On the other hand, Fatoohi and al-Dargazelli’s work is still a part of the Bucaillist project in many respects. Firstly, the same missionary undertone belies it as other Bucaillist works: the idea that the Qur’ān is the true word of God, and one can arrive at that conclusion rationally by seeing how consistent it is with all knowledge that we arrive at rationally. More importantly, the idea that the goal of science and all human knowledge is to arrive at an approximation of the truth about all matters, also underlies Fatoohi and al-Dargazelli’s work. Finally, like the Bucaillists, Fatoohi and al-Dargazelli also hold that the Qur’ān is to be consulted not only in moral and spiritual matters, but also in scientific matters, whether they be natural or historical. In this respect, the goal of Islamic science is to determine the actual meaning of the Qur’ānic verses that relate to scientific phenomena in order to increase our spirituality.

We are required, however, to exercise caution in the confidence of our interpretation of the Qur’ān. After all, it is only an interpretation and may prove to be wrong at some later time in the future. It is here that I must separate myself from Fatoohi and al-Dargazelli. The missionary tone of their work entails that they believe they have possibly arrived at the actual meaning of the verses that describe the exodus. Although I agree that their account is more rational and grasps the real history of the exodus far better than any preceding account, I would still want to be critical about whether they have captured the whole truth with regard to the account of the exodus. After all, the truth embodied in the Qur’ān comes from God, whereas the knowledge that we glean from the Qur’ān is heavily influenced by the social culture of our time. To claim that at a given point we have deciphered the true meaning of a particular verse(s), is to lose the essential virtue that keeps Islamic science on a God-fearing path: humility. Or, as Averroes would say: “Only Allah knows best”.

Nahyan Fancy


The relationship between science and religion has gone through many stages from total rejection to tentative acceptance to efforts at building interface between science and religion. The current attempts at meaningful science-
religion discourse with the aim to discover areas of mutual relevance was initiated in physical sciences, and psychology seems to have followed suit albeit reluctantly. Despite the substantial early work of William James, the status of religion as a legitimate subject matter for psychology, during the greater part of the twentieth century, remained peripheral, an area no respectable experimental psychologist will venture upon. For the social scientists, religion remained a set of practices supporting a belief system which might or might not have any psychological benefit; hence its reluctant inclusion among the variables.

This situation has changed and publication of books and research journals on psychology of religion are now undertaken more often. This will perhaps help remove the reservations (a polite word for blinkers) Pakistani mainstream psychology academia has harboured about the study of religion for many decades. I can recall (now with amusement, though at that time it was highly discouraging) the difficulty I faced in getting a research proposal on Meditation approved by the department where I teach. A senior professor of Applied psychology exclaimed: “You should have gone to the Islamic Studies department”. There were always hints that religious experience could only be included as a sub-hypothesis, that the main effect should be some other factor like attribution or coping or depression. Students were hard put to find a supervisor who would agree to supervise a dissertation on religiosity or spiritual attitude. Hence it gives me great pleasure and sense of camaraderie to read and review this book *The Psychology of Religion* by Kate M. Lowenthal.

The book under review is written by a psychologist who teaches a course on psychology of religion. This simple statement is prelude to the comments that follow. In my opinion, the author’s experience has equipped her with the balanced scholarly approach that characterizes this book. Years of facing queries from students who are trying to place and understand a suprarational human experience and human behaviour through the paradigms and tools of empirical science can only make one cautious as well as objective in approaching this area.

The plan of the book is very logical. It begins by examining and tracing the course which the relationship between religion and psychology has taken over time. The author acknowledges that the study of religion has mainly focused on Christianity and considers the limiting effects of this trend. The learned author has somewhat tried to make amends by including brief but balanced introduction to five major religions of the world. This is followed by a detailed examination of religious behaviour including rituals like prayer as well as religious discourse. This is the first book to my knowledge which has given attention to religious conversion and included accounts of factors which lead to change of faith. The division of religion into behaviour and experience,
inner and outer, is a useful one and bears witness to the author's clarity of conception in this domain.

The chapter on religious feelings discusses both positive and negative feelings like guilt and shame and provides evidence for their link with mental health, well being and psychology.

The last chapter examines the effects of religion on behaviour, thought and feelings. The role of religion in promoting or dealing with prejudice is analyzed objectively by presenting up-to-date research evidence and avoiding unsupported conclusions or assumptions. The same chapter also deals with issues of identity belonging to religious faith and how it helps in coping with stress. Logically, this same religious identity can also be related to intergroup prejudice and the author brings relevant research to inform readers of this relationship. Each chapter is concluded with a summary which must be helpful to students and serves a rehearsal function for long term storage as well as links to next chapter.

We find in the book just the right combination of caution and conjecture which blends well with the subject matter. However, the author has firstly and lastly maintained a true scientific inquiry and unbiased style.

The reviewer can sense a sympathy which is well concealed, but it is so refreshing to find in someone balancing between sheer selling religion for psychological benefits and equally biased and convenient naivete that attempts to 'explain away' religion. None of these approaches comprises honest inquiry. Both do not do their homework. Loewethal has done better.

She has done her homework well, maintained a good research standard throughout and has refrained from venturing into areas for which she has not found the evidence, or where research has not been done.

As a truly welcome and long awaited work, it will be an invaluable source book for students in this area and reference guide for future researchers.

Despite these merits, I find certain theories simplistic. For example, the treatment of inner life is brief and omits research on meditation. There is a substantial body of work in Buddhist psychology which is hardly attended to. Although the sources consulted for research are impressive and fairly exhaustive, I sincerely feel that a little more attention to the research published journals from Islamic countries would have enriched the passing reference to Islam.

The book is aimed primarily at the beginning level, hence the brevity. It can be emphasized that each theme — inner life, religious behaviour, etc. can be developed and enlarged into a detailed treatment. Since most of the empirical research is in Christian faith, the author cannot be blamed for
lopsidedness in this regard. But research is available on religious coping,\(^1\) aggression among students of religious schools\(^2\), spiritual attitude and well being\(^3\), on perception of God and its relationship to depression,\(^4\) and on effect of parental loss on Coping with Stress\(^5\). to quote a few only from Pakistan.

Naumana Amjad


For many religious observers, modern society is virtually immoral. Over the past hundred years, under the rubric of libertarianism, utilitarianism and capitalism, people have been encouraged to follow their own desires and pursue their own selfish goals to whatever extent they deem possible, referred to as the “pleasure principle”. On the other hand, many religions, especially Islam, encourage people to control their desires (\textit{nafs}), in order to be God-fearing and pious. Thus, practices such as sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, drinking, pornography, etc., are just some of the many current social norms that are, understandably, considered immoral by Mehran Banaei and Nadeem Haque. *From Facts to Values* is a critique of any ideology that accepts, tolerates or encourages the “pleasure principle” as the guiding principle for moral affairs.

Banaei and Haque’s chief target of criticism is relativism. Clearly, the intellectual ideology of the day, relativism certainly poses a severe threat to any religious ideology, and vice versa. On the ethical plane, the standard

---


\(^5\) Rukhsana Kausar, “Effect of Parental Loss and Gender of Adolescents on their Coping with Stress”, a paper presented in the Fifth International Muslim Psychology Conference held in Lahore on February 16-18, 2001.