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## SCHOLARSHIP EXEMPLAR



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa  
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

### Scholarship 2023 Religious Studies

Time allowed: Three hours  
Total score: 24

Check that the National Student Number (NSN) on your admission slip is the same as the number at the top of this page.

**You should answer ONE of the questions in this booklet.**

Check that this booklet has pages 2–20 in the correct order and that none of these pages is blank.

Do not write in any cross-hatched area (▨). This area may be cut off when the booklet is marked.

**YOU MUST HAND THIS BOOKLET TO THE SUPERVISOR AT THE END OF THE EXAMINATION.**

# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

## INSTRUCTIONS

Write an essay about the psychology of religion and spirituality, in response to ONE of the questions below.

Space for planning is provided on page 4 of this booklet. Begin your answer on page 5.

### ***EITHER: QUESTION ONE***

"Spiritual emotions such as gratitude, awe and reverence, and love and hope are likely to be generated when people perceive sacredness in various aspects of their lives."

— Patrick McNamara, neuroscientist, and Robert Emmons, professor of psychology

"Our own words to God become sacred when they are spoken from the heart."

— Joy Cowley, New Zealand author

People committed to religious and spiritual traditions generally prefer to trust the inspiring leaders and texts from their own traditions as a guide to their religious and spiritual practice.

For whom, and to what extent, are findings from the psychology of religion and spirituality convincing and useful?

### ***OR: QUESTION TWO***

"While this work is ongoing, findings to date are unequivocal; various aspects of religion are strongly related to physical and psychological well-being in everyday life in general."

— Crystal Park, professor of psychology

"If one submits everything to reason, our religion will contain nothing that is mysterious or supernatural."

— Blaise Pascal, philosopher, mathematician, physicist

Researchers in the field of the psychology of religion and spirituality claim to clarify and expand our understanding of aspects of religious and spiritual experience.

What is it about religious and spiritual perspectives and experiences that makes them such a challenging yet rewarding area of study for researchers?

# PLANNING

"Religion is a wishful thing that involves the ~~continuousness~~ of separation ~~from~~ other actions and continuousness of found nowhere else but in hallucination confusion." - Freud

Proverbs 6:16-19

"There are six things the Lord hates..."

~~Memorize~~

"Love thy neighbour as yourself"

Introduction

P1: Contradictions

Bible Quotes  
& Encyclicals

P2: Outside Views (comes with experience)

Human influence  
Proverbs 3:5-6  
Ode

- challenging side

P3: Scientific side - Lack of evidence (Perspectives and experiences)

- should of turn

P4: Religious Spiritual awakening

- rewarding

P5: Religious appreciation

P6: Understand of World (religious history)

Holy see  
Secular

1870's

French revolution  
Democratic and  
social secular  
Committee

Analysis (any final points)

Conclusion

- P4: religious researchers

What is it about religious and spiritual perspectives and experiences that makes them such a challenging ~~yet~~ rewarding area of study for researchers?

"This is showing our cognitive ~~is~~ engineered fools biases us towards a certain way of thinking. One of ~~pre~~ pre life, an afterlife, gods, ~~invisible~~ invisible beings who are doing things - they are all aspects of most large world religions." - Justin PHD

Select (✓) ONE essay question to answer.

☐

Question One

☒

Question Two

Religion and spirituality, although extremely different, are both areas which have confused, enlightened, angered and calmed many researchers and people in general over the centuries ~~whereas~~ they have been present in our world. This can be attributed to its self contradictions, ~~scientific~~ lack of scientific evidence, and taught ignorance, as well as the human influence that repels many away from specifically religion. Contrary to this, the people who do look past all of that and learn and research about religion and spirituality ~~can~~ have found many rewarding aspects, such as spiritual awakening, religious appreciation, a new understanding of the world as well as ~~the~~ new found knowledge about such a largely spread aspect of our history and future. ~~This~~ (This essay will be focusing on religion as a whole but focusing on Christian/~~them~~ catholic examples/evidence)

~~The Catholic Church~~ The Bible is one of main foundations of religion in our world. A book written thousands of years ago by many different people, through many different areas and times, because of this, ~~it~~ as well as new teachings (Encyclicals) there are many contradictions which make it difficult to understand. ~~Then~~ For example, the greatest commandment, barring "Love thy God", is that of "Love thy Neighbour as yourself." A simple yet

powerful teaching that has stumped so many, because the religions which follow the Bible have never truly taught or lived by that statement. To many people, within the religion and outside of it subconsciously add on a list of conditions that the church (Catholic) and other religious organizations has added on over the years. It's "Love thy neighbour" as long as they ~~and~~ have the same beliefs as you, don't anger you and live their lives according to your beliefs and not their own. This mentality is what has ~~made~~ made religion so difficult to understand and research. Love, is a simple word that holds so much meaning, to some it means family, to others kindness, to religion it means all of that and more. Love means treasuring those around you, having kindness for those who you may not agree with, and having compassion for all. This fact has been tainted by human influence and interpretation within religion. This tainted practice of love is what confuses and repulses people from religion, including researches because it is hard to understand how a group of people can preach about love then practice the opposite.

Another aspect of religious ~~perspective~~ and spiritual perspectives and experience that make it ~~an~~ a ~~challeng~~ challenging topic to research, is that

of an outsider, insider mentality, and set of experiences. To study religion and spirituality, specifically <sup>as</sup> someone who is not religious nor spiritual is extremely difficult. It can be hard to understand this type of way of life if you have never lived it. Religion and spirituality are complex things, each perspective, each individual has a different understanding and connection of/with their religion/spirituality. This ~~idea~~ individualized aspect means that, yes each religion has an overall code, way of life, but to each follower/parishoner/individual that way of life means something totally different to the next person in the line. This difference in connection makes it such a challenging area to study because the more you learn, the more there is to learn, the more articles, interviews and papers you read, the more ~~new~~ new information/perspective there is to educate yourself with. A researcher who wishes to be thorough would need to spend months just researching different aspects of individual religion and this ~~makes~~ is what makes it so difficult. ~~Studying~~ Studying a religion, because of the difference, is extremely difficult to someone who does not partake in that difference. This For example Freud, the father of psychoanalytics, has created a theory on religion, the main message being that "Religion is a wishful thing that involves the separation from other actions and a continuous new

found nowhere else but in hallucination confusion." This quote was written by Freud an outsider to religion who couldn't fully grasp the idea of individualised religious perspectives and experiences. ~~There is~~ This shows just how difficult it can be to understand the workings of religion if you have not seen apart of said workings. ~~Freud says~~ "Hallucination confusion." This is how Freud describes religious and spiritual experiences. Researching religion can be extremely rewarding, but to get then to the truly rewarding and educated aspects of religion there are layers that need to be peeled away and these layers can sometimes look like cement walls to those who don't know what's underneath, this hard exterior is what creates a hazard and repelling effect for those wanting to research religion.

One of those layers is that of taught ignorance, which originally was born from not understanding and only seeing the ~~more~~ bad and contradictory side to religion/religious figures has now been combined with the ignorance that science creates. For those who study or have knowledge of science religion has become something 'disproven' and outdated. In school, students are taught about evolution and biology, this knowledge can deter people away from understanding,

or even trying to understand religion. To many science and religion are to ends of a spectrum that can never both be correct.

Much of religion is not backed by ~~scientific~~ scientific evidence and this means to many people that it is not factual. This ignorance/perspective is what can create an unintentional barrier to researchers delving into the world of religion and spirituality. "If one submits everything to reason, our religion will contain nothing that is mysterious or supernatural." This quote from Blaise Pascal, philosopher, mathematician and physicist shows that religion can be present when science is present. Blaise Pascal, a physicist, ~~for~~ proves that the ~~elimination~~ elimination of taught (scientific or ~~communit~~ <sup>social</sup>) ignorance can lead to the knowledge and understanding of both. The difficult part being the first step ~~to~~ that removal because many don't step outside of what they understand ~~to~~ or appreciate to do research. ~~But this is~~ When that hesitation and taught ignorance is removed is when studying religion and spirituality starts becoming rewarding because now, the researcher has knowledge ~~on~~ of a whole new way of life, of a whole new, large, population of the world.

On the other side, if said researcher is already religious it can be just as hard, because to be a good researcher you need to be unbiased and willing to learn any new information. For somebody already apart of religion being unbiased is extremely hard, especially ~~been~~ when researching aspects of religion which are negative and/or against ~~when the religion~~ specific religion or individual perspective that you hold. Along with this, when you have grown up, or lived a certain way of life for a substantial amount of time one can start to believe that they know everything to do with said way of life, in this case religion. This belief ~~can~~ is our barrier to the willingness a researcher needs to ~~be~~ be educated about new, or ~~are~~ already knowledgeable subjects. Also if you are religious, specifically in a religion that follows the teachings of the Bible, or a Bible that includes Proverbs it is hard as a teaching from Proverbs 3:5-6 says "Trust in your Lord, not in your own understanding, ~~use~~ use his word and he will set straight your path." If a ~~pre~~ already religious researcher followed this word researching anything, let alone other aspects or other religions would be extremely difficult and would most likely result in a biased report/understanding.

Contrary to all of these negative aspects of

~~studying~~ studying religion which make it difficult, there are many rewarding aspects of studying religion and spirituality, one aspect being that of religious appreciation and spiritual awakening. Contrary to popular belief religion and spirituality are not the same thing, but they can be intertwined as a lot of religion is based on an individual's connection with God through spirituality. Spirituality awakening is that of becoming aware of your soul, your inner self, mentally. Many people feed their bodies but do not feed their soul. Spirituality does not necessarily mean ~~become~~ ~~it~~ believing in a higher power but believing in yourself and the knowledge that you know your soul inside and out.

Researching religion may not convert the researcher but it can create a realisation of values, or morals that spiritually align with you and your wants in life. Along with this researching religion and spirituality can bring religious appreciation. Appreciating religion is extremely important in the grand scheme of things because as a human who is involved in society you/the researcher will meet people who are religious, have family and/or friends who are religious, and you may even date/marry a religious person. Having an understanding and appreciation for religion and the people apart of those religions ~~can~~ can help people to understand other people

In a deeper sense as well as providing the ability to connect with someone because you understand such a large aspect of their life even if you don't share that experience.

Not only can you understand and connect with other people, ~~you can also~~ researching religion and spirituality can also lead to an understanding and appreciation of our world and our societies history. Religion has played an instrumental part of our world's development and history. ~~The~~ The current society we live in is mostly secular as it is the common ground between most people. Secularhumanism is based on the idea that decisions should be decided by human experience and not religion, but studying religion helps us understand the secular world because it stemmed from Christianity, more specifically the English church. Understanding the roots of secularhumanism and when it was invented is extremely beneficial when ~~and~~ trying to understand how our modern world (specifically secular countries) and how and why it operates that way. Understanding our world's history is how we can begin to understand our future and for our secular world, religion is our history.

Understanding our past, and our current religious

Worldly aspects is most certainly a challenging thing but it reaps all the rewards if approached. Religion in a psychological context is pre-empted, it is psychologically predictable because our human brain can comprehend our eventual demise and because of that our brain automatically contemplates the concepts of life most similar to religious attributes. A study done by Justin, PhD, Oxford University, states "This is showing ~~that~~ our cognitive engineered tools biases us towards a certain way of thinking. One of pre-life, an after-life, Gods, invisible beings who are doing things - these are all aspects of most large world religions." This quote shows us that not only can understanding and researching religion and spirituality be rewarding ~~when~~ in a ~~historical~~ ~~under~~ understanding our history context, but in a understanding ~~ourselves~~ ourselves and some of our human created fears of demise. It may even provide an answer to our/your most prevalent life long fears/~~are~~ ways of thinking.

"While this work is ongoing, findings to date are unequivocal; various aspects of religion are strongly related to physical and psychological well-being in everyday life in general." - Crystal Perle  
Professor of Psychology

This quote shows how religion is not separate

to our world but intertwined in the most fundamental aspects of human life. Understanding our history, our why, and our communities is how we connect as people and as members of a multi-cultural, multi-religious society. Without this understanding and connection we are not one large connected society we are a group of disconnected ~~soci~~ communities with nothing holding us together. This is what researching religion and spirituality can help create, ~~that~~ and it is why it is so rewarding. Even though it may be hard to research whether you are religious or not, it will forever be rewarding in more ways than one.

### Acknowledgements

Material from the following sources has been adapted for use in this assessment:

#### Page 2

First quote: Emmons, R. A., and McNamara, P. (2006). Sacred emotions and affective neuroscience: Gratitude, costly signalling, and the brain. P. McNamara (Ed.), *Where God and science meet: How brain and evolutionary studies alter our understanding of religion 1*, (p 12). Praeger Perspectives.

Second quote: Cowley, J. (2018). *Veil Over The Light – Selected Spiritual Writings*, (p 65). FitzBeck Publishing.

Third quote: Park, C. (2005, November 16). Religion as a Meaning-Making Framework in Coping with Life Stress. *Journal of Social Issues*, 61(4), pp 707–729. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2005.00428.x>

Fourth quote: Pascal, B. *Pensées*, Fragment 162:II, 602. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pascal/sourced> 2/03/2023

## Scholarship

**Subject:** Religious Studies

**Standard:** 93603

**Total score:** 13

Question	Performance descriptor	Score	Marker commentary
2	Analysis and critical thinking	4	<p>The candidate demonstrated some analysis and critical thinking, such as showing an understanding of religious and spiritual experiences, looking at the challenges and rewards that researchers outline within the study of religion and spirituality, and their relationship to secular society.</p> <p>Further development of the analysis would have allowed the response to reach Scholarship level.</p>
	Integration, synthesis, understanding	4	<p>Relevant examples were given, but the candidate could have used more specific studies of psychology to develop their answer. This could have been done by giving a range of different forms of research from different fields and developing a greater synthesis to their argument.</p>
	Development, precision, clarity	5	<p>The candidate showed a convincing understanding of the psychology of religion and spirituality, which resulted in a mostly logical conclusion. The candidate presented ideas systematically, dealing with different topics consecutively.</p> <p>Greater consistency in the presentation of their argument would have improved the candidate's grade.</p>