
Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Batson, C. Daniel, Schoenrade, Patricia, Ventis, W. Larry (1993). *Religion and the Individual*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. 427 pp., \$36.50 CDN, pb.

Reviewed by: Dr. Bill Hague, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta.

With the name Daniel Batson on the cover, one can expect innovative thinking about religion, backed up with scholarship and research. One can expect relatively clear exposition. This recent Batson publication does not disappoint on any of these qualities.

It might be a bit disappointing for those familiar with Batson that, on digging into the present volume, one finds it is substantially a repeat of Batson and Ventis' significant 1982 book, *The Religious Experience* with added chapters and more recent research. The question then becomes: Does this warrant a new publication? I think "Yes." The scarcity of data that limited their ability in the 1982 edition to make conclusions about the quest orientation toward religion, particularly in relation to mental health, has been somewhat made up for in the meantime.

For those not familiar with Batson, the whole book should be helpful in the psychological study of religion; for devotees of Batson, the new data and the added chapters make it worthwhile. Batson is known in social-psychological contexts, for his research into three religious orientations: two as described by Allport: *extrinsic* (religion as something to be used), *intrinsic* (religion as something to be lived), and "quest" orientation which Batson himself contributed to address some of the many questions left over from a simple bi-polar approach. In this volume, Batson et al. have presented the latest version of their three-dimensional model, and included clarification and evaluation of their model in the light of criticisms. They have included evidence from almost a hundred recent studies on the relationship of personal religion and mental health.

In chapter 8, "Mental Health or Sickness?" Review of much data leads to interesting conclusions: "In sum, the research provides virtually no evidence that the extrinsic, means dimension of personal religion is positively associated with mental health, and it provides considerable evidence that this dimension is negatively associated with several conceptions of mental health" (p. 286). And later: "Overall, measures of the intrinsic, end dimension relate positively to measures of mental health in forty-nine findings, relate negatively in fourteen findings, and show no relationship in thirty findings" (p. 287).

Although no clear directions have come yet from the still sparse research on the quest dimension, "Evidence generally supports the predicted positive relationship between the quest dimension and measures of open-mindedness and flexibility. . . . The evidence includes several positive cor-

relations with measures of anxiety, especially death anxiety, but a negative correlation with social anxiety" (p. 288).

Which of these patterns indicates better mental health will depend of course on the conception of mental health one prefers: freedom from worry and guilt, conformity to social norms, compliant adjustment to what is, or restless questing toward what ought to be both within oneself and in society. Interestingly, the quest dimension is positively associated according to Batson, with greater self-acceptance but not with absence of illness or more freedom from worry. If one were to take health as absence from anxiety or concern, then perhaps the intrinsic, end orientation of personal religion, or, even more, the extrinsic, means orientation would satisfy. But William James, in nineteenth century terms distinguished the "healthy soul," with its neat answers to the queries life throws at us, as inferior to the "sick soul" whose anxiety and agony seems to be the lot of those whom Batson would call "questers."

Two other new chapters in this book are excellent. They are lucid and realistic; they address the substantive issues that cut to the heart of personal religion's role in life as lived by real people. Chapter 9, "Brothers and Sisters or Sheep and Goats" gets down to the issue: Does religion promote universal love and acceptance, or does it promote intolerance, prejudice and bigotry? We know of course from our experience that it does both, but this book helps us identify the factors that form the thin, meandering line of the watershed between.

Chapter 10, "Concern for Others or Self Concern?" should be especially interesting to care-givers. Summarizing a wide range of studies, Batson et al. point to the helper's own need to give help as often outweighing, and sometimes getting in the way of truly helping. The researchers find, as one would expect, little concern for others in the extrinsic, means orientation, while the need to look good in one's own eyes or the eyes of others is often an element in the intrinsic, end dimension. They found questers more concerned with action than appearance.

One sentence seems to summarize the findings of the two preceding chapters: "The Quest dimension is related to reduced intolerance and increased sensitivity to the needs of others, whereas the intrinsic, end dimension is [negatively] related to the appearance of these social benefits" (p. 364). I have inserted the word "negatively" in the preceding sentence (presuming an omission) since it then fits the context.

The last chapter, "Is Religion on our Side?" completes the book in its usual thought-provoking and comprehensive style, putting the conundrum of religion's role into metaphorical terms of a stranger coming into one's life. The stranger makes promises of support and cooperation, yet his behaviour makes one wonder which side he is on—for us or against us. It is a good way of addressing the enigmatic presence of religion, so glorified by some, so condemned by others. It is a good way of ending a book which truly helps unravel the confusion.