity" and "Religious Belief" in the *Abstracts*' annual cumulative subject indexes.[1]

Even more surprising from the clinical perspective is that Albert Ellis, whose negative stance toward religion is well known (1960; 1970; 1980, 1986) announced that, "Although I have, in the past, taken a negative attitude toward religion, and especially toward people who devoutly hold religious views, I now see that absolutist religious views can sometimes lead to emotionally healthy behavior (Ellis, 2000, p. 31)." A new millennium indeed!

[1] Note that this count does not control for cross-listings among these three topics. Also, while "religiosity" is the term used in *Psychological Abstracts* for this body of literature, I use "religiousness" throughout the present paper for etymological reasons. Religiosity is the noun form of "religiose," which denotes an affected or exaggerated religious interest; "religiousness," which does not carry that conceptual baggage, is more appropriate here.

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In the last seven years, numerous "special issues" have examined religion and its relation to various areas of psychology: the field in general (Baumeister, 2002); developmental psychology (King & Boyatzis, 2004); psychiatry (Josephson & Dell, 2004); personality (Emmons & McCullough, 1999); values and health, in the context of twin research (Kirk & Martin, 1999); adolescence (McKinney, 1999); cancer care (Russak, Lederberg, & Fitchett, 1999); and health psychology (Thoresen, & Harris, 1999). A round of second and third editions of psychology of religion texts have appeared (Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993; Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle, 1997; Paloutzian, 1996; Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 2003; Wulff, 1997) as well as a second "Psychology of Religion" chapter in the *Annual Review of Psychology* (Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003; see also Gorsuch, 1988).

But this is not a novel interest among social psychologists. They have long been prominent in the study of the function of religion in human behavior. Gordon Allport and his colleagues (Allport & Ross, 1967) created the measures of intrinsic and extrinsic religiousness, the most widely used multiple-item standardized religiousness scales in the field. Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi's (1975) *The Social Psychology of Religion* was arguably the first of the modern psychology of religion texts. The majority of the presidents of APA Division 36, Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, and the majority of the recipients of its William James Award have been social psychologists. Prominent theories in personality-social psychology have also been employed in the analysis of religious behavior, and by prominent theorists: cognitive dissonance (Brock, 1962); attribution (Bulman & Wortman, 1977; Proudfoot & Shaver, 1975); and altruism (Batson, Eidelman, Higley, & Russell, 2001). The *Journal of Social Issues* published an issue on "Religious influences on personal and societal well-being," (Paloutzian & Kirkpatrick, 1995).

But while individual social psychologists have contributed to the study of religion, the field of social psychology has not integrated the concept into its standard repertoire. The subject index of the fourth edition of the *The Handbook of Social Psychology* (Gilbert, Fiske, & Lindzey, 1998a) had only one listing for the word "religion," referring to Boyer's (1994) work cited earlier. As will be seen later, this reflects inadequate indexing. But it is also true that the fourth edition of the *Handbook* failed to integrate a considerable body of empirical research concerning the impact of religiousness on phenomena of interest to social psychology. How did matters come to such a pass?

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A Cursory History of the Recent Social Psychology of Religion

Dittes (1969)

One of the landmarks of the social psychology of religion was the third edition of *The Handbook of Social Psychology* (Lindzey & Aronson, 1969), which included a 57-page chapter (Chapter 44) by Dittes (1969) entitled "Psychology of Religion." He noted that:

> religion offers rich, sometimes dramatic, instances of key psychological processes such as the development and change of attitude and belief, the arousal and reduction of anxiety and guilt, personality change, the development of integrative and self-referent processes in personality, and above all, many instances of the interrelation between cognitive and motivational variables Furthermore, these are frequently in important interaction with group processes (Gregory, 1952). (Dittes, 1969, p. 602)

Dittes then went on to consider various theoretical orientations toward religion, measurement issues, and methodological approaches. He examined the topic of "religion as explicit and differentiated versus subjective and diffused," (p. 618) addressing many of the issues later to be familiar in the literature of intrinsic and extrinsic religiousness (Donahue, 1985). In this context, he examined the issue of the relation between religion and prejudice.

Dittes' discussion of "religion and personality characteristics . . . [is] organized around the general supposition that religion is associated with deficiencies in personality, with a 'weak ego' or 'constricted ego.'" (p. 636) A diverse collection of findings was placed upon this Procrustean bed. For example:

> Young, Dustin and Holtzman (1966) report a negative but apparently curvilinear correlation between college grades and favorable attitudes toward organized religion: A students reversed the trend and showed a more favorable attitude than B+ students. The authors suggest that both high achievement and approval of organized religion may represent strong internalization of cultural (or, at least, parental norms). (Dittes, 1969, p. 638)

Thus, perhaps uniquely in the relevant literature, high levels of academic achievement are said to reflect a "constricted ego." Later on that same page, Dittes contended that the finding that families that engage in home-based religious devotion are more stable ("Families that pray together stay together") is an artifact of a correlation of

religion with social desirability.[2] He concluded with a "theory of ego constriction" to explain religion. He thus presents his review in the context of a clear presumption of religion's "guilt."

Rokeach (1969)

It was not a presumption but a verdict that was delivered by Rokeach (1969). Giving the 1969 H. Paul Douglas lecture to the Religious Research Association (!), he stated that "man's relation to his fellowman will probably thrive at least a bit more if he altogether forgets or unlearns or ignores what his organized religion has tried to teach him about values and what values are for" (p. 39). He based this statement on national data using his Value Survey (see Rokeach, 1973). But Donahue (1989) demonstrated that the measure of Christian religiousness that Rokeach selected, the "terminal" value of *salvation*, lacked validity as a measure of Christian religiousness. It "differentiated quite strongly between various Christian denominations. . . . Baptist and Congregationalists were the only ones who ranked it first; Lutherans ranked it 3rd, Catholics 10th, and Episcopalians 13th." In contrast, for the "instrumental" value *forgiveness*, "both Protestants and Catholics ranked [it] 4th while Jews ranked it 15th and nonbelievers 16th. No Protestant denomination ranked it lower than eighth" (p. 332). Thus *forgiveness* would have been a more valid operationalization of Christian religiousness based on the Value Survey. Rokeach (1969), however, used *salvation*. He reported a negative rank order relation between it and expressions of social compassion in 20 out of 24 cases. In contrast, Donahue (1989), examining Rokeach's published data, found a negative relation between social compassion and *forgiveness* in only 6 of 24 cases, and a positive relation in one case.

The Dam Breaks

The end of the 1960's marked the beginning of a veritable explosion in the field. Robinson and Shaver's (1969) *Measures of Social Psychological Attitudes* appeared, including a 92-page chapter on "Religious Attitudes." In 1973, *Psychological Abstracts* added forty-four

[2] In fact, research has established that when religiously relevant items are removed from social desirability scales, there is no correlation (Watson, Morris, Foster, & Hood, 1986).

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religion-relevant index terms (e.g., God Concepts, Religiosity, Religious Beliefs, Religious Practices; APA, 2001). In the same year, Batson's measure of quest religiousness, presented as a more conceptually valid alternative to the intrinsic and extrinsic religiousness concepts made its initial appearance (Darley & Batson, 1973), sparking one of the field's most spirited conceptual and empirical debates (for a review, see Batson et al., 1993). Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi's groundbreaking *The Social Psychology of Religion* appeared in 1975, and then the pace quickened. APA admitted Division 36, then called "Psychologists Interested in Religious Issues" into the divisional pantheon. A number of psychology of religion texts appeared in quick succession (Batson & Ventis, 1982; Byrnes, 1984; Meadow & Kahoe, 1984; Spilka, Hood, & Gorsuch, 1985). The *International Series in Experimental Social Psychology* published its 11th volume, entitled *Advances in the Psychology of Religion* (Brown, 1985). In 1988, the *Annual Review of Psychology* included a chapter on psychology of religion (Gorsuch, 1988). There was even something of a "stealth" social psychology of religion being pursued. Attitude researchers seemed to think that religion was a good content area in which to test out various theories and processes (Bagozzi & Burnkrant, 1979; Fazio, Herr, & Olney, 1984; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1974; Kahle & Berman, 1974; Ostrom, 1969; Salancik & Conway, 1975; Wicker, 1969, 1971; Zanna, Olson, & Fazio, 1980).

All of this activity, the majority of it by social psychologists, would have seemed to predict the inclusion of psychology of religion in the 1985 edition of the *Handbook*. As the editors of the 1998 edition noted, "topics rarely appear like miracles in one edition and then drop off the face of the next" (Gilbert et al., 1998b, xi). But that is pretty much what happened. Allport's "The Historical Background of Social Psychology," reprinted essentially intact from the 1969 *Handbook* made a couple of passing references to religion. Archer's (1985) chapter on "Social Deviance" had references to the sexual mores of Shakers, Mormons and the Oneida community (*à la* Foster, 1984). Kinder and Sears' (1985) chapter on "Public Opinion and Political Action" discussed the relation between religion and voting. There was a discussion of "religion and healing movements" in the chapter on "Cultural Psychology" (Prince-Williams, 1985), while McGuire's (1985) contribution on "Attitudes and Attitude Change" cites a number of religious examples of "single significant experiences" that produce attitude change. But there is no extended treatment of religion in any of these places, and no chapter devoted

solely to it. Shortly thereafter, Robinson, Shaver, and Wrightsman's (1990) second edition of *The Measurement of Social Psychological Attitudes* completely dropped the chapter on measures of religiousness.

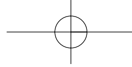
Back to the Present

It is in this historical context that I will examine the most recent *Handbook*. But is that fair? Can the *Handbook* be legitimately employed as a barometer of the state of the field? Historically, *Handbook* editors have cautioned against that. The preface to the third edition explicitly noted, "a final *Handbook* is almost never a precise reflection of the intention of the editors and their advisors, and consequently readers should be cautious in interpreting trends or the current state of the field from the content of the various editions" (Lindzey & Aronson, 1985/1998, p. xiv). In contrast, the editors of the fourth edition make quite the opposite assertion. The *Handbook*, they tell us, is

> the standard professional reference for the field on social psychology. . . . With each new edition the *Handbook* gave readers an opportunity to listen as a new generation of scholars pondered social psychology's enduring questions. . . . The *Handbook* . . . may well be the field's most venerable institution . . . Each edition's table of contents provides a thumbnail sketch of social psychology's topical concerns . . . on the whole these tables reveal a striking stability at the field's core. (Gilbert et al., 1998b, p. xi)

If social psychology is whatever social psychologists do, then psychology of religion certainly belongs in the *Handbook*. Many prominent psychologists of religions are social psychologists, and many prominent social psychologists have addressed religion. Indeed, one of the contributing authors of the fourth edition of the *Handbook* (Batson, 1998) is the author of a prominent psychology of religion text (Batson et al., 1993). If individual different variables related to behavior are one of social psychology's domains, religiousness is arguably among the strongest. From another perspective, *Psychological Abstracts* indexes religion under "social processes."[3] What then, does the current *Handbook* hold concerning religion?

[3] But note that the "masthead" of the table of contents in *Psychological Abstracts* reminds us, "This classification was designed to describe the content of the PsycINFO database, not the field of psychology."



Treatment of Religion in the 1998 Handbook

Notable Coverage

Two of the chapters of the current *Handbook* give fairly extensive coverage to the influences of religion on human behavior. One, Kinder's (1998) chapter on "Opinion and Action in the Realm of Politics" examines the influence of religion on voting behavior. Kinder even includes a cautionary note to his fellow social psychologists about the received view of the influence of religion:

> The power and persistence of group-centrism in public opinion amounts to a dramatic disconfirmation of the expectation, issued confidently not so long ago, that categories of race and ethnicity and religion and the like were about to become obsolete (Glazer & Moynahan, 1975). Things haven't turned out that way—not in the United States, and not around the world, where conflict organized around social and cultural differences has become a murderous commonplace. (Kinder, 1998, p. 808)

Religion also receives pride of place in the chapter on "The Cultural Matrix of Social Psychology" (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998), although this is almost exclusively to contrast "Western" social and personality patterns with "Eastern," specifically Buddhist, cultural matrices. The authors also note that the non-individualistic, "weak ego" psychology traditionally denounced as pathogenic by Western psychologists (Dittes, 1969; Ellis, 1980), is in fact the basis of not only religion but culture in most of the rest of the world. "It may be no exaggeration to say that outside of some subcultures of secular Europe and America, obedience and reverence are *the* foundations of morality in most of the world" (Fiske et al., p. 943). It is this chapter that cites Boyer (1994) cites, generating the only citation for "religion" in the *Handbook's subject* index.

Notable Lack of Coverage

Several chapters make reference to religion, but only as the source of problems: the chapter on "Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Discrimination" (Fiske, 1998) engages in fundamentalist-bashing, focusing solely on Christian fundamentalists:

> It is not fundamentalism per se that apparently underlies its association with prejudice, but rather a categorical, stringent, monopolistic,

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> authoritarian way of being religious, which entertains no doubts, uncertainties, relativities, or inclusivities. People who deny authoritarian certainties apparently are viewed as deserving complete rejection, or worse. (p. 374)

Interestingly, the sort of religion condemned here, which might be described as "devoutly held" and "absolutist," is precisely that which Ellis (2000) conceded "can sometimes lead to emotionally healthy behavior" (p. 3).

The chapter on "Social Psychology and World Politics" (Tetlock, 1998) discusses religion primarily in a section entitled "the nation-state under siege," but manages to completely ignore the encyclopedic treatment of that topic in the volumes of *The Fundamentalism Project* (Marty & Appleby, 1991–1995; see especially, Marty & Appleby, 1993).

Buss' (1998) presentation on Evolutionary Social Psychology mentions religion only to let creationists down easy. "Creationism, the view that a supreme deity crated humans, complete with all their complex mechanisms, is not a scientific theory, leads to no testable predictions, and hence is not a scientifically viable alternative explanation" (pp. 988–989). Stark (2003), however, noted that evolutionism has had an imperfect track record as a science. Evolutionists, Stark finds, have generally chosen not to address "in public" the utter lack of evidence for some of its basic premises, and the evolution "debate" has often served as a bully pulpit for an anti-theistic elite.

In fairness, some chapters cite religion as a major influence on life and culture in their introductions or toward their conclusions, including religion in a litany of important social forces. But this is done without citation, and without further discussion.

How Much Is Actually Missing?

No handbook, and more specifically no individual chapter in a handbook can be expected to cover everything. But can it be said that justice has been done to a topic when a treatment ignores phenomena that are central to it? Petty and Wegener's (1998) contribution, "Attitude Change: Multiple Roles for Persuasion Variables" makes no mention of religious conversion, despite a large body of research in that area (Malony & Southard, 1992; Rambo, 1993).

Pittman's (1998) article on "Motivation" dances around the concept of religion, seemingly going to excruciating lengths to avoid actually saying the "R word":

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> One fundamental problem . . . is the task of making sense out of and acting in a world that is extremely complex and at best only partly open to understanding and influence. (p. 550)
>
> At . . . times the goal may be to construct and maintain favored or comforting conceptions of reality. (p. 551)
>
> [first level heading:] Coming to terms with self and the end of the self (p. 550)

Snyder and Cantor (1998) discuss volunteerism in their chapter on "Understanding Personality and Social Behavior," seemingly unaware of the point made in Kinder's (1998) chapter that volunteerism in religious organizations is American volunteerism *par excellence* (see also Hoge, Zech, McNamara, & Donahue, 1998).

Deaux and LaFrance's (1998) chapter on "Gender" does not mention gender difference in religiousness, a difference so persistent throughout the history of psychology of religion research, regardless of the culture or religion examined, or of the measure used, so resistant to being explained away, that Stark (2002) recently challenged his colleagues in the field to disprove his assertion that it has some form of physiological basis, related to gender differences in risk-taking.[4] In their defense, Deaux and LaFrance (1998) do state that "this is *not* a chapter about sex differences . . . [but rather] a compound framework . . . within which the significance of gender for social interaction can be understood" (p. 788). Later, when discussing the "subtypes and variations" of gender stereotypes, they state that, along with cultural differences, "these variations could also be linked to differences in religious tradition, for example, Catholic versus Protestant, underlying the importance of systems as well as individuals when analyzing stereotypes" (p. 796). The matter is treated no further, however.

Gilbert's (1998) chapter, "Ordinary Personology," disregards a bourgeoning body of literature on religious attributions (see Spilka et al., 2003 for a review) although he himself has more recently begun to touch on this area (Gilbert, Brown, Pinel, & Wilson 2000). Cialdini and Trost (1998) discuss "Social Influence, Social Norms, Conformity and Compliance," and even mentions "cult recruiters"

[4] But see Freese (2004) for evidence from the "World Value Survey" that not even "risk preference" can account for nearly universal gender differences in religiousness.

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as "commercial compliance professionals" (p. 169) without even nodding in the direction of the huge body of literature on the "brainwashing" issue (Bromley & Shupe, 1983; Robbins, 1979).

Pruitt (1998) writes a chapter on "Social Conflict" without ever mentioning religion; Brewer and Brown's (1998) discussion of "Intergroup Relations" makes reference to intra-Jewish and Hindu-Muslim relations; but the authors of both articles seem unaware of the related work of *The Fundamentalism Project* (e.g., Don-Yehiya, 1994; Frykenberg, 1993).

Tyler and Smith (1998) present a chapter on "Social Justice and Social Movements," without noting the fact, obvious upon inspection of the list of Nobel Peace Prize recipients, that religious motivations lie at the heart of many movements for social justice.

And As If That Wasn't Bad Enough . . .

The two most startling examples of leaving religion out remain. There has of late been an explosion of interest in the relation between religion and health. The evidence of that link in no way postdates the *Handbook*. Nonetheless the chapter on Health Behavior (Salovey, Rothman & Rodin, 1998) never mentions "the R word" in some 50 pages. Koenig, McCullough, and Larson's (2001) *Handbook of Religion and Health* includes some 2500 studies, the vast majority of which would have been available to the authors, but they cite only six of them.

But perhaps the most curious omission is that fact that Batson's (1998) chapter on "Altruism and Pro-Social Behavior" makes no mention of his own extensive (Batson et al., 1993) and continuing (Batson et al., 2001) work on the relation between religion and altruism. As mentioned above, his measure of quest religiousness was made famous in the "Jerusalem to Jehrico" field experiment (Darley & Batson, 1973). His conceptualization and programmatic research on this concept has generated a great deal of scholarship critiquing, validating, revising, and extending the concept. He is among the most prominent psychologists of religion in the United States. For example, the author index in Spilka et al.'s (2003) textbook includes some 2677 citations (not counting self-citations by the four authors). Batson has the single greatest number of these citations. Yet in his *Handbook* chapter, he only cites Darley and Batson (1973) in passing, en route to explaining why he was not going to be giving a great deal of attention to "dispositional variables."

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But Batson had shown his hand earlier. In 1986, he published an article in the *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* entitled "An Agenda Item for Psychology of Religion: Getting Respect." It would have been more descriptively subtitled "Being Respectable." Batson (1997)[5] caricatures the field of psychology of religion as the late comedian Rodney Dangerfield, whose signature line was "I don't get no respect." He says that Dangerfield's character "is tragically amusing because not only does not get respect, he does not deserve any. I fear the same is true for the psychology of religion" (p. 4). He goes on to criticize psychology of religion for its lack of theory and poor (non-behavioral, primarily correlational) research methods. He then discusses three additional faults:

> [T]he goal for a substantial number of [psychologists of religion] is to demonstrate the positive value of religion . . . rather than to make an honest inquiry . . . [about how] religion operates. . . . [One way is by] intentionally or unintentionally . . . fail[ing] to ask the relevant hard questions . . . which might embarrass our present understanding.
>
> There is a second way . . . We can distort the result of the search. [W]e can selectively perceive and report results . . . One hopes this is rarely done; yet it is done—most obviously, in articles reviewing research on a given topic. . . . [A]nother, more subtle way . . . [is by failing to acknowledge that] studies differ in quality. This difference needs to be reflected in our assessment of what the research is saying. (Batson, 1997, pp. 8, 9, 10)

Thus Batson characterizes the field of psychology of religion as being at best theoretically and methodologically unsophisticated, and at worst populated by a substantial number of researchers doing advocacy/junk science and who are likely to fabricate scholarly consensus through the selective citation of research.

But even if all of this is true, one presumes that Batson is not engaging in some form of academic *auto de fe*. One presumes that he feels his own research, which not infrequently has employed experimental designs and behavioral measures, has been done to correct these shortcomings. Thus his research, being of higher quality, would presumably add to our understanding of the place of different ways of being religious in the determination of altruism.[6] And yet he omits it.

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[5] The article was originally published in 1986 in the *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, volume 5, pages 6–11. The reference and pagination here is to the version of the article published in Spilka and McIntosh's (1999) anthology, "reprinted and edited with the permission of the author and the publisher" (p. 3f).

[6] "Again using research relating ways of being religious to antisocial and prosocial

Why Is It Left Out?

The foregoing discussion has demonstrated that there is an extensive body of literature concerning the function of religion in content areas of interest to social psychology. Why then, does the *Handbook*'s review of these areas fail to cite these studies? Religion has been so persistently left out of areas where it so obviously appears relevant that one might presume some sort of mandate to ignore it. But absent some sort of "smoking e-mail," such a presumption seems unfounded. Besides which, at least one of the articles (Kinder, 1998) notes the power of religion as a cultural force, and its failure to wither away.

There are a number possible causes for this glaring omission. For one, psychologists' lack of religiousness and animosity toward the study of religion is well established. Not counting faculty in educational psychology, faculty in psychology departments in the United States are more than half again as likely than college faculty in general to respond "none" to the question "What is your present religion?": 50% versus 30% (*Politics of the professorate*, 1991, as cited in Shafranske, 1996b). We have already seen Batson's (1997) opinion of (other) psychologists of religion; it is pretty well typical. David Wulff, who spent some twenty years working on a history of psychology of religion, stated "Psychologists . . . tend not only to be uninterested in religion but also to harbor genuine antagonism toward it. . . . They are often suspicious of the motives and objectivity of those psychologists who do [study it]" (Wulff, 1996, p. 44).

Psychologists, for the most part, take as given the "secularization thesis" that as society "advances," it becomes less religious. This theory has been proved largely untenable (e.g., Stark, 1999; although that view is not unanimous Bruce, 2001). Hoge (1996), another sociologist of religion, notes that "Overall church involvement in the United States has not has not changed measurably since the 1960s. . . . Academics and intellectuals should not think that all Americans are as they are" (pp. 23, 24). Barrett (2004), a representative of the new cognitive psychology of religion, has suggested that the academic environment, both physically and intellectually, cognitively predisposes its inhabitants toward reductionistic explanatory frameworks.

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behavior, I believe that one or two studies using behavioral measures may be more informative—and so should be weighted more heavily—than several dozen studies using self-report questionnaire measures of such activities" (Batson, 1997, p. 10).

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Religion is generally absent from psychology textbooks (e.g., Lehr & Spilka 1989) and journals (Weaver, et al., 1998). I found that between 1969, the year the second edition of the *Handbook* was published, and 1984, the year before the third edition was published, the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* published 48 articles that *Psychological Abstracts* listed under "religion" or one of its cognates; a rate of 4.36 per year. Between 1985 and 1997, there were 44 such articles, or 5.5 per year; from 1998 to 2002, it has been 5, a rate of less than 2 per year. As another example, *Psychological Bulletin* presented a 55-page "Review and Critique of Category Systems for Classifying Ways of Coping" (Skinner, Edge, Altman, & Sherwood 2003). It does not cite Pargament's (1997) *The Psychology of Religion and Coping* or any substantial portion of its nearly 900 references. The article's author, the journal editor, and the reviewers were either unaware of the book or chose to ignore it.

I have had personal experience with these issues. In 1979, I was a graduate student in the personality and social psychology program at Purdue University, whose Department of Sociology and Anthropology included Jim Davidson, editor of the *Review of Religious Research*. When I proposed, as a preliminary examination topic, to do a literature review on "The definition and measurement of Christian religiosity in the context psychological theory" (Donahue, 1980),[7] the topic was rejected, on the grounds that there was not enough literature. I had provided only a brief "exemplary" reference list. My committee approved the topic when I returned with a list of over 150 relevant references. In my defense I was asked to assure the committee that I had not reviewed the literature selectively, leaving me wondering how I was supposed to establish this point, and whether this question was put to others who defended literature reviews.

What Would be Gained by Including Religion?

What, then, is the field really missing by ignoring religion?

[7] At that time, I had not yet developed my current preference for the use of the word "religiousness," and defended "religiosity" on the grounds that it was the standard usage in the field.

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Large Amounts of Otherwise Inexplicable Variance

From the earliest applications of factor analysis (Thurstone, 1934), through more recent studies examining religiousness in the context of groups of heterogeneous variables (Hadden, 1963, Brown, 1966; Wearing & Brown, 1972), to a "Replicated Item-Level Factor Analysis of the Full MMPI" (Johnson, Null, Butcher & Johnson, 1984), religion-related items have almost invariably formed a unique factor. In the case of the MMPI, the fact that its twelve religion-related items did not load any of the pathology factors was one of the reasons for excluding all religion items from the MMPI-2 (the other reason being privacy complaints). Even in the case of the five-factor model of personality, correlations between religiousness and other personality factors are apparently small (see MacDonald, 2000; Saroglou, 2002). This, coupled with the fact that religion is significantly and negatively correlated with behaviors in such social psychological spheres of interest as drug use, teenage sexual involvement, and criminal behavior (see Spilka et al. 2003, for a review), would argue that otherwise anemic multiple Rs might start to put on a little weight with the addition of a measure of religiousness to the list of predictor variables.[8]

An Important Cross-Cultural Phenomenon

One of the recent trends in psychology is to examine the cross-cultural applicability of its concepts and theories (e.g., Adamopoulos & Kashima, 1999). Religion is a cultural universal, and recent analyses suggest that earlier presumptions that religion is so diverse that one can only understand *religions* and not *religion* are mistaken: rather, all religion reflects cognitive universals. Indeed, it could not be otherwise (Boyer, 2001). Kirkpatrick (2004) has found a general theory of the origin of religion at the nexus of evolutionary social psychology and attachment theory. Given such broad-based, and, as it were, "hard-wired" perspectives, how much longer can social psychology continue to ignore it?

[8] Those looking for just the right measure would do well to begin by consulting Hill and Hood (1999).

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Understanding the Underserved

Psychology has frequently drawn attention to the needs of traditionally underserved groups, acknowledging the necessity of moving beyond its traditional perspective based on college sophomores and white males (e.g., Guthrie, 1976). But women, Blacks, and Hispanics have higher rates of religiousness than the white male population (Spilka et al. 2003), and religiousness is recognized as an important component of Black (Billingsley, 2000) and Hispanic (Dolan & Deck, 1994) culture. Can social psychology understand such groups without understanding values that are uniquely important to them?

Influence on Social Policy

Religion has come to the fore in dramatic and tragic ways in recent years. In the case of David Koresh and the Branch Davidians, for example, a volatile mixture of government ineptness (*Report of the Department of the Treasury*, 1993), ignorance of the nature of the group being dealt with (Tabor & Gallagher, 1995), and anti-cult hysteria (Bromley & Shupe, 1995) resulted in the deaths of men, women, and children who were not being held hostage or brainwashed. Ammerman's (1993) literally *post mortem* report to the federal government on the handling of the crisis notes the unwillingness of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms to consult *anyone* when faced with such a situation, and the unwillingness of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to accept referral to relevant individuals when they *have* decided to seek advice. Ammerman is a sociologist of religion who is an expert on the Southern Baptists (Ammerman, 1987, 1990), but the federal agencies who contacted her to advise them on their handling of the situation at Waco refused her referrals to sociologists of religion more familiar with apocalyptic religious movements. It was also clear to her that if she declined involvement, expertise in the social scientific study of religion would not be used as a criterion in choosing her replacement (see also Ammerman, 1995). If social psychologists, familiar with the history and development of such groups, could have been referred to the government by the American Psychological Association, the outcome might have been different. It is the unique perspective of social psychologists, as opposed to clinical psychologists—trained to deal with people who are the casualties of such groups—or forensic psychologists—trained to deal with the criminal mind—that is appropriate in such cases.

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(The literally fatal mistake at Ranch Apocalypse may have been the involvement, and mentality, of the FBI "hostage rescue" team.)

On a far less dramatic level, the availability of social psychologists who can speak knowledgeably about the practices and mentalities of various religious or other nontraditional groups, as well as bringing to bear social psychological principles to reduce ingroup/outgroup tensions and rumor creation, would seem to be an important "niche" in an ever more diverse American society. But the availability of such experts presumes training, and training requires recognition of the unique dynamics involved.

Concluding Reflections

Sociology tends to view religion from a distance, as one of many social institutions influencing behavior, a perspective perhaps best represented by the new economic models of religious involvement (Stark, Iannaccone, & Finke, 1998). But such a perspective may make it difficult to deal with individual cases. Clinical psychologists deal "up close and personal," and are likely to see only the casualties of religious involvement. But all intense human experiences (marriage; boot camp; a high school football team's "Hell Week"; high-involvement religious groups) produce casualties. Clinicians have the unique skills to deal with such individuals, but not a sufficient breadth of view to understand the social dynamics of the groups involved. A social psychology of religion could fill that gap, bridging the two extremes (which currently eye each other quite warily) and produce unique benefits for all.

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[9] This source is also widely available on the internet.

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