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Religion and socio-economic human rights: An empirical enquiry  
among adolescents in England and Wales

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### **Abstract**

This study explores the association between attitudes toward socio-economic human rights and three dimensions of religion (religious practice, religiosity, and self-assigned religious affiliation), after taking into account personal factors (age and sex) and psychological factors (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism) among a sample of 987 students between the ages of 14 and 18 years in England and Wales. Religious practice was assessed by two factors, personal prayer and worship attendance. Religiosity was assessed by three factors, thinking about religious issues, reconsidering religious issues, and belief in God. Self-assigned religious affiliation distinguished among four groups, Protestant Christians, Catholic Christians, Muslims, and religiously unaffiliated. The data demonstrated the importance of personal factors, with females and older students holding more positive attitudes toward socio-economic human rights, and the importance of psychological factors, with higher neuroticism scores and lower psychoticism scores being associated with more positive attitudes toward socio-economic human rights. Among the dimension of religion, religiosity provided stronger prediction of individual differences in attitudes toward socio-economic human rights than either religious practice or self-assigned religious affiliation. In particular, adolescents who often gave thought to religious issues held more positive attitudes toward socio-economic human rights.

*Keywords:* Religiosity, religious practice, self-assigned religious affiliation, human rights.

## Introduction

In order to set the scene for new empirical investigation concerning the connection between religion and socio-economic human rights, this introduction explores five main issues: the way in which socio-economic human rights have been positioned within the international research programme within which the empirical enquiry has been established; a consideration of how socio-economic human rights might be located within a reading of Christian scripture; a consideration of how socio-economic human rights might be located within a reading of Islamic scripture; a review of the empirical studies on which the present enquiry builds; and the shaping of the research question addressed by the present enquiry.

### Socio-economic human rights

The International Empirical Research Program Religion and Human Rights 2.0 identified seven main areas of socio-economic rights to include within the empirical project. These seven main areas were expressed in the following terms: the state's obligation regarding the right to work; the state's obligation regarding the right to social security; the state's obligation regarding living wages; the state's obligation regarding rest and leisure; the state's obligation regarding the rights of the child; the state's obligation regarding prohibition of discrimination against women; and the state's obligation regarding prohibition of discrimination against homosexuals. Each of these seven main areas will be looked at in turn.

The state's obligation regarding the *right to work* was operationalised in the survey by the following two items:

- The government should provide a job for everybody who wants one;
- The government should provide a decent standard of living for the unemployed.

The state's obligation regarding the right to work is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 23) and in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and

Cultural Rights (Article 6). The state's obligation to social security in the event of unemployment is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 25).

The state's obligation regarding the *right to social security* was operationalised in the survey by the following two items:

- The government should provide health care for the sick;
- The government should provide a decent standard of living for the elderly.

The state's obligation regarding the right to social security is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 22). The right to health care is part of the broader network of rights to health and wellbeing: these rights are expressed by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 12). In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 'old age' is identified as a specified category for support (Article 25.1).

The state's obligation regarding the *right to living wages* was operationalised in the survey by the following two items:

- Everyone should have the right to equal pay for equal work;
- Everyone should have the right to a fair wage for their work.

The state's obligation regarding the right to living wages is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 23) and in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 7) which promote everyone's right to a just and fair wage along with a decent standard of living for themselves and their family.

The state's obligation regarding the *right to rest and leisure* was operationalised by the following two items:

- Everyone should have the right to a reasonable limitation of working hours;
- Employment without paid holiday leave should be forbidden.

The state's obligation regarding the right to rest and leisure is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 24) and in the International Covenant on Economic,

Social and Cultural Rights (Article 7) which detail the right of individuals to rest and leisure, as well as limitation of working hours and entitlement to holidays with pay.

The state's obligation regarding the *rights of the child* was operationalised by the following two items:

- The state should protect children from forced labour;
- The state should protect children's rights to play and recreation.

The state's obligation regarding the rights of the child is enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights where it is specifically stated that children should be protected from economic and social exploitation and harmful employment (Article 10). The Convention on the Rights of the Child specifically identifies the rights of the child to rest and leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities (Article 31).

The state's obligation to prohibit *discrimination against women* was operationalised by the following two items:

- The state should protect women's rights to adequate job opportunities;
- Women should have the right to equal pay for equal work.

The state's obligation to prohibit discrimination against women is enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights with special reference to the socio-economic area (Article 7). These rights are further elaborated in the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979).

The state's obligation to prohibit *discrimination against homosexuals* was operationalised by the following two items

- Homosexuals should have the right to hold any public office;
- The state should prosecute discrimination against homosexuals.

The state's obligation to prohibit discrimination against homosexuals is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 2), in the European Convention on Human

Rights (Article 14) and in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Articles 2 and 26). The main element of these Articles is that individuals have a right to equal treatment/non-discrimination in the exercise of all the other rights contained within each document. Furthermore, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 26) provides for equality before the law specifically stating that the 'law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.' In a legal case in Australia in 1994 the Human Rights Committee held that the references to 'sex' in Articles 2 and 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights should be taken to include sexual orientation (see <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/undocs/html/vws488.htm>).

### **Christian scripture**

These seven main areas of socio-economic rights included within the International Empirical Research Program Religion and Human Rights 2.0 interact with Christian scriptures in a variety of ways. Each of these seven areas will be reviewed in turn. The weight given to the scriptures for determining social, moral and ethical values, attitudes and behaviours varies from one Christian tradition to another. While the view that revelation and authority reside in scripture alone (*sola scriptura*) is a matter of wide disagreement and debate, nonetheless scripture remains accepted as a key source of revelation and authority throughout Christian traditions and may be subject to a wide range of hermeneutical perspectives (see Village, 2016).

The *right to work* and the right to be supported when employment is not an option is well enshrined within the biblical tradition. A number of passages of scripture speak of the obligation of those who have access to resources to support those who do not have such access to resources. In this context specific reference is made to the weak, to widows, to

orphans, and to strangers. For example, Deuteronomy 24:19 argues that a sheaf left in the field:

shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow,  
so that the Lord your God may bless you.

On these grounds, it can be hypothesised that those influenced by Christian scripture will wish to endorse a scale of socio-economic human rights embracing the right to work and to be supported when unemployed.

The *right to social security* in the sense of health care for the sick and care for the elderly is well enshrined within the biblical tradition. The ministry of Jesus is full of examples of the sick being healed (healed in body and healed in mind). When John the Baptist, from his prison, sent his disciples to enquire whether Jesus was indeed the one sent by God, part of the evidence to which Jesus pointed was the healing of the sick. According to Matthew 11: 4-5 Jesus sent the following message back to John.

Go and tell John what you hear and see:

The blind receive their sight,  
the lame walk,  
the lepers are cleansed,  
the deaf hear.

There are examples, too, of families caring for the older generation, including, for example, the case of Simon Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1: 29-31). On these grounds, it can be hypothesised that those influenced by Christian scripture will wish to endorse a scale of socio-economic human rights embracing the right to care for the sick and elderly.

The *right to a living wage* is illustrated by a number of biblical passages. In Luke 10: 7 Jesus makes the clear statement that 'the labourer deserves to be paid'. The theme is picked up again in Timothy 5: 18.



The Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain' and 'The labourer deserves to be paid.'

In the legal tradition of the Old Testament, Leviticus 19: 13 makes the clear expectation that 'You shall not keep for yourself the wages of a labourer until the morning'. On these grounds, it can be hypothesised that those influenced by Christian scripture will wish to endorse a scale of socio-economic human rights embracing the right to a living wage.

The *right to rest and leisure* is firmly embedded within the scriptural tradition of the Sabbath. Within the Mosaic Law, the rest from labour on the Sabbath day is specifically extended to embrace the stranger. The classic statement of the Decalogue in Exodus 20: 8-10 reads as follows.

Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work – you, your son and your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, and the alien resident within your towns.

On these grounds, it can be hypothesised that those influenced by Christian scripture will wish to endorse a scale of socio-economic human rights embracing the right to rest and leisure.

The *rights of the child* may present a more complex discussion in relation to Christian scripture. There is a strand within the biblical tradition that emphasises the authority of parents over the child that may be seen by some to come into conflict with the rights of the child. A text cited in this regard is Proverbs 13: 24.

Those who spare the rod hate their children, but those who love them are diligent to discipline.

On these grounds, it can be hypothesised that some influenced by Christian scripture may be less likely to endorse the scale of socio-economic human rights, embracing the rights of the child.

Like the rights of the child some areas concerning the *rights of women* may come into conflict with certain aspects of Christian scriptures. One strand of Christian scripture, grounded in the Adamic creation narrative, sees women as subordinate to men (Genesis 2: 18-24). This view is reinforced by certain aspects of Pauline and post-Pauline theology. For example, 1 Timothy 2: 11-14 argues as follows.

Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve, and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

On these grounds, it can be hypothesised that some influenced by Christian scripture may be less likely to endorse a scale of socio-economic human rights embracing the rights of women.

Like the rights of the child and like some areas concerning the rights of women, the *rights of homosexuals* may come into conflict with certain aspects of Christian scripture. One strand of Christian scripture grounded in interpretation of both Old Testament passages (see Leviticus 20: 13) and New Testament passages (see Romans 1: 27) continue to be seen as inimical to homosexual orientation or to homosexual practice. In Romans 1: 27 Paul writes as follows.

Men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameful acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for this error.

On these grounds, it can be hypothesised that some influenced by Christian scripture may be less likely to endorse a scale of socio-economic rights embracing the rights of homosexuals.

### **Islamic Scripture**

Islam as a monotheistic religion belongs to the family of Abrahamic faith traditions, alongside Christianity and Judaism. As such the notion of divine revelation is the foundation of the core beliefs, values and practices in Islam. While Abrahamic faith traditions share the same monotheistic heritage, each has become a distinctive faith tradition, forming its own unique foundational religious narratives. The shared notion of sacred scripture, for example, has been perceived through distinctive interpretations and expressions. In Islam, the sacred revelation, the Qur'an, is taken to be the literal word of God rather than based on a less formal idea of a general divine inspiration. In Muslim tradition, the way the Qur'an is perceived shows strong resemblance to the centrality of Jesus in Christianity rather than the Bible as such. Moreover, the Qur'an, literally meaning recitation, came out of an oral culture and, as a result, its historical formation, transmission and canonisation were originally undertaken by means of oral preservation and liturgical performance. The Qur'an was committed to a written text, thus became a scripture called *Mushaf* in Muslim tradition. However, the Qur'an's strong oral and aural features still dominate its reception within contemporary Muslim societies (Graham, 1977; Smith, 1993; Madigan, 2001; Sahin, 2008).

The Qur'an for both the majority Sunni and the minority Shia Muslims constitutes the core of 'sacred scripture' in Islam forming the heart of religious and spiritual authority and guidance for Muslims. In addition, for Sunni Muslims the authentic prophetic reports known as Hadith that contain the living traditions of the Prophet (*sunna*) also act as an inalienable source of religious authority that informs Muslims' personal and social attitudes, beliefs and practice. For Shia Muslims the traditions/reports attributed to the special religious and spiritual guides (imams) are considered to be a significant source of religious authority (*marji*). As such, in addition to the direct Qur'anic teachings, the prophetic traditions will also be referenced in framing the interaction between the International Empirical Research

Program Religion and Human Rights 2.0 and Islamic scripture. Each of the seven areas will be reviewed in turn.

The *right to work* and the right to be supported when employment is not an option is well enshrined within the Qur'anic and prophetic traditions. There are more than 300 verses in the Qur'an stressing people's right to work (*amal*), to be productive and to earn (*ajr*) the means of looking after their basic needs. For example, the Qur'an contains passages where the prophets such as Moses receive wages for their work (28-25) and so stresses the centrality of human work and efforts in enabling humans to lead a dignified and rewarding life in this world and the world come (53:39). (The first number is the chapter and the second refers to the verse number in the Qur'an).

The significance of work in Islam is also stressed by the prophetic traditions. According to one of these traditions, the prophet one day sees a young fit man occupied with prayers in the mosque during the work time. The prophet immediately inquires about who feeds him and provides for him in life. Upon learning that it is the young man's brother who works and shares his earning with him, the prophet says that 'your brother is a better worshiper than you' and ends the conversation with one of his well-known short remarks that stresses the dignity of work and the value of being productive in life: 'the hand that gives is always better than the hand that receives'.

A number of Qur'anic passages speak of the obligation of those who have access to resources to support those who do not have such access to resources. The Qur'an frequently asks the faithful to support the poor and those who are unable to look after themselves to the point that offering such financial support (*Zakat*) becomes part a religious requirement, not a simple voluntary charity, for better off Muslims. The Qur'an in numerous places recognises supporting the poor, orphans, and widows, as a fundamental right that the faithful community should honour and observe (2:43; 17:26; 03:38; 58:13; 93:9-10).

One of the well-known prophetic reports similarly emphasises paying *Zakat* that aims to support people in financial need and hardship, as a fundamental pillar of Islam. On these grounds, it can be hypothesised that those influenced by Islamic scripture will wish to endorse a scale of socio-economic human rights embracing both the right to work and to be supported when unemployed.

The *right to social security* in the sense of healthcare for the sick and care for the elderly is well enshrined within the Muslim tradition. According to the Qur'an looking after the parents when they are old is a religious obligation:

Your Lord has commanded that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind and caring to your parents. If one or both of them reach old age with you, do not say to them a word of disrespect, or scold them, but say a generous word to them and care for them. And act humbly to them in mercy, and say, 'My Lord, have mercy on them, since they cared for me when I was small'. (17: 23-24)

Similarly, the prophet Muhammad, who grew up as an orphan, was reminded in the Qur'an to support and care for the orphans and the needy (93: 8-10). And in turn the Prophet is reported to have said: 'Those who do not have mercy on young children, honour the elderly and look after them are not part of our community'. On these grounds it can be hypothesised that those influenced by Islamic scripture will wish to endorse a scale of socio-economic human rights embracing the right to care for the sick and elderly.

The *right to a living wage* is illustrated by a number of Qur'anic verses and the prophetic reports as follows:

You shall give full weight and full measure when you trade, equitably... (6:152)

O my people, you shall give full measure and full weight, equitably. Do not cheat the people out of their rights, and do not act wickedly on earth by spreading mischief.

(11:85)

A prophetic report says: 'Pay the labourer his/her wages before his/her sweat dries.'

On these grounds, it can be hypothesised that those influenced by Islamic scripture will wish to endorse a scale of socio-economic human rights embracing the right to a living wage.

The *right to rest and leisure* is firmly embedded within the Qur'anic and prophetic traditions. The natural human need for rest is firmly recognised in the Qur'an as God creates nature to accommodate this need:

It is mercy from Him that He created for you the night and the day in order to rest (during the night), then seek His provisions (during the day), that you may be appreciative. (28:73)

Within Muslim tradition Friday is designated as a day of rest and a well-known prophetic report suggests attending one's natural physical needs by rest is paramount, 'Do not forget your physical body, your family etc. all have rights over you'. On these grounds, it can be hypothesised that those influenced by Islamic scripture will wish to endorse a scale of socio-economic human rights embracing the right to rest and leisure.

Similarly, the above mentioned prophetic tradition specifically mentions the *rights of the child* that parents must observe. There are instances in the Qur'an suggesting that children need to be respectful to their parents and obey them, but this obedience is qualified as the same passage also recognises the rights of the children not follow the parents if what parents ask limits their right to follow their faith:

And We have enjoined upon human beings to care for their parents. His mother carried him, [increasing her] in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Be grateful to Me and to your parents... . But if they endeavour to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, *do not obey them* but accompany them in [this] world with appropriate kindness. (31:14/15)

However, there are also prophetic reports suggesting disciplining children particularly when it comes to getting them to observe religious duties. On these grounds, it can be hypothesised that overall those influenced by Islamic scripture will wish to endorse a scale of socio-economic human rights embracing the rights of the child.

In respect of the *rights of women*, the principle of gender equality and dignity is firmly recognised in the Qur'an as the Qur'anic passages emphasise that both men and women are created equally with same essence (4:1). Moreover, the expression 'faithful men and women' (implying equality) is repeated in numerous places in the Qur'an. As a consequence, the Muslim tradition and Islamic Law acknowledge that women have the right to own property and to keep their business separately, even if they are married. Although, in some specific social areas (for example, inheritance, being a witness in a court and polygamy) some literal readings of the Qur'anic texts have led to the denial of women's rights and gender equality, in traditional Islamic Law, none of these passages are interpreted to suggest the denial of the rights and dignity of women. On these grounds, it can be hypothesised that those who have been influenced by Islamic scripture will wish to endorse a scale of socio-economic human rights embracing the rights of women.

However, *the rights of homosexuals* may come into conflict with certain aspects of Muslim tradition, particularly with certain prophetic reports. In the absence of direct Qur'anic verses on homosexuality, often the account borrowed from the biblical story of Sodom is interpreted as implying the condemnation of homosexuality. In classical schools of Islamic Law several prophetic reports are cited as condemning and prescribing punishment for homosexuality. Although the authenticity of some of these prophetic traditions are disputed by scholars, they inform the negative perception of homosexuality within the mainstream Muslim communities. On these grounds, it can be hypothesised that some influenced by the

Muslim tradition may be less likely to endorse a scale of socio-economic rights embracing the rights of homosexuals.

### **Empirical perspective**

The International Empirical Research Program Religion and Human Rights 1.0 chose to include the following socio-economic human rights within the survey: right to employment, right to a decent life in the case of unemployment, and rights of the sick, the old, children, women and refugees (see van der Ven, 2013, p.180). The ten items designed to sample these areas are presented by van der Ven (2013, p.186) in the following order. The government or the state:

1. should provide a job for everybody who wants one;
2. should provide a decent standard of living for the unemployed;
3. should provide health care for the sick;
4. should provide a decent standard of living for the old;
5. is obliged to protect children from neglect or negligent treatment;
6. is obliged to protect children's right to engage in play and recreational activities;
7. should protect women's right to adequate job opportunities;
8. should protect women's right to acquire and administer property;
9. is obliged to provide a decent standard of living for political refugees;
10. is obliged to guarantee political refugees freedom to travel.

In some studies analyses have been undertaken on the basis of these individual items (see van der Ven, 2013; Anthony, 2013). Van der Tuin and Fumbo (2012) combined the two items on women to create a two-item scale of women's socio-economic human rights that achieved an alpha coefficient of .70 among their sample of 486 students from Tanzania. This two-item scale was reapplied in a study by Francis, Robbins, and McKenna (2016) among 1,058 students in Wales, with an alpha coefficient of .75. Botvar and Sjöborg (2012) combined the



following three items to create a scale concerned with the right to work: the government should provide a job for everyone who wants one; the government should provide a decent standard of living for the unemployed; the state should protect women's rights to adequate job opportunities. Drawing on data provided by 1,600 students from Norway and Sweden this scale achieved an alpha coefficient of .80. Botvar (2013) created five two-item scales to assess the right to employment, the right to social security, the rights of women, the rights of the child, and the rights of refugees. Drawing on data provided by 586 students from Norway, these five scales demonstrated the following alpha coefficients: employment, .75; social security, .86; women's rights, .85; children's rights, .82; and refugees' rights, .78.

In other studies these items have been employed to create a scale of attitude toward socio-economic human rights. Under factor analysis van der Ven (2013) reported that the two items concerning the rights of refugees did not load on the same factor as the other eight items. The literature has agreed, therefore, largely to work with an eight-item scale. Not all of the studies employing this instrument have reported on internal consistency reliability, but those that did so demonstrated a good level of reliability. Webb, Ziebertz, Curran, and Reindl (2012) reported an alpha coefficient for their scale of .86 among 1,785 students from Germany (mean age 16.5 years) and an alpha coefficient of .91 among 532 students from Palestine (mean age 17.5 years). Francis and Robbins (2013) reported an alpha coefficient of .86 among 1,058 students from England and Wales (between 14 and 18 years of age).

This eight-item scale of attitude toward socio-economic human rights has been used in relation to religion in two main different ways, to explore differences between different religious groups and to explore the religious covariates of individual differences in attitude toward socio-economic human rights. Drawing on their data from 1,785 students from Germany and 532 students from Palestine, Webb, Ziebertz, Curran, and Reindl (2012) reported that: when students from both Germany and Palestine were considered together,

Muslim students recorded a significantly more positive attitude toward socio-economic human rights compared with Christian students; when students from both Muslim and Christian affiliations were considered together, there was no significant difference between the attitudes of German and Palestinian students. Drawing of data from 942 senior secondary students in Tamil Nadu India, Anthony (2013) reported no significant difference between the mean scores recorded by Christians, Muslims, and Hindus, on the scale of socio-economic human rights.

Van der Ven (2013) drew on data collected from 7,102 students from six North-West European countries: Belgium (N = 1,229), England and Wales (N = 1,241), Germany (N = 1,785), The Netherlands (N = 1,116), Norway (N = 586), and Sweden (N = 1,144). Four religious variables were applied in this study described as: belief in personal God; belief in non-personal God; religious communities that are open to what are going on in society and prophetically take sides with the poor; and inter-worldview interaction. These four religious variables were regressed on socio-economic human rights, after controlling for sex and civil values, among Christian, Muslim, and non-religious students separately. The data demonstrated that belief in personal God predicted more positive attitude toward socio-economic human rights among Muslims, but among neither Christians nor the non-religious; belief in non-personal God was unrelated to attitude toward socio-economic human rights among all three groups; religious communities that are open to what is going on in society and prophetically take sides with the poor predicted more positive attitude toward socio-economic human rights among all three groups; inter-worldview interaction predicted less positive attitudes towards socio-economic human rights among Christians and the non-religious, but not among Muslims.

Drawing on their data from 1,058 students from England and Wales, Francis and Robbins (2013) employed a regression model controlling for personal factors (sex and age)

and psychological factors (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism) before entering one religious variable and one theological variable into the equation. The religious variable was self-assigned religious affiliation distinguishing between three groups (Christian, Muslim, and religiously unaffiliated). The theological variable was concerned with textual authority, assessed by the items 'The Qur'an is a divine book to be taken literally', and 'The Bible is a divine book to be taken literally'. Within the multiple regression environment controlling for sex, age and personality, the data found no significant association between textual authority and attitude toward socio-economic human rights. The attitude of Christian students was not significantly different from the attitude of religiously unaffiliated students. Muslim students, however, recorded a significantly less positive attitude toward socio-economic human rights in comparison with religiously unaffiliated students.

Ok and Eren (2013) expanded the eight-item scale of socio-economic human rights into a ten-item scale by adding the following two items:

- The state should protect unspoilt nature;
- The state should reduce air pollution by industry imposing legal limits.

Drawing on data from 422 students in Turkey (mean age 15.4 years) this ten-item scale reported an alpha coefficient of .87. The three religious variables used in this study were described as measuring religious saliency, religious stress, and religious openness.

Considered independently none of these three religious variables correlated significantly with socio-economic human rights. Within the environment of multiple regression, controlling for sex, age, and political preference, higher scores of religious saliency and higher scores of religious openness both predicted a more positive attitude toward socio-economic human rights.

Francis and Robbins (2016) built on the work reported by Ok and Eren (2013) to test the effects of religious saliency and religious openness on attitude toward socio-economic

human rights within a different cultural setting. They reverted to the original eight-item measure of socio-economic human rights, on data from 1,058 students between the ages of 14 and 18 years. Regression analysis, controlling for sex, age, personality and politics found that more positive attitudes toward socio-economic human rights were associated with greater religious saliency and greater religious openness.

### **Research question**

Against this background the aims of the present study drew on data generated by the International Empirical Research Program Religion and Human Rights 2.0 among young people in England and Wales in order to construct and to test a scale of attitude toward socio-economic human rights and to test the general hypothesis that religiosity functions as a significant predictor among young people of individual differences in attitude toward socio-economic human rights. Within this general hypothesis the study is designed to differentiate among the effects of religiosity (religious saliency, religious openness, and religious belief), the effects of religious practice (personal prayer and worship attendance) and the effects of religious affiliation (Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, and unaffiliated). The effects of these religious factors is contextualised within the effects of personal factors (sex and age) and psychological factors (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism).

Such contextualisation is important because of the place given to these factors in previous research. The two personal factors (sex and age) are recognised as key predictors of individual differences in adolescent religiosity. Research tends to show that females record higher levels of religiosity than males (Francis & Penny, 2014) and that levels of religiosity decline during adolescence (Kay & Francis, 1996). The three psychological factors proposed by Eysenck's dimensional model of personality (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1991) are also recognised as key predictors of individual differences in religiosity (Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle, 1997). Eysenck's dimensional model of personality proposes three higher order factors

defined as extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism. Empirical studies within the psychology of religion employing this model of personality have consistently shown an inverse association between psychoticism scores and religiosity, as crystallised by Francis (1992) and confirmed by more recent studies, including Francis, Robbins, ap Sion, Lewis, and Barnes (2007), Francis, Robbins, Santosh, and Bhanot (2008), and Francis and Hermans (2009).

## **Method**

### **Procedure**

Selected schools within England and Wales in conurbations where there was evidence of Christian, Muslim and religiously-unaffiliated students were invited to participate in the study. Within participating schools complete classes of year 11, year 12, and year 13 students (15- to 18-year-olds) were invited to complete the questionnaire within the context of a normal lesson. Students were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Although all students were given the choice not to present their questionnaire for analysis very few decided not to submit their response.

### **Measures**

*Attitude toward socio-economic human rights* was assessed by a newly constructed scale designed to operationalise seven specific issues: the state's obligation regarding the right to work; the state's obligation regarding the right to social security; the state's obligation regarding living wages; the state's obligation regarding rest and leisure; the state's obligation to the rights of children; the state's obligation to protect women from discrimination; and the state's obligation to protect homosexuals from discrimination. Each of the seven areas was operationalised by two items. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale: disagree strongly (1), disagree (2), not certain (3), agree (4), and agree strongly (5).

*Personal factors* were assessed by two variables: sex, male (1) and female (2); and school year, year 11 (1), year 12 (2) and year 13 (3).

*Psychological factors* were assessed by the abbreviated form of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised (EPQR-A) as developed originally by Francis, Brown, and Philipchalk (1992) and further modified by Francis, Robbins, Loudon, and Haley (2001). This instrument comprised three six-item measures for extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism. Each item is rated on a two-point scale: yes (1), and no (0).

*Religious practice* was assessed by two items. Frequency of worship attendance was assessed by the question 'How often do you take part in religious services at a church or mosque or another place?' rated on a six-point scale: never (1), hardly ever (2), a few times a year (3), one to three times a month (4), once a week (5), and more than once a week (6). Frequency of personal prayer was assessed by the question 'How often do you pray?' rated on an eight-point scale: never (1), hardly ever (2), a few times a year (3), one to three times a month (4), once a week (5), more than once a week (6), once a day (7), and several times a day (8).

*Religiosity* was assessed by three items. Religious saliency was assessed by the question 'How often do you think about religious issues?' rated on a five-point scale: never (1), rarely (2), occasionally (3), often (4), and very often (5). Religious openness was assessed by the question 'How often do you reconsider aspects of your religious views?' rated on a five-point scale: never (1), rarely (2), occasionally (3), often (4), and very often (5). Religious belief was assessed by the question 'To what extent do you believe that God or something divine exists?' rated on a five-point scale: not at all (1), not very much (2), moderately (3), quite a bit (4), and very much so (5).

*Religious affiliation* was assessed by the question ‘Do you belong to a religious community or would you describe yourself as non-religious?’ followed by a checklist of religious groups and the final category ‘non-religious’.

### **Participants**

The analyses reported in this paper were conducted on the 987 students who self-assigned as Catholic, as Protestant, as Muslim, or as non-religious. This group comprised 377 males and 610 females, 365 students from year 11, 395 students from year 12, and 227 students from year 13; 100 Catholics, 142 Protestants, 34 Muslims, and 678 non-religious students.

### **Results and discussion**

- insert table 1 about here -

The first step in data analysis examined the scale properties of the newly constructed Scale of Attitude toward Socio-economic Human Rights. The data presented in table 1 demonstrates that each of the 14 items contributed to a homogeneous scale with correlations between the individual items and the sum of the other 13 items ranging from .35 to .73. Overall the item endorsements reveal a positive endorsement of socio-economic human rights, especially in terms of social security, protection of women, living wages, and the rights of children. In terms of the state’s obligation regarding the right to social security, 84% agreed that the government should provide health care for the sick, and 84% agreed that the government should provide a decent standard of living for the elderly. In terms of the state’s obligation to protect women from discrimination, 86% agreed that women should have the right to equal pay for equal work, and 83% agreed that the state should protect women’s rights to adequate job opportunities. In terms of the state’s obligation regarding living wages, 84% agreed everyone should have the right to a fair wage for their work, and 81% agreed that everyone should have the right to equal pay for equal work. In terms of the state’s obligation

to the rights of children, 82% agreed that the state should protect children from forced labour, and 78% agreed that the state should protect children's right to play and recreation.

Endorsement was somewhat lower in terms of protection of homosexuals, rights to rest and leisure, and the right to work. In terms of the state's obligation to protect homosexuals from discrimination, 77% agreed that homosexuals should have the right to hold any public office, and 70% agreed that the state should prosecute discrimination against homosexuals. In terms of the state's obligation regarding rest and leisure, 75% agreed that everyone should have the right to a reasonable limitation on working hours, and 43% agreed that employment without paid holidays should be forbidden. In terms of the state's obligation regarding the right to work, 62% agreed that the government should provide a job for everybody who wants one, and 44% agreed that the government should provide a decent standard of living for the unemployed.

- insert table 2 about here -

The second step in data analysis took an overview of the psychometric properties of the four scales employed in the study in terms of means, standard deviations, and alpha coefficients (Cronbach, 1951). The data presented in table 2 demonstrate that the 14-item scale concerned with attitude toward socio-economic human rights and two of the three scales concerned with psychological factors (extraversion and neuroticism) recorded internal consistency reliability in terms of alpha coefficients in excess of the threshold of .65 commended by DeVellis (2003). The lower alpha coefficient recorded by the psychoticism scale is consistent with the known operational difficulties incurred in measuring this dimension of personality (Francis, Brown, & Philipchalk, 1992).

- insert table 3 about here -

The third step in data analysis took an overview of the responses to the three items concerning religiosity and the two items concerning religious practice. In terms of religious



saliency, 36% of the participants often or very often think about religious issues. In terms of religious openness, 22% of the participants often or very often reconsider certain aspects of their religious views. In terms of religious beliefs, 30% of the participants believe quite a lot or very much that God or something divine exists. In terms of worship attendance, 13% of the participants attend religious services at least weekly. In terms of personal prayer, 17% of the participants pray at least once a week.

- insert table 4 about here -

The fourth step in data analysis explored the bivariate correlations between attitude toward socio-economic human rights and the two personal factors (sex and age), the three psychological factors (extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism), the three religiosity factors (religious saliency, religious openness, and religious belief), the two religious practices (personal prayer and worship attendance) and religious affiliation (Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, and non-religious). For the purpose of correlational analysis (and subsequent regression analysis) the categorical variable of religious affiliation was employed to create four dummy variables (Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, and non-religious). These correlation coefficients are presented in the first column of table 4. They demonstrate that, when each of these factors is considered in isolation, the personal factors carry good predictive power in relation to attitudes toward socio-economic human rights. There is a significantly more positive attitude among female students than among male students and among older students than among younger students. The psychological factors also carry good predictive power in relation to attitudes toward socio-economic human rights. There is a significant positive correlation with neuroticism scores and a significant negative correlation with psychoticism scores, but no significant association with extraversion scores. All three of the religiosity factors are also significantly positively correlated with attitude toward socio-economic human rights: a more positive attitude toward socio-economic human rights is

associated with greater religious saliency, greater religious openness, and higher levels of belief in God or in something divine. On the other hand, the correlation coefficients suggest significant association between attitude toward socio-economic human rights and neither religious practice nor religious affiliation.

In light of these multiple correlations, the fifth step in data analysis constructs a series of regression models with attitude toward socio-economic human rights as the dependent variable and with the independent variables being added incrementally in five steps (see table 4). Model one begins by introducing the personal factors (sex and age). Model two adds the psychological factors (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism). Model three adds the religiosity factors (religious saliency, religious openness, and religious belief). Model four adds the religious practices factors (personal prayer and worship attendance). Finally model five adds religious affiliation. In this model religious affiliation is added as three dummy variables (Protestant, Catholic, and Muslim) with non-religious identity standing as the reference point. It is the fifth model that is of greatest interest when all the predictor factors are taken into account. In this model, the factors of core importance remain the personal factors, the psychological factors, and the religiosity factors. In terms of personal factors, both sex ( $\beta = .15, p < .001$ ) and age ( $\beta = .07, p < .05$ ) remain statistically significant when all the other variables are in the equation: year 13 students are overall more positive toward socio-economic human rights than year 11 students, and female students are more positive toward socio-economic human rights than male students. In terms of psychological factors, both neuroticism scores ( $\beta = 0.11, p < .001$ ) and psychoticism scores ( $\beta = -.20, p < .001$ ) remain statistically significant when all other variables are in the equation: a more positive attitude toward socio-economic human rights are associated with higher neuroticism scores and with lower psychoticism scores. In terms of religiosity factors religious saliency ( $\beta = .28, p < .001$ ) remains statistically significant when all other variables are in the equation: a more

positive attitude toward socio-economic human rights is associated with higher levels of religious saliency. However, when religious saliency is in the model the two other religiosity factors (religious openness and religious belief, with both of which there were significant positive correlations) cease to be of significance: the variance accounted for by the religiosity factors is entirely routed through religious saliency. Finally, the regression model confirms that neither religious practice (personal prayer and worship attendance) nor religious affiliation (conceived as Protestant, Catholic and Muslim in comparison with the non-religious) serve as significant predictors of individual differences in attitude toward socio-economic human rights.

### **Conclusion**

The general aim of the present study was to draw on data generated by the International Empirical Research Program Religion and Human Rights 2.0 among young people in England and Wales in order to construct and test a scale of attitude toward socio-economic rights and to test the general hypothesis that religiosity functions as a significant predictor among young people of individual differences in attitude toward socio-economic rights. This general hypothesis was grounded in analysis of the scriptural traditions that shape Christianity and that shape Islam. Overall within both Christian and Islamic scriptural traditions evidence was found to support the majority of socio-economic human rights included within the research program. The operationalisation of this general aim proceeded in three steps, leading to the following conclusion.

Step one examined the scaling properties of the 14 items included in the Program that were intended to operationalise seven component aspects of socio-economic human rights as conceived within the broader human rights legislation. The data demonstrated that all 14 items cohered to generate a single scale with an alpha coefficient of .89. This alpha coefficient indicates a high level of internal consistency reliability, while the correlations

between the individual items and the sum of the other 13 items (ranging from .35 to .73) demonstrate that each of the 14 items contributes well to the overall scale score. The levels of item endorsement (ranging from 44% to 86%) demonstrate good variability in the discrimination of the individual items. On the basis of these data it is reasonable to assess attitude toward socio-economic human rights as one construct comprising the seven components of the right to work, the right to social security, the right to a living wage, the right to rest and leisure, the rights of the child, the rights of women, and the rights of homosexuals.

Step two argued that personal factors (age and sex) and psychological factors (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism) should be taken into account as control variables before exploring the effect of religiosity on individual differences in attitude toward socio-economic human rights. The bivariate correlation coefficients between personal factors and attitude toward socio-economic human rights show that both sex and age are significant predictors. Females hold a more positive attitude than males; older students hold a more positive attitude than younger students. The bivariate correlation coefficients between psychological factors and attitude toward socio-economic human rights show that both neuroticism and psychoticism are significant predictors, but that extraversion is not. More positive attitude toward socio-economic human rights are associated with higher neuroticism scores and with lower psychoticism scores. However, both neuroticism scores and psychoticism scores tend to be significantly correlated with sex: females record higher scores on the neuroticism scale (Francis, 1993) while males record higher scores on the psychoticism scale (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1976). The beta weights show that, when both sex and personality are in the model, the individual effects of sex, neuroticism, and psychoticism are reduced.

Step three conceptualised religion as expressed through three components characterised as religious affiliation (distinguishing among Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, and unaffiliated), religious practice (distinguishing between personal prayer and worship attendance) and religiosity (distinguishing among religious saliency, religious openness, and religious belief). The data indicate that neither religious practice nor religious affiliation serve as significant predictors of individual differences in attitude toward socio-economic human rights. What does count, however, are the effects of personal religiosity. A more positive attitude toward socio-economic human rights is shown by the correlation coefficients to be associated individually with higher levels of religious saliency, higher levels of religious openness, and higher levels of religious belief. When all three measures of personal religiosity are entered as predictors of individual differences in attitude toward socio-economic human rights, the beta weights demonstrate that the shared variance is routed through religious saliency. In other words, religious saliency is the key religious factor in promoting a more positive attitude toward socio-economic human rights. It is those young people who think about religious issues who hold more positive attitudes toward socio-economic human rights.

This core finding linking religious saliency to individual differences in attitude toward socio-economic human rights has implications both for the academic community and for the practical community of religious educators. In terms of the academic community concerned with shaping future research into the connection between religion and human rights, it may be important to incorporate within such research measures of personal religiosity in general and more specifically measures of religious saliency. In terms of the practical community of religious educators, it may be important to define and to discuss the social and personal correlates of religion not only in terms of the external factors so well recognised and recorded

by sociologists of religion (including religious affiliation and religious practice) but also in terms of the more internal and motivational factors discussed by psychologists of religion.

There are clear limitations with the present study both in respect of the measures employed and in respect of the sample. In respect of the measures employed, limitations arise from the use of single-item measures of religious saliency, religious openness, and religious belief in the operationalised model. Future deliberations designating the International Empirical Research Program Religion and Human Rights 3.0 may wish to expand the psychologically-informed measures of religiosity to be included in the survey. In respect of the sample, limitations arise from accessing only 987 students who self-identified as Catholics, as Protestant, as Muslim, or as non-religious, among whom only 34 self-identified as Muslim. Future research within this tradition in England and Wales needs to identify schools in which there is a higher concentration of Muslim students.

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Table 1

*Scale of Attitude toward Socio-economic Human Rights (SASHR): Scale properties*

	<i>r</i>	Yes %
<i>State's obligation regarding the right to work</i>		
The government should provide a job for everybody who wants one	.42	62
The government should provide a decent standard of living for the unemployed	.43	44
<i>State's obligation regarding the right to social security</i>		
The government should provide health care for the sick	.70	84
The government should provide a decent standard of living for the elderly	.68	84
<i>State's obligation regarding living wages</i>		
Everyone should have the right to equal pay for equal work	.68	81
Everyone should have the right to a fair wage for their work	.73	84
<i>State's obligation regarding rest and leisure</i>		
Everyone should have the right to a reasonable limitation on working hours	.65	75
Employment without paid holiday leave should be forbidden	.35	43
<i>State's obligation to the rights of children</i>		
The state should protect children from forced labour	.68	82
The state should protect children's right to play and recreation	.68	78
<i>State's obligation to protect women from discrimination</i>		
The state should protect women's rights to adequate job opportunities	.64	83
Women should have the right to equal pay for equal work	.65	86
<i>State's obligation to protect homosexuals from discrimination</i>		
Homosexuals should have the right to hold any public office	.45	77
The state should prosecute discrimination against homosexuals	.47	70

Note: *r*, correlation between individual item and sum of other nine items

%, sum of agree strongly and agree responses

Table 2

*Scale Properties*

	N items	$\alpha$	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Low	High
Socio-economic human rights	14	.89	75.19	8.67	14	70
Extraversion	6	.79	3.91	1.98	0	6
Neuroticism	6	.71	3.87	1.76	0	6
Psychoticism	6	.49	1.03	1.19	0	6

Table 3

*Religiosity measures and religious practice measures*

	<i>r</i>	%
How often do you think about religious issues?	never	17
	rarely	21
	occasionally	27
	often	21
	very often	15
How often do you reconsider certain aspects of your religious views?	never	29
	rarely	24
	occasionally	24
	often	14
	very often	8
To what extent do you believe that God or something divine exists?	not at all	25
	not very much	20
	moderately	25
	quite a lot	13
	very much so	17
How often do you take part in religious services at a church or mosque or another place?	never	49
	hardly ever	21
	a few times a year	14
	1-3 times a month	5
	once a week	6
	more than once a week	7
How often do you pray?	never	53
	hardly ever	16
	a few times a year	9
	1-3 times a month	4
	once a week	3
	more than once a week	4
	once a day	6
several times a day	4	

Table 4

*Regression models on attitude toward socio-economic human rights*

	<i>r</i>	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
<i>Personal factors</i>						
Sex	.25***	.235***	.165***	.150***	.145***	.145***
Age	.16***	.134***	.122***	.066*	.063*	.065*
<i>Psychological factors</i>						
Extraversion	-.02		-.043	-.37	-.040	-.043
Neuroticism	.21***		.121***	.111***	.108***	.108***
Psychoticism	-.26***		-.206***	-.199***	-.201***	-.200***
<i>Religiosity</i>						
Religious saliency	.30***			.257***	.277***	.279***
Religious openness	.18***			.001	.002	.005
Religious belief	.12***			-.058	-.001	.007
<i>Religious practice</i>						
Personal prayer	.06				-.079	-.065
Worship attendance	.05				-.025	-.024
<i>Religious affiliation</i>						
Protestant	.05					-.021
Catholic	-.01					.001
Muslim	-.02					-.039
Non religious	-.05					
Total <i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>		.079	.140	.193	.198	.199

Note: \**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .01; \*\*\**p* < .001

**Index terms**

Biblical

Christian

Discrimination

Individual differences

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Islamic

Muslim

Psychological factors

Qur'an

Religiosity

Religious affiliation

Religious practice

UN Declaration of Human Rights