

Chapter One

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1. Introduction

St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) famously quoted Psalm 14:1 when he asserted, 'Truly there is a God, though the fool says in his heart there is no God' (St. Anselm, 1995). He wrote this in a thesis attempting to prove God's existence. St. Anselm was challenged by a monk called Gaunilo of Marmoutiers who entitled his reply *On Behalf of the Fool* (see St. Anselm, 1995). Gaunilo argued that St. Anselm's 'proof' of God's existence lacked logic. This study will go further and show that St. Anselm's assertion, that not believing in God is associated with foolishness and so, implicitly, with low intelligence, is incorrect. The opposite is broadly true.

Intelligence is negatively associated with religiousness. In this study we will focus on the relationship between intelligence and religious belief, as this will be argued to be the essence of religion, and the studies we will draw upon will focus on World Religions and Christianity in particular. But, as we will see in

Chapters Seven, Ten and Twelve, this statement is also true if religiousness is broadened to include both belief and ritual observance or if it is broadened beyond Christianity. This obviously does not mean that all highly intelligent people are not religious or that all of those who are low in intelligence are religious. It certainly does not mean that all those who are wealthy or highly educated are inherently less religious than those who are uneducated or impoverished. It means that, broadly speaking, the more intelligent are less religious than the less intelligent and that intelligence is the reason for this. Low intelligence predicts religiousness whether we define 'religion' according to the dictionary (as 'belief in or reverence for supernatural powers') or in a broader way, such as to include ideologies which I will call 'replacement religions.'

Attempting to argue that intelligence negatively predicts religiousness seems to evoke two initial responses.

2. 'What about the Archbishop of Canterbury, St Thomas Aquinas or Jacques Derrida?'

The first response is to list all of the highly intelligent yet religious people alive today, or present the even longer list of religious historical figures, and ask how the hypothesis can possibly be true. With regard to replacement religion, examples of intelligent Marxists or Multiculturalists are presented.

There are, of course, many comparatively religious people who are relatively intelligent. However, we will see that they are the minority within their cultural contexts. We will show that their comparatively high religiousness is due to strong personality traits counter-acting their intelligence, environmental factors in adulthood (especially stress), and, to a lesser extent, the experience of having been raised in a religious family. We will

see that British university graduates, overall, are more 'religious' than non-graduates (see Meisenberg et al., 2012), something which may be explained, in part, by educational success relating not just to intelligence but to specific personality factors which also make one prone to religiousness. However, this does not undermine the overall trend that those who are of high intelligence are less likely to be religious and are more likely to be atheists, skeptics and agnostics than those of low intelligence. In addition, we will show that supporters of replacement religions are on average less intelligent than non-supporters and, as with the religious, highly intelligent ideologues can be substantially explained by a particular personality trait profile.

With regard to the Early Modern period, for example, where it might be argued that everybody was religious by modern standards, we will show that the more intelligent were more questioning and liberal in their religiousness than the less intelligent and thus less 'believing' and so less 'religious.' Even in modern times, it will be demonstrated that the liberal religious are on average more intelligent than the conservative religious (though less intelligent than the non-religious).

3. 'It's Simplistic'

The second response to the assertion that intelligence negatively predicts religiousness is to call it 'simplistic.' But, as we will discuss in Chapter Two, any attempt to understand the world involves simplifying a mass of information into a manageable system. Empirical assertions by their very nature play-down nuance and simplify, meaning that any theory, no matter how accurate, risks being accused of being 'simplistic.' The word 'simplistic' implies simplifying something, which may be correct when nuanced, to the point where it is inaccurate. For example, to

claim 'there is a negative correlation between intelligence and physical attractiveness' (see Kanazawa, 2011) may be empirically accurate, while to assert, 'Physically unattractive people have lower IQs than attractive people' would be simplistic because the statement's lack of nuance has led to it being empirically inaccurate. From a scientific perspective, the question is whether the assertion that intelligence negatively predicts religiousness is empirically accurate. This study will show that it *is* empirically accurate. There are, of course, exceptions to the rule. Nobody is claiming that intelligence is the only factor in explaining religious differences and that intelligence negatively correlates with religion perfectly. But, we will show that intelligence negatively predicts religiousness in general. One could only conclude that this was 'simplistic' by making a strawman of the argument.

Moreover, it is axiomatic in science that, all being equal, the simplest theory is the best, so it seems odd to criticize a theory as 'simplistic' unless the theory's predictions are not borne out in most cases. Perhaps researchers who do so think that intelligence is associated with complex thinking and so dismissing intuitively accurate or widely accepted theories as 'simplistic' makes themselves seem more intelligent. But a consequence of such an attitude is an impractical failure to better comprehend the world where it could have been better comprehended. As Charlton (2009) argues, some highly intelligent scholars will reject the simplest theory, even though it is usually the correct theory, and instead adopt unnecessarily complex ideas simply because their intelligence allows them to do so. This may show-off how intelligent they are (and there may be benefits to doing this), but it does not help us to better understand the world and so, scientifically, it is not especially helpful.