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**Faculty of Medicine and Life Science
School of Psychology**

**The Development of Scales for the Assessment
of Religious Belief and Spirituality
in Roman Catholic Believers,
their validation and relevance for
Mental Health in circumstances of
Traumatic Bereavement on September 11th 2001**

by

**Dr Anna Grazia Lecca
BSoc Sci, BA, MA, DClinPsychol**

Thesis for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy

ABSTRACT

Faculty of Medicine and Life Science
School of Psychology

Doctor in Philosophy

The Assessment of the Religious Belief and Spirituality in Roman Catholic Believers
A Focused Approach to the Study of Religiousness while connecting Spiritual Coping with
Bereavement Resolution and Psychological Well-Being
The experience of the Bereaved individuals involved in the
Attack to the WTC on September 11th 2001

by Dr Anna Grazia Lecca

Substantive understanding of religious belief hasn't been explored within Catholicism. The study first investigates multi-faceted aspects of individual religious experience by the development of psychometric scales assessing sensitiveness to Catholicism, contents of Catholic belief and strength of adherence to them, and religiousness in the Catholic domain as a means for establishing, keeping, and improving a personal relationship with God, which is described as a mutual interaction.

Scales were developed after conducting exploratory studies and thematic analysis, and finally tested in a sample of 470 individuals with a Catholic background.

Developed scales are: 'The Attitude toward Catholicism Scale', 'The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church' and 'The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God'.

These scales are useful instruments for the assessment of religious belief in Catholic individuals especially when mental health outcomes need to be investigated in connection to practical aspects of religious belief.

The role of religious belief in practice, bereavement resolution, and mental health are further aspects of the study conducted in New York in a sample of 42 Catholic bereaved individuals who lost their spouse in the WTC disaster.

Although done retrospectively, the research focuses on the assessment of religious belief in Catholic bereaved individuals involved in the World Trade Center disaster prior to the attack. Moreover, while in the process of mourning, re-evaluation of religious experience, religious forgiveness described as a motivational transformation, and religious coping were also investigated.

Aspects connected to a re-evaluation of the religious experience, the usage of religious strategy of coping, and religious forgiveness were explored in relation to the constructive significance given to religious belief, which was also explored in relation to resolution of bereavement, depression, and life satisfaction.

Mechanisms of religious coping were analysed as transformation of significance and measured with the 'Religious vs. Non Religious Coping Scale'. Religious transformation was assessed by the 'Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale'. Religious forgiveness was measured with the 'Scale of Religious Forgiveness'.

These above three scales were developed for the purpose of this study according to the particular features of the participants of the New York sample.

Resolution of bereavement, levels of depression, and life satisfaction were mainly explored by conducting linear and multiple regressions in relation to different factors that emerged from factor analysis of the new developed scales.

Results significantly supported the conceptualisation that constructive religious experience operates as a motivational phenomenon in promoting psychological well-being.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Anna Grazia Lecca declare that the thesis entitled "*The Development of Scales for the Assessment of Religious Belief and Spirituality in Roman Catholic Believers, their Validation and relevance for Mental Health in Circumstances of Traumatic Bereavement on September 11th 2001*" and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

This work was done wholly while in candidature for a research degree at the University of Southampton;

Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;

Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;

I have acknowledged all main sources of help;

Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;

None of this work has been published before submission.

Signed: Anna Grazia Lecca _____

Date 20.09.07

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PART I

CHAPTER I

General Aims of the Thesis

1 Relationships between Religious Belief, Health and Well-being

In recent years, a growing body of literature has explored the implications of religion and spirituality for various mental and physical health outcomes (Koenig 1994, Levin 1994).

While the findings are not univocal, mounting evidence indicates that various dimensions of religiousness and spirituality may enhance subjective states of well-being (Ellison 1991), lower levels of depression and psychological distress (Idler 1978, Williams et al., 1991) and reduce morbidity and mortality (Levin, 1996). Such findings have elicited considerable attention from medical researchers in epidemiology, sociology, psychology, gerontology and other fields.

Moreover, since empirical studies have shown a clear connection between stressful life events and various forms of religious/spiritual involvement (Bearon & Koenig, 1990; Bjorck & Cohen, 1993; Ellison & Taylor, 1996; Lindenthal et al., 1970) there is a developing interest in the study of religious/spiritual coping with stress.

The connection between life stressors, health, and spiritual involvement can be explored by focusing on the stability of the individual object of significance that stressful life events could threaten, and the role of religious belief in preserving it.

In times of personal crisis, sense of meaning, intimacy with others, personal control, sense of personal comfort, or other objects of significance could negatively impact on individual health conditions. Religion, in its search for significance in relation to the sacred seems to offer a variety of coping methods for conserving these objects of significance in times of stress or, if that is no longer possible, transforming these objects of significance (Pargament, 1997).

Evidence from empirical studies suggests that in times of stress many people persevere in their religious set of beliefs and religious practice, reporting over the course of their crisis a fortified or unchanged faith (Bahr & Harvey, 1979; Balk, 1983; Croog & Levine, 1972; Brenner, 1980; McIntosh, Silver, & Wortman, 1989). These findings specifically apply to religious values rather than secular goals and priorities, which do not always seem to be firmly rooted. There are times when established sets of priorities and values which distinguish and characterise individuals' purposes in life and reasons for being and living are called into question: conservation of such values does not seem to be workable anymore.

Life events can be so disruptive, upsetting and critical. In the depth of hardship and anguish "established" objects of significance can be argued for, and ultimate ends of significance might be lost or no longer viable. As a consequence meaning-making associated with distress must be determined.

In times of distress the individual has to ascribe meaning to the traumatic experience and discover a new sense of direction and purpose from it by undertaking a new direction towards a transformation of significance (Pargament, 1997).

Religious coping can be considered as a mediating factor between the individual sense of significance for an event perceived as threatening, challenging or harming and personal psychological balance and ultimately individual well-being. It is likely to be particularly compelling when individual's religious assimilation in the orienting system is deeply felt. The more religion is fully integrated into people's lives, the more religious coping is concerned with religious solutions. Those who generally integrate their faith throughout their lives may seek out ways to deal with any kind of adversity such as deprivation, bereavement, hardship, harm or failure with religious purpose. In addition religious coping, is likely to be a more compelling route to significance than non-religious options, particularly to those who are aware of the limitations of their human condition.

2 Development of Scales for Assessing Religious and Spiritual Beliefs

Existing measures in the psychology of religion were analysed in literature reviews. Although much research on the measurement of religious variables attempts to measure religious attitudes and thoughts, much research continues to concentrate on a widespread sets of beliefs. As a consequence assessment of a particular religious belief is vaguely addressed in its particular elements, own traits and specificity. Moreover while prevalence of scales were widely concerned with the presence or absence of religious practice, the person's strength of faith and content of belief were scarcely acknowledged.

The abundance of different religious traditions when addressing psychological aspects of spiritual belief seems to confirm that the content and strength of a specific belief are mostly neglected. Researchers seem to welcome any sets of different beliefs and disregard the importance of addressing a specific religious orientation. They apply generalised religious scales to individuals with different beliefs, and therefore ignore the fact that content, meaning and religious language may vary across participants of different religious affiliations.

This is displayed both in the formulation of items and also in the dis-heterogeneity in sample procedures, which appears to be one of the main incongruences found in analysing psychometric work. When attempting to demonstrate the validity of a scale, a variety of different religious affiliations in participants recruited for the scales' standardisation was found. Failure to distinguish between different beliefs and religious traditions could be a predictor of ambiguous outcomes in research.

As a consequence, lack in proper assessment of variables describing religious experience makes research in psychology often inconsistent. Results are often ambiguous and description of the religious experience appears to be of little substance.

Literature review shows that research studies, instead of exploring a specific context of religious belief to understand how people from the same religion affiliation ignore, refuse, or encourage their relationship with the Divine, tend to merge research domains by addressing beliefs of different religious denominations. Moreover they have their own view of what religion is, and what distinguishes "good" or "desirable" from "bad" or "undesirable" religiousness. Consequently, researchers often devote time to the development of new scales to measure religion in a way that they find acceptable.

One of the most important questions that must be addressed by research in the field of spirituality and religion is how the religious experience diverges among different people, especially in those who share the same religious education. Rather than considering one stated belief, empowering research question, refining it, monitoring and restricting confounding variables, often research studies show a comprehensive approach to different beliefs. The extent of personal belief and religious behaviour need to be explored by restricting the area to investigate and therefore, by considering a specific religious affiliation.

Research appears deficient in assessing different aspect of religiosity among people of the Catholic religious affiliation. Items in psychometric scales tend to be very general with overlapping constructs and dimensions and they may be interpreted with different meanings.

This thesis attempts to provide a specific framework on religious investigation by considering, in depth the nature of the Belief in the Roman Catholic Church with its particular proprieties. Religious experience will therefore be studied incorporating the theory referred in the Catholic Church Doctrine as the theoretical framework in the study of religious belief.

It follows that research questions in research hypothesis will be explored according to the Catholic Church Doctrine, and that questionnaires, inventories, scales of measurement and other tools for investigating religious belief and assessing other experiences of faith, have been specifically built upon the Catholic belief. It has been regarded as the theoretical framework for assessing individuals with a Catholic religious background.

Religious dedication, fervour, devoutness and commitment converge towards the dimension of belief and to a specific religious group affiliation where members are identified as believers. Therefore, whilst focusing on measures of religious belief, research has to deal with the fundamental nature of the content of religious belief, doctrine or creed. In fact, even though being a member of a religious affiliation confers the status of believer, this condition differs among individuals because the content and the strength of what people believe may be different.

In addition, supposing that people may agree as to a particular statement of faith, their certainty and strength of that specific statement of faith may vary. Therefore, although believers are members of the same religious group, their belief can diverge in the content, principles and also in the extent of their belief.

Although this assumption is a vital research feature, previous psychometric work showed a general absence of appropriate scales for addressing the specificity and the direction of a definite belief. This is especially true in a crosswise literature review, which shows that assessment of variables defining religious belief alongside the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church has been fully ignored.

The necessity of approaching the study of religious belief centred on Catholicism requires the development of psychometric scales focused on Catholic belief together with a proper language for stating its contents and its doctrine. An additional condition is also required for validating such developed Catholic religious scales. They need to be tested and validated among individuals who share a Catholic education. These should include both believers who are members of Catholic affiliations and past members of the Catholic Church independently from their actual religious practice.

3 Establishing Validity and Reliability of the Scales on Religious and Spiritual Belief

Good conceptualisation of the content, transformation of the content into questions for data collection, and understanding the relationship between the level of measurement and the appropriateness of data analysis are important factors for reducing measurement errors. In addition, the understanding of the process involved in developing a valid and reliable questionnaire is of immense value to enhance the quality of research.

Development of a valid and reliable questionnaire is therefore a must to reduce measurement error. It implies prevention of discrepancy between respondents' attributes and their survey responses, Groves (1987).

In order to assess validity, namely to establish any built- in error incorporated in the tool of measurement (Norland, 1990), a panel of experts was formed to according to the objectives of the study. In this research validity was addressed by dealing with a number of answers to deal with the following questions:

1. Is the scale valid? In other words, is the scale measuring different types of approach to Catholic belief?
2. Does the content of the scale represent different attitudes towards Catholic belief and distinguish them in respondents?
3. Is the scale measuring the content and the adherence to fundamental statement of faith professed by the Roman Catholic Church?

4. Is the scale measuring the content of the mutual spiritual relationship between the individual and God, its direction and its quality?
5. Are scales appropriate for the sample/population of the research?
6. Are the scales and questionnaires comprehensive enough to collect all the information needed to address the purpose and goals of the study in addressing different multi-faceted aspects of the religious core of values in individuals with a Catholic background?

In the research study construct validity related to the construct of religious belief and spirituality that was translated into functioning and operating reality was addressed through:

- Translation validity in the qualitative study was assessed by focusing on whether the formulation of questions was a good reflection of the construct of the Catholic belief.
- Content Validity was established both in the qualitative study and in the pilot study by addressing the extent to which the questionnaires and the new scales reflected the specific domain of the Catholic religious content.
- In particular a good level of convergent validity among raters who were gathered independently from one another was found for the developed scales around the defined belief in the Roman Catholic Church.

Validation of the scales to assess religious belief was also conducted by means of intercorrelational analysis with standardised scales for assessing mental health to establish whether or not correlations were significant.

Reliability refers to random error in measurement and indicates the accuracy or precision of the measuring instrument.

The versions obtained at the end of process regarding the translation validity, content validity and convergent validity of the scales were pre-tested in a pilot study to improve questionnaires through a sample of 23 volunteers. Moreover, before fieldwork began, a test-retest study was also conducted. A population study of 16 participants out of 23 answered the same questionnaire (retesting) after seven days.

In the content analysis for establishing reliability of coding nominal categories intercoder type of consistency or interrater agreement reliability Cohen's kappa (k) was used.

Internal consistency via correlation, standardising the means and variance of data of the quantitative study was established through Cronbach alpha coefficient (α). In order to improve reliability, "Correlation matrix" and "view alpha if item deleted" were addressed to determine higher alpha coefficient by deletion of items. Moreover, correlations among internal factors of multidimensional scales were conducted.

4 Research Plan

The research plan of the PhD thesis will consist of:

1) Literature Review on:

- Definition of Religion and Spirituality;
- Catholic Theory of Religious Belief and its implications on positive health outcomes;
- Spirituality, religiousness in connection to well-being and discussion of related research limits;
- Psychology of Coping;
- Psychology of Religious and Spiritual Coping;
- Psychology of religious and spiritual coping according to the principles of the Roman Catholic Church.

2) Qualitative Study

An initial exploratory study was conducted involving in-depth interviews with participants having a common Catholic background. This was aimed at addressing their religious experience and to devise items for developing psychometric scales focused on a specific and shared belief.

3) Development of Scales of Catholic belief and attitudes

The development of scales of Catholic belief and attitudes is based on the above interview material and is informed by a theoretical framework on religious belief based on the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. A relevant literature review regarding previous psychometric work precedes each developed scale in order to allow divergences and inaccuracies in this field to emerge and to be properly acknowledged.

4) Large Quantitative Study

This relates to the investigation of the functioning of the above scales and their administration in a general survey of adult participants from different ages with a Catholic background. With the intention of acquiring a large spread of religious belief in the sample, secular and religious institutions contacted in Cagliari (Sardinia) and about 500 participants were recruited.

The research study was conducted in conjunction with the local diocesan Bishop in the Dioceses of Cagliari, and with the agreement of the appointed heads of local organisations such as Catholic Schools, Religious Congregations, and Prayer Groups.

5) Final Empirical Study

The author was offered a job position in New York as part of a research team. This was an opportunity to examine the usefulness of the scales in a practical settings by conducting an investigation with a Catholic sample who had suffered traumatic loss as a result of the World Trade Centre Disaster.

The final empirical study was, therefore, conducted to provide application and validation of the scales in understanding religious spiritual coping with a major stressful life event. Spiritual and religious means and ends of significance in the coping process will be explored in final chapters in relation to resolution of bereavement in people involved in the World Trade Center (WTC) tragedy.

5 Thesis as an Interdisciplinary Field crossing Psychology and Theology

This research study aims to understand the values and dynamics that direct human behaviour by taking into account both psychology and theology based on the conviction that these fields can bring significant contributions when describing the implications of the spiritual dimension of the human beings and their behaviour.

One of many bridges that link psychology and theology is the topic of “eschatology” where, both disciplines can receive mutual illumination for a richer development and growth. For example while theologians are concerned about Christian eschatology, hence the study of Christian beliefs concerning final events and ultimate purposes, and therefore the concluding destiny of created things and especially of man and of the Church, according to the purposes of God, psychologists are concerned about people’s perceptions of events according to their expectations, their values, and how their perceptions can significantly affect their vision of their personal life, their relationships, their vision of the world, and therefore how they react to them behaviourally speaking.

Questions that can form a common ground of interest in both fields could be:

- How religious belief can be approached, explored and understood without psychology’s understanding of cognitive processes that shape the individual experience and are socially cultivated?
- How behavioural responses can be approached, explored and understood without considering the spiritual dimension of the individual experience?

These questions can be addressed by exploring shared areas in the field of psychology and theology as it occurs in this research project.

In this research study the main aim is to determine any sort of feasibility for establishing a pathway between the field of religious belief and health psychology. Because research implies assessment of the use of religious belief, the contribution that religion may give to psychological process needs to be also specifically addressed.

Particular expertise both in Catholic and theological constructs, and expertise in developing psychometric scales requires this thesis to be an interdisciplinary work crossing both the fields of Health and Clinical Psychology and Christian Catholic Theology.

Subsequently, after assessing individual religious core of values, religious strategy of coping with stressful events will be also explored in relation to mental health outcomes.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Religious Belief and Spirituality, Coping Process and Health: The Need of a Focused Approach to the Study of Religiousness while connecting Spiritual Coping to Health

1 Introduction

This chapter mainly consists of a literature review of the different aspects covered by the research project. They are organised around the central areas of investigation: religious belief and spirituality as a means and ends for significance; coping process in relation to pathways to significance; specific coping methods characterised by religious significance; and spirituality and religious belief in connection to health outcomes.

The aim of the present chapter is to provide a literature review and to understand the direction, that the research in this field, is heading in. In this way, the research can give an accurate contribution in connecting the psychology of religion and health psychology, based on a specific religious domain and therefore based on a distinct research approach.

Specifically this chapter will illustrate literature review regarding:

- Secular Definition of Religion and Spirituality

The necessity to provide a definition both for religion and for spirituality seems not to be deferrable anymore. Therefore emphasis will be given to the necessity of a specific definition of the variables in the spiritual and religious domains. Aligned with a specific religious tradition, this approach will be characterised by an effort to describe religion and spirituality at the foundation of the belief professed by the Roman Catholic Church.

- Catholic Understanding of Religion

The research project is designed around the Belief of the Roman Catholic Church. As a consequence, research hypotheses are based on postulates and inferences arising from the beliefs professed by the Catholic Church, whose teachings, expressed in its Doctrine, are considered as the theoretical framework in this research.

In this research, the study of the Catholic Church Doctrine will be, therefore, the only theoretical framework in the field of psychology of religion. This implies that the Doctrine of the Catholic Church will be necessarily considered, fully accepted, properly quoted, and, above all, treated as an unequivocal theory of the Catholic religious belief. Here the definition of religion will be endorsed within literature review within Catholic belief.

- *Religion and Spirituality in Connection to Health: the holistic approach to health*
The spiritual dimension of human experience will be presented within to a holistic approach to health, where the implications of physical, emotional and spiritual aspects are closely connected.
An overview of the main contributions given by academics in exploring links between religious experience in connection to physical and psychological well-being will be provided.
The literature review of any connection between religiousness and life satisfaction as indicators of well-being, and religiousness and depression as indicator of lack of well-being, will be specifically addressed.
Moreover, the chapter analyses research criteria adopted in previous studies to focus on how they have been conducted in approaching religion and spirituality associated with psychological disorders and other clinical conditions. Therefore the scientific approach to this connection will be explored and discussed through an analysis of the main research limitations in order to highlight problems in research methods. Particular regard will be given to assumptions and conceptualisations in the research design, methodological scientific criteria adopted, and appropriate measurement of key religiousness-spirituality variables. The aim is to identify a research area that needs to be improved when assessing spirituality and religiousness in order to provide psychology of religion with consistency in its results.
In addition the implications of the Catholic Religious Belief on positive health outcomes will be analysed and understood in terms of “Fruit of the Spirit”(Galatians 5:22) that flourishes in the individual’s life conferring a sense of sense of meaningfulness and fulfilment in life.
- *Psychology of Coping*
A specific section of the Chapter will cover the literature on the psychology of coping to analyse the psychological constructs that underline the coping process.
- *Psychology of spiritual coping according to the principles of the Roman Catholic Church*
The literature on religiousness and spiritual coping will be analysed and discussed from a religious perspective according to the faith professed by the Roman Catholic Church. This will be explored to understand how individuals revise or review stressful events using religion as a strategy for coping. In addition, in analysing the strategy of religious coping, a particular focus will be given to the literature on forgiveness, which is regarded as a method for the recreation of the means and ends of significance.

2 Understanding of Religion

2.1 Secular definitions of Religion and Spirituality

A number of modern scholars of religion have commented on the challenging question when trying to define what religion is: current definitions are either too narrow and exclude many belief systems which most agree are religious, or they are too vague and ambiguous, suggesting that just about anything and everything is a religion. Furthermore, some researchers argue that religion itself does not exist apart from the academic creativity being conceptualised only around culture. This approach is especially pointed out by Jonathan Z. Smith (1982) who conceptualises religion as the result of a conventional, anthropological, historical construct solely created by researchers with their creative cognition and curiosity.

Even when confronted with the sources and development of the term, religion seems to be doubtful, as it appears in the Oxford English Dictionary, that points out the uncertainty of the etymology of the word.

The term “religion” is taken from the Latin root *religio-nis* meaning obligation, bond, reverence, fear of the supernatural, or probably from the Latin root of *religare* (*re* + *ligare*) and *so meaning* to tie up, to bind. This seems to be favoured on the assumption that it helps explain the power religion has. Religion has also been connected with *relegere*, which means “to read over again” perhaps to underline the nature of ritual acts or moral codes implied in religion. Definitions of religion are illustrated from in 1 to Table 5.

According to the Collins Dictionary of English (2000) *religion* is defined as:

- 1 A belief in, worship of, or obedience to a supernatural power or powers considered to be divine or to have control of human destiny;
- 2 Any formal or institutionalized expression of such belief the Christian religion;
- 3 The attitude and feeling of one who believes in a transcendent controlling power or powers;
- 4 Something of overwhelming importance to a person.

Table 1 Definition of Religion according to the Collins Dictionary of English (2000)

According to the Oxford Dictionary of English (1995) *religion* is defined as:

- 1 The belief in a superhuman controlling power, esp. in a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship
- 2 The expression of this in worship;
- 3 A particular system of faith and worship;
- 4 Life under monastic vows (the way of religion);
- 5 A thing that one is devoted to (football is their religion).

Table 2 Definition of Religion according to the Oxford Dictionary of English (1995)

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, (1971) *religion* is defined as:

- 1 Action or conduct indicating a belief in, reverence for, and desire to please a divine ruling power; the exercise or practice of rites or observances implying this;
- 2 A particular system of faith and worship;
- 3a Recognition on the part of man of some higher unseen power as having control of his destiny, and as being entitled to obedience, reverence, and worship;
- 3b The general mental and moral attitude resulting from this belief, with reference to its effect upon the individual or the community;
- 3c Personal or general acceptance of this feeling as a standard of spiritual and practical life. Devotion to some principle; a strict fidelity or faithfulness; conscientiousness; pious
- 4 affection or attachment.

Table 3 Definition of Religion according to the Oxford Dictionary of English (1971)

According to the Webster's Third New International Dictionary, (1971) *religion* is defined as:

- 1 The personal commitment to and serving of God or a god with worshipful devotion, conduct in accord with divine commands esp. as found in accepted sacred writings or declared by authoritative teachers, a way of life recognised as incumbent on true believers and typically the relating of oneself to an organised body of believers.
- 2 The state of a religious;
- 3a One of the systems of religious faith and worship;
- 3b The body of institutionalised expressions of sacred beliefs, observances and social practices found within a given cultural context;
- 4 The profession or practice of religious beliefs;
- 5 Archaic, scrupulous conformity;
- 6 A personal awareness or conviction of the existence of a supreme being or of supernatural powers or influences controlling one's own, humanity's, or all nature's destiny;
- 7a A cause, principle, system of tenets held with ardour, devotion, conscientiousness and faith, a value held to be of supreme importance;
- 7b A quality, condition, custom, or thing inspiring zealous devotion, conscientious maintenance and cherishing.

Table 4 Definition of Religion according to the Webster's Third New International Dictionary, (1971)

The definition of religion was also looked up in the Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, (2002). Here, rather than defining religion, traits of religions were listed as illustrated in the next page.

- Belief in supernatural beings (gods).
- A distinction between sacred and profane objects.
- Ritual acts focused on sacred objects.
- A moral code believed to be sanctioned by the gods.
- Characteristically religious feelings (awe, sense of mystery, sense of guilt, adoration), which tend to be aroused in the presence of sacred objects and during the practice of ritual, and which are connected in idea with the gods.
- Prayer and other forms of communication with gods.
- A world view, or a general picture of the world as a whole and the place of the individual therein.
- A more or less total organisation of one's life based on the world view.
- A social group bound together by the above.

Table 5 Definition of Religion according to the Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, (2002).

In analysing the literature, different definitions of religion were found. Some definitions focus upon belief in divine powers, which is how people in the West typically conceive of religion. Others delve more deeply into the subject by describing psychological and sociological aspects of religious belief systems.

Further definitions of religion seem to underline a response to an experience connected to the sacred. In this connotation religion is associated with devoutness manifested by religious behaviour and therefore religion seems to aim towards fostering and nourishing a spiritual life.

This latter question can be linked to the feature of religion that extends beyond the sphere of spirituality, which is a meaningful aspect of practising one's own personal religious convictions.

Literature in this field revolves also around a narrow suppositions offering restricted views in examining religion. Some theorists have defined religion as the ultimate value according to goals and norms as the means to those goals (Williams 1968, Kluckhohn 1951). Others, for example Batson, Shoenrade and Ventis (1993) have defined religion as an individual and social force concerned with existential questions and their solutions.

These views are related to one of the vital aspects of religion, which is the search for meaning. In fact although the process of one's search for meaning and the success or failure of that search are not very clear, constructing meaning from life's events is a critical human endeavour. Although the meaning of life may vary among individuals, religion seems to respond to this challenge. Several studies have demonstrated the critical function of religion in conferring on life a sense of purpose and coherence, (Dufton & Perlman 1986, Paloutzian, 1981).

This brings researchers to determine the substance of what is "sacred" when allocating religion the mission to explain the meaning of life and the purpose in life. Another reason why a definition of religion is needed is to distinguish the "sacred" from idolatry.

Most of the existing literature in this field recognises that religion implies a specific belief in something sacred, with a particular set of beliefs with specific protocols for services and rituals, specific behavioural, social, doctrinal and denominational characteristics involving a system of worship and dogmas shared among individuals. In addition, meaning in life seems to be another important aspect of religion.

Although considerable effort has been made in delineating the conception of religion, specifications in describing aspects that qualifies it are however still unsatisfactory unless a specific religious tradition is considered.

The over-all purpose of this study is to call attention to the necessity of establishing specific boundaries when addressing religion by addressing the Roman Catholic Church.

2.2 Theoretical Framework for Catholic Religious Belief

Before addressing a definition of religion in the Catholic framework it is necessary to outline literature that can give the theory of Catholic religious belief proper consideration. Sources for addressing teachings and truth in the faith of the Catholic Church Doctrine need therefore to be identified. They are mainly: the Sacred Scriptures, the Apostolic Tradition, and the Church's Magisterium.

In this research the theoretical framework will be endorsed by addressing the teachings of the Sacred Scriptures, which are systematically collected in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. It is, an authentic reference text in order to know what the Catholic Church believes. More specifically, it is a statement of the Church's faith and of Catholic Doctrine attested to, or illuminated by, the Sacred Scriptures, the Apostolic Tradition and the Church's Magisterium.

It follows that research suppositions and research questions will be based alongside these above remarks, and that questionnaires, inventories, scales of measurement and other tools for investigating religious belief and assessing experiences of faith, have been specifically built upon the Catholic theoretical framework to assess individuals with a Catholic religious background. This of course applies also the definition of religion within Catholicism which will be the topic of the following section.

2.2.1 Definition of Religion within Catholicism

A definition of religion can be inferred from the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) as defined in article 2244 (CCC). According to this, the concept of religion revolves around being sensible in recognising and considering as true that man originated from God, man's destiny is in God, and men's existence is recapitulated in God.

The article 2244 (CCC) in fact says: "*Every institution is inspired, at least implicitly, by a vision of man and his destiny, from which it derives the point of reference for its judgment, its hierarchy of values, and its line of conduct. Most societies have formed their institutions in the recognition of a certain preeminence of man over things. Only the divinely revealed religion has clearly recognised man's origin and destiny in God, the Creator and Redeemer".*

Compared to other definitions of religion, this notion does not suggest a broad search for meaning. The main goal of the individual's life is already defined. Purpose in life is already implied in religion and qualifies intrinsically what and where religion is aimed.

In addition religion can be explained according to themes against it as quoted in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. In fact the article 2125 (CCC) says that "*Since it rejects or denies the existence of God, atheism is a sin against the virtue of religion*".

By accepting own independence from God, personal aims and goals are established and achieved according to the individuals' own principles and rationale, combined with the limited knowledge, in relation to their moral judgment and with some ideology attached. This human overconfidence shows considerable superiority over things.

In spite of that, art 2245 (CCC) quotes that "*The Church invites political authorities to measure their judgments and decisions against this inspired truth about God and man: Societies not recognising this vision or rejecting it in the name of their independence from God are brought to seek their criteria and goal in themselves or to borrow them from some ideology. Since they do not admit that one can defend an objective criterion of good and evil, they arrogate to themselves an explicit or implicit totalitarian power over man and his destiny, as history shows*".

Therefore at its core Catholicism "*...is a storehouse of values that offers answers to the great questions of life. The Catholic wisdom radically affirms the dignity of every person as a child of God, establishes a basic fraternity, teaches people to encounter nature and understand work, provides reasons for joy and humour even in the midst of a very hard life*" (CCC).

A satisfying definition of religion within this study has been created as presented below:

The core concept of religion consists of ascribing God as the recapitulation of human existence. The individual's purpose in life is established by recognising and accepting true, the belief that man originated from God and that man will return to God. As a consequence man should recognise in this belief the path in which religious aims are lived.

According to this analysis, religion is the frame in which the teachings contained in its Doctrine, Liturgy, and community serve as a support for focusing on, and aiming at its religious contents, and for allowing individuals to persevere in their religious purposes. Religion is therefore a means to pursue heavenly aims.

Religion is the ground in which individual's spirituality is encouraged and actualised, as it provides a means to activate and develop a process involving the individual's relationship with the Divine. Religion in fact allows individuals to undertake a personal experience of the sacred. Spirituality therefore develops through means provided by religion. This allows individuals to establish a reciprocal relationship with the divine, and move towards a direct and deep personal encounter with God.

For this reason, whilst religion can be considered the means for reaching significance, spirituality is the destination of significance.

2.2.2 Application of the Catholic Theoretical Framework and Catholic Religious Belief in Practice

According to Catholic religious belief, in searching for what makes life complete, the individual is actually answering an inner and holy call, which is asking for love. In fact God created man wishing to share His love and happiness with Him. It implies that individuals are therefore inevitably called to an intimate communion with God, where he can share a perfect love with Him, and that they are called to discover this dimension in order to realise the true meaning and ends for which they have been created.

In fact in the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola *“Man was created to praise, do reverence and serve God our Lord, and thereby to save his soul; and the other things on the face of the earth were created for man's sake and to help him in the following out of the end for which he was created. Hence it follows that man should make use of creatures so far as they do help him towards his end, and should withdraw from them so far as they are a hindrance to him with respect to that end”*.

By praising, doing reverence and serving the Lord, the “Fruit of the Spirit”(Galatians 5:22) flourishes in the individual's life making it full and satisfactory. Therefore, humankind realises its perfection when it discovers and accomplishes this divine purpose in a progressive inclination to holiness, which consists of a personal commitment of faithfulness to the Lord.

Although the relationship with God represents the source of meaning and the purpose in the individual's life, holiness cannot be accomplished without the Holy Spirit. God comes to meet the individual desire for Him through the Gifts of the Holy Spirit to enable individuals to live a holy life.

When the individual decides to live in fellowship with God and recognises Jesus as the Saviour, they are open to the work of the Holy Spirit. By doing so individuals recognise God's spiritual presence in the happiness they experience by doing His will. They manifest the presence of the Holy Spirit and others can sense God's spiritual presence by witnessing these good works.

In this close relationship with God, people grow in their faith and develop the Fruits of the Holy Spirit that confirm the effective and unfailing power to deal with any distressful life event. St. Paul affirms: "but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."

In God's faithful and unconditional love, human life frames events through the eyes of faith, and religious belief becomes a deep religious experience in which the "Fruit of the Spirit" is clearly manifested.

Despite atrocious experiences, robust and mature faith seems to provide a religious significance where intimacy in the relationship with God appears to be a source of a true and astonishing psychological well-being.

2.3 Spirituality in Connection to Health: Towards a Wholeness Study of the Human Experience

The spiritual dimension is without doubt an important aspect in relation to health (Astrow, Puchalski, and Sulmasy, 2001). It pertains to the inner world of human being, and both with psychological aspects of human experience to whole personal wellness and human completeness. The fulfilment of emotional needs and self-development explained with psychology, and the fulfilment of spiritual dimension pertained to religion, might be harmonised by an emotional healing as fulfilment of psychological wounds reached in the connection with the sacred available in the religious experience. In embracing such a holistic approach while studying human experience, this connection gives human dignity consistent integrity.

It is therefore not surprising that researchers in this field are interested in key dimensions of religiousness and spirituality because they may relate to physical and mental health outcomes. Indeed researchers generally concur in affirming that belief, religious practice and spirituality provide comfort in facing illness, and improve psychological well-being (Keung and McQuellon, 2001). Values, attitudes, emotions and perceptions connected to religious beliefs and spiritual experience are seen as potential activators of mechanisms eliciting processes that lead to health. Hence, research effort focuses on aspects of religious experience in order to identify mechanisms through which religion might operate on health promoting healthier physical and mental conditions.

Academic working groups in the US are making a considerable effort in promoting the psychology of religion with a flourishing dedication for including religious and spiritual aspects in health and medical research. Positive aspects of the religious experience may therefore allow researchers to enhance the understanding of personal well-being indicators and to consider the vulnerability of people exposed to chronic stressors and strains where the religious aspect is neglected.

Medical and pastoral care are substantially related in investigating and combining any association between religious experience and improvement of health conditions in clinical practice. Clinicians and researchers suggest that religious commitment should be facilitated in people while in treatment. They are also exploring usage of spirituality as complementary therapy for treating psychological disorders and in programming medical intervention (Koopman, and Blasband, 2002).

Although there is not yet strong scientific evidence of the potential and beneficial effects provided by spirituality and religiousness, religious interventions in medical practice is often suggested.

Matthews and colleagues (2001), recommend that clinicians should assess patients' religious belief in order to know if faith would be helpful to them in managing their illness and consequently to facilitate and support their faith and their religious commitment while in treatment (Matthews, Conti, and Sireci, 2001). Moreover according to Eisemberg et colleagues, 1993, medicine as a science should address unconventional therapies such as prayer and meditation both for improving healing and recovering (Eisemberg, Kessler and Foster, 1993).

Although it has been found that the use of prayer in general has positive outcomes (Argyle, 2000, and Pargament, 1997), there is no significant research yet on the use of prayer in the context of psychological treatment.

No research has been conducted regarding combined usage of psychotherapy and aspect of religious belief such as: confession, Eucharist, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament or prayer. Moreover, effectiveness of religious counseling in the Catholic domain has never been investigated.

Despite the fact that many scientific articles have been written, research on connecting religion and spirituality with health must accurately adopt high methodological research standards, which also implies a deep knowledge of the topic.

Because of the importance ascribed to the spiritual dimension of human experience, the work of this research will apply strict research methods when connecting spirituality to health in order to grant the psychology of religion a scientific, and therefore reliable research approach.

2.3.1 Religiousness and Spirituality in relation to Mental Health

The literature on religion and mental health presents contradictory findings. Religiousness is not always expected to enhance mental health. Mental health seems to be associated with intrinsic religiosity, participation in shared rituals and social support from the religious community. On the other hand although certainty of belief seems to provide fundamentalists with optimistic attitudes, it appears that they tend to have strong feelings of guilt.

Emmons, Cheung and Tehraini (1998) suggest that perhaps spiritual goals provide an overarching framework for living; one that integrates other goals and offers the individual a sense of higher purpose and coherence in life. Religion seems to drive personal existence, steer human life, and orientate human behaviour as it involves the search for personal ends, the meaning in life, and self-development.

Research shows that individuals who pursue spiritual aims in their lives seem to display higher levels of purpose in life, including marital satisfaction, and general life satisfaction (Emmons, 1999). Moreover, it has been found that in comparison with other types of strivings expecting to enhance mental health, spiritual strivings appear to be stronger correlated to well-being (Zinnbauer et al., 1999). Seligman, (1999) and Taylor, (1993) also found that a sense of personal control and the ability to find meaning in life's experiences and optimism were valuable psychological resources capable of improving mental health.

Religious involvement appears to have significant protective effects for emotional and psychological well-being especially when facing crises. According to Larson and colleagues, (1998) religion provides peace of mind as a valuable resource in coping with life's difficulties (Larson, Swyers, & McCullough, 1998).

Although religious experience does not seem to be the only effect in causing better mental health, there is evidence that generally religion is likely to be associated with better mental health including lower levels of depression, (Alvarado, Templer, Bresler, and Thomas-Dobson, 1995), higher rates of hope, happiness, and altruistic attitudes (Anandarajah, and Hight, 2001). Loewenthal, Goldblatt, Gorton, Lubitsch, Bicknell, Fellowes, and Sowden, (1995) in a sample of Jews and Christians showed how religious involvement can affect emotions and psychopathology. They found a high prevalence of mild anxiety and low prevalence of major depression in individuals who were engaged in religious observance.

Ellison (1991) found that having firm beliefs in "existential certainty" correlated with life satisfaction independently of both church attendance and private devotions, especially for older and less educated individuals.

Although religious experience seems to produce increased happiness, for a time at least, a positive and strong relation between religious practice and happiness has not always been found in

research studies. Results are often positive but modest associations on religious beliefs on health are of modest effect.

These findings bring us to consider that although religious practice might be considered as a set of behaviours to assess religious involvement, it is not able to represent an assessment for religiousness in terms of the deep experience of personal relationship with the Divine.

Among different religious practices such as worship, prayer, music, meditation seems to play a central part in most religions as it is considered a deep source of religious experience.

Cooper, and Kenneth, (1997) in exploring the role of meditative prayer in relation to stress found that it was the main predictor of obtaining deeper insight into religious truth, feeling the presence of God and a deep sense of peace and well-being. This in turn was a good predictor of existential well-being, consisting of having a sense of meaning and purpose, as well as happiness, life satisfaction and religious satisfaction.

Prayer seems to be used by those who are very ill, in danger, or in despair. Mattlin at al. (1990) found that religion helped people to deal with the loss of a loved one. Moreover, in a study with a sample of 1344 African Americans, Ellison and Taylor (1996) found that many turned to prayer. 80% of those who turned to prayer did so for bereavement, illness, self, family, or other problems. This seems to be in line with Hardy's findings, according to whom, depression, despair and serious distress seem to assume a trigger role in activating religious experience (Hardy, 1979), which could correspond to a change of attitude in the individuals personal belief similar to religious conversion.

Converts may be in a state of guilt, anxiety, conflict, or severe distress or depression before conversion, but they often feel much better afterwards (Argyle, 2000). Particular kinds of distress producing conversion are anguish over death and loss, fear and dread, and crises of meaning (Spilka and McIntosh, 1995). The main effect after conversion is that these individuals have a stronger sense of meaning and purpose in life as was found by Di Raymond and Paloutzian (2005).

The effects of religious experience, and specifically, the effects of prayer and conversion, seem to be correlated with positive mental health outcomes especially with regards to purpose in life, life satisfaction, and happiness. In addition, the content of belief matters too.

In fact, according to Soldwisch (2001) and Benjamins (2004), belief in the after-life and belief in a supportive caring God are strong predictors of happiness for the elderly, which lead to a greater sense of hopefulness, self-esteem and confidence and give a positive attitude to life.

Reviewing the literature that associates religiousness to clinical depression, controversial research results and salient research limitations in the way studies have been conducted were found.

While there is general agreement regarding the validity and reliability of psychometric tests and other measurement methods used in clinical practice such as inventories or structured interviews, the complexity of the religious experience continues to suffer from low methodological standards in research. For that reason most of the studies addressed could be disputed and the association between depressive symptoms and religiosity results still appear inconsistent.

Murphy and colleagues (2000), in a sample of 271 neuropsychiatric patients, found that religious belief, but not religious behavior, was a predictor of lower levels of hopelessness and depression, where hopelessness was a mediator of the effects of religious belief on depression. Therefore, religious belief was modestly, positively, and indirectly associated with levels of depression. The coefficient of the relation of religious belief to hopelessness and depression was $-.32$, $p < .001$ indicating that people who have a stronger belief are more depressed than people who do not embrace religiousness.

Although suitable scales of measurement to assess levels of depression in outpatients or to diagnosis the severity of depression in inpatient samples were appropriate, failure in methodological criteria adopted for assessing religious core of belief were found. Notwithstanding, the Beck Depression Inventory and Structured Clinical Interview for DMS-III-R, (Spitzer, 1980) were used to assess clinical depression. In this study, serious personality disorders were prudently excluded, but deficiencies in the assessment of participants' religious beliefs, religious behaviors, and religious affiliations provided major research limitations.

Religious affiliation (Christian in 76% of participants, Jewish 3%, other 3% and none 13%) contributed to a lack of homogeneity in the features of participants forming the sample considering that "Christian" does not qualify itself a religious affiliation. Moreover, participants hadn't even been assessed for either content or the strength of their beliefs.

Murphy and colleagues, (2000), attempted to measure religious behavior through two indicators: frequency of attendance at worship, and frequency of private religious practice. This approach seems to be very reductive because it does not explore the personal meanings ascribed to religious behavior, which does not necessarily correspond to a personal experience of God.

Religious behavior can be learned and cognitively integrated as well as other behaviors or cognitive processes. In fact among people who pray or attend services there are many that see religion as a duty and who might not have any religious commitment or any relationship with God.

Religious traditions are different from each other. Religious variables might be the same under the same religious affiliations, but might differ in different cultural or religious contexts.

It is likely therefore that the religious variable could differ in different affiliations and religious traditions.

It is easy to understand that there cannot be a common ground among religious variables in the ways researchers understand them and they need specific and closer psychological investigation.

2.3.2 Research Limitations in Connecting Religion, Spirituality and Well-being

In reviewing the literature, it was undoubtedly found that the psychological approach to spirituality was combined with religion; in fact both religion and spirituality were characterised as dynamic processes that involved ordinary and transpersonal experiences in social or personal contexts.

It was found that the study of religion and spirituality have been mostly addressed in correlation with other disciplines, especially in the fields of mental health, psychopathology or in relation to severe physical health.

Although a general consensus assumes that belief, religious practice and spirituality provide comfort in facing illness, an accurate review of scientific publications showed a modest effect of religiousness on health outcomes. In addition results in research were often contradictory and statistically weak.

One of the central concerns that appeared in literature when connecting religion, spirituality and well-being demonstrated that aspects of individual attitude towards religious belief have not always been accurately investigated with systematic and methodical research criteria. Moreover, health problems which received clinical diagnosis were not always assessed in their grade of severity.

Complexity in elaborating research projects and enthusiasm in connecting spirituality and health often brought researchers to expand their research boundaries by discounting any occurrence of confounding variables as it can happen when a range of participants of different religious affiliations are included in the research sample.

Indeed, literature addressing the effect of religion and spirituality on health seems to be spoiled by intersecting dimensions of religion and spirituality.

Although sharing a broad spectrum of likeness such as: religious constructs, faith convictions rituals, beliefs and other religious delineations, certainly religion and spirituality are two different and distinct concepts.

Consequently, such definitional inconsistencies reveal theoretical misconstruction when investigating religiousness and spirituality. Moreover, from a methodological perspective, this approach seems to be an unsatisfactory predictor of coherent findings.

As a result it is extremely difficult to draw conclusions about whether religious core belief and religious and spiritual involvement are associated with health outcomes.

Although delineating a specific research domain seems to be one the most substantial requirements for designing a research project, an inconsistent description of religious belief and spirituality resulted in a confusing area of investigation along with a lack of deeply-rooted research conclusions. Regrettably, weak and inconsistent findings resulted in fairly inaccurate research outcomes. As a consequence, applied research on spiritual beliefs and health have not always been reliable or confirmed.

Although dimensions among spirituality and religion are presumably closely interconnected, as found in most of the studies addressed, indeed researchers need to delve into identifying proprieties and qualities of those variables designed for describing individual's religious experience.

Defining research confines, competence in isolating dimensions and sub-dimensions of religious belief, and controlling confounder variables, together with a comprehensive description of features in defining religious belief seem to be, as a minimum, the wisest responsibility to take in order to allow the psychology of religion and spirituality to have scientific valuation.

Literature addressing individuals' religious dimension appeared inadequate in describing the nature of participants' relationship with the divine, set of beliefs professed, and strength of adherence to statements of faith. This was mainly due to a deficit of consistency in the definition of religion and spirituality, which resulted in inadequate measures to assess their constructs. Research limitations typically perceived were: lack of experimental methods, use of inadequate sampling techniques and lack of comparison groups, and research replication.

Some of the main research problems called into discussion and analysed were:

- 1) *Mixture of different descriptions in addressing core religious belief, along with the absence of specific definitions both for religion and spirituality;*
- 2) *Ambiguity of research boundaries in addressing religious belief variables along with an abundance of different religious traditions when addressing psychological aspects of spiritual belief.*
- 3) *Inadequate assessment of the individuals' strength of their belief due to intrinsic features of scales of measurement used;*
- 4) *Inadequate assessment of the individual's religious core beliefs due to intrinsic features of scales of measurement used;*
- 5) *Inaccuracy of clinical assessment when determining group and severity of illness and abundance of health outcome variables;*
- 6) *Failure of hypothesis testing might affect statistical significance;*

There is an evident need to make an effort to work towards good quality research in the psychology of religion. The above listed problems arisen in literature will be treated in the following sections.

1) Mixture of different descriptions in addressing core religious belief, along with the absence of specific definitions both of religion and spirituality;

Although spirituality has been referenced to in the context of religion as it is experienced and expressed through traditional religious understanding, it is also true that indistinctiveness of religion and spirituality in relation to their particular attributes and connotations resulted in failures in the biases of research outcomes.

As a consequence, one of the main research necessities to make the field reliable is to at least address this lack of specificity by recognising that religion and spirituality are two distinct constructs and therefore need to be treated separately.

For this reason modern approaches to religiousness and spirituality should include a progressive separation of religious experience and sentiments from their association with organised religion, Zinnbauer B. J. and colleagues (1999).

2) Ambiguity of research boundaries in addressing religious belief variables along with an abundance of different religious traditions when addressing psychological aspects of spiritual belief.

Another theme that appeared in the literature reviewed was the abundance of different religious traditions when addressing psychological aspects of spiritual belief. In undertaking research often the assessment of a particular religious belief was vaguely addressed in its particular elements, traits, and its specificity.

Research seemed to neglect the significance of addressing specific religious orientation rather than apply the study to individuals with different beliefs, and therefore ignore that likely content of belief may vary among participants of different religious affiliations.

One of the most important questions that must be addressed in research in the field of spirituality and religion is how core religious belief diverges among different people, especially in the way individuals experience them while sharing the same religious background and religious formation.

Often research studies show a comprehensive approach to different beliefs. Rather than consider one stated belief in order to empower the research question, refining it, monitoring and restricting confounder variables, applied research on religion and spirituality seems to move against criterion that make it reliable.

Whilst religious behaviour such as church attendance and saying prayers were mostly explored in research, research needs to focus on analysing the content of the religious belief and on measuring participant's adherence to it. This should be the main assumption before developing any psychometric tool for addressing any variable assessing individual religious aspect.

Religiousness and religious behaviour, among people of the same religious affiliation, can finally be studied, and correlations between religious behaviour and the relationship with the Divine can therefore be approached.

Moreover research appeared deficient both in exploring the relationship between the individual and the Divine, and in assessing strength of adherence to a specific stated belief which may vary from one individual to another, being a personal belief.

3) *Inadequate assessment of individuals' strength of their belief due to intrinsic features of scales of measurement used;*

In analysing the literature, lack of tools of measures for assessing a person's strength of belief was noticed. Sometimes scales of spiritual belief had not been standardised. When found, they failed to address strength of the religious content. Moreover scales addressing content of belief were widely concerned around the presence or absence of religious practice. Furthermore, statistically they did not have good validity and internal re-test reliability.

An enormous number of scales to assess religion also confirms this. In addition, there is much research on the measurement of religion with several good instruments for measuring religious attitudes and thoughts, yet much research continues to focus on the most superficial level of description, and strength of belief is mostly neglected.

4) *Lack of assessment of the individual's religious core beliefs;*

Scales of measurement in most cases have a cognitive approach to religion: religious belief and practices, religious orientation, religious development, religious commitment and involvement, religiousness and moral values, spirituality and mysticism, the concept of God, and divine intervention. Religious experience in terms of the relationship with God applied to daily single events in life is mostly ignored.

5) *Inaccuracy of clinical assessment when determining group and severity of illness and abundance of health outcome variables;*

In most of the previous studies, failure to record the severity of the illness was found. At the admission stage, the absence of a proper health assessment may have resulted in a poor consistency at the follow up stages.

In addition, the sample group included a range of diagnoses related to physical diseases, mental health or health behaviours in patients taking part in research projects.

The enormous variety makes it difficult to come to general conclusions about associations between religiosity and health. Indeed, precise diagnoses, grade of illness severity, and assessment of any parameter that may contribute to refine research should be addressed with precise criteria.

Progress in designing the study, the improvement of research questions, setting proper parameters, measurement of variables, and proper health assessment instead of displayed diversity of outcomes might lead to better results.

In order to understand the association between spirituality and mental health, research should be guided by an effort to focus on the above-mentioned problems. This will identify methodological criteria, which could restrict and monitor confounder variables towards an improvement of biases.

6) Failure of hypothesis testing in attempting statistical significance

When reviewing literature on the effects of religious experience on health, dissatisfaction about statistical inference was found. With the attempt to generalise beyond research samples and making statements about the trends in the data which apply more widely, research was confronted with statistical significance.

An awareness of the above problems and difficulties found in scientific publications would prevent researchers making the same mistakes again in applying methodology to research hypothesis and would also permit the study of this phenomenon with reliable scientific rigor.

Summarising, literature in this field has not always been systematic and methodical. There is obvious need to make an effort to work towards consistency in the psychology of religion. If complexity currently distinguishes this work, then there is all the more reason why it must be carried out with responsibility and trustworthiness by adopting, in the research method, the best scientific practice and relating this research work to colleagues in the same field of study.

3 Psychology of Coping

Scientific interest in the coping process is increasing with researchers who are interested in the ways in which people go through critical times in life. Literature points out how people differ in managing their critical life situations and how effectively or unproductively they might handle these terrible experiences.

Findings revealed that people are not always shattered as a result of severe distress (Goertzel, 1962; Garmezy and Masten 1990; Murphy and Moriarty, 1976). People seem to be effective in facing problems when these people are characterised by a favourable set of attitudes towards themselves and the world (Tyler, 1978; Mondel and Tyler, 1981). They also appear to be resilient to the effects of stress. People do not seem to be victims of their circumstances, they instead tend to actively approach, avoid, anticipate, and appraise situations.

This effectiveness in coping appears to happen according to the individuals' prospective of significance. People bring an orienting system, a general frame of reference for viewing and dealing with the world that helps and directs them through difficult times. This suggests that people are engaged in processing events, even dreadful events, by shaping situations they encounter and redefining them by a process of adaptation to the environment and by a personal development which implies a search of significance over time (Pargament, 1997).

The search of significance is the most significant ingredient in analysing religion as a means of coping, as religion like, coping, is a search for significance.

Before examining it, transactional perspective of the construct of coping will be addressed according to the qualities and definitions of coping (Pargament, 1997). Qualities of coping:

A) Coping as an encounter between person and situation:

The principal focus of coping is the theme of the individual-confronted-with-difficult-situation that puts an individual to the test and which implies any effort as a response following the encounter between the person and the struggling situation. This is explained in Friedman et al., and Pearlin and Schooler's definitions of coping. According to Friedman et al. (1963), coping can be defined as "All of the mechanisms utilised by an individual to meet a significant threat to his psychological stability and to enable him to function effectively." Pearlin and Schooler (1978), speak of coping as "Any response to external life strains that serves to prevent, avoid or control emotional distress".

B) Coping as a multidimensional process involving every dimension of human functioning:

The coping process involves the full range of human expressions: strong feelings, physiological responses, and behavioural reactions in a mixture of features such as fear, frustration, sadness, anger, threat, loss, hate, challenge, relief, and gain.

It appears in many dimensions of human functioning: cognitive, affective, behavioural, and physiological and implies a larger context of relationships and settings. These aspects are pointed out by Silver and Wortman (1980), in their definition of coping.

In addition to “Any and all responses made by an individual who encounters a potentially harmful outcome” Silver and Wortman (1980) focus on “cognitions, emotional reactions and physiological responses” besides any deliberate behaviour in managing stressful events.

Moreover Lazarus and Folkman, (1984), talk about cognitive and behavioural aspects in their definition of coping: “Constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person”.

C) Coping as a possibility and choice:

Coping involves choices as we can infer from Haan and Murphy’s definitions of coping.

According to Haan (1977), “Coping involves purpose, choice and flexible shift, adheres to intersubjective reality and logic, and allows and enhances proportionate affective expression”. Murphy (1974), defines coping as “A process involving effort on the way toward the solution of a problem, as contrasted on the one hand with ready-made adaptational devices such as reflexes or, on the other hand, with complete and automatised mastery and resulting competence”.

In relation to these definitions, coping implies that although choices and possibilities could be more restricted in some situations than others, this does not erase the fact that at some level a personal stance has to be chosen. Adverse aspects and threats need to be faced through decision making and appropriate strategies, even though people are not always aware of their choices.

D) Coping as a multilayered social phenomenon:

Individual social context underlies the coping process, which is carried out by the person in his or her social system: familial, occupational, organisational, institutional, and cultural. These aspects interact with the coping process.

E) Coping as an active process:

Coping can also be considered as “An active process involving difficult decisions in times of troubles” (Pargament, 1997). This implies that coping is not static but instead develops, evolves, changes and unfolds overtime. In describing coping Pargament (1997) talks about “the flow of coping” and gives eight assumptions about the coping process:

- 1) People seek significance;
- 2) Events are constructed in terms of their significance to people;
- 3) People bring an orientating system to the coping process;
- 4) People translate the orientating system into specific methods of coping;
- 5) People seek significance in coping through the mechanisms of conservation and transformation;
- 6) People cope in ways that are compelling to them;
- 7) Coping is embedded in culture;
- 8) The keys to good coping lies in the outcomes and the process.

The process of coping will be discussed around the main points above.

Usually, life events, stress and hardship, are assumed as experiences that take place out of nowhere and people have to cope with it. Actually people appraise events in ways to straighten significance. Therefore, in analysing the coping process, the concept of significance plays a crucial role as it allows shaping and accommodating any sort of event in people’s vicissitudes. The search for significance is not limited only to the time of stress. In the coping process, people particularly strive toward significance. While dealing with problems people are drawn to their systems of objects and organisation of values to which they are attracted. This implies that the concept of significance has motivational attributes, is orientated towards a configuration of valued objects (Carver & Scheier, 1991), and involves feelings and beliefs associated with worth, importance, and value. People’s value systems unfold and are underlined in the process of coping. Here significant objects that people tend to and care for are revealed. They may be material, physical, psychological, social, or spiritual, (Pargament, 1997), they may be good or bad, and of greater or lesser value (Rokeach 1968), and they can be virtually limitless (Rychlak, 1981).

Regardless of whatever appraisal of events is unconscious or deliberate, people interpret positive and negative events according to cognitive constructions that bring significance to their life: they take on challenges, make efforts, and create stress to do what they value and they do what they can to avoid those situations that detract them from significance.

Even events that come as a complete surprise such as a sudden death or a natural disaster are cognitively constructed in order to enhance significance.

Cognitive construction seems therefore to be the key in assessing the stressfulness of a given event. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) point out that events become stressful when they cut to the core of people's values. Because values differ, people can respond quite differently to the same event. The evaluation of an event for its significance to the individual depends on its ability to reach out and shake the things that people care about. The more significance is threatened, challenged, and harmed, the more people are potentially stressed out. The word "potentially" is used because individual perception of the event is critical too (Aldwin 1994). Moreover, the evaluation of an event for its significance is also tied to personal perception of the resources and burdens for dealing with the event. The more people perceive that coping resources are few, the more people feel stressed out.

The above orienting system directs people along stressful life events. They bring into the coping process what guides them in life: weakness and resources included, which interfere with the coping process. As a consequence, people's frame of reference can shape the coping process in many ways by advancing or limiting it hence making some coping methods more or less available to the individual than others.

According to Pargament, (1997) people in times of trouble cope by maximising not only the ends of significance, but also the means to significance. They also cope through the values most compelling to them through two functional mechanisms which are: *conservation* and *transformation* (Pargament, 1997).

The conservation of significance reflects the basic human tendency to conserve. Conservational forms of coping attempt to maintain and protect people's core values in order to conserve things people care about, even in the most threatening conditions. In the more devastating cases, stressful life events shake and shatter not only the means for achieving significance, but also the nature of significance itself. Significance becomes devitalised, and the search for a new character of significance needs to be created through transformation rather than conservation (Pargament, 1997).

Transformational forms of coping attempt to change the character of significance itself by revoking old values and discovering new ones in order to build new ways of life.

To address the coping process in a more detailed way, means and ends need also to be addressed. Individuals tend to conserve or transform both objects of significant importance (means) and also their habitual ways of reaching significance (ends). Therefore, conservation and transformation can be analysed according to destinations of significance and pathways to significance.

Pargament (1997) describes four methods of coping according to the combinations between destinations of significance and pathways to significance, and conservation and transformation of means and ends. They are illustrated in Table 6.

		Destinations of Significance	
		Conservation of Ends	Transformation of Ends
Pathways to Significance	Conservation of Means	<i>Preservation</i>	<i>Re-Evaluation</i>
	Transformation of Means	<i>Reconstruction</i>	<i>Re-Creation</i>

Table 6 Destination to Significance

- *Preservation*: consists of the effort of protecting of both means and ends of significance by holding on to individuals' vital things;
- *Reconstruction*: consists of the effort of protecting means and transforming ends of significance when old values are not longer sufficient to the search for significance. Reconstruction allows to rebuild new beliefs able to sustain individuals' meaning in life;
- *Re-Evaluation*: consists of the effort to change the destination of significance while leaving the pathways to significance intact. Therefore, means are conserved and ends transformed.
- *Re-Creation*: the effort to change both the destination of significance and the pathways to reach it, therefore means and ends are transformed.

Transformation of means and ends is mostly connected with religious coping methods. It will be examined in the next section, while addressing religious coping in detail.

People also cope by selecting the most compelling option in order to bring the greatest gain and the least loss of significance through the use of the fewest resources and the accumulation of the least burdens. What makes a choice compelling has to do with comparative assessments of those activities that allow maximising the significance, increasing the gains and reducing the losses to the things people care about.

In selecting a method of coping, people tend to save their energy and take on the lightest burdens in a path of least resistance, reaching the coping decision through some measure of analysis and intuition, logic and emotion, in a conscious and unconscious process.

Outcomes of coping are difficult to assess as there are many implications in the coping process and should meet several criteria.

First, outcomes are relevant to the demands of a particular stress situation, (Folkman 1992). Secondly, the success of the coping process should be evaluated according to the individual's own goals (Menaghan 1982), considering that they can change overtime (Mullen & Suls, 1982). Thirdly, although coping presents an opportunity for achievement, the search of significance is not always successful. Therefore, coping outcomes should be sensitive to the possibility of failure or take into consideration that they may lead directions that are not easily predicted at the beginning (Sterne & Pascale, 1979).

It is important to appreciate the full range of potential outcomes in coping: failure, success, and no change at all. Pargament (1997) points out that in effective coping the elements of the coping process regarding *means, ends and individual-system* are efficiently integrated.

In the effective coping encounter of the stressful situation, individual's appraisals are well attuned to the reality of the situation, to the individual's own resources and burdens, and to the individual's objects of significance.

Problems in coping might arise where there is a loss of balance in various goals that form the individual's pattern of significance or when personal needs are not supported by the social system and the individual therefore experiences a coping conflict.

Having explored the process of coping, the methods in which religion is included in the process of coping can be analysed in order to understand how religion is transposed in actuality to daily life.

3.1 Psychology of Religious and Spiritual Coping

Although the coping process is greatly investigated by researchers, and although there is empirical evidence that spiritual methods of coping can affect psychological adjustment while dealing with critical times in life, scientific studies on the role played by religious faith has not, however, been regarded as worthy of merit.

The literature review on psychology of religious coping shows a clear connection between stressful life events and various forms of religious involvement (Bearon and Koenig 1990; Bjorck and Cohen 1993; Ellison and Taylor 1996; Lindenthal et al 1970). Research in this field shows that positive religious coping is reflective of positive methods of dealing with life stressors; conversely, negative religious coping is reflective of a struggle in coping methods. Research also indicates that religious methods of coping can affect people psychologically, socially, and physically while experiencing crisis (Koenig 1992; Wright et al. 1985).

Although religion and coping are two separate notions, there is an important point of reference among them which makes these two concepts converge. The extent of religion and coping connection dwells in the orienting system. Yet as was said, people bring their orienting system to the coping process. Religious belief is one part of this large orienting system which helps individuals to filter, process, and make sense of a considerable number of situations. This means that religion can potentially guide how circumstances are viewed and understood.

Distress is likely to be expressed when an object of significance is threatened, challenged, or harmed. In these situations, personal appraisal of the situation and personal resources and burdens lack congruity. Religion, in its essential sacred character for the search of significance, can provide different coping methods for conserving or transforming objects of significance that are questioned in time of stress. Religious coping therefore seems to have implications on mental health outcomes.

Religious coping can be considered as a mediating factor between the individual sense of significance for an event perceived as threatening, challenging, or harming and the personal psychological balance and ultimately individual well-being. It is likely to be particularly compelling when an individual's religious assimilation in the orienting system is deeply felt. The more religion is fully integrated in people's lives, the more religious coping is concerned with religious solutions. Those who generally integrate their faith throughout their lives may seek out ways to permeate this faith into their adversity such as: deprivation, bereavement, hardship, harm, or failure with religious purpose. In addition, religious coping is likely to be particularly compelling to those who are aware of the limitations of their human condition for its quality of being a compelling route to significance than non-religious options.

As said above, the individual's orienting system, where religion is actively engaged, offers a way of seeing things and interpreting events. But religion also influences how events can be handled according to the way in which religion is expressed in specific situations (Ebaugh, Richman, and Crafetz, 1984).

It seems evident that significant objects and values in the individual's orientating system have important implications for the extent to which religious coping is shaped. Before translating religious orientation into life situations, we should address also that religious coping appears to be moulded by other orienting variables as well, such as: person's history of experience, development over life span, motivations, life situations, ethnic group, socio-economic status, etc.

The religious search for significance in the religious ways of coping are designed both to conserve spiritual, psychological, social, and physical ends, and to allow individuals to confront, assimilate, and accommodate to a variety of negative experiences (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2002).

Evidence from empirical studies suggests that in times of stress many people persevere in their religious belief and religious practice, reporting over the course of their crisis a fortified or unchanged faith (Bahr & Harvey, 1979; Balk, 1983; Croog and Levine, 1972; Brenner 1980; McIntosh, Silver, and Wortman, 1989). These findings specifically apply to religious values rather than secular goals and priorities, which do not always seem to be firmly rooted. There are times when an established set of priorities and values which distinguish and characterise individuals' purposes in life and reasons for being and living are called into question. Conservation of such values does not seem to be workable anymore. Life events can be disruptive, upsetting, and critical. In the depth of hardship and anguish, "established" objects of significance can be argued, and ultimate ends of significance might be lost or no longer viable.

The research for meaning associated to distress needs to be determined. In times of distress the individual has to ascribe a meaning to the traumatic experience and discover a new sense of direction and purpose from it by undertaking a new direction towards a transformation of significance.

As we addressed in the literature on coping, transformation of significance can involve revaluation of significance or recreation of significance. Essentially, individuals have to seek and find powerful meanings, good enough both for supporting and remedying their misfortune or bad events and also for enhancing the good. In this journey of seeking, individuals often discover new sets of values in religious purpose. As a consequence, transformation of significance assumes a religious quality where religious belief is incorporated in the coping process and the coping process itself becomes "religious". In religious coping, individual's inner desire and motivation of creating a satisfying meaning, both to a devastating event and to personal existence and purpose in life, is found in the personal experience of the sacred.

Before analysing religious transformation of significance in relation to the coping process, we want to state that we are aware of a general tendency in the psychology of religion to assess people belonging to different religious affiliations involving dissimilar stated beliefs.

This project wants to fulfil this lacuna in research methodology when trying to establish a pathway between psychology of religion and psychology of coping. For this reason, we will be moved by a need to give religious belief its proper specificity by focusing on the belief professed by the Roman Catholic Church.

This will allow giving research consistency and reliability. Religious transformation of significance in the coping process will be analysed according to the principles to the Roman Catholic Church and bridged to psychology of coping according to the most accredited current literature in this field (Pargament, 1997).

3.1.1 Psychology of Religious and Spiritual Coping according to the principles of the Roman Catholic Church

Despite any experience of religious feelings, and taking into account that religious practice may vary among people, man's nature and vocation is essentially to be a religious being. The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines man as a “*religious being*”¹ and emphasises man's nature and vocation of being religious. “*Man is by nature and vocation a religious being. Coming from God, going toward God, man lives a fully human life only if he freely lives by his bond with God*”². Man naturally tends to God. “*As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I go and see the face of God?*”³. *The desire for God is written in the human heart because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself*⁴, and “*although man can forget God or reject him, He never ceases to call every man to seek him, so as to find life and happiness*”⁵.

In this perspective, communion with God through life in the spirit seems to be a crucial key for realising truth, freedom and happiness. Man's bond with God represents what gives man significance in life and what makes life worth living. Although religious belief is functional to achieve significance, religious belief does not always correspond to a powerful encounter with God. That it gives a spiritual or religious meaning to life can therefore be argued. Meaningfulness in life is abundantly achieved and fulfilled as long as man allows God to dwell in his heart and to work within him. “*I am the vine and you are the branches*.

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church n° 28

² Catechism of the Catholic Church n° 44

³ Psalm 42,2-3

⁴ Catechism of the Catholic Church n° 27

⁵ Catechism of the Catholic Church n° 31

*As long as you remain in me and I in you, you bear much fruit; but apart from me you can do nothing*⁶”. Therefore it is in this dimension that the desires of peoples’ lives can be totally achieved and fully satisfied.

This introduction is necessary to explain that strategies of religious coping, in dealing with problems, do not seem just to correspond specifically to the search of the sacred. In religious coping, individuals find meaning to their negative events by giving to the distressing experience a religion significance based on their relationship with God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. In times of hardship man trusts in God’s love and help. Psalm 118, 5-7⁷

Away from any religious perspective, search for significance can be sought and founded in something different from religion. Personal satisfaction, success, richness, and honesty are just a few of the common drives that may lead individuals’ lives. Although they seem to give strong meaning and significance to life, it is likely that they could be argued in time of distress.

When significance is called into question transformation of significance needs to be reevaluated or even more re-created.

Transformation of significance in each of its two aspects of revaluation and recreation will be analysed.

3.2 Religious Re-evaluation of Significance

In this type of coping process means are conserved, at least for the moment, while ends go through a transformation towards a search of a new sense of purpose, which is found in religion. Re-evaluation of religious significance stresses the search for new ends in life in the religious purpose where it is assumed that life has an ultimate transcendental goal. (Pargament, 2000). Individuals are therefore called to discover the reason for being, the motivation why they live life, by discerning their transcendental mission in life.

In this respect, rather than creating a new reason for living, the individual’s task in coping is actually to discover the transcendental vocation constructed for him.

Religious belief provides spiritual answers to discern the transcendental design as it reveals the nature of man’s vocation¹ and the goal of human experience⁸. Man’s vocation is to seek and love what is true and good. *“Endowed with a spiritual soul, with intellect and with free will, the human person is from his very conception ordered to God and destined for eternal beatitude. He pursues his perfection in seeking and loving what is true and good”*.

⁶ John 15-5

⁷ Psalm 118,5-7

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church n° 1711

⁸ Catechism of the Catholic Church n° 1719

The goal of human experience to which God calls individuals is: *The kingdom, the vision of God, participation in the divine nature, eternal life, filiations and rest in God*⁹.

This promise is clearly made in the Beatitudes, which are at the heart of Jesus' preaching. The Beatitudes reveal the goal of human existence, the ultimate end of human acts. They respond to the natural desire for happiness and are addressed to each individual personally¹⁰.

Research hypothesis assumes that people seek out religious purpose in coping when they are aware of their sense of insufficiency, especially considering when religious objectives are accessible and offer more compelling sense of direction than other alternatives.

The transformation in the re-evaluative coping involves a continuity and change in the attempt to search new meanings. When successful, the search for a religious purpose places the individual's life into a different context where the individual tends to move from personal goals to more elevated ends. This is the ideal outcome of the process. As an actual fact, the search of religious purpose could be just the beginning of a process where reaffirmation of individual's way of life can be easily predicted. In fact, religious re-evaluation of significance is characterised by the conservation of means and transformation of ends, which need to be reshaped to be suitable for the new goals. In attempting to maintain a way of life while seeking out religious purpose, the individual can sense continuity while giving up old values and taking up new ones. In experiencing this change the individual keeps himself together emotionally and remains part of his social context before transforming his means.

Religious re-evaluation of significance in coping is not total. It is likely followed by a period of constructive coping, although there are times of radical change in which transformation of both means and ends comes simultaneously when coping involves re-creation of significance.

3.3 Religious Recreation of Significance

The literature on the psychology of religious coping considers religious re-creation of significance the most radical individual change (Pargament, 1997). The individual experiences a profound religious involvement in a total transformation involving revolution of means and ends of significance.

It is interesting to notice that the definition of religious re-creation of significance examined both by the theory of psychology and coping and by the theory of the Catholic belief converges in focusing on the nature of the individual dramatic change. Respectively, Pargament (1997), in his definition, regards religious recreation of significance as a “*re-creation*”, whereas St. Paul to Corinthians, defines this transforming process as a “*new creation*” (2 Cor 5,17-18).

⁹ Catechism of the Catholic Church n° 1726

¹⁰ Catechism of the Catholic Church n° 1718- 1719

Moreover, in approaching religious re-creation of significance, an important parallel in analysing literature regarding both the theory of psychology of coping and the theory of Catholic belief has also been found. Pargament (1997), focusing on religious re-creation of significance considers two powerful coping mechanisms designed to re-create means and ends of significance. They are religious conversion and religious forgiveness as two aspects that seems to be interconnected also in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. At n° 2608 it states that *"From the Sermon on the Mount onwards, Jesus insists on conversion of heart: reconciliation with one's brother before presenting an offering on the altar, love of enemies, and prayer for persecutors, prayer to the Father in secret, not heaping up empty phrases, prayerful forgiveness from the depths of the heart, purity of heart, and seeking the Kingdom before all else.*

Religious conversion and religious forgiveness will be examined separately as two distinct religious coping mechanisms.

3.3.1 Religious conversion

The objective of conversion is to create an essential change both in destinations and pathways of living. The potential convert is hoping to relinquish not just old objects, but the life around them. Furthermore, the convert's intent is to build a new life centered on something sacred, and larger than the self and experienced as a central part of the self.

According to the Scriptures man is called *"to put off completely the "old man" and to put on the "new man"* Eph (4:23-24). Moreover, St Paul to Corinthians writes that *"Therefore if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself"*. (2 Cor 5:17-18). As a consequence, through religious conversion individuals abandon their core values and submit their lives to Jesus Christ.

To this respect, literature of psychology of spiritual coping emphasises the individual experience of religious conversion in which according to Pargament (1997) *"In an effort to recreate life, the individual experiences a dramatic change of the self, a change in which the self becomes identified with the sacred.* As a consequence in the religious conversion the sacred is incorporated into the identity of the individual who admits the limits of personal power and surrenders to own self to something sacred.

Religious conversion is a radical way of coping towards re-creation of significance, once significance has been transformed, the individual's task in coping is to conserve the new religious identity.

3.3.2 Religious Forgiveness

Although forgiveness is an important topic in theology, most of the literature in psychology of forgiveness has been addressed in many different secular contexts. Watts and Gulliford (2004), explored the nature of forgiveness in an interdisciplinary dialogue both in the psychology and theology perspectives. They analyse a variety of aspects of forgiveness. Some of them are: strategies aimed at promoting forgiveness in case were reconciliation is possible, the healing power of forgiveness in transforming family relationships, the capacity for forgiveness, the process of forgiveness, caution when approaching forgiveness towards abusers.

One of the most important themes in relation to the re-creation of significance, so that religious forgiveness becomes a religious coping mechanism, is how human forgiveness could be shaped on divine forgiveness.

According to the Christian theology of forgiveness, the offended believers must become a spiritual first responder. This implies:

- 1) The acceptance of the existence of sin, which essentially is a state of separation and therefore is a broken relationship between individuals and God;
- 2) The incarnation of God through His son Jesus' coming to acknowledges human estrangement from God and one another and to restore human history of disobedience to God resulting in human separation from His Grace;
- 3) Awareness that forgiveness originates from God and belongs to God's initiative because He loves his humankind in spite of its sinfulness;
- 4) Awareness that forgiveness cancels sinfulness in toto and from moment to moment. It means that being justified by faith and by God's grace individuals are discharged from their debts;
- 5) The experience of forgiveness enables individuals to experience freedom. As Paul indicates, Christ has set man free from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2). The freedom offered by Christ is real freedom (John 8:36). As the load of sin and guilt is lifted, individuals are able to free themselves from the chain of events that has thus far controlled their existence.

The Holy Scriptures teach how forgiveness applies to individuals when addressing the individual's need to accept forgiveness and practice forgiveness with others. Moreover, they say that beneficial outcomes come from forgiveness for spiritual renewal. In fact, as quoted in Psalms 51:10 "*Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me*" when sins are lifted away individual's heart and spirit is renewed with hope. Conversely, the spirit suffers from feelings of depression, anxiety, unhappiness, hopelessness, and despair associated with sin.

The spirit renewal that comes with forgiveness is a blessing. "*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered*" (Psalms 32:1).

When Christian forgiveness was addressed by analysing passages in the Scriptures, it was found that forgiveness was both conditional and unconditional.

The passage of Luke 17:3 "*Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him*" clearly suggests a conditional forgiveness. While it is often true that forgiveness involves a two-way transaction, there are times when forgiveness should be unconditional and unilateral.

These following passages do indeed suggest an unconditional forgiveness where no such condition is stated or implied.

Mark 11:25-26 "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything all against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

Luke 6:36-37 "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven".

Eph 4:31-32 "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you".

Col 3:12-15 "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also ye are called in one body; and be thankful".

Paul, in writing to the church at Colossians, speaks concerning the character a Christian should have. First, this character involves an understanding of the relationship between the individual and God. Second, this character involves an understanding of the type of individual's attitudes such as compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and long-suffering.

Christian Forgiveness is both judicially gracious and relationally contingent. As a free act of grace He saves us, not due to a human merit of any kind - including confession and repentance of specific acts of sin. The initial bath of regeneration, which includes a thorough judicial cleansing, is a sovereign and gracious work of God.

Christian Forgiveness is an indicator of genuine faith, in the sense that Christ's forgiven ones will themselves be forgiving ones. To refuse to forgive from the heart every offence or sin gives proof ultimately that the professing believer's faith is fake.

Christian personal forgiveness is always to take place in the heart, regardless of the sin or the lack of confession and repentance. This protects individuals in a practical way of allowing grudges, bitterness, and resentment to grow, which will become a form of hatred or anger. It also will demand that individuals reflect first on their own sins and the gracious forgiveness of God toward them, as undeserving sinners.

But a Christian's love for the sinning believer will move him to pursue his/her repentance, securing a full relational forgiveness -either through the process of confrontation known as discipline (cf. Matthew 18:15-20) or after that, when confession and repentance take place. Divine forgiveness is therefore strictly linked to the Sacrament of Penance and reconciliation in which individuals find God's unconditional forgiveness, and as a result they are called to forgive others. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC, 1422) in fact, "Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, by example, and by prayer labours for their conversion."

The importance of responding to divine forgiveness is therefore a crucial path to the practice of forgiveness in human relationships. In fact, by being reconciled with God who reconciles, individuals can live by God's merciful love and are ready to respond to be reconciled to others. In this way individuals can humanise themselves and enable to complete incompleteness and to live and work for a forgiving society.

Although the concept of forgiveness is central to the Christian tradition, religious forgiveness hasn't been explored as a religious construct. Most of the research on this topic has been mainly conducted in secular language for exploring aspects of forgiveness. Different dimensions of forgiveness have been explored. Weiner's work addresses personal responsibility, personal blame, and public confession (Weiner, 1991). Enright focuses on the forgiveness in relation to human stages of development linked to Kohlberg's stages of moral development. Moreover, Mauger et al (1992) developed scales measuring forgiveness of others and forgiveness of self.

However most of the reviewed literature focuses on the interpersonal dimension of forgiveness particularly in close relationships, and none seems to examine instances of forgiving both where restoration of a positive relationship is not possible, and when relationship with the offender does not exist.

In addition, not all of these scales explore forgiveness by God and by others, and many citations from recent literature have questionable validity.

Clearly research about forgiveness has hardly begun, and indeed religious forgiveness needs to be investigated.

4 Conclusions

Literature addressing the connection between religiousness, spirituality, and health were evaluated. A broader problem within literature was the inability of the studies to link religion, spirituality, and medicine to clearly define independent and dependent variables. In fact, variables addressing religion and spirituality were poorly defined and vary widely from study to study. In the literature examining the health correlations of religious involvement, there were almost as many different definitions of religiousness and spirituality as there were studies.

Research in religious coping necessarily needs to address specific variables able to identify individual's religious experience. In order to pursue this aim an equal conceptual framework system of shared beliefs, values, practices, perspectives, folk knowledge, language, norms, rituals, and material objects need to be taken into account.

Moreover, it seems reasonable not to extend religious observance into different sets of religious affiliations even though under common or similar features. Indeed research in the field of the psychology of religion fails to attend to this. Variables that identify religious aspects are not less important than other psychological variables and they need to be treated with equal research conventions.

A shared belief and a specific religious affiliation among individuals is one of the most important aspects in explaining the religious variable. Different religious affiliations result in different beliefs and therefore bring different religious languages, religious meanings, and religious statements of belief. In consequence, studies are affected by a lack of methodological rigor when conducting research. Conversely the study of a specific shared belief allows research consistency when describing different facets of the religious variable.

Previously reviewed research investigating religious experience seems to ignore the individual religion affiliation, religious involvement or practice, strength of belief, commitment in the relationship with God, intimacy of this relationship, and means of relationship.

Scientific research cannot deny that devised instruments of measurement that reflect truthfully and effectively the belief explored must address these deficiency, which would result in a lack of consistency when relating the dimension of religious belief to other psychological dynamics.

In reviewing literature on religious belief and spirituality and identifying inappropriate methodology in connecting religious experience with health, research recognises an emergent need for undertaking a focused approach to the study of variables for addressing individual religious significance as individuals' core values in order to assess strategies for coping and linking those variables to psychological well-being.

Moreover forgiveness should be closely tied to theorising around religious context. The development of improved measures for forgiving in its religious component would greatly

facilitate research on the psychology of forgiveness in order to improve literature in the clinical and health fields.

This study attempts to provide a focused research framework in which research on religion and spirituality can be approached congruously. By doing so it will contribute to enrich the field of psychology and religion and spirituality by applying precise theoretical assumptions to specific psychometric instruments devised according to the established definition of religious belief and spirituality.

Hopefully these approaches to religious and spiritual constructs will represent a conventional reference point and may be adopted as a shared benchmark, established and accepted for its proprieties, and used in general agreement among researchers of psychology of religion and spirituality.

CHAPTER III
Qualitative Study
Exploratory and In-depth Interviews with a
Sample of Participants with a Roman Catholic Background

1 Introduction and Aims of Pilot Interviews

Research methods literature in applied social science recommends exploratory interviews to explore individuals' perceptions, opinions, facts and predictions, and their effects.

In the process of the development of Catholic religious scales exploratory interviews are useful tools in the early stage of the study for understanding individuals' religious experience.

Therefore, procedures regarding qualitative methods will be addressed.

Firstly this chapter focuses on the advantages of using exploratory pilot interviews and in-depth interviews. Secondly a description of the various steps involved in carrying out the applied study will also be explored. Perceptions of God, content of peoples' belief, doubts concerning faith, and nature of the relationship with God were fundamental themes explored.

This part is organised by combining of both an overview of techniques of applied qualitative methods, and their principles.

This preliminary study has been a determining factor for eliciting information in order to devise items and develop psychometric scales for assessing people's belief and to measure the intimacy of people's relationship with God, which will be addressed in the following chapters.

In the initial research stages, exploratory interviews are crucial factors for the successful development of the research. Information should be used for preparing other data collection techniques, especially for planning both in-depth interviews and questionnaires. These are essential for obtaining evidence on the content of explored issues, and particularly important for managing the research process, in identifying questions to be addressed, for clarifying the domain and for refining the research question.

Considering that research in religion and spirituality distinctive and unique to the Catholic domain of belief is lacking, exploratory interviews are a fundamental requirements for providing accuracy in exploring religious attitudes, differences among individuals as related to God, and the content and strength of their faith. Exploratory interviews allow outlining initial features of people's belief, refining research hypotheses and conceptualising research implications. Therefore conducting exploratory interviews in the Roman Catholic domain provides a valid contribution to address the complexity of the religious experience and consequently it gives the study of psychological well-being a reliable research approach when linked to the religious experience.

Catholicism as a specific religious denomination has been taken into account for studying religious experience.

Although they may have different experiences with God and also disparate kinds of relationships with Him, participants need to possess a shared knowledge of belief where principles and values are inspired by the same religious background. Recruitment therefore, represents a crucial factor in the research process. With regard to this, in order to participate in this research, the most important requirement was to have a Catholic background consisting of the knowledge of the Catholic doctrine and the achievement at least of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation. Conversely, religious practice was not a requirement for participation, as a range of individuals with a variety of approaches in practicing their faith needed to be recruited to study different attitudes both towards Catholicism and their relationship with God.

The aim of the preliminary study was to underline a vital aspect of religion which is the experience connected to the sacred in present and past members of the Roman Catholic Church. According to this connotation, questions in exploratory interviews aimed to enlighten any fostering and nourishing of a spiritual life implying a relationship with God.

Given answers could provide information for making distinctions between different interactions person-God and therefore differentiate religious experiences among individuals while exploring contents and strength of their belief.

In addition by differentiating religious experiences, hypotheses on connecting personal relationship with God and a sense of purpose in life and a solution to the existential questions could be generated. This is another perspective in examining religion which allows research to progress towards a further association concerned with religion and coping.

Questions in exploratory interviews represented a broad-spectrum guideline of themes, which were not confined to defined categories.

2 Methods

2.1 Recruitment of Participants and conduct of Interviews

In planning exploratory interviews, the recruitment of individuals with different attitudes towards faith was necessary. A variety of people ranging from non-believers, to strong believers, such as ordained people, needed to be contacted in order to cover a representative spectrum of experiences. Participants needed to be carefully selected through direct personal contacts in prayer groups, work environments, clubs, and societies. People from these different environments were personally contacted and asked about their availability to participate in the research study.

Personal knowledge of experiences and perspectives of individuals potentially suitable as respondents was the main criterion adopted in the process for recruitment participants.

When asking for their consent to take part in this research, they were informed about the research process both during preliminary contact and later on, just before the interview started in the formal setting.

Interviewees were presented with an outline of the research subject and its aim, Institution involved, confidentiality in collecting data, recording methods and length of the interview. In addition, in order to produce effective cooperation and significant verbal reports, participants were informed about the content of the questions they would be asked.

Participants in the pilot study were recruited mostly in Sardinia, Italy.

In this pilot study there were 43 participants, both secular and religious aged between 28 and 77, and from a Catholic background who were present or past members of the Catholic Church.

In particular, individuals in the sample were mainly selected among four categories of potential participants:

- *Individuals members of the Church but who were no longer believers;*
- *Individuals who were past members of the Church and believers but who no longer involved in any religious practice;*
- *Members of the Church with a religious belief and a religious practice;*
- *Members of religious communities of Catholic convents, monasteries, who have committed their lives to the Lord.*

Interviews were scheduled according to participants' time and venue preference and confirmed in advance, by telephone, to make sure that the place and time was still convenient for them. Some of the lay people preferred to be interviewed at their work place or other offices, and others at their home place. Religious people were interviewed in their monasteries or in their convents' meeting rooms.

All interviews were conducted in a quiet and welcoming atmosphere, in a pleasant and comfortable place, without any interruption or interference.

At the beginning of every interview, following a friendly and familiar greeting, attention was paid to put the individual at ease. This was done by introducing my-self, my work background, and my research interests assuming that better informed and involved participants would provide more cooperation and reduce resistance. The role of the participant's contribution to the study was emphasised and access to the results was also offered.

According to the Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines BPS (1998), participants were offered a copy of the information sheet in which the interviewers could get an idea of the various phases of the protocol. In addition, they were offered a copy of the statement of informed consent, including permission to tape the interview where assurance of confidentiality of information and anonymity would be guaranteed by members of the research team involved in this project.

Participants were also informed that the recording was not a precondition to the interview and that it would only be used to ensure accuracy in reported information. It was also explained that respondents could refuse to answer any question if they wished.

Exploratory interviews were conducted in a flexible way, from participants' points of view, according to their perspective. All interviews were unique and very distinctive.

With respect to the content, participants were allowed the time they needed to answer the questions respecting their silence while they were occupied in thought. Interventions were very rare. However, in some cases essential points needed to be clarified. Particular attention was given to key words, phrases, idioms and terms used during the interview.

On average, interviews lasted one hour and 40 minutes. The interviews' notes were completed about one hour after the interview ended and they were accurately transcribed as participants' own verbalisations two days later.

2.2 Content of Interviews

In order to yield several accounts, in getting information from participants, open ended questions were used (What...?, Where...?, How...?, Why...?, When...?). These were formulated widely with the intention of giving participants autonomy to speak about the anticipated topic, so that they could explain and expand on their ideas.

With reference to the areas to be explored, generally participants were asked about: Their personal sense of belonging to the church, their faith (and whether it contained their religious commitment), their experience of God, their relationship with God, their meanings ascribed to the Sacraments (and to their participation in the holy mass), their idea of personal attribution to the ministries of the church, their opinion on the meaning of prayer and their experience of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Some of the questions asked to participants were:

- 1) Do you have you a kind of religious belief?
- 2) Can you describe your belief?
- 3) Do you have any kind of religious faith?
- 4) Can you briefly summarise your religious belief?
- 5) Are you committed in your faith?
- 6) Can you describe your religious commitment?
- 7) Does your belief affect your daily life?
- 8) If so, How?
- 9) What is your understanding of spirituality?
- 10) Tell me about your spirituality
- 11) How do you practice your spirituality?
- 12) Do you think that you have a relationship with God?
- 13) Do you think that God looks for a relationship with you?
- 14) Do you think you have experienced God's work in your life?
- 15) Do you think is important to know God's will?
- 16) How do you discern it in your life?
- 17) Does your relationship with God help you make decisions in your daily life?
- 18) How?
- 19) Have you ever experienced periods of serious distress in your life?
- 20) What role did religion play during these periods?
- 21) Did your belief change after that experience?
- 22) What does prayer mean for you?
- 23) Do you have any reason to be angry with God?
- 24) Could you tell me about any doubts that you have in your religious belief?

2.3 Thematic Analysis

2.3.1 Purpose of Thematic Data

The analysis of the exploratory interviews involved carrying out thematic analysis, which is very content and descriptive orientated. In contrast to the analysis of quantitative survey data, the purpose of thematic data analysis is to collect data from common areas, in order to categorise experiences under a higher order theme or category. Therefore, by exploring individual experiences and classifying them, differences between categories can be compared one against the other.

Thematic data allows to study participants' religious experiences by gathering information about common conceptualisations and grouping them in categories and sub-categories according to their properties. Then, characteristics pertaining to each category are coded and labelled according to a conceptual name representing them.

2.3.2 Thematic Data: Aim of the Study and Areas of Investigation

The principal aim of the preliminary study was to explore religious experience around three fundamental topics:

- 1) *Understanding different attitudes towards the Catholic religion in believers and non-believers;*
- 2) *Establishing the extent of certainties and doubts about principles of belief professed by the authority of the Catholic Church in believers and non-believers.*
- 3) *Understanding the nature and the quality of the relationship with the Divine among believers and non-believers.*

Semi-structured interviews therefore tended to investigate in respondents:

- personal approach to religious belief;
- firmness and resistance about the contents of belief;
- commitment to their religiousness;
- the nature of the relationship they might have with God.

Therefore thematic analysis was differentiated in:

- 1) *Thematic Analysis for exploring believers and non-believers' attitudes towards the Catholic religion. This will be addressed in section 3.2.1;*
- 2) *Thematic Analysis for exploring the certainty of belief and reservations about fundamental principles of faith. This will be addressed in section 3.2.2;*
- 3) *Thematic Analysis for exploring personal experience with the Divine, which is addressed in section 3.2.3.*

2.3.3 Thematic Data: An overview of the Analysis Procedure

Within the framework of qualitative approaches, in content analysis the main idea of the procedure was to formulate a theoretical background in describing individuals' Catholic belief.

Following this criterion, recordings of the interviews were transcribed and worked through. As a consequence participants' transcripts were broken down, examined, and categorised for identifying common themes. Within a feedback loop those categories were revised and checked in respect to their reliability by using Cohen's Kappa.

What makes content analysis meaningful in discovering and describing the focus of the individual religious experience is its reliance on coding and categorising of the data with similar meaning or connotation based on explicit rules of coding.

As the interviews were transcribed, the first step involved reading through the transcripts and highlighting information relevant to the topics within the interview schedule and operating both with emergent coding and a priori coding. As a consequence some of the main categories were established prior to the analysis based upon literature, while others were formed following some preliminary examination of the data.

The main categories for describing individuals' attitudes towards religion were hypothesised in agreement with professional colleagues, and then, when transcripts were reviewed and a set of features had been generated, a check list was also formed.

Established categories were compared with the emergent themes and differences that showed up were reconciled. A code book was created for each of the individual themes, or in some cases sets of themes, and applied to data. They included a code name, a description of the code and an example of quotes relating to each code.

The final step of the analysis involved determining the consistency of the codes and checking the level of reliability. This was carried out two weeks after the first code was assigned and the research recoded an unmarked set of interviews and detected any codes, which were inconsistent. Any inconsistent code was revised and re-tested for consistency and reliability.

3 Results

3.1 Sample Characteristics

One of the first problems in analysing data was to find a criterion to organise the information arising from the sample of interviewees starting from details of participants: gender, age, status, education and professions.

The sample was composed of 43 people having an average age of 56: 16 Male and 27 female including both secular and ordained people. Secular people were chosen from believers and not believers.

A description of the sample's details will be shown in table 1 illustrating Age and Gender of participants and in table 2 illustrating believers and non-believers.

Age and Gender

16 Males	Age Range	31 – 67
27 Females	Age Range	28 – 77
Size of Sample 43 people	Age Range	28 – 77

Table 1 Age and Gender

- *Lay people's status varied between: single, married, separated and divorce persons with different education, job, profession and presumably strength of personal belief.*
- *Ordained people belonged to different orders such as Silesians, Capuchins and Jesuits. Ordained people interviewed were both involved in outdoor life and in enclosure life.*

Believers and Non-Believers in the Sample

<u>Believers</u>		Secular Practicing	15	
		Secular Non Practicing	13	36
		Religious (Ordered)	8	

Non Believers

7

Total

43

Table 2 Believers and Non-Believers

This preliminary study needed a decisive requirement: people had to have received a Catholic education. As a consequence participants had to be expected to have received Sacraments of Christian's Initiation.

As illustrated in Table 3, all recruited participants were educated as Catholics and all of them had received the Sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, Holy Communion and Confirmation.

Catholic Religious Education in Childhood and Sacraments Received

Catholic Formation	43
Baptism	43
Reconciliation	43
Holy Communion	43
Confirmation	43
Church Marriage	28
Ordination	8
Sacrament of the sick	2

Table 3 Catholic Education and Sacraments Received

Participants had different status: about half of the seculars were married, seven of them were single, two participants were separated and one of them divorced, and the last was living with his partner.

Ordained people were eight, of whom two participants were priests: one was a diocesan priest and the other Jesuit. Two were Friars, respectively under the Capuchin and Dominican orders.

Three were nuns of whom one belonged to the Silesian order, one to the order of the Sacrament and the last was under the enclosure order of Carmelitans. An ordained woman who lives a normal life was also interviewed. Participants' status is shown in tables 4 and in table 5.

Secular Status

Single	7
Married	23
Separated	2
Divorced	1
Widowed	2

Tables 4 Participants' Secular Status

Religious Status

Priests	2
Friars	2
Nuns	3
Ordained secular	1

Tables 5 Participants' Religious Status

Almost half the sample had the equivalent of Advanced Level education, and by eleven participants had a degree. Thirty-four people in the sample had an occupation, five were unemployed and four were retired.

Participants' Education and occupation is shown in the following tables 6 and 7.

Education

Primary School	3
O Level or GCSE	7
A Level	18
Degree	11
Postgraduate Qualification	4
Total	43

Tables 6 Participants' Education

Occupation

Employed	31
- Permanently	26
- Temporarily	5
Self Employed	3
Unemployed	5
Retired	4
Total	43

Tables 7 Participants' Occupation

3.2 Result of the Thematic Analysis

3.2.1 Coding and Findings of Thematic Data for exploring attitudes towards the Catholic Religion

The thematic analysis for exploring attitudes towards the Catholic Religion generated six main categories of themes related to the main topics presented within the interview schedule.

They are:

- 1) *Mere Atheism*
- 2) *Agnosticism*
- 3) *Hesitant Belief*
- 4) *Conventional Belief*
- 5) *Old towards Renewed Belief*
- 6) *Renewing Belief*

Each thematic category is coded and described in its appropriate table. It contains the coding, a description of the content for the theme, and some significant quotations of the respondents from the transcript.

3.2.1.1 Thematic Analysis of Code 1: P A - Mere Atheism

The thematic analysis of Code 1, revealed a significant lack of religious attitude. The individuals in this class appeared not to be attracted towards any form of religious belief. Their approach was coded as “Mere Atheism”. Religious approach of this kind is displayed in individuals without any sort of religious belief; they have in common that they do not profess any faith and are not interested in any form of religious practice. Moreover they strongly assert the rejection of the existence of God or of any supernatural power. They seem to be centred on themselves as they tend to put considerable emphasis on their own motivation rather than that of God. Thematic Analysis of Code 1 is illustrated in table 8.

CODE	CODE DESCRIPTION
Code 1: P A Mere Atheism	Lack of any interest in religion; Importance of human being motivation; Highlighting strength of mind; Emphasis on evolution; Denying God's Existence; Denying any Supernatural Power;
Reference	« I depend on me... »

Table 8 Thematic Analysis of Code 1

3.2.1.2 Thematic Analysis of Code 2: A - Agnosticism

Thematic analysis of Code 2, allowed the identification of a religious attitude that has been coded “Agnosticism”. Approach to religious belief of this kind appears to some extent contradictory. Individuals in this group assert that they do not believe in God, although they avoid denying His existence. They generally seem not to recognise a supernatural power although presenting a perplexing approach when describing their beliefs. Therefore, their opinions seem unstable and this is often unclear to them. People of this group seem to wish to have faith, but they find it very hard to find.

Thematic Analysis of Code 2 is illustrated in table 9.

CODE	CODE DESCRIPTION
Code 2: AG Agnosticism	Assertion of not to believe in God with associated avoidance of denying his existence; Changeable opinion in recognising any supernatural power; Awareness of comfort that faith provides in believers; Occasional desire to have faith;
Reference	<i><< I cannot afford rejecting the idea that God may exist. However, I do not believe in God >></i>

Table 9 Thematic Analysis of Code 2

3.2.1.3 Thematic Analysis of Code 3: HB – Hesitant Belief

Thematic analysis of Code 3, allowed spotting a particular religious attitude that has been coded as “Hesitant Belief”. Individuals in this class differ slightly from the above as they clearly recognise some supernatural power above them. Although they tend to define themselves as non-believers, they state that they are searching for a sort of faith to believe in.

Thematic Analysis of Code 3 is illustrated in table 10.

CODE	CODE DESCRIPTION
Code 3: HB Hesitant Belief	Awareness of some supernatural power / being Manifested desire to search for faith and belief
Reference	<i><< I tend to believe in a form of some supernatural thing beyond my understanding >></i>

Table 10 Thematic Analysis of Code 3

3.2.1.4 Thematic Analysis of Code 4: CB – Conventional Belief

Thematic Analysis of Code 4 revealed a type of religious attitude coded as “Conventional Belief”. Under this category, a homogenous sub-set of themes was found. Particular features in attitudes towards religion in this class can be explained through three distinctive religious approaches coded as: “Cognitive Belief”, “Pleasing Belief” and “Involved Belief” as illustrated in table 11.

The classifier of “Conventional Belief” seems to embody and identify a group of individuals who believe in God essentially because of their religious educational heritage. Therefore, the religious assimilation is a part and a derivation of their culture. Apart from the minor sub-group, where people believe in God but are not interested in any religious practice or in any religious commitment, in all sub-dimensions of the classifier of “Conventional Belief” usually individuals under this group practice their faith and attend religious services. The main feature is that individuals in this class have in common is that their belief in God is based on a cognitive level of knowledge, which is not refused but instead, is passively accepted. This approach brings a positive attitude towards religion. As a consequence, an authentic relationship of love with God has not been experienced, belief seems weak or inconsistent, and faith appears infertile in personal life.

This approach to belief consists mainly of keeping the tradition in attending important events with a social facet such as Baptisms, funerals and marriages, or other particular services for Christmas or Easter, whereas Sunday Mass is mostly neglected or attended as an obligation. Moreover, perception of the religious practice is mainly focused on what individuals have to do in order to solve and respond to a personal responsibility, to accomplish their sense of obligation towards people, such as parents or relatives, or to answer a need of social desirability and group acceptance.

Sub-Code 4a “Cognitive Belief”

Cognitive belief is a kind of religious attitude manifested in people who usually do not argue about the existence of God. They typically believe in God, although they do not recognise the authority of the Church, or think that it is not necessary in order to believe in God. For this reason, although they accept God’s existence, they prefer to establish their own relationship with God devoid of any Church mediation. Therefore, they do not empathise with recurring religious practice since their manner of keeping their belief appears to be sufficient. These people might occasionally go to Church, when they desire to be closer to God, but they are inclined to be doubtful about the Church’s dogma.

Sub-Code 4b “Pleasing Belief”

The religious approach of individuals classed in the group “Pleasing Belief”, in comparing belief in God and religious practice, can be described as the core of their inheritance and convention of their upbringing. Their religious practice is mostly a social façade of satisfying families’ requests where the essential substance, which consists of responding to God’s love, seems to be largely neglected.

Although people in this category are used to attending the Holy Mass when prescribed from the liturgy and are used to receiving Sacraments of the Confession and the Communion often, still religious practice seems to be an obligation where a serious commitment to God is often ignored.

Sub-Code 4 c “Involved Belief”

The religious attitude of individuals classified in the group “Involved Belief” is very difficult to address because these individuals’ keenness for religious practice and noticeable dedication to religious activities, makes people think that they are rightly respectful in faith.

Although an evident service in the community through a personal commitment, individuals in this group do not seem to reflect the “Fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22). Rather delivering service with generous heart, a humble compassion, a warm dedication and a loving service, people of this category seem to be inclined to exalt their ego while delivering service. In fact, their attitude seems to reflect the individual desire to perform superiorly and better.

Despite the fact that in this study has been difficult to provide a detailed assessment to analyse the relationship between the personal involvement in religious practices, and service to the community, Church leaders explain this attitude by suggesting a lack of spiritual growth according to a “life in the Spirit”. Individuals in this category tend to be driven from their ego while delivering service. The own individual seems therefore the true motivator of the service they administered.

CODE	CODE DESCRIPTION
Code 4: CB Conventional Belief	Belief in God for conformity due to education heritage; Lack of firm and concrete commitment to God; Emptiness of religious practice when it occurs due to: - a sense of pleasing significant people (parents, partner or others) - a need of social desirability or group acceptance - a sense of duty
Sub-code 4a Cognitive Belief	Belief as sufficient requirement of being Catholic Avoidance of any clerical mediation Absence of religious practice Individually personalised way of belief
Reference	<< <i>I am a Catholic... in my way...</i> >>
Sub-code 4b Pleasing Belief	Rigid and structured religious practice as core of inheritance and convention of upbringing Religious practice mainly a façade for satisfying families' requests
Reference	<< <i>I do not miss a single Sunday Mass...</i> >>
Sub-code 4c Involved Belief	Keenness for religious practice Noticeable service made available to the community Desire to appear and to perform superiorly and better Inclination of exalting personal ego while delivering service Lack of spiritual growth and deficiency of sincere bond with God Lack of obedience to spiritual guidance
Reference	<< <i>I do... I am doing... I'm... I have organised... I will...</i> >>

Table 11 Thematic Analysis of Code 4

3.2.1.5 Thematic Analysis of Code 5: BtC – Old towards Renewed Belief

The thematic analysis of Code 5, groups the religious attitude coded as “Old towards Renewed Belief” consisting of a conflictual character they show when the function of religion is approached. The religious attitude towards Catholicism of this kind of believers seems likely to be associated with a new experience of belief. The necessity of people in this group is to address and solve the incongruity and contradiction in what they have thought and what they are experiencing now. Their need seems to be aimed at an effort to re-create a belief that does not collude anymore with the past through an integration with a new or different view of belief.

The conflict consists of the personal questioning of the role of the religion, which they need to incorporate in order to deal with their struggle about the meaning and the aim of their lives and the role of religion in life that they want to address responsibly not just in order to express mere opposition.

Thematic Analysis of Code 5 is illustrated in table 12.

CODE	CODE DESCRIPTION
Code 5: BtC <i>Old towards Renewed Belief</i>	Conflictual character in the meaning and purpose of belief Struggling with the meaning and the aim of life and God's role Necessity to solve incongruities and incorporating belief Responsibility in addressing faith where opposition is generated to find explanation.
Reference	<i><< I feel confused within myself... I do not have answers about my future... my destiny... where I came from... My days are counted... why suffering? Where am I heading to? >></i>

Table 12 Thematic Analysis of Code 5

3.2.1.6 Thematic Analysis of Code 6: RB – “Renewing Belief”

The thematic analysis of Code 6, revealed a category labelled as “Renewing Belief”. This order classifies data into three sub-groups coded such as: “Beginning the Journey of Faith”, “Renewed Committed Belief” and “Strong Intimacy” conceptualising mainly the dynamic aspect of faith. Attitudes of this kind are shared by individuals who have in common a personal experience of God besides their cognition and belief. Religious belief seems to be incorporated in their lives and develops daily through a constant religious commitment. “Renewing Belief” appears to be a religious experience strictly interconnected to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and in the Blessed Virgin.

The main feature of this classifier is an intense and developing personal experience of religious connection with a particular person in the Holy Trinity and/or with the Blessed Virgin. In this relationship the vital attribute seems to be the mutuality aspect of the religious interaction. In fact the main attribute of this group consists of a kind of religious belief in which a real reciprocal experience is described.

The spiritual connection made mainly through prayer seems to confer on the individual a sense of intimacy and closeness with the Divine Person invoked. The nature of that spiritual connection seems to reflect a strong individual faith conviction brought about from a significant religious practice and spiritual growth. Attitudes towards religion in individuals of this class therefore seem to be an integrated aspect of their daily life.

As a consequence, religious practice is the result of a deep conversion, of a new and renewed religious relationship.

Religious attitudes in “Renewing Belief” is explained through three distinctive features of religious approaches among believers coded as “Beginning the Journey of Faith”, “Renewed Committed Belief” and “Strong Intimacy”.

Sub-Code 6a “Beginning the Journey of Faith”

Religious attitude classified as “Beginning the Journey of Faith” identify a religious approach characterised by a progressive interest in faith. Individuals belonging to this category seem to be in a position of considering the role of religion in their lives and they appear to be in the process of opening themselves up to a spiritual experience. Fundamentally, they are in their journey towards conversion where they may be coming close to the experience of acquiring faith, refreshing, re-invigorating the pre-existent belief in which calling, or re-calling from faith is strongly felt.

Their attitude towards religion is reported as the discovering of a spiritual dimension, which is different from what they had thought. People of this group seem to have a wider spiritual awareness and attentiveness to the presence of the Lord in their lives. They tend to describe their faith in a refreshed and renewed way. Moreover they refer to a personal change because of God’s love for them, which they experienced while participating in a retreat or prayer meeting where they felt a special call from God to them.

Sub-Code 6b “Renewed Committed Belief”

The attitude of “Renewed Committed Belief” in relation to religion seems to describe an approach to faith that has solid and mature spiritual commitment to God the Father, Jesus the Saviour, the Holy Spirit as foundation of perfection in whom individuals with a “Renewed Committed” approach to faith are sincerely and deeply involved in their relationship with the Persons of the Holy Trinity.

Seeing that belief involves all aspects of their lives, religious practice plays an essential role in people’s daily life in the following ways: frequency in receiving Sacraments especially on the subject of Penance and Eucharist, perseverance in personal prayer, daily participation to the Holy Mass, fasting, and spiritual direction. These practices are pillars of individuals’ faithfulness to the Lord.

Certainly the intensity of the strength of commitment in people of this category varies so their spiritual qualities seem to differ according to the extent of their intimacy with the Lord.

Sub-Code 6c “Strong Intimacy”

“Strong Intimacy” is a classifier that identifies the religious attitude displayed in believers with a strong intimacy to God. The particular feature of this attitude is its association to a personal commitment that is a living testimony and witness of the work of the Holy Spirit. Again the intensity of this intimacy seems to differ according to the extent of personal will submission strictly linked to the intimacy with the Lord.

CODE	CODE DESCRIPTION
Code 6: RB Renewing Belief	Personal touching experience of God apart from belief Belief in God harmoniously integrated life Perception of God as a person very close Sharing every aspect of life Belief to the real action of God on any circumstances in life Confidence in God’s work brought about from a substantial experience and spiritual growth. Religious practice becomes a necessity in order to stay with God Religious practice becomes an interchange of love with God Religious practice is a result of meeting God due to a deep conversion of a new and renewed relationship with God.
Sub-code 6 a Beginners in Faith	Appreciating an interest towards faith Experience of acquiring faith, or refreshing, or re- invigorating the pre-existent belief Experience of discovering God in a new way New awareness of the presence of God in life
Reference	<< <i>I knew that Jesus is the Son of God... actually I discovered He is my Saviour... my Redeemer... my refuge</i> >>
Sub-code 6b Renewed Committed Belief	A solid and mature experience of spiritual commitment to God Deepness of involvement in the relationship with God. Desire to continue religious practice Sharing faith in a prayer group or community Commitment in following spiritual guidance Genuine and unconditional service for the community
Reference	<< <i>The Lord wants me to be ...I fight within me for engaging myself in following guidance from my Spiritual guide</i> ...>>
Sub-code 6c Strong Intimacy	Very established commitment in faith Ministering faith and service for facilitating spiritual growth in others Living as a faithful testimony and witnesses of God Commitment in fasting, adoration and constant prayer for others’ need Providing spiritual guidance, Providing discernment for individuals’ needs Conducting fasting and prayer for individuals’ needs
Reference	<< <i>My deep desire is to serve the Lord in doing His will... constantly and completely</i> ...>> << <i>I want my will to be submitted to the Lord as a grape pressed in His hands...yes... as a grape...as He wants me to become for His glory</i> ...>>

Table 13 Thematic Analysis of Code 6

3.2.2 Coding and Findings of Thematic Data for exploring Steadiness of Catholic Belief and Reservations about its Fundamental Principles of Faith

In order to understand the extent of certainties and reservations regarding principles affirmed by the Roman Catholic Church, participants were asked to address any kind of doubt affecting their belief conviction.

Because 15 individuals of the original sample responded in a radical way about their reservations in fundamental principles of faith, (both positively and negatively), steadiness of belief was explored in a sample of 28 individuals.

The total absence of belief led 6 individuals to feel unsuitable to discuss faith issues as not applying to their experience. On the other hand religiously ordained participants professed strongly their total loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church and to Church's authority in declaring as truth the contents of the Roman Catholic Doctrine.

Reservation in faith, steadiness of belief conviction, and related doubts were assessed therefore in respondents with different approaches to religious belief, but still believers.

The thematic analysis generated two categories of themes related to the main topics presented within the interview schedule, which will be illustrated in the following tables containing codes, and descriptions for each theme analysed. They are:

- 1) *Reservations in Faith;*
- 2) *Doubts versus Disbelief;*

CODE	CODE DESCRIPTION
Code 1 Res <i>Reservations in Faith</i>	<p>Reluctance and hesitation to believe in fundamental statements of faith proclaimed by the Roman Catholic Church:</p> <p>Role of the Holy Spirit in reconciliating man to God; Communion of Saints; Existence of Hell; Existence of Demons; Second Advent of Christ on the earth; Last Judgement;</p>

Table 14 Thematic Analysis of Code 1 Res

CODE	CODE DESCRIPTION
Code 2 DD <i>Doubts vs. Disbelief</i>	<p>Firm scepticism close to disbelief in the fundamental statements of faith proclaimed by the Roman Catholic Church:</p> <p>Jesus Christ's work in human's lives</p> <p>Purity of the Virgin Mary since the creation of the word; Virginity of Mary before and after Jesus Christ was born; Conception of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit; Chastity of Mary and St Joseph before and during marriage;</p> <p>Infallibility of the Church in proclaiming the moral doctrine; Infallibility of the Holy Father in dogmatic matters; Mediating Role of the Church in providing Salvation;</p> <p>Devil as a living person; Devil's action in human's life;</p> <p>Resurrection from the death in the flesh;</p>

Table 15 Thematic Analysis of Code 2 DD

Thematic data emerged in qualitative analysis revealed uncertainties and disbelief around central areas professed by the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

Considering that answers from participants without any religious belief and responses from participants with a strong faith were missing, it seems clear that among the remaining 28 participants (who are classified as believers) there was a consistent disbelief attitude towards the truth of the Doctrine proclaimed by the Roman Catholic Church.

Refusing to accept the mediating role of the Church in providing salvation and the infallibility of the Church in proclaiming the moral doctrine, a generalised mistrust towards the Apostolic Authority emerged, together with a sense of division rather than unity among those who define themselves as “believers”.

The perception of a general confusion about the content of faith professed by the Catholic Church highlights the need to address in a detailed way both the contents of belief and extent of this belief by a specific instrument for assessing it.

3.2.3 Coding and Findings of Thematic Data for exploring Spirituality

The thematic analysis for examining individual's religious experience generated two main categories of themes. They are:

- *Individual Disposition towards God*
- *God disposition towards the Individual;*

Each thematic category is coded and described in its appropriate section.

3.2.3.1 Thematic Analysis of Code 1: ItG Individual Disposition towards God

CODE	CODE DESCRIPTION
Code 1: ItG Pos <i>Individual Disposition towards God (Positive)</i>	Positive individual disposition / inclination towards the Lord through benevolent feelings, attitudes and behaviour displayed towards God; Positive means, process and method of the spiritual experience; Implication of positive approach to spirituality
<i>Sub-code 1a Pos Disp</i>	Openness to God's intervention
<i>Positive Disposition / Feelings vs God</i>	Readiness to God's work Gratitude to the Lord Personal belief to the real action of God Certainty of God's presence
Reference	<< <i>I trust in the Lord... I am in God's hands</i> >>
<i>Sub-code 1b Pos Rel</i>	Church attendance
<i>Positive Means / Process of the Relationship</i>	Receiving Sacraments, Conventional Prayers, Meditation of Scriptures, spontaneous prayer, rosary Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament Searching for spiritual guidance Retreat, fasting, periods spent in solitude and desert
Reference	<< <i>I try to share aspects of my life through prayer as much as I can manage ...</i> >>
<i>Sub-code 1c Pos Impl</i>	Serving and announcing the Lord
<i>Implication of Positive Relationship with God</i>	Patience when in trouble Praying / forgiving individuals seen as persecutors Sharing joy and sorrow one another
Reference	<< <i>I am drawn to talk about Lord's love</i> >>

Table 16 Thematic Analysis of Code 1 Individual Disposition towards God (Positive)

CODE	CODE DESCRIPTION
Code 2: ItG Neg <i>Individual Disposition towards God (Adverse)</i>	Adverse individual disposition / inclination towards the Lord through negative feelings, attitudes and behaviour displayed towards God; Unhelpful means, process and method of the spiritual experience.
Sub-code 2° Pess Disp <i>Pessimistic Disposition / Feelings vs. God</i>	Suspicion, mistrust, resentment about God Anxiety and fear if considering religious experience Feelings of being neglected and abandoned Tension and fear of God <i><<I completely refuse to have anything to do with God... I do not see the point...>></i> <i><<It's difficult for me to be absolutely certain that God cares about me... God leaves me alone... and I need help...>></i>
Reference	
Sub-code 2a1 Unc Rel <i>Unconstructive Means /Process of the Relationship</i>	Avoiding receiving Sacraments Occasional spontaneous religious connection Absence or poor religious practice Considering spiritual guidance as not necessary or disturbing <i><<I try to share aspects of my life through prayer as much as I can manage ...>></i>
Reference	

Table 17 Thematic Analysis of Code 1 Individual Disposition towards God (Adverse)

3.2.1.2 Thematic Analysis of Code 2: GtI - God towards Individual

CODE	CODE DESCRIPTION
Code 2: GtI <i>God Disposition towards the Individual</i>	Mixture of feelings that the individual tends to ascribe to God according to his perception of God in the relationship with the individual;
Sub-code 2a Pos Att <i>God's positive perceived Attitude /Behaviour towards Individual</i>	God's involvement with the individual's practical life Knowing individual's needs Fulfilling individual's necessities Committed and constant faithful presence Providing individuals comfort and support Protecting individuals from danger Good, Lovable, tender and kind with individuals Compassionate and caring about individuals
Reference	<i><<God is personally and intimately involved with me and my interests>></i>

Sub-code 2b Neg Att	Unjust and wrong with me
God's negative perceived Attitude / Behaviour towards Individual	Judging me Distant and detached from me Careless about me
Reference	<i><<God must be thinking... of someone else... elsewhere... he is certainly not concerned about me now...>></i>

Table 18 Thematic Analysis of Code 2 God towards Individuals

4 Validity

Validity of the qualitative analysis was established by means of evaluation of classifiers. The effect of the individual analyst on research findings can create a credibility problem for qualitative approaches from the perspective of evaluative criteria utilised in quantitative psychology. Nevertheless the evaluation for thematic analysis for exploring personal religious experience within the Catholic tradition should be examined around themes that can be outlined by the literature addressed by the Catholic theoretical frame of reference.

In the evaluation of the classification method for reading and analysis of texts, the researcher's knowledge and personal interests are important variables in the discovery process. The researcher's task is also to study how the topic is organised around a specific theory treated by literature.

Theory explored in the literature allows the semantic content of textual corpus to be improved in its consistency and good classifiers to be identified with a significant discriminator function in building a class according to the criterion of sameness, similarity, homogeneity and equivalence.

In approaching individuals' attitude towards religion, belief conviction, and spirituality classifiers were evaluated and confronted with literature review for identification of concepts. Specifically:

- In approaching individuals' belief conviction, classifiers for thematic analysis were examined according to the entire content of the faith through studying the articles contained in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Literature was reviewed from article 185 to article 2758 of Section II - Part One of the Catechism, which treats the Profession of the Christian Faith.
- In approaching individuals' religious experience classifiers for thematic analysis were scrutinised mainly according to the articles centred on prayer. In fact "*In the New Covenant, prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their Father*" (art. 2565). In this relationship "*Man is in search of God*" (art. 2566) and "*God tirelessly calls each person to that encounter known as a prayer*" (art. 2567). Literature was reviewed from article 2559 to article 1065 of Section I - Part Four of the Catechism, which entails the Christian Prayer.

In evaluating classifiers for thematic analysis two judges were chosen according to their pastoral ministry and academic expertise. They were two ordained professors, members of the Faculty of Theology at Pontifical University in Cagliari who examined categories according to benchmarks of the Catholic Doctrine. Classifiers and given descriptors for their objects were both confirmed.

Although evaluation of classifiers for thematic analysis remains a most subjective process that is guided by a personal interpretative path and cognitive process; nevertheless, the use of such classification methods supported by literature gives some “objective” orientation to the analysis in which a multitude of possible paths of research can be identified.

5 Reliability

In addressing reliability for content analysis, the classification procedure must be consistent. To make valid inferences from the text, people should code the same text in the same way in content analysis. As Weber (1990) notes “reliability problems usually grow out of the ambiguity of word meanings, category definitions, or other coding rules”. As a consequence the coefficient reported may be artificially inflated (Krippendorff, 1980).

Reliability for thematic analysis was addressed by adopting percentage agreement between two raters. They were chosen according to their pastoral minister and academic expertise. They were two ordained professors, members of the Faculty of Theology at Pontifical University in Cagliari who also examined the categories for the thematic analysis.

Reliability was measured by using Cohen’s Kappa, which allows the calculation of percentage agreement between raters taking into account a certain percentage of agreement by chance. Cohen’s Kappa approaches 1 as coding is perfectly reliable and goes to 0 when there is no agreement other than what would be expected by chance (Haney et al., 1998).

Kappa is computed as:

$$K = \frac{P_A - P_C}{1 - P_C}$$

where:

P_A = Proportion of units on which the raters agree;

P_C = Proportion of units for which agreement is expected by chance.

Given data in tables 13, 14 and 15 illustrating agreement matrix for the religious attitudes, spirituality, and object of belief, a percentage of agreement calculation can be derived by summing the values found in the diagonals (proportion of times that the two raters agreed).

By multiplying the marginal values, at an unexpected proportion for each cell (reported in parentheses in the tables) can be calculated. Summing the product of the marginal values in the diagonal, an adjustment for the basis of chance agreement factor is then calculated.

In practice, Kappa value calculates reliability according to the proportion of agreement between raters after accounting for chance.

Rater 2		Rater 1							Marginal Totals
		Pure Atheism	Agnosticism	Hesitant Belief	Conventional Belief	Old towards New Belief	Renewed Believers	Strong Intimacy	
Pure Atheism	.11 (.09)*	.008	.002	.009	.004	.005	.002	.12	
Agnosticism	.002	.13 (.11)	.003	.002	.006	.005	.002	.14	
Hesitant Belief	.009	.007	.09 (.08)	.004	.001	.003	.006	.11	
Conventional Belief	.001	.004	.009	.17 (.15)	.006	.001	.09	.19	
Old towards New Belief	.002	.002	.009	.003	.07 (.06)	.005	.008	.09	
Renewed Believers	.01	.02	.003	.004	.006	.12 (.10)	.007	.13	
Strong Intimacy	.004	.001	.005	.000	.004	.006	.21 (.18)	.22	
	.13	.17	.12	.19	.097	.14	.32	1	

Table 19 Agreement Matrix of Religious Attitudes

* Values in parentheses represent the expected proportions on the basis of chance associations, i.e. the joint probabilities of the marginal proportions.

Rater 2		Rater 1		Marginal Total
		Individual towards God	God towards Individual	
Individual towards God		.43 (.37)*	.03 (.02)	.48
God towards Individual		.01 (.008)	.31 (.26)*	.34
		.47	.36	1

Table 20 Agreement Matrix of Spirituality

* Values in parentheses represent the expected proportions on the basis of chance associations, i.e. the joint probabilities of the marginal proportions.

Rater 2		Rater 1		Marginal Total
		Reservations in Faith	Doubts vs Disbelief	
Reservations in Faith		.27 (.18)	.03 (.02)	.32
Doubts versus Disbelief		.07 (.04)	.06 (.03)	.16
		.44	.15	1

Table 21 Agreement Matrix of Object of Belief

* Values in parentheses represent the expected proportions on the basis of chance associations, i.e. the joint probabilities of the marginal proportions.

According to Cohen's K coefficient, the calculations for reliability of content analysis for the categories were:

K = .57	Religious Attitude
K = .56	<i>Spirituality</i>
K = .53	<i>Object of Belief</i>

Kvalseth (1989), suggests that a K coefficient of 0.61 represents reasonably good overall agreement. In addition, Landis & Kock (1977), have suggested the following benchmarks for interpreting K as illustrated in table 22.

<i>Kappa Statistic</i>	<i>Strength of Agreement</i>
<0.00	<i>Poor</i>
0.00 – 0.20	<i>Slight</i>
0.21 – 0.40	<i>Fair</i>
0.41 – 0.60	<i>Moderate</i>
0.61 – 80	<i>Substantial</i>
0.81 – 1.00	<i>Almost Perfect</i>

Table 22 Benchmarks for interpreting K, Landis & Kock (1977)

In reporting reliability with K coefficient as above, qualitative analysis according to Cohen, Kvalseth (1989), and Landis & Kock (1977) shows moderate reliability.

6 Discussion of Thematic Analysis Results

Qualitative research in exploring religious experience displayed distinctive stances in individuals when reporting their religious accounts. These stances made research attention aware of both of the different themes which emerged and their possible interconnection.

Thematic analysis seemed to describe: different types of approaches to religion, critical reservations and doubts in addressing contents of belief, diverse degrees of devoutness and features of religious practice, conflicting feelings associated with different kinds of personal spiritual connection, and religious behaviour. Moreover, emerged themes in thematic analysis seemed to be interconnected according to different gradations of personal religious experience, the extent of personal faith, and the individual stage of religious development. Often this development goes in the direction of a mature faith and towards an intimate relationship with the Lord.

Results of the thematic analysis alongside areas of investigation described in section 8 of this chapter are summed in table 23.

Religious Attitude	Object of Belief	Spirituality
<u>Mere Atheism</u>	<u>Reservations in Faith</u>	<u>Individual towards God</u>
<u>Agnosticism</u>	<u>Doubts vs. Disbelief</u>	<u>Benevolent:</u> - Disposition to God - Means / Process of the Relationship - Implication of the Relationship
<u>Hesitant Belief</u>		<u>Adverse:</u> - Disposition to God - Means of Relationship
<u>Conventional Belief</u> - Cognitive Belief - Pleasing Belief - Involved Belief		<u>God towards Individual</u> - God's positive perceived Attitude - God's negative perceived Attitude
<u>Old towards New Belief</u>		
<u>Renewing Belief</u> - Beginning Journey of Faith - Renewed Committed Belief - Strong Intimacy		

Table 23 Results of Thematic Analysis

The severest divergence among all the categories found in the analysis of personal attitude towards Catholicism was represented by two main classifiers (“Mere Atheism” and “Strong Intimacy”), that grouped two extreme and opposite religious attitudes in the sample. In both of these categories object of belief was unarguable. In fact religious attitude coded as “Pure Atheism” was characterised by the absence of religious belief and even more by the non-existence of any system of belief. Conversely, the attitude towards religion labelled as “Strong Intimacy” was associated with an incontestable adherence to the principles of faith professed by the Catholic Church.

These principles of faith were found in believers whose acceptance of the content of faith was unconditional.

Reasonably thematic analysis provided the understanding that, among the classifiers “Mere Atheism” and “Strong Intimacy”, reservations and doubts regarding the content of belief as described by the two groups “Reservations in Faith” and “Doubts vs. Disbelief” were not found.

“Strong Intimacy” codified for describing a particular attitude towards Catholicism, and other parallel approaches (“Beginning Journey of Faith” and “Renewed Committed Belief”) that emerged in the higher order coded “Renewing Belief” seemed to be associated with a remarkable spiritual connection identified with both a reciprocal and a benevolent relationship with God.

The aspect of the mutuality in a shared and reciprocal interaction, was in fact the main result of the thematic analysis in exploring features of religious connection.

The two main properties outlined, were coded as: “Individual towards God” (both in terms of benevolent and adverse attributes) and “God towards the Individual” (both regarding positive and negative qualities directed to the individual). The first illustrates the personal inclination towards God and the second describes the individual perception of God as experienced by the individual when God relates to the person.

The classifier of “Individual towards God” characterised by the benevolent element was described around three sub classifiers coded as “Disposition to God”, “Means / Process of the Relationship” and “Implication of the Spiritual Relationship”.

Thematic analysis explicated a strong linkage between deep-rooted religious attitude and spiritual connection. In fact the classifier codified as “Renewing Belief” with its three sub-classes, and the two classifiers “Individual towards God” and “God towards the Individual” both positively denoted were found to be strongly interconnected.

Spiritual connection in individuals presenting attitudes classed as “Renewing Belief” was achieved through religious behaviour characterised by a deep involvement in religious activities and by an intense desire to fulfil God’s expectations. This was displayed through a genuine belief in the real action of the Lord and as a consequence in gratitude to the Lord manifested through a consistent religious practice. Essentially it was made of Church and Sacraments attendance, meditation on the Scriptures, and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Moreover, other forms of religious behaviour such as the search for spiritual guidance, time spent in solitude and fasting was seen as a means of allowing the individual to achieve openness and readiness to receive the Lord and as a consequence for consenting to the Lord’s intervention. Moreover, qualitative research seems to suggest that the attitude identified as “Implication of the spiritual relationship” seemed to be associated with the attitudes coded as “Strong Intimacy” which, seems to correspond to the work of the Christian Love described in Romans 12.9.

It was characterised by serving the Lord, being patient in times of trouble, forgiving people seen as persecutors, and trying to find the good even in difficult circumstances.

The religious approach in individuals whose attitude was classified as “Conventional Belief” differed consistently in relation to adherence to the content of belief, as well as to the strength and nuances of religious belief. These individuals viewed religious practice mainly as a sense of duty. Additionally, faith reservations regarding the endorsement of the Catholic fundamental statements of belief seemed to be aligned with the religious behaviour described by the classifier “Conventional Belief”. This approach to belief rather than entailing a personal need to develop and improve a profound relationship with the Lord, (who nevertheless was described as loving and caring) entailed rigid and structured activity as the core inheritance and convention of upbringing.

Although individuals whose attitude was identified as “Conventional Belief” manifested kind and sympathetic feelings towards God, they tended to display resistance and an opposing position towards the Church. This was clearly demonstrated by the content analysis regarding the object of belief held. Belief of individuals categorised under the code of “Conventional Belief” revealed a wide-range of misconstructions among Catholic believers about different fundamental beliefs of the Roman Catholic Doctrine.

Results of the content analysis for the object of belief identified two main classifiers: “Reservation in faith” and “Doubts vs. Disbelief”. The differences among these classes are linked by the reluctant attitude regarding the Catholic Doctrine as truth of faith. The classifier coded “Reservation in faith” includes attitudes of hesitation and reluctance, while “Doubts vs. Disbelief” addresses individuals’ tendency to doubt and distrust the Catholic teachings.

Individuals’ attitudes classified as “Conventional Belief” were associated both with “Reservation in faith” and with “Doubts vs. Disbelief” according to the gradient and nature of the belief expressed by three sub-groups of the “Conventional Belief” class. Religious approaches to “Cognitive Belief” and “Pleasing Belief” seemed to be associated with an inconsistent level of adherence to the object of belief professed by the Catholic Church. It was mainly expressed by the result of the thematic analysis where an association to “Doubts vs. Disbelief” attitude with these two classes was found.

Some of the relevant themes which emerged in the content analysis regarding “Doubts vs. Disbelief” attitude were: the infallibility of the Church in proclaiming the moral doctrine, the infallibility of the Pope regarding dogmatic matters, the mediating role of the Church in providing Salvation, the belief in the devil as a living person and his actions in individuals’ life, the belief in the resurrection from the death in the flesh, and many others.

Among the “Conventional Belief” attitude, the religious approaches of “Involved Belief” seemed to be associated with a minor level of adherence to the object of belief professed by the Catholic Church. This was mostly expressed by the result of the thematic analysis that revealed an association with “Reservation in Faith”. Some of the relevant themes that emerged in the content

analysis were: the role the Holy Spirit in reconciliating man to God, the Communion of Saints, the existence of Hell, the existence of demons, the second advent of Christ on the earth, and the last judgement.

The untrusting attitude towards the Catholic Doctrine in asserting Catholic faith displayed in the classifier “Doubts vs. Disbelief” was also found associated with: “Adverse disposition to God” and “God’s negative perceived attitude”. This condition of conflictual, lack of spirituality, or a pessimistic relationship with God was mainly identified in the two approaches to religious belief coded as “Agnosticism” and “Hesitant belief”.

Thematic analysis allowed the identification of individuals’ particular features of religious experience in three areas of investigation: attitude towards Catholicism, object of belief and spirituality as reported in Table 24.

RESULTS of THEMATIC ANALYSIS
DESCRIPTION of THE RELIGIOUS EXPEREINCE VARIABLE

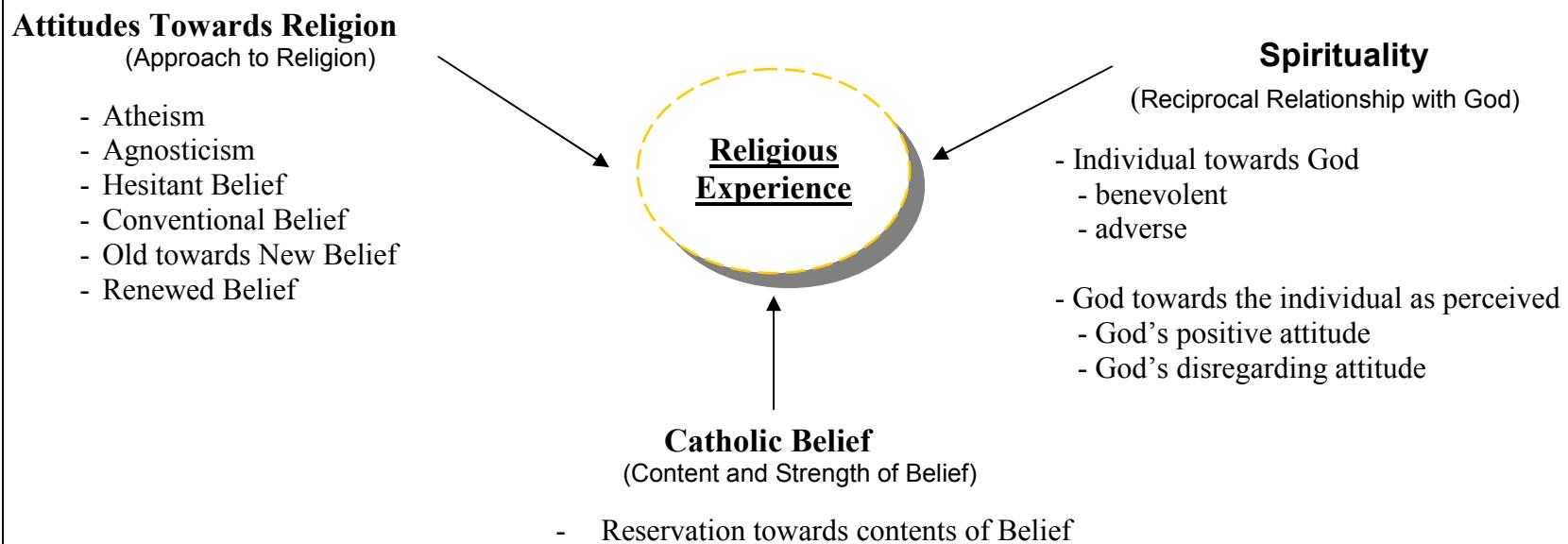


Table 24 Results for the Thematic Analysis for the Description of the Religious Experience Variable

7 Rationale for developing Catholic Religious Scales

Results of the thematic analysis allowed the discovery of diverse categories of individuals' religious attitudes and the hypothesis for possible relations among emerged themes. In fact associations both among the higher order of classifiers and among the sub-codes were identified.

In studying religious belief and spirituality alongside the Catholic tradition results indicated that research in this field has to deal with the complexity of the phenomenon studied. Although Catholicism as a specific religious tradition was explored, research results confirmed that an approach to religious belief needs to be considerably improved for more accuracy.

Among Catholic believers qualitative analysis revealed that in approaching religious belief, the extent of adherence to content of belief, religious practice, commitment, and involvement in a relationship with God varied consistently in people and in exhibition of religious belief, behaviour, and devoutness.

Despite qualitative research conducted with actual members affiliated with the Catholic Church, discrepancies with regard to the dogma of the Catholic Church, differences in the meaning of religious practice, and experiences about spiritual connection were found. These incongruities emphasised the urgent need to address the religious experience in Catholic individuals by developing appropriate instruments of measurement.

As a consequence, attitudes towards Catholicism and the quality of religious experience, along side the specific Catholic religion belief, need to be enhanced through further research.

Appropriate psychometric instruments were therefore devised for addressing religious experience among Catholic people. Content analysis in allowing classifiers to emerge consented to develop items of the scales.

In this way, variables addressing religious experience could be addressed and analysed through quantitative research where the extent of any relations among them could be measured.

As Reported in Table 25, developed scales were:

- **“Attitude Towards Catholicism Scale”**
- **“Self Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church”**
- **“The Mutual Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God”**

A specific chapter for each developed scale will be provided subsequently with an account of previous psychometric work explored in literature review. Psychometric proprieties of the scales tested in a large sample will also be reported from section III to section V in chapter VII regarding statistical analysis of the large survey study.

ASSESSMENT of THE RELIGIOUS EXPEREINCE VARIABLE
With PSYCHOMETRIC INSTRUMENTS in the CATHOLIC DOMAIN

Attitudes Towards Religion

(Approach to Religion)

- Atheism
- Agnosticism
- Hesitant Belief
- Conventional Belief
- Old towards New Belief
- Renewed Belief

The Scale of Attitudes
Towards Catholicism

**Religious
Experience**

Spirituality

(Reciprocal Relationship with God)

- Individual towards God
 - benevolent
 - adverse
- God towards the individual as perceived
 - God's positive attitude
 - God's disregarding attitude

The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of

Catholic Belief

- Reservation towards contents of Belief
- Doubts towards contents of Belief

Content of Belief

The Self-Evaluation Scale of
Adherence to the Creed of
the Roman Catholic Church

Strength of Belief

Table 25 Assessment of the Religious Experience Variable with Psychometric Instruments to explore Religious Experience in the Catholic Domain

8 General Summary and Conclusions

The goal of the study was to examine crucial themes of individual religious experience. The author interviewed a sample of 43 individuals through semi-structured interviews from a variety of Catholic non-believer and believer individuals.

The content analysis of in-depth interviews demonstrated different aspects of the religious experience. Some of the participants were in the process of developing a new interest towards God, others were questioning their rapport with God. Sometimes individuals referred to their disappointment in God or their conflictual rapport when connecting to God. Still others were in the process of refreshing their rapport with God while-lastly others maintained a close relationship with the Lord.

Thematic analysis also allowed establishing relationships among classifiers and research hypothesis to arise, and research paths to be established.

In addition this acquired information is a promising essence to form items of possible dimensions for the development of scales, which will be used to address other psychological constructs both in the field of the psychology of religion and in health psychology.

The development of psychometric scales will be a valid contribution in the research of spirituality where, so far, the scales that have been used do not apply specifically to people with a Catholic religious belief.

Therefore the qualitative study allows literature in psychology of religion to be enriched by important information and address as inaccuracies in research methods, regarding the usage of psychometric measures designed to address religious experience among indistinct religious affiliations.

At the final stage of the PhD corrections, some of the developed scales were re-named. The “Self Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” was re-named as “*Adherence to the Dogma of the Roman Catholic Church*”.

“The Mutual Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God” was renamed as the “*Scale of the Reciprocal Relationship with God*”.

PART II

CHAPTER IV

The Development of the Catholic Scale for Measuring Religious Sensitivity: “*The Attitude Towards Catholicism Scale*”

1 Introduction

As noted in previous chapters, although measures with specific framework and psychometric properties are crucial factors for assessing religious experience, research approach is deficient in dealing with Catholic religious attitude.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide:

- 1) A relevant literature review regarding previous psychometric work to address the religious attitude in the Catholic domain. Therefore, divergences and inaccuracies in this field related to a definite religious belief will be covered. Consequently, a description of people's beliefs and attitudes as "Catholics" will be explained.
- 2) A focalised description of research stages in which the "Attitude toward Catholicism Scale" was developed according to the results of the thematic analysis. Domain of measurement, variables and construction of items will also be illustrated.

2 Previous Psychometric Work exploring Religious Attitude

In examining the existing literature on psychometric work and analysing scales to measure peoples' religious sensitivity and attitude towards religion, particular focus was given to psychometric tools that could be applied to assess the individual's religious approach in the Catholic tradition. A mixture of different scales was found, although all scales pertained to the Christian domain.

The analysis of the scales of religious attitude and orientation shows that research in psychology of religion focuses on religious attitudes and religious experience as an evaluative reaction toward religion in which people's perception of religion is explored at a general level. Often scales refer to the essential qualities or characters of feelings associated with the religious experience together with an element of evaluation.

Positive versus negative religious attitudes are clearly revealed in the "Attitude Towards Christianity Scale" (Francis, 1978; Francis & Stubb, 1987) in which high scores denote favourable attitudes toward Christianity, and the "Rejection of Christianity Scale" (Greer and Francis, 1992) which measures negative attitudes towards Christianity.

Although addressing both positive and negative feelings should lead to a better conceptualisation of one's inner motivations within a developed overall theory, there are weaknesses of existing scales for the measurement of attitudes towards Christianity. This is due to the large variation in the nature of the Christian religions addressed, where believers evidently differ in the content of their beliefs. Consequently different denominations and affiliations in people with Christian backgrounds in religious belief confuse the assessment of people's religious attitude. In considering the psychometric addressing religious belief, religious behaviour, and spirituality overlapping constructs and dimensions were found.

Literature in this field also indicated that religious belief can be of a vague nature, and therefore items in attitude scales tend to be very general with the apparent advantage of being understood by a variety of people who may interpret them with different meanings.

One of the most important and representative illustrations, related to the overlapping constructs, is concerned with the abundant number of scales that have been built to measure the general attitude toward Christianity. Their main incongruence is the internal dis-homogeneity in the sample. We found a variety of religious belief and faith of participants who have been recruited for the scales' standardisation.

The "Religion Scale" (Birdis, 1961) to measure attitudes toward religious belief and practice was administered to Jewish and Christian participants. Items in the "Attitude Toward Christianity Scale" (Francis, 1978; Francis & Stubb, 1987) and items in the "Rejection of Christianity Scale" (Greer and Francis, 1992) were standardised through their administration to both Roman Catholic and Protestant participants. Moreover in the "Religious Attitude Inventory" (Ausbel and Schpoont, 1957) that attempts to assess the intensity of the individuals' religious attitude any specific religious affiliation is addressed supposing that this scale could be applicable to members of diverse religious backgrounds. A limitation regarding Ausbel and Schpoont' scale is that participants in the sample with an average age of 20.5, don't seem to be a good sample of people for investigating attitudes towards religion in adulthood. Young people, being in their developmental growth regarding sensitivity to religious belief, do not seem to be good representative samples of an adult population, which is supposed to already have a solid and long-established attitude towards religion.

Christianity is regarded as embodying a general code of beliefs. In the Poppleton and Pilkington's "Religious Attitude Scale" (1963) in which, although people can be assessed from an antireligious attitude to pro-religious attitude, this scale does not address a specific population of believers.

Literature in psychology of religion shows a significant deficiency in assessing people's attitudes towards a stated belief. Our intent in this study is to fulfil this need with particular interest in the Catholic belief by taking into account the nature of the contents of this faith and structuring items of the scales embedded in the definite feature of this belief.

With reference to Catholicism, literature has little of specific research related to the assessment of the attitudes of Catholic believers toward the Catholic religion. In this field, as a result of the involving changes after the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), conservative and liberal attitudes were studied in Catholic believers through a scale designed by Coursey (1971-74) in "The Liberal – Conservative Scale". It measures attitudes of members of the Roman Catholic Church according to the characteristics and the style of worship after the introduction of a large change in the traditional system. The scale consists of 40 items, which score from the most liberal response to the most conservative response, where liberal to conservative Catholics can be identified. Dimensions in

this scale are: pious submissiveness, ecumenical attitudes, marriage issues, Church rules, style of worship, and social rights.

With reference to the normative of the sample, although methodological approach seems to apply to scientific criteria, as participants consisted of adults with a Catholic education and members of Catholic Parishes both moderately conservative and liberal, concepts described in content of the scale are questionable.

Items addressing aspects of traditional and liberal Catholics were deceptive and misleading.

Two main features were found:

- 1) Substantial matters when approaching conservative versus liberal attitudes;
- 2) Meaning of the religious practice;

2.1 Substantial Matters when Approaching Conservative vs. Liberal Attitudes

Without doubt, items relating to distinctive outfit, ordinary or modern clothes for clericals, or style of worshipping such as types of hymns, folk Masses, or age for children for receiving confession or confirmation can be considered good indicators of people's conservative versus liberal attitudes. In fact, items associated with the form of how things should be done and the manner of styles adopted show the tendency of people's attitudes to an openness or reticence toward any renewal.

Items of this kind are consistently coherent with the aim of the scale, however in their purpose of attempting to assess liberal attitudes, some items disappoint crucial and fundamental issues in Catholicism where intrinsic and essential meanings expressed in items injure substantial matters of Catholic belief.

For this reason the main criticism of this scale is the controversial content of particular items which seem to be misleading along with the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

Some disingenuous items to be reported are illustrated in table 1.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Item 25 "<i>Following one's conscience is a legitimate excuse for disobeying Church Authority</i>";□ Item 28 "<i>The Church should never grant a divorce to someone validly married</i>";□ Item 35 "<i>Priests should be allowed to marry</i>"□ Item 38 "<i>Catholics should be allowed to use birth control pills</i>"
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Table 1 Example of Items from "The Liberal - Conservative Scale" Coursey (1971-74)

Research criticism brings important consequences. The first criticism concerns the field of applicability of the scale. Although the Liberal -Conservative Scale was designed to assess attitudes

among Catholics, the content addressed by this scale seems not to reflect the Catholic Doctrine. Therefore, the scale cannot distinguish traditional Catholics from liberal Catholics since attitudes investigated differ from the sphere of the Catholicism.

The second criticism, linked to the construct of the scale, concerns the implications for the research methods when giving liberalist answers to “liberal” items.

The liberalist content of the liberalist items is not coherent along the liberal dimension because of the co-existence of items, which are not in line with the teaching to the Catholic Church. The way the Liberal-Conservative Scale has been developed to assess members of the Catholic Church presents a failure when mixing up issues that have substantial differences and dissimilar characteristics in the nature of their meanings and contents. This leads the author to consider that the criteria adopted in assessing liberalist attitudes is not able to differentiate “liberal Catholic believers” from “liberal Catholic-heretic believers” for the reasons explained above.

2.2 Meaning of Religious Practice:

Another significant aspect of the scale is the meaning implicitly ascribed to the religious practice when liberal and conservative attitudes are assessed. It relates to the subscale of submissiveness (subscale 1) that measures conformity to traditional recommendations of devoutness and submission to the authority of the Church.

Some items of this kind are illustrated in table 2.

- Item 2 “*Catholics should try to gain all the indulgences they can;*”
- Item 24 “*Catholics should make the nine First Fridays at least once in their Lives;*”
- Item 34 “*A good Catholic should say the Rosary often.*”

Table 2 Example of Items from “The Liberal - Conservative Scale” Coursey (1971-74)

These selected items which refer to religious practice are supposed to explore Catholic believers’ fervour while adhering to content of belief. Rather than conformity to traditional Church recommendations, we consider religious practice as a mean of commencing and establishing a relationship with God.

Here, if we take into account the way items are formulated, it seems that religious practice is a duty or a job to do in order to be a good Catholic. Words such as: “Should try... should make...

should say...” are important markers of the way in which religious practice is seen. In fact “should” implies a sort of imposition or an obligation of doing something rather than a manner of discovering and realising a relationship with God.

In attempting to address previous research work, properties of specific sets of belief were poorly addressed. Moreover, the tendency to assess religious affiliations in people who have different stated belief resulted in significant limitations.

3 Development of the “Scale of Attitudes Towards Catholicism”

3.1 The Necessity for the Scale to Address Attitudes Towards Catholicism

The analysis of the literature regarding the psychometric work in studying people’s approach to religion and in assessing their attitude shows substantial inconsistencies. Different reasons can be ascribed to them: lack of a set of beliefs versus a variety of religious orientation frameworks, different meaning and approaches attributed to religion. Problems in research methodology such as homogeneity and congruity of samples, content validity of scales and other weaknesses have also been found and described.

In recognising these problems, a Catholic belief framework has been chosen to deal with the considerable gap existing in the field of psychology of religion when assessing religious attitudes toward Catholicism. In reviewing the literature, the assessment of sensitivity to Catholic religious belief has been effectively neglected.

Comparing studies will contribute in the development of an instrument to assess attitudes toward Catholicism and will allow the author to confront research inaccuracies while carrying out cross field research particularly in mental health and in clinical areas.

Believing that psychology of religion mainly suffers from an inaccuracy in the assessment of participants’ belief, personal belief needs to be properly assessed. Research is aimed at providing a scientifically valid contribution to describe people’s religious attitudes according to their style of belief in the Catholic framework.

The purpose of this research was to provide a psychometric instrument of measurement able to address people’s religious sensitivity and attitudes within a Catholic boundary and finally to describe types of believers with particular ascribed attitudes among styles of belief.

The “Attitude Towards Catholicism Scale” has been developed to measure Catholic religious sensitivity in people who have received a Catholic education. This scale was designed to assess both believers who are members of Catholic affiliations and past members of the Catholic Church independently from their current religious practice.

The purpose of this scale was to identify the individuals’ personal Catholic faith attitude together with the current position in the personal journey of faith.

Therefore the aim of the scale was to illustrate the individuals' personal situation and status of the religious belief in a point in time.

3.2 Formulation of Items for “The Scale of Attitude Towards Catholicism”

Items for the “Attitude Towards Catholicism Scale” were derived from the attitudes and behaviours’ descriptions originated from the results of content analysis in the pilot study.

With the intention of representing the contents arisen from the in-depth interviews, 41 items were developed for possible inclusion in the scale. After being examined by judges for their content validity, some were dropped, changed, and re-formulated.

The final scale used in the quantitative study consisted of 38 items progressively ordered according to meaningful steps in people’s journey of faith in which they could recognise their religious experience at that particular moment in their life.

Proposed items in the scale of attitude toward Catholicism, reflected positive and negative attitudes towards styles of religious belief and were formulated starting from an atheist attitude where people may deny any existence of God, towards a serious commitment to God where a strong relationship with Him was implied.

Content analysis allowed research to identify particular religious attitudes in people. Significant sentences arising from the in-depth interviews were included to represent individuals with common or close contents in their discourses when reporting their religious attitudes. Items were built by taking into consideration their experiences, their way of behaving, their feelings and perceptions along with the theoretical classification.

Different items for different religious attitudes such as: Pure Atheism (table 3), Agnosticisms (table 4), Hesitant Belief (table 5), Cognitive Belief (table 6), Pleasing Belief (table 7), Involved Belief (table 8), Old towards Renewed Belief (table 9), Beginning in Journey of Faith, (table 10), Renewed Committed Belief (table 11) and Strong Intimacy (table 12) were distinguished. Items for each identified category were devised as below:

Mere Atheism

1)	
2)	I believe that no divinity exists;
3)	I do not believe in a supernatural or in a transcendent being; Rather than God being the Creator I believe in evolution in which physical
4)	principles or chemical transformations essentially operate; I believe predominantly in the human capacity to determine events such as thought.

Table 3 Mere Atheism

Agnosticism

5)	<i>I do not believe in God even if sometimes I ask myself if there could be something greater than human intelligence;</i>
6)	
7)	
8)	<i>I am indifferent in my feelings towards God and faith;</i>
	<i>I seriously doubt the existence of God;</i>
	<i>I am looking for God and faith;</i>

Table 4 Agnosticism

Hesitant Belief

9)	I tend to believe in God, even though I am sometimes unsure or ambivalent and have reservations towards Him;
10)	I know that God exists but I find it hard to ultimately believe;
11)	Sometime I feel annoyed by God;
12)	In my belief in God my thoughts vary between human doubts and truth of dogma in faith;

Table 5 Hesitant Belief

Cognitive Belief

13)	
14)	<i>I believe in God I know He exists;</i>
15)	I believe in God although I do not practise;
16)	I believe in God but I practise on rare occasions;
17)	I think that ultimately the important thing is to believe rather than be present at religious services; I do not think it is necessary to pray or to attend Mass regularly unless I have a personal need;

Table 6 Cognitive Belief

Pleasing Belief

18)	
19)	<i>I believe and I practise, especially on Sunday which is dedicated to the Lord;</i>
20)	I do not think it is necessary to pray or to go to church often at the risk of being a fanatic;
21)	<i>It is necessary to go to Mass: thanking God is our duty;</i> Sometimes I avoid expressing my faith in social situations.

Table 7 Pleasing Belief

Involved Belief

22)	Usually I attend Mass regularly both on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation in the liturgical year;
23)	I carry out activities in the parish and I suppose I am a person of faith;
24)	I mistrust over enthusiastic people who recount having had a great experience of God;
25)	Sometime I am afraid that God punishes me in someway;

Table 8 Involved Belief

Old towards Renewed Belief

26)	I am more disposed with time to question myself about my faith and the role of religion in my life even if I find it difficult;
27)	I am discovering an interest and almost a calling towards God;
28)	This God of mercy and compassion is different from what I expected;
29)	I think time for conversion is coming for me;

Table 9 Old towards Renewed Belief

Beginning in Journey of Faith

30)	I am starting or I have started recently a journey of faith;
31)	<i>Until sometime ago I lived far from God... but God was always patient with me and full of mercy;</i>
32)	I am discovering that God loves me despite the fact that I haven't ever been interested in Him before;

Table 10 Beginning in Journey of Faith

Renewed Committed Belief

33)	I would like to be able to confide completely in God;
34)	<i>God is the force of my life;</i>
35)	I feel safe because God is with me and He loves me in a special way;

Table 11 Renewed Committed Belief

Strong Intimacy

36)	I almost physically need and spiritual need of receiving Christ in the Holy Communion almost every day;
37)	I feel the abundance of God's love within me and within those around me and I have a constant desire to pray;
38)	<i>God is my breath, my life, my very existence;</i>
39)	My joy is in responding to God's love until assimilate Him in order to know him completely;
40)	I am nothing, even though I was something, I am nothing: I am only worth how much I love;
41)	I feel in a particular intimacy with God.

Table 12 Strong Intimacy

Answers in the initial scale were formulated in the format of True, Uncertain and False with a score of three point Likert Type Scale (1 = strongly disagree; 3 = agree; 5 = strongly agree) for each type of answer. This format was chosen because the participant would have had the opportunity of first choosing among the three basic answers (True, Uncertain, and False) and then to circle the value according to one's opinion.

The final section of the questionnaire was destined to the participant's comments that would have been useful to adopt for implementing the scale. Furthermore, a section for comments on items' comprehension was also recommended to be completed.

4 Validity

Content validity for the scale of attitude toward Catholicism was assessed by a contribution of experts together with other researchers in this field who reviewed the items. Content validity was analysed by specialists who were mostly religiously ordained individuals. They consisted of six individuals with the following functions:

- 1) Jesuit Priest, Director of a local Diocesan Seminary;
- 2) An academic Jesuit Theologian, Superior of a local Jesuit Community;
- 3) Franciscan Priest in charge of priesthood's spiritual direction;
- 4) Diocesan Priest accountable to pastoral care;
- 5) Superior Mother of the Salesian Sisters of St John Bosco Order, Director of both the Religious house and in charge of the undergraduate courses;
- 6) Lay person leader of a prayer group.

In order to accomplish content validity, research assumed that the contribution of these experts would have helped to identify supplementary pertinent focal points to be addressed in formulated items. Their involvement would establish general agreement in judgments when assessing the extent to which items would measure desired content domain.

The majority of experts had already been interviewed in order to understand theoretical assumptions that would determine types of believers. They were contacted individually and asked whether or not formulated items would have matched hypothesized categories of believers.

Great contribution regarding these aspects was given by the Head of the Jesuit Order, with an academic approach and by the Franciscan Priest in charge of the priesthood's spiritual direction, who shared his experience in answering people's doubts of faith and therefore giving important insights.

5 Reliability

The “Attitude Towards Catholicism Scale” was pre-tested in a pilot study to establish reliability through a sample of 23 volunteers. Moreover, before fieldwork began, a test-retest study was also conducted. A population study of 16 participants out of 23 answered the same questionnaire (retesting) after seven days.

Psychometric proprieties of the scale are reported in chapter VII.

6 Conclusions

The development of the “Attitude Towards Catholicism Scale” allows the assessment of the religious sensitivity in people with a Catholic background. It allows to rank types of believers from non-believers to strong believers and to identify features of different religious approaches to Catholicism.

CHAPTER V

The Development of the Catholic Scale for Measuring

Cognitive aspects of Religious Belief: Content and Strength of Belief

“The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church”

1 Introduction

While focusing on measures of religious belief, research needs to deal with the fundamental core of the religious belief, doctrine, or creed connected to a specific religious domain. Although this assumption is an elemental point for assessing the uncertainty of people's belief, reviewed literature regarding previous psychometric work seems to be unable to describe the religious phenomena, as incongruous and unreliable elements were found.

Once again, as illustrated in previous chapters, this superficial level of study displays a lack of thoroughness and seems to be inadequate in addressing this project. Moreover, the absence of scales for assessing the belief established in the Catholic religion framework leads this study to provide the development of an adequate instrument of measurement in order to assess the contents and the intensity of belief in people who have had a Catholic upbringing.

According to this premise the purpose of this chapter is to provide:

- 3) A relevant literature review regarding previous psychometric work to examine how content and strength of belief have been addressed so far. This will be discussed in light of the belief in the Roman Catholic Church according to the Creed.
- 4) A focalised description of research stages towards “The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” development. Items of measurement domains will be described in light of the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church. Moreover, items forming the scale will be illustrated according to the results of thematic analysis emerged in in-depth interviews.

2 Previous Psychometric Work exploring Content and Strength of Belief

Different scales and approaches to religious belief have been found while reviewing existing literature. Contrasting combinations of items were widely noticed. Indeed items in scales for assessing religious belief were sometimes associated with items formulated for addressing psychological attitudes or political viewpoints. In addition most items to measure religious belief were connected with items related to religious practice, to religious attitude and philosophical opinions. Furthermore, some scales tended to associate religious belief with determiners of mental health outcomes or relate religious belief with indicators of religious strategies of coping.

In analysing the literature, while attempting to measure how much conviction of faith would have been firmly held, the underlining of common obstacles and research problems were considered important key factors to be dealt with.

According to these aims the scales that we are describing are:

- The “Certainty in Religious Belief Scale” by Thouless, 1935;
- The “Christian Orthodoxy Scale” by Fullerton & Hunsberger, 1982; Hunsberger, 1989;
- The “Inventory of Religious Belief” by Brown & Lowe, 1951.

The “Certainty in Religious Belief Scale” by Thouless, 1935 is worthy of being quoted as it represents the first evident attempt to measure the level of belief conviction beyond limitations that will be pointed out later.

What needs to be appreciated in the “Certainty in Religious Belief Scale” is Thouless’s effort in assessing the degree of the individuals’ firmness of faith. In fact this scale has been formulated to measure the degree to which certainty of religious belief is held. A positive aspect that needs to be considered in this scale is that some religious items reflect a code of belief which in most part is Christianity.

Items with a significant relevance in this scale are illustrated in table 1.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Item 1 “<i>There is a personal God</i>”□ Item 2 “<i>Jesus Christ was God the Son</i>”□ Item 4 “<i>The world was created by God</i>”□ Item 7 “<i>There is a God who is all-powerful</i>”
--

Table 1 Example of Items from the “Certainty in Religious Belief Scale” (Thouless, 1935)

Even though very few, these items are a good example of valuable statements of belief because they take into consideration truth of faith, which is not arguable in Christian faith.

Items in the scale can be rated according to the extent of personal belief in such a way that surety of belief and scarcity of faith would have been measured. Moreover, because of the believing versus disbelieving conviction's attribute of the scale, both believers and non believer would have been assessed in the certainty of their religious belief.

Thouless's scale provides a starting point in literature for addressing the measurement of certainty of belief. Although it affords helpful research suggestions for approaching the study of certainty belief, by way of contrast there are many questionable issues which will be considered from now on.

First, the scale of 40 items that was supposed to assess certainty of belief, includes 15 nonreligious items, which reflects philosophical and political aspects of the culture and the time period. In any case, if this minimal problem in Thouless's scale was revealed, nonreligious items would have been dropped from the scale and 25 religious statements of belief would have been the items to be considered.

As a matter of fact, even the 25 religious items do not seem to assess certainty of belief. Some of them are referred to as religious attitudes towards Christianity, others towards religious practice, which is a reflection of belief. Even more, they address people's religious opinions with the result of mixing areas of investigation losing the focal point of assessing certainty of belief. Therefore, even the 15 religious items appear to be unsuccessful in pursuit of the aim of the scale.

An example of analysed problems that emerged from the scale can be shown from the item illustrated in table 2.

- Item 16 "*Religion is opium for the people*"
- Item 17 "*Attendance at Church is a better way of spending Sunday than taking a walk in the country*"
- Item 19 "*Christianity is a better religion than Buddhism*"
- Item 20 "*The Bible is literally true in all its parts*"
- Item 21 "*Man is, in some degree, responsible for his actions*"

Table 2 Example of Items from the "Certainty in Religious Belief Scale" (Thouless, 1935)

Supposing that "Christianity" could be a research variable, which is very debatable, a further remark about the construction of the scale is related to inexactness of items' attributions in their constructs. Affirmations of belief seem to be not appropriate or even more misleading if considering Christianity thematic.

Some of these items are illustrated in table 3.

- Item 8 *“There is a God who is altogether good”*
- Item 23 *“The spirits of persons who have died can sometimes communicate with the living”*

Table 3 Example of Items from the “Certainty in Religious Belief Scale” (Thouless, 1935)

Additional comments on the Thouless's scale are related to the content of belief and the direction of the belief, which are not addressed at all. The problem could be found both in the way in which the scale was conceived since the beginning in Thouless's mind or in the system of scoring that has been chosen and which has important implications related to this concern.

Respondents are asked to rate each item on a 7-point Likert-type scale from “I am completely certain that this statement is true” (+3) to “I am completely certain that this statement is false” (-3) where 0 demonstrates total uncertainty.

Still negative scores have theoretical and substantial meaning when disagreement needs to be addressed, it wouldn't be realistic to rate untrue statements with negative scores for which people are usually not commonly familiar. Instead this criterion seems to respond to the author's methodology of scoring. The average degree of certainty was determined summing true items and false items with disregarding signs and dividing by the number of items. As a consequence certainty of belief could range from 0 to 3 but the main implication is related to the problem that areas where faith is strong. Where it is weak or where doubts dwell people's belief could not be identified.

The “Christian Orthodoxy Scale” by Fullerton & Hunsberger, 1982; Hunsberger, 1989. This scale allows the measurement of the grade of faith in Christian believers, no more than in its basic meanings of Christianity that they can share.

Although dissimilarities in diverse beliefs among members of different Christian groups would not be satisfactory research method conditions, Fullerton & Hunsberger seem to emphasise common foundation of faith that believers share in common.

The scale is compounded by 24 items, of which 12 are negatively worded. Respondents are asked to mark their opinions according to their extent of agreement and of disagreement.

The “Christian Orthodoxy Scale” attempts to measure the degree to which believers agree on central themes of Christianity such as: the existence of God in three persons, the divine nature of Christ, the birth of Jesus from a Virgin, the mission of Jesus on earth for the salvation of humankind with reference to death and resurrection of Christ. Efficacy of prayer, miracles and inspiration of the Bible are also addressed.

In analysing the structure of the scale and items' development, noticeable effort has been shown in the task of addressing common issues in Christian belief.

Crucial items in measuring believers' acceptance of faith are shown in table 4.

- Item 1 "God exists as a Father, Son and Holy Spirit"
- Item 10 "Christ will return to the earth someday"
- Item 14 "God made man of dust in His own image and breathed life into him"
- Item 15 "Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God provided a way for the forgiveness of man's sins"
- Item 17 "Jesus was crucified, died and was buried, but on the third day He arose from the dead."

Table 4 Example of Items from the "Christian Orthodoxy Scale" (Fullerton & Hunsberger, 1982, 1989) These items are very significant because they focus on the content of what Christian believers profess. Moreover, they are accurately formulated. In fact, they do not express opinions or communicate ideas or thoughts. Hereby, they assert a matter of faith namely a fact of belief to which respondents are invited to answer according to the conviction and the degree of their faith.

Despite the fact that the "Christian Orthodoxy Scale" seems to move forwards in the development of accurate methods to assess strength of belief, contents of faith are not always clearly and systematically addressed.

Even now statements of faith are still affected by evaluations, interpretations, impressions or judgments, which could be ascribed to the personal attributions of the scale's author. These considerations apply also to the direction to which items are formulated. Items in fact seem to assign attributions, proprieties and qualities of a different kind rather than addressing adherence to a specific domain of belief.

Items of the "Christian Orthodoxy Scale are illustrated in Table 5.

- Item 6 "It is ridiculous to believe that Jesus Christ could be both human and divine"
- Item 9 "The concept of God is an old superstition that is no longer needed to explain things in the modern era"
- Item 13 "Jesus Christ may have been a great ethical teacher, as other men have been in history. But he was not the divine Son of God"
- Item 22 "Jesus' death on the cross, if it actually occurred, did nothing in and of itself to save Mankind"
- Item 23 "There is really no reason to hold to the idea that Jesus was born of a Virgin. Jesus' life showed better than anything else he was exceptional, so why rely on old myths that don't make sense"

Table 5 Example of Items from the “Christian Orthodoxy Scale” (Fullerton & Hunsberger, 1982, 1989)

Content of such type of items used to address religious belief do not seem to meet moral and ethical values of believers as their sensibility could be infringed. In addition, the way items are formulated seems not to pay attention to individuals who are moving towards their religious conversion. In fact, they would be exposed to doubts that could spring out and could result in deflections in individuals’ personal journey of faith.

In any case, it would still be hard to overcome added variables linked to unconstructive and negative qualities. Furthermore from a research point of view, the most important variable that constitutes the aim of the research seems to be far from the study.

The impression we had was that the grade of acceptance of faith in believers, which should be the imperative research question, has been at sometime forgotten in many analysed scales.

This matter also of the “Inventory of Religious Belief” by Brown & Lowe, 1951 who built an instrument to measure belief in Christian dogma. Statements are categorised according the way they are phrased. Items of the scale are 15 and 8 of which, are traditional and conservative worded, and the remaining 7 are worded in a more liberal direction with a reverse score. All of them should take into account main Christian principles. Examples of items from the “Inventory of Religious Belief” (Brown & Lowe, 1951) are illustrated in Table 6.

- Item 6 “*The idea of God is unnecessary in our enlightened world*”
- Item 8 “*The Bible is full of errors, misconceptions and contradictions*”
- Item 13 “*I think a person can be happy and enjoy life without believing in God*”
- Item 14 “*In many ways the Bible has held back and retarded human progress*”

Table 6 Example of Items from the “Inventory of Religious Belief” (Brown & Lowe, 1951)

When assessing the acceptance of a belief, research should pay attention to believers’ exposition to truthfulness, unambiguous, and transparency of items. As a consequence, research should adopt carefulness in dealing with the content of belief by strictly addressing authentic religious content stated in a confined religious denomination. Indeed research should not manoeuvre or manipulate statements of faith by formulating misleading items. Instead, it should assess what people believe or refuse to believe when confronted with the content of religious belief by means of truthful religious items.

This study will avoid negative phrasing and the use of misleading expression.

Great effort in terms of the number of scales that have been published is recognised, despite their research limitations.

Although different scales of measurement attempt to assess the degree to which believers agree to belief in mainly among Christian believers, construction of items results a mixture of chaotic questions. There is an urgent need to reorganise items with scientific criteria, as ambiguity in meaning and lack of order seems to be the main rule.

The research question and the aim of the study must be noticeably developed and clearly stable in mind throughout the research work.

From the reviewed literature, different themes have strongly emerged.

When addressing research methods in psychology of religion, research should take into account and be aware of the necessity of addressing:

- Specific stated belief;
- Defined doctrine of that specific belief;
- Meticulous knowledge of the doctrine;
- Deep understanding of faith
- Comprehensive knowledge of contents' doctrine with main relevant topics;
- Content of belief possibly by area;
- Direction of belief;
- Proper language of the addressed belief when formulating items;
- Respect of religious belief of whom the scale in progress will be administered to;
- Participants' religious belief held while sampling procedures;
- Determiners of scoring taking into consideration contents and direction of belief.

3 Development of the “Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church”

3.1 The Necessity for a Scale to Address Content and Strength of Belief

Religious dedication, fervour, devoutness, and commitment converge towards the dimension of belief and to a specific religious group affiliation where members are identified as believers.

However, research should take into account that although under the same religious denomination religious belief differs among individuals. It applies both on the content of what individuals believe and in the strength and extent of the different aspects and contents of belief.

In fact, although common themes of religious belief or similar sets of beliefs can be shared among believers, individuals' belief may vary considerably. Believers under the same religious denomination may differ in their belief in terms of specific content of belief element, partially

diverge, or even disagree in the content of their religious belief. In addition it is supposed that people having an agreement for a particular statement of belief, they may vary in the strength of adherence to that specific statement.

Therefore, although believers are members of the same religious group, their belief can diverge both in the content of the faith principles and also in the extent of the belief.

Consequently contents of belief and strength of belief would identify different believers taking into account that the religious experience is a developmental and dynamic process where people may realise their spiritual growth.

According to the substantial lacunae existing in literature, personal belief and strength of belief need to be appropriately measured. Although people recognise themselves as believers, despite the fact that they belong to a Catholic affiliation both with and without a religious practice, the content of beliefs and the robustness of their faith varies substantially.

3.2 The Catechism of the Catholic Church: the theoretical basis to Address Catholic Belief

The principal aim in undertaking research among people with a catholic education background is to understand how believers differ in the content of their belief and how strongly they believe when addressing the content of their religious belief.

Catholic statements and pastoral norms are comprehended in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Consequentially in order to enlighten the adherence to doctrinal values connected with it, both in substance and strength of faith we have to move towards the analysis of the contents of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church was originated to fulfil the request made by the Assembly of Synod of Bishops in 1985 who longed for a textbook where the totality of faith and moral Catholic doctrine was encompassed. In 1996 the Holy Father J Paul II entrusted a commission of twelve Cardinals and Bishops, chaired by Cardinal J Ratzinger with the task of presenting one, unique and outstanding doctrine as a truthful instrument where Catholic faith is established.

The purpose of the catechism is to expose the doctrine of the Catholic faith in its whole through a systematic presentation of both faith and morals. This comes through the light of the Second Vatican Council and the whole of the Church's Tradition.

The enunciations of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine are based on the Sacred Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, the liturgy, and the Church's Magisterium.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church is the outcome of a thoroughgoing cooperation of numerous theologians, exegetes, bishops and episcopates of the Catholic Church world wide, who worked together to express the truth of Christian mystery and a sure norm for teaching faith.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, in proclaiming that the Catholic faith is the authentic reference text for the Catholic doctrine and represents a legitimate instrument that bonds believers in the unity of the same apostolic faith. Moreover, in preserving the unity of faith and fidelity to the Catholic doctrine, the Catechism responds to the needs of the universal and local Church and serves for ecclesial communion.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church is structured on four parts: the baptismal profession of faith (the Creed), the sacraments of faith, the life of the faith (the Commandments), and the prayer of the believer (the Lord's Prayer).

With the purpose of creating an instrument proficiently focused on belief in the Catholic faith, the first part of the Catechism of the Catholic Church needed to be analysed in order to deeply explore statements of fundamental belief articulated in the baptismal profession of faith, which constituted the Creed of the Catholic Church.

3.2.1 The Creed of the Catholic Church

The word “creed” is derived from the Latin word “credo” which means “I believe”. In a religion context when individuals say, “I believe” they are implicitly formulating a creed by assuming religious principles and truths that cannot be proven even though a reasonable justification for belief could be provided.

It means that when we accept teachings of the Church as matters of faith we receive them assuming that they are true and that they cannot change. Catholic confession of principles of faith is brought together in the Catholic Creed, which is, generally speaking, the “Constitution of belief” of the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Creed is the statement of fundamental beliefs and confession of principles of faith. The first thing that sets the Creed of the Catholic Church apart from all the other confessions is that it is definite. It has precise, unequivocal and determined assumptions of faith.

Catholics, apart from their own personal experience with God, believe that truth is one, absolute and unchanging. Statements of faith are absolute because they are totally unconditioned, unquestionable, and perfect. In fact when we are dealing with religious truths we accept them as matter of faith taught by Revelation from God. He has revealed these truths to us through prophets, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Moreover statements of faith are unchanging because what God revealed as truth must be consequently the same yesterday, today and forever. There are no alternatives. In the acceptance of truths expressed in the Creed remains the only truth because Christ's teachings have not changed. Therefore what is more important is that the Creed of the Catholic Church is the same throughout all generations.

Among the Creeds, two remain the most familiarly known in the Church's life: the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. The Apostles' Creed is the basic Creed of the Catholic Church, which

has received this title because of its great antiquity; it dates from very early times in the Church, a half-century or so from the last writings of the New Testament.

The Apostles' Creed as follow:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He arose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Various articles in the Creed have been expanded for greater clarification to the ordinary needs of the Church especially during the general council of the Church at Nicaea in the year 325 A.D., and in the council of Constantinople in 381. They gave unequivocal answers defining the belief of true Christians against movements, which threatened Christ's teaching. For example, the Council of Nicaea had to make clear the truth of the eternity of Christ's existence, as taught in the Gospel of John 1:1, against the Arian heresy which held that there was a time before which the Word was not. These clarifications resulted in the form of a longer version of the Apostles' Creed and originated the Nicene Creed, which is recited during the Catholic Mass.

The Nicene Creed is as follow:

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation, he came down from heaven; by the Holy Spirit he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day He arose again in accordance with the Holy Scriptures; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the

Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

3.3 Formulation of Items

3.3.1 Analysing the “Profession of the Christian Faith”: Research Implications

The deeper study of the Catholic Doctrine involved positive suggestions for conducting in-depth interviews. In particular, it made clear how simple assertions in which a belief was affirmed would have had important implications on other connected statements of belief. As a consequence, it helped to identify incongruence and doubts of faith when interviews were conducted.

In paying attention to people’s discourses, the perception of a progressive awareness of a lack of faith’s steadiness was a remarkable impression. In fact, sometimes pillar statements of faith, that would not have been ever argued as they were taken for granted, were not always confirmed to be robust.

This understanding was an indication of a specific process that was occurring during the interviews. Participants, sometimes even surprised in their respect, recognised themselves stuck in their spiritual journey or trapped in doubts. Others discovered unrealised growth of faith, which was occurring during that precise moment while they were speaking about their belief. Evidence of this process in people’s personal journey both in weakening or development of faith, was especially established for those people whose answers were not clear to them. In particular, when some nebulous aspect of their belief was spotted and, therefore, when they were asked to expand their ambiguity and talk more specifically about some aspects of their personal belief.

The study of the Catholic Doctrine has therefore been very useful, especially for sharing contents of belief with people of different openness to belief, and for confronting issues that come up as doubts about faith arose from in depth interviews.

The central aim of this work was to develop an instrument of measurement able to address fundamental contents of faith with respect to theological assertions in Catholic framework. A further purpose of the research was to provide an instrument capable of measure the strength of the adherence to the Doctrine of the Catholic Roman Church in people’s religious belief taking into consideration the Creed of the Catholic Church.

“The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church”: has been designed for people with a religious education based on Catholic values, in order to assess the

content and the strength of their belief whichever present or past members of Catholic affiliations independently from their religious practice.

Therefore, the aim of the scale was first, to understand how people deal with accepting religious truths of faith based on the teachings of the Holy See, secondly, to associate these proposed beliefs to their strength of belief.

Consequently, content of belief, personal devotional commitments, ritual involvement, worship participation, practice on a regular basis, and other dimensions associated to religiousness and spirituality were addressed in further with subsequent research.

With reference to review and dissatisfaction for items developed until that time, characterised by misleading proprieties, and even more without taking into account any set of guidelines during their formulation, the Catechism of the Catholic Church was assigned great and absolute importance.

Initial doubts and reservations appeared in participants when the pilot study was conducted, dimensions were identified and items developed through an accurate examination and study of the Catholic Doctrine.

Items for the “The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” have been formed both analysing Part One of the Catechism, addressing the Profession of Faith, and also encompassing Section Two of the Profession of the Christian Faith where the Nicene Creed is addressed and contents of faith widely explained.

All the items proposed in the scale are positively expressed. They are formulated as true statements. Each of them states the truth of faith, which is taught by the Holy Church.

Therefore, misleading items have been accurately avoided. Rather than checking respondents’ preparation in what the teachings of the Catholic Roman Church are, adherence to different particular areas of belief and strength of faith conviction was the purpose of the study. The research aim was to assess the actual faith, which has a vital place in Catholic peoples’ lives. This means that participants were not assumed to know the teachings of the Church as the questions were formulated coherently with these teachings.

Participants were asked if they believed in true assertions of faith and how strong their belief was. The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church has not been constructed to investigate their knowledge of the teachings of the Catholic Church. The doctrine is truthfully expressed in the scale.

With the intention to represent the contents of faith arising from the analysis of the Doctrine and from the sense and significance of the in-depth interviews, initially 402 items were developed for possible inclusion in the scale, after being examined by judges for the content validity this has been reduced to 108 in the final scale.

3.4 Structure of the Scale and Description of Dimensions

Contents of belief in the “Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” were arranged by thematic areas of faith and revolved around subordinate focus. They are:

1) Belief in God

Belief in God is mainly centered on:

- God as the Head
- Existence of God in three Persons
- God as Creator and the Mystery of Creation
- Goodness of God and love for the Humankind
- Omnipotence and Omniscience of God

2) Belief in Jesus

Christ

Belief in Jesus Christ is mainly centered on:

- Divine Nature of Jesus Christ
- Human Nature of Jesus (Temptations, Sufferance...)
- Obedience of Jesus to God's will
- Jesus as Saviour of universal redemption
- Ascension to Heaven

3) Belief in The Holy Spirit

Belief in The Holy Spirit is mainly centered on:

- Identity of the Holy Spirit
- Grace of a new birth in Christ
- The Holy Spirit and the Church

4) Belief in the Holy Trinity

Belief in the Holy Trinity is mainly centered on:

- Trinitarian Dogma
- Communion and unity of the Holy Trinity

5) Belief in the Blessed Virgin Mary

Belief in the Blessed Virgin Mary is mainly centered on:

- Immaculate Conception
- Blessed Mary “Ever-Virgin”
- Assumption of the Blessed Mary
- Role of the Blessed Mary for the Church

6) Belief in the Kingdom of God

Belief in the Kingdom of God is mainly centered on:

- Proclamation of the Kingdom of God
- Signs of the Kingdom of God
- Accomplishing perfection of Kingdom of God

7) Belief in the Holy Catholic Church

- Church: People of God
- Church: Body of Christ

Belief in the Holy Church
is mainly centered on:

- Holiness of the Church
- Means of Salvation
- Mission of the Church
- Infallibility of the Church
- Ecclesial Ministry
- Episcopal college and the Holy Pope
- Religious Life

8) Belief in Angels and Demons

Belief in Angels and Demons
is mainly centered on:

- Existence of not corporeal beings
- Fall of angels
- Action and power of satan

9) Belief in Original Sin

Belief in Original Sin
Is mainly centered on:

- Descent of Original Sin
- Consequences of holiness' deprivation

10) Belief in the Communion of Saints

Belief in the Communion of
Saints is mainly centered on:

- Unity of Believers and Holy Persons
- Communion of the Church

11) Belief in the Glorious Advent of Christ

Belief in the Glorious Advent of
Christ is mainly centered on:

- Meaning of Eschatological coming of Christ

12) Belief in the Resurrection from Death

Belief in the Resurrection of the
Body is mainly centered on:

- Resurrection of the flesh

13) Belief in the Final Judgement

Belief in the Final Judgement
is mainly centered on:

- Christ's Judgment of living and dead people
- Judgment according to loving conduct

14) Belief in Everlasting Life

Belief in Heaven
is mainly centered on:

- Realisation of perfect Communion with God
- Eternity and definitiveness condition of delight

Belief in Purgatory
is mainly centered on:

- Function of purification
- Solidarity of believers through prayers

Belief in Hell
is mainly centered on:

- Eternal privation of God's love
- Choice of refusal of God's forgiveness

Although believers could hold to faith by principles of the Catholic Church appreciating the wisdom of the values proclaimed by the Catechism, being humans, they may have different ways of thinking about contents of belief as widely explained previously.

Therefore an instrument that could have allowed researcher to assess different aspects of faith was needed to address differences and common features of people's content of belief.

Identifying areas of content of belief was a crucial task according to the Catholic Doctrine whose milestone is the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Research effort was directed towards a scrupulous study of Catholic literature, where constellation of items were devised around dimensions described in articles elucidated in this reference book.

Therefore, different items that compose the scale will also be illustrated along with Theology. Items and dimensions of the Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church have been formulated with reference to the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The intent of this paragraph is to connect them according to the articles that elucidate the Doctrine.

From a research prospective this allows the author to:

- Specify the boundaries of the belief;
- Describe the nature and properties of the belief;
- Establish a reference point for the construction of items;
- Support the accuracy of items.

Identified areas of belief and related items will now be analysed in the light of the Catholic Doctrine, particularly in connecting to the Scriptures and to the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

This section is organised to describe the Theology behind each dimension and to present related items that have been set to describe them.

3.4.1 Belief in God

"I believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that us, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made."

The Apostles' Creed starts with "I believe in one God". It is the starting constitutional assertion of the Doctrine. What develops from that concerns how God reveals Himself in order to allow individuals to know Him.

The dimension of "Belief in God" attempts to assess the following themes:

- A) God's Divine Nature;
- B) Oneness of God and God in Three Persons;
- C) God as Creator;
- D) God's Omnipotence and Omniscience;
- E) God's love and faithfulness.

A) God's Divine Nature

Catholic teaching states that to believe in God means to recognise God's Divine Nature, which is the essential being of God. Therefore, "Since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the divinity is like an image fashioned from gold, silver, or stone by human art and imagination" (Acts 17:29). "Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made. As a result, they have no excuse" (Rom. 1:20). "For in him dwells the whole fullness of the deity bodily" (Col. 2:9).

B) Oneness of God and God in Three Persons:

Catholic teaching states that God is One and exists in Three Persons. The Catechism (art. 200) says that "the Christian faith confesses that God is one in nature, substance and essence." The confession of God's oneness does not mean that believers confess three gods but the dogma of the holy Trinity. Therefore, God is unique; there is only one God. According to the Catechism (art. 254) "the divine persons are really distinct from one another. The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit". This will be specifically faced in the Dogma of the Holy Trinity.

C) God as Creator

Catholic teaching states that God is the Creator of the universe. He creates "out of nothing". The Bible says, "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:3). The Catechism says, "Nothing exists that does not owe its existence to God the Creator" (art 338). God created everything for man, and God created man. The Scriptures in Genesis says that "God created man in his own image, in he created him, male and female he created them." (Gen. 1:27) Everything was created in perfect holiness, harmony, and wisdom. The psalmist proclaims, "How varied are your works, Lord! In wisdom you have wrought them all" (Psalm 104:24). Moreover the Catechism says "Because God creates through wisdom, His creation is ordered. (art. 299). In addition "The first man was not only created good, but was also established in

friendship with his Creator and in harmony with himself and with the creation around him" (art 374). Man occupies an exceptional privilege in the creation: He was created in the image of God (art. 355) and in a state of holiness. The Catechism says "Created in a state of holiness, man was destined to be fully "Divinised" by God in glory" (art. 398). God upholds and sustains what He created. "God does not abandon his creatures to themselves.

He not only gives them being and existence, but also, and at every moment, upholds and sustains them in being, enables them to act and brings them to their final end" (art. 301). "For you love all things that exist, and detest none of the things that you have made; for you would not have made anything if you had hated it. How would anything have endured, if you had not willed it? Or how would anything not called forth by you have been preserved? You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord, you who love the living" (Sap. 11:24-26).

D) Omnipotence and Omniscience of God

The Scripture exalts the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God. The Catholic teaching states that nothing is impossible to God. "It is always in your power to show great strength, and who can withstand the strength of your arm?" (Sapience 11:21). "He does whatever he pleases" (Psalm 115:3).

The Catechism (art 271) quotes that "God's almighty power is in no way arbitrary: in God, power, essence, will, intellect, wisdom, and justice are identical. Nothing therefore can be in God's power which could not be in his just will or his wise intellect". This statement is crucial because linking the omnipotence of God and His wisdom, reveals the nature of God's and it makes clear a great mystery behind it.

Although God can do everything, His omnipotence is a mystery and therefore only faith can discern it. To understand this mystery it is important to relate the omnipotence of God to His nature, that is coherently linked with God's love, mercy, compassion and faithfulness.

E) God's love and faithfulness

Catholic teaching states that God's kindness is implied in His divine name. "I Am" or "He Is" expresses God's faithfulness. It is a consequence of what God is and therefore the goodness of God is infinitely established in His nature. His steadfast love is everlasting despite the faithlessness of men's sins, in spite of people's merits and world's situations.

This brings researcher to consider a key point in the most argued issue among non-believers. Some people because of their lack of faith, find it hard to believe in God's love, wisdom, and almighty, as they cannot think of God's Goodness when troubles, sufferance and tragedies are visible reality of this world. Sometimes events causing harm, injuries, pain could lead people to think that God is absent or incapable of stopping them.

Although God allows things to happen, it does not change the fact that God can do everything and that His love is everlasting. God conquered evil.

The issue is that God's strength is a mystery as it "is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9). Being a Mystery, it leads to that people can accept it only by faith and Grace. God's power is extremely manifested in the voluntary humiliation of his Son for the forgiveness of sin. Christ crucified is thus "The power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (Cor 1:24-25). God conquered evil by His Son. His mercy, graciousness, and power are strongly manifested according to His ways.

The above themes have been expressed in 6 items to assess to what extent people believe in God's connected questions. Items are illustrated in Table 7.

1)	God is one, He has a divine nature and He exists in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit;
2)	God is Omnipotent and Omniscient: everything is possible for Him and He knows the deepest thoughts of men;
3)	God is infinitely rich in love, benevolence, grace, and mercy. His love is unconditionally offered to man, regardless of man's works;
4)	As a God of love, God is faithful; He doesn't abandon men but instead He cares about them and guards Them;
5)	God is the creator of the world: He, in His knowledge and wisdom, gave the beginning to all things;
6)	God created men in a state of grace, holiness, and in harmony with God, with himself, and with the creation;

Table 7 Items for Belief in God

3.4.2 Belief in Jesus Christ

*...I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father...
... For us men and for our salvation, he came down from heaven; by the Holy Spirit he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day He arose again in accordance with*

the Holy Scriptures; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father".

The dimension of the “Belief in Jesus Christ” attempts to describe: Jesus Christ in His Divine and Human Nature, His obedience to God’s will, the character of the free will of Jesus in the mystery of the redemption, the experience of Jesus’ death, the resurrection, and His ascension to heaven. The following themes will be explored:

- A) Jesus Christ as the Eternal Son of God;
- B) Divine and Human Nature of Jesus Christ;
- C) Jesus Christ Descended from Heaven and Came in the Flesh;
- D) Jesus Christ’s Obedience to God’s Will;
- E) Christ’s Life as a Mystery of Redemption;
- F) Jesus’ Death is the Unique and Definitive Sacrifice;
- G) Jesus’ Descent into Hell;
- H) Jesus Rose from the Dead;
- I) Jesus Ascended into Heaven and He is Seated at the Right Hand of the Father

4) Jesus as the Eternal Son of God

Catholic teaching states that Jesus is the eternal Son of God, made man, came from God, descended from heaven and came in the flesh. That Jesus is the only Son of the Father is widely reported in the Scriptures. “And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14). “No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the Father's side, has revealed him” (Jn 1:18). Matthew in the Gospel reports that After Jesus was baptized, God’s voice came from the heavens, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” Jesus calls Himself the “Only Son of God”. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

The Catechism asserts, "Son of God" signifies the unique and eternal relationship of Jesus Christ to God His Father" (art. 454).

B) Divine and Human Nature of Jesus Christ;

Catholic teaching states that Jesus Christ has both a Divine and a Human nature. He is a true God and a true man where the divine and human natures are united in the unique person of the Word.

The fourth ecumenical council, at Chalcedon in 451, professed that our Lord Jesus Christ is “perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, composed of rational soul and body; consubstantial with the Father as to his divinity and consubstantial with us as to his humanity; like us in all things but sin” (art. 467 Catechism).

Christ, assuming His human nature, also assumed a rational human soul and human knowledge. He humbly assumed a human nature in obedience to His Father’s will in order to cooperate with God and with the Holy Spirit to the human salvation. “Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:7-8). The Catechism explains that at the same time, “this truly human knowledge of God’s Son expressed the divine life of his person” (art. 473). St. Maximus the Confessor, Qu. et dub. 66 PG 90, 840 proclaims that “The human nature of God’s Son, not by itself but by its union with the Word, knew and showed forth in itself everything that pertains to God.”

The divine and human nature of Jesus Christ is explicitly stated in art. 483 of the Catechism: “Christ, being true God and true man, has a human intellect and will, perfectly attuned and subject to his divine intellect and divine will, which he has in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit” (art. 483).

C) Jesus Descended from Heaven and Came in the Flesh

Catholic teaching states that the Word became flesh without ceasing to be God and Lord, who came in order to reconcile mankind with God. The Catechism says “The Word became flesh in order to save us by reconciling us with God” (art. 457). “The Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world” (1Jn 4:10). “He was revealed to take away sins” (1Jn 3:5). “For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have the eternal life” (Jn 3:16). Jesus presents himself as a human model for the mankind. “The Word became flesh in order to be the model of holiness” (art 495).

This model is very explicit in the Beatitudes when Jesus says: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me” (Mt 11:29). Moreover, “Christ enables us to live in him all that he himself lived, and he lives it in us. “By his Incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man.” (art.521). In his human nature by coming in the flesh, Jesus experiences temptations, sufferance, and death.

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning” (Heb 4:15).

D) Christ’s Obedience to God’s Will

Catholic teaching states that Christ's obedience to God's will is of free choice. The Catechism in the art. 569 says, "Jesus went up to Jerusalem voluntarily, knowing well that there he would die a violent death because of the opposition of sinners" (Heb 12:3). Because of His perfect communion with his Father, Jesus desires the salvation of men, consequently He freely chooses to be the instrument of God's divine love. "The world must know that I love the Father and that I do just as the Father has commanded me" (Jn 14:31). Jesus' offer has the character of a sovereign freedom. He goes to his death freely. The Catechism in art. 610 says, "Jesus gave the supreme expression of his free offering of himself at the meal shared with the twelve Apostles" "on the night he was betrayed" (1Cor 11:23). On the eve of his Passion, while still free, Jesus transformed this Last Supper with the apostles into the memorial of his voluntary offering to the Father for the salvation of men: "This is my body which is given for you" (Lc 22:19). "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:28).

E) Christ's Life as a Mystery of Redemption

Catholic teaching states that Christ's life is a mystery of redemption. In fact, because of original sin, human nature needed to be healed and to be raised from death. Therefore, Christ's whole life is a mystery of redemption that comes to humankind through the blood of his cross. "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases" (Mt 8:17). With His resurrection He justifies his people. "He was handed over for our transgressions and was raised for our justification" (Rom 4:25). "Christ's whole life is a mystery of recapitulation. All Jesus did, said and suffered had as its aim restoring fallen man to his original vocation" (art.518). "Christ did not live his life for himself but for us, from his Incarnation," "for us men and for our salvation", to his death, "for our sins", and Resurrection "for our justification" (art 519).

Jesus' sacrifice is universal as it embraces all humankind. Christ died for all of humanity without exception: "There is not, never has been, and never will be a single human being for whom Christ did not suffer" (Council of Quiercy 853: DS 624).

F) Jesus' Death as the Unique and Definitive Sacrifice;

Catholic teaching states that Jesus' death is the unique and definitive sacrifice that reveals Christ's obedience to the divine will. He is God's totally obedient servant. He is "obedient unto death" (Phil 2:8). Jesus substitutes his obedience for our disobedience by offering his life in freedom and love in reparation for our disobedience. By accepting in his human will, that the Father's will be done, He accepted to die. For "He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Pt 2:24).

Jesus fulfils the atoning mission "unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8). Jesus' death was a real death. He tasted death experiencing the human condition of death through the separation of his soul from his body. Jesus human existence in fact ceased on the cross.

G) Jesus' Descent into Hell

Catholic teaching states that Jesus' descent into hell was the preliminary stage required for making His redemptive work happen. It would have been completed with the resurrection of the dead. During the period in the tomb, Jesus descended into hell to preach the Gospel message of salvation even to the dead. In fact, Christ's redemptive work needed to be announced to all men of all times and all places. "The gospel was preached even to the dead" For this is why the gospel was preached even to the dead that, though condemned in the flesh in human estimation, they might live in the spirit in the estimation of God" (1 Pt 4:6). "The descent into hell brings the Gospel message of salvation to complete fulfilment. This is the last phase of Jesus' messianic mission" (Catechism art. 634). Therefore as reported in the art. 635 of the Catechism "Christ went down into the depths of death so that "the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live" (Jn 5:25). Jesus, "the Author of life", by dying destroyed "him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free all those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their life" (Heb 2:14-15).

H) Jesus Rose from the Dead

Catholic teaching states that on the third day Jesus rose from the dead. "Christ is risen from the dead. Dying, he conquered death; to the dead, he has given life" (Byzantine Liturgy, Troparion of Easter). The first messengers of Christ's Resurrection were Mary Magdalene and the women who came to finish anointing the body of Jesus.

Then Jesus appeared to Peter and then to the His disciples. According to Paul, witnesses of Jesus' resurrection were more than five hundred people to whom Jesus appeared on a single occasion and also to James and of all the apostles. (CCC, articles 642, 643).

I) Jesus ascended into Heaven and He is Seated at the Right Hand of the Father

Catholic teaching states that Jesus ascended into heaven and He is seated at the right hand of the Father. "So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mc 16:19). Jesus' humanity comes into God's heavenly domain where He permanently exercises his intercession" for "those who draw near to God through him"

Heb (7:25). The risen body is glorified by the Holy Spirit and passes to another life beyond time and space. Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father. By "the Father's right hand" we understand the glory and honour of divinity, where he who exists as Son of God before all ages, indeed as God, of one being with the Father, is seated bodily after he became incarnate and his flesh was glorified." (art. 663 of the CCC).

Teachings of the Catholic Church related to the mystery of Jesus Christ's life have been expressed with the formulation of 15 items as illustrated in Table 8.

They assess to what extent people believe in the statements connected to Jesus Christ's mission as Son of God.

7)	Jesus Christ is God made man: in His person He embodies both divine and human nature;
8)	Jesus Christ came to earth to do God's will: to save men from eternal death;
9)	Christ was tried in every way that man is, but, never yielded to sin. He therefore overcame all temptation – the same temptation that man has always been subject to but has never been able to overcome;
10)	The scourging, suffering, agony and death Christ experienced were not just consequences of unfavourable circumstances. Instead, it all played a part in God's mystery;
11)	Jesus gave His life as a free offering in the sense that He voluntary chose to die. He did so because by so doing He made manifest His glory through humility and obedience;
12)	On the Cross Christ took upon Himself the sins of all mankind. His sacrifice consists of the eternal salvation of men.
13)	Jesus experienced death in the sense that He experienced the literal separation of His Spirit and body;
14)	While Christ's body remained in the tomb, His divine nature continued to exist;
15)	After His death, Christ went to the kingdom of the dead as the Saviour of all righteous men and there announced His salvation to those who had died;
16)	The dead have the chance to hear the Word of God and be saved. Those that receive the Word will be resurrected;
17)	After His death and resurrection Jesus appeared in flesh and bone to many people;
18)	In the resurrection Jesus passed to an eternal dimension of life beyond time and space;
19)	The risen Christ is the fount of the resurrection of man;
20)	After the resurrection Christ ascended to heaven, and by so doing showed the entrance to the kingdom of God to all humanity;
21)	The ascension of Christ into heaven consisted of His participation in the power and authority of Himself;

Table 8 Items for Belief in Jesus Christ

3.4.3 Belief in the Holy Spirit

"I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets".

The Roman Catholic Doctrine teaches that the Holy Spirit is a real person and has a divine identity, just as the Father and the Son. Jesus said: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come" (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit allows men to know Jesus. "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (1Cor 12:3). Knowledge of faith is possible only through the Holy Spirit who inspires faith in us, disposes us to welcome faith in God and motivates us to communicate with God.

The catechism says: "Through his grace, the Holy Spirit is the first to awaken faith in us and to communicate to us the new life, which is to "know the Father and the one whom he has sent, Jesus Christ" (art. 684).

The Catechism in art. 737 says: "The Spirit prepares men and goes out to them with his grace in order to draw them to Christ. The Spirit manifests the risen Lord to them, recalls his word to them and opens their minds to the understanding of his Death and Resurrection. The Holy Spirit therefore gives birth into the divine life. As "by one Spirit we were all baptized," so we are also "made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). The Holy Spirit is the gift of God's love who motivates people to love God. "God is Love" (1Gv 4:8-16) and "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5). Because of sin love needs to be restored. The Holy Spirit, through the Church, restores the communion with God, lost through sin.

The Catechism in art. 736 says: "Through the Holy Spirit we are restored to paradise, led back to the Kingdom of heaven, and adopted as children, given confidence to call God "Father", share in Christ's grace, called children of light, and given a share in eternal glory"(St. Basil, De Spiritu Sancto, 15,36: PG 32,132). "The mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit is brought to completion in the Church, which is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. This joint mission henceforth brings Christ's faithful to share in his communion with the Father in the Holy Spirit" (art. 737).

Belief in the Holy Spirit has been expressed with formulation of 5 items illustrated in Table 9. They assess to what extent people believe in the statements in the third Person of the Holy Spirit.

22)	The Holy Spirit is love with which God accomplish His designs for the salvation of the world;
23)	The Holy Spirit being the origin of life gives to men the gift of the divine birth: He reconciles the man to God and puts them again on communion with Christ;
24)	The Holy Spirit is a transforming power which changes and renews that which is touched;
25)	The Holy Spirit being the soul of the Church edifies, animates, and sanctify the Church by assisting in his apostolic ministry and being the living vessel of God;
26)	The Holy Spirit brings man to Christ and turns the heart of man towards God;

Table 9 Items for Belief in the Holy Spirit

3.4.4 Belief in the Holy Trinity

The teaching of the Bible concerning the Trinity considers God as a Tri-unity, with each Person of the Godhead equally, fully, and eternally God. Each is necessary, and each is distinct, and yet all are one. The three Persons appear in a logical, causal order. The Father is the unseen, omnipresent Source of all being, revealed in and by the Son, experienced in and by the Holy Spirit. The Son proceeds from the Father, and the Spirit from the Son. With reference to God's creation, the Father is the Thought behind it, the Son is the Word calling it forth, and the Spirit is the Deed making it a reality. We "see" God and His great salvation in the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, then "experience" their reality by faith, through the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit. Though these relationships seem paradoxical, and to some completely impossible, they are profoundly realistic, and their truth is ingrained deep in man's nature. Thus, men have always sensed first the truth that God must be "out there," everywhere present, and the First Cause of all things, but they have corrupted this intuitive knowledge of the Father into pantheism and ultimately into naturalism. Belief in the Holy Trinity has been expressed with formulation of 4 items illustrated in Table 10.

27)	The Holy Trinity is the unity of thee persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who are at the same time are the same and yet distinct and constitute the only one God;
28)	The three persons of the Holy Trinity are in perfect communion of love and live among them as in perfect unity;
29)	In the resurrection of Christ the Holy Trinity acts in a perfect manner among the redemption of man;

30)	The ministry of the Holy Trinity will be completely revealed to man in everlasting life;
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Table 10 Items for Belief in the Holy Trinity

3.4.5 Belief the Blessed Virgin Mary

... "By the Holy Spirit he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man"...

According to Catholic teaching the dimension of "Belief in the Blessed Virgin Mary" describes some important aspects of Roman Catholic belief: Her Immaculate Conception, "ever-virgin", Her Assumption of the Blessed Mary and Her Role for the Church.

Catholic teaching states that since the beginning of eternity, God has chosen for the mother of his Son the Virgin Mary. The Father "blessed Mary more than any other created person in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Ef 1:3). He has chosen Her "in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him in love" (Ef 1:4).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church professes "To become the mother of the Saviour, Mary was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role" (art 490) and that "from the first instant of her conception, she was totally preserved from the stain of original sin and she remained pure from all personal sin throughout her life" (art 508). Therefore, She remained free of every personal sin her whole life long.

"Full of grace" (Lc. 1:28) is the greeting with which the angel Gabriel salutes her at the moment of the annunciation.

Mary was invited to conceive Jesus by the Holy Spirit and She responded with the obedience of faith certain that "with God nothing would have been impossible". By expressing her "Yes" she cooperated in the Mystery of Salvation.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church professes that "The Holy Spirit, "the Lord, the giver of Life", is sent to sanctify the womb of the Virgin Mary and divinely fecundated it, causing her to conceive the eternal Son of the Father, in a humanity drawn from her own" (art. 485). The Gospel accounts understand the virginal conception of Jesus as a divine work that surpasses all human understanding and possibility. "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit", said the angel to Joseph about Mary his fiancée (Mt 1:20). The Church sees here the fulfilment of the divine promise given through the prophet Isaiah: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son" (Is 7:14). The Catechism says (art. 510) "Mary remained a virgin in conceiving Her Son, a virgin in giving birth to him, a virgin in carrying him, a virgin in nursing him at her breast, always a virgin" (St. Augustine, Serm. 186, 1: PL 38, 999): with her whole being she is "the handmaid of the Lord" (Lc 1:38).

Mary's role in the Church is inseparable from her union with Christ. She has cooperated in the birth of Jesus, His mission, and in the divine birth of believers in Jesus. The Church proclaims that She is Mary, Mother of Christ, Mother of the Redeemer and Mother of the Church.

The Catechism states (art. 967), “By Her complete adherence to the Father's will, to his Son's redemptive work, and to every prompting of the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary is the Church's model of faith and charity. Moreover, Her special obedience, the divine work and Her unique faith make Her “Mother to us in the order of grace” (Jn 19:26-27). "Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death".

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son's Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians, (Catechism art. 966).

The belief in the Blessed Virgin Mary has been explored through 10 items illustrated in Table 11.

31)	The blessed Virgin Mary has been preserved from original sin and remained pure of personal sin during her existence;
32)	The blessed Virgin Mary has been chosen by God before the creation of the world as Mother of his son;
33)	The blessed Virgin Mary accomplished her role by doing the will of God and thus opens the way to the realisation of the saving plan;
34)	The conception of Jesus by the blessed Virgin Mary came only through the work of the Holy Spirit;
35)	The blessed Virgin Mary is the “forever Virgin” which means a virgin in all her being in heart and in body before and after the birth of Jesus;
36)	The blessed Virgin Mary is the Mother of Jesus and she did not have any other children besides Jesus;
37)	The blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph in their married life honoured their virginity within their marriage, and their life together was one of profound communion and reciprocal help;
38)	The pain of the blessed Virgin Mary for the sacrifice of Her son Jesus signifies humble obedience to the will of God and absolute trust in God;
39)	The assumption of the blessed Virgin Mary to heaven was done in both soul and body;
40)	The blessed Virgin Mary continues her maternal role among the Church and among all men

Table 11 Items for Belief in the Blessed Virgin Mary

3.4.6 Belief in Original Sin

The dimension of the “Belief in Original Sin” is a very important aspect of the Roman Catholic belief, as it faces an essential truth of the faith. This dimension deals mainly with the

following themes: embodiment of original sin and its meaning, descent nature of the original Sin and consequences of holiness' deprivation implied with it.

The teaching of the Roman Catholic Church states that although God, infinitely good, established everything under an original justice, the experience of suffering results from the original sin that accompanies the human history.

According to the Catholic Doctrine, God created man in His image and established him in His friendship. As a creature, man would have had to live this friendship according to a submission to God. The Catechism says that: "Man is dependent on his Creator, and subject to the laws of creation and to the moral norms that govern the use of freedom" (art.396). But "Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart, and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command. This is what man's first sin consisted of. All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness (art. 397). Original sin therefore consists of an abuse of the God's freedom in which man chooses against God, and prefers himself to God.

The Catechism says that "The Harmony with creation is broken: visible creation has become alien and hostile to man. Because of man, creation is now subject "to its bondage to decay"(art. 400). Regarding this, the Scriptures say that "For creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. (Rom. 8:20). "Finally, the consequence explicitly foretold for this disobedience will come true: man will return to the ground for out of it he was taken. Death makes its entrance into human history (Catechism art. 400). By original sin man loses the original holiness he received from God, and as the first man he transmitted the inclination to sin to all his descendants. The Catechism (art. 419) says "We therefore hold, with the Council of Trent, that original sin is transmitted with human nature, "by propagation, not by imitation" and that it is... 'proper to each'" (Paul VI, CPG # 16).

As a result of original sin all human beings suffer from "captivity under the power of him who thenceforth had the power of death, that is, the devil", (Council of Trent 1546: Session 5a, Decretum de peccato originali, canon 1:DS 1511; Heb 2:14).

Moreover "The whole of man's history has been the story of dour combat with the powers of evil" (Council Vatican II, Cost. Past. Gaudium et spes, 37: AAS 58 (1996) 1055).

In the art. 410, the Catechism says "After his fall, man was not abandoned by God.

On the contrary, God calls him and in a mysterious way heralds the coming victory over evil and his restoration from his fall". In art. 420, the victory that Christ won over sin has given us greater blessings than those which sin had taken from us. St. Paul says, "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Rom 5:20); and the Exulted sings, 'O happy fault, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!" (St. Thomas Aquinas, S. Th. III, I, 3, ad 3.)

Items illustrated in Table 12 explore belief in original sin.

Belief in Original Sin

41)	The entire human story is signed with the guilt of original sin which has as a result inclined man to evil;
42)	Original sin is inherited by all men for which by the disobedience of one, all are made sinners;
43)	Sin makes man devoid of communion with God. It is necessary that man must undertake a purification;
44)	If man had not chosen to sin, he would be exempt from death;
45)	Sin and death are by the resurrection

Table 12 Items for Belief in Original Sin

3.4.7 Belief in the Kingdom of God

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) teaches that Jesus gathered His disciples to be the seed and the beginning of God's Reign on earth, and Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide them (CCC 541, 764). Jesus gives the Twelve apostles share in his authority and 'sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal (CCC 551). Mighty works, wonders, and signs described in the New Testament manifest that, the kingdom is present within Jesus (CCC 547). To enter it, one must first accept Jesus' word: The word of the Lord is compared to a seed, which is sown in a field; those who hear it with faith and are numbered among the little flock of Christ have truly received the kingdom. Then, by its own power, the seed sprouts and grows until the harvest (CCC 543). The Kingdom of God began with Christ's death and Resurrection and must be further extended by Christians until it

has been brought into perfection by Christ at the end of time (CCC 782, 2816). Until then, the coming of the Kingdom will continue to be attacked by evil powers as Christians wait with hope for the second coming of their Saviour (CCC 671, 680). However, the ultimate triumph of Christ's Kingdom will not come about until Christ's return to earth at the end of time (CCC 671). Items describing teaching of the Church on the Kingdom of God are illustrated in Table 13.

46)	The Kingdom of God is already on the earth, even though it has not yet completely been revealed to man in its perfection;
47)	The Kingdom of God already manifests its power through the signs that accompany the Word;
48)	To enter the Kingdom of God, one must embrace the Word of Christ and adhere to this all-encompassing choice, their whole life;
49)	Although Christ is resurrected, the Kingdom of God on earth is still affected by the power of the devil;
50)	The Kingdom of God will be perfectly completed when Christ comes again to the earth;

Table 13 Items for Belief in the Kingdom of God

3.4.8 Belief in the One Holy Catholic Church

The belief in the Holy Catholic Church is entirely addressed in Article 9 of Chapter III regarding the “Belief in the Holy Spirit” contained in Section Two of the Catechism of the Catholic Church concerning the “Profession of the Christian Faith”.

It is comprehensible that teachings concerning the holiness of the Church are therefore centred on the Holy Spirit, the source and giver of all holiness.

It is Christ who, through the Holy Spirit, makes his Church one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. It is he who calls her to realise each of these qualities.

Art. 778 of the CCC says that the “Church is both the means and the goal of God's plan: prefigured in creation, prepared for in the Old Covenant, founded by the words and actions of Jesus Christ,

fulfilled by his redeeming cross and his Resurrection, the Church has been manifested as the mystery of salvation by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit" (CCC 778).

As a matter of faith the Church is held to be unfailingly holy. The CCC at art. 823 says that "...this is because Christ, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit is hailed as 'alone holy,' loved the Church as his Bride, giving himself up for her so as to sanctify her; he joined her to himself as his body and endowed her with the gift of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God" (CCC 823).

The word "Church designates the assembly of those whom God's Word "convokes," i.e., gathers together to form the People of God, and who themselves, nourished with the Body of Christ, become the Body of Christ (CCC 777). "Not only is the Church gathered around Christ; she is united in him, in his body" (CCC 789).

The most distinctive characteristic of Roman Catholicism has always been its theology of the church (its ecclesiology) in which everyone is brought to salvation. In this view, the Church is the instrument and the sign by which God calls and moves the world toward his kingdom. The CCC, in 780, says that: "The Church in this world is the sacrament of salvation, the sign and the instrument of the communion of God and men" (CCC 780).

"The Church, in Christ, is like a sacrament - a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men. "The Church's first purpose is to be the sacrament of the inner union of men with God. Because men's communion with one another is rooted in that union with God, the Church is also the sacrament of the unity of the human race (...) at the same time, the Church is the "sign and instrument" of the full realisation of the unity yet to come (CCC 775).

Pre - Vatican II theology taught that the Roman Catholic Church is the only true church of Christ, since it alone has a permanent hierarchy (which is apostolic) and primacy (which is Petrine) to ensure the permanence of the church as Christ instituted it.

The belief in the Holy Catholic Church has been addressed with formulation of different statements around the following themes: Church in God's Plan, Church as People of God, Body of Christ, Temple of the Holy Spirit, Church as One, Catholic and Apostolic, and the Hierarchical Constitution of the Church. Items describing teaching of the Holiness of the Catholic Church are illustrated in Table 14.

51)	The Church is the universal Community of believers gathered by God and unified in the Body of Christ.
52)	The Church is the dwelling of God with man and the instrument for the Communion between God and man.
53)	God, through the Church, consigns man to salvation with an invitation to be converted. In fact, God's aim is the sanctification of men.
54)	The Church has been unfailingly established through the nourishing Word and the Body of Christ.

55)	The Church is one, as in the Church all believers of the Church form only one body. This unity is formed by human as well as divine elements.
56)	Although the Church is formed by sinners, the Church is Holy, as God is its Holy author: Christ gave Himself to sanctify it.
57)	On earth the Church is already adorned by a true Holiness, although it is not perfect because of the sin, but it will have its glorious realisation in the final age.
58)	The Church announces the totality of faith as supported by Christ in the announcement of the truth and it is founded through the workings of Holy Spirit.
59)	The Church brings and administers with it the means of salvation through the Sacraments
60)	The Church's role is to interpret the Word of God. Its magisterium is principally based on the Holy Scriptures.
61)	The Church in its ministry of interpretation of the Holy Scriptures is unfailing because it is guided by the Holy Spirit who guarantees that the truth will be preserved.
62)	The magisterium of the Church unfailingly proclaims the moral Doctrine.
63)	The Holy Father unfailingly proposes a belief as revealed by God and taught by Christ.
64)	The Apostles are the original witnesses of Christ and construct the foundation of the ministry of priesthood
65)	In the ecclesial hierarchy the bishophood succeeds to the apostles, and the Holy Father is the successor of Saint Peter.
66)	The Holy Father is the foundation of the unity between the ecclesial hierarchy and believers.
67)	Referring to divine institution of the ministry of priesthood, priest possesses the authority of Christ. Therefore he acts in His name and in His place.

Table 14 Items for Belief in the One Holy Catholic Church

3.4.9 Belief in Angels and Demons

The existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls "angels" is a true statement of faith. The witness of Scripture is as clear as the unanimity of Tradition (CCC 328). The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines them as "Purely spiritual creatures having intelligence and will who are personal and immortal creatures, surpassing in perfection all visible creatures" (CCC 330). Their role is also described in the art. 329. "With their whole beings the angels are servants and messengers of God" (329). Because they "always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven, (Mt 18;10) they are the "mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word" (Ps 103;20).

The Scripture and the Church's Tradition see in the disobedient choice a seductive voice opposed to God, a fallen angel, called "Satan" or the "devil". The Church teaches that Satan was at first a good angel, made by God: "The devil and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God, but they became evil by their own doing" (Lateran Council IV (1215): DS 800).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church illustrates that: "this fall consists of the free choice of these created spirits, who radically and irrevocably rejected God and his reign" (CCC 392).

The Doctrine connected to original sin teaches that the devil has acquired certain domination over man, even though man remains free. Original sin entails "captivity under the power of him who thenceforth had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Council of Trent (1546): DS 1511; cf. Heb 2:14).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches about the dramatic situation of the world, which is in the power of the evil one and makes man's life a battle (CCC 409). The whole of man's history has been the story of dour combat with the powers of evil, stretching, so our Lord tells us, from the very dawn of history until the last day. Finding himself in the midst of the battlefield, man has to struggle to do what is right. It is at great cost to himself, and it is only by God's grace that he succeeds in achieving his own inner integrity.

Items for addressing the Doctrine about angels and demon are described in Table 15.

68)	The Angels are spiritual beings that have been created free. They are provided with intelligence and will. They do not have a body;
69)	The Angels worship, glorify, and serve God. They collaborate with God's project for man's salvation;
70)	The devil was originally created as a good angel, rebelled deliberately against God and His Kingdom. The devil acts in a perverse way against God;
71)	The devil is a living being made blind from pride and from love for himself. Having chosen to refuse God, he attempts to associate man to his rebellion against God;
72)	The devil organises human perdition but he can act just until God allows it because the devil is not superior to God;

Table 15 Items for Belief in Angels and demons

3.4.10 Belief in the Communion of Saints

The term "communion of saints" has two closely linked meanings: communion in holy things (sancta) and among holy persons (sancti). In particular the Catechism of the Catholic Church distinguishes among Communion in Spiritual Goods: Communion in faith (CCC 949), Communion in the Sacraments (CCC 950), Communion of Charisms (CCC 951), and Communion in Charity (CCC 953). In the Communion of Saints "None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. Charity does not insist on its own way. In this

solidarity with all men, living or dead, which is founded on the communion of saints, the least of our acts done in charity resounds to the profit of all. Every sin harms this communion" (CCC 953).

In addition, the Catechism of the Catholic Church distinguishes among the Communion of the Church of Heaven and Earth three states of the Church (CCC 954) in one family of God (CCC 959) that form three states of the Church. Some of his disciples are pilgrims on earth, others have died and are being purified, while still others are in glory, contemplating in full light God himself triune and one, exactly as he is (CCC 954).

Items addressing the teaching of the Church about the belief in the Communion of Saints are described in Table 16.

73)	The Communion of Saints consists of the communion of the spiritual goods among Those who are living or dead in Christ;
74)	The communion of the spiritual goods consists of charisms, faith to the Sacraments, prayers, and in the good deeds of those who have realised salvation;
75)	The Communion of Saints is a supernatural link of unity and of the mystical Body of Christ;
76)	Through the Communion of Saints there is an exchange of holiness of one to another;

Table 16 Items for Belief in the Communion of Saints

3.4.11 Belief in the Glorious Advent of Christ

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that during Christ's second coming, he will judge the living and the dead. Only those who are judged to be righteous and just will reign with Christ forever (CCC 1042, 1060). Christ's second coming will also mark the absolute defeat of all evil powers, including Satan (CCC 550, 671). Until then, the coming of the Kingdom will continue to be attacked by evil powers as Christians wait with hope for the second coming of their Savior (CCC 671, 680). This is why Christians pray to hasten Christ's return by saying to him "Marana tha!" which means "Come, Lord Jesus!" (CCC 671, 2817).

Belief in the Glorious advent of Christ has been explored through 3 items illustrated in Table 17.

77)	Jesus will come from His Kingdom with all His glory;
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78)	Christ's second coming can happen anytime;
79)	When Christ will come, He will triumph. The bad will be banished and the Kingdom will be fully accomplished;

Table 17 Items for Glorious advent of Christ

3.4.12 Belief in the Resurrection of the Body

Belief in the resurrection of the dead has been an essential element of the Christian faith from its beginnings. "...Just as Christ is truly risen from the dead and lives for ever, so after death the righteous will live for ever with the risen Christ and he will raise them up on the last day" (CCC 989). "The "resurrection of the flesh" (the literal formulation of the Apostles' Creed) means not only that the immortal soul will live on after death, but that even our "mortal body" will come to life again" (Rom 8:11).

"The resurrection of all the dead will be "the hour when all who are in the tombs will hear [the Son of man's] voice and come forth" (CCC 1038).

At no point does the Christian faith encounter more opposition than on the resurrection of the body. It is however, very commonly accepted that the life of the human being continues in a spiritual fashion after death.

But how can we believe that this body, so clearly mortal, could rise to everlasting life?

What is "rising"? , Who will rise? , How? and When?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church answers these questions with the articles 997, 998, 999, 1000 and 1001.

"In death, the separation of the soul from the body, the human body decays and the soul goes to meet God, while awaiting its reunion with its glorified body.

God, in his almighty power, will definitively grant incorruptible life to our bodies by reuniting them with our souls, through the power of Jesus' Resurrection" (CCC 997).

"All the dead will rise, "those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment" (CCC 998).

"Christ is raised with his own body: "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself"; but he did not return to an earthly life. So, in him, "all of them will rise again with their own bodies which they now

bear," but Christ "will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body," into a "spiritual body". But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" You foolish man! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable.... the dead will be raised imperishable.... For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality (CCC 999).

"This "how" exceeds our imagination and understanding; it is accessible only in faith. Yet our participation in the Eucharist already gives us a foretaste of Christ's transfiguration of our bodies. Just as bread that comes from the earth, after God's blessing has been invoked upon it, is no longer ordinary bread, but the Eucharist, formed of two things, the one earthly and the other heavenly: so to our bodies, which partake of the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, but possess the hope of resurrection" (CCC 1000).

"When? "Definitively "at the last day," "at the end of the world. "Indeed, the resurrection of the dead is closely associated with Christ's Parousia. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first" (CCC 1001).

Items for addressing the teaching of the Church about angels and demon are described in Table 18.

80)	When Christ will return on the earth the dead will rise by coming out from the tombs; They be resurrected in their body and their flesh;
81)	The spirit of the human being continues to exist although death of the flesh;
82)	With the resurrection of dead the soul will be reunited with the body;

Table 18 Items for Belief in the Resurrection of the Body

3.4.13 Belief in the Final Judgement

The holy Roman Church firmly believes and confesses that on the Day of Judgment "all men will appear in their own bodies before Christ's tribunal to render an account of their own deeds" (Council of Lyons II [1274]: DS 859; cf. DS 1549).

When Christ will come "in his glory, and all the angels with him, ... he will separate those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment" (Mt 25:31,33.46). In art. 1039 the Catechism of the Catholic Church says that: "In the presence of Christ, who is Truth itself, the truth of each man's relationship with God will be laid bare. The Last Judgment will reveal even to its furthest consequences the good each person has done or failed to do

during his earthly life" (CCC 1038). Belief in the last judgment has been expressed with formulation of 3 items illustrated in Table 19.

83)	In the day of the last judgement all men will appear with their body before Christ;
84)	Christ, at His coming, will judge the living and the deeds revealing the hidden disposition of man hearts.
85)	At the last judgement day behaviour will be enlightened because of the love towards one another.

Table 19 Items for Belief in the Final Judgment

3.4.14 Belief in the Everlasting Life

According to the Catholic Doctrine, those who die in God's grace and friendship, and are perfectly purified, live forever with Christ. They are like God forever, for they "see him as he is" (1Gv 3:2), "face to face" (1Cor 2:9).

This perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity - this communion of life and love with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed - is called "heaven" Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfilment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church further defines the meaning of living in heaven. "To live in heaven is to be with Christ, the elect live in Christ, but they retain, or rather find, their true identity, their own name" (CCC 1025): "For life is to be with Christ; where Christ is, there is life, there is the kingdom" (St. Ambrose, In Luc., 10, 121: PL 15, 1834A).

Table 20 illustrates items assessing belief in Heaven.

Belief in Heaven

86)	Heaven is the encounter with God in which man experiences a perfect communion of love with the Creation and all Creatures.
87)	Heaven is the eternal and definitive condition of supreme participation in the joy of salvation in the shining vision of God.
88)	In heaven man reaches perfect happiness and enjoys the perfect realisation of himself.

Table 20 Items for Belief in Heaven

Doctrine of faith on Purgatory was especially addressed by the Church at the Councils of Florence and Trent (Cf. Council of Florence (1439): DS 1304; Council of Trent (1563): DS 1820; (1547): 1580; see also Benedict XII, Benedictus Deus (1336): DS 1000).

The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church "All who die in God's grace and friendship,

but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven" (CCC 1030).

This final purification of the elect is defined as Purgatory, and is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. Items assessing belief in Purgatory are reported in Table 21.

Belief in Purgatory

		Table 21 Items for Belief in Purgatory
89)	In Purgatory the dead individuals purify themselves from sin and they strive to reach a holy disposition in order to have a life in perfect Communion with God;	
90)	Believers' solidarity through prayer facilitates purification of the dead;	

y

The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. The Catechism of the Catholic Church asserts that: "To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him for ever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called hell" (CCC 1033).

"Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, "eternal fire" (Cf. DS 76; 409; 411; 801; 858; 1002; 1351; 1575). "The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs" (CCC 1035).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms that: "God predestines no one to go to hell; for this, a wilful turning away from God (a mortal sin) is necessary, and persistence in it until the end. In the Eucharistic liturgy and in the daily prayers of her faithful, the Church implores the mercy of God, who does not want "any to perish, but all to come to repentance" (CCC 1037).

Items assessing belief in Hell are illustrated in Table 22.

Belief in Hell

		Table 22 Items for Belief in Hell
91)	Hell essentially consists of the privation of God's eternal love;	
92)	The torment of hell does not happen by chance; it is the sinner, that chooses it;	
93)	The torment of hell is eternal desperation that weighs on the entire being, leaving no room for refuge or relief;	
94)	Hell is sin that becomes definite because of stubborn refusal of God's forgiveness;	

4 Validity

Content validity for the scale for measuring content and strength of belief was formulated according the statements of the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church and therefore their truthfulness needed to be accurately verified.

Research assumed that the contribution of believers with a reasonable knowledge and awareness of the research study would have helped to identify comprehensibility of the items on the scale, which we considered a prerequisite before addressing the content validity. In reality some items were repetitive, complicated, or hard to understand. Support and advice for rephrasing them was valuable.

Content validity for the “Self Evaluation Scale of adherence to Dogma of the Roman Catholic Church was assessed by a contribution of four judges: two theologians who from theology department and two ordained professors in a Catholic college. Items were analysed and reviewed in order to address their accordance to the principles of the Roman Catholic faith. In order for an item to be included in the scale, an 80% agreement among the judges was required. All 97 items remained after this process although 27 were better re-phrased.

5 Reliability

The “Scale of attitude toward Catholicism” was pre-tested in a pilot study to establish reliability through a sample of 23 volunteers. Moreover, before fieldwork began, a test-retest study was also conducted. A population study of 16 participants out of 23 answered the same questionnaire (retesting) after seven days.

Psychometric proprieties of the scale are reported in chapter VII section 4.

6 Conclusions

The cognitive aspect of religious belief differs from religion to religion and as a consequence belief in members of religious groups identified as “believers” vary in the strength and in the content of their beliefs. They may also disagree about what their beliefs should be.

Nevertheless, it is essential to assess individuals’ belief variation within a restricted range of religion denomination. However, the systematic assessment of the substance of the Catholic belief in literature has been neglected.

The development of the “Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” allows the assessment of the cognitive dimension of the Roman Catholic belief by measuring adherence to the contents of faith professed by the Roman Catholic Church and by assessing to what extent religious belief is accepted by Catholic individuals as truth of faith;

CHAPTER VI

The Development of the Catholic Scale for Measuring Spirituality:

“The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God”

1 Introduction

Existing approaches to spirituality were analysed through literature review. Because definitions of spirituality were even more diverse and less well established than definitions of religiosity, the description of spirituality will be assessed as one of the primary aims of this chapter. Moreover the crucial purposes of this chapter are to:

- 1) Provide relevant literature review regarding previous psychometric work on spirituality. Inconsistencies, divergences, and inaccuracies in this field will be analysed.
- 2) Give the field psychology of religion reliability in the domain of measuring spirituality by devising a specific psychometric tool for assessing individuals' relationship with God. As a consequence a description of “The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God” will be illustrated according to the results of thematic analysis.

Until very recently the term spirituality has been interchanged with religion. Literature shows that a research approach to spirituality has been referenced both within the context of religion and outside the context of religion.

Although spirituality is experienced and expressed through a conventional religious understanding and therefore associated with religious life, contemporary conceptualisations of spirituality tend to address spirituality disconnected with religion.

The notion of spirituality in the reviewed literature seemed to be linked to a:

- Belief in a power operating in the universe that is greater than oneself;
- Sense of interconnectedness with all living creatures;
- Awareness of the purpose and meaning of life;
- Development of personal absolute values;
- Internalised personal relationship with the sacred or transcendent.

Moreover, the term spirituality appears to be linked to positive feelings such as love, joy, peace, hope, patience, generosity, forgiveness, thankfulness, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, compassion and many others.

Alongside the latter approach one of the most important aspects of spirituality seems to lie in the sense of connection between the transcendent in the relationship with self, others, and nature, which is a source of inner strength, comfort, love, peace and other optimistic attitudes.

This view of disengaging spirituality from religion mostly reported in literature seems to reflect the rise of secularism in this century and a growing disillusionment with religious institutes. The perception is that spirituality is absorbing secular tendency and as a consequence, is acquiring distinct meanings and connotations separate from religion traditions.

These considerations allow inference that spirituality is interiorised by individuals. In fact, the conceptualisations of an individual's spirituality revolve around a self-generated spirituality. This method of conceptualising spirituality seems to increase together with a more distinct separation of organised religion and detachment from religious affiliation, where submission to religious authority seems to be progressively neglected.

By contrast, studies affirm that spirituality encompasses not only emotions and personal sensations in the personal connection with the transcendent but also practice, action, community, obedience and discipline (Fuller 2001). William James, one of the central reference point in the scientific study of spiritual experience emphasises the role of theology and the religious tradition for the development of the religious experience and the spiritual connection.

Likewise, Albanese (2001), one of the leading historians specialised in religious traditions, approaches spirituality as a part of religious tradition asserting that spirituality might be best approached as a way of "knowing" the divine. Each way of knowing is to some degree grounded expressed within religious traditions, institutions, and organisations.

Albanese embraces the notion that spirituality is "the personal, experiential element in religion". He traces four dominant strains of spirituality expressed within religious institutions:

"knowing through the body," which includes corporate and individual rituals and practices;
"knowing through the heart" which makes emotion and experience central;
"knowing through the will," which emphasis prophetic stance;
"knowing through the mind" which urges adherents to pursue metaphysical connection to the divine.

Several important features of spirituality can be therefore underlined.

First spirituality is primarily expressed by actions, that is, in *ways* of knowing, such as praying, meditating on the Scriptures, worshipping, and seeking and applying spiritual guidance, which involve action, devotion, and theology.

Second, spirituality is concerned with different styles which are distributed differently across religious traditions. Some religious traditions are more likely to emphasise "knowing through the heart" rather than "knowing through the mind". Moreover among specific religious affiliations styles of spirituality can also be distinguished. In the Catholic tradition Franciscan spirituality, Marian Spirituality, Charismatic Spirituality, Benedictine Spirituality and Ignatian spirituality are just a few examples of particular styles of spirituality which have their own distinctive way of responding to the Holy Spirit under the Roman Catholic Church authority. These spiritual styles are generated and learnt in religious organisations where traditions produce them and members teach them to individuals.

Although the study of spirituality should recognise the essential role played by religion, by contrast one of the most distinguishing characteristics of analysing spirituality was the precise nature of religious the connection related to the spiritual dimension when examining literature.

Spirituality was not linked to any specific religious tradition.

The need to address spirituality by referencing it in the context of religion is an important incongruence in the research method that has been satisfied by dealing with spirituality according to the Catholic tradition.

2 Previous Psychometric Work in exploring Spirituality

Although the literature on spirituality illuminates the close links between spiritual connection and religious tradition the development of psychological measures of spirituality seems to go in the reverse direction, weakening research criteria in psychology and religion.

One of the main problems in examining spirituality is that most surveys focus on questions about experience, viewpoint, emotions and other feelings, reinforcing the view that spirituality is individual and primarily connected to the emotional aspect of the spiritual experience.

Moreover measures of “spirituality” focus on the most general and indistinct questions where relations between spirituality and religion implied in questions are not clear as wording and language used apply universally to all sorts of religious belief.

In reviewing literature scales of spirituality diverse measures were examined including one scale on the mystical experience, a phenomenon central to spirituality. Moreover, projective instruments designed to generate data of a spiritual and religious nature were also found.

One of the most recent measures of spirituality “The Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness and Spirituality” (Undrewood, 2002), seems to overlap concepts of religion and spirituality. Moreover it addresses spirituality across many religious boundaries and perspective where features of religious belief and tradition seemed to merge.

These considerations apply also to the “Index of Core Spiritual Experiences” (Kass et all., 1991). The intent of the instrument is twofold: to address religious experiences leading to a conviction in God’s existence, and to measure behaviours and attitudes that would be present among those experiencing a closeness to God. Questions are aimed at identifying elements of core of spiritual experiences that seem to be detached from any sort of religious tradition.

Divergent religious backgrounds in participants of the sample for standardisation of the scale confirm also this dissimilarity in connecting spirituality to religious belief.

Some of the items of the scales illustrated in table 1 support this research problem.

- Item 3 “*How often do you spend time on religious or spiritual practices?*”
- Item 4 “*How often have you felt as though you were close to a powerful spiritual force that seemed to lift you outside yourself?*”
- Item 7a “*An experience of a great spiritual figure (e.g., Jesus, Mary, Elijah, Buddha)*”
- Item 7b “*An experience of angels or guiding spirits*”
- Item 7c “*An experience of communication with someone who has died*”

Table 1 Example of Items from the “Index of Core Spiritual Experiences” Kass et al. (1991)

Other instruments for addressing spirituality in a wide range of religious populations are the “Mysticism Scale” (Hood, 1975) and the “Religious Experience Questionnaire” (Edwards, 1976).

The “Mysticism Scale” is intended to assess an individual’s intense experience, characterised by a sense of unity with the outside world and / or with “nothingness” which may or may not be religiously interpreted.

Although the scale has been found to be related to measures of openness to religious experience, the “Mysticism Scale” appears to be broadly construed probably to be used across a wide range of individuals from different religious tradition.

Therefore, mysticism as an element of spirituality is not based on a particular religious tradition as emerged in the wording and content all-embracing items.

An Example of items of the scales is illustrated in table 2.

<input type="checkbox"/> Item 13 “ <i>I have had an experience in which a new view of reality was revealed to me</i> ”
<input type="checkbox"/> Item 15 “ <i>I have never had an experience in which time and space were nonexistent</i> ”
<input type="checkbox"/> Item 31 “ <i>I have had an experience in which I felt nothing is ever really dead</i> ”

Table 2 Example of Items from the “Mysticism Scale” Hood, (1975)

In the “Religious Experience Questionnaire”, although items of the scale are not addressing a specific religious belief, their wording formulation does not appear to be as challenging as appeared in previous studies. Statements in “Religious Experience Questionnaire” are designed to measure personal religious experience, which refers to the experienced reality of an affective relationship with a personal caring God. They form a one factor solution based on the personal religious experience factor although loadings range from .46 to .83 and therefore appear not to appropriately support the homogeneity of the construct.

Spirituality has also been explored around the quality of an individual’s relationship with God and the degree of an individual’s awareness of God in his life which represent premise of spiritual

maturity according to Hall & Edwards, (1996) who developed the “Spiritual Assessment Inventory” (SAI).

In order to explore the respondent’s reaction to negative experiences with God, the scale is formed by 43 items, some of which consist of two parts. Construct validity of the SAI is based on the results of the factor analysis that generated five factors relating to Awareness, Instability, Defensiveness /Disappointment, Grandiosity, and Realistic Acceptance.

As noted before, once again approaches to spirituality as a part of religious tradition was not found. Moreover regarding construct validity additional investigation was needed for this scale at least for improving Cronback’s Alpha coefficient (.52) on the Grandiosity factor.

The research approach to spirituality was analysed through literature review. It was found that spirituality seems to be just a personal and private aspect of an individual connection to a transcendent being.

Although research in related fields emphasises the essential role played by religious tradition on the study of spirituality, scales on spirituality are formulated for addressing a broad spectrum of individual different religious affiliations.

This methodology seems to be lacking in one of the most significant element that is religious context which should be considered in relation to its aspects of its fundamental nature.

Therefore the study of spirituality needs to be re-considered around the following question: “How effectively can measures of spirituality be used across many religious boundaries”?

This research recognises the need for restricting the study of spirituality in the context of the Catholic tradition and for addressing spirituality in terms of mutual interaction.

3 Development of the “Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God”

3.1 Spirituality as a Mutual Interaction

Literature review reveals that the main focus of spirituality seems to be the connection element, which implies personal religious involvement and more specifically a personal interaction with God (Hood, 1975; Elkins et al 1988; Idler and Kasl 1992).

It was found that religious connection was an important aspect of spirituality, and that religious connection was explained both in terms of direction of the interaction, and in terms of the quality of the interaction.

In being central feature of spirituality, religious connection was found to be an experience of reciprocity between the individual and God, and between God as perceived by the individual. In addition, religious connection was found to be qualitative positive and promising and also adverse.

Individuals appeared longing for a connecting with God, wanting to be closer to God, and / or to merge with God. Moreover they experienced God as committed, compassionate and supporting

towards individuals. Conversely thematic analysis revealed opposite attitudes in individuals who seemed to manifest adverse disposition towards God, suspicion and mistrust.

As a consequence, thematic analysis allowed conceptualising spirituality according to a combination of:

- The direction of the interaction:
 - Individual towards God
 - God as perceived from the individual
- The quality of the religious connection:
 - Positive connection
 - Negative connection

According to the results of the thematic analysis items for the scale of exploring spirituality were devised and “The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God” was developed”.

Psychometric proprieties of the scale are reported in chapter VII.

3.2 Formulation of Items for the “Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God”

Items for the “Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God” were formulated by taking into account the direction of the interaction of the relationship and the quality of the religious connection which derived from thematic analysis of the pilot study.

With the intention of representing the contents arisen from the in-depth interviews, 140 items were developed for possible inclusion in the scale. They were organised around two directions in the individuals’ approach to spirituality:

- The Individuals’ disposition towards their relationship with God;
- The attitude of God towards the individuals in His relationship with them, according to the way God was perceived by the individuals.

Therefore, proposed items of scale reflected two sections entitled:

- “How I describe myself in the Relationship with God”;
- “How I describe God in His Relationship with me”;

Additional sections of items were also devised in order to assess:

- Type and frequency of religious practice;
- Emotions associated with occurrence of religious practice with particular regard to the practice of the Holy Mass, the Communion, the Eucharistic Adoration and Confession;
- Emotions associated with absence of religious practice in Catholic believers;

After being examined by judges for the content validity, same items in the scale were dropped, changed, and re-formulated. The final scale used in the quantitative study consisted of 131 items. Items devised for each section in the scale are illustrated in the tables below.

Table 3 illustrates items of the section “How I describe myself in my Relationship with God”. Table 4 illustrates items for the section “How I describe God in His Relationship with me”.

Items related to type and frequency of religious practice, and emotions associated with occurrence and absence of religious practice are illustrated respectively in tables 5, 6 and 7.

Table 3 Items for the section “How I describe myself in my Relationship with God”

1	I have a strong relationship with God;
2	I usually feel attached to God;
3	I have an intimate relationship with God;
4	I am usually aware of God’s presence;
5	I commit myself to maintaining my relationship with God;
6	I feel very involved in my relationship with God;
7	I keep as much distance as possible from God;
8	I am usually aware of God’s work in my life through people I meet or speak to, or things that happen;
9	I am open to receive God’s forgiveness;
10	God’s presence is very strong in my life;
11	I am self-sufficient and independent from God;
12	I never hesitate to go out of my way to help someone in trouble;
13	I trust mainly in myself rather than God;
14	I do not need to be connected with God to have a sense of purpose in life;
15	I live as if God does not exist;
16	I comfortably take advice and guidance from God because He is faithful;
17	In taking decisions, I usually ask myself, what the will of God would be for me in that situation;
18	I am comfortable that whatever might happen to me, hurtful or worrying because God would provide for me;
19	My life is part of God’s plan;
20	After confessing my sins and receiving their absolution I am certain of God’s forgiveness;
21	Before taking a decision I look into God and pray to the Holy Spirit to help me to find The right direction whether I would like it or not;
22	I have never intensely disliked anyone;
23	I doubt about God’s forgiveness;
24	God is essentially the meaning of my existence;
25	I always try to carry out God’s plans in my life;
26	I have had an experience of God in which I felt transformed by His great love for me. I am re-born into a new life;
27	I pray to God to achieve a deeper conversion;
28	Sometimes I think that God could leave me or give up on me;
29	Sometimes I feel a sense of blessing so strong that everything seems to be holy around me;
30	For me it is essential to improve my relationship with God;
31	My desire is to be closer and united with God;
32	Sometimes I feel disappointed with God;
33	There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others;
34	My relationship with God is essentially based on a fellowship journey of faith;
35	Without God my life would be meaningless;

36 My relationship with God is essentially based on prayer and on meditation of the Holy Scriptures;

37 I love God even fighting my human nature;

38 The Holy Communion is the source of a deep intimacy and unity with God;

39 I feel God's love for me;

40 I feel detached from God;

41 I warmly and cheerfully do my best to please God keeping my spirit in His Grace

42 God is the centre of my interests: I share my plans with Him and I give him my activities;

43 To reach a closer relationship with God I usually fast, meditate, worship or go on retreats;

44 I do not take care about God;

45 I am joyful, happy and very open to God;

46 I angrily leave God out from my life. I completely refuse to have anything to do with Him;

47 I despise or scorn God: his ways are wrong and mine are better;

48 Sometimes following God's teachings causes me sufferance;

49 There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right;

50 I accuse and blame God for what he does;

51 I find peace and refuge in God. He is my rock against any trap;

52 I take over God doing what I care I cannot be blocked or restricted by Him;

53 If I could, I would punish God or I would take revenge against Him;

54 When somebody offends me I thank God because I have the opportunity to practice love for neighbour;

55 With much kindness and benevolence I tell God my problems and experiences of my life;

56 I need to be still in the presence of the Lord to find peace and receive love;

57 I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable;

58 I humbly accept corrections from my spiritual guidance in order to achieve my spiritual growth;

59 I angrily react towards God about what He allows to happen which is contradictory;

60 Even facing heartbreaking situations I still trust God. He is with me and that He takes care of me especially in those circumstances;

61 It is sometimes difficult for me to be absolutely certain that God will always care for me;

62 When I feel close to God I experience positive feelings such as happiness, satisfaction or a sense of fulfilment;

63 I don't see the reason to pray to God or to seek advice from any spiritual guidance to face my problems;

64 My relationship with God gives me hope about my future;

65 I am very satisfied with my relationship with God;

66 Sometime I am concerned that God is not with me or that he could leave me;

67 I am resentful towards God;

68 When I feel weak and tempted towards any grave sin I pray more insistently;

70 I wish to know God in a profound way;

71 I ask God to be able to serve him according to his will;

72 Sometimes I think that my sins are not completely forgivable;

73 My prayers are always heard according to God's plan of salvation for me;

74 Usually I speak about God's wonders in my life;

75 I need to ask God to be focused on His will

76 The most important thing is to believe in God rather than being involved in the religious practice;

77	It is very important to me to avoid sinning as far as I can;
78	The possibility of offending God does not concern me;
79	I am certain about God's patience with me for everything I do wrong or I can't help;
80	In God any human aspiration is completely satisfied;
81	My relationship with God affects the way I feel about myself: If I feel peaceful with God I feel good with myself;
82	My relationship with God affects my relationship with others in the way that if I feel peaceful with God I feel more well disposed with others;

Table 4 Items for the section “How I describe God in His Relationship with Me”

83	Would you say that God seeks a personal relationship with you?
84	What is the picture that best describes the God's closeness to you?
85	God does not seem to pay attention to me at all;
86	God clearly understands me and loves me even if I differ from His commands or I do something wrong;
87	God is tolerant towards my weaknesses and failures;
88	God's love for me is unconditional: He loves me the way I am;
89	God angrily leaves me out from His care;
90	God is always with me and He looks for me with loving tenderness;
91	God accuses and blames me. I tries to let me believe that I am wrong;
92	God warmly and joyfully recognises the good I do;
93	God is very joyful, happy and very open to me;
94	God's plan for me is reliable;
95	God misleads me or deceives me;
96	God does not take into account my real needs;
97	When I don't know something I don't at all mind admitting it;
98	God is committed in His relationship with me;
99	God punishes me and he takes a revenge against me;
100	God is distant and detached from me;
101	God trusts and rely on me;
102	God manifests a caring loving tenderness to me;
103	God does not care about my problems;
104	Even if I am in the wrong, God seeks and looks after me. He never abandons me;
105	God interferes in my affaires, takes over, blocks and restricts me;
106	God takes care of his relationship with me;
107	God keeps himself as much as distance as possible from me;
108	God is open to give me His forgiveness;
109	God has a plan of love for my life;
110	God doesn't love me enough as he never answers my prayers;
111	When I am going through suffering and pain God's compassion and love are even stronger;
112	I am God's precious son/daughter and God loves me in a special way;
113	I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favours of me;
114	God would like me to improve my relationship with him;
115	God's forgiveness for me is total, definitive and everlasting;
116	God's attitude towards me is incoherent and contradictory. Sometimes he seems to be caring about my needs, sometimes he does not care;
	God's ultimate desire for me is my happiness;

Holy Mass
Communion
Confession
Scriptures Meditation
Adoration
Prayer in a Prayer Group
Rosary
Spiritual Retreat
Desert Days
Spiritual Guidance

Table 5 Type and frequency of religious practice

Peace, Serenity
Love for others
Joy, Happiness
Hope
Comfort, Consolation
See and do the goodness
Desire of sharing faith
Desire of Humility
Desire of Intimacy with God

Table 6 Emotions associated with occurrence of religious practice in Catholic believers

Sadness
Abandonment
Loneliness
Danger
Discouragement
Doubts
Uneasiness
Impatience
Despair

Table 7 Emotions associated with absence of religious practice in Catholic believers

4 Validity

Content validity for the scale of the “Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God” was assessed by a contribution of experts together with other researchers in this field who reviewed the items of the scale. Content validity was analysed by specialists who were mostly religiously ordained individuals. They consisted of six individuals with the following functions:

- 7) Jesuit Priest, Director of a local Diocesan Seminary;
- 8) An academic Jesuit Theologian, Superior of a local Jesuit Community;
- 9) Franciscan Priest in charge of priesthood’s spiritual direction;
- 10) Diocesan Priest accountable to pastoral care;
- 11) Superior Mother of the Salesian Sisters of St John Bosco Order, Director of both the Religious house and in charge of the undergraduate courses;
- 12) Lay person leader of a prayer group.

In order to accomplish content validity, research assumed that the contribution of these experts would have helped to identify supplementary pertinent focal points to be addressed in formulated items. Their involvement would have allowed for the establishment of general agreement of judgments when assessing the extent to which items would measure desired content domain. Great contribution regarding these aspects was given by the Priest, Head of Jesuit Order, with an academic approach and by the Franciscan Priest in charge of the priesthood’s spiritual direction, who shared his experience in answering people’s doubts of faith and therefore giving important insights.

5 Reliability

The “Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God” was pre-tested in a pilot study to establish reliability through a sample of 23 volunteers. Moreover, before fieldwork began, a test-retest study was also conducted. A population study of 16 participants out of 23 answered the same questionnaire (retesting) after seven days.

Psychometric proprieties of the scale are reported in chapter VII.

6 Conclusions

The development of “The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God” allows the assessment of the intimacy of the relationship with God and the personal religious commitment. The formulation of the scale allows the individual to describe himself in his relationship with God and God in his relationship with the individual according to the direction of the interaction and the quality of the religious connection.

PART III

CHAPTER VII

Survey Study

The Assessment of the Catholic Religious Belief

1 Introduction

After having conducted exploratory and in-depth interviews, investigated belief, and developed new measures of assessing religious belief, psychometric scales needed to be tested in a large sample.

This chapter explores religious experience emerged in a survey study and it is structured in six parts:

- Aims, methodology and data collection;
- Sample characteristics;
- Psychometric proprieties of “The Scale of Attitudes towards Catholicism”;
- Psychometric proprieties of “The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Roman Catholic Church”;
- Psychometric proprieties of “The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal relationship with God”;
- Acknowledgement of research limitations;
- Discussion and Conclusions;

2 Aims, Methodology and Data Collection

2.1 Aims of the Study

Procedures in which the study needed to be conducted were of great importance in relation to the large number of participants to be recruited representing a wide range of individuals' approach to Catholic belief in different ages, and in relation to the management of the study. Therefore, every distinct stage of the research sequence required being independently addressed and carefully planned.

Because of the favourable outcome of data collection and promising accomplishment of the research aims, the organisation of the process for assuring effective participation in completing and returning questionnaires will be explained in details.

The main object of this section is therefore to illustrate the procedures and methodology in which the survey study has been organised and conducted.

Several critical factors could have brought a very fruitful result in terms of the data collection, or in the opposite way, it could have led to a very unsuccessful consequence. They were linked to the identification of potential participants' features and to the necessity of reaching them with an accurate approach.

The decisive aspect for the recruitment of people in the sample was linked to the following vital factors: obtaining related permissions, research advertisement, research presentation, and planning of research meetings.

The whole thing required good management skills with an appropriate plan of monitoring and tactfulness. Therefore stages of the research process needed to be properly considered, realistically designed, and finally, productively employed. Before addressing this topic, with the purpose of facilitating the understanding of this process, type of data to be collected and aim of the research will also be briefly addressed.

This section will be structured taking into consideration the aims or the study, the necessity of covering a considerable range of different attitudes in participants' belief. It will be followed by the analysis of sources of potential bodies both lay and religious where participants would have been recruited. Finally it will address required authorisations from those in charge who also needed to know the research project and related questionnaires eventually delivered. Consequently research advertisement needed to be built up and carried out.

The methodology of these addressed problems will be reported within diverse procedures of which the survey study has been carried out.

The survey study was aimed to refine research tools while validating new developed scales through testing their reliability with statistical methods and to assess religious belief in a sample with Catholic participants.

Data collection was related to information about faith and religious practice:

- Any belief in God, any doubts in the existence of God, any experience of God, any search or desire for God and any attitudes critical of God or against Him.
- Content of Catholic Belief and the related strength of belief. A brief example could be: the persons of God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Mary. Other contents of belief were: the Holy Trinity, Kingdom of God, the Holy Church in its Magisterium and Ecclesial Hierarchy. Arguments against those beliefs needed in addition to be explored.
- Any Relationship with God and eventually the perception of one's belonging to God. Any involvement in this relationship and means of keeping it growing. Trust in God in hard situations and seeking for accomplishing his will.
- Feelings about God especially related to any involvement in religious practice or in the non-attendance of any religious commitment.
- Religious practice especially linked with the practise of the Sacraments on a regular basis and with the desire to stay in a state of grace.
- Any involvement in prayer group activities to spread the Gospel, giving preaching or testifying God's work.

2.2 Recruitment of Participants

2.2.1 Necessity of Reaching a Range of Participants with Different Strength of Belief and Dissimilar Religious Contents

One of the most challenging aspects of the recruitment of participants was obtaining a range of categories of belief within the sample. The whole sample had to include all possible categories of people including adults from different ages but all from within a Catholic background. First of, all both non-believers and believers needed to be addressed. Among believers, both people with religious practice and non religious practice needed to be gathered. Conventional believers and renewed believers needed also to be recruited in order to make evident their differences and eventually to explain and confirm the model.

Despite the fact that recruiting all possible nuances of types of believers and non believers was a hard task to complete, we assumed that in pursuing this aim the participants would have been good people to work with through assigning them a specific role with adequate motivation.

Participants' collaboration in the research project would have allowed recruiting those difficult to reach in a straight line such as: non believers or believers without any religious practice that could be easily reached through relatives or people with whom they have any sort of relationships.

Potential identified participants therefore needed to be reached, contacted, and motivated. The aim was to encourage a substantial contribution to the research project while presenting it among people supposing that this was the only manner to reach all range of people identified in the model. Otherwise, peoples' attitudes towards religious sensitivity would not have been manifested according to the hypothesised model. In this way different religious styles and belief attitudes would have arisen from the sample.

2.2.2 Identifying Organisations to Recruit Potential Participants

With the intention of acquiring an ample gradation of belief in potential participants, specific institutions, religious organisation, or religious prayer groups and associations have been determined as central sources for recruiting participants:

- Two Religious Congregations for contacting members of religious orders such as: Capuchins and Sacred Heart of Jesus orders respectively with male and female participants;
- One Catholic Parish for contacting directly parishioners of the local community and indirectly believers with not religious attendance or seldom religious practice;
- Catholic School for contacting adults who seem to care about Catholic values;
- Two Prayer Groups for contacting directly people involved in personal journey of faith and indirectly people not interested in faith. They were Neo Catechumenal for addressing any age in adulthood and Marian Movement for addressing young adults people aged about 25-35 years. This was an important aspect that needed to be dealt with. In fact they could have had a decisive role in recruiting young adults not interested in faith.

Participants have been explained with respect to the difficulty we had in recruiting those away from any religious involvement and we emphasised their active role in pursuing this task by giving them specific guidelines.

Along with this supposition, members of prayer groups interested in the research had been entrusted to speak to potential non-believers or to anybody without any interest in faith. Furthermore, they were entrusted with the related research packages. In the same way parishioners contacted in church had been instructed to talk about the research with people they knew who were believers somewhat reticent towards any religious practice or people who have “their own personal way of belief” that could be interested to participate in this research study.

Furthermore, in order to coordinate participants from different promising sources, a group leader for each of them needed to be identified.

Group leaders emerged spontaneously immediately after having made explicit the necessity and the importance of that role. It would have been easy to manage and supervise individuals who were willing to be involved in the research study. The main task was to keep a list of their names and contact details and maintain records of the number of research packages assigned to them.

The research study was conducted in harmony with the local diocesan Bishop in the Dioceses of Cagliari – Sardinia, and with the agreement of the appointed heads of the mentioned organisations.

of Capuchins, Head Nun of the “Holy Heart of Jesus” Convent, Parish Priest, Director of the Secondary Catholics School, and leaders of prayer groups were individually contacted and personally met in their offices where the research project and related questionnaires were illustrated.

In the Parish the research study was personally announced in every Holy Mass celebrated on Saturdays and Sundays and once a day in the weekday Mass for a period of almost three weeks, in order to induce an interest and awareness in parishioners before being involved. After the service people in charge of the main entrance could give details about planned meetings for potential participants to be recruited. Furthermore, the research project was advertised through some posters appositely prepared and hung in the entrance to the Church.

In the Catholic School the research study was also promoted among teachers and scholars' parents through a communication note in which a brief content of the project was given. Moreover venue and time for planned meeting was set for a complete explanation of the study and for the recruitment of participants. Furthermore, the research project was advertised through posters hung in the main hall of the school.

In the Religious Order Congregations possible participants were identified from the directors of the religious orders. They were Provincial Father in charged for the Capuchins order and the Mother Superior in the order of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

With respect to Prayer Groups research presentation took place on the same day of the prayer meeting in order to contact as many participants as possible.

2.3 Procedure of the Survey Study

This paragraph will present practical aspects mainly connected to the need to make participants understand the weight of the project. Therefore the importance of establishing a rapport with potential participants promoting the research with proper highlighting will be addressed. Moreover, the need to emphasise their valuable role for the outcome of the research by motivating them in their collaborative responsibility will be also illustrated. Furthermore this section will focus on methodology to which research packages have been delivered and set deadlines for returning them.

Content of the Research Package will be also reported.

2.3.1 Establishing Relationship with Potential Participants

As mentioned before, groups of participants were met through small planned meetings where the personal contact with the researcher would have improved people interest and strengthen the significance of the research.

Although meetings allowed the establishment of mutual consideration and active sharing about the importance of studying the role of faith in people's lives, it was made clear to individuals that they were under no obligation to participate in the study. It was made known that they could participate in an anonymous way. Therefore their autonomy in releasing personal information would have been highly respected. It has also been emphasised that in any case personal details would be treated with strict confidentiality.

Through these meetings research aims were better illustrated and participants had the opportunity to ask questions if they wanted to. After presenting myself, my work as a psychologist and researcher, the aim of the study was explained to the participants and the value of their contribution was underlined.

2.3.2 Motivating Participants

Participants have been made aware of the time consuming nature of the research. In fact to complete forms and questionnaires they would spend about two hours. In order to reward them they were offered a prize from a draw consisting of a trip of one week for two people in a locality of a pilgrimage in Italy or a trip in Rome. Because of this, tickets were included in the research packages and their associated numbers transcribed on the participants' codes.

2.3.3 Content of the Research Package

After research aims were verbally illustrated, participants were reassured that everything said during the presentation would be available in the cover letter of the research package. Content of the research package was also shown. It included:

- 1) A Presentation Letter with the ticket stapled on it;*
- 2) Two Consent Forms (one to be kept by the participant, one to be given back);*
- 3) Personal Details Form with for demographic information;*
- 4) Structured Questionnaire on Faith and Religious Behavior;*

In addition the research package included the three developed psychometric scales to assess attitudes towards Catholicism, content and strength of belief and the experience of any relationship with God. These scales were:

- 1) "The Attitude Toward Catholicism Scale";
- 2) "The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church";
- 3) "The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God"
- 4) "Life Satisfaction" (Diener, 1995)
- 5) "Vitality" (SF-36 MOS UK Version – Copyright 1992 New England Medical Centre Hospital)

2.3.4 Delivering of Research Packages and Deadlines for Returning

A number of 500 research packages were given out with visible enthusiasm by participants who manifested impatience in receiving them when the research project was presented. Very few people refused to take part in the research project.

Number of research packages distributed is reported in table 1.

Organisations	N° of Research Package distributed
Religious Congregations	30
Prayer Groups	110
Catholic Parish	180
Catholic School	180
Total	500

Table 1 Distribution of Research Packages

Participants' names were recorded together with their contact details and the number of research packages delivered. They have been given three weeks to complete and return through the group leader in charge of collecting them.

Participants responded devotedly to the research considering that percentage of fully completed research package was 93%. The success both in completing and returning the questionnaires must be due in the first place to the care given to respondent and to the organisational work thorough the process.

3 Characteristics of the Sample

3.1 Introduction

In presenting data, the sample will be described by addressing socio-demographic variables and variables related to the individual faith and religious behaviour. They allow outlining some of key faith's aspects in participants according to open ended questions assessed at the very beginning of the research. This section illustrates descriptive statistics according to the following variables:

- 1) *Socio-Demographic Variables;*
- 2) *Catholic Religious Education and Sacraments received;*
- 3) *Personal Perception of Being Catholic Believer;*
- 4) *Brief Assessment Faith's Milestones;*
- 5) *Importance of Faith and Spiritual Guidance;*
- 6) *Sharing of Faith with others;*
- 7) *Bereavement, Faith and Religious Practice;*
- 8) *Mental Health Characteristics*

3.1.1 Socio-Demographic Variables

The sample comprised 472 participants from both genders and from across the adult age range. Participants were 39% male and 61% female and their average age was 51.

A detailed description of the sample is reported in Table 1a.

RANGE OF AGE AMONG THE SAMPLE	Young Adults 25 – 36	Young Mid-life 37 - 48	Older Mid-life 49 - 60	Older Aged 61 – 76	Total
Gender					
Male	22%	11%	32%	35%	39%
Female	28%	22%	25%	23%	61%

Table 1a *Range of Age in the Sample*

Participants' education was nearly equally distributed. It mainly consisted of Secondary and High School, respectively 39% and 28%. Education ranging in the sample is illustrated in Table 1b.

Education	Total 100%
Primary School	19%
Secondary School	39%
High School	28%
Postgraduate	13%

Table 1b *Education of participants*

Secular status in the sample (77%) was mainly formed by married individuals (45%) followed by singles (17%). Widowhood was experienced by 3% of the participants. Religious status was 23%. Details of secular and religious status are reported in Table 1c

Secular and Religious Status	Total 100%
<u>Secular Status</u>	77%
- Single	17%
- Married	45%
- Separated	8%
- Divorced	4%
- Widow	3%
<u>Religious Status</u>	23%

Table 1c Secular and Religious Status

Participants were employed in 58% of cases as illustrated in table 1d

Occupation	Total 100%
Employed	58%
Unemployed	24%
Retired	18%

Table 1d Occupation

3.1.2 Catholic Religious Education and Sacraments Received

In the research study, the assessment of religious participants' background was vital. Therefore, although Catholic religious values were part of the curricula in school, participants were specifically asked about their religious education. Almost of all participants received a Catholic education, which was delivered both through attendance at the Catechism in parish churches and in primary and in secondary schools as a curricula subject. Results are reported in Table 2a.

Catholic Education	Perc.
Catechism in church and parish	89%
Religious education at school	94%

Table 2a Catholic Education

As illustrated in Table 2b, all recruited participants received the Sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, Holy Communion and Confirmation. Church marriage occurred in 94% of cases.

Sacraments Received	Perc.
Baptism	100%
Reconciliation	100%
Holy Communion	100%
Confirmation	100%
Church Marriage	94%
Ordination	23%
Sacrament of the sick	37%

Table 2b Sacraments Received

3.1.3 Personal Perception of Being a Catholic Believer

Before addressing very specific questions on participants' religious experience according to research perspective, the participant's view of how he/she would have described his/her religious standing was explored. For this reason participants were asked to state their own position related to their perception of being a Catholic believer and a practising believer. Results show that half of the participants in the sample considered themselves as Catholic and practicing believers.

Table 3 shows participant's perception in feeling as Catholic believers.

Religious Perception	Yes	Not Sure	No
Do you consider yourself a Catholic believer?	54%	9%	37%
Do you consider yourself a practising believer?	51%	2%	47%

Table 3 Personal Perception in feeling as Catholic Believer

3.1.4 Brief Assessment of Faith's Milestones

An initial assessment of the important aspects of belief was made. Some of the main questions were related to belief in God, in the Divinity of Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit, and in the Virginity of the blessed Mary. Individuals reported the highest result in their belief in God (78%), followed by the belief in Jesus Christ (59%) and the Holy Spirit (49%).

Significant results appeared in the belief in the Virginity of the blessed Mary and in the belief in the Pope's infallibility in proclaiming the Doctrine of the Church. Participants' answers to these questions were respectively "I do not believe" in 42% and 51% of cases.

Fundamental core of Catholic belief is reported in the Table 4.

Core of Catholic belief	Yes	Not Sure	No
Do you believe in God?	78%	3%	19%
Do you believe in the Divinity of Jesus Christ?	59%	9%	32%
Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?	49%	14%	37%
Do you believe in the Virginity of the blessed Mary?	52%	6%	42%
Do you believe in the Pope's infallibility in proclaiming the Doctrine of the Church?	47%	2%	51%

Table 4 Brief Assessment of Faith's Milestones

3.1.5 Importance of Faith and Spiritual Guidance

Participants were asked to rate the importance given to faith in their life. Faith was “essential” in 40% of cases, “very important” in 28% of cases, and “indifferent” in 9% of cases. Spiritual guidance was also addressed and it was reported in 61% of participants.

Participants’ answers are reported respectively in Tables 5a and 5b.

<i>How important is faith in your life?</i>	<i>Total</i>
Not Necessary	4%
Of a little Importance	19%
Indifferent	9%
Very Important	28%
Essential	40%

Table 5a *Importance of Faith in Life*

Spiritual Guidance	Yes	No
Do you have a spiritual guidance?	61%	39%

Table 5b Spiritual Guidance

3.1.6 Sharing of Faith

Individual tendency to share faith with others plays an important role in understanding if people integrate their relationship within the community as member of the same body of Christ. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that “Faith is not an isolated act. No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone” “The believer has received faith from others and should hand it on to others” “I cannot believe without being carried by the faith of others, and by my faith I help to support others in the faith” (art.166). Moreover “Since all the faithful form one body, the good of each is communicated to the others” (art. 947).

Participants’ attitude to share faith with others was explored in order to understand individuals’ disposition and experience in being “members of the body of Christ”. Participants were asked if their faith was a matter of a shared experience with others. Just 42% of them answered positively as reported in Table 6.

Sharing Faith	Yes	No
Apart from the Holy Mass, do you usually meditate Holy Scriptures, say prayers or worship with other believers?	42%	58%

Table 6 Sharing of Faith

3.1.7 Bereavement, Faith and Religious Practice

Relief from conditions of pain in times of hardship was also explored. The aim was to analyse if participants' faith provided any comfort in coping with bereavement they may have had to deal with in the past. Participants' results indicate that 46% of them found comfort in faith while dealing with grief and that frequency of religious practice at that time increased in 57% of cases and did not change in 34% of individuals.

Results are reported in Tables 7a and 7b.

Comfort experienced in Faith	Yes	No	Not Applicable
In time of hardship, faith, did faith provide comfort to you while facing bereavement of a close relative?	46%	12%	42%

Table 7a Comfort from Faith when Coping with Bereavement

Frequency of Religious Practice	Increased	Decreased	Did not Change
In facing this problem, your religious practice...	57%	9%	34%

Table 7b Religious Practice when Coping with Bereavement

3.1.8 Mental Health Characteristics

Psychological well-being features of the participants were explored through standardised scales of mental health. They were:

- Satisfaction with Life Scale is a short 5-item instrument designed to measure global cognitive judgments of satisfaction with one's life by Diener (1995).
- A number of 9 items for assessing Vitality were selected from the SF-36 MOS UK Version (New England Medical Centre Hospital Copyright, 1992).

SATISFACTION WITH LIFE

In relation to satisfaction with life 32% of the participants of the total, scored more than the average. Therefore individuals in the sample were generally satisfied although some areas of their lives would have needed some improvement.

People who scored in the range of below average were 19%. It is most likely that they could have had small but significant problems in several areas of their lives. Although in many areas they were doing fine, dissatisfaction across a number of life domains remained unresolved and unpleasant.

12% of participants scored dissatisfied with their lives. People of this range may have had a number of domains that were not going well, or one or two domains that were going very badly.

According to Diener (1995), life dissatisfaction could be explained as a response to a recent event such as bereavement, divorce, or a significant problem at work.

Individuals who scored highly in the satisfaction with life scale were 13%. They likely felt that things were mostly good in their life.

Respondents who were highly satisfied with their life were 8% implying that the major domains of their life were going well and that their life was enjoyable.

Opposite to them, individuals who scored extremely dissatisfied with their life were 6%. They probably were extremely unhappy with their current life. According to Diener (1995), in some cases this is in reaction to some recent bad event such as widowhood or unemployment. In other cases, it could be explained as a response to a chronic problem such as alcoholism or addiction.

Results for satisfaction with life are reported in tables 8a.

SCORES Satisfaction with life	Very High	High	Average	Below the average	Dissatisfied	Extremely Dissatisfied
	8%	13%	32%	19%	12%	6%

Table 8a Scores for Participants' satisfaction with life

VITALITY

Participants in the sample who reported the higher scores for vitality scale were 10% followed by those who scored high (16%). Respondents who scored average and below average, were respectively 28% and 17%. Individuals who reported extremely low scores for the vitality scale were 8% of the respondents in the sample.

Results for vitality are reported in table 8b.

SCORES Vitality	Very High	High	Average	Below the average	Low	Extremely Low
	10%	16%	28%	17%	11%	8%

Table 8b Scores for Participants' Vitality

4 Validation of “The Attitude Towards Catholicism Scale”

4.1 Introduction

This section will provide a description of the multivariate statistical techniques for analysing psychometric proprieties of “The Scale of Attitudes toward Catholicism”.

Before addressing different phases and procedures adopted, a brief account of statistical methodology employed for pursuing this task will be acknowledged with particular regard to exploratory factor analysis, which has been used to identify clusters of highly correlated items of the scale according to applied statistics procedures.

Methodological approach for analysing the scale has been principally conducted through item analysis and exploratory factor analysis. Items of the scale were correlated with other instruments of measurements.

Before conducting the factor analysis, item analysis was carried out to screen these items. Standard deviation and mean for the 38 items of the scale were examined. The range established for the mean was $\leq 2.5 \geq 5.5$ and standard deviation ≤ 1.5 . All the 38 items met this requirement and none of them was excluded from further analysis.

4.2 Exploratory Factor Analysis

Numerous statistical methods are used to examine the relation between independent and dependent variables. Factor analysis is used to study the patterns of relationship among many dependent variables with the goal of discovering something about the nature of the independent variables that affect them.

Many definitions are offered in the literature for factor analysis. A comprehensive definition was provided by Reymont and Joreskog (1993): *“Factor analysis is a generic term that we use to describe a number of methods designed to analyse interrelationships within a set of variables or objects resulting in the construction of a few hypothetical variables (or objects), called factors, that are supposed to contain the essential information in a larger set of observed variables or objects... that reduces the overall complexity of the data by taking advantage of inherent interdependencies [and so] a small number of factors will usually account for approximately the same amount of information as do the much larger set of original observations”*. (p. 71)

The purpose of factor analysis is to discover simple patterns in the pattern of relationships among the variables, determine if the observed variables can be explained in terms of a smaller number of variables called factors, establish the number of different factors needed to explain the pattern of relationships among particular variables, ascertain the nature of those factors, and finally evaluate how well the hypothesised factors are able to explain the observed data.

The purpose of this research phase was to identify the underlying components of attitudes towards religion in Catholic individuals and to develop an instrument of measurement that would yield reliable and valid measurements of these components.

The following paragraphs are organised according two main different phases in which variables have been rotated to identify meaningful components and consequently to select relevant items. Next sections will address:

- Identification of Components (Phases 1, 2 and 3)
- Exploring Items in Detail and Item Selection (Phases 4 and 5)

Exploratory Analysis will be explained according to the aims of the sub-phases of the research.

In order to explore principal factors on the correlations of the 38 items, principal component analysis for the Scale of Attitudes toward Catholicism was carried out. Items were rotated with both varimax and direct oblimin rotation methods with eigenvalues for more than one. The analysis was conducted in the course of three phases such as:

- Phase 1: Principal Component with Varimax Rotation (6 components)
- Phase 2: Exploratory Analysis with Oblimin Rotation (5 components)
- Phase 3: Exploratory Analysis with Oblimin Rotation (4 components)

Phase 1: Principal Component with Varimax Rotation (6 Factors Solution)

The aim of the analysis was to develop independent components in which scores on one factor are not correlated with scores of another factor and where the variance explained by each factor could be maximised.

In order to increase correlation between variables that highly correlate with the factors and decrease the correlation of variables with low correlation with the factors, principal component analysis with varimax rotation was conducted.

Primarily in the analysis with varimax rotation six factors were extracted accounting for 71% of the total variance.

Factor One seemed to reflect attitudes of people who can be described as believers. They tended not to argue about God's existence and in that sense had knowledge of God. The first component also included believers who seem to be having a strong personal experience with God. Although items in factor one loaded high (from .47 to .85), factor one wasn't able to distinguish between the two sub categories.

Factor Two appeared to represent attitudes of non believers. Items describing absence of any belief in God or doubts concerning God's existence loaded high from -.61 to -.82. Although factor 2 grouped items describing disbelievers, it seemed that it did not distinguish between those who deny the existence of God or any supernatural power such as atheists from those who might recognise

something above human intelligence such as agnostic' people. Again the second component was unable to distinguish between disbelievers.

Items in Factor Four grouped consistently together loading high from .83 to .65. They embodied attitudes related to people who were moving towards their religious conversion and starting with their personal journey of faith.

Items in Factor Five appeared to describe attitudes of people with reservations about God who were seeking a sort of belief and would have liked to have a grounded faith such as hesitant believers.

Items identified in Factor three and in Factor six did not seem to have any significant interpretation.

Concluding, principal component analysis with varimax rotation failed in forming distinct components. It also did not explain differences in attitudes towards religion especially regarding belief and disbelief. The analysis of principal component was unsuccessful in separating among different attitudes towards belief (Factor 1) and among diverse attitudes towards disbelief (Factor 2).

Phase 2: Factor Analysis with Oblimin Rotation (5 Factors Solution)

In order to increase the interpretability of the principal component solution through an association among components, the 38 inventory items were submitted to factor analysis with oblimin rotation. This solution permitted better represent actual relationships among variables for underlined attitudes. Five component solutions were found. The variance explained was 74 % of the total variance.

The first component appeared to describe opposite attitudes which seemed to characterise from devotion and commitment to God to absence of belief in God. This factor seemed to represent devoted versus atheist attitudes in people's belief.

The second component appeared to describe the attitude of believing in God, intended as a notion of knowledge with an absence of practice.

This factor thus seemed to represent a Cognitive Religious Attitude in which belief alone was sufficient. Attitudes of doubting and seeking faith was outlined in factor three, whereas component four seemed to represent an attitude towards faith and religious conversion. Component five seemed to have a connotation of distrust and suspect about both faith and convicted believers.

Phase 3: Factor Analysis with Oblimin Rotation (Four Factor Solution)

In order to improve the association of the components the explorative analysis with oblimin rotation was conducted with four factors. The variance explained was 72 % of the total variance. This solution would also have improved the component reliability and therefore the reliability of the scale.

Finally the components were definitely found and labelled as it follows:

Component 1: Belief versus Disbelief;

Component 2: Cognitive Belief;

Component 3: Doubting versus Looking for Faith;

Component 4: Towards Faith.

Table 1 illustrates a summarising of the three research phases before refining the scale with selected items.

Phase	Type of Analysis And Solution	Principal Interpretation of Components	Accounted Variance	38 Items	Cronbach Alpha
1	Principal Component Varimax Rotation 6 – Components Extracted	F1 Belief F2 Disbelief F3 Not Interpretable F4 Towards Faith F5 Reservation about God F6 Not Interpretable	71.39%	14 9 6 4 3 2	.7 .73 /
2	Factor Analysis Oblimin Rotation 5 – Components Extracted	F1 Devotion versus Atheism F2 Cognitive Religious Attitude F3 Doubting - Seeking F4 Moving Towards Faith F5 Distrust and Suspect	74.35%	22 6 4 4 2	.72 .71 .73 .75 /
3	Factor Analysis Oblimin Rotation 4 – Components Asked	F1 Belief versus Disbelief F2 Cognitive Religious Attitude F3 Doubting - Seeking F4 Moving Towards Faith	71.67%	21 6 4 7	.72 .61 .72 .9

Table 1 Initial Research Phases

The examination of the four components obtained with the factor analysis (4 -component solution) will be explained in detail in the next paragraph. It consists of the two final phases where some item were dropped out from the scale and some were retained. This process was made for instrument refinement. Cronbach's coefficient alpha reliability for each factor was recalculated and exploratory analysis was also re-conducted to address the variance explained by each component.

4.3 Exploring Four Factor Solution in Detail and Item Selection

Although the exploratory factor analysis with the four component solution allowed us to identify categories of attitudes towards Catholicism, the “Attitude toward Catholicism needed to be improved according to a selection of the most representative items.

The aim of this paragraph is to illustrate the methodology used in order to purify the scale through a process that involved two phases:

- Phase 4: Exploring Four Factors Solution in Detail and Selection of Items;
- Phase 5: Exploratory Factor Analysis for Selected Items.

Phase 4: Exploring Four Factors Solution in Detail and Selection of Items

The factor analysis with oblimin rotation revealed four main components representing different approaches for describing people’s religious attitudes. Items in each factor needed to be conceptually and statistically analysed. At this stage of the research it was very important to retain the most representative items in the scale, eliminating the misleading ones to increase internal consistency through Cronbach’s Alpha reliability test.

Factors are explained in detail in the next sections.

FACTOR ONE

Factor one explains the attitude of believing in God versus the attitude of disbelieving in God through 21 items listed in Table 2.

Component 1: Belief versus Disbelief

	ITEMS	Loadings
11	I do not believe in God or in a divine power	-.88
1	I Believe in God, I do not have any doubt that He exists	.85
22	I believe that Miracles are not just events happened in the past. God continues to act with prodigious work also today.	.79
6	Rather than God I belief in the power of human faculties such as willing, thinking and mental powers	-.78
16	I believe in Miracles described in the Bible and I ascribe them a supernatural explanation	.77
5	Rather than believing in God as a Creator I believe in the evolution theory	-.7
7	I do not belief in God but I wonder if something greater than human intelligence might exist	-.69
29	I would like to be able to completely rely on God	.68
20	I avoid expressing my own religious belief and my faith	-.68
2	God does not exist	-.68
30	I believe in the Providence. The whole of favorable circumstances that creates are not purely and simply coincidences. In them I can see God's intervention	.65
21	I mistrust over enthusiastic people who recount having had a great experience of God	-.63
28	God has been patient and merciful with me	.63
4	I Belief in a the existence of a supernatural or transcendent being	.58
17	I believe and I practice especially on Sunday which is the day dedicated to the Lord	.57
32	I feel safe and secure as God is with me and He loves me in a special way	.54
31	God is the strength of my life	.51
36	I need to feed myself with the Body of Christ and I wait to meet Him He dwells in me and me in Him	.51
35	I speak about God, of His infinite love for each of us, of His father's tenderness and His care for everyone	.49
37	My joy is in responding to God's love until I became assimilated to Him to know Him completely	.49
19	It is necessary to go to Mass: thanks giving is a duty	.41
Reliability Coefficients		Alpha = .72
Nº of Variables: 21		

Table 2 Initial Items and loadings for Factor One

Items loaded above .4 with an alpha reliability coefficient of .72.

Some of the items were removed within the factor in order to strengthen factor one and to maximise the reliability coefficient.

The criterion adopted in selecting items was:

- 1) Keeping items that could measure what they have been intended to measure and excluding those that could weaken the connotation of the factor;
- 2) Keeping items loading above .65.

Factor one resulted compounded by 8 items. Reliability for the factor was recalculated and it increased up to .93.

Table 3 shows final items and loadings for Factor 1

Component 1: Belief versus Disbelief – Selected Items

ITEMS		Loadings
3	I do not believe in God or in a divine power	-.88
1	I Believe in God, I do not have any doubt that He exists	.85
22	I believe that Miracles are not just events happened in the past. God continues to act with prodigious work even today.	.79
6	Rather than God I believe in the power of human faculties such as willing, thinking and mental powers	-.78
5	Rather than believing in God as a Creator I believe in the evolution theory	-.7
7	I do not belief in God but I wonder if something greater than human intelligence might exist	-.69
2	God does not exist	-.68
30	I believe in the Providence. The whole of favourable circumstances that creates are not purely and simply coincidences. In them I can see God's intervention	.65

Reliability Coefficients	Alpha = .93	Nº Variables 8
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Table 3 Final Items and loadings for Factor One

FACTOR TWO

Factor two explains the attitude of a particular style of belief where religious faith takes the shape of a notion or knowledge. It seems to represent a piece of information that stays at a cognitive level as data of fact. It seems to involve the believer in a cognitive level but it does not affect his/her life.

The factor analysis for factor two identified six items loading above .46 with a correlation alpha reliability coefficient of .61.

While five items loading above .65 were significantly meaningful in explaining the factor, the item 23 “*I feel more well-disposed to understand the role of faith in my life*” loading .46 actually was not distinctively representing the component.

By removing item 23 Alpha coefficient for reliability would have increased up to .82, therefore it has been dropped out from the scale.

Items forming factor two with their respective loadings are listed in Table 4.

Component 2: Faith limited to Cognition

ITEMS		Loadings
15	I think that it is not necessary to pray or go to church on regular basis unless for a particular and a personal need	.87
14	I believe in God and I practice my faith just in rare and limited occasions	.82
12	I believe in God although I sometime I have ambivalent ideas and reservations. It is difficult to believe in an absolutely manner	.72
13	I believe in God I know He exists, I am a believer although I do not practice my faith, the most important thing is to believe	.72
18	I do not think it is necessary to pray or going to church often otherwise there is a risk of becoming a fanatic	.65

Reliability Coefficients **Alpha = .82** N° Variables 5

Table 4 Items and Loadings for Component Two

FACTOR THREE

Factor three seems to show the individual's inner conflict between feeling the desire and aspiration towards God, and yet, being concerned about his doubtful or indifferent attitude towards the existence of God. This approach to belief can be ascribed to people whose religious attitude could be defined as agnosticism. This attitude seems to be correlated to the attitude of seeking faith and to the attitude of having a hesitant belief.

The factor analysis for factor three identified clearly this approach in which individuals were hesitant seekers. Four meaningful items loading above .65 with a correlation alpha reliability coefficient of .72 were found.

They are listed in Table 5 with their respective loadings.

Component 3: Seeking Faith

ITEMS		Loadings
10	I am looking for God and for faith	-.87
11	I would like to believe or to experience God	-.82
9	I have deep doubts about God's existence	-.68
8	I am indifferent towards God and faith	-.65

Reliability Coefficients **Alpha = .72** N° Variables 4

Table 5 Items and Loadings for Component Three

For the particular attitude of those kind of potential believers, factor three could be split in two sub factors such as:

Agnostics who are represented with items n. 8 and 9

Hesitant Seekers described through items 10 and 11.

Their Alpha Reliability Coefficients are respectively .79 and .85.

FACTOR FOUR

Factor four embodies a progressing approach towards faith in which individuals are moving towards their religious conversion and starting with their personal journey of faith. Furthermore, because they are cultivating a personal discovery in experiencing God, distinctive attitudes of desire of prayer and personal existence orientated to God was also found.

The factor analysis for factor four ascertained seven significant items loading above .4 and it showed a correlation alpha reliability coefficient of .9.

Items for factor four are listed in Table 6.

Component 4: Discovering Faith

ITEMS		Loadings
26	I have been living without God until a while ago and feel that I am moving towards Him	.87
25	I am starting or I have just started a journey of faith	.82
24	I am discovering an interest and a recall towards God	.74
27	I am discovering that God loves me although I have not cared about Him until now	.66
38	In God everything makes sense I am nothing	.55
33	I have a continuous desire to pray to God	.51
34	God is my breath, my life and my own existence	.49

Reliability Coefficients **Alpha = .9** N° Variables 7

Table 6 Items and Loadings for Component Four

With the intention of measuring attitudes towards conversion, misleading items were excluded. Therefore items n. 38, 33 and 34 (originally designed to identify believers with strong conviction of faith) were removed from factor four. Reliability for factor four was .86.

Final items and loadings for factor four are illustrated in Table 7.

Component 4: Discovering Faith – Final Selection of Items

ITEMS		Loadings
26	I have been living without God until a while ago and feel that I am moving towards Him	.87
25	I am starting or I have just started a journey of faith	.82
24	I am discovering an interest and a recall towards God	.74
27	I am discovering that God loves me although I have not cared about Him until this period	.66

Reliability Coefficients **Alpha = .86** N° Variables 4

Table 7 Final Items and Loadings for Factor Four

Summarising phase four, the initial principal component factor analysis with oblimin rotation was conducted on 38 items. It revealed four patterns of correlations that formed the main four variables of the scale.

Components	38 Items	% Variance	Cumulative %	Cronbach Alpha
F1 Belief in God	21	48.31	48.31	.72
F2 Faith limited to Cognition	6	13	61.32	.61
F3 Seeking Faith	4	5.49	66.81	.72
F4 Discovering Faith	7	4.84	71.66	.9

Table 8 Preliminary Analysis

As reported in Table 8, the preliminary analysis of the scale showed that cumulative variance accounted for 71% of the total variance was explained mainly by the first factor by 48% and by the second factor by 13%. The third and the fourth factor both accounted for 5% of the total variance.

In relation to the refinement of the scale through the item selection a total of 17 items were dropped from the scale. The final result was formed of 21 items.

Further factor analysis needed to be run in order to give an account of the variance explained by the four factors with the selected items.

This will be explained in the following section.

Phase 5: Explorative Factor Analysis for Selected Items

At the final stage of the research, once items within each factor were identified, factor analysis was conducted on the final 21 selected items.

The analysis confirmed four components in the scale, which are clearly visible in the scree plot. in Table 9.

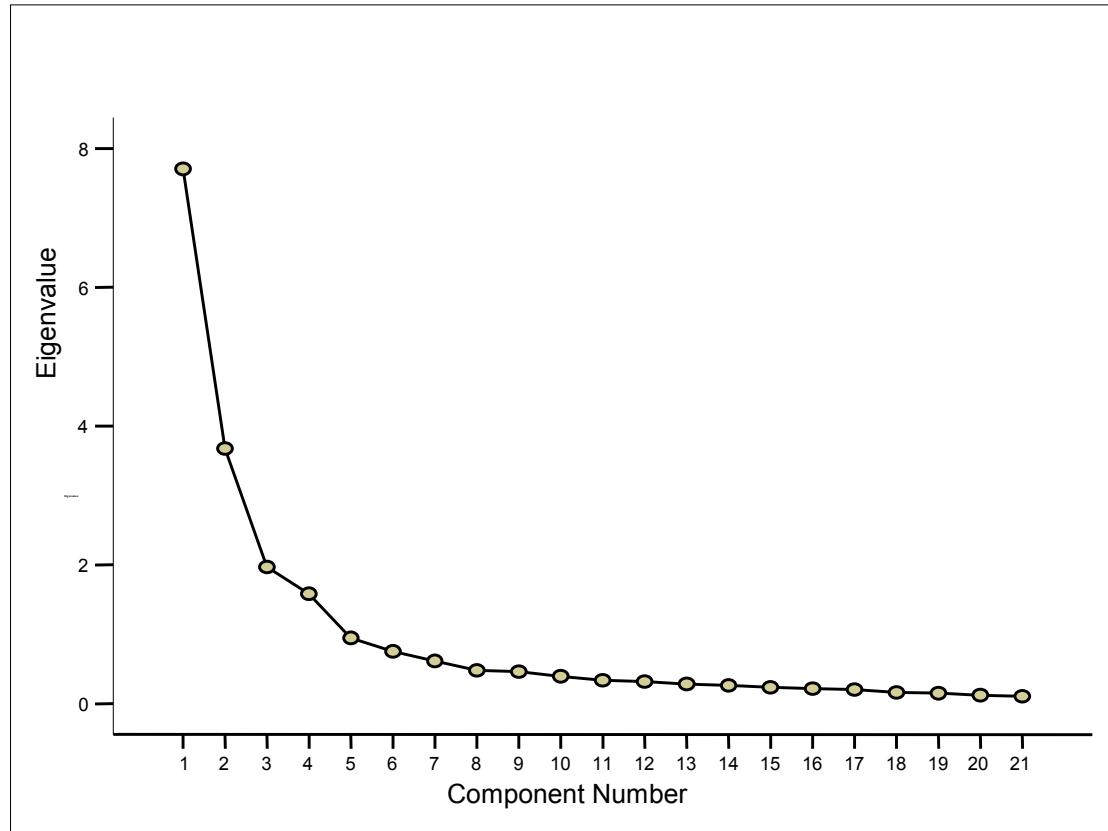


Table 9 Scree Plot

Factor analysis needed to be re-conducted in order to report the variance explained by each factor according to the re-distributions of the single items' loadings. In the following paragraphs discussion for the refinement of the scale will be reported with the results of the principal components analysis.

4.4 Discussion of the Refinement of the Scale

The factor analysis with oblimin rotation, 4 – components solution with 38 items, differs considerably from the factor analysis on the scale with 21 items. The latter embodies a significant enrichment of the scale. The main indicators of that improvement are:

- A) The explained variance
- B) The Alpha reliability coefficient

A) The explained variance

Although cumulative variance accounted for 71% of the total variance in both analyses, there is a substantial improvement in the refined scale, which is related to the variance explained by each single factor on the scale.

First of all, while in the preliminary analysis, the first factor explained 48% of the total variance. The accounted variance for the same first factor in the refined scale explained 37% of the total variance. Secondly, while in the preliminary analysis the second factor explained 13% of the total variance. The accounted variance for the second factor in the refined scale was able to explain 17% of the total variance. While in the preliminary analysis both the third and the fourth factors accounted for 5% each of the total variance. The variance explained for the same factors in the refined scale was respectively 9% and 7% of the total variance.

B) The Alpha reliability coefficient

The Cronbach Alpha Reliability coefficients in almost all factors improved notably. Coefficients' values above .72 were more than acceptable according to the literature in statistics. Reliability for the first factor, which was .72, improved to .93. An improvement of the correlation among items in the second factor was .61. By refining the understanding of the factor Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient increased to .82. Reliability coefficients for the third factor, originally of .72, improved to .86 after re-analysing the connotation of the factor.

Finally the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for factor four decreased to .86. Further consideration of the factor detected that there was an overlapping of concepts. In fact, items describing attitudes of discovering faith could have had similarities with items that could have been leading to people with very fervent faith.

Although these items were very interrelated, they were dropped from the scale. Lessening of reliability calculation can therefore be ascribed for this reason.

Final variables for the scale are illustrated in Table 10.

Components	21 Items out of 38	% Variance	Cumulative %	Cronbach Alpha
F1 Belief in God	8	36.70	36.70	.93
F2 Faith limited to Cognition	5	17.50	54.20	.82
F3 Seeking Faith	4	9.38	63.58	.86
F4 Discovering Faith	4	7.54	71.13	.86

Table 10 Final Variables for the Scale

4.5 Correlations among factor scores within the “Scale of Attitudes Toward Catholicism”

In the Attitudes towards Catholicism Scale, the strongest correlation among factors is represented by the attitude of “disbelief” associated to the attitude of “seeking faith” with $r = .421$, which is a highly moderated correlation. It is a positive association indicating that people with high scores in disbelief tend to have high scores in seeking for faith.

There are small inverse correlations between the attitudes of “faith limited to cognition” and the attitudes of “seeking faith” with $r = -.121$, and “discovering faith” where $r = -.226$. Moreover, the attitude of “seeking faith” is inversely correlated with the attitude of “discovering faith” although $r = -.096$ shows that this correlation is not significant.

There is not a significant correlation between “disbelief” and both “faith limited to cognition” ($r = -.047$) and “discovering faith” ($r = -.038$).

The results of the correlational analysis are shown in table 11.

Factors	Pearson Correlations	Disbelief	Faith Limited to Cognition	Seeking for Faith	Discovering Faith
Disbelief	Pearson Correlation N	1 470			
Faith Limited to Cognition	Pearson Correlation N	-.047 470	1 470		
Seeking for Faith	Pearson Correlation N	.421 470	-.121 470	1 470	
Discovering Faith	Pearson Correlation N	-.038 470	-.226 470	-.096 470	1 470

Table 11 Correlations among Factors

Scores for the “Scale of Attitudes Toward Catholicism” were calculated taking into account that:

- 1) Sub scores for each factor were useful to assess individual scores;
- 2) Factor scores were useful to distinguish among peoples’ attitudes.

Scores therefore were obtained according the criteria of factor scores and summing scores.

A) Factor Scores

Factor Scores for each factor were also calculated, as illustrated in table 12.

Factors	Items	Loading
Belief in God	1 I Believe in God, I do not have any doubt that He exists	.91
	3 I do not believe in God or in a divine power	.9
	2 God does not exist	.87
	22 I believe that Miracles are not just events happened in the past. God continues to act with prodigious work even today.	.83
	7 I do not belief in God but I wonder if something greater than human intelligence might exist	.72
	30 I believe in the Providence. The whole of favourable circumstances that creates are not purely and simply coincidences. In them I can see God's intervention	.71
	6 Rather than God I belief in the power of human faculties such as willing, thinking and mental powers	.68
	5 Rather than believing in God as a Creator I believe in the evolution theory	.65
Faith limited to Cognition	15 I think that it is not necessary to pray or go to church on regular basis unless for a particular and a personal need	.87
	14 I believe in God and I practice my faith just in rare and limited occasions	.73
	12 I believe in God although I sometime I have ambivalent ideas and reservations. It is difficult to believe in an absolutely manner	.72
	13 I believe in God I know He exists, I am a believer although I do not practice my faith, the most important thing is to believe	.71
	18 I do not think it is necessary to pray or going to church often otherwise there is a risk of fanaticism	.69
Seeking Faith	25 I am starting or I have just started a journey of faith	.92
	26 I have been living without God until a while ago and feel that I am moving towards Him	.92
	24 I am discovering an interest and a recall towards God	.74
	27 I am discovering that God loves me although I have not cared about Him until now	.62
Discovering Faith	10 I am seeking God and for faith	-.83
	11 I would like to believe or to experience God	-.81
	8 I am indifferent towards God and faith	-.55
	9 I have deep doubts about God's existence	-.53

Table 12 Factor Scores of the Scale

B) Summing Scores

Summing scores were calculated according to the mean of the scores for the item in each factor taking in account that the number of items would have differed from one factor to another:

It is illustrated in the Table 13.

Components	Total Score	Mean
Attitude towards Disbelief	38	4.75
Cognitive belief	35	5
Doubts and uncertainty	28	4
Conversion and undertaking faith	28	4

Table 13 Means and Total Scores

4.6 Intercorrelations among factor scores of “Scale of Attitudes Toward Catholicism” and factor scores of Mental Health Scales

Intercorrelational analysis among factor scores of the “Scale of Attitudes Toward Catholicism” and factor scores of the “Satisfaction with life Scale”(Diener, 1995) and factor scores of the “Vitality”(SF-36 MOS UK Version) was conducted to establish whether or not correlation was significant.

The strongest intercorrelation among factors of the scales was represented by the attitude of “Discovering Faith” associated to life satisfaction with $r = .528$, which is a highly moderated correlation. It is a positive association indicating that people who scored high on “Discovering Faith” factor tend to have high scores on satisfaction in life. Similarly, highly moderated correlation has been found in the same group of individual who also displayed high scores on vitality $r = .439$.

There were small inverse correlations between the attitudes of “Seeking Faith” and life satisfaction and vitality respectively $r = -.142$ and $r = -.137$

There was no significant correlation between “disbelief” and “faith limited to cognition” with life satisfaction and vitality.

The results of the intercorrelational analysis are shown in table 14.

Factors	Pearson Correlations	Life Satisfaction	Vitality
Disbelief	Pearson Correlation N	-.088 470	-.031 470
Faith Limited to Cognition	Pearson Correlation N	-.064 470	-.049 470
Seeking for Faith	Pearson Correlation N	-.212 470	-.137 470
Discovering Faith	Pearson Correlation N	.528 470	.439 470

Table 14 Intercorrelations among Factors of the Scale of Attitudes Toward Catholicism and factors of Mental Health Scales

4.7 Discussion and Conclusions

With the development of the “Scale of Attitudes Towards Catholicism”, religious sensitivity in the approach to the Roman Catholic Faith was explored and studied among individuals with a Catholic background.

The studying of religious behaviours of members of the Roman Catholic Church through in-depth interviews allowed research to devise items for developing a specific psychometric scale for assessing Catholic individuals.

Originally, 38 items forming the “Scale of Attitudes Toward Catholicism”, developed for measuring attitudes toward Catholicism, were formulated. The scale was analysed using the principal components analysis and enhanced with the illustrated process according to applied statistical methodology. Finally, this refinement procedure allowed the inclusion of 21 out of 38 items.

The analysis of the “Scale of Attitudes Towards Catholicism” confirms that this psychometric instrument has a good internal consistency and represents a multidimensional scale for assessing attitudes towards belief in the sphere of Catholicism.

The variable related to this scale of measurement allows research to rank past and present members of the Catholic Church on a continuum from non-believers to strong believers and also analyse features of different religious attitudes and approaches relating to the transcendent.

The scale represents the effort of assessing the attitudes towards Catholicism in individuals who embrace the belief professed by the Catholic Church. It also represents an effort to confer research as a reliable tool which also explores the nature of people’s relationship with God in a relatively neglected area in this field of research to date.

The “Scale of Attitudes Toward Catholicism” is illustrated in the appendix.

5 Validation of “The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church”

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this section is to provide a description of the multivariate statistical techniques used for analysing the psychometric proprieties of “The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church”.

The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence is an attempt to develop a tool of measurement of global principles proclaimed by the Roman Catholic Church where adherence to contents of beliefs and strength of firmness in faith are the central aspect of assessment.

Because the scale has been developed according to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church, which is all Catholic faith embracing, research assumes that concepts in the scale are reasonably organised around one-dimension.

Identifying themes of beliefs and quantifying the intensity to which believers adhere to them, is an essential part for separating believers’ features in investigating their certainty and doubts of faith.

The following sections will examine methodological criteria according to which the scale has been structured. They include testing reliability and item analysing. Furthermore analysis of factors in the scale has also been conducted in order to test the one-dimensionality of the scale.

Significance of fundamentals of belief has been explored to investigate the main core items, which represent essential principals of faith conviction.

All 105 items of the scale were analysed through mean and standard deviation. Criterion adopted was $\leq 2.5 \geq 5.5$ for the mean and ≤ 1.5 for the standard deviation.

Means’ values were above 3.81 and below 4.67. Standard deviations’ values were above 2.12 therefore none of them was excluded from further analysis.

A Cronbach’s alpha was performed on the 105 items of the scale. It was calculated to be .99 indicating that this measure appears to have a very good internal consistency.

5.2 Factor Analysis

The dimensional proprieties of the scale factor analysis was run both with varimax and oblimin rotation in order to test them.

A principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted on the correlations of the 105 variables. Three factors were initially extracted with eigenvalues equal or greater than 1. Cumulative variance was 93% explained mainly by the first factor for 90%. First factor embodied all 105 items loading above .89. The second factor accounted for 1.3% of the variance and the third factor for 1% of the variance.

A principal component factor analysis with oblimin rotation was also conducted. Variance explained was exactly the same but loadings for the items in the first factor were above .887.

A final principal component factor analysis with oblimin rotation was carried out asking for 1 factor that accounted for 89% of the variance counting items loading above .92.

Table 1 illustrates the unidimensional concept of the scale.

Factor Solution	Comp	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
		Total	% of Variance	Cumulative
Varimax / Oblimin Rotation	1	94.92	90.40	90.40
	2	1.36	1.30	91.70
	3	1.05	1	92.70
1 Factor Oblimin Rot	1	93.12	88.68	88.68

Table 1 Values Explaining Uni-dimensional Concept of the Scale

Factor analysis revealed that “The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” measures a one-dimensional concept, which is more evident in the scree plot in Table 2.

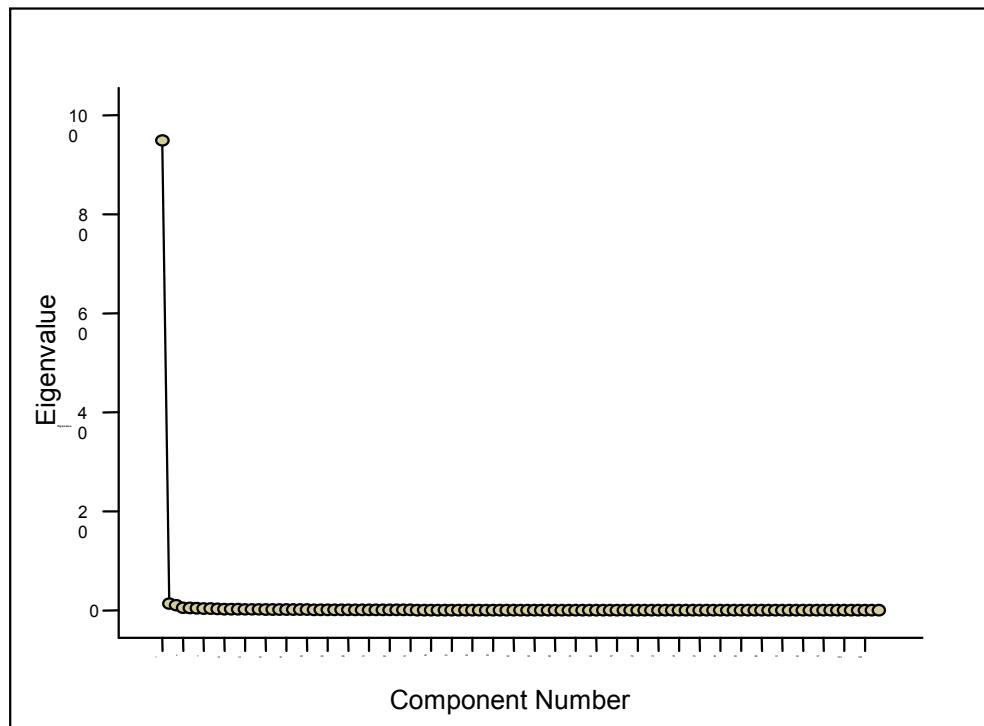


Table 2 Scree Plot

5.3 Intercorrelations among factor scores of “The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” and factor scores of Mental Health Scales

Intercorrelational analysis among factor scores of the “The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” and factor scores of the “Satisfaction with life Scale”(Diener, 1995) and factor scores of the “Vitality”(SF-36 MOS UK Version) were conducted to establish whether or not correlation was significant.

The correlational analysis revealed no significant correlation between the adherence to the Roman Catholic Creed and life satisfaction and vitality.

The results of the intercorrelational analysis are shown in table 3.

FACTORS	PEARSON CORRELATIONS	Life Satisfaction	Vitality
Adherence to the Roman Catholic Creed	Pearson Correlation N	.027 470	061 470

Table 3 Intercorrelations among the Factor of the “The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” and factors of Mental Health Scales

5.4 Discussion

The “Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” focuses solely on Catholic Doctrine and conceptualises individual adherence to its principles of belief. Items of the scale are formulated according to references from the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Being all positively phrased, they consent personal self-evaluation of specific belief to which individuals are invited to reflect on and answer according to their stance.

Although the scale relies heavily on face validity, subjects completing the scale are likely to be aware that they are answering questions related to the degree to which they accept the belief professed by the Roman Catholic Church, hence their actual belief, rather than what it is desired or hoped for, which supports the face validity of this instrument. In fact, validity was established according to the principles of the Roman Catholic faith through an assessment provided by four judges.

Factor Analysis of the “Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” retained all 105 items in a single component, accounting for 89% of the explained variance and loadings (representing the correlation between each item and the single component extracted) ranging from .92 to .99.

Utilising Cronbach’s coefficient alpha, an internal-consistency reliability estimate, the “Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” yielded a .99 correlation, indicating an impressive degree of internal reliability.

Completion of the scale seemed to be demanding. It is sensible to formulate a shorter version for a more straightforward administration, which might weaken the essential content of religious belief.

Content and strength of religious belief were investigated through the development of “The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church”.

The description and the development of the newly devised scale was a crucial part of this research, and contributed to literature in substantial terms by investigating the core of fundamental beliefs professed by the Roman Catholic Church. Items of the scale are statements of faith that have been scrutinised by theologians in order to outline religious beliefs in the Catholic domain.

With respect to the statistical tests performed in the construction of the scale, the factor analysis, scree plot, and Chrombach’s coefficient indicated that there was essentially one factor. “The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” has a remarkable degree of internal reliability.

Cognitive aspect of Catholic belief in its specific religious content and strength of religious belief were successfully addressed.

“The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” is illustrated in the appendix.

6 Validation of “The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God”

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to give a description of the multivariate statistical techniques for analysing psychometric proprieties of “The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God” according to the applied statistical procedures.

This scale of 131 items in Likert form, with seven responses from “I strongly disagree” to “I strongly agree”, measures one’s personal spirituality in terms of relationship with God.

This questionnaire considers the respondent’s description of his/her relationship with God and the description of God in His relationship with the participant.

In developing this instrument, reports of individual experiences that emerged in thematic analysis were integrated in the scale elucidated by the Catholic Doctrine. In fact, exploring in an open-ended way the experiences of a wide variety of people, plus a review of features of the spiritual life as highlighted in theological and spiritual Doctrine were used to develop this scale.

Means and standard deviations were analysed for 123 items of the scale. The criterion adopted was $\leq 2.5 \geq 5.5$ for mean and ≤ 1.5 for standard deviation.

In the first screening problematic items with means above 2.5 and standard deviations below 1.5 were withdrawn from the scale. Therefore they were not considered for further analysis.

Table 1 reports items that were dropped from the original scale.

Dropped Items		Means	Std. Dev.
66	I accuse God for what he does.	1.98	1.51
66	If I could I would punish God or I would take revenge against Him.	1.53	1.13
73	I angrily react towards God for what He allows to happen which is contradictory.	1.96	1.42
81	I am resentful with God.	1.85	1.17
109	God misleads me or deceives me.	1.81	1.26
113	God punishes me and he takes revenge against me.	1.89	1.39
121	God keeps himself as much distance as possible from me.	2.39	1.48

Table 1 Dropped Items

Item Analysis also revealed items that did not meet either set criterion. Especially it showed items with a mean below 2.5 and standard deviation above 1.5. These items were included for further analysis such as reliability test and exploratory factor analysis in order to understand to what extend they would have affected it.

Items with these features are listed in Table 2.

Problematic Items		Means	Std. Dev.
10	I keep myself as much distance as possible from God.	2.28	1.54
59	I angrily leave God out from my life. I completely refuse to have anything to do with Him.	2.14	1.69
104	God accuses me and blames me. He tries to let me believe that I am wrong.	2.48	1.60
119	God interferes in my private life, takes over, blocks or restricts me.	2.27	1.5
124	God doesn't love me enough as he never answers my prayers.	2.18	1.65

Table 2 Problematic Items

6.1.1 Organisation of Items

In the process of screening variables according to set criteria for item analysis, a number of items were dropped from the scale. Furthermore, before analysing Cronbach's Alpha reliability and loadings in factor analysis, variables were organised according to common themes shared among them. In particular variables aggregated were:

1) Items Related to Frequency of Religious Practice

2) Items Related to feelings associated with Occurrence of Religious Practice and Absence of Religious Practice

1) Items Related to Frequency of Religious Practice

A set of items related to frequency of the religious practice was created as religious practice was considered an indicator of commitment to God. Frequency to which believers used to relate to God was also assessed.

Indicators of religious practice were: Holy Mass, Communion, Confession, Scriptures Meditation, Adoration, Prayer in a prayer group, Rosary, Spiritual Retreat, Desert Days and seeking for Spiritual Guidance.

Frequency of Religious Practice		
Religious Practice in Believers <i>Items 69 a/l</i>	Mean	Std Deviation
Holy Mass	2.72	2.91
Communion	2.35	2.87
Confession	1.43	1.96
Scriptures Meditation	2.21	2.94
Adoration	1.56	2.37
Prayer in a Prayer Group	1.71	2.60
Rosary	1.73	2.76
Spiritual Retreat	.60	1.38
Desert Days	.36	1.13
Spiritual Guidance	.71	1.47
<i>Alpha Reliability Items 59 a/l .94</i>		

Table 3 Religious Practice

2A) Items associated with feelings in Occurrence of Religious Practice

Feelings associated with Religious Practice in Believers (Items 47 a/m and Items 52 a/m)	Mass - Communion Eucharistic Adoration		Confession Items 52 a/m					
	Means	Std Deviations	Means	Std Deviations				
PEACE – SERENITY	4.68	2.50	4.69	2.62				
LOVE for OTHERS	4.68	2.43	4.55	2.58				
JOY – HAPINESS	4.62	2.46	4.68	2.55				
HOPE	4.78	2.46	4.73	2.57				
COMFORT / CONSOLATION	4.61	2.46	4.65	2.56				
SEE and DO GOODNESS	4.60	2.45	4.71	2.54				
DESIRE to SHARE FAITH	4.52	2.47	4.46	2.52				
DESIRE to BE HUMBLE	4.78	2.49	4.68	2.53				
DESIRE to IMPROVE INTIMACY with GOD	4.80	2.53	4.69	2.62				
<i>Alpha Reliability</i>	<i>Items 47 a/m .99</i>		<i>Items 52 a/m .99</i>					
Alpha Reliability (Total Items 47 a/m and Items 52 a/m)								
.99								

Table 4 Feelings in Occurrence of Religious Practice

2B) Items associated with feelings in Absence of Religious Practice

Feelings associated with Absence of Religious Practice in Believers (Items 55 a/i)	Neglect in the Relationship with God	
	Means	Std Deviations
SADNESS	4.10	2.41
ABANDONMENT	3.80	2.40
LONELINESS	3.97	2.44
DANGER	3.84	2.38
DISCOURAGEMENT	3.92	2.42
DOUBT	3.85	2.40
UNEASINESS	3.86	2.41
IMPATIENCE	3.44	2.29
DESPAIR	3.22	2.28
<i>Alpha Reliability Items 55 a/I .98</i>		

Table 5 Feelings in Absence of Religious Practice

6.2 Factor Analysis

Before proceeding with factor analysis, some items of the scale needed to be reversed. Tables 6 and 7 show items for reversed scores.

Reversed Items

7	I confess my sins straight to God
10	I keep myself as much distance as possible from God
14	I am self sufficient and independent from God
16	I trust mainly in myself rather than God
17	I do not need to be connected with God to have a sense of purpose in life
19	I live as if God does not exist
32	Sometimes I feel disappointed with God
42	I feel very tense, shaky, wary, fearful with God
43	I feel detached from God
57	I do not take care about God
59	I angrily leave God out from my life. I completely refuse to have anything to do with Him
60	I despise or scorn God: his ways are wrong and mine are better
65	I take over from God, doing what I can I cannot be blocked or restricted by Him
75	It is sometimes difficult for me to be absolutely certain that God will always care for me
77	I do not see the reason to pray to God or to seek advice from any spiritual guidance to deal with my difficulties
80	Sometimes I am concerned that God is not with me or that I could leave me
85	Sometimes I think that my sins are not completely forgivable
89	The most important thing is to believe in God rather than being involved in the religious practice
91	The possibility of offending God does not concern me

Table 6 Items Reversed (Focused on Participant)

29	Some time I think that God could leave me or give up on me
98	God does not seem to have attention to me at all
102	God angrily leaves me out from His care
104	God accuses me. He tries to let me believe that I am wrong
110	God does not take into account my real needs
114	God is distant and detached from me
117	God does not care about my problems
119	God interferes in my affairs, takes over, blocks and restricts me
124	God doesn't love me enough as he never answers my prayers
130	God's attitude towards me is incoherent and contradictory. Sometimes he seems to be caring about my needs, sometimes he does not care

Table 7 Items reversed (Focused on God as perceived by the Participant)

In analysing the psychometric proprieties of the “The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the personal Relationship with God” attention must be paid to the scale that has been constructed in order to assess two dimensions of the relationship with God which are:

- The respondent’s inclination towards God. Section one of the scale in fact is related to “How to describe myself in the relationship with God”.
- The respondent’s perception of God in his relationship with the respondent. Section two of the scale is related to “How I describe God in his relationship with me”.

Because of its structure, conceptual and practical considerations needed to be applied to appropriate statistic methodology, both in terms of running factor analysis and exploring the reliability of the scale. Therefore psychometric proprieties of the scale have been analysed separately for the two different sections of the scale and it will be addressed separately on:

- “How I describe myself in my relationship with God” (Section One)
- “How I describe God in his relationship with me” (Section Two)

6.2.1 ***“How I Describe myself in my Relationship with God”*** (Section One)

A principal component factor analysis was initially run with varimax rotation to test correlations among 39 items of the scale. Two factors were extracted. The cumulative variance was 71% explained mainly from the first factor for which also embodied items loading above .57.

The oblimin rotation was also conducted. Cumulative variance was slightly higher (73%), two factors were confirmed with loadings above .52, and with an initial alpha Chrombac's reliability of .61.

A number of 13 items were dropped from the scale. Loadings of items were above .75 and alpha Chrombac's reliability for the section one of the scale increased to .91.

Section One					
Analysis	Components	N 27 Items	Cronbach Alpha	% Variance	Cumulative %
<i>Solution Adopted (oblimin)</i>	F1 Committed Relationship F2 Uneasy Relationship	21 6	.98 72	64.77 8.29	64.77 73.07

Table 8

Factor 1 Committed in the Relationship

The first factor, “Committed Relationship”, consisted of the individual religiousness, spiritual involvement indicating participation in the spiritual relationships, salience of faith and therefore personal commitment in the relationship with God.

The dimension explored in factor 1 describes also pervasiveness of the spiritual influence, spiritual contribution, and spiritual incorporation in the individual life.

Items of factor 1 are reported in Table 9.

Items of Factor 1		Loadin g
40	The Holy Communion is the source of a deep intimacy and unity with God	.94
13	God's presence is very strong in my life	.93
45	God is the centre of my interests: I share my plans with Him and I give him my activities	.92
22	My life is part of God's plan	.91
64	I find peace and refuge in God.	.91
28	God is essentially the meaning of my existence	.91

24	After confessing my sins and receiving their absolution I am certain of God's forgiveness	.9
26	I always try to carry out God's plans in my life	.9
23	Before taking a decision I look into God and pray the Holy Spirit to help me in finding the right direction	.89
84	I ask God to serve him according to his will	.89
4	I usually feel attached to God	.89
27	I have had an experience of God in which I felt transformed by his great love for me. I am re-born into a new life	.89
51	In order to receive God's forgiveness I confess my sins to a priest	.89
37	Without God my life would be meaningless	.88
33	For me it is essential to improve my relationship with God	.88
46	My relationship with God is essentially centred on the participation of the Holy Mass and practice of Sacraments	.88
75	I need to ask God to be focused on His will	.87
38	My relationship with God is essentially based on prayer and on meditation of the Holy Scriptures	.87
58	I am joyful, happy and very open to God	.87
20	I am comfortable that whatever might happen to me, hurtful or worrying because God will provide for me	.86
21	In taking decisions I usually ask myself what the will of God would be for me in that situation	.82

Reliability Coefficients

Alpha = .98

Nº Variables 21

Table 9

Factor 2 Uneasy Relationship

The second factor, "Uneasy Relationship", consisted of the individual struggle in relating to God characterised by attitudes insolence, disregard, disapproval and by feelings of anger, fear and suspicion. salience of faith and therefore personal commitment to the relationship with God.

The dimension explored in factor 1 describes individual's unpleasant disposition in approaching spiritual connection and therefore the "uneasy relationship" addressed, is characterised by disengagement from God. Items of factor 2 are reported in Table 10.

<i>Items of Factor 2</i>		Loading
60	I despise or scorn God: his ways are wrong and mine are better	.97
42	I feel very tense, shaky, wary, fearful with God	.98
59	I angrily leave God out from my life. I completely refuse to have anything to do with Him	.89
10	I keep myself as much distance as possible from God	.89
57	I do not take care about God	.79
32	Sometimes I feel disappointed with God	.76

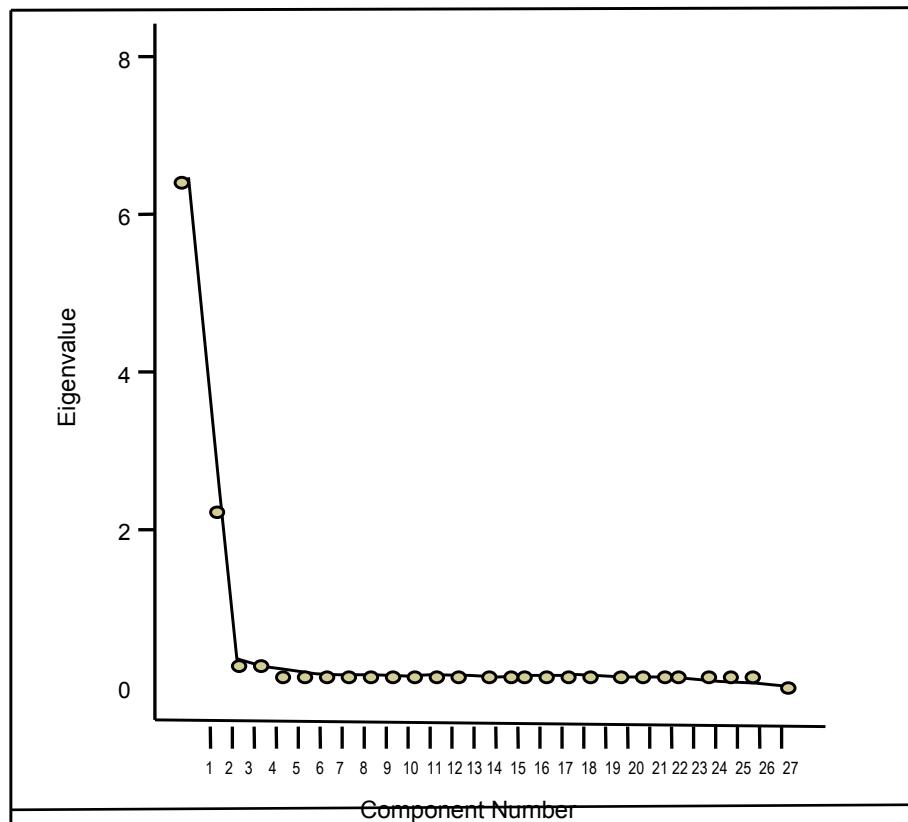
Reliability Coefficients

Alpha = .83

Nº Variables 6

Table 10

The two factors of the scale are clearly visible in the Scree plot in Table 11.



Describe myself in the Relationship with God" (Section One)

Table 11 Scree Plot "How I

6.2.2 “How I Describe God in His Relationship with Me” (Section Two)

A principal component factor analysis was initially run with varimax rotation to test correlations among 37 items of the scale. Three factors were extracted. Cumulative variance was 70%, explained mainly by the first factor (49%), second factor (12%) and third factor (4%). Loadings for the items were above .54.

The initial alpha Chronbac's reliability of scale was .87. The oblimin rotation was also conducted. Cumulative variance was slightly higher (75%) and two factors were found. Alpha Chronbac's Reliability for the section one of the scale was .91.

Section Two					
Analysis	Components	N 21 Items	Cronbach Alpha	% Variance	Cumulative%
<i>Solution Adopted</i>	F1 God's Love / Faithfulness to Me F2 God's Disregard of Me	14 6	.97 .94	57.06 18.47	57.06 75.53

Table 12

Factor 1 God's Love / Faitfulness as perceived by the Individual

The first factor, “God’s Love / Faithfulness”, consisted of the positive individual’s perception of God in the relationship with him /her. This dimension indicates individuals’ constructive attributions that the person ascribes to God towards himself / herself. Therefore it indicates a confident bond of the spiritual interaction, expressed the direction of God to the individual.

Factor 2 God's Disregard as perceived by the Individual

The second factor, “God’s Disregard”, consisted of the negative individual’s perception of God in the relationship with him /her. This dimension indicates individuals’ unconstructive attributions that the person ascribes to God towards himself / herself. Therefore it indicates a pessimistic bond in the spiritual interaction, expressed in the direction of God to the individual.

Items of factor 1 are reported in Table 13, items of factor 2 are reported in Table 14.

Items of Factor 1		Loading
123	God has a plan of love for my life	.91
106	God is very joyful, happy and very open with me	.87
116	God manifests a caring loving tenderness to me	.87
99	God clearly understands me and loves me even if I differ from His commands or I do wrong	.84
120	God takes care of his relationship with me although I sometimes do not	.84
125	When I am going through suffering and pain God's compassion and love are even stronger	.83
118	Even if I am in the wrong God seeks and looks after me. He never abandons me	.82
98	God does not seem to pay attention to me at all specially when I would need his support	.82
103	God is always with me and He looks for me with loving tenderness	.81
131	God's ultimate desire for me is my happiness.	.87
101	God's love for me is unconditional: He loves me the way I am	.87
92	I am certain about God's patience towards me for anything I do wrong or I can't help	.86
128	God would like me to improve my relationship with him	.85
105	God warmly and joyfully recognises the good I do	.84

Reliability Coefficients **Alpha = .93** N° Variables 14

Table 13

<i>Items of Factor 2</i>		Loading
124	God doesn't love me enough as he never answers my prayers	.9
117	God does not care about my problems	.84
114	God is distant and detached to me	.86
110	God does not take into account my real needs	.84
130	God's attitude towards me is incoherent and contradictory. Sometimes he seems to be caring about my needs, sometimes he does not care	.82
102	God angrily leaves me out from His care	.79

Reliability Coefficients **Alpha = .82** N° Variables 6

Table 14

The two factors of the scale are clearly visible in the Scree plot in Table 15.

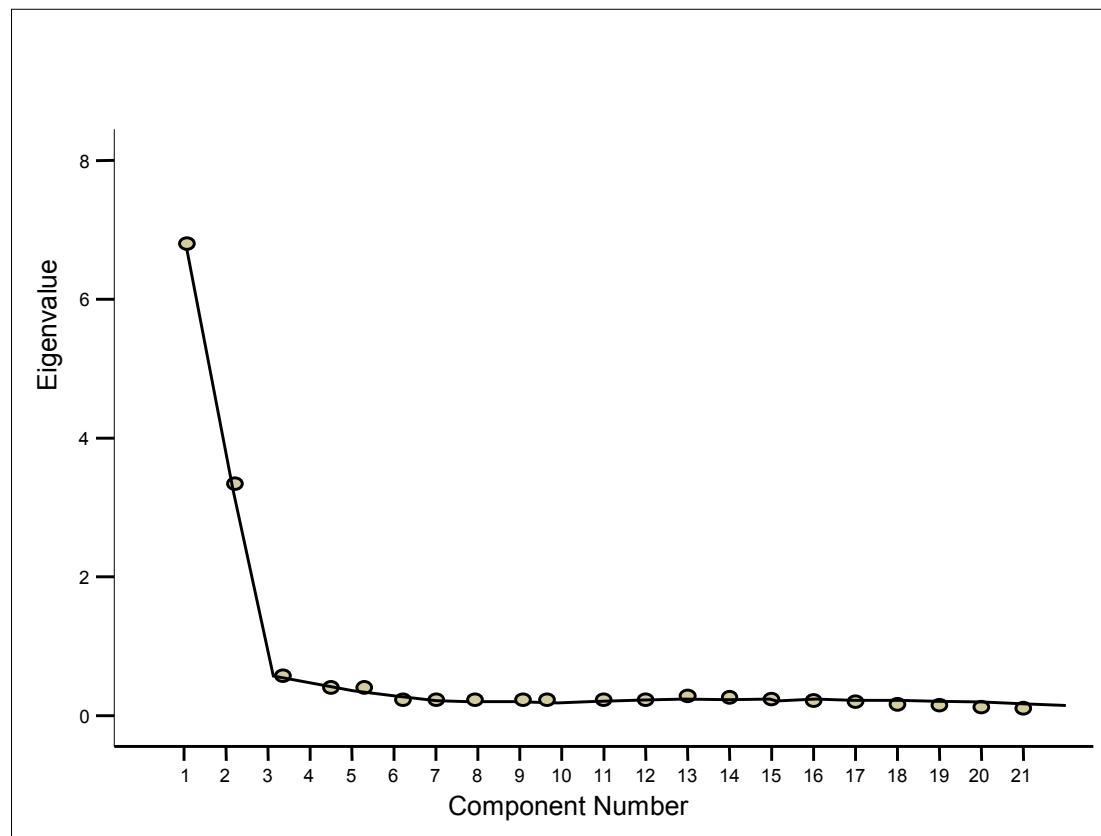


Table 15 Scree Plot “How I Describe God in the Relationship with Me” (Section Two)

The psychometric analysis of the original 131 items of the “Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God” revealed four dimensions with a total of 47 items.

Direction of the relationship and relative dimensions of the Scale are illustrated in table 16.

Direction of the Relationship	Components	Nº Items	Total Items
<i>How I Describe Myself in My Relationship with God</i>	Committed Relationship	21	27
	Uneasy Relationship	6	
<i>How I Describe God in His Relationship with Me</i>	God’s Love / Faithfulness to Me	14	20
	God’s Disregard of Me	6	

Table 16 Direction of the spiritual relationship and relative dimensions of the Scale

The “Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God” is illustrated in the appendix.

6.3 Correlations among Factors within the “The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God”

Correlations among factors in “The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God” show that individual spiritual relationship with God is described as reciprocal.

The nature of this mutual relationship is illustrated in the correlation between the factors of “Committed relationship with God” and God’s “faithfulness with Me” $r = .667$.

The factors of “Uneasy relationship with God” and “God’s disregard of me” correlates $r = .643$ indicating that people who manifest disengagement and defensiveness in the relationship with God tend to perceive a sense of neglect and lack of care from God.

Pearson Correlations	Factors	Committed Relationship	Uneasy Relationship	God's Love / Faithfulness To Me	God's Disregard of Me
Pearson Correlation N	Committed Relationship	1 470			
Pearson Correlation N	Uneasy Relationship	-.419 470	1 470		
Pearson Correlation N	God's Love / Faithfulness to Me	.667 470	-.351 470	1 470	
Pearson Correlation N	God's Disregard of Me	-.483 470	.643 470	-.371 470	1 470

Table 16 Correlations within Factors of the Scale

6.4 Intercorrelations among factor scores of “The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God” and factor scores of Mental Health Scales

Intercorrelational analysis among factor scores of the “Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God” and factor scores of the “Satisfaction with life Scale”(Diener, 1995) and factor scores of the “Vitality”(SF-36 MOS UK Version) were conducted to establish whether or not correlation were significant.

The strongest intercorrelations among factors of the scales were associated to the individuals’ perception of God as disregarding in His relationship with the respondents and the degree of their life satisfaction and vitality. In fact, the factor of “God’s disregard of me” was associated to life satisfaction with $r = -.551$, and to vitality $r = -.597$ which are a highly moderated negative correlations. They indicate that people who scored highly on “God’s disregard of me” factor tended to have low scores on satisfaction in life and in vitality.

Other significant correlation between the other dimensions of the “Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God” and life satisfaction and vitality scales were not found.

The results of the intercorrelational analysis are shown in table 17.

Pearson Correlations	Factors	Life Satisfaction	Vitality
Pearson Correlation N	Committed Relationship	.043 470	.028 470
Pearson Correlation N	Uneasy Relationship	-.086 470	-.095 470
Pearson Correlation N	God's Love / Faithfulness to Me	.078 470	.062 470
Pearson Correlation N	God's Disregard of Me	-.551 470	-.597 470

Table 17 Intercorrelations among Factors of The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God and factor scores of Mental Health Scales

6.5 Discussion and Conclusions

This study enriched literature on spirituality, by providing a scale which was shown to be a reliable measure for assessing spiritual connection as a mutual relationship with God.

Factor analysis indicated that the “Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God” measured two constructs in the mutual approach of the spiritual connection:

- When exploring the direction of the connection of “Individual towards God” “Committed relationship” and “Uneasy relationship” were identified as factors;
- When exploring the direction of the connection of “God as perceived by the Individual” “God's Love / Faithfulness to Me” and “God's Disregard of Me” were identified as factors.

The analysis of the scale confirms that this psychometric instrument has a good internal consistency in both directions of the relationship and represents a multidimensional scale for assessing the nature of the spiritual connection.

Hopefully this approach to spirituality would represent a conventional reference point and would be adopted as a shared benchmark which would be established and accepted for its proprieties and would be used in general agreement among researchers of psychology of religion and spirituality.

7 Acknowledgement of Research Limitations

The survey study was conducted with strict methodological research criteria. However, several limitations can be acknowledged in these following areas:

- a. The research findings rely solely on the basis of a single study. Therefore, although it was assessed by formal statistical significance with a *p*-value above 0.05, findings of the study were not replicated.
- b. Intercorrelations between the developed scales to assess religious belief in Catholic individuals including “The Attitude Towards Catholicism Scale”, “The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” and “The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God” may be inflated by the strong Catholic tradition culture in the population of the sample in Cagliari.
- c. Moreover, for the same reasons the intercorrelations between factors of the developed scales and factors of standardized scales of mental health such as factor scores of the “Satisfaction with life Scale”(Diener, 1995), and “Vitality”(SF-36 MOS UK Version) may preclude being able to draw any accurate conclusions about cause and effect relationships between these characteristics.

Because of the above limitations, results of this research study must be interpreted with caution.

8 Discussion and Conclusions

The study has been conducted in different stages. A preliminary study was carried out through exploratory interviews, in-depth interviews, and thematic analysis. These stages were performed in order to elicit information for the subsequent development of psychometric scales.

Psychometric proprieties of the above scales were tested in a sample of 472 individuals with a Catholic background. The scales were analysed and enhanced according to the applied statistical methodology.

For all of the three scales analysis confirms that new developed psychometric instruments have a good internal consistency and high validity.

PART IV

CHAPTER VIII

Use of the Scales in Practice:

A study of Traumatic Bereavement

1 Introduction

One of the principal aims of the research study was the development of psychometric instruments suitable to assess religiosity among Catholic individuals and their validation within a Catholic sample. A further stage of the research was to investigate the usability and the value of these scales in a mental health context.

In order to pursue this aim, the developed scales in the Catholic domain were used to investigate the religious experience in individuals exposed to the traumatic loss of their spouse / partner involved in the World Trade Centre (WTC) tragedy in 2001.

The role of religious belief in practice was therefore analysed in relation to resolution of complicated bereavement, and explored in association with mental health outcomes.

This chapter begins with some considerations regarding complicated grief and analyses the process of grief following the terroristic attack, mainly taking into account individual religious variables connected to psychological response to death in the process of mourning.

The chapter therefore, examines the spiritual side connected to this process and presents an empirical study conducted in New York to address implications of spiritual values and religious beliefs as mediator variables in bereavement resolution. Consistently with the literature addressing the process of “re-creation of significance”, Pargament (2007), any individual personal change in his / her religious values towards bereavement resolution will be the focus of the research illustrated in this chapter. Moreover, in relation to the religious re-creation of significance in the process of mourning, along with the assessment of any change or renovation of personal religious core of values, religious forgiveness was also considered as a key factor in understanding death and in applying religious strategies of coping when dealing with death and resolving complicated grief.

Aspects connected to the re-evaluation of the religious experience, religious forgiveness, and the usage of religious strategy of coping, were explored in relation to the constructive significance given to religious belief. In addition, religious re-creation of significance in the process of mourning was also explored in relation to well-being indicators such as life satisfaction and levels of depression.

Design study, its analysis, and results will be addressed in this chapter together with new specific measurements that were devised and tested by means of a small empirical study.

This study represents a first attempt to investigate usability and value of the psychometric scales in applied and practical situations of “real life”. The opportunity was provided when the researcher was offered a job in New York investigating the WTC disaster, and was afforded the opportunity to employ these scales with a Catholic sample who had suffered a major trauma.

Considering that the developed scales were used retrospectively to assess individuals’ religious core of values, the relatively short time spent in New York, the difficulty for recruiting participants, and the limitations regarding the untested versions of the scales of exploring “real life situations”, the study is admittedly approximate in exploring religious belief.

The chapter will address:

- The understanding of complicated bereavement following terroristic attacks and its implications when studying bereavement. This will be analysed in section 2.
- The Design of the study. This will be analysed in section 3.
- Data analysis. This will be presented in section 4;
- Discussion of the results. This will be presented in section 5
- Summary and discussion. This will be analysed in section 6.

2 The Understanding of Complicated Bereavement following Terroristic Attacks and Implications when Studying Bereavement

In order to understand complicated bereavement following terroristic attacks a general overview of the following topics will be given. They consist of:

- Analysis of the impact of complicated grief on mental health;
- Analysis of the process of grief and psychological variables in mediating its resolution;
- Analysis of spiritual coping variables suggested as a model in mediating the relationship between the individuals' search for meaning, creation or re-creation of significance based on their religious values, and bereavement resolution;
- Consequent necessity to analyse the importance of assessing conservation of means and ends of significance provided by religious belief and to explore people's fluctuation in their religious core of values when dealing with the mourning process.

2.1 An Outline of Complicated Grief and Mental Health

Conjugal bereavement itself is one of the most troubling misfortunes besetting individuals. Regrettably, emotional distress can be even more overwhelming and incapacitating when conjugal bereavement is experienced after a traumatic event. It can result in tremendous loss, which is likely to be associated with potential maladaptive aspects of grief affecting mental health conditions.

Clinical research shows that circumstances of complicated grief are significantly and positively correlated with severe posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorders, and depression, and that, in the long term, the impact of disastrous mass-violence acts complicated grief can be significantly and strongly associated with a range of psychiatric conditions.

September 11th 2001 was a tragic day with tremendous loss of life, physical injuries, significant emotional and psychological distress, and property damage in “ground zero.” Such a massive, disruptive, and violent event resulted in an unexpected, and extremely upsetting and traumatic bereavement. Complicated grief in survivors and in people involved in the WTC disaster resulted in significant levels of what has been described as “traumatic distress”.

According to a group of researchers from New York State Psychiatric Institute investigating complicated grief among bereaved adults 2.5 and 3.5 years after the September 11th attacks, approximately 88% of the participants in a group of 704 bereaved adult screened positive for complicated grief. Moreover, approximately half of them met criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder, major depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation post September 11th. The majority of the participants with complicated grief reported receiving grief counselling and psychiatric medications (Neria and colleague 2006).

In New York there were many organisations to support bereaved individuals and families, as well as evacuees, first responders and crisis/rescue workers, persons living, working, or attending school near the WTC site, and people who provided services for those affected by 9/11. Services included individual and group psychotherapy, mental health counseling and psychosocial support, psycho-educational workshops on topics such as trauma, stress management, bereavement, religious counselling, and complementary holistic services.

New York has many particular faith- based programmes such as “Faithful Response” managed by the Lutheran and the Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, Saint Vincent Catholic Medical Centre’s WTC Healing Services and many others providing faith-based mental health care and counselling along the Christian tradition. Unfortunately, it seems to be difficult to access data in relation to the use of religious coping strategies in connection to the process of mourning in individuals who experienced traumatic bereavement following the WTC attacks on September 11th from these charities and no profit organisation, no research into this specific topic has been published to date.

2.2 The Process of Complicated Grief and Religious Coping

The grieving process reflects the individual uniqueness. It may occur in several stages, and it can be exhibited in different order, duration, and intensity. Therefore, it is widely accepted that stages of grief are not linear. Shock, disbelief, denial, bargaining, guilt, anger, depression, and eventually acceptance of the loss and hope can be displayed in different ways during the grieving process.

Some people go through the stages quickly or even skip some stages entirely. Other people seem to linger or return to certain stages after a period of feeling better. Eventually, bereaved persons will work through the process of grieving. With time and support, they will acknowledge and understand the loss, experience the pain of separation, and adapt to a new life and identity.

The outcome of the process of grieving and the actual operational strategies of coping depend on a wide range of variables. Some of these are individual’s developmental phases in understanding death, previous experiences with death, nature of the relationship with the person object of the loss and quality of this relationship, time available in preparation for the loss and circumstances of the loss, cognitive and emotional skills of the affected individuals to experience and resolve grief, personality characteristics, personal religious beliefs and spiritual values and so on. All these aspects seem to play a fundamental role in the grieving process.

Moreover, according to Janoff-Bulman, (1992) assumptions about the world are intimately connected to an individual’s worldview, and they may shift or change in response to trauma. As a consequence, beliefs about the world and how it operates will affect individuals’ coping process.

Research on world assumptions has investigated their relationship to traumatic events and demonstrated that positive world assumptions may be part of coping with trauma, (Janoff-Bulman, 1989) and that sense of vulnerability has been found to predict style of religious problem solving (Webb, M., & Whitmer, 2001)

Several studies have shown that religious strategies of coping continue to predict outcomes of life stressors significantly, even removing the effects of global religious measures (Pargament, 1997). These findings suggest a model in which spiritual coping methods mediate the relationship between religious variables and the outcomes of stressful life events.

The empirical study presented in this chapter will analyse some of the most common characteristics of religious beliefs and aspects of spirituality in bereaved individuals, and explores their role as mediating variables in resolution of bereavement and their implications on mental health outcomes. The aspects of religious beliefs and spirituality will be described around a sub set of variables, that for simplicity will be addressed together as “religious experience” or “religious core of belief”.

They are conceptualised around the assessment of any extent of change in personal religious values, which will be addressed as “individuals’ revaluation of religious belief.”

Moreover, consistently with literature addressing the search for significance and the re-creation of significance, religious forgiveness and religious coping will be investigated according to the individuals’ religious belief adjustment in their journey of faith where in times of disruption, and of traumatic distress objects of significance may be transformed.

2.3 The importance of assessing individuals’ revaluation of their religious belief in connection to religious coping methods

Although conservation of means and ends of significance provided by religious belief could appear reasonable under normal circumstances, intense sorrow and grief as a result of the tragedy of September 11th could lead individuals to question about the significance they ascribe to their actual belief. It implies that people may acquire a new awareness towards their beliefs, reflect on the values according to their frame of reference and finally apply them to their daily lives.

People with any sort of beliefs, spiritual values, and different experiences in their journey of faith, when coping with traumatic life events might be moved by a need or an effort to change their values in order to recreate new ones. They might revoke old values, and discover that their beliefs are not able to sustain them in time of troubles. Therefore, when a traumatic experience occurs, faith is ultimately tested and it might become questionable.

The WTC tragedy is an illustrative example for studying the extent and the nature of people’s core values after the occurrence of their traumatic loss to understand any adjustment in individuals’ religious values or any drastic change in their faith. Therefore, the assessment of

individuals' revaluation of their religious belief allows the establishment of any conservation, transformation, re-evaluation, and the re-creation of their religious significance. Moreover, by associating it with any strategy of religious coping, the mourning process can be investigated in relation to religious core of belief variables and in connection to the bereavement resolution, in individuals who were affected by the tragedy on September 11th.

2.4 Forgiveness in Acts of Murder in Connection with Religious Coping

Despite the fact that forgiveness has been explored both in its religious construct and outside any religious framework, and addressed across different disciplines, literature is almost deficient in considering forgiveness in circumstances of murder. In fact, most of the reviewed literature focuses on the human aspects of forgiveness, mainly looking at its interpersonal dimension, which is particularly studied in close relationships, and mainly explored through key problems associated with giving and receiving forgiveness. Therefore, common themes of research of psychological aspects of forgiveness are linked to the emotional issues associated to it such as resentment, poor self-esteem, defensiveness, self-righteousness, hardness of heart to make forgiveness possible.

Although forgiveness has become an active research area in psychology, literature on forgiveness fails to examine instances of forgiving when a personal relationship with the offender does not exist, or is not even possible or not advisable for individual self protection, as it often occurs in criminal offences. Moreover, literature seems to be almost completely absent in circumstances of complicated grief due to massive disruption and loss of life as it happened in ground zero on September 11th 2001.

One of the immediate first questions that may arise is the necessity to understand the reason why forgiveness can be seen as a part of the subject. It may be viewed as unrealistic to address forgiveness in connection with acts of murder, and it may seem unexpected and challenging to bring it into therapy sessions and using it with clients dealing with their mental health issues.

The reason why forgiveness is called into research and into clinical practice is because of its nature of being an effective coping method. In fact, the process of forgiving relates to the re-creational process of significance, the generation of new values, and to the different set of priorities which are determining elements for promoting radical chance in people's core of significance and in the purpose of the life that they can build around it.

Because forgiveness incorporates characteristics of transformation of meaning, which has been particularly found in religious coping methods, forgiveness allows individuals to re-establish or create new objects of significance when processing cognitive and emotional information of the traumatic event during. As a consequence, in their process of healing it allows individuals to shift their focus from anger, despair and pain, into a new understanding of the offence and compassion for the offender. In fact, by relieving the feeling of resentment against the offender, assimilating new

aspects of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural set of values, and re-creating new objects of significance, individuals are lead towards their conflict resolution.

Applied research in counselling offers many examples of how transformational aspect of forgiveness is used in clinical treatments. It provides a coping method, which fosters radical changes in therapy.

For this reason, forgiveness has been addressed in the process of change in individual psychotherapy, in marital therapy, in pastoral care and counselling (McCullough, Pargament, and Thoresen, 2001), and used among those who have been victims of different offences (Freedman & Enright, 1995; McCullough & Worthington, 1994; Helm, 2005).

Although specific literature on forgiveness in acts of massive murders and religious coping methods involved in mourning process has been hard to find, McCullough and Worthington's conceptualisation of forgiveness offer a reference point for considering some of the typical aspects of forgiveness coping methods on human interactions.

Forgiveness is placed as an empathy-facilitated set of motivational changes (McCullough and Worthington, 1991). This implies a process that occurs when individuals inhibit their motivations to seek revenge and pursue conciliatory behaviour towards those who acted destructively against them. This notion seems to suggest the idea of an inner individual movement which leads to a conciliatory behaviour that operates from apology, through empathy and then to forgiveness.

This process seems to imply the idea of a personal inner adjustment, development, and transformation, which is similar to the process of coping when the search for significance is undertaken and meaning is found.

In this view, the route to forgiveness, as well as the coping process, assumes a new transformational connotation. In fact, by shifting from anger, resentment, hurt, and fear associated with an offence, individuals progress towards constructive cognitive, emotional, and behavioural patterns and develop constructive attitudes towards the offender.

Exactly as with religious conversion process and religious coping process, forgiveness too can be regarded as a process of achieving life transformation by the promotion of attitudes such as reconciliation and peace.

However, it cannot be denied that some devastating, hurtful, disruptive acts, which may be "unforgivable" can be easily incorporated in such a compassionate attitudes towards the offender. In addiction, it seems to be unclear whether or not forgiveness depends on interpersonal repentance, or it is conditional upon a person who first asks for forgiveness.

Moreover, in relation to challenging circumstances such as acts of murder or acts involving large-scale victims, as happened in the WTC disaster, the question is about how forgiveness can effectively occur.

It was difficult to find precise answers in literature review to respond to these questions. Further literature analysis lead to an ultimate question: “Who does forgiveness belong to”?

The answer seems to dwell in the religious component of forgiveness, which process incorporates characteristics of transformation of meaning as well as religious coping, although has not received much attention in relation to its divine dimension.

Forgiveness has been mainly addressed in its pure human characteristic and deprived of its divine aspect elucidated by theology. While human forgiveness applies and operates at the levels of secularism, and therefore away from traditional religious values, religious forgiveness is central to religious belief especially in Christianity.

Forgiveness in Christian faith is personified by Christ who was made man to re-establish the alliance of the relationship between God and humankind as quoted in Romans 5:18-19 “So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of One, many will be made righteous”.

Christian Theology of divine forgiveness, already explored in some of its constitutive elements in Chapter II, assumes the primacy of the approach over psychological aspects of forgiveness.

By accepting the Theological assumptions in describing divine forgiveness, and recognizing it as a mystery of salvation which is beyond rational explanations, an effective and productive dialogue between theology and psychology of forgiveness can be successfully established to explain how some devastating, hurtful, disruptive and “unforgivable” acts could lead to attitudes of true reconciliation and peace in connection to divine forgiveness as means of religious coping in challenging situations.

2.5 Ethical Issues: Avoiding Re-traumatisation

The traumatic experience of the individuals involved in the WTC attack who participated in the final study was of immense care and attention in order to avoiding re-traumatisation.

Awareness of the sensitive process allowed researcher to address carefully every single stage of the research in order to ensure no harm for the participants. In fact, because of its intimate and intrusive nature, awareness of the appropriate interventions in the research process was assured to maximise security and emotional safety for each of the participants.

In this research project, strict guidelines were applied since the design of the study was submitted for approval.

The design of the study, described in the research application titled *“Exploring Spirituality and Religious experience in Catholic Believers. Assessing Mental Health and Psychological Well-being”*

in people involved in the WTC tragedy while coping with spouse bereavement” was authorised by the School of Psychology Ethics Committee on 1st February 2005.

Moreover, in order to ensure high standards of understanding the traumatic experience in the research process the following safeguards were advocated:

1. Adherence to the Clinical Psychology Code of Ethics;
2. Usage of the informed consent in engaging participants in research; the informed consent applied to the decision to participate, a knowledge of the likely consequences of participation, information about the purposes of the research and the use of data.
3. Development of personal awareness of the stages and areas of inquiry and ethical issues were related to: inviting for participation, informing and respecting the participant, contracting / negotiating the nature of the survey, conducting the survey, interpreting information, developing theory, act and style of writing for communicating findings.

Some questions that were taken into account for conducting the study were:

- Does the presentation of the research for recruiting participants have any influence on the study?
- How free are the respondents? Are they aware they are participating in research?
- Does the participant have a contract of engagement?
- Is there sensitivity to the needs for health and safety?
- Does ownership cease once the 'data' is moulded into theory?

4. Development of personal awareness of the areas of inquiry and ethical issues were related to: the context of the researcher which required to operate within a social and professional framework, the framework of the research and its value, and primary consideration to the participant. In fact, the danger of traumatisation or re-traumatisation during the process of research, which is a widely accepted principle in therapy is not always strictly adhered to research.

In conducting research ethical inquiry to maximise the security and emotional safety for participants was assured by:

- entering into specific contract with the participants;
- respecting privacy and confidentiality;
- specifying how to conduct survey respecting boundaries;
- agreeing on counselling support availability;
- stating usage of the information;
- stating how to conduct the analysis;
- obtaining specific permission to extrapolate and interpret, and being faithful to data collection;
- agreeing on publication and writing.

2.6 Need for Short Version of Scales Assessing Catholic Belief in Addition to Concurrent

The use of short and reliable questionnaires in psychological and medical studies is increasingly demanded due to further facilitate clinical assessments, to respond to research reasons for instance in small samples, and for ethical reasons.

In order to conduct the empirical study involving a small number of traumatised participants, a short version of “The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” – 105 question were designed comprising of 32 items.

The short version of the “The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” was needed in addition to the concurrent long version in order to look backwards prior to the WTC attack, in order to make an assessment of Catholic religious belief in participants before being exposed to their loss.

The long version of the “The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” was needed to assess participants’ religious beliefs while coping with their loss.

There was no need to devise a short version of the “Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God” as the factor analysis of the 131 items original scales allowed reducing a considerable number of items up to a total of 47 items.

3 Design of Study

This section will examine:

- General research hypothesis and association between variables;
- General aim of the study and overview of the main research questions;
- Questionnaires and scales of the research package:
 - Questionnaire design for collecting qualitative data;
 - Choice of scales for addressing complicated grief;
 - Choice of scales for addressing mental health measures;
- Design of the new scales to measure: Re-evaluation of Religious Experience, Religious Coping and Religious Forgiveness;
- Selection of items for shorter scales assessing Catholic belief;
- Acknowledgement of limitations of the research;
- Research stages;
- Advertising research, recruitment of participants, and administration of questionnaires;
- Value of the study: relevance of Catholic belief scales.

3.1 General Research Hypothesis and association between Variables

Although in previous studies, religious experience was not restricted to a particular religious belief, they have shown a clear connection between stressful life events and spiritual involvement.

The focus of this research project is to limit the main research variable, which is the religious experience, to a Catholic sample. The aim is to fulfil research gaps while exploring spiritual support provided by religious experience in offering coping methods for conserving objects of significance that can be threatened or harmed while dealing with their grief.

The assessment of the religious experience will attempt to establish whether participants conserved, transformed, re-evaluated or re-constructed their object of significance (means) and the ways of reaching it (ends) while coping with their traumatic loss.

Another research aim is to determine whether or not religious experience (independent variable), that might evoke any religious strategy of coping and any attitude to forgiveness (intervening variables), could possibly have an impact on bereavement resolution (dependent variable).

Religious strategies of coping will also be addressed in relation to indicators of mental health (dependent variable) such as levels of depression and rates of life satisfaction in order to determine whether attitudes arising from spiritual experience might have had any impact on mental health outcomes, and consequently, had any effect on psychological well-being in bereaved individuals. The relationship between the independent, intervening, and dependent variables of the overall research hypothesis are shown in Table 1.

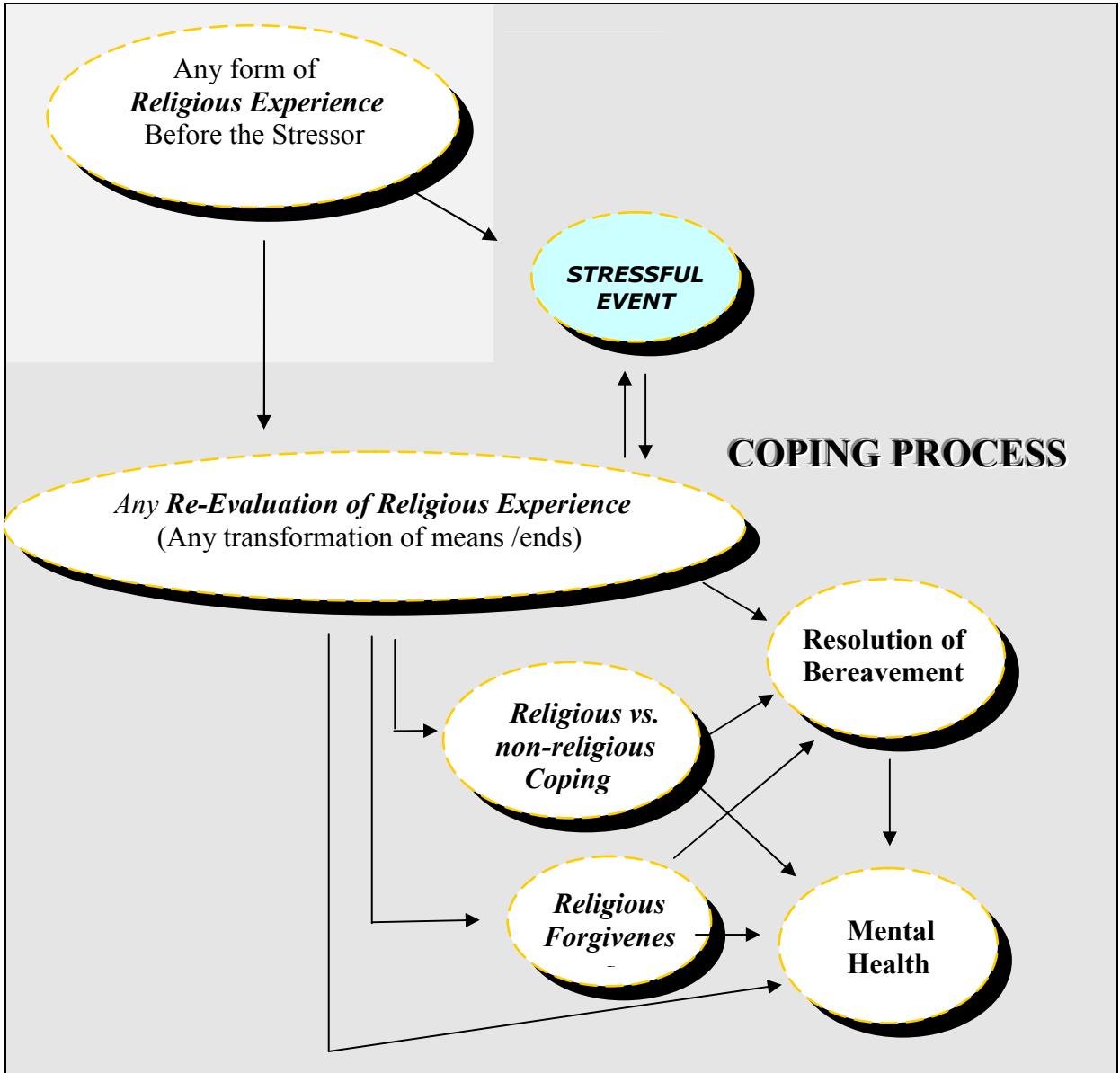


Table 1 Overall Research Hypothesis

The research focuses on the assessment of religious belief in Catholic bereaved individuals involved in the World Trade Center (WTC) disaster prior to the stressor, namely the attack on the WTC. Moreover, while in the process of mourning, re-evaluation of religious experience, forgiveness described as a motivational transformation, and religious coping will also be investigated.

Aspects connected to a re-evaluation of the religious experience, the usage of religious strategy of coping, and religious forgiveness will also be explored in relation to the constructive significance given to religious belief, which will be also explored in relation to the resolution of bereavement and mental health outcomes (depression, and life satisfaction).

3.2 General Aim of the Study and Overview of the Main Research Questions

The aim of the research project was to:

- A. Study the role of spiritual belief in practice in a sample of bereaved individuals dealing with traumatic loss by assessing their religious experience prior to and after the disaster.
- B. Explore religious experience as a dynamic process of faith growth or faith dissolution in bereaved individuals in order to assess any occurrence of faith re-evaluation in participants' religious experience following the disaster;
- C. Study any relationship between participants' re-evaluated religious experience and their religious/non religious strategies of coping;
- D. Study the role of religious vs. non religious strategies of coping in improving bereavement resolution;
- E. Study the role of religious vs. non-religious strategies of coping in relation to indicators of psychological well-being.
- F. Study any relationship between participants' re-evaluated religious experience and their attitude to forgiveness;
- G. Study the role of religious forgiveness in improving bereavement resolution;
- H. Study the role of forgiveness in relation to indicators of psychological well-being.
- I. Study any relationship between participants' re-evaluated religious experience and their resolution of bereavement
- J. Study any relationship between participants' re-evaluated religious experience and their mental health outcomes.

According to the temporal sequence they were presented, general research questions were:

Assessment of Religious experience *prior* to the WTC attack

- What kind of religious approach did the participants have?
- Were they committed to God or did they use to have an uneasy relationship with God?
- How did they perceive God? Loving and caring or unfaithful?
- Did the participants differ according to the strength of their faith and in their relationship with God?

Assessment of Religious experience *immediately after* the WTC attack

- Did religious experience change in participants after the event? If it did, how?
- Was there any particular religious attitude that might have been a determining factor in influencing resolution of bereavement?
- Was there any particular religious attitude that might have promoted any spiritual coping?
- Was there any particular religious attitude that might have promoted any forgiveness?

- Did religious experience fluctuate in bereaved persons after the loss of their spouse? If it did, how?
- How did faith change in people whose faith was limited to a mere matter of cognition?
- Were they disoriented, confused about their actual belief?
- Did they desire to strengthen their faith?
- How did faith change in people who were moving towards faith after the disaster?
- Did they improve their relationship with God?
- Did they worsen their relationship with God? Did they lose their faith?
- How did religiosity change in people who had reservations towards faith?
- Were they disoriented? Did they lose their faith?
- Did compromised relationship with God make worsen?
- Did faith change in people who defined themselves as non-believers? If it did, how?
- Did they desire to acquire faith?
- Did faith stay stable in believers?
- Did they improve their personal relationship with God?

Assessment of Strategies of Coping in dealing with traumatic loss: the role of religious experience and the role of religious forgiveness

- Did positive religious experience allow any religious coping to rise?
- Did positive religious experience allow any religious forgiveness to rise?

Resolution of Bereavement (as dependent variable)

- Did religious ways of coping have any impact on resolution of bereavement?
- Did religious forgiveness have any impact on resolution of bereavement?
- Did improvement of relationship with God have any impact on resolution of bereavement?

Mental Health Outcomes

- Did Religious ways of coping have any impact on rates of Mental Health indicators, such as declining rates of depression levels or rising rates of life satisfaction?
- Did forgiveness have any impact on rates of Mental Health indicators, such as declining rates of depression levels or rising rates of life satisfaction?

Resolution of Bereavement (as independent variable)

- Did resolution of bereavement have any impact on depression?
- Did resolution of bereavement have any impact on life satisfaction?

3.3 Questionnaires and Scales Employed

3.3.1 Questionnaire Design

A general questionnaire was devised to address mainly qualitative data of the participants in order to describe the sample. Data in the questionnaire included the following sections:

- Personal details;
- Religious background;
- Faith and religious experience before the stressor;
- Religious experience in the mourning process.

3.3.2 Choice of Scales for Addressing Complicated Grief

Individuals who lost loved ones unexpectedly and tragically are faced with a difficult grieving and adaptation process that is likely to impair their psychological well-being and increase their psychological distress. Given the stress associated with traumatic widowhood, and potentially associated with the maladaptive aspects of grief, the resolution of bereavement was assessed with the “Scale of Complicated Grief” by Prigerson, 1995.

The Prigerson’s inventory of complicated grief is an unidimensional instrument of measurement, which was shown to be a reliable scale for the assessment of individuals who experienced high levels of extremely upsetting distress to inordinate adversity. This scale was chosen for its high internal consistency and its test-retest reliabilities are evidence of its reliability. Moreover, the scale’s total score association with severity of depressive symptoms and a general measure of grief suggested a valid, yet distinct, assessment of emotional distress.

3.3.3 Choice of Scales for Addressing Mental Health Measures

Psychological well-being and emotional distress are often regarded as distinct if not complementary dimensions of mental health. However, health researchers agree that among one of the well-being dimensions, life satisfaction, is quite strongly correlated with the distress dimension of depression.

In accordance with the current literature, indicators of mental health taken into account in this study will be therefore levels of life satisfaction and rates of depression, which will be considered as dependent variables for exploring mental health outcomes.

Life satisfaction and rates of depression will be measured with the “Satisfaction with Life Scale” by Diener, 1985 and with Beck’s Depression Inventory, 1961. They are standardised psychometric scales widely used by in health and clinical settings, and in health and clinical research.

- The Beck’s Depression Inventory

is one of the most widely used instruments to identify and assess depressive symptoms, and has been reported to be highly reliable regardless of the population.

It consists of a twenty-one question multiple choice self-report inventory. It has a high coefficient alpha, (.80) its construct validity has been established, and it is able to differentiate depressed from non-depressed patients.

- The Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener)

is a measure of life satisfaction, which is one factor in the more general construct of subjective well being. It consists of 5-items that are completed by the individual whose life satisfaction is being measured.

Instruments of measurement already standardised have been used for addressing indicators of mental health. They are illustrated in Table 2.

Variables	Scales already Standardised
Resolution of Bereavement	Scale of Complicated Grief (Prigerson, 1995)
Indicators of Mental Health	Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, 1985) Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, 1961)

Table 2 Instruments of Measurement already standardised

Grief and Mental Health will be analysed in relation to the variables of “Religious Coping” and “Forgiveness” which should also be predictors of a positive resolution of bereavement.

Therefore, resolution of complicated grief will be explored as both a dependent and an independent variable. It is a dependent variable if determined by any strategy of coping and/or any attitude to forgive. It is an independent variable if considered as an independent predictor of mental health outcome. The research hypothesis among variables of the study and relative instruments of measurement are reported in Table 3.

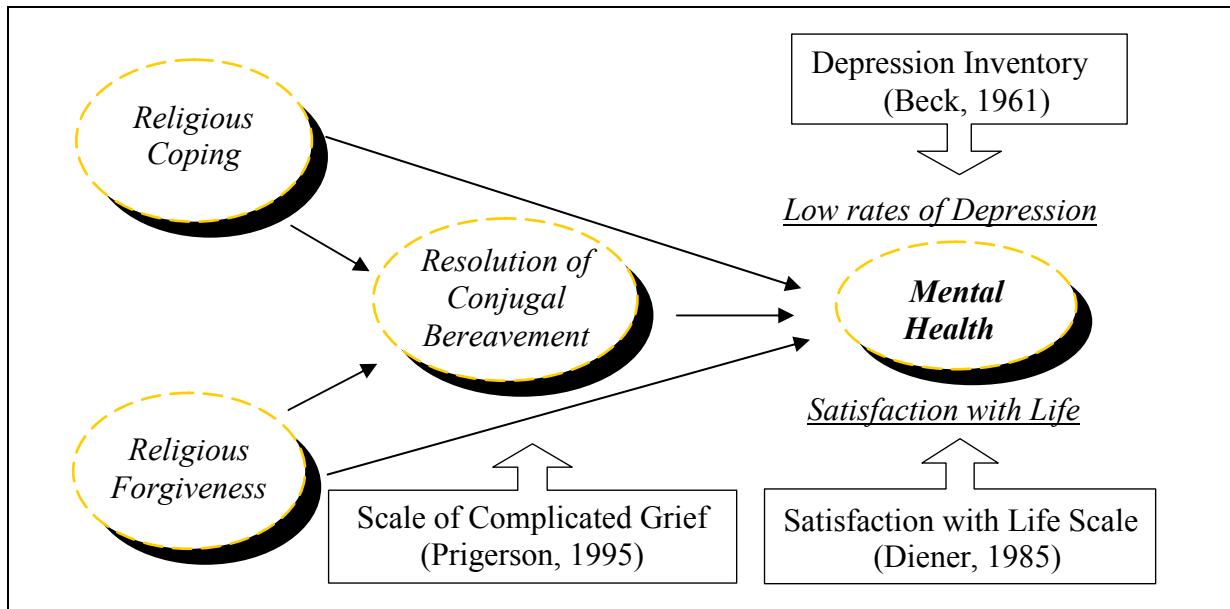


Table 3 Relationship among variables and Scales of Measurement

3.4 Design of the New Measures

Relationships among quantitative variables for measuring dimensions of religious experience to explore occurrence of religious coping and religious forgiveness were devised for the purpose of addressing the specific research questions of the empirical research study.

Variables measured in the new scales for the empirical study will be described together in detail with their specific research hypothesis and association, while psychometric work for their validation will be presented in the data analysis section. In fact psychometric proprieties of the new scales pertain to quantitative data analysis of the sample and reflect the experience of bereaved individuals participating in the research.

Characteristics of each of the new developed scale will be illustrated in the following sections. An overview of the devised tools is reported in table 4.

Variables	New Scales Created for the Research Study
Religious Experience Reframed	The Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale
Religious vs. Non-Religious Coping	Religious vs. Non-Religious Coping Scale
Religious Forgiveness	The Scale of Religious Forgiveness

Table 4 New Instruments of Measurement Developed for the Empirical Research Study

3.4.1 Description of the Re-evaluation of Religious Experience Scale

The Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Variable Scales was devised to describe any personal faith adjustment after the occurrence of the distressing event. It represents an instrument to determine whether or not the experience of bereavement following the WTC attack shattered the nature of the individual religious significance.

Assessing bereaved individuals in this variable, allows this study to have a shared starting point for the religious assessment among individuals commonly exposed to the experience of loss. Therefore, the re-evaluation of the religious core of values variable becomes the ultimate variable for establishing further relationships among other research variables. The re-evaluation of the religious experience variable allows to:

- Assess any occurrence of faith re-evaluation in participants religious experience following the disaster;
- Distinguish between different religious attitudes in bereaved individuals;
- Establish the dynamic process of faith growth or faith dissolution in individuals exposed to traumatic bereavement.
- Relate individuals' novel religious attitude to other variables such as: attitude to forgiveness and religious coping, and levels of life satisfaction and rates of depression.

The re-evaluation of religious core of values in bereaved individuals included one 5-point Likert scale with nine questions. The items devised for the re-evaluation of religious experience scale are reported in Table 5.

1) Improving my relationship with God
2) Developing a closer intimacy with God
3) Desire to strengthen my faith
4) Desire for a closer relationship with God
5) Desire to acquire faith or wishing to believe
6) Questioning myself about the meaning I give to religious belief
7) Resentment towards God with loss faith
8) Disoriented and confused about my personal faith as a fulfilment source in my life
9) Uncertain and doubtful about meaning of my actual belief

Table 5 Items of the “Re-evaluation of religious Experience Scale”

3.4.2 Description of the Religious vs. Non-Religious Coping Scale

The religious vs. non-religious coping scale was devised to describe spiritual ways of coping methods after the occurrence of the distressing event. It represents a variable able to determine whether or not the experience of bereavement followed after the WTC attack was dealt with by means of religious values.

The research hypothesises that religious ways of coping variable (mediating variable) may be impacted on by the re-evaluation of the religious experience (independent variable) and that if a positive relationship is confirmed it can be a predictor of both the positive resolution of bereavement, and of positive mental health outcomes (dependent variables).

Religious vs. non Religious Coping Variable may affect rates of mental health indicators by lowering rates of depression levels and by raising rates of life satisfaction. Moreover, religious coping could be a mediating variable in health outcomes if a positive re-evaluation of the religious experience may occur.

The evaluation of the religious vs. non religious strategies of coping in bereaved individuals included one 5-point Likert scale with ten questions. The items devised for the scale are reported in Table 6.

1) Looked more into relationship with God for finding a new direction for living
2) Prayed to make sense of the situation with God
3) Looked for spiritual support
4) Did what I could and put the rest in God's hands
5) Dealt with my feelings through God's love
6) Depended on my personal strength relying on myself
7) Tried to find a purpose in life without any religious support
8) Tried to deal with my feelings without God's help
9) Tried to make sense of the situation without relying on God
10) Made decisions about what to do without God's help

Table 6 Items of the “Religious vs. Non-religious Coping Scale”

3.4.3 Description of the Religious Forgiveness Scale

The hypothesis of the research is that religious forgiveness may operate as a transformational process, which may arise from a positive re-evaluation of the religious experience and develop into positive resolution of disruptive resentment.

In reviewing literature, current scales of forgiveness were not appropriate to address forgiveness. In fact, the existing scales were focused on interpersonal hurt and therefore mainly ended to conceptualise particular dimensions to explore the degree to which the respondent has forgiven the person involved in the hurting relationship. Therefore dimensions of revenge or

avoidance were not applicable. Indeed a scale to assess occurrence of religious forgiveness in the absence of any relationship with the offender needed to be developed.

Religious forgiveness will be explored as a mediating variable, which may be impacted by the Re-evaluation of the religious experience (independent variable). If a positive relationship is confirmed, religious forgiveness may be a predictor of both positive resolution of bereavement, and of positive mental health outcomes (dependent variables). Religious forgiveness may affect rates of mental health indicators by lowering rates of depression levels and by raising rates of life satisfaction. The evaluation of the religious forgiveness scale included one 5-point Likert scale with thirteen questions.

The items devised for the scale are reported in Table 7.

1) I feel compassion for them, it must have been painful for them too
2) I asked Jesus to have mercy on them
3) I am willing to forgive them
4) I ask God to help me to forgive these people
5) I prayed for them asking God to bless them
6) I have stopped blaming them
7) I feel compassion towards them
8) This kind of offence cannot be forgiven
9) I replay the offence in my mind
10) I dwell in the offence
11) I think about them with anger
12) They are worth of blame
13) They are cruel and don't deserve to be forgiven

Table 7 Items of the “Religious Forgiveness Scale”

3.5 Selection of Items for Short Versions of the Scales Assessing Catholic Belief

A short version of the “Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” was devised. Items for the scale were selected according to the main thematic areas of faith. Items were chosen among those that incorporated the fundamental core of the religious belief in the Catholic Doctrine. All the items in the short version were exactly worded in the same way as those in to the long version of the scale.

A shorter version of the original Items of the “Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God” was derived from factor analysis conducted in the large survey study revealing 47 items. They were selected and used to assess the direction of the spiritual relationship and its relative dimensions in bereaved individuals for the study in New York.

3.6 Acknowledgement of Research Limitations

It is important to note that an analytic framework of research providing accurate quantitative connections between the assessment of Catholic belief strategies of religious coping, resolution of complicated grief and mental health outcomes is limited in several important respects.

The number and nature of available research data in the New York sample of bereaved individuals does not provide clear and solid guidance for the analysis desired. Therefore, the lack of detailed understanding of the relationships between these variables remains an obstacle to a more refined research analysis.

The lack of reliable empirical data and the limits on inferences that can reasonably be drawn from it are a common feature of discussions of research in this area:

- a. The representativeness of the study sample relative to the bereaved population in New York cannot be determined because of the small number of participants in the sample ($n = 42$) restricting the generalizability of findings. Moreover, as the process of participants' recruitment was mainly conducted through Catholic organizations therefore only a small number of non religious believer bereaved individuals ($n = 21\%$ of the sample) were contacted. It implies that if bereaved participants were most religious individuals, they were more likely to participate in the study and therefore the prevalence of religious coping and forgiveness and its association with resolution of complicated grief and with mental health outcomes might be inflated.
- b. Another factor limiting the research was related to the sampling distribution. Generally, for conducting Manova subjects in each cell should be more than the number of the dependent variables. The sample was very small and cells sizes were small and unequal. Therefore assumption testing was critical and analysis may have resulted inaccurate. Considering that these data were of "low quality," and from a small sample, non-parametric methods would have been more appropriate.

In fact, parameter-free methods or distribution-free methods would have enabled describing the distribution of the variables without relying on the estimation of parameters such as the mean or the standard deviation.

- c. The research study was conducted three years and four months after the WTC attack. Moreover, the design was a one-time retrospective survey that was conducted over a five month period. The aim was to produce an ambitious profile of the characteristics of religious core of values prior to the WTC attack to establish any role on religious strategy of coping with complicated grief. This type of cross-sectional design precludes being able to draw any accurate conclusions about cause and effect relationships between these characteristics. Moreover, it is possible that the make-up of the bereaved population may differ depending on the stage of the coping process participants were dealing with. As well, the make-up in the coping process of the bereaved

population may change over time in response to social support or other variables which are not addressed in this study.

- d. Information collected in the study was of a self-report nature which, depending on the subject areas being queried, may be prone to some inaccuracy as a result of less than accurate recall, lack of information, or discomfort with self-disclosure.
- e. Psychometric scales for addressing religious assessment including “The Attitude Towards Catholicism Scale”, “The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” and “The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God” were used in a sample of bereaved individuals from a Catholic background. However, these scales for assessing Catholic belief had not been validated with people who have experienced traumatic loss. In addition they were devised in Italy, therefore in a different language and culture.
- f. Data regarding religious assessment were collected by means of untested short scales. In fact the “Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” – 105 questions was re-designed and consisted of 32 items. Moreover the “Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God” was administered according to the results of the factor analysis by means of 47 items. It can be assumed that adaptation of untested scales would satisfy minimum psychometric requirements across diverse population groups. A further limitation of the study was that both scales were not previously tested in the English language.
- g. Although new developed scales to measure re-evaluation of religious core of belief, religious coping and religious forgiveness displayed good internal-consistency reliability, items for the new devised scales were not standardised and validated instruments. Moreover they were developed without conducting previous thematic analysis.
- h. Intercorrelations between the developed scales to assess religious belief in Catholic individuals including “The Attitude Towards Catholicism Scale”, “The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church” and “The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God” were established by means of standardized scales of mental health such as factor scores of the “Satisfaction with life Scale”(Diener, 1995) and the “Vitality” dimension (SF-36 MOS UK Version). However, intercorrelations between the above developed scales to assess Catholic belief were not determined in relation to standardized scales for assessing religious dimensions of the human experience of the same research field of investigation.
- i. A further limitation of the study was that participants were not assessed in their complicated grief symptoms nor for other mental health problems such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and PTSD-related symptoms, major depression, overall anxiety, alcohol use, substance abuse,

suicidal ideation, comorbidity or other functional health impairments. Clinical implications of traumatic loss would have improved awareness when interpreting research results.

Because of the above limitations, results of this research study must be interpreted with caution.

3.7 Research Stages

The study was conducted in New York with a sample of 43 widows and widowers present and past members of the Catholic Church who experienced loss of a loved-one who died in the WTC attack of Sept 11th 2001.

- 1) Assessment of Religious Experience before the WTC Attack (Retrospectively);
- 2) Assessment of any Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience after the WTC Attack;
- 3) Assessment of Strategy of Coping and Attitude to Forgiveness;
- 4) Assessment of Psychological Well-being (at the present time).

Aims of the research study and research tools are reported in table 8 and stages of the final empirical study are summarised in table 9.

Aim of the Study	Research Tools
Assessment of Religious Experience Before the WTC Attack (Retrospectively)	Psychometric scales and Questionnaires used: - Questionnaire for assessing Faith and Religious Experience prior to the WTC attack; - The Scale of Attitudes Toward Catholicism"; - The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church"; - The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God";
Assessment of Religious Experience Immediately after the WTC Attack Retrospectively)	- Questionnaire for assessing Faith and Religious Experience immediately after the WTC attack; - The Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale; - The Scale of Religious Forgiveness; - Religious Coping Scale;
Assessment of Strategy of Coping Assessment of Attitude to Forgive	- Inventory of Complicated Grief (Prigerson, 1995);
Assessment of Conjugal Bereavement Resolution	- Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, 1961);
Assessment of Psychological Well-being (at the present time)	- Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, 1985).

Table 8 Aims of the research study and Research Tools for the empirical study

Summary of the Research Stages

- 1) Assessment of Religious Experience prior to the WTC Attack (Retrospectively)
- 2) Assessment of Religious any Adjustment in the Religious Experience following the WTC Attack
- 3) Assessment of Strategy of Coping and Attitude to Forgive
- 4) Assessment of Psychological Well-being at the present time

Sample	Stressor	Measures for Assessing Religious Experience (Independent Variables)	Mediators Variables	Measures for Assessing Psychological Well-being (Dependent Variables)
42 persons: widows and widowers believers member of Catholic Church and Non Believers	Traumatic loss of the loved-one died in the World Trade Centre attack Sept 11 th	<p>Prior to the Attack</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attitude towards Religion - Strength of Faith - Spirituality <p>Immediately After the Attack</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale 	<p>After the Attack</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Religious vs. Non Religious Strategies of Coping; - The Scale of Religious Forgiveness; 	<p>At the Present Time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inventory of Complicated Grief (Prigerson, 1995) - Depression Inventory (Beck, 1961) - Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, 1995)

Table 9 Stages of the Final Empirical Study

3.8 Advertising Research, Recruitment of Participants, and Administration of Questionnaires

The study was conducted in New York immediately after its approval, from February to June 2005. Participants were contacted in different ways and stages.

Firstly, an advertising package for promoting research was sent to leaders of bereavement support groups and leaders of Catholic widow and widowers clubs. The research package contained a copy of letter-headed paper presenting the research, flyers to be posted on notice boards, and several copies of letters and pre-paid envelopes for requesting the research package. They were asked to collaborate in the recruitment process by advertising the research among individuals of their support groups, putting flyers on their club notice board, and in distributing a letter requesting participation in the research study to interested individuals.

Moreover, this advertising material was also sent to Parish Priests of 38 Catholic Churches and Parishes in New York City. They were asked to collaborate in this research by advertising the research project on the Parish Bulletin and putting flyers on their Parish notice boards.

In addition, the mentioned above advertising material was also sent to 4 New York Hospitals for the attention of their Directors of Pastoral Care and to 3 New York Radio stations for the attention of their General Managers.

In the second stage, above-mentioned leaders, priests, directors, and managers were also contacted by phone to confirm receipt of the material and to look into the opportunity for reaching potential participants in person by means of planned meetings.

In a few cases meetings were arranged with the partnership of leaders of support groups and with pastoral services from a few Parishes of the community. Participants were mostly recruited by means of personal contact and by presentation of the research project.

Research packages were mainly given in person after research presentation; whilst return of research packages was mainly carried out by pre-paid post.

Finally a sample of 57 adults' participants involved in the loss of their loved-one who died in the W.T.C. tragedy was formed, although 13 participants were withdrawn from the sample, because the questionnaires were not completed in full. Therefore, the final sample included 42 participants.

According to the Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles, and Guidelines BPS (1998), participants were offered a copy of the information sheet in which they could get an idea of the various phases of the protocol.

Moreover, they were offered a copy of the statement of informed consent, including assurance of confidentiality of information and anonymity, which would always be guaranteed among members of the research team involved in the project.

In addition a list of free and immediate counselling was provided to the participants in case they experienced any psychological distress relating to the experience with the 9/11 tragedy.

The research package consisted of:

A questionnaire for assessing Faith and Religious Experience prior to the WTC attack;

1. “The Scale of Attitudes Toward Catholicism”;
2. “The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church”;
3. “The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God”;

A questionnaire covering Religious Experience immediately after the WTC attack and process of mourning including three new developed scales:

4. “Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale”;
5. “The Scale of Religious Forgiveness”;
6. “The Religious vs. Non-religious Coping Scale”;

Scales for addressing current resolution of bereavement and indices of mental health:

7. “The Inventory of Complicated Grief, ICG” (Prigerson et al. 1995);
8. “The Depression Inventory” (Beck et al. 1961);
9. “Satisfaction with Life Scale” (Diener, 1985).

3.9 Value of the Study on Spirituality: Relevance of Scales for Assessing Catholic Belief

Research on religiousness and spirituality can surely enhance the aspects of the individuals' purpose in life. While it is true that modern science research provides cure for illness, relief from pain, vaccines for viral diseases for many people worldwide, and improves life conditions with technology, the happiness and state of mind that we are referring to here is temporary. Actually happiness and pain are independent of any discovery or invention made by modern science. One of the most important things that gives significance to destiny and empowers individuals with strength to bear their pain and discomfort is the spiritual practice. The value of the spiritual research is therefore of a great importance.

In attaining the connection to the divine through spiritual practice, spiritual research can educate humanity on the spiritual dimension of the life and inform individuals how it affects it.

In particular the relevance of the developed scales to assess different dimensions of religious Catholic belief and spirituality provide tools for people to understand and experience the spiritual dimension and overcome problems both in applied life situations and where the cause is spiritual in nature and achieve everlasting happiness.

4 Analysis

4.1 Overview of Research Questions

Research question will be grouped according to the following themes:

- Assessment of Religious experience *prior* the WTC attack
- Assessment of Religious experience *immediately after* the WTC attack)
- Assessment of Strategies of Coping in dealing with traumatic loss: the role of religious experience and the role of the religious forgiveness
- Resolution of Bereavement (as dependent variable)
- Mental Health Outcomes
- Resolution of Bereavement (as independent variable)

Research questions will be addressed according to a pattern consisting of:

- General overview of the research hypothesis for the theme addressed in each stage
- Research hypothesis for each question;
- Specific question;
- Instrument of measurement used to address the question;
- Statistical method adopted;
- Overview of the statistical procedures adopted.

4.2 Overview of the Statistics Used

Different statistical methods were adopted for data analysis according to the purpose of the questions and according to the nature of data. Mainly statistical analysis was conducted through multiple regression, but linear regression, MANOVA and ANCOVA were also used.

Some examples of the use of the statistics are reported below, while specific usage of statistical methods for each question are reported together with the hypothesis of each of research question, instrument of measurement used and statistic method adopted.

A) Multivariate analysis of variance MANOVA was used for assessing group differences across multiple metric dependent variables simultaneously, based on a set of categorical (non-metrical) variables acting as independent variables.

At the beginning of the study it was used specifically to assess differences in individuals' relationship with God considering their different approaches to Catholicism and to explore the nature of these differences. Moreover it was used to assess differences in individuals' who had with different approaches to Catholicism before the attack to explore any change in their core of religious values after the attack.

B) Analysis of variance ANOVA was used to uncover the main and interactional effects of categorical independent variables on an interval dependent variable to reveal interaction effects on a built-in-basis.

It was especially used to explore differences among individuals with opposite perceptions of God in relation to their adherence to the religious content of the belief professed by the Roman Catholic Church.

C) Multiple regression was the main statistical method used in the research. By allowing us to explore the relationship between one continuous dependent variable and a number of independent variables or predictors, it was useful to build a model and test whether a particular variable contributed to explore the predictive ability of the model. Multiple regression was used to explore the relationship between:

- Spirituality conceptualized in its mutual relationship with God and adherence to Catholic belief;
- Spirituality conceptualized in its mutual relationship with God and any change in their core of religious values in individuals after the attack;
- Change in individuals' core of religious values after the attack and religious vs. non-religious strategies of coping;
- Change in individuals' core of religious values after the attack and religious forgiveness.

D) Multiple regression was also important as statistical method used in the research to analyse the relationship between two continuous variables. So it was used to explore the relationship between:

- Religious vs. non-religious strategies of coping and Resolution of Complicated grief;
- Religious forgiveness and Resolution of Complicated grief;
- Religious vs. non-religious strategies of coping and levels of depression;
- Religious forgiveness and levels of depression;
- Religious vs. non-religious strategies of coping and levels of depression;
- Religious forgiveness and levels of depression;
- Religious vs. non-religious strategies of coping and life satisfaction;
- Religious forgiveness and life satisfaction;

4.3 Questions for Assessing Religious Core of Belief *Prior* to the WTC Attack

QUESTION 1

Research hypothesis for Question 1

The research hypothesises that, individuals with different approaches to Catholicism may have different attitudes when relating to God. Specifically:

- Belief in God should be a predictor of a positive relationship with God characterised by commitment to God and by a perception of God as faithful to the individual;
- Disbelief or lack of belief in God should be predictor of the individual's perception of God's disregard and to an uneasy relationship with God;
- Indifference or reservation towards faith should be predictive of an uneasy relationship with God.

Research Questions for Question 1

Among people with different approaches to Catholicism, are there any differences in their relationship with God? If so, what is the nature of such differences?

Instruments of Measurement Used		Statistic Method
Question 15 of the Questionnaire	The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal	
Categories of participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Not a believer- Believer without practicing faith- Indifference or reservations towards Catholicism- Seeking and moving into faith- Believer practicing faith	Factor Scores of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Committed Relationship with God- Uneasy Relationship with God- God's Faithfulness to the individual- God's Disregard of the individual	MANOVA

Table 10 Instruments of Measurement for addressing Question 1

Statistics Overview: MANOVA

Multivariate analysis of variance MANOVA is a statistical technique used for assessing group differences across multiple metric dependent variables simultaneously, based on a set of categorical (non-metrical) variables acting as independent variables.

MANOVA, by comparing samples based on two or more dependent variables provides a discriminant function between the groups and allows us to specify the comparisons of group differences for the dependent variables, whilst still maintaining statistical efficiency.

Therefore, MANOVA is a powerful statistical tool that provides information on the nature and predictive power of the independent measures, as well as the relationships and differences seen in the dependent measures.

MANOVA can be used with one-way, two-way and higher factorial designs involving one, two, or more independent variables.

Several types of research questions may be answered by using MANOVA such as the main effects of the independent variables, the interactions among the independent variables, the importance of the dependent variables, the strength of association between dependent variables, and the effects of covariates and how they may be utilised.

Three steps are necessary to evaluate MANOVA results:

1) Evaluate if the model is significant for each dependent variable

This process implies evaluating covariates and interpreting what effect they may have had.

The analysis requires calculating F-test, which focuses on the dependents.

The omnibus or overall F-test indicates whether or not unrelated sets of scores differ in the variability of the scores around the mean. There will be an F significance level for each dependent variable. That is, the F-test tests the null hypothesis that there is no difference in the means of each dependent variable for the different groups formed by categories of the independent variables.

2) Determine which dependent variables exhibited differences across groups

In order to determine if each effect is significant a Multivariate Test is required. In fact, it focuses on the independent variables and their interactions. The multivariate formula for F is based on the sum of crossproducts, that is, takes the covariance into account as well as the group means.

Leading multivariate tests for exploring group differences used in this research were: Wilks' Lambda, Hotelling's Trace Square, Pillai-Bartlett trace, and Roy's greatest characteristic root (GCR).

3) Identify which groups differ on a variable or on the entire variate

If the overall F-test shows the centroid (vector) of means of the dependent variables is not the same for all the groups formed by categories of the independent variables, Post-hoc univariate F-test of group differences are used to determine which group means differ significantly from others. This helps to specify the exact nature of the overall effect determined by the F-test.

Pairwise multiple comparison tests, test each pair of groups to identify similarities and differences.

QUESTION 2

Research hypothesis for Question 2

The research hypothesises that, individuals with opposite perception of God, when relating to Him, may have different strength in their adherence to the content of belief. Specifically:

Individuals who perceive God as a faithful and loving God, should report a stronger adherence to the content of their belief if compared to those who perceive God as ignoring or treating them as unworthy of consideration.

Research Questions for Question 2

Are there any differences among individuals with opposite perception of God in the strength of adherence to the content of the belief professed from the Roman Catholic Church?

Instruments of Measurement Used		Statistic Method
Question 16 of the Questionnaire	<i>The Self- Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Individual's perception of God as faithful and loving- Individual's perception of God's as disregarding and ignoring about the individual	Factor Scores of: <i>The Self- Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church</i>	ANOVA (One-way)

Table 11 Instruments of Measurement for addressing Question 2

Statistics Overview: ANOVA

Analysis of variance ANOVA is used to uncover the main and interaction effects of categorical independent variables (called factors) on an interval dependent variable. A main effect is the direct influence of an independent variable. An interaction effect is the joint effect of two or more variables on the dependent variable. Whereas regression models cannot handle interaction unless explicit crossproduct interaction term is added, ANOVA uncovers interaction effects on a built-in-basis.

The key statistics in ANOVA is the F-test of difference of group means, testing if the means of the groups formed by values of the independent variable (or combinations of values for multiple independent variables) are different enough not to have occurred by chance.

If the group means do not differ significantly then it is inferred that the independent variable(s) did not have an effect on the dependent variable. If the F test shows that overall the independent variable(s) is (are) related to the dependent variable, then multiple comparison tests of significance are used to explore just which values of the independent(s) have the most to do with the relationship.

One-way ANOVA

One-way ANOVA tests differences in a single interval dependent variable among two, three, or more groups formed by the categories of a single categorical independent variable. Also known as univariate ANOVA, single classification ANOVA, or one-factor ANOVA, this design deals with one independent variable and one dependent variable.

It tests whether the groups formed by the categories of the independent variable seem similar (specifically that they have the same pattern of dispersion as measured by comparing estimates of group variances). If the groups seem different, then it is concluded that the independent variable has an effect on the dependent.

Two-way ANOVA

Two-way ANOVA analyses one interval dependent in terms of the categories (groups) formed by two independent variables, one of which may be conceived as a control variable.

Two-way ANOVA tests whether the groups formed by the categories of the independent variables have similar centroids.

Two-way ANOVA is less sensitive than one-way ANOVA to moderate violations of the assumption of homogeneity of variances across the groups.

QUESTION 3

Research hypothesis for Question 3

The research hypothesises that, the nature of the individual relationship with God, may have an effect on the strength of the content of personal belief. Specifically:

Individuals who have a committed approach in relating themselves to God, should report a stronger adherence to the content of their belief if compared to those who feel somehow uncomfortable while connecting themselves to God.

Research Question for Question 3

Does the nature of the relationship between the individual and God, affect the strength of adherence to the content their belief?

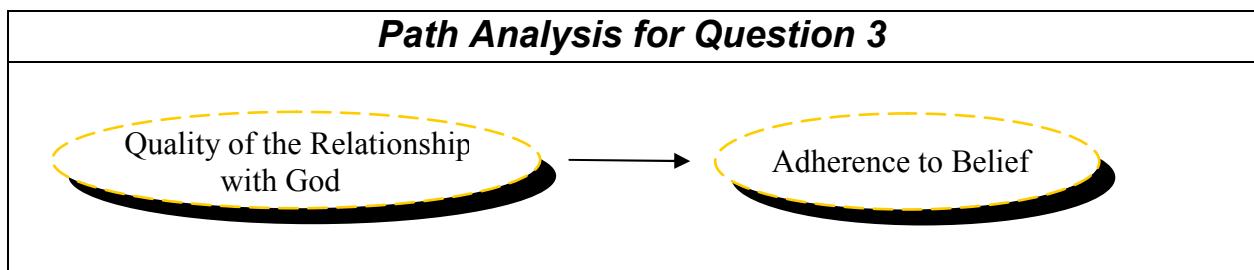


Table 12 Path Analysis for question 3

Instruments of Measurement Used	Statistic Method
The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God (Part I): How I describe myself in the Relationship with God	<i>The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church</i>
Factor Scores of: - Committed Relationship - Uneasy Relationship	Factor Scores of: - The Self- Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church

Table 13 Instruments of Measurement for addressing Question 3

Statistics Overview: Multiple Regression

Multiple regression allows us to explore the relationship between one continuous dependent variable and a number of independent variables or predictors usually continuous.

Multiple regression can be used to address a variety of research questions such as how well a set of variables is able to predict a particular outcome and the relative contribution of each of the variables that make up the model. Moreover, multiple regression allow us to test whether adding a particular variable contributes to the predictive ability of the model over and above those variables already included in the model. In addition multiple regression can also be used to statistically control an additional variable or variables when exploring the predictive ability of the model.

Some of the main types of research question that multiple regression can address are:

- How well a set of variables is able to predict a particular outcome;
- Which variable in a set of variables is the best predictor of an outcome;
- Whether a particular predictor variable is still able to predict an outcome when the effects of another variable are controlled.

The three main types of multiple regression analysis are: standard, hierarchical, and stepwise multiple regression.

Standard Multiple Regression

In standard multiple regression all the dependent or predictor variables are entered into the question simultaneously. Each independent variable is evaluated in terms of its predictive power, over and above that offered by all the other independent variables.

This approach will be used for knowing how much variance a dependent variable is able to explain as a group. It would also reveal how much unique variance in the dependent variable that each of the independent variables explained.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression

In hierarchical multiple regression the independent variables or set of variables are entered in steps into the equation in a specified order on theoretical grounds. Independent variable is assessed in terms of what it adds to the prediction of the dependent variable, after the previous variables are controlled for.

Once all sets of variables are entered, the overall model is assessed in terms of its ability to predict the dependent measure. The relative contribution of each block of variables is also assessed.

Stepwise Multiple Regression

In stepwise regression, a list of independent variables is provided and is entered in a statistical program that selects which order they go into the equation, based on statistical criteria.

QUESTION 4

Research hypothesis for Question 4

The research hypothesises that, personal perception of God (assumed as, the way that God relates to the individual) may have an effect in the strength in the content of personal belief. Specifically:

Individuals who perceive God as faithful and loving should report stronger rates in their adherence to contents of belief when compared to individuals who perceive God as disregarding towards them.

Research Questions for Question 4

Does the nature of the individuals' personal perception of God affect strength in their belief?

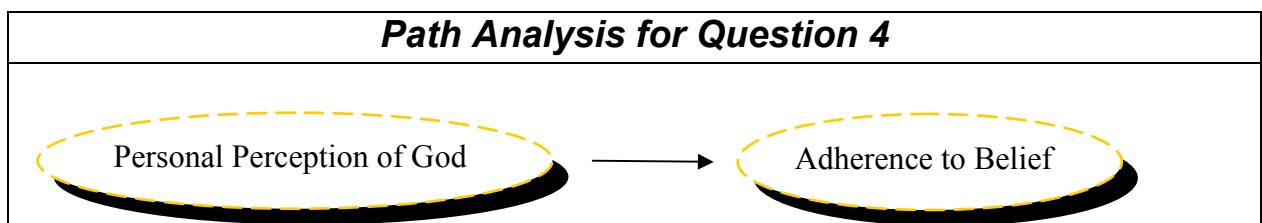


Table 14 Path Analysis for question 4

Instruments of Measurement Used	Statistic Method
The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God (Part II): How I describe God in His relationship with Me	<i>The Self- Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church</i>
Factor Scores of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - God's Faithfulness to the individual - God's Disregard of the individual 	Factor Scores of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Self- Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church

Table 15 Instruments of Measurement for addressing Question 4

4.4 Questions for Assessing any Adjustment of Religious Core of Belief Immediately After the WTC Attack

QUESTION 5

Research hypothesis for Question 5

The research hypothesises that, the individual's attitude towards religious belief is not stable over time. Individuals exposed to a traumatic experience might revoke, transform, or consolidate old values. Specifically:

- Individuals who do not believe could conserve their absence of faith. They might also transform their approach to religion by an attempt to achieve significance and they may desire to acquire faith or might become believers;
- Believers lacking in practising their faith may lose it, as they might change the character of significance.
- Individuals whose attitude is characterised by indifference or by reservations towards religion may worsen their relationship with God or become disoriented about their personal beliefs;
- Individuals who are moving into faith may desire to strengthen their faith;
- Individuals who believe and practise their faith could consolidate their belief or improve their relationship with God.

Research Questions for Question 5

What happened to people's faith after the WTC attack? Are there any differences among people with different approaches to religion, in their faith adjustment after the attack?

If so, what is the nature of such differences?

Instruments of Measurement Used		Statistic Method
<i>Question 10 of the Questionnaire</i>	<i>The Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale</i>	
Different categories of participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Not a believer- Believer without practising faith- Indifference or reservations towards Catholicism- Seeking and moving into faith- Believer practising faith	Factor Scores of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Desire of Acquiring Faith- Disoriented about own Personal Belief- Desire of Strengthening Faith- Improving vs. Worsening Relationship with God- Losing Faith	MANOVA

Table 16 Instruments of Measurement for addressing Question 5

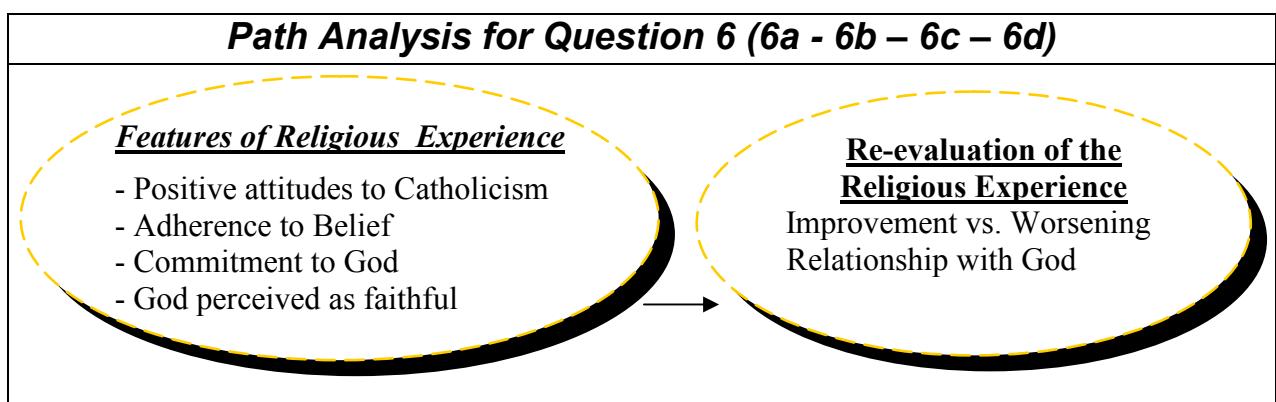
QUESTION 6

Research hypothesis for Question 6

Positive religious experience characterised by a confident attitude to Catholic belief, robust adherence to belief, committed relationship with God and individual's perception of God's faithfulness referred to a period previous to a traumatic event (even reported retrospectively), may be a predictor of a deeper religious experience, after its happening, which is characterised by an improvement of the individual relationship with God.

Research Questions for Question 6

After the attack, did indicators of positive religious experience, referred to as existing before the traumatic event, characterised by an active belief in God, robust faith, commitment relationship with God and individual's perception of God's faithfulness contribute to any improvement in The personal relationship with God?



QUESTION 7

Research hypothesis for Question 7

Distrustful religious experience characterised by lack of belief, weak adherence to content of belief, uneasy relationship with God and perception of God as disregarding referred to a period previous to a traumatic event (even reported retrospectively), may be predictor of a religious experience characterised by resentment towards God and loss of faith after occurrence of the devastating event.

Research Questions for Question 7

After the attack, did distrustful religious experience evolve into a sense of resentment of God and lose faith if any?

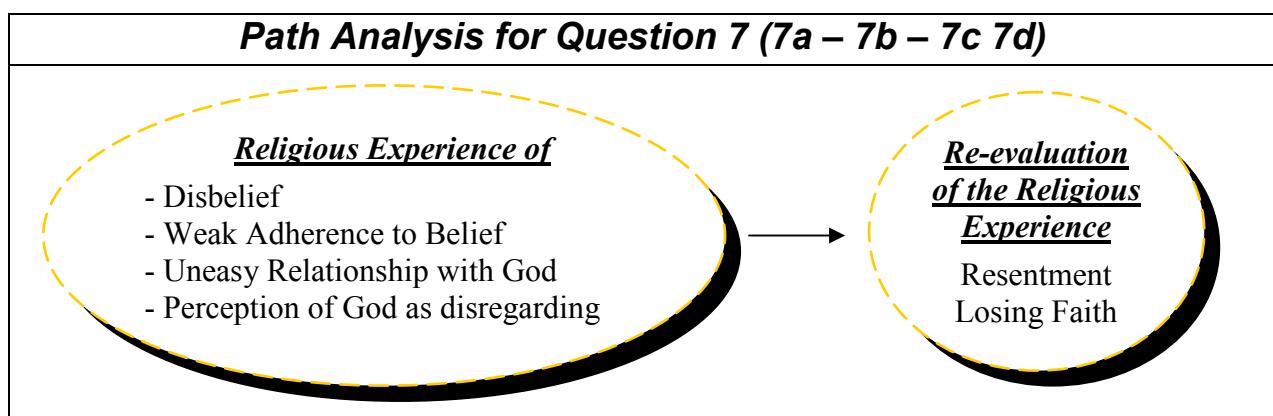


Table 19 Path Analysis for question 7

Questions	Instruments of Measurement Used (Independent Variables)		Statistic Methods
Q 6a	Factor scores of the Attitude towards Catholicism Scale	Factor Scores of Improvement of Relationship with God from the Scale of Re-evaluation of Religious Experience	MULTIPLE REGRESSION
Q 6b	Factor scores of the Adherence to Content and Strength of Belief (Creed)	Factor Scores of Improvement of Relationship with God from the Scale of Re-evaluation of Religious Experience	LINEAR REGRESSION
Q 6c	Factor scores of the Mutuality Scale Relationship (Me-God)	Factor Scores of Improvement of Relationship with God from the Scale of Re-evaluation of Religious Experience	MULTIPLE REGRESSION
Q 6d	Factor scores of the Mutuality Scale Relationship (God-Me)	Factor Scores of Improvement of Relationship with God from the Scale of Re-evaluation of Religious Experience	MULTIPLE REGRESSION

Questions	Instruments of Measurement Used		Statistic Methods
	<i>(Independent</i>	<i>(Dependent Variable)</i>	
Q 7a	Factor scores of the Attitude towards Catholicism Scale	Factor Scores of Losing faith from the Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale	MULTIPLE REGRESSION
Q 7b	Factor scores of the Adherence to Content and Strength of Belief (Creed)	Factor Scores of Losing faith from the Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale	LINEAR REGRESSION
Q 7c	Factor scores of the Mutuality Scale Relationship (Me-God)	Factor Scores of Losing faith from the Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale	MULTIPLE REGRESSION
Q 7d	Factor scores of the Mutuality Scale Relationship (God-Me)	Factor Scores of Losing faith from the Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale	MULTIPLE REGRESSION

Table 20 Instruments of Measurement for addressing Question 7

4.5 Questions for Assessing Process of Coping while dealing with loss due to WTC Attack: Role of Religious Core of Belief and Role of Forgiveness

QUESTION 8

Research hypothesis for Question 8

The research hypothesises that, the nature of the relationship with God should influence development of particular strategies of religious coping.

Research Questions for Question 8

Q8a After the attack, did positive religious experience (particularly improvement of relationship with God) allow any religious coping to develop?

Q8b After the attack, did negative religious experience (particularly resentment and loss of faith) allow any non-religious coping to emerge?

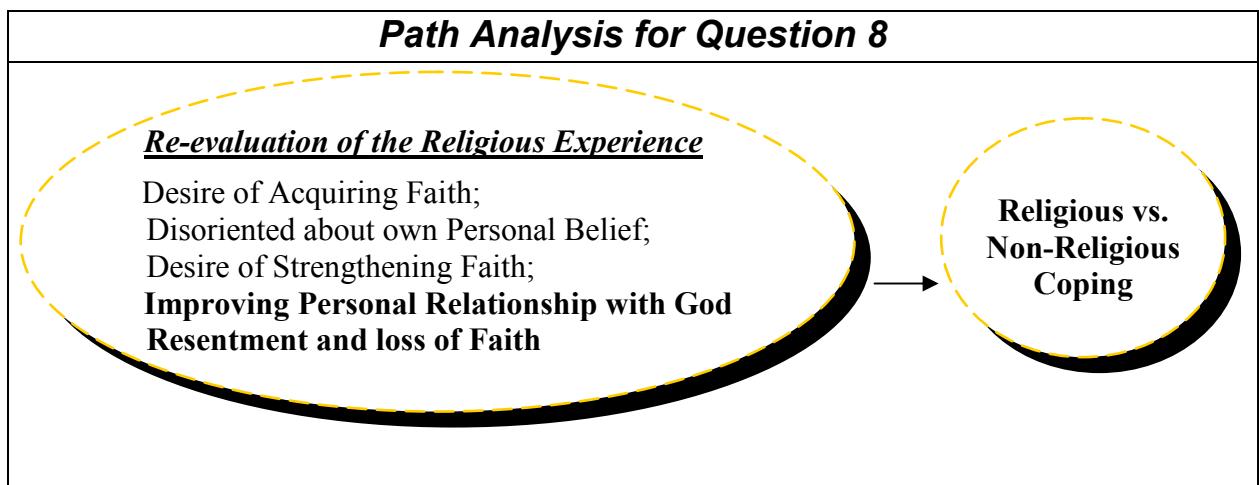


Table 21 Path Analysis for question 8

Instruments of Measurement Used (Independent Variable)	(Dependent Variable)	Statistic Method
Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale	Religious vs. Non-Religious strategies of Coping Scale	MULTIPLE REGRESSION

Table 22 Instruments of Measurement for addressing Question 8

QUESTION 9

Research hypothesis for Question 9

The research hypothesises that, the nature of the relationship with God should influence personal attitude to forgive and religious forgiveness to rise.

Research Questions for Question 9

Q9 After the attack, did positive religious experience (particularly improvement in the relationship with God) allow any religious forgiveness attitude to rise?
a relationship with God) allow any religious forgiveness attitude to rise?

Q9 After the attack, did any negative religious experience (particularly worsening relationship with God, confusion about one's belief, resentment to God and loss of faith) allow any attitude of lack of religious forgiveness to rise?
b with God, confusion about one's belief, resentment to God and loss of faith) allow any attitude of lack of religious forgiveness to rise?

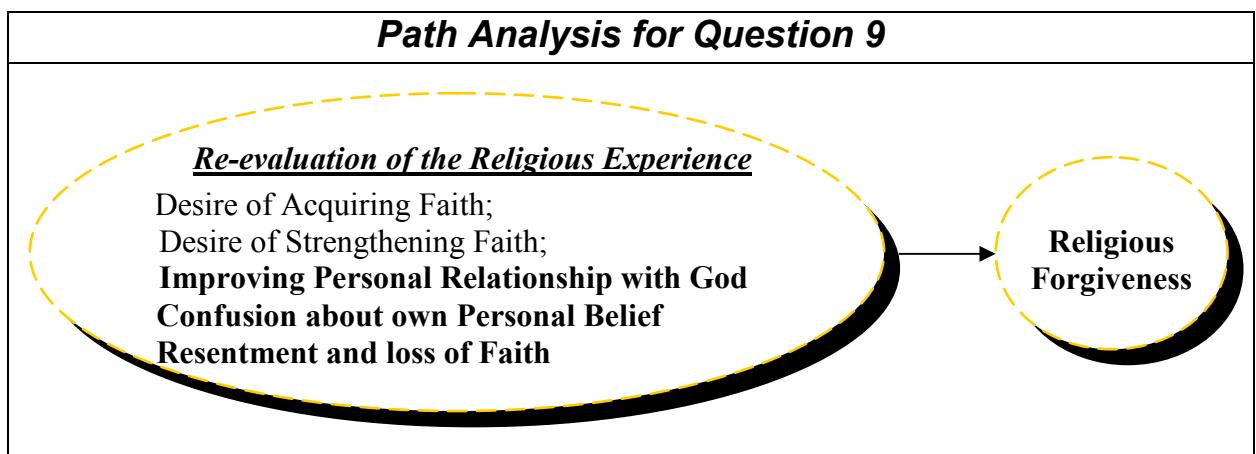


Table 23 Path Analysis for question 9

Instruments of Measurement Used (Independent Variable)	(Dependent Variable)	Statistic Methods
Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale	<i>The Scale of the Religious Forgiveness</i>	MULTIPLE REGRESSION

Table 24 Instruments of Measurement for addressing Question 9

4.6 Questions for Assessing Resolution of Conjugal Bereavement (as dependent variable)

QUESTION 10

Research hypothesis for Question 10

Resolution of Conjugal Bereavement should be associated with an improved relationship with God and religious strategies of coping and religious forgiveness to rise.

Research Question for Question 10

Q 10a Was improvement in relationship with God a determining factor in influencing resolution of conjugal bereavement?

Q 10b Did religious ways of coping have any impact on the resolution of bereavement?

Q 10c Did religious forgiveness have any impact on the resolution of bereavement?

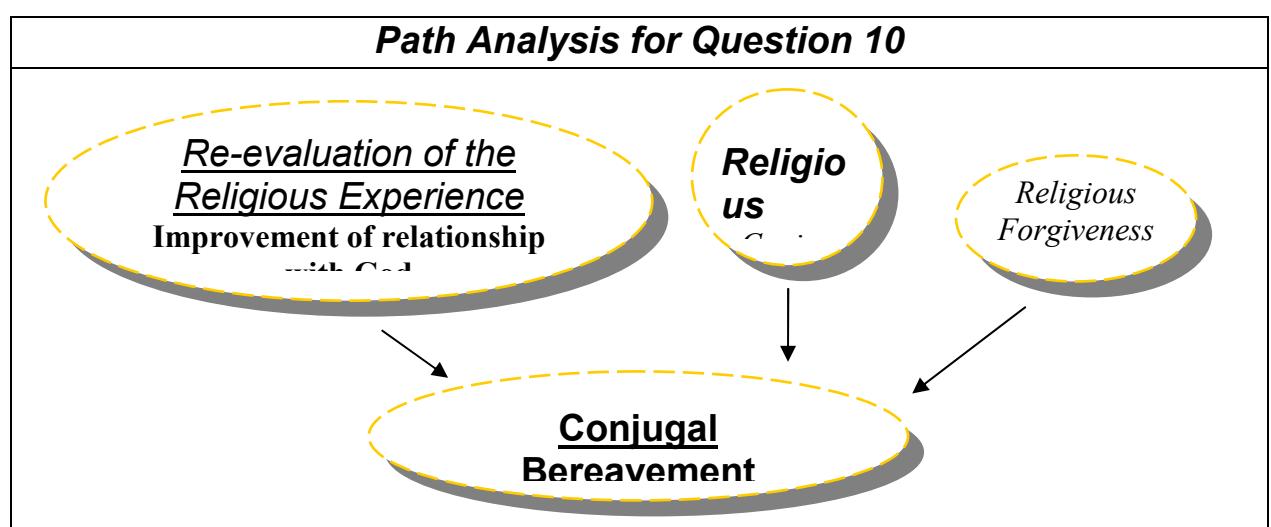


Table 25 Path Analysis for question 10

Instruments of Measurement Used <i>(Independent Variable)</i>		<i>(Dependent Variable)</i>	Statistic Methods
Q 10a	Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale	<i>Inventory of Complicated Grief</i> (Prigerson, 1995)	MULTIPLE REGRESSION
Q 10b	Religious vs. Non-religious strategies of Coping Scale	<i>Inventory of Complicated Grief</i> (Prigerson, 1995)	LINEAR REGRESSION
Q 10c	<i>The Scale of the Religious Forgiveness</i>	<i>Inventory of Complicated Grief</i> (Prigerson, 1995)	LINEAR REGRESSION

Table 26 Instruments of Measurement for addressing Question 10

4.7 Questions for Assessing Mental Health

QUESTION 11

Research hypothesis for Question 11

The research hypothesises that, the strategy of religious coping should be associated with positive outcomes in mental health indicators such as declining rates of depression and improving rates of life satisfaction.

Research Questions for Question 11

Q 11a Did religious coping have any impact on lowering rates of depression?

Q 11b Did religious coping have any impact on improving life satisfaction?

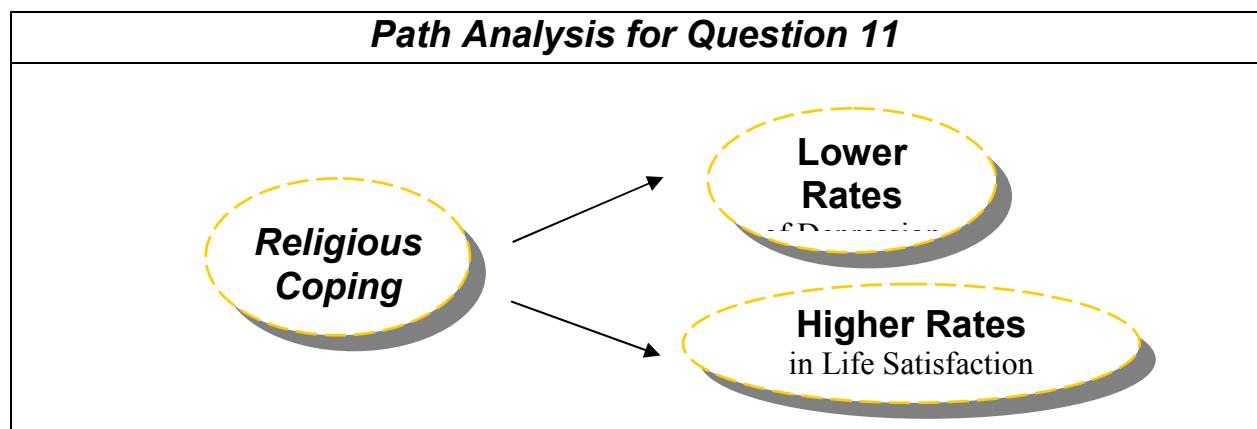


Table 27 Path Analysis for question 11

Instruments of Measurement Used (Independent Variable)		Statistic Methods
Q11a	Religious vs. Non-religious strategies of Coping Scale	Dependent Variable
Q11a	Religious vs. Non-religious strategies of Coping Scale	Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, 1961)
Q11b	Religious vs. Nonreligious strategies of Coping Scale	Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, 1985)

Table 28 Instruments of Measurement for addressing Question 11

QUESTION 12

Research hypothesis for Question 12

The research hypothesises that, religious forgiveness should be associated to positive outcomes in mental health indicators such as lower rates of depression and higher rates in life satisfaction.

Research Questions for Question 12

Q 12a Did religious forgiveness have any impact on lowering rates of depression?

Q 12b Did religious forgiveness have any impact on improving life satisfaction?

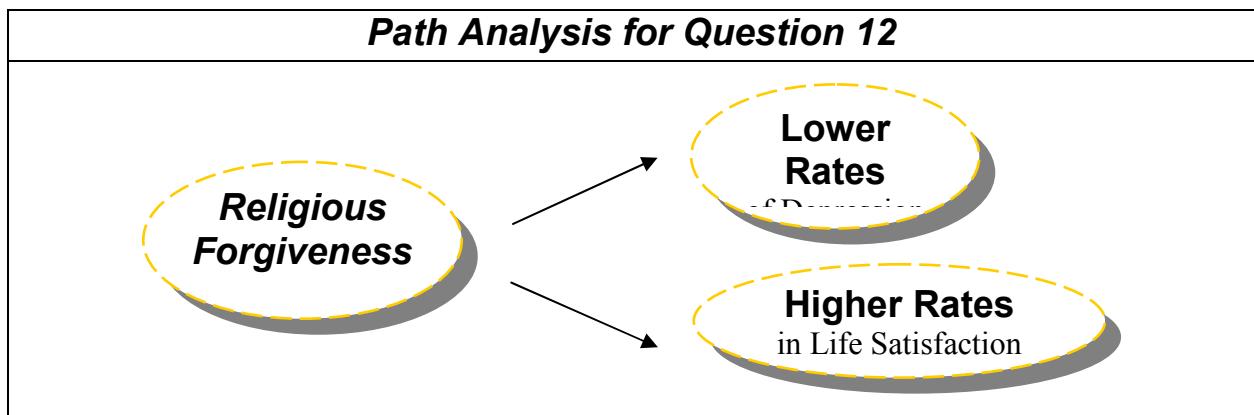


Table 29 Path Analysis for question 12

Instruments of Measurement Used (Independent Variable)		(Dependent Variable)	Statistic Methods
Q12a	Attitude to Forgiveness Scale	Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, 1961)	LINEAR REGRESSION
Q12b	The Scale of Religious Forgiveness	Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, 1985)	LINEAR REGRESSION

Table 30 Instruments of Measurement for addressing Question 12

4.8 Questions for Assessing Resolution of Conjugal Bereavement (as independent variable)

QUESTION 13

Research hypothesis for Question 13

The research hypothesises that, positive rates in resolution of conjugal bereavement should be associated to positive outcomes in mental health indicators such as lower rates of depression and higher rates in life satisfaction.

Research Questions for Question 13

Q 13a Did positive resolution of bereavement have any impact on lowering rates of depression?

Q 13b Did positive resolution of bereavement have any impact on improving life satisfaction?

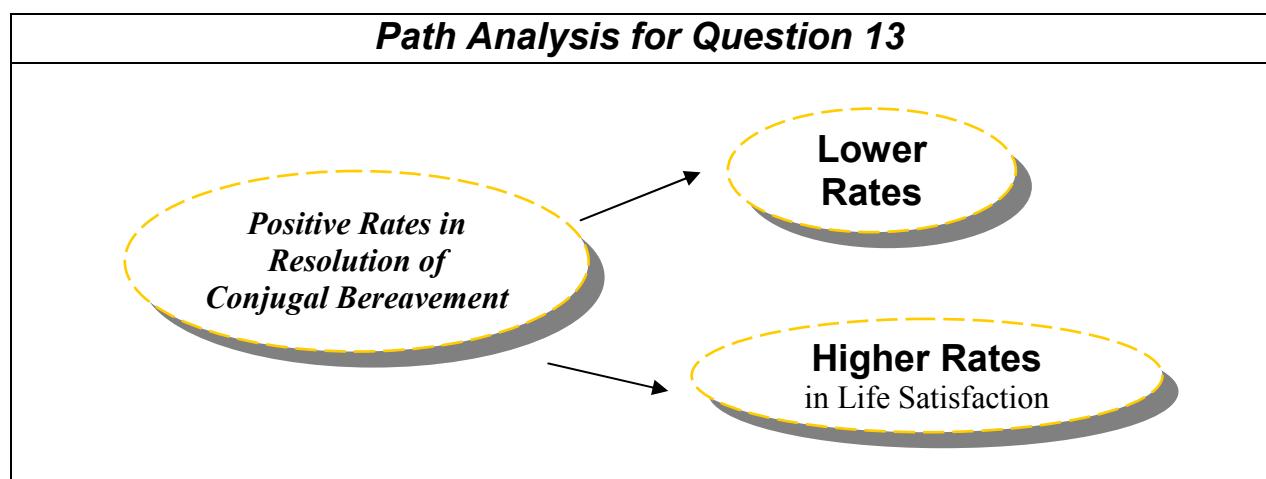


Table 31 Path Analysis for question 13

Instruments of Measurement Used			Statistic Methods
	<i>(Independent Variable)</i>	<i>(Dependent Variable)</i>	
Q 13a	<i>Inventory of Complicated Grief</i> (Prigerson, 1995)	Depression Inventory (Beck, 1961)	LINEAR REGRESSION
Q 13b	<i>Inventory of Complicated Grief</i> (Prigerson, 1995)	Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, 1985)	LINEAR REGRESSION

Table 32 Instruments of Measurement for addressing Question 13

5 Results

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this section is to analyse and comment on data in the research conducted in New York with bereaved participants. Data will be presented focusing on:

- Description of the sample, and demographic characteristics of the participants;
- Features of the religious experience among participants *prior* to the WTC attack;
- Description of the characteristics of the religious experience *immediately after* the WTC attack with particular regard to:

- any change in individual faith core of religious values. Therefore, the development of the “Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale” will be presented and discussed around data analysis on faith transformation;
- Usage of any spiritual coping in dealing with bereavement
- Occurrence of any religious forgiveness;

Therefore, a particular section will cover the analysis of the development of the three new scales: “Religious vs. Non-Religious Coping Scale” and the “Religious Forgiveness Scale”.

- Data analysis of the resolution of bereavement (as dependent variable);
- Data analysis of the mental health outcomes;
- Data analysis on resolution of bereavement (as independent variable);

5.2 Comments on the Response to the Survey

The survey elicited high rate of responses from the target population. In fact, 91% of the participants returned completed questionnaires.

Some of the main keys of the successful response process were:

- Advertising research in Parishes, Churches, Schools, Hospitals and other organisations;*
- Personal contact between the interviewer and eligible interviewees;*
- Presentation of the research through different meetings;*
- Cooperation of the interviewee for clarifying questions;*
- Consistent format and well designed survey questionnaires;*

5.3 Description of the Sample: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Gender	Count	Perc.
Widows	20	48
Widowers	22	52
Tot	42	100%

Table 2.1 Gender

Participants in the sample were almost equally distributed according to gender. They were all bereaved individuals affected by the loss of their spouse. There were 48% widows and 52% widowers as illustrated in Table 2.1.

Marital Status	Count	Perc.
Widow / Widowers	37	88
With a new partner	5	12
Tot	42	100%

Table 2.2 Marital Status

12% of the participants in the sample met a new partner at the time of the research, as shown in Table 2.2.

Age	Count	Perc.
30 – 37	5	12
38 – 45	9	21
46 – 52	7	17
53 – 60	9	21
61 – 68	12	29
Tot	42	100%

Table 2.3 Age

Participants' age ranged from 30 to 68 years. Individuals aged from 61 to 68 formed the majority of the sample (29%), followed by those aged from 53 to 60 years and from those aged from 38 to 45 years. Each range formed 21% of the sample. Age ranging is reported in Table 2.3.

Education	Count	Perc.
PhD or Equivalent	4	10
Masters	7	17
Undergraduate	10	24
High School	14	33
Professional	7	17
Tot	42	100%

Table 2.4 Education

Education in participants was consistent. In fact 73% of individuals in the sample obtained a High School Diploma. Education ranging in the sample is illustrated in Table 2.4.

Religious Education	Count	Perc.
2.5 – 3 years	4	79
4 – 6 years	38	21
Tot	42	100%

Table 2.5 Religious Education

Attendance of Catholic Catechism as part of individual religious education was highly significant in the sample. 79% of the individuals received a Catholic education for a period from 4 to 6 years as reported in Table 2.5.

Sacraments Received	Count	Perc.
Baptism	42	100
Reconciliation	42	100
Communion	42	100
Confirmation	42	100
Church Marriage	35	83
Sacrament of the sick	5	11

Table 2.6 Sacraments Received

All the individuals in the sample received the Sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, Communion, and Confirmation. Church Marriage occurred in 83% of cases as illustrated in Table 2.6.

5.4 Faith and Religious Core of Belief prior to the WTC Attack

5.4.1 Features of Religious Experience of Participants prior to the WTC Attack

The sample mainly consisted of individuals who declared that they were believers, 79% compared to 21% of individuals who stated that they did not have any religious belief. Features of the different kinds of belief, derived from the thematic analysis exploring individual attitudes towards Catholicism, were given as options. Results are illustrated in Table 3.1.

Attitude towards Religious Belief	Count	Perc.
Not a Believer	9	21
Believer	33	79
Believer without practicing faith	(6)	(14)
Reservation towards religion	(5)	(12)
Moving into faith	(6)	(14)
Believer practicing faith	(16)	(8)
Tot	42	100

Table 3.1 Attitude towards Religious Belief

Personal importance ascribed to faith was also explored. Faith was “essential” or of “great importance” in almost half of the sample totalling 48% together. Faith was “just important” in 19% of cases, “of a little importance” in 21% of cases and “not important” in 12% of cases, as illustrated in Table 3.2.

Personal Importance ascribed to Faith	Count	Perc.
Essential	10	24
Great Importance	10	24
Just Important	8	19
Of a Little Importance	9	21
Not Important	5	12
Tot	42	100

Table 3.2 Personal ascribed to Faith

Participants were asked to respond about their belief in God, in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and in the Holy Spirit as three separate persons. Moreover, they were asked about their belief in the Holy Trinity. Individuals reported the highest result in their belief in God (81%), followed by the belief in Jesus Christ (67%), and the Holy Spirit (61%). Results about their belief in the Holy Trinity were quite low (49%). Table 3.3 summarises answers to the question.

Belief in	God		Jesus Christ as Son of God		The Holy Spirit		The Holy Trinity	
	Count	Perc	Count	Perc	Perc	Perc	Count	Perc
Yes	34	81	28	67	26	61	21	49
No	7	17	8	19	12	29	19	44
Not Sure	1	2	6	14	4	10	3	7
Tot	42	100	42	42	100	100	42	100

Table 3.3 Beliefs in God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity

Participants were also asked how they interpret the direction of their relationship with God according to the results of the thematic analysis,. 50% of the participants in the sample assumed a shared relationship with God followed by 44% assuming a spiritual relationship headed towards God. Few participants (6% of the sample) regarded their relationship with God as a religious course in the direction “God towards Me”. Results are reported in Table 3.4.

Direction of Religious Relationship	Count	Perc
Me towards God as One and in Three Persons	16	44
Shared / Mutual relationship	18	50
God towards Me	2	6
Tot	42	100

Table 3.4 Direction of the Religious Relationship

Participants were asked to indicate their confidence in their spiritual connection. Results shown in Table 3.5 indicate that a sense of being confident was displayed by 66% of the participants, against 34% of the participants who experienced a sense of being uncomfortable when relating to God.

Feelings in the Spiritual Connection	Count	Perc
Confident	28	66
Uncomfortable	14	34
Tot	42	100

Table 3.5 Feelings in the Spiritual Connection

The results of the thematic analysis of God’s attitude towards them as perceived by participants, was explored together with the quality of the relationship with God. Participants were asked to comment on their perception of faithfulness or neglect in God’s attitude towards them. Moreover, they were asked to indicate any sense of fulfilment or dissatisfaction experienced in the relationships.

Results indicate that a faithful and loving God was perceived by 84% of participants. 16% of them understood God as ignoring or neglecting the individual, as illustrated in Table 3.6. A satisfactory relationship was perceived by 67% of the sample against 23% who experienced a difficult relationship with God, as illustrated in table 3.7.

God's Attitude towards Me	Count	Perc
Faithful and loving to me	35	84
Ignoring or neglecting me	7	16
Tot	42	100

Table 3.6 God's attitude towards Me

Quality of the Relationship with God	Count	Perc
Perceived as Satisfying	29	67
Perceived as Difficult	13	23
Tot	42	100

Table 3.7 Quality of the Relationship with God

5.4.2 Religious Attitudes in the Participants prior to the WTC Attack

ANALYSIS of QUESTION 1

Multivariate analysis of variance was performed to investigate individuals' different approaches to Catholicism in their relationship with God. Independent variables for different approaches to Catholicism were: not a believer, believer without practicing faith, indifference or reservations towards religion, seeking and moving into faith, and believer practicing faith.

Four dependent variables derived from factorial scores of the scale "The mutuality evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God" were used: Committed Relationship with God, Uneasy relationship with God, God's faithfulness to the individual, and God's disregard of the individual.

Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity, with no serious violations noted. Results are reported in table 1Q1.

	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	p. level
Pillai's Trace	.96	1.27	16	64	.241
Wilks' Lambda	.23	1.53	16	40.35	.134
Hotelling's Trace	.46	1.77	16	46	.066
Roy's Largest Root	2.10	8.43	4	16	<.001

Table 1Q1 Results of Multivariate Test MANOVA

The *p-level* column shows that Roy's Largest Root for exploring group differences in the approach to Catholicism illustrates a significant effect on the four factors on the relationship with God $F = 8.43$, $p < .001$.

Tests were conducted in order to identify the specific dependent variables that contributed to the significant overall effect, that is, to discover which factor is actually important multivariate.

Results are reported in table 2Q1.

Relationship with God	MS Effect	MS Error	F(gl1,2) 4,37	p-level
Committed Relationship with God,	1.39	.96	1.44	.238
Uneasy relationship with God	1.07	1.01	1.05	.39
God's faithfulness	1.40	.97	1.43	.241
God's disregard of me	2.74	.82	3.33	.019

Table 2Q1 Results of Multivariate Test on Dependent Variables

P-level reported in table 2Q1 shows that there was a statistically significant difference in the factor “God’s disregard of me” $p = .019$.

In order to understand how groups varied among them Duncan Post hoc tests were conducted. Results are reported in table 3Q1 and 4Q1 (for a better understanding of the means).

Approach to Catholicism	{1} .796	{2} -.719	{3} -.494	{4} .355	{5} -.11
Not a believer {1}					
Believe in God without practicing my faith {2}	.006				
Indifference or reservation towards religion {3}	.017	.644			
Seeking and moving into faith {4}	.366	.046	.103		
Believe and practice my faith {5}	.082	.241	.43	.34	

Table 3Q1 Duncan Post Hoc Test for factor *God’s disregard of me*

Different Approaches to Catholicism	MEANS
Not a believer	.79
Seeking and moving into faith	.35
Believe and practice my faith	-.11
Indifference or reservation towards religion	-.49
Believe in God without practicing my faith	-.71

Table 4Q1 Means Differences in Approaches to Catholicism for factor *God’s disregard of me*

Table 4Q1 illustrates specific differences among all the means for the categories analysed.

Table 3Q1 illustrates that the strongest idea of considering God as disregarding towards individuals is among those who define themselves as “Not believers” (mean .79), followed by individuals who assert that they are “Seeking and moving into faith” (mean .35). Unexpectedly those who are categorised as “Believe and practice my faith” appear to consider God as disregarding towards them, although the value of the mean (-.11) does not appear to be significantly different from the means of the other approaches to Catholicism. They are followed by those who display “Indifference or reservation towards religion” (mean -.49) which seems to be more reasonable. Finally individuals who perceived to be disregarded by God are those who define themselves “Believe in God without practicing my faith” (mean -.71).

Results of Duncan Post Hoc Test for factor “God’s disregard of me” reveals that individuals categorised as “Not a believer” differ significantly from the category “Indifference or reservation towards religion” ($p = .017$) and from “Believe in God without practicing my faith” ($p = .006$). Moreover the approach to Catholicism categorised as “Believe and practice my faith” differ significantly from the category “Seeking and moving into faith”.

The research hypothesis in question 1 sought to determine whether individuals with different approaches to Catholicism may have different attitudes to their relationship with God, therefore

when relating to Him as explored in the “Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God”, and if so the nature of such differences.

Results revealed that different approaches to Catholicism only differ from the factor “God’s disregard of me” in the Scale of Spirituality in the relationship with God.

This means that the analysis did not reveal any differences in the approaches to Catholicism in relation to the factors of Committed Relationship with God, Uneasy Relationship with God, and God’s Faithfulness to the individual.

For this reason both assumptions that indifference or reservation towards faith could have been predictor of an uneasy relationship with God, and the hypothesis that, belief in God, hypothesised to be predictor of a positive relationship with God, was not explored.

Only the hypothesis of Disbelief in God was found to be predictor of the individual’s perception of "God as disregarding".

Unpredictably, the individual’s perception of understanding God as disregarding appears to be equally shared among the categories of “Not a believer”, “Seeking and moving into faith” and “Believe and practise my faith”, as the means of this three groups do not significantly differ among them.

Conversely the group categorised as “Non-believer” differs significantly in the perception of considering God as disregarding from the group of “Indifference or reservation towards religion” and the group “Believe in God without practicing my faith.”

ANALYSIS of QUESTION 2

A one-way correlated score ANOVA was conducted to compare scores on personal perception of God towards the individual with the strength of adherence to the Creed of the Catholic Church as personal a milestone of belief.

Two levels of the Independent variable were: God's faithfulness towards the individual and God's disregard of the individual.

The dependent variable is measured through a single factor score derived from the factor analysis of the scale.

Results of the analysis are reported in Tables 1Q2 and 2Q2.

	df Effect	Effect MS	Error df	MS Error	F	p-level
God's attitude as perceived by the individual	1	864.17	40	68.46	12.62	< .001

Table 1Q2 Results of One-Way ANOVA

F(1,40) = 12.62; p < .001	
Perception of God	Adherence to the Roman Catholic Church Creed
God's disregard	112.75
God's faithfulness	123.4

Table 2Q2 Means of Independent Variables

A one-way correlated analysis of variance showed a significant interaction effect of God's attitude as perceived by the individuals on the individuals' adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church ($F_{(1,40)} = 12.62$, $p < .001$). God's faithfulness mean was 123.4 and God's disregard mean was 112.75.

The analysis shows that individuals who perceive God as disregarding tend to be less reliable and dependable towards the belief professed by the Church whereas individuals who perceive God as faithful are more inclined to adhere to the Catholic belief.

ANALYSIS of QUESTION 3

The research hypotheses in question 3, wanted to determine whether the nature of the relationship between the individual and God (committed or uneasy relationship) was predictive of strong or weak adherence to the content of the belief professed by the Roman Catholic Church.

A stepwise multiple regression was performed on the entire sample with factor scores of the Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church as the dependent variable and factor scores of components of the Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God: confident while relating to God unconfident while connecting to God as independent variables. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 1Q3.

Regression for the Dependent Variable Self- Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church						
R= .57	R ² = .32	R ² adj = .31				
F(1.40)=19.44	p <.001		Std Err = 7.78			
Dependent Variable	β	Std. Err β	B	Std. Err. B	t(40)	p-level
Intercept			115.18	1.2	95.86	
Committed relationship	.57	.12	5.33	1.21	4.4	<.001

Table 1Q3 Stepwise Multiple Regression

The data was analysed by multiple regression, using as regressors committed relationship with God and conflictual relationship with God.

Only the predictor of commitment in the relationship with God entered in the regression equation whereas uneasy relationship with God did not contribute to the prediction beyond intention.

Correlation between commitment in the relationship with God and the adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church was R = .57 and accounted for 32% of the variance for the dependent variable.

F (1.40) =19.44 illustrates that correlation coefficients are highly significant p < .01.

β impact on adherence to the Creed was positive (.57) and highly significant: t(40) = 4.4; p < .01.

Table 2Q3 summarises p and β values as path coefficients from multiple regression analysis.

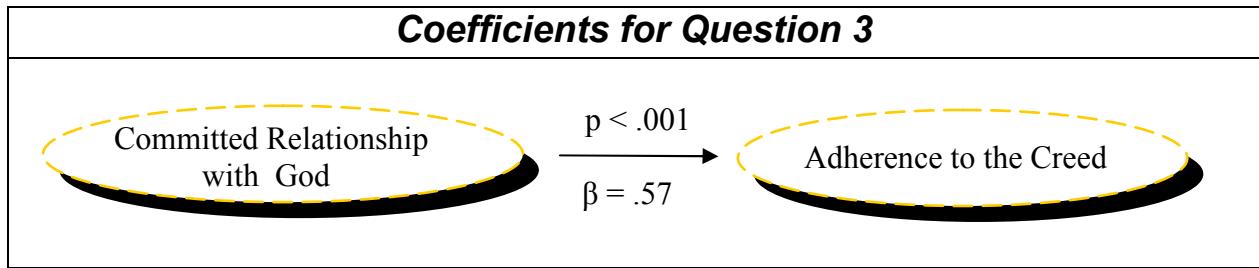


Table 2Q3 Path Coefficient on Adherence to the Creed of the Catholic Church

ANALYSIS of QUESTION 4

The research hypotheses in question 4, wanted to determine whether the nature of the perception of God when relating to the individual (faithful or disregarding) was a predictor of strong or weak adherence to the content of the belief professed by the Roman Catholic Church. A stepwise multiple regression was performed on the entire sample with factor scores of the Self- Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church as the dependent variable and factor scores of components of the Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God: God's Faithfulness to the individual and God's Disregard of the individual as independent variables.

The results of the analysis are presented in Table 1Q4.

Regression for the Dependent Variable						
Self- Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church						
Variable	β	Std Err β	B	Std Err B	t(40)	p-level
Intercept			115,18	1.23	93.05	
God's Faithfulness to me	.43	.13	4.07	1.24	3.28	.002
God's Disregard of me	-.33	.13	-3.15	1.24	-2.53	.015

Table 1Q4 Stepwise Multiple Regression

Table 1Q4 shows that both the predictors of God's Faithfulness to me and God's Disregard of me entered into regression, and they correlate with the dependent variable $R = .55$. Factors explain 30.3% of variance $R^2 = .3$; R coefficients are highly significant: $F_{(2,39)} = 8.51$ and $p < .001$.

This factor has major impact on the dependent variable of adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church is God's Faithfulness to me ($\beta=0.43$) with a high level of significance: $t(40) = 3.28$; $p = .002$. Being the correlation positive the higher the individual perception of God's attitude as faithful to the person, the higher the adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church.

The impact of God's disregard of me on the adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church is negative ($\beta = -.33$) with a good level of significance: $t (40) = -2.53$; $p = .015$. Negative correlation implies that the higher the individual perception of God as disregarding the lower the scores on the adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church.

Values of beta coefficients are reported in Table 2Q4.

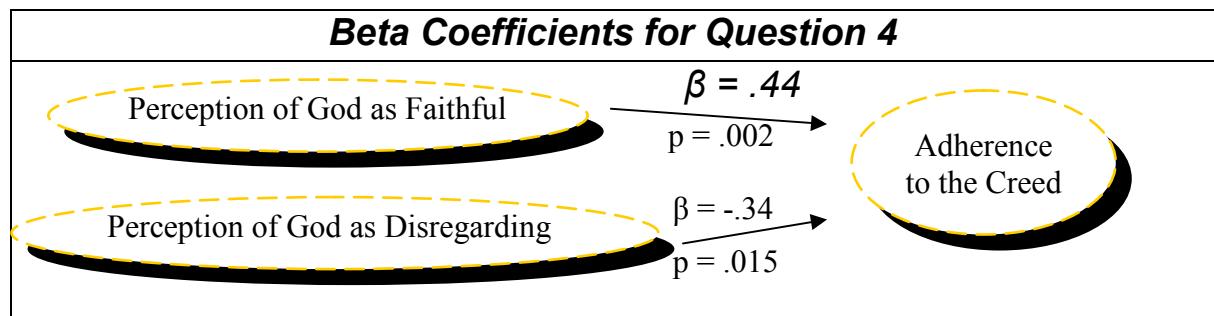


Table 2Q4 Beta Coefficients on Adherence to the Creed of the Catholic Church

5.5 The Assessment of the Adjustment of Individual's Core of Religious Belief Immediately After the WTC Attack

5.5.1 The Analysis of “Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale”

The Scale of the Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience of 10 items in Likert form, with seven responses from “I strongly disagree” to “I strongly agree”, was devised in order to measure whether or not people’s core values might have varied and therefore was aimed to re-assess individual’s religious experience following the traumatic loss.

Before conducting factor analysis, mean and standard deviation were analysed for all the items of the scale. The criterion adopted was $\leq 2.5 \geq 5.5$ for the mean and ≤ 1.5 for the standard deviation.

Originally, a principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted on the correlations of the 10 variables. Five factors were initially extracted with eigenvalues equal or greater than 1. Cumulative variance was 90%, explained mainly from the first factor for 38%. Loadings were above .66.

A principal component factor analysis with oblimin rotation was, also conducted. Variance explained was exactly the same, but loadings for the items were above .77.

An item was dropped from the scale a further factor analysis with oblimin rotation with Kaiser normalisation proceeded.

Loadings were above .88 e and reliability of the scale was .80.

Table 4.1 shows the extraction sums of squared loadings for each component of the scale.

Factor Solut.	Comp	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
		Total	% of Variance	Cumulative
Varimax / Oblimin Rotation	1	3.81	38.13	38.13
	2	2.09	20.97	59.1
	3	1.39	13.95	73.6
	4	1.15	11.51	84.58
	5	.63	6.31	90.89

Table 4.1 Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings

Factor analysis revealed that “Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale” describes five dimensional concepts. Components with loadings for each item are illustrated in Table 4.2.

Items of the Scale	Loadings for Components				
	1	2	3	4	5
Dissatisfaction / Worsening my relationship with God	-.9				
Improving my relationship with God and developing a closer intimacy with God	.88				
Desire for strengthening my faith		.89			
Desire for a closer relationship with God		.85			
Desire of acquiring faith or wishing to believe			.91		
Questioning myself about the meaning I give to religious belief			.92		
Resentment towards God with loss faith				.98	
Disoriented and confused about my personal faith as a fulfilment source in my life					.97
Uncertain and doubtful about meaning of my actual belief					.97

Table 4.2 Loadings for Factors of the Scale

Factor One Improving vs. Worsening Relationship with God

Factor one explains individual improvement in the relationship with God versus dissatisfaction in the relationship with God. This dimension is expressed through two items with loadings above .88 and with a reliability alpha coefficient of .76. Items are reported in Table 4.3

ITEMS	Loadings
Dissatisfaction / Worsening my relationship with God	-.9
Improving my relationship with God and developing a closer intimacy with God	.88
Reliability Coefficients Alpha = .76	Nº of Variables: 2

Table 4.3 Items, loadings and reliability for Factor 1

Factor Two Desire of Strengthening Faith

Factor two explains individual desire of strengthening faith and to improve personal relationship with God. This dimension is expressed through two items with loadings above .854 and with a reliability alpha coefficient of .78. Items are reported in Table 4.4

ITEMS	Loadings
Desire for strengthening my faith	.89
Desire for a closer relationship with God	.85
Reliability Coefficients Alpha = .78	Nº of Variables: 2

Table 4.4 Items, loadings and reliability for Factor 2

Factor Three Desire of Acquiring Faith

Factor three explains the individual desire to acquire faith due to doubtfulness of personal belief. This dimension is expressed through two items with loadings above .92 and with a reliability alpha coefficient of .82.

Items, loadings and reliability for Factor 3 are reported in Table 4.5.

ITEMS	Loadings	
Desire to acquire faith or wishing to believe	.91	
Questioning myself about the meaning I give to religious belief	.92	
Reliability Coefficients	Alpha = .82	N° of Variables: 2

Table 4.5 Items, loadings and reliability for Factor 3

Factor Four Losing Faith

Factor four explains the individual doubtfulness of personal belief. This dimension is expressed with a single item loading above .92 and with a reliability alpha coefficient of .85.

Items, loadings and reliability for Factor 4 are reported in Table 4.6.

ITEMS	Loadings	
Resentment towards God with loss faith	.98	
Reliability Coefficients	Alpha = .85	N° of Variables: 1

Table 4.6 Items, loadings and reliability for Factor 4

Factor Five Disoriented about own Personal Belief

Factor five explains the individual doubtfulness of personal belief. This dimension is expressed through two items with loadings above .97 and with a reliability alpha coefficient of .84.

Items, loadings and reliability for Factor 5 are reported in Table 4.7.

ITEMS	Loadings	
Disoriented and confused about my personal faith as a fulfilment source in my life	.97	
Uncertain and doubtful about meaning of my actual belief	.97	
Reliability Coefficients	Alpha = .84	N° of Variables: 2

Table 4.7 Items, loadings and reliability for Factor 5

The scree plot shows the extracted components in the factor analysis of the scale, clearly visible

in Table 4.8.

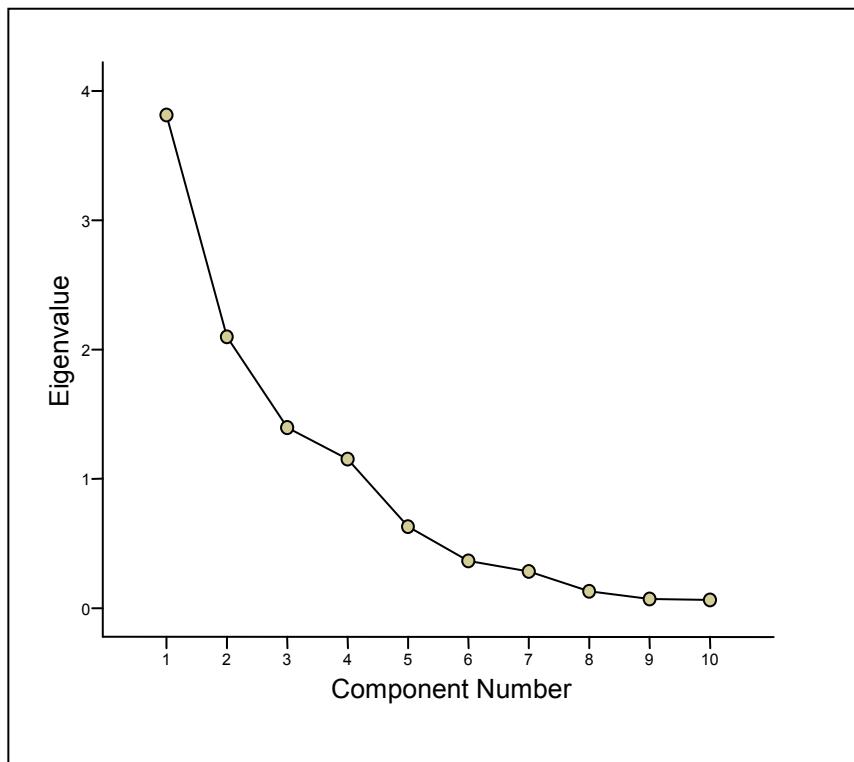


Table 8 Scree Plot

5.5.2 Discussion

Dimensions of the re-evaluation of the religious experience scale were explored and described in five dimensional concepts expressed through 10 items loading above .88. The alpha coefficient for the “Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale” was .80. Reliability coefficients of the scale were: “Desire to Acquire Faith” = .82, “Disoriented about own Personal Belief” = .84, “Desire to Strengthen Faith” = .78, “Improving vs. Worsening Relationship with God” = .76, and “Losing Faith” = .85.

This scale will be used to assess re-evaluation of the religious experience in bereaved participants if any occurred, in order to establish further relationships among variables such as: religious coping, forgiveness, and resolution of bereavement.

5.5.3 Analysis of Questions for Assessing any Re-evaluation of the Religious Core of Belief Immediately After the WTC Attack

ANALYSIS of QUESTION 5

Multivariate analysis of variance was performed to investigate individuals' different approaches to Catholicism and any adjustment of their religious experience.

Independent variables for different approaches to Catholicism were: not a believer, believer without practising faith, indifference or reservations towards religion, seeking and moving into faith, and believer practising faith.

Five dependent variables derived from factorial scores of the scale "Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale" were used: Desire to Acquire Faith, Disoriented about own Personal Belief, Desire to Strengthening Faith, Improving vs. Worsening Relationship with God, and Losing Faith.

Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity, with no serious violations noted.

Results are reported in Table Q5.1.

	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	p-level
Pillai's Trace	2.11	8.11	20	144	<.001
Wilks' Lambda	.01	15.07	20	110.39	<.001
Hotelling's Trace	15.03	23.68	20	126	<.001
Roy's Largest Root	12.06	86.87	5	36	<.001

Table Q5.1 Results of Multivariate Test MANOVA

All four leading multivariate tests for exploring group differences in the approach to Catholicism indicate a significant effect on the combined dependent variables related to the adjustment of the religious experience as shown in the p-level column.

The p-level column in fact shows that five groups that have different approaches to Catholicism differ significantly in the factors related to the adjustment of the religious experience globally considered.

In order to determine which dependent variables exhibited differences across groups of different approaches to Catholicism, that is to establish which factor is actually important multivariate tests were conducted.

Results are summarised in Table Q5.2.

Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience	MS Effect	MS Error	F(gl1,2) 4,37	p-level
Desire to acquire faith	6.37	.41	15.23	<.001
Disoriented about own Personal Belief	7.96	.24	32.27	<.001
Desire to Strengthen Faith	.95	1	.95	.44
Improving vs. Worsening Relationship with God	5.26	.53	9.76	<.001
Losing Faith	1.16	.98	1.18	.335

Table Q5.2 Results of Multivariate Test on Dependent Variables

“Desire to Acquire Faith” as a factor derived from the Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale was analysed.

The p-level column in Table Q5.2 illustrates that statistically significant differences are displayed in three factors: “Desire to Acquire Faith”, “Disoriented about own personal belief”, and “Improving vs. worsening relationship with God”.

In order to analyse these differences in detail the Duncan Post hoc tests were run.

Results are illustrated in tables 3 and 4 for the factor “Desire to Acquire Faith”, Tables Q5.5 and Q5.6 for the factor “Disoriented about own Personal Belief” and tables Q5.7 and Q5.8 for the factor “Improving vs. Worsening Relationship with God”.

Approach to Catholicism	{1} 1.38	{2} -.384	{3} -.232	{4} .249	{5} -.653
Not a believer {1}					
Believe in God without practising my faith {2}	<.001				
Indifference or reservation towards Catholicism {3}	<.001	.661			
Seeking and moving into faith {4}	<.001	.088	.169		
Believe and practice my faith {5}	<.001	.44	.256	.019	

Table Q5.3 Duncan Post Hoc Test for factor “Desire of Acquiring Faith”

Different Approaches to Catholicism	MEANS
Not a believer	1.38
Seeking and moving into faith	.24
Indifference or reservation towards Catholicism	-.23
Believe in God without practicing my faith	-.38
Believe and practice my faith	-.65

Table Q5.4 Means Differences in Approaches to Catholicism for factor “Desire of Acquiring Faith”

Table Q5.4 displays that the desire to acquire faith is visibly strong in individuals who define themselves as Non-believer with mean 1,38, followed by those who are Seeking and moving into

faith with mean .24 and by those who display Indifference or reservation towards religion with means -.23.

Finally, the desire of acquiring faith is feeble in those who believe in God without practising their faith mean -.38. The group of individuals who are practising believers has the smallest desire to acquire faith mean -.65.

Results of Duncan Post Hoc Test for factor “Desire to Acquire Faith” reveal that among different approaches to Catholicism, individuals categorised as “Non-believer” differ significantly from all the others. In fact, p-levels in the first column are very low.

Individuals who are grouped under “Seeking and moving into faith” significantly differ from those who are categorised as “Non-believer” $p = .002$ and from those under the category “Believe and practice my faith” $p = .019$.

Those who display Indifference or reservation towards religion significantly differ from those who are categorised as “Not a believer” $p = .001$ as well as those who “Believe and practise my faith” differ significantly from those who are categorised as “Non-believer” $p = < .001$.

In addition individual grouped as “Believe and practice my faith” significantly differ from those “Non-believer” $p < .001$ and from those who are “Seeking and Moving into faith” $p = .019$.

“Disoriented about own personal belief” as a factor derived from the Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale was analysed.

Approach to Catholicism	{1} .068	{2} < .001	{3} -.499	{4} .016	{5} -.639
Non-believer {1}		< .001			
Believe in God without practising my faith {2}	< .001				
Indifference or reservation towards Catholicism {3}	< .001	< .001			
Seeking and Moving into faith {4}	.84	< .001	.05		
Believe and practice my faith {5}	.001	< .001	.6	.02	

Table Q5.5 Duncan Post Hoc Test for factor “Disoriented about own personal belief”

Different Approaches to Catholicism	MEANS
Believe in God without practicing my faith	2
Non-believer	.06
Seeking and moving into faith	.01
Indifference or reservation towards Catholicism	-.49
Believe and practice my faith	-.63

Table Q5.6 Means Differences in Approaches to Catholicism for factor “Disoriented about own personal belief”

Table Q5.6 shows the means of the five groups in relation to the factor “Disoriented about personal belief”. The group who displays the strongest disorientation in faith is the one categorised as “Believe in God without practicing my faith” with mean 2 distantly followed by the

one grouped as “Non-believer” mean .06. Individuals belonging to “Seeking and moving into faith” and “Indifference or reservation towards religion” categories seem to be moderately “Disoriented about their personal belief” respectively means of .01 and -.49.

Conversely individuals categorised as “Believe and practice my faith” are the ones less disoriented in their faith among all the other groups of individuals.

Results of Duncan Post Hoc Test for factor “Disoriented about own personal belief”

Individuals who are grouped as “Believe in God without practising my faith”, displaying the higher disorientation in their belief, significantly differ from all the individuals in the other groups with p-levels unquestionably low (see column 2 Table Q5.5).

Individuals who are grouped as “Non-believer” significantly differ from all the others except from those who are “Seeking and Moving into faith” (see column 1 Table Q5.5).

Individuals who are grouped as “Seeking and moving into faith” seem to experience “Disorientation about own personal belief” significantly different from those who are categorised as “Believe in God without practising my faith” $p < .001$ and those who are grouped as “Believe and practice my faith” $p = .023$. Moreover, the p level of .058 indicates a tendency of significant difference between individuals grouped as “Seeking and moving into faith” and individuals grouped as “Indifference or reservation towards religion”. In addition the latter significantly differ from the group of people identified as “Non-believer” $p = .048$ and from individuals who are grouped as “Believe in God without practising my faith” $p = < .001$.

Individuals who are categorised as “Believe and practice my faith” display a significant difference in being “Disoriented about own personal belief” from those who are grouped under “Not a believer” $p = .017$, from those who are grouped under “Believe in God without practising my faith” $p < .001$, and from those who are “Seeking and Moving into faith” $p = .023$.

Moreover, individuals grouped under “Believe in God without practising my faith” display disorientation about their personal belief, statistically similar to the group described as having “Indifference or reservation towards religion”.

“Improving vs. worsening relationship with God” as a factor derived from the Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale was also analysed.

Approach to Catholicism	{1}	{2}	{3}	{4}	{5}
	-.514	-.17	-.466	< .001	< .001
Non-believer {1}		.38	.019	.006	.012
Believe in God without practising my faith {2}	.385		.006	.043	.071
Indifference or reservation towards Catholicism {3}	.019	.002		< .001	< .001
Seeking and Moving into faith {4}	.006	.043	< .001		.735
Believe and practice my faith {5}	.012	.071	< .001	.735	

Table Q5.7 Duncan Post Hoc Test for factor “Improving vs. worsening relationship with God”

Different Approaches to Catholicism	MEANS
Seeking and Moving into faith	.68
Believe and practice my faith	.55
Believe in God without practising my faith	-.17
Non-believer	-.51
Indifference or reservation towards Catholicism	-1.46

Table Q5.8 Means Differences in Approaches to Catholicism for factor “Improving vs. worsening relationship with God”

Table Q5.8 shows the results for the means of the five groups in relation to the factor “Improving vs. worsening relationship with God”.

It illustrates that the group who presents the highest desire to Improve the relationship with God is the one categorised as Seeking and Moving into faith mean .68 followed by those who are grouped under “Believe and practice my faith” mean .55.

Moderate desire to improve the relationship with God is displayed by those who are categorised as Believe in God without practising my faith mean -.17 and Non-believer mean -.51.

The lowest desire of improving personal relationship with God is shown in those grouped as Indifference or reservation towards religion mean -1.46.

Results of Duncan Post Hoc Test for factor “Improving vs. worsening relationship with God” indicate that individuals who reveal “Indifference or reservation towards religion” significantly differ from all the others (see column 3). “Non-believer” individuals significantly differ from all the categories of individuals with the exception of “Believe in God without practising my faith” individuals (see column 1). Moreover the latter, significantly differ from those who display “Indifference or reservation towards religion” $p = .002$ and from those who are “Seeking and Moving into faith” $p = .043$. In addition individuals who are “Seeking and Moving into faith” significantly differ from all the categories of individuals with the exception of those who “Believe and practice my faith” (see column 4).

Individuals belonging to the latter category significantly differ from “Non-believer” $p = .012$ and from those who display “Indifference or reservation towards religion” $p < .001$. The research hypothesises that the individual’s attitude towards religious belief is not stable over time. Individuals exposed to a traumatic experience might revoke, transform or consolidate old values. This issue has been addressed in question 5. The research hypothesis in question 5 sought to explore whether individuals with different attitudes towards Catholicism referred as displayed prior to the attack could have exhibited any faith-readjustment in their approach to Catholicism after the stressful event, and if so the nature of such differences.

Answers to this multipart question will be presented according to specific research sub-questions quoted in the previous chapter for question 5.

Results revealed that different approaches to Catholicism (reported from bereaved individuals at the research time but referred to the moment in time before the attack) were associated with different religious attitudes (referred to the time after the attack).

Individuals exposed to a traumatic experience actually revoked, transformed or consolidated old values as confirmed by current literature (Pargament 2000).

Findings reveal that individuals who do not believe have the highest desire to acquire faith (see tables 3 and 4) compared to the others (p-levels $< .001$). They are moderately disoriented about their personal belief (see tables 5 and 6) after those who believe without practising, compared to the individuals in other categories in their different approaches to Catholicism prior to the attack. They significantly differ from all the others (p-levels $< .05$) with the exception of those who are moving into faith.

Although non-believers display the highest desire to acquire faith, they have the lowest commitment to improve their relationship with God. They significantly differ from all the others (p-levels $< .02$ with the exception of those who believe without practicing their faith.

Research hypothesis for individuals who did not believe before the attack transformed their approach to religion by desiring to acquire faith to face their dramatic situation.

Findings reveal that individuals lacking in practicing their faith before the attack, report the highest level of uncertainty in their personal belief. Moreover, believers without practising their faith highly, differ significantly from all the others p-levels $< .001$.

Although these individuals do not seem to have revoked old values, they seem to fail in significance. Therefore again current literature (Pargament, 2000) has been supported.

Findings reveal that individuals whose attitude is characterised by indifference or by reservations towards religion have both the lowest desire to improve their relationship with God with a significant difference to the other categories p-levels $< .02$, and a low level of disorientation in their personal belief with a significant difference with the other categories p-levels $< .05$ with the exception of the groups such as: moving into faith and believers who practice their faith.

Therefore, contrary to the research hypothesis they seem to be consistent in their position concerning their beliefs.

Findings reveal that individuals who are seeking and moving towards faith have the strongest desire to improve their relationship with God with a significant difference with the other categories p-levels $< .05$ with the exception of individuals who are believers who practise their faith.

By consolidating old values of significance, findings again confirm current literature (Pargament 2000).

Faith consolidation is also displayed in individuals grouped as believers practising their faith. In fact, findings reveal that these individuals have the lowest levels, both for disorientation in their personal belief with a significant difference with all the other categories p-levels $< .03$ excepting from those who display indifference or reservation towards religion, and the lowest levels of desire of acquiring faith a significantly difference from non-believer $p < .001$ and moving into faith $p = .01$.

ANALYSIS of QUESTION 6

A series of stepwise multivariate analysis of variance for analysing questions 6a, 6c and 6d, together with linear regression for question 6b were performed to investigate any faith re-evaluation after the attack in order to assess any sort of individual change in personal religious experience.

Independent variables for establishing any improvement or worsening of relationship with God were: active belief in God, adherence to belief, commitment to God and perception of God's faithfulness.

Results of the analysis are reported for each independent variables addressed and illustrated in the relate tables.

Analysis of question 6a

Question 6a wanted to assess if a positive attitude towards Catholicism was a predictor of any improvement of the relationship with God immediately after the WTC disaster. Prediction was explored through stepwise multiple regression analysis by using factors of the attitude towards Catholicism Scale and factor scores of the factor of "Improvement vs. worsening relationship with God" attained from the Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale.

Results of multiple regression with Improvement vs. worsening relationship with God as dependent variable are reported in Table Q6.1.

Regression for the Dependent Variable Improvement vs. worsening Relationship with God Attained from the Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale

R = .59 R² = .51 R² adj = .46
F(3.84) = 55.78 p < .001 Std Err = .89

Variables	β	Std. Err β	B	Std Err B	t(40)	p-level
Intercept			117.73	1,37	76,19	< .001
Renewed Belief	.81	.18	5.75	1.38	3.58	< .001
Faith limited to Cognition	-.80	.18	-5.69	1.38	-3.41	< .001
Discovering vs. Moving into Faith	.77	.18	5.63	1.38	3.39	< .001

Table Q6.1 Results of Multiple Regression

Table Q6.1 shows that the actual religious belief, faith limited to a cognition level, and individual path towards discovering or moving into faith, entered into regression, whereas the attitude of seeking faith did not enter into regression.

Three factors correlate with the dependent variable of "Improvement vs. worsening Relationship with God" R = .59 explaining 51% of variance R² = .51;

F_(3.84) = 55.78 indicates that R and R² coefficients are significant p < .001. β column indicates that the factor having the strongest impact on the dependent variable is "Renewed belief", β = .81,

followed by “Faith limited to Cognition” negative impact factor as $\beta = -.80$, and finally “Discovering vs. Moving into Faith” factor $\beta = .77$.
 t and p-level columns indicate that beta score values are highly significant.
 Table Q6.2 shows beta coefficients for the analysis.

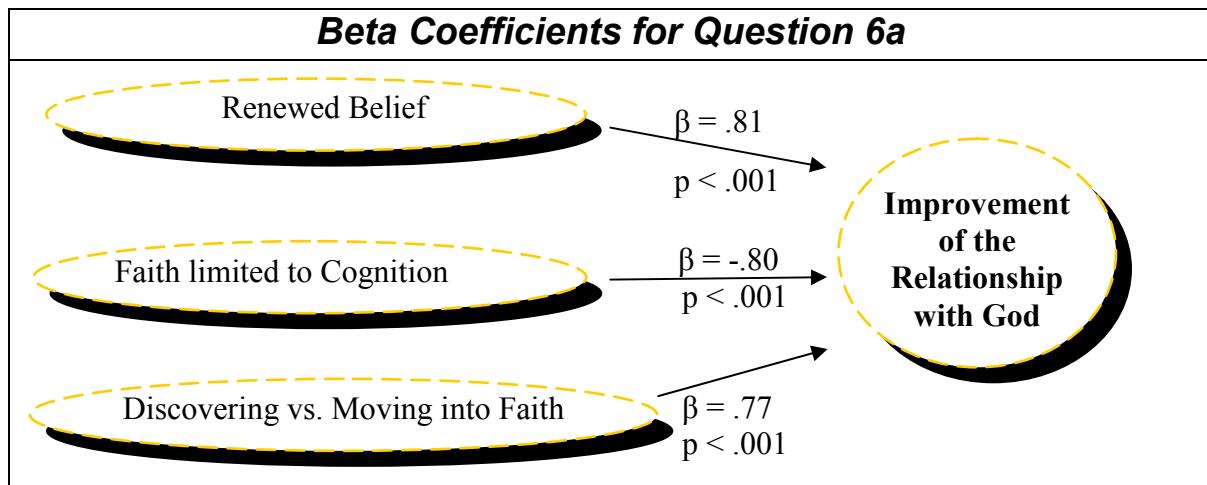


Table Q6.2 Beta Coefficients for “Improvement vs. Worsening Relationship with God”

Analysis of question 6b

Question 6b wanted to assess if adherence to belief was a predictor of any improvement of the relationship with God immediately after the WTC disaster. The relationship between these variables was analysed by linear regression, using factor scores of the Self- Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church and factor scores of the single factor of “Improvement vs. worsening relationship with God” attained from the Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale. Results of linear regression are reported in table Q6.3

Regression for the Dependent Variable Improvement vs. worsening Relationship with God attained from the Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale

$R = -.44$ $R^2 = .19$ $R^2 \text{ adj } = .17$
 $F(1,40) = 9.78$ $p < .003$ $\text{Std Err} = .9$

Variable	β	Std. Err β	B	Std Err B	t(40)	p-level
Intercept			5.45	1.74	3.11	.003
Adherence to the Creed	-.44	.14	-.04	.01	-3.12	.003

Table Q6.3 Results of Linear Regression

The slope of the regression line, expressing the un-standardised regression between Adherence to the Creed and Improvement of the relationship with God is displayed under β and is $-.44$. Although relatively small, $\beta = -.44$ indicates a negative relationship between the two variables. This means that for every increase of 1.00 on the score of adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church, the score on the Improvement of Relationship with God variable changes

by -.44.

Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church explained 19% of variance of the dependent variable and contributed to the prediction $R^2 = .19$ and the explication power of the predictor is small, although the R and R^2 coefficients are significant $F(1,40) = 9.79$ and $p = .003$.

Analysis of questions 6c and 6d

Multivariate analysis of variance was performed to establish if a committed relationship with God and the individual's perception of God as faithful could have been predictive elements of any improvement in personal relationship with God.

Results shown in tables Q6.4 and Q6.5 indicate that regression was both a rather poor fit ($R^2 \text{ adj} = 6,6\%$) in relation to the factor scores for the scale on the relationship (Me-God) and ($R^2 \text{ adj} = 11 \%$) and for the scale on the relationship (God-Me). Overall relationships were not significant in both analysis as $F(2,39) = 2.45$; $p < .099$ and $F(2,39) = 2.56$; $p = .089$.

Regression for Dependent Variable Improvement vs. worsening Relationship with God attained from the Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale						
Variables	B	Std. Err β	B	Std Err B	t(39)	p-level
Intercept			.007	.14	0,04	.962
Uneasy Relationship	-.26	.15	-.26	.14	-1.77	.084
Committed Relationship	.2	.15	.2	.15	1.34	.186

Table Q6.4 Results of Multivariate Test

Regression for Dependent Variable Improvement vs. worsening Relationship with God attained from the Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale						
Variables	β	Std. Err β	B	Std Err B	t(39)	p-level
Intercept			.007	.14	.04	.96
God Faithfulness to me	.24	.15	.24	.14	.61	.114
God's disregard of me	-.24	.15	-.24	.14	-1.6	.116

Table Q6.5 Results of Multivariate Test

ANALYSIS of QUESTION 7

A series of stepwise multivariate analysis of variance for analysing questions 7a, 7c and 7d, together with linear regression for question 7b was performed to investigate any individual change in personal religious experience, especially regarding resentment towards God with a loss of faith following the WTC attack.

Independent variables for determining resentment towards God with a loss of faith were: religious disbelief, weak adherence to the content of Catholic belief, an uneasy relationship with God, and the perception of God as disregarding the individual.

Results of the analysis are reported for each independent variables addressed, which are illustrated in relate tables.

Results for Questions 7a and 7b

Question 7a wanted to determine whether or not any distrustful attitude towards Catholicism could be a predictor of any resentment towards God with a loss of faith immediately after the WTC disaster.

This Prediction was explored through stepwise multiple regression analysis by using factor scores of the “Attitude towards Catholicism Scale” and factor scores of the “Resentments towards God and loss of faith” factor attained from “The Scale of Religious Experience Reframed”.

Results indicated that regression was unfortunate ($R^2 \text{ adj} = 7.2\%$) in relation to the factor scores for “The scale of the attitude towards Catholicism”. Moreover, the overall relationship was not significant as $F(2.39) = 5.05$; $p < .074$.

Question 7b wanted to assess if weak adherence to belief professed by the Catholic Church could be a predictor of any resentment towards God and loss of faith immediately after the WTC disaster.

Prediction was explored through linear regression analysis by using factor scores of the “Adherence to Content and Strength of Catholic Belief Scale” and the factor scores of “Resentments towards God and loss of faith” factor derived from “The Scale of Religious Experience Reframed”.

Results indicated that regression was unlucky ($R^2 \text{ adj} = 9.3\%$) in relation to the factor scores for the “Adherence to Content and Strength of Catholic Belief Scale”. Overall relationship was not significant as $F(2.39) = 2.69$; $p < .076$.

Results for question 7c

Multivariate analysis of variance was performed to establish if an uneasy relationship with God could have been predictive of any resentment towards God and a loss of faith.

Results shown in Table Q7.1 indicates that correlation between the independent variable “Uneasy relationship with God” and the dependent variable of “Losing Faith” $R = 0.59$ explains 45% of the variance of the dependent variable $R^2 = .45$.

Regression was a strong fit ($R^2 \text{ adj} = 43\%$) in relation to the factor scores for the scale of the relationship (Me-God). Moreover overall relationships was also significant as $F(5.49) = 56.31$; $p < .001$.

Regression for the Dependent Variable Losing Faith attained from the Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale						
R = .59	$R^2 = .45$	$R^2 \text{ adj} = .43$				
F(5.49)=56.31	p < .001	Std Err = .79				
Variable	β	Std. Err β	B	Std Err B	t(44)	p-level
Intercept			84.32	1.32	57.45	p < .001
Uneasy relationship	.59	.19	4.10	1.35	2.64	p < .001

Table Q7.1 Multivariate Analysis

Table Q7.2 shows beta coefficients for the analysis.

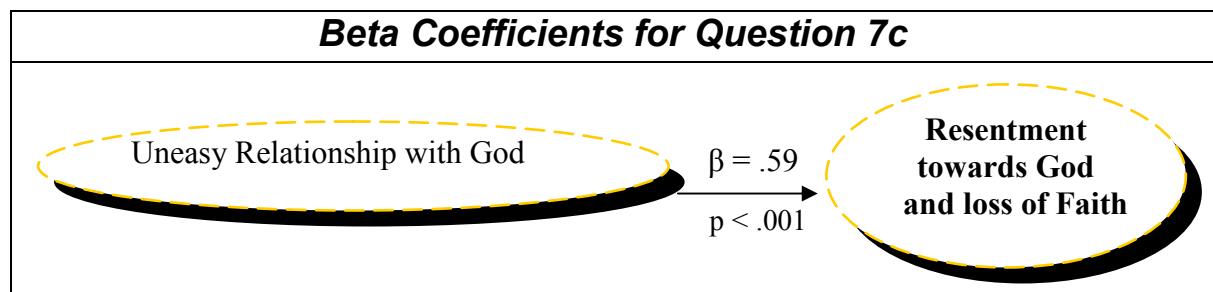


Table Q7.2 Beta Coefficients

Results for question 7d

Multivariate analysis of variance was performed to establish if the individual's perception of God as disregarding could have been predictive of any resentment towards God and loss of faith.

Results shown in Table Q7.3 indicates that correlation between the independent variable "God's disregard of me" and the dependent variable of "Losing Faith" $R = .62$ explains 47% of the variance of the dependent variable $R^2 = .47$.

Regression was a strong fit ($R^2 \text{ adj} = 47\%$) in relation to the factor scores for the scale on the relationship (God-Me). Moreover, overall relationship was significant as $F(5.49) = 63.38$, $p < 0.001$.

Regression for the Dependent Variable Losing Faith attained from the Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale						
	$R = .62$	$R^2 = .47$	$R^2 \text{ adj} = .44$			
	$F(5.49) = 63.38$	$p < .001$		$\text{Std Err} = .98$		
Variable		β	Std. Err β	B	Std Err B	t(44)
Intercept				78.83	1.46	62.96
God's disregard of me		.62	.23	4.57	1.47	3.96

Table Q7.3 Multivariate Analysis

Table Q7.4 shows beta coefficients for the analysis.

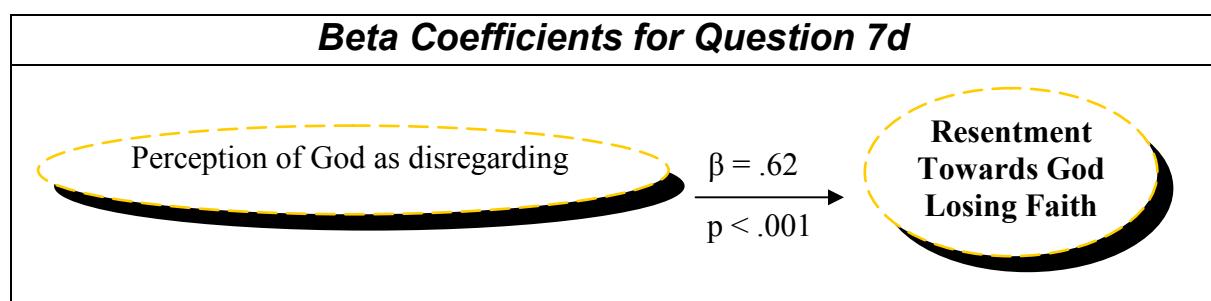


Table Q7.4 Beta Coefficients

5.6 The Assessment of Process of Coping while dealing with loss due to WTC Attack: Role of Religious Core of Belief and Role of Religious Forgiveness

5.6.1 The Analysis of the “Religious vs. Non-Religious Coping Scale”

The Scale of Religious vs. Non-Religious Coping of 10 items in Likert form, with seven responses from “I strongly disagree” to “I strongly agree”, was devised in order to measure individual tendency to cope with traumatic loss by means of support offered by religious belief, or from individual reliance.

Before conducting factor analysis mean and standard deviation was analysed for all the items of the scale. The criterion adopted was $\leq 2.5 \geq 5.5$ for the mean and ≤ 1.5 for the standard deviation.

A principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted on the correlations of the 10 variables. One factor was extracted with eigenvalues equal or greater than 1. Cumulative variance was 79% explained, loadings were above .87 and reliability of the scale was .96.

Table 5.1 shows the extraction sums of squared loadings the component of the scale. Loadings for each item are illustrated in Table 5.2.

Factor Solut.	Comp	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
		Total	% of Variance	Cumulative
Principal Component	1	7.83	79.33	79.33

Table 5.1 Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings

Items of the Scale	Loadings
1) Looked more into relationship with God for finding a new direction for living	-.89
2) Prayed to make sense of the situation with God	-.87
3) Looked for spiritual support	-.9
4) Did what I could and put the rest in God's hands	-.89
5) Dealt with my feelings through God's love	-.87
6) Depended on my personal strength relying on myself	.91
7) Tried to find a purpose in life without any religious support	.91
8) Tried to deal with my feelings without God's help	.87
9) Tried to make sense of the situation without relying on God	.89
10) Made decisions about what to do without God's help	.87

Table 5.2 Loadings for Items of the Scale

Factor analysis revealed that “The Scale of Religious vs. Non-Religious Coping” is an unidimensional measurement, as illustrated in the scree plot in Table 5.3.

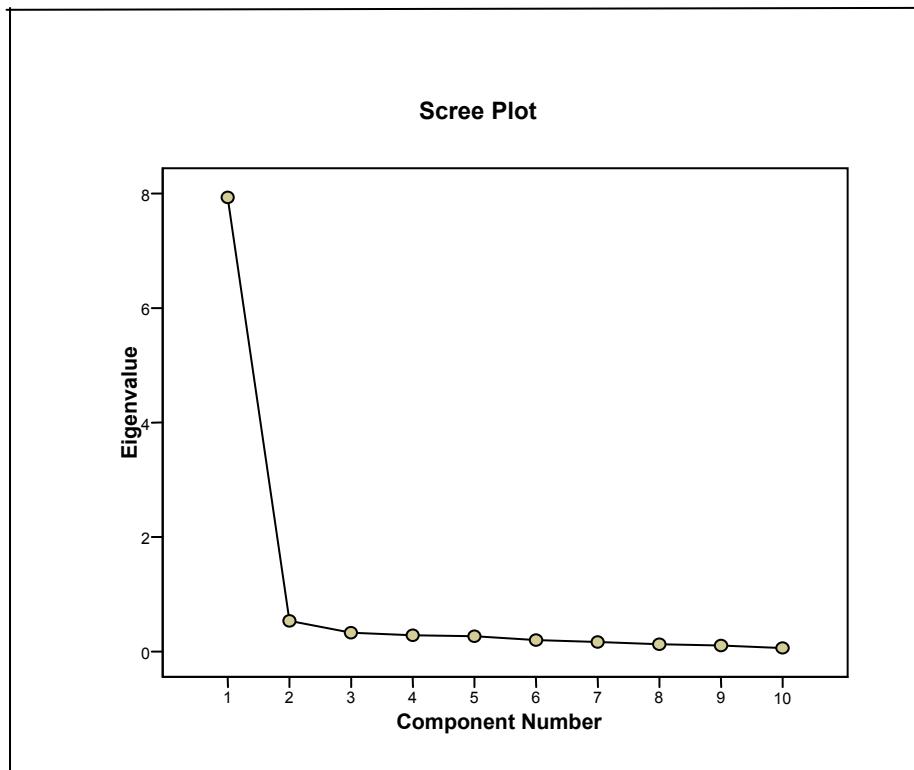


Table 5.3 Scree Plot

5.6.2 Discussion

The “Scale of Religious vs. Non-Religious Coping” has been designed to allow the assessment of patterns of coping. The scale has been tested in a sample of bereaved individuals to analyse cases of positive religious coping and the cases of absence of religious coping.

Although the limited number of respondents, loadings were above .87 and reliability of the scale was .961. Therefore the “Scale of Religious vs. Non-Religious Coping” showed good reliability.

Data analysis demonstrated that the “Scale of Religious vs. Non-Religious Coping” is a screening tool to discriminate between religious and non religious process of coping in participants involved in the study by assessing:

- positive religious coping reflective of benevolent religious methods of understanding and dealing with the life stressor;
- negative religious coping reflective of religious struggle in coping.

This scale will be used to explore religious coping as mediating variable in relation to re-evaluation of the religious experience (independent variable) and dependent variables such as: religious forgiveness, and resolution of bereavement.

5.6.3 The analysis of “The Religious Forgiveness Scale”

The Scale of the religious forgiveness of 12 items in Likert form, with seven responses from “I strongly disagree” to “I strongly agree”, was devised in order to assess any occurrence of religious forgiveness towards those responsible for the WTC disaster.

Before conducting factor analysis mean and standard deviation was analysed for all the items of the scale. The criterion adopted was $\leq 2.5 \geq 5.5$ for the mean and ≤ 1.5 for the standard deviation.

A principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted on the correlations of the 12 variables. One factor was extracted with eigenvalues equal or greater than 1. Cumulative variance was 78% explained, loadings were above .84, and reliability of the scale was .97.

Table 5.4 shows the extraction sums of squared loadings for the component of the scale. Loadings for each item are illustrated in table 5.5.

Factor Solution	Comp	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
		Total	% of Variance	Cumulative
Principal Component	1	10.17	78.26	78.26

Table 5.4 Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings

Items of the Scale	Loadings
5) I prayed for them asking God to bless them	.93
7) I feel compassion towards them,	.92
2) I asked Jesus to have mercy on them	.91
6) I have stopped blaming them	.91
4) I ask God to help me to forgive these people	.9
1) I feel compassion for them, it must have been painful for them too	.88
10) I dwell in the offence	-.88
9) I replay the offence in my mind	-.88
8) This kind of offence cannot be forgiven	-.86
13) They are cruel and don't deserve to be forgiven	-.85
11) I think about them with anger	-.85
3) I am willing to forgive them	.84
12) They are worth of blame	-.84

Table 5.5 Loadings for Items of the Scale

Factor analysis revealed that “The Scale of Religious Forgiveness” is an unidimensional measurement, as illustrated in the scree plot in Table 5.6.

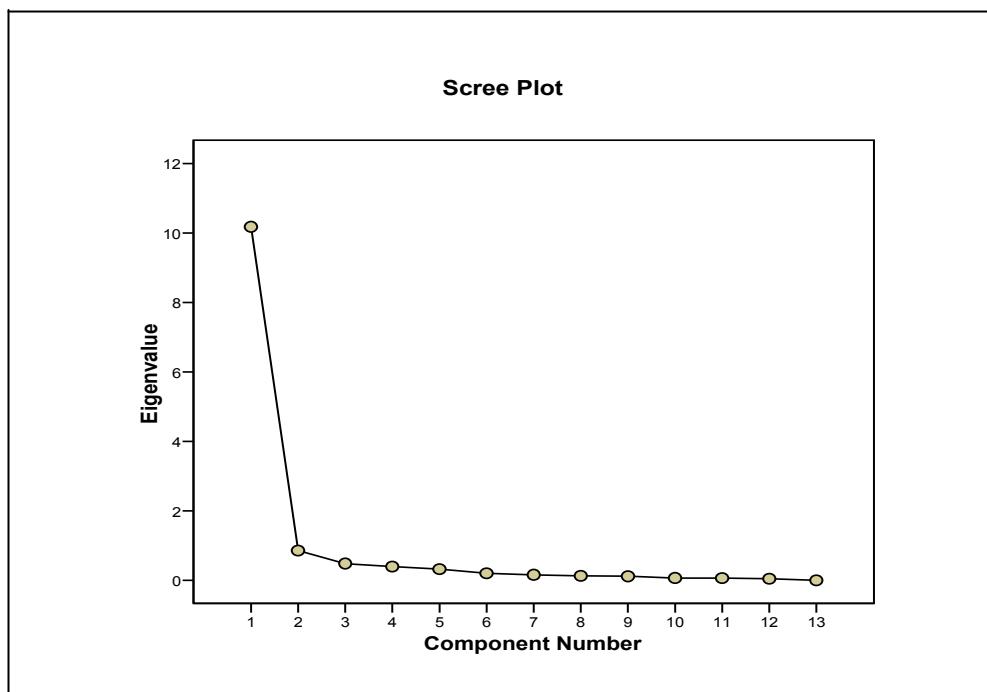


Table 3 Scree Plot

5.6.4 Discussion

The development of “The Scale of Religious Forgiveness” allowed the assessment of religious forgiveness outside the context of interpersonal close relationship, as it has been addressed so far in literature.

In fact, the scale was devised for assessing religious forgiveness beyond any interpersonal rapport with the offender. The scale was tested in a sample of bereaved individuals of the WTC.

Factor analysis revealed that the scale has one dimensional factor that measures religious forgiveness vs. condemnation (and not just vs. absence of religious forgiveness).

Despite being 42 respondents for a 12 items scale, loadings were above .84 and reliability of the scale was .97. The “Scale of Religious Forgiveness” demonstrates a good internal consistency and provides an easily administered assessment of forgiveness as a specific religious construct.

This scale will be used to explore relationships between religious forgiveness as a mediating variable in relation to re-evaluation of the religious experience (independent variable) and dependent variables such as: religious coping and resolution of bereavement.

5.7 Analysis of Coping Methods while dealing with loss due to WTC Attack: Role of Religious Core of Belief and Role of Forgiveness

ANALYSIS of QUESTION 8

Stepwise multiple regression analysis was used to predict the nature of coping strategies. In particular, religious experience characterised by improvement in relationship with God was assumed to be a predictor of religious ways of coping, whereas resentment towards God and loss of faith was supposed to be predictive of non-religious ways of coping.

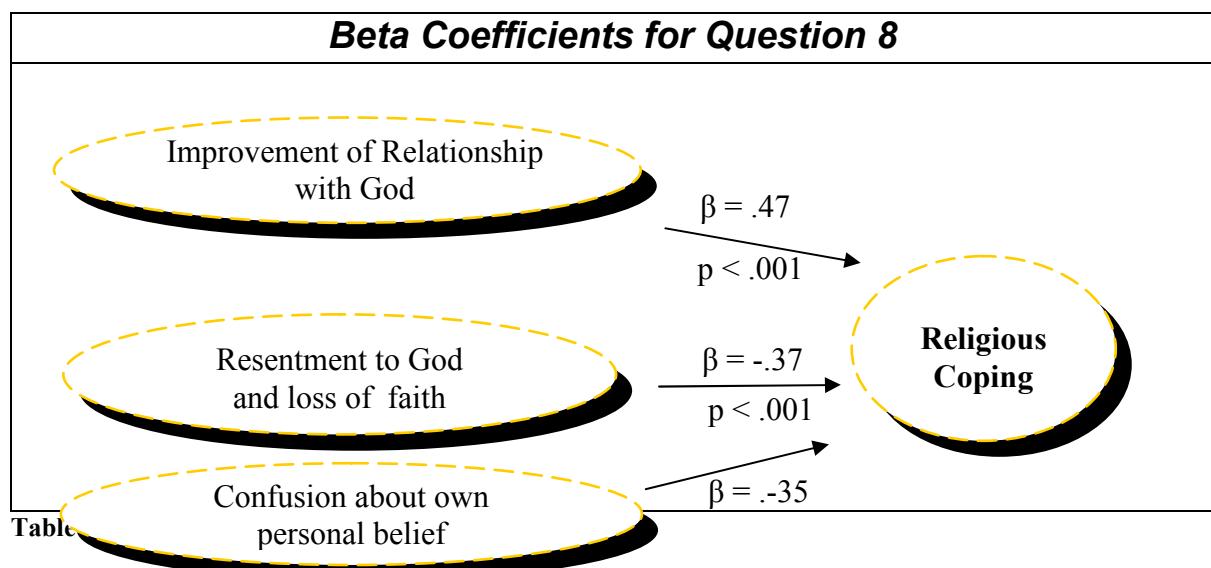
The results for the analysis are shown in Table Q8.1.

Regression for the Dependent Variable Religious vs. Non-Religious ways of coping						
Variables	β	Std Err β	B	Std Err B	t(38)	p-level
Intercept			120,5	1.0	85.56	< .001
Improvement of Relationship with God	.46	0.11	5.6	1.2	4.4	< .001
Resentment to God and loss of faith	-.37	0.11	-4.3	1.2	-3.4	< .001
Confusion about own personal belief	-.35	0.11	-4.1	1.2	-3.2	< .001

Table Q8.1 Results for stepwise multiple regression

Improvement in Relationship with God, resentment and loss of faith, and confusion about own personal belief entered into the regression equation significantly as $R = .69$; $F (3.38) = 12.02$ and $p < .001$. All together explained 48% of variance as $R^2 = .48$.

In particular improvement of the relationship with God was a good predictor of religious coping $\beta = .46$ whereas resentment to God and a loss of faith was a good predictor of Non-religious coping $\beta = -.37$. Moreover regression analysis revealed that individual confusion about own personal belief was a predictor of Non-religious coping $\beta = -.35$. Table Q8.2 shows beta coefficients for the analysis.



ANALYSIS of QUESTION 9

Stepwise multiple regression analysis was used to predict individual attitudes to forgiveness. In particular, religious experience characterised by improvement in relationship with God was assumed to be a predictor of forgiveness, whereas resentment towards God and loss of faith were supposed to be predictor of lack of forgiveness.

The results for the analysis are showed in table Q9.1.

Regression for the Dependent Variable Forgiveness						
	β	Std Err β	B	Std Err B	T(38)	p-level
R = .67	$R^2 = .46$	$R^2 \text{ adj} = .41$				
F (3.38) = 10.81	p < .001	Std Err = 8.57				
Intercept			119.16	1.32	90.02	< .001
Improvement of Relationship with God	.4	.11	4.55	1.33	3.4	< .001
Resentment to God and loss of faith	-.39	.11	-4.47	1.33	-3.33	.002
Desire of Acquire Faith	.37	.11	4.17	1.33	3.11	< .001

Table Q9.1 Results for stepwise multiple regression

Improvement in Relationship with God, resentment and loss of faith, and although unexpectedly desire to acquire faith entered into the regression equation significantly as $R = .67$; $F (3.38) = 10.81$ and $p < .001$. All together this explained 46% of variance as $R^2 = .46$.

In particular, improvement in the relationship with God was a good predictor of forgiveness $\beta = .40$ whereas resentment to God and a loss of faith were predictor of not just absence of forgiveness, but desire opposite to religious forgiveness such as condemnation $\beta = .39$.

Moreover, regression analysis revealed that individual desire to acquire faith was a predictor of religious forgiveness $\beta = -.37$. Table Q9.2 shows beta coefficients for the analysis.

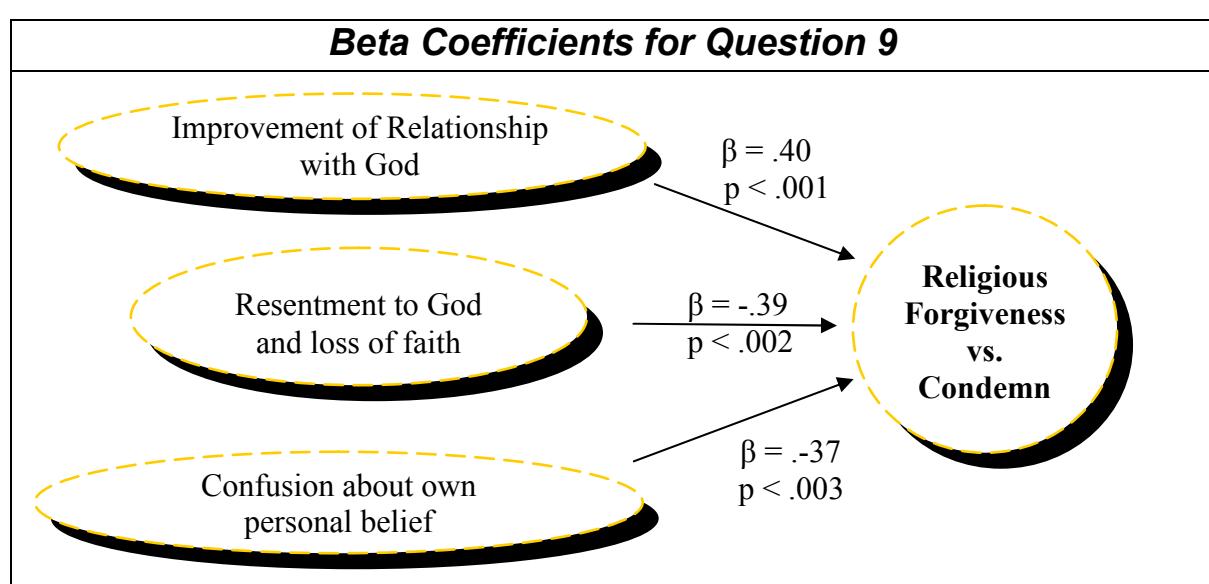


Table Q9.2 Beta Coefficients for Religious Forgiveness

5.8 Intercorrelations of the New Scales

Intercorrelational analysis among factor scores of the “The Re-Evaluation of Religious Experience Scale”, “The Religious vs. Non-Religious Coping Scale” and “The Religious Forgiveness Scale” was conducted to establish whether or not correlation were significant.

Findings of the analysis reveal that intercorrelation among factors of the scales were not significant.

5.9 Analysis of Resolution of Complicated Bereavement (as dependent variable)

ANALYSIS of QUESTION 10

Stepwise multivariate analysis of variance and linear regression for analysing questions 10a, 10b and 10c were performed to investigate any determining factor impacting on resolution of conjugal bereavement. An improved relationship with God, religious coping and religious forgiveness were hypothesised to be predictor variables of bereavement resolution. Results of the analysis are reported for each independent variables addressed and illustrated in the relate tables.

Results for question 10a

Question 10a wanted to establish whether or not improvement in relationship with God could have been a significant factor in influencing resolution of bereavement after the WTC disaster. The prediction was explored through stepwise multiple regression analysis by using factor scores of factors of the “Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale” and factor scores of the Inventory of Complicated Grief (Prigerson).

Results of multiple regression with resolution of bereavement as dependent variable are reported in Table Q10.1, beta coefficients are reported in table Q10.2.

Results shown in table 1 indicate that the variables of individual “Improvement of personal relationship with God”, “Disoriented / Confused about Personal Belief”, and “Desiring of Acquiring Faith” entered into regression. They correlate positively ($R = .67$) and explain 45% of total variance of the dependent variable ($R^2 = .45$). Both R and R^2 as shown by F are highly significant. The predictor of the individual improvement of the relationship with God has the major impact in determining bereavement resolution $\beta = .49$.

The predictor of being disoriented / confused about personal belief also impacts on bereavement resolution. This is a negative correlation therefore when confusion about individual belief increases bereavement resolution decreases $\beta = -.42$.

The predictor of “Desiring to Acquire Faith”, although entered into regression, was not statistically significant $\beta = -.16$.

Regression for Resolution of Bereavement Variable						
R = .67	R ² = .45	R ² adj. = .4				
F(3.38) = 10.49	p < .001	Std Err = 9.03				
Variables	β	Std. Err β	B	Std Err B	T(40)	p-level
Intercept			119.40	1.39	85.69	< .001
Improvement /Worsening	.49	.11	-5.8	1.41	-4.11	< .001
Disoriented /Confused about Personal belief	-.42	.11	5.03	1.41	3.56	.001
Desiring of Acquiring Faith	.16	.11	1.89	1.41	1.34	.18

Table Q10.1 Results of Multiple Regression for Bereavement Resolution

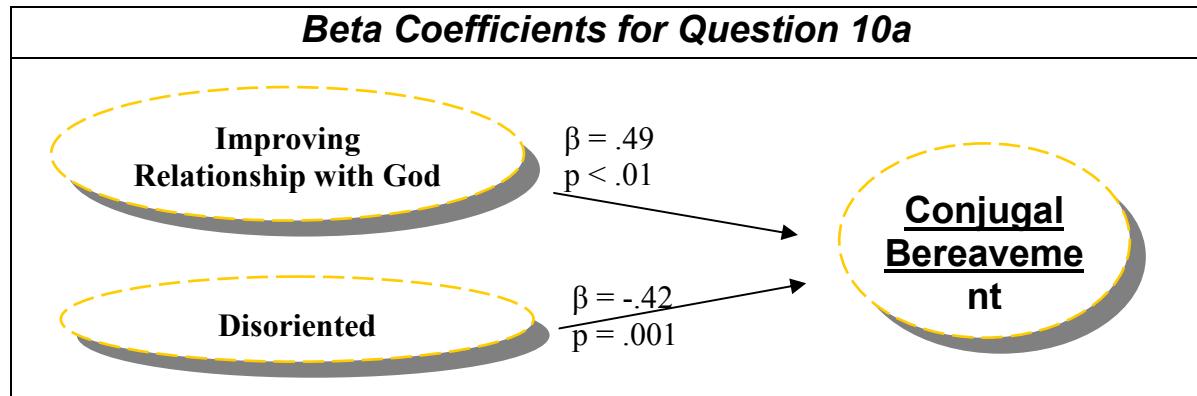


Table Q10.2 Beta Coefficients Results for Bereavement Resolution

Results for question 10b

Question 10a wanted to establish whether or not religious coping could have been a significant factor in influencing resolution of bereavement after the WTC disaster. The prediction was explored through linear regression analysis by using factor scores of the “Religious vs. non-religious coping scale” and factor scores of the Inventory of Complicated Grief (Prigerson). Results of linear regression with resolution of bereavement as dependent variable and beta coefficients are reported in Tables Q10.3 and Q10.4.

Results shown in Table Q10.3 indicate that the predictor of the religious coping variable and the resolution of bereavement variable have a high positive correlation. The first explains 79% of the variance of bereavement resolution ($R^2 = .79$). Both F values are highly significant together with β weight = .77 showing that religious coping is a key factor in conjugal bereavement resolution.

Regression for Resolution of Bereavement Variable						
R = .77	R ² = .79	R ² adj. = .72				
F(1.40)=156.97	p < .001	Std. Err = 5.36				
	B	Std. Err β	B	Std. Err B	t(40)	p-level
Intercept			16.32	8.26	1.97	.002
Religious / non Religious Coping	.77	.07	.85	.06	12.52	< .001

Table Q10.3 Results of Linear Regression for Bereavement Resolution

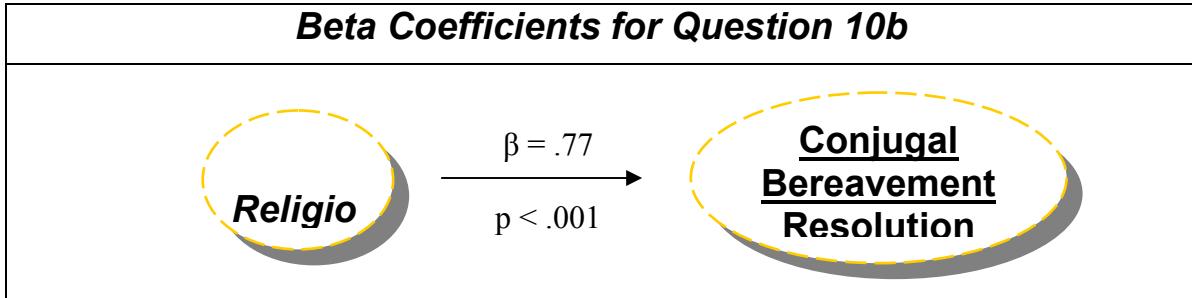


Table Q10.4 Result of Beta Coefficient for Bereavement Resolution

Results for question 10c

Question 10c wanted to establish whether or not religious forgiveness could have been a significant factor in influencing resolution of bereavement after the WTC disaster. Prediction was explored through linear regression analysis by using factor scores of factors of the “Attitude to Forgiveness Scale” and factor scores of the “Inventory of Complicated Grief” (Prigerson). Results of linear regression with resolution of bereavement as dependent variable are reported in Table Q10.5 and beta coefficients are reported in Table Q10.6.

Regression for Resolution of Bereavement Variable						
	β	Std Err β	B	Std Err B	T(40)	p-level
R = .44	$R^2 = .39$		$R^2 \text{ adj} = .28$			
F(1.40)=113,48	p < .001		Std Err = 6.07			
Intercept	.44	.08	12.27	10.1	1.21	0.23
Forgiveness			.89	.08	10.65	< .001

Table Q10.5 Results of Linear Regression for Bereavement Resolution

Results shown in Table 5 indicate that the predictor of the religious forgiveness variable and the resolution of the conjugal bereavement variable have a high positive correlation. The first explains 73% of the variance of bereavement resolution ($R^2 = .73$). Both F values are highly significant together with β weight = .44, indicating that religious forgiveness has an important role in bereavement resolution.

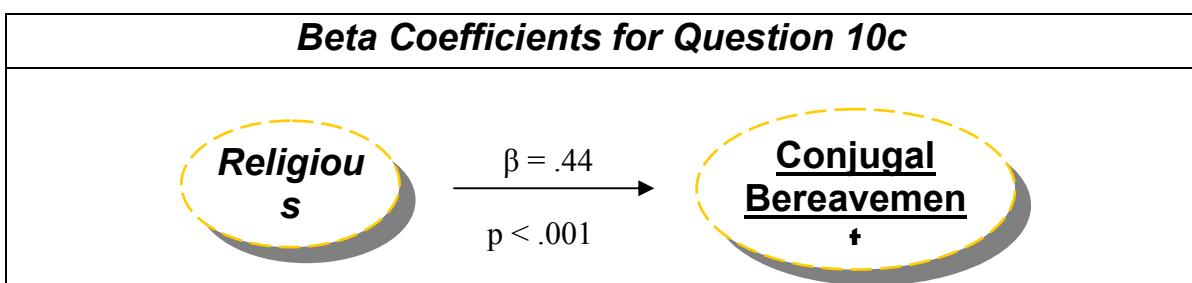


Table Q10.6 Results of Beta Coefficients for Bereavement Resolution

5.10 Analysis of Mental Health Outcomes

ANALYSIS of QUESTION 11

Linear regression was conducted to analyse any impact of religious coping on rates of depression and on life satisfaction since strategy of religious coping was supposed to be associated with positive outcomes in mental health indicators.

Analysis of question 11a

Question 11a wanted to assess if religious coping was a predictor of low rates of depression. The relationship between these variables was analysed by linear regression, using scores of the Religious vs. Non-religious strategies of Coping Scale, and scores of the Depression Inventory (Beck). Results of linear regression are reported in Table Q11.1.

Regression for the Dependent Variable Depression

$R = .48$ $R^2 = .18$ $R^2 \text{ adj} = .13$

$F(1,41) = 7.63$ $p < .002$ $\text{Std Err} = .8$

Variable	β	Std. Err β	B	Std Err B	t(40)	p-level
Intercept			5.43	1.72	3.1	.007
Religious Coping	-.48	.13	.04	.01	3.11	.009

Table Q11.1 Results of Linear Regression

The slope of the regression line, expressing the unstandardised regression between religious coping and levels of depression is described with β and it is $.48$.

Although relatively small, $\beta = -.48$ indicates that the two variables are in a negative relationship in which for every increase of 1.00 on the score in the religious coping scale, the score on the depression variable changes by $-.48$.

Religious coping explained 18% of variance of the dependent variable and contributed to the prediction $R^2 = .18$. The regression was poor ($R^2 \text{ adj} = 13\%$), but the overall relationship was significant $F(1,41) = 7.63$ and $p = .009$.

Beta coefficient for the question is reported in Table Q11.2.

Beta Coefficients for Question 11a

Religious Coping

$\beta = -.48$
 $p = .009$

Depression

Table Q11.2 Beta Coefficient for Depression

Analysis of question 11b

Question 11b wanted to determine whether or not religious coping was a predictor of life satisfaction. The relationship between these variables was analysed by linear regression, using scores of the Religious vs. Non-religious strategies of Coping Scale, and scores of the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener).

Results of linear regression are reported in Table Q11.3.

Regression for the Dependent Variable Life Satisfaction						
R = .31		R ² = ,1318597		R ² adj = .11		
F(1.7) = 4.37		p < .01				
Variable	β	Std. Err β	B	Std Err B	t(40)	p-level
Intercept			3.49	1.64	3.04	.006
Religious Coping	.31	.17	.04	.5	3.19	.007

Table Q11.3 Results of Linear Regression

Regression between religious coping and levels of life satisfaction is displayed with β and it is .31.

The value expressing the relationship between the two variables is very low.

Religious coping explained 13% of variance of the dependent variable and contributed to the prediction $R^2 = .13$. The regression was poor (R^2 adj = 13%), and overall relationship was not very significant $F(1.27) = 4.37$ and $p = .007$.

Table Q11.3 shows beta coefficients for the linear regression of religious coping impacting both levels of depression and rates in life satisfaction.

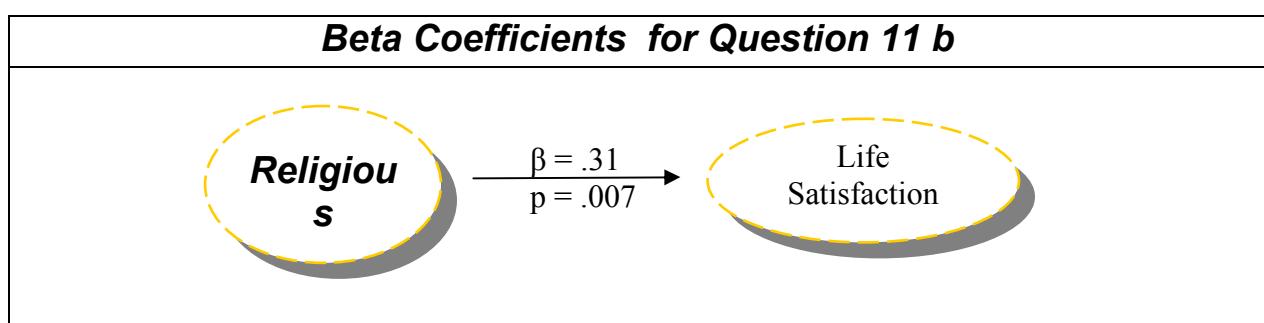


Table Q11.4 Results of Beta Coefficients

ANALYSIS of QUESTION 12

The impact of religious forgiveness on rates of depression and on life satisfaction was explored through linear regression since forgiveness was supposed to be associated to positive outcomes in mental health indicators.

Analysis of question 12a

Question 12a wanted to assess if religious forgiveness was a predictor of any depression.

The relationship between these variables was analysed by linear regression, using scores in the Attitude to Forgiveness Scale, and scores in the Depression Inventory (Beck).

Results of linear regression are reported in Tables Q12.1 and Q12.2.

Regression for the Dependent Variable Depression						
R = .59	$R^2 = .51$	$R^2 \text{ adj} = .46$				
F(3.51) = 52.39	p < .001	Std Err = .84				
Variable	β	Std. Err β	B	Std Err B	t(40)	p-level
Intercept			8.43	1.26	5.97	< .001
Forgiveness	-.59	.17	.04	.01	3.14	< .001

Table Q12.1 Results of Linear Regression

Regression between religious forgiveness and levels of depression, described with β equals $-.59$, indicating that the two variables are in a significant negative relationship.

Religious forgiveness explained 51% of variance of the dependent variable and contributed to the prediction $R^2 = .51$. The regression was fortunate ($R^2 \text{ adj} = 46\%$), and the overall relationship between forgiveness and level of depression was significant: $F(3.51) = 52.39$ and $p < .001$.

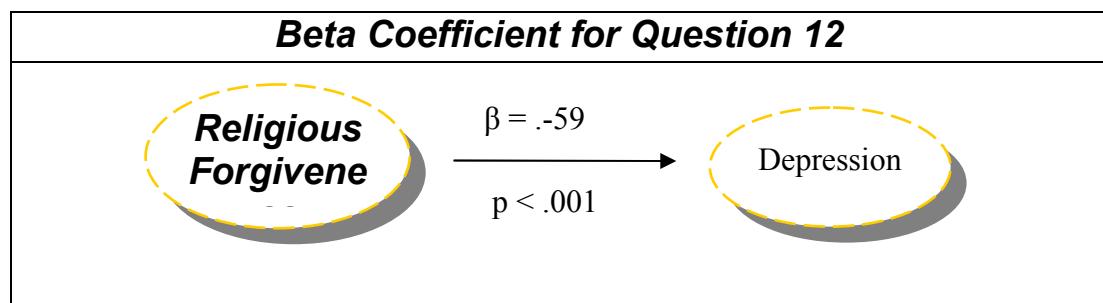


Table Q12.2 Results of Beta Coefficients for Depression

Analysis of question 12b

Question 12b wanted to establish whether or not religious forgiveness was a predictor of life satisfaction. The relationship between these variables was analysed by linear regression, using scores of the Attitude to Forgiveness Scale, and scores of the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener).

Results of linear regression are reported in Table Q12.3.

Regression for the Dependent Variable life satisfaction						
R = .61	R ² = .42	R ² adj = .39				
F(3.51) = 44.73	p < .001	Std Err = .66				
Variable	B	Std. Err β	B	Std Err B	t(40)	p-level
Intercept			7.38	1.38	6.36	< .001
Forgiveness	.61	.19	.04	.015	3.14	< .001

Table Q12.3 Results of Linear Regression

Regression between religious forgiveness and levels of life satisfaction is displayed by β and is .61. The value expressing the relationship between the two variables is significant.

Forgiveness explained 42% of variance of the dependent variable and contributed to the prediction $R^2 = .39$. The regression (R^2 adj = 13%), and overall relationship also significant $F(3.51) = 44.73$ and $p < .001$.

Table Q12.4 shows beta coefficients for the linear regression of religious forgiveness impacting on both levels of depression and rates in life satisfaction.

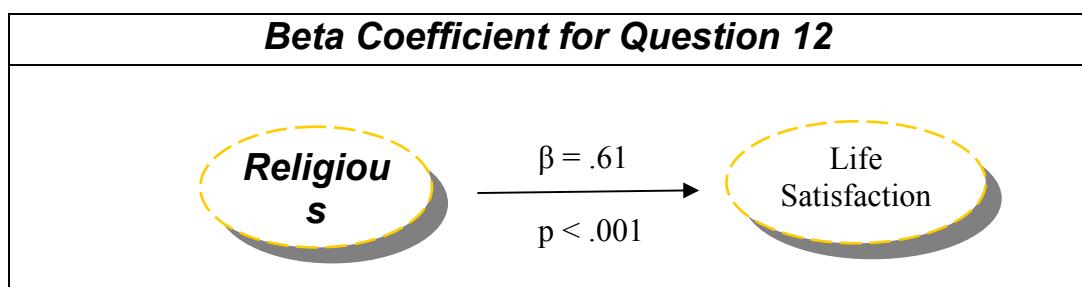


Table Q12.4 Results of Beta Coefficient for life satisfaction

5.11 Analysis of Resolution of Complicated Bereavement (as independent variable)

ANALYSIS of QUESTION 13

The resolution of conjugal bereavement on mental health outcome was explored through linear regression in order to establish the effect of constructive bereavement resolution on rates of depression and on life satisfaction.

Analysis of question 13a

Question 13a wanted to examine the impact of positive bereavement resolution as a predictor of low rates of depression.

The relationship between these variables was analysed by linear regression, using scores of the Inventory of Complicated Grief (Prigerson), and scores of the Depression Inventory (Beck).

Results of linear regression are reported in Tables Q13.1 and Q13.2.

Regression for the Dependent Variable Depression

$R = .46$ $R^2 = .35$ $R^2 \text{ adj} = .33$
 $F(1.47) = 21.49$ $p < .001$ $\text{Std Err} = .54$

Variable	β	Std. Err β	B	Std Err B	t(40)	p-level
Intercept			3.49	1, 56	3	< .006
Bereavement Resolution	.46	.17	.04	.5	3.15	< .007

Table Q13.1 Results of Linear Regression

Linear regression between resolution of bereavement and rates of depression displayed by β is .46.

The value expressing the positive relationship between the two variables is not considerably significant.

Bereavement resolution explained 32% of the variance of the dependent variable and contributed to the prediction $R^2 = .33$. The regression was poor ($R^2 \text{ adj} = 37\%$) although $p < .001$ was significant.

Beta Coefficients for Question 13

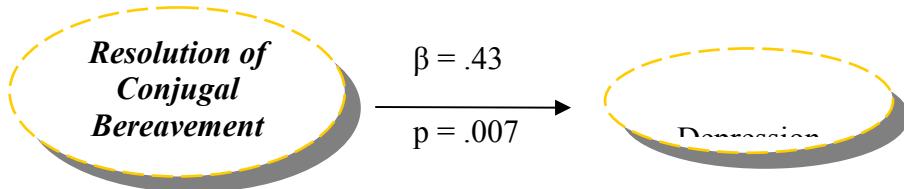


Table Q13.2 Results of Beta Coefficients

Analysis of question 13b

Question 13b wanted to analyse the impact of positive bereavement resolution as predictor of life satisfaction.

The relationship between these variables was analysed by linear regression, using scores of the Inventory of Complicated Grief (Prigerson), and scores of the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener).

Results of linear regression are reported in Table Q13.3.

Regression for the Dependent Variable Life Satisfaction						
R = .53	R ² = .37	R ² adj = .36				
F(1.27) = 5.76	p < .001	Std Err = ,6				
Variable	β	Std. Err β	B	Std Err B	t(40)	p-level
Intercept			5,02	1, 65	4,73	< .005
Bereavement Resolution	.53	.15	.07	.5	4,73	< .006

Table Q13.3 Results of Linear Regression

Linear regression between the resolution of bereavement and rates of life satisfaction is expressed by β and is .53. This value, expressing the positive relationship between the two variables, is not significantly remarkable.

The bereavement resolution explained 37% of the variance of the dependent variable and contributed to the prediction $R^2 = .37$. The regression was poor (R^2 adj = 36%) although $p < .001$ was significant.

Table Q13.4 shows beta coefficients for the linear regression of bereavement resolution impacting both on levels of depression and rates of life satisfaction.

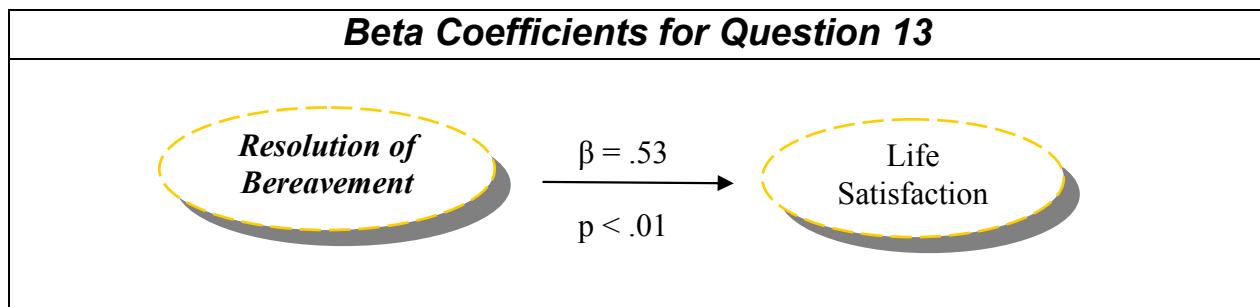


Table Q13.4 Results of Beta Coefficients

6 Summary and Discussion

Findings in assessing religious experience prior to the WTC reveal different aspects in individual religious connection, especially among those who perceive God in opposite ways.

Individuals categorised as “Non Believers” and “Seeking and Moving into faith” most strongly perceived “God as disregarding towards them” (Table 1).

Moreover, the analysis reveals that individuals who perceive God as disregarding them, tend to be less reliable and dependable in the belief professed by the Catholic Church, whereas individuals who perceive God as faithful are more inclined to adhere to the content of the Catholic belief (Table 2).

Personal perception of God, in fact, seems to be crucial in accepting the Catholic teachings as truth of faith. The analysis revealed that the factor which has the most impact on the dependent variable of adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church is “God’s Faithfulness to me” ($\beta=.43$) with a high level of significance $p < .01$ followed by the factor “God’s Disregard of me” with a negative correlation still significant ($\beta = -.34$ and $p = .01$).

Different Approaches to Catholicism	MEANS
Non-believer	.79
Seeking and moving into faith	.35

Table 1 Means Differences in Approaches to Catholicism for factor *God’s disregard of me*

Perception of God	Adherence to the Roman Catholic Church Creed
God’s disregard	112.75
God’s faithfulness	123.4

Table 2 Means of Independent Variables

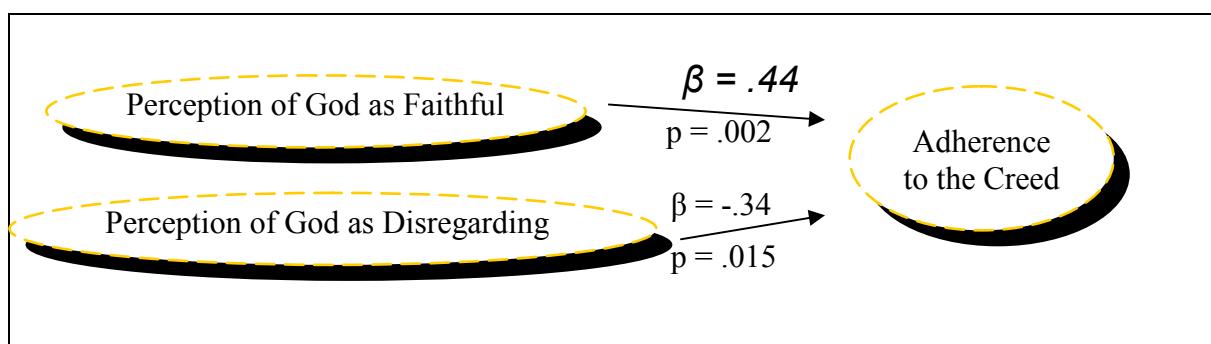


Table 3 Beta Coefficients on Adherence to the Creed of the Catholic Church

although, scores of the attitude of a “Committed relationship with God”, accounting for 32% of the total variance, were positively related to the adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church. β impact on adherence to the Creed was positive (.57) and highly significant $p < .01$, (Table 4), whereas an uneasy relationship with God did not enter into regression and therefore did not contribute to the prediction beyond intention.

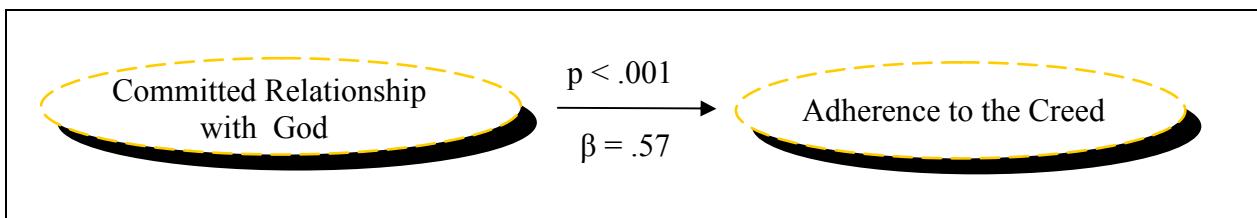


Table 4 Beta Coefficient on Adherence to the Creed of the Catholic Church

Attention to any change in the core of individuals' religious faith values allowed the understanding of the process of faith transformation (Pargament, 2000) immediately after the WTC and the delineating of the active role of the religious experience in practice.

Research findings reveal that religious belief seems to be a dynamic process. Results among the sample revealed that individuals exposed to the experience of a traumatic loss mainly revoked or transformed their old values according to their religious belief features held prior to the stressful event. Specific attitudes towards Catholicism prior to the traumatic event in participants' everyday life reflected a new approach to personal religious experience.

Substantial statistical differences between individual attitudes towards Catholicism prior to the WTC attack and individual religious experience re-evaluated after the stressful event were found.

Research findings were significant for particular categories of attitudes towards Catholicism in relation to the following factors of “The Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale”. They were: “Desire for Acquiring Faith”, “Disorientation about own personal belief”, “Improving vs. worsening relationship with God”, and “Losing Faith associated with Resentments towards God”. These will be analysed separately.

A) “Desire to Acquire Faith”

Research results show that individuals grouped in the category of “Non-Believer” before the stressful event, have immediately after the traumatic event, the strongest “Desire to Acquire Faith” among all the individuals in the categories, followed by those who are “Seeking and moving into faith” as reported in Table 5.

Different Approaches to Catholicism	MEANS
Non-believer	.38
Seeking and moving into faith	.24
Indifference or reservation towards Catholicism	-.23
Believe in God without practicing my faith	-.38
Believe and practice my faith	-.65

Table 5 Means Differences in Approaches to Catholicism for factor “Desire of Acquiring Faith”

The most considerable result is that the “Desire to Acquire Faith”, besides being very strong in “Non believer” individuals, is also significantly different than the “Desire for Acquiring Faith” displayed in other groups.

A deep “Desire to Acquire Faith” in individuals in “Non-believers” seems to suggest that possibly the traumatic event could have created a development of a personal inner movement towards faith. In fact, a total absence of faith prior to the event seems to have elicited a strong desire for reconstructing new meanings by means of religious values expressed with the “Desire to Acquire Faith” after the stressful event.

The personal inner path from a lack of religious belief to the “Desire for Acquiring Faith” after the event in individuals grouped as “Non-Believer” prior to the event, was five times higher compared to the “Desire to Acquire Faith” in individuals categorised as “Seeking and moving into faith” prior the event. These results suggest that the religious approach to Catholicism in individuals grouped in the “Non-believers” category after the said event implies a process of abandoning their previous atheism for a new, not yet defined, religious stance.

Although individuals grouped in the “Seeking and moving into faith” category were already in a position of looking and moving into faith, statistical results suggest that they were in the process of consolidating their religious stance. However, anticipating the results in the following section C, as individuals of this group displayed the highest desire to improve their relationship with God, a deep process of longing for their “Desire to Acquire Faith” allows distinguishing a religious transformation of significance in this particular group of individuals.

Individuals Grouped in the categories of “Indifference or reservation towards Catholicism” and of “Believe in God without practising my faith” do not differ substantially in their “Desire to Acquire Faith”. They have the lowest “Desire to Acquire Faith” among the different categories and they are very distant from those who are “Seeking and moving into faith”. These results seem to suggest that faith re-adjustment in those individuals was not significantly found.

Reasonably individuals grouped as “Believe and practice my faith” have the lowest “Desire to Acquire Faith”.

B) “Disorientation about own personal belief”

Research findings about personal sense of religious disorientation reveal that individuals belonging to the group “Believe in God without practising my faith” have the highest condition of uncertainty regarding religious belief compared to the other groups.

Differences in approaches of Catholicism are illustrated in Table 6.

Different Approaches to Catholicism	MEANS
Believe in God without practicing my faith	2
Non-believer	.06
Seeking and moving into faith	.01
Indifference or reservation towards Catholicism	-.49
Believe and practice my faith	-.63

Table 6 Means Differences in Approaches to Catholicism for factor “Disoriented about own personal belief”

Data analysis shows that individuals grouped in the category “Believe in God without practising my faith” display the highest sense of faith insecurity compared to the other categories. On the contrary individuals belonging to the “Seeking and moving into faith” and individuals grouped as “Not a believer”, which are statistically similar, seem to be moderately “Disoriented about own personal belief”.

Moreover individuals grouped under the “Indifference or reservation towards Catholicism” category do not seem affected by any sense of being “Disorientation about their own personal belief”.

This seems to mean that both believer individuals whose religious practice is a central part of their religious experience, and individuals, who exhibit indifference towards faith, do not seem affected in the core of their religious meaning.

These data reflect previous statistics, hence individuals who show lack of interest in approaching faith display steadiness in their convictions and have the lowest “Desire to Acquire Faith” suggesting again that they seem to be consolidating their religious stance.

C) “Improving vs. worsening relationship with God”

Data analysis reveal that individuals who are coded as “Seeking and Moving into faith” and those who are categorised as “Believe and practice my faith” have the highest desire to improve their relationship with God, compared to the other groups. Moreover individuals grouped under the “Indifference or reservation towards Catholicism” category display the lowest desire of personal involvement in the relationship with God as reported in Table 7.

Different Approaches to Catholicism	MEANS
Seeking and Moving into faith	.68
Believe and practice my faith	.55
Believe in God without practising my faith	-.17
Non-believer	-.51
Indifference or reservation towards Catholicism	-1.46

Table 7 Means Differences in Approaches to Catholicism for factor “Improving vs. worsening relationship with God”

As mentioned in section A, statistical results suggest that individuals grouped in the “Seeking and moving into faith” group were in the process of transforming their religious stance towards an improvement in their relationship with God.

Table 8 summarises the most significant results emerged from the analysis of the individual religious transformation of significance prior and immediately after the WTC disaster.

Attitudes towards Catholicism Prior the WCT disaster	Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience after the WTC disaster	MEANS
Non-Believer	Desire of Acquiring Faith	1.38
Seeking and Moving towards Faith		.24
Belief in God without practicing Faith	Disoriented	2
Seeking and Moving towards Faith	Improving the Relationship with God	.68
Believer and practice my Faith		.55

Table 8 Religious transformational of Significance

In addition research findings suggest that a positive religious experience characterised by a “Renovated Religious Belief” together with an attitude of “Discovering and moving into Faith” were predictors of “Improvement in the Relationship with God”, as illustrated in Table 9.

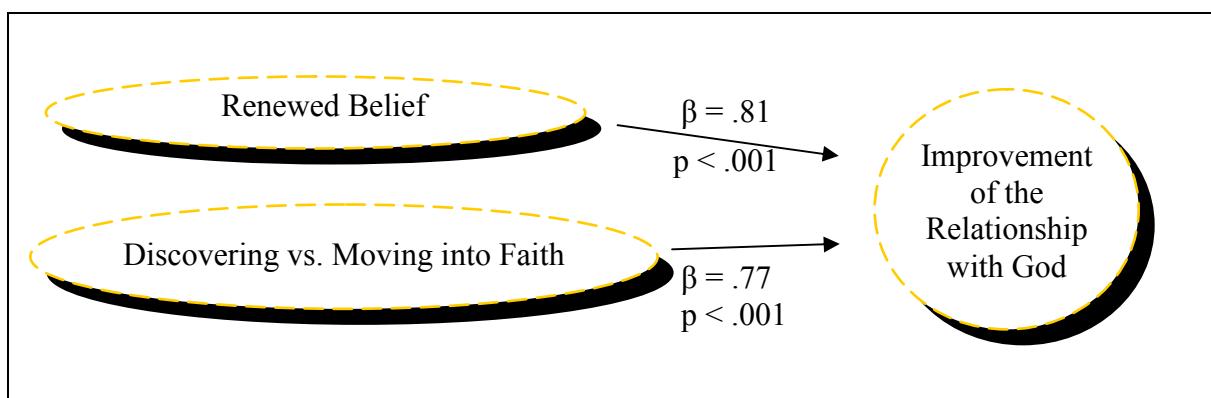


Table 9 Beta Coefficients on Improvement vs. Worsening Relationship with God

D) “Losing Faith associated with Resentment towards God”

Research results show that a distressful religious experience characterised by an uneasy relationship with God was a predictor of resentment towards God and loss of faith as well as perception of “God as disregarding the individual” circumstances, as reported in Tables 11 and 12.

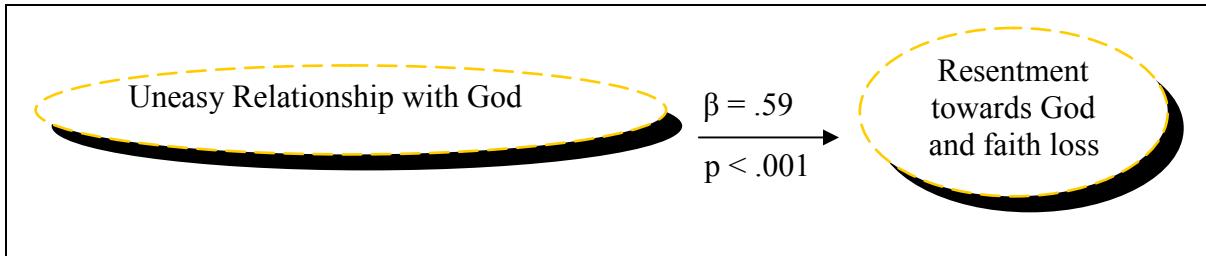


Table 11 Beta Coefficients for Resentment towards God and faith loss

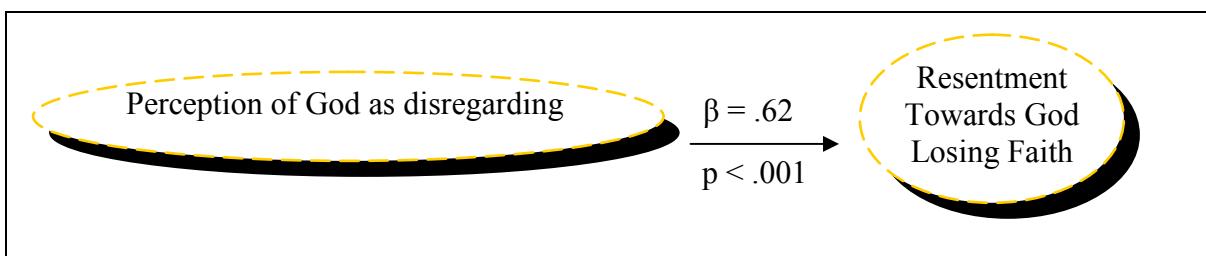


Table 12 Beta Coefficients for Resentment towards God and faith loss

Findings related to religious vs. non-religious coping methods allowed the research study to provide a model of religious coping, which will be presented in the concluding part of the thesis.

The analysis of the variable of the religious vs. non religious strategy of coping was explored as a mediating variable, as suggested in literature (Pargament, 1997). This approach to spiritual coping illuminates research on religious belief which was found not to be a predictor of positive outcomes of life stressor, whereas search for meaning while dealing with the stressor needed to be addressed as a re-creational religious meaning that could be found in a new experience of religious belief or in an adjustment of old meanings. Therefore, the re-evaluation of the religious experience needed to be considered as a independent variable to study any occurrence of religious coping in order to further address mental health outcomes of traumatic experience of loss.

Therefore, rather than being studied in relation to religious measures, the religious vs. non religious coping variable was studied in relation to the re-evaluation of the religious experience. Improvement in the relationship with God after the experience of traumatic bereavement the factor of “Improvement of the Relationship with God” was found to be a predictor of religious coping, as reported in Table 13.

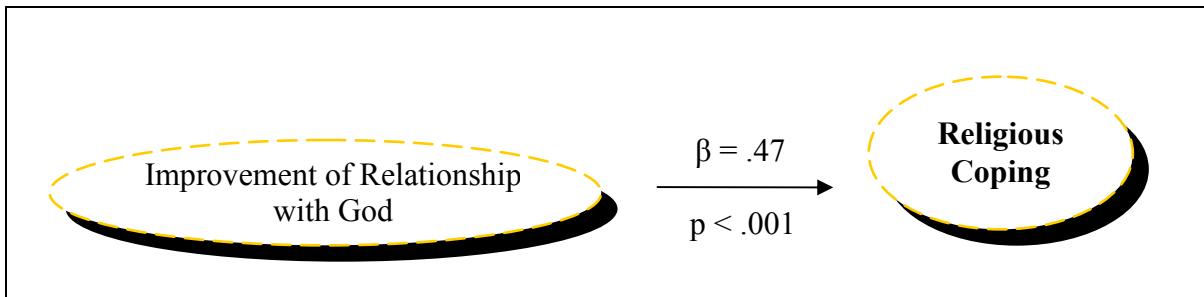


Table 13 Beta Coefficient for Religious Coping

Research findings confirmed that “Resentment to God and loss of faith” was a predictor of Non-religious coping. Moreover it was also found that “Confusion about own personal belief” was beyond intention a predictor of Non-religious coping as reported in Table 14.

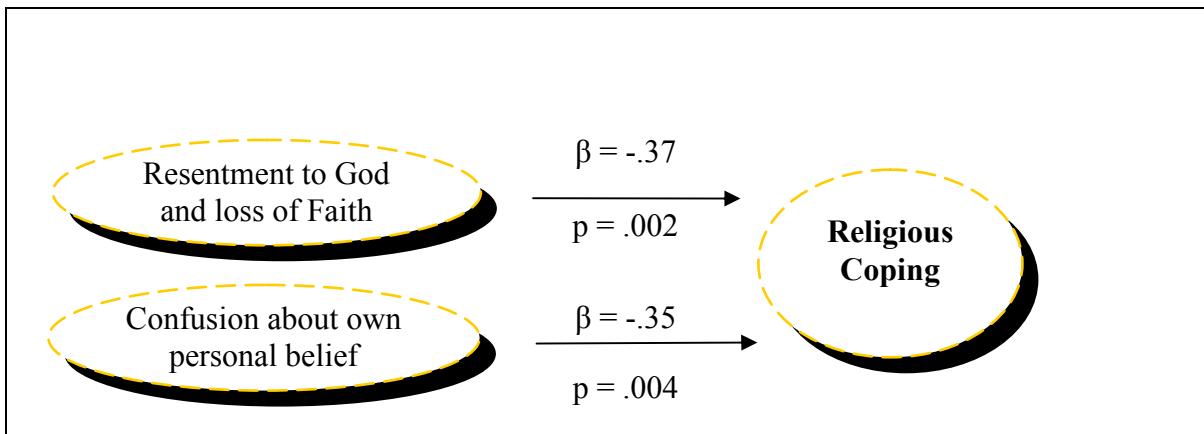


Table 14 Beta Coefficient for Non-Religious Coping

Research findings confirmed that religious coping was a predictor of positive conjugal bereavement resolution, as reported in Table 15.

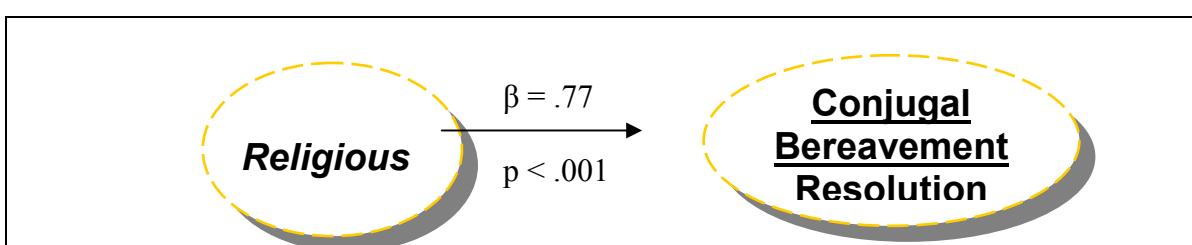


Table 15 Beta Coefficient for Religious Coping on Bereavement Resolution

Research results also confirmed that religious coping was a predictor of both life satisfaction and low rates of depression, as reported in Table 16.

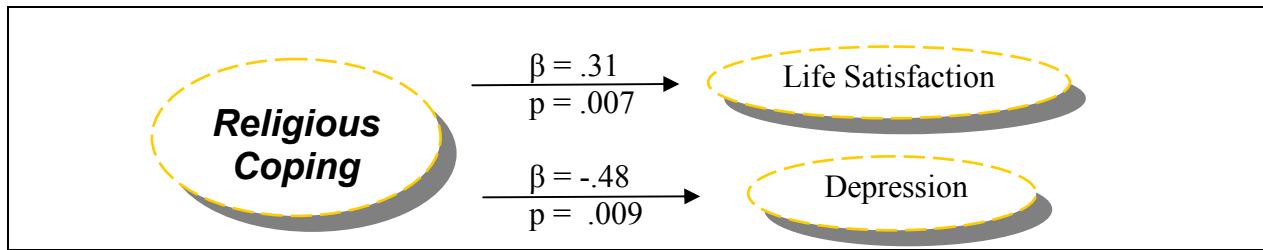


Table 16 Beta Coefficient for Religious Coping on Mental Health

Religious coping was explored in the perspective of the religious tradition of the Roman Catholic Church, according to the role it plays in the search for significance in stressful life events.

In the WTC tragedy, bereaved individuals experienced a traumatic unexpected loss. Through the coping process they tried to hold on to significance, or develop new sources of significance.

Research findings revealed that strategies of religious coping were adopted by individuals whose belief feature after the loss was characterised by “Improvement in the Relationship with God”, which positively impacted resolution of bereavement. These results show that religious significance to traumatic events can promote religious forms of coping leading to positive emotional benefits as positive resolution of bereavement.

Conversely, strategies of non-religious coping were used by individuals who belief after the stressor was characterised by “Resentment to God” and “Confusion about own personal belief”.

An angry religious struggle with God in the midst of a traumatic experience was not found to be a predictor of negative resolution of bereavement. Individuals who scored highly in being, “Disoriented in my own religious belief” in the assessment of their Re-evaluation of the religious experience immediately after the WTC disaster, resulted to be still not relieved from their bereavement resolution as they were engaged negatively in their emotions connected to their loss.

Religious coping was found to be a predictor of both life satisfaction and low rates of depression.

These findings allowed creating a model in which religious coping mediates relationships among the other variables addressed in the study, as presented in Table 17.

The Religious forgiveness has been conceptualised as a coping method that implies the most radical change in the core of the individual significance and therefore the most drastic change in the approach to the greatest negative object causing pain.

Although forgiveness has been approached as a motivational change (McCullough and Worthington, 1991), its transformational aspect seems to characterise it and recalls a more deep-rooted personal re-creational process that goes beyond the mere restoration of the relationship with the offender. Having considered forgiveness as a coping method supported by religious belief, its role has been explored as the one of the religious coping process and considered as an intervening variable.

Research findings revealed that as well as religious coping, religious forgiveness was adopted by individuals whose belief feature after the loss was characterised by “Improvement of the Relationship with God”, as illustrated in Table 18.

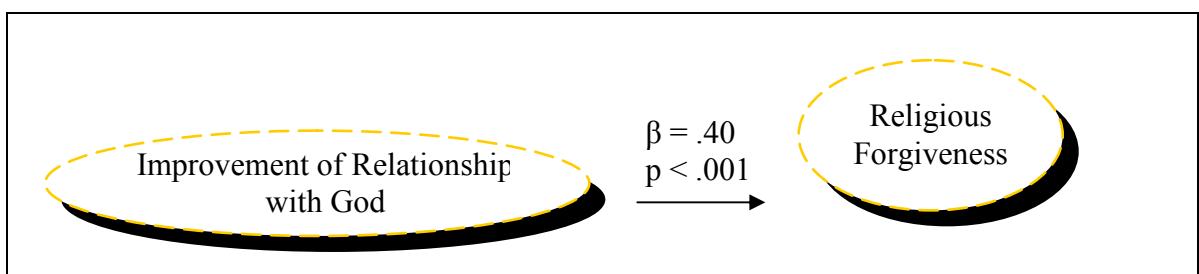


Table 18 Beta Coefficient

Moreover religious forgiveness was found to be predictor of resolution of bereavement as illustrated in Table 19.

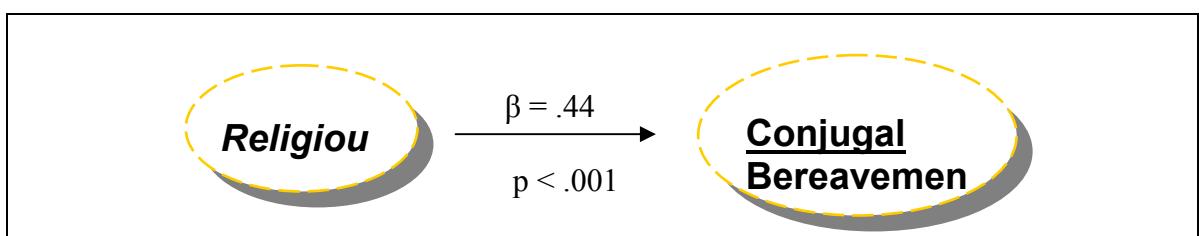


Table 19 Beta Coefficient

Consistently with the movement towards reconciliation, forgiveness has been explained as a transformational process where hunger was transformed into positive resolution of disruptive resentment, and resolution of bereavement was facilitated.

These results seem to confirm literature suggesting that coping methods in terms of religious forgiving responses seem to become less negative and more positive or pro-social over time (McCullough, Pargament & Thoresen, 2006).

Conversely, findings demonstrating that individuals whose belief after the stressor was characterised by “Resentment to God” and “Confusion about own personal belief” displayed not just a lack of forgiveness but attitudes of condemnation towards the offenders, as reported in Table 20.

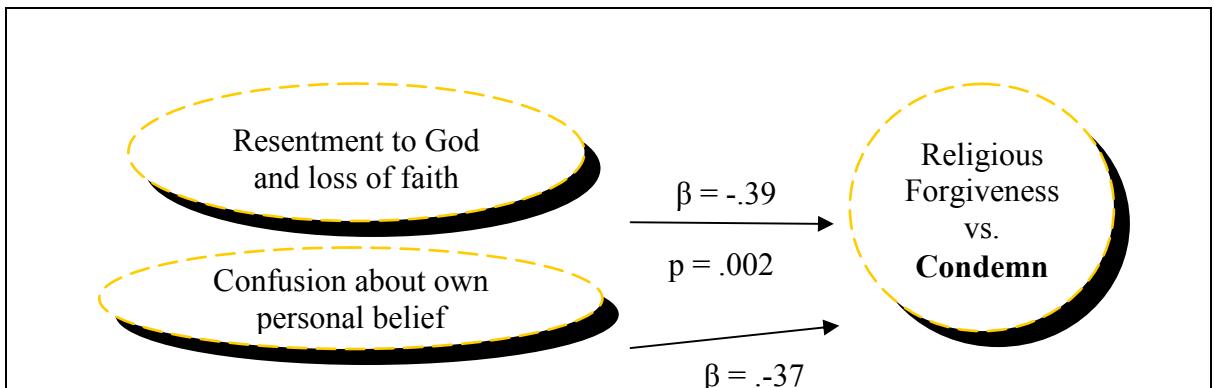


Table 20 Beta Coefficients

Religious forgiveness was found to be both a predictor low rates of depression and a predictor of life satisfaction, as reported in Table 21.

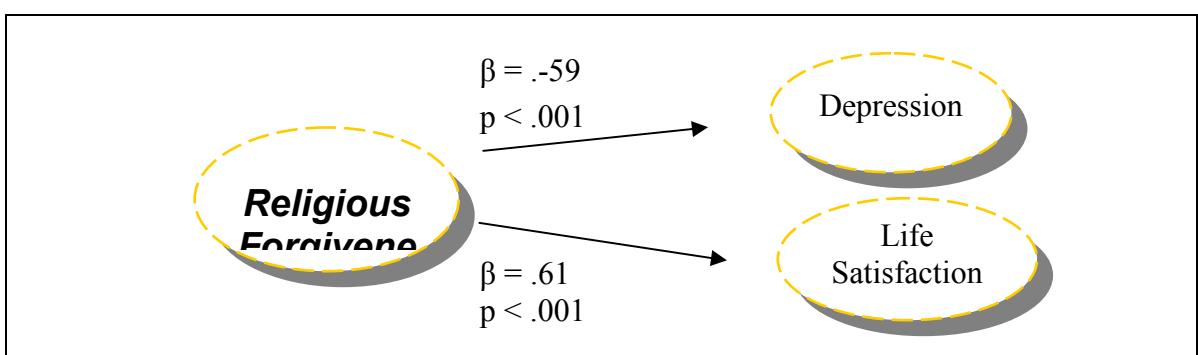


Table 21 Beta Coefficients

Although promising findings were found, empirical research on forgiveness, and specifically religious forgiveness, is still in its early stage of development.

A number of questions need to be addressed such as: the quality and the impact of the offence on the process of forgiving, the process of forgiveness outside the interpersonal context, both outcomes associated with seeking and receiving forgiveness, and outcomes associated to unforgiving responses to health, personality traits, and attributes according to which individuals may differ in their propensity to forgive, social factors influencing forgiveness, individual profound experience of forgiveness in his spiritual dimension, and many others.

Research on forgiveness is likely to develop in the years to come.

Resolution of conjugal bereavement was studied first in association with any adjustment of individual re-evaluation of religious experience and in connection to mental health outcomes.

Results indicate that individuals who highly scored on the factor “Disoriented about my personal religious belief” reported the lowest scores in resolution of bereavement. These findings suggest that a maladaptive resolution of bereavement was found.

Results are reported in Table 22.

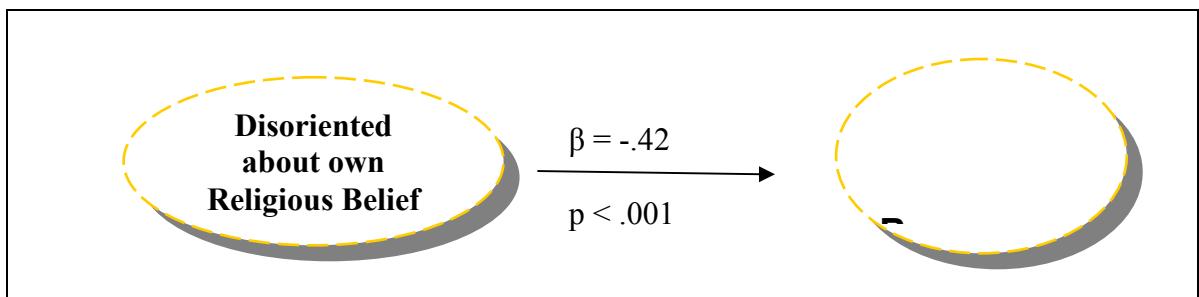


Table 22 Beta Coefficients Results for Bereavement Resolution

The effect of the constructive bereavement resolution was also explored in relation with rates of depression and of life satisfaction. Research findings demonstrate that the positive bereavement resolution is a predictor of both low rates of depression and positive rates in life satisfaction.

Beta coefficients for the relationships of these variables are reported in Table 23.

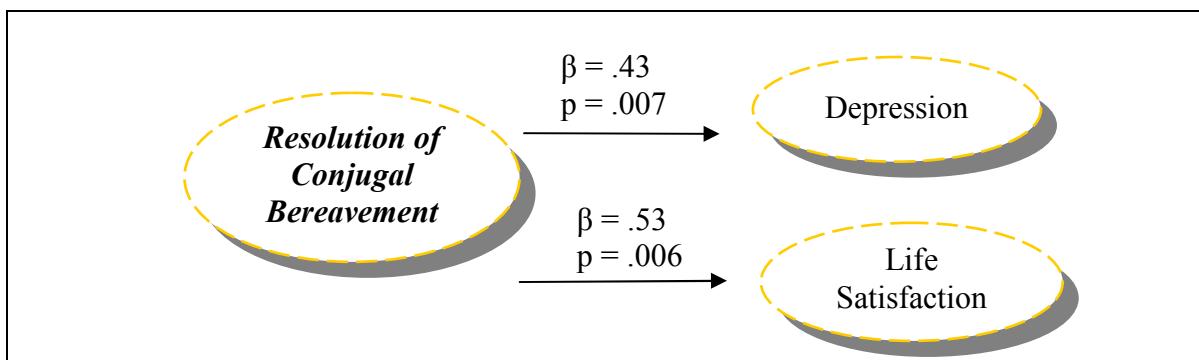


Table 23 Results of Beta Coefficients

CHAPTER IX

General Discussion and Conclusion

1 Introduction

One of the principal aims of this research study was to accomplish an appropriate development and validation of psychometric instruments to assess different aspects of religiosity among individuals with a Catholic background. A successive stage of the research was to investigate the usability and the value of these scales in mental health settings. Although the study conducted in New York was an additional study, it represents a first attempt to apply the devised scales in a challenging “real life” situation.

The principal aim of this chapter is to present:

- an overview of the aims of the thesis and its unique contribution to the psychology of religion and health;
- its main findings;
- its clinical implications on future research;
- its research limitations;
- conclusions of the study.

2 Overview of Aims and Unique Contribution

The absence of scales to assess religious belief in the Catholic domain has made it difficult to measure religious attitudes, thoughts, and behaviour especially in connection to health.

Much research disregards the importance of addressing definite beliefs of a specific religious affiliation and continues to concentrate on a widespread set of different religious traditions. Indeed, research in the field of psychological aspects of spiritual belief requires a specific assessment of specific features and elements of a specific religious denomination.

The unique contribution of the thesis to the already existing literature is that the religious belief was explored within a specific religious denomination which has the advantage of limiting the influence of confounder variables in applied research methods, and enriching the psychology of religion by a deeper focus on a specific framework of religious investigation.

The main contribution of the thesis in the field of psychology of religion was made through an investigation of the multi-faceted aspects of individual adherence to the religious core of beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church. The thesis in fact considers in depth the proprieties of the belief of the Roman Catholic Church that were addressed through the Catholic Doctrine assumed as its theoretical frame of reference.

The main contribution of the thesis consists of providing a substantive understanding of different individuals’ features of belief when they are questioned about their approach to

faith, their understanding of the content of Catholic Doctrine, and the quality of their relationship with God. Different research stages were needed to describe these aspects including exploratory interviews, in-depth interviews, a pilot study, and a large survey study in order to enrich literature with reliable psychometric instruments to explore religious core of belief of the Roman Catholic Church.

One of the main contributions of the thesis consists of a proper development of psychometric instruments for assessing religious belief in the Catholic domain. They explore sensitivity to Catholicism, contents of Catholic belief and strength of adherence to them, and religiousness in the Catholic domain as a means of establishing, keeping, and improving a personal relationship with God, which is conceptualized in terms of a mutual spiritual interaction.

The development of the scales of religious belief in the Catholic domain is a unique contribution for assessing the extent of belief in a large population of individuals who have a Catholic background.

A minor aim of the thesis was to examine the usefulness of the above scales in a practical settings by conducting an investigation with a Catholic sample who have suffered traumatic loss as a result of the World Trade Centre disaster. Scales were used for understanding and to explore religious spiritual coping in complicated grief, bereavement resolution, and mental health.

Although this study presents several research limitations, it can be considered as a first attempt to combine theological reflection based on Catholic belief, with an understanding of human dynamics in psychological terms.

This is an extra contribution to the thesis and to the literature of psychology of religion and health that can be used in the Catholic domain. Researchers who are prepared to consider, that involvement in religious activities may enhance psychological well-being and lead to better mental health outcomes, can be engaged in applying these scales for conducting a proper individual religious assessment before undertaking health studies.

3 Main Findings

The purpose of the key aim of the study, was to develop scales to understand the perspective and issues of religious values in a particular group of people, belonging to the specific context of the Catholic domain.

Research findings confirm several issues already found in literature examining the relationship between some aspect of religious belief or behaviour and some indicator of

health. Moreover, they highlight some new issues for consideration both in designing psychometric instruments to assess belief in different religious domains as well as for future research.

Main findings of the study can be summarised according to results for the:

- Validation of the scales in a large survey study;
- Aspects of religious strategies of coping.

Validation of the scales in a large survey study

The validation of the scales in a large survey study provided a preliminary empirical base for conceptualising individual religious core belief in the Catholic domain regarded in its multi-faceted aspects: responsiveness to the Catholic belief in terms of attitudes towards Catholicism, content and strength of adherence to the belief professed by the Roman Catholic Church, and individual spiritual connection in terms of mutual relationship with God.

Developed scales were: 'The Attitude toward Catholicism Scale', 'The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church' and 'The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God'.

The main implication of this study is that items in the scales are designed to assess different dimensions of the individual religious experience in the Catholic domain, so that confounder variables, due to different features of other religious affiliations, are controlled.

These scales were shown to be useful instruments for the assessment of religious belief in Catholic individuals, and they should be widely applicable among Catholic individuals.

'The Attitude toward Catholicism Scale' allows for distinctions between a wide range of types of believers according to the features of their different approaches towards Catholicism and religious practice. It measures the features of different religious attitudes towards Catholicism in people from past or present members of the Catholic Church who are ranked from non-believers to confident believers;

'The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church' provides understanding of the extent to which Catholic religious belief is accepted as truth of faith by Catholic individuals. It measures the strength of adherence to the contents of the Roman Catholic Church and therefore to understand to what extent people recognise and accept as true the Catholic statements of faith as a valid and authentic belief for them;

'The Mutuality Evaluation Scale of the Personal Relationship with God" explores the quality of the relationship with God and the personal religious commitment. It measures the quality and direction of the individuals' spirituality, which is explained in terms of a mutual relationship with God.

Subsequently based on this work implications of the practical aspects of religious belief can be studied in the field of psychology of religion especially where mental health outcomes need to be investigated in connection with religious support, religious coping, or other styles of religious problem solving implemented by the religious transcendent component.

Aspects of religious strategies of coping

Aspects connected to a re-evaluation of the religious experience, the use of religious strategy of coping, and religious forgiveness were explored in relation to the constructive significance given to religious belief, which was also explored in relation to resolution of bereavement, depression, and life satisfaction.

Mechanisms of religious coping were analysed as transformation of significance and measured with the 'Religious vs. Non Religious Coping Scale'. Religious transformation was assessed by the 'Re-evaluation of the Religious Experience Scale'. Religious forgiveness was measured with the 'Scale of Religious Forgiveness'. These scales were developed for the purpose of this study according to the particular features of the participants of the New York sample. Resolution of bereavement, levels of depression, and life satisfaction were mainly explored by conducting linear and multiple regressions in relation to different factors that emerged from factor analysis of the new developed scales.

Although religion has been seen more as a force of conservation than transformation, results significantly supported the hypothesis that religion plays a vital role in assisting individuals in achieving significance when coping with stressful life events.

Religious coping is a dynamic process that implies both the power of transforming significance and conserving it. When significance is achieved, the renovated religious belief operates by preserving and conserving new sets of values until a transformation of a different kind occurs and new values need to be discovered or re-organised.

By means of religious practice individuals can be encouraged to leave old objects of significance and re- restore them with new ones. Research findings show that the predicting factor for eliciting religious coping was "Improvement in the Relationship with God". It is the key role in allowing religious significance to be achieved. In the Catholic religious belief the most important means for improving the relationship with God are: the Holy Mass, the Communion, and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, fasting, prayer, and meditation of the Holy Scriptures.

Through these means individuals can achieve intimacy with Jesus Christ and improve their personal relationship with the Lord. As a consequence individuals can transform / re-

construct events which result in an adaptive way of coping leading to positive mental health outcomes while dealing with life threats.

The results significantly supported the conceptualisation that constructive religious experience operates as a motivational phenomenon in promoting psychological well-being.

In conclusion, the transformational process of the religious coping by operating as a motivational phenomenon allows new purposes to live and to rise according to a fresh religious identity, and therefore may allow well-being to flourish.

4 Health and Clinical Implications

There is ongoing scientific interest in linking measures of spirituality, religious involvement to health and clinical settings. Studies have also found that spirituality and religion are positively related to immune system function. Although Koenig et all (2001), reported that the majority of the studies of heart disease, blood pressure and cancer risk found salutary effects among the more religious, Stefanek and McDonald (2005) observe that evidence for an association between religion and cancer or cardiovascular disease are more equivocal. Both positive and negative findings have come from studies of religious coping and illness adjustment among cancer patients (Thune-Boyle, and Stygall, 2006). Studies on positive forms of religious coping were related to lower levels of depression, anxiety, and distress, while negative forms of religious coping were associated with poorer psychological adjustment (Smith, McCullough, 2003). Moreover, religion-associated variables have been shown inverse association between religiousness and depressive symptoms, suicidal behaviour, substance misuse, and lower risk of relapse (Cotton, Zebracki, Rosenthal et al., 2006 and Rew and Wong (2006).

Despite the fact that substantive research documenting the connection between various religious dimensions and physical and mental health was found, surprisingly little attention has been given to the study of religion among individuals whose belief is embodied in the Catholic tradition. Moreover, a small but growing number of studies conducted mostly within the past few years have recognised the importance of religiosity in recovering from illness.

The developed scales represent valid instruments to be used both for conducting research and for enhancing clinical practice. They can be used:

- as a baseline assessment of religious beliefs among individuals with Catholic background for undertaking research especially in connecting religious variables with mental health outcomes.
- In addition, these scales can be used in different health and clinical contexts of care. This may apply to long hospitalisation, day hospital, psychotherapy as an important component of the individual's healing process, both in the private and in the public

practice of health. It may imply that members of the Hospitals' Continuous Quality Improvement Committees could include these scales in their clinical protocols for the admission of their patients / clients. The assessments of their spiritual dimensions would reveal special consideration for their health care which, is enriched by sensitivity to their spiritual needs. In the same way that clinicians and other health care professionals could use these scales for exploring the individual's spiritual dimension so that by knowing the significance their clients give to religious value they may include religious values in their clinical or health treatments.

5 Future Research

There are several research needs in the study of spirituality and health. First, there is clearly a need for more careful conceptualisation of religious belief and spirituality and their assessment within specific religious affiliation. Secondly, previous research on religion and health has displayed many limitations of the existing studies. These include the scarcity of multidimensional, psychometrically tested measures of religion; few measures of spirituality; the widespread use of cross-sectional data; potential confounding by omitted socio-demographic, social, and health variables; and a paucity of longitudinal studies.

Research is also necessary to understand the mechanisms by which religion affects health. The relationship between prayer and health will require consideration of the conditions under which particular dimensions of prayer may be related to specific health outcomes. Future research needs to distinguish aspects of attendance that may be spiritual from those that may be more social and cultural, the meaning of religious attendance and the specific benefits that various respondents may experience as a result of such activity.

More systematic research must examine how a broader range of indicators of health practices, belief systems, role identity, the clergy, social support, and other social and psychological resources may mediate in the relationship between religious involvement and health.

Religious/spiritual beliefs are an important resource that can affect an individual's orientation towards life and the impact of stress on health. Further attention should also be directed towards understanding religion and spirituality as a central motivating forces in life. A major research challenge is in defining and measuring the extent to which religious and spiritual beliefs can provide a sense of meaning and purpose in life according to a specific set of beliefs. Additional prospective studies are also needed to enhance the understanding of the temporal ordering of the relationship between exposure to spirituality and the timing of health consequences, and to strengthen research in causal inferences in producing immediate

effects on biological parameters, other religious and spiritual activities, however, may have a longer “incubation” period before demonstrating results.

Moreover, despite the challenges of cross-cultural comparisons, research on diversity in religious orientation and geography it is necessary to determine the generalisability of current findings on the association between religion and health.

6 Limitations

The research has certain limitations that need to be taken into account when considering the aspects of religious belief and religious coping, and their contributions to the field. Although research limitations have been discussed in chapter VII and VIII, however, some of these limitations can be seen as fruitful avenues for future research under the same theme.

This study has focused on an extensive and complex phenomenon that was outlined through an ambitious research design. Clearly, this represents a challenging task for research regardless of the more specific interests and implications that the study may have. In this study, religious belief has been studied from a rather narrow empirical perspective. The study design naturally brings forth many limitations as far as the generalisation of the results of the study is concerned.

Thus, the qualitative study, the development of the scales for assessing religious belief in a population with a Catholic tradition, the large quantitative study and the final empirical study, can only be seen as a kind of pilot context of the process that describe the individual's religious dimension. On the other hand, this also gives an idea of the numerous variables that need to be taken into consideration when attempting to connect religious values with health. By confining the field of psychology of religion and health in the Catholic domain and understanding something about this particular case in depth more, psychology of religion might eventually also learn something more about general religious phenomena, which is clearly one of the future research challenges of this topic.

Multiple case study design and replication of research would enable the field to test the conceptual framework of the study further. However, as the theme of this study has been related to religious strategies for coping with complicated grief, it can of course be seen that it is likely to include certain limitations in the sense that bereaved individuals were at such an emerging stage of their lives especially as far as the bereavement resolution process was concerned.

The theoretical base of this study can be described as a restricted perspective. However, the purpose of adopting this kind of strategy in the present study has been to use the Catholic

perspectives as a strength. The use of this approach was chosen because different religious denominations were included in general literature in this field.

It was worth to apply this narrow approach in the study. Of course, this made it important to clarify carefully the area of investigation and provide standing points and relations of this perspective.

The conclusions as well as the limitations of this study also bring forth some fruitful and interesting possible avenues for future research that might be needed in relation to the relationship between religious belief, traumatic life events, religious coping process, health, and well-being.

7 Conclusions

Research is beginning to illuminate several facets of the different dimensions of individuals' core of belief and their connection to psychological well-being and mental health. One of the most relevant issues addressed in this study was that religious and spiritual variables implying complex constructs benefit from being explored in a specific religious belief domain.

However, explaining the religious dimension of the human experience even under the specific domain of the Catholic belief has been shown to be a complex task.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in order to gain a greater depth of understanding of the individual religious belief, which was investigated through specific variables and explored according to the Roman Catholic frame of reference

The specific assessment of different dimensions of the religious experience in the Catholic domain would improve research in psychology and religion. Moreover, by isolating mechanisms that relate religiousness and spirituality to health, research in the health psychology and psychology of religion would be enriched by a consistent and solid approach in methodology and hopefully lead to more reliable and useful results.

“The Scale of Attitudes Towards Catholicism”

I believe in God I know He exists, I am a believer although I do not practice my faith, the most important thing is to believe

1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____ 6_____ 7_____
I strongly_____ almost_____ disagree_____ not_____ almost_____ agree_____ completely_____
disagree_____ disagree_____ sure_____ agree_____ agree_____ agree_____ agree

I think it is not necessary to pray or going to church often otherwise there is a risk of fanaticism

1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____ 6_____ 7_____
I strongly_____ almost_____ disagree_____ not_____ almost_____ agree_____ completely_____
disagree_____ disagree_____ sure_____ agree_____ agree_____ agree

I am seeking for God and for faith

1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____ 6_____ 7_____
I strongly_____ almost_____ disagree_____ not_____ almost_____ agree_____ completely_____
disagree_____ disagree_____ sure_____ agree_____ agree_____ agree

I would like to believe or to experience God

1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____ 6_____ 7_____
I strongly_____ almost_____ disagree_____ not_____ almost_____ agree_____ completely_____
disagree_____ disagree_____ sure_____ agree_____ agree_____ agree

I have deep doubts about God's existence

1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____ 6_____ 7_____
I strongly_____ almost_____ disagree_____ not_____ almost_____ agree_____ completely_____
disagree_____ disagree_____ sure_____ agree_____ agree_____ agree

I am indifferent towards God and faith

1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____ 6_____ 7_____
I strongly_____ almost_____ disagree_____ not_____ almost_____ agree_____ completely_____
disagree_____ disagree_____ sure_____ agree_____ agree_____ agree

I have been living without God until a while ago and feel that I am moving towards Him

1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____ 6_____ 7_____
I strongly_____ almost_____ disagree_____ not_____ almost_____ agree_____ completely_____
disagree_____ disagree_____ sure_____ agree_____ agree_____ agree

I am starting or I have just started a journey of faith

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree

I am discovering an interest and a recall towards God

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree

I am discovering that God loves me although I have not cared about Him until this period

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree

“The Self-Evaluation Scale of Adherence to the Creed of the Roman Catholic Church”

94)	God is one, He has a divine nature and He exists in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit;
	1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____ 6_____ 7_____ I strongly disagree almost disagree disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
95)	God is Omnipotent and Omniscient: everything is possible for Him and He knows the deepest thoughts of men;
	1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____ 6_____ 7_____ I strongly disagree almost disagree disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
96)	God is infinitely rich in love, benevolence, grace, and mercy. His love is unconditionally offered to man, regardless of mans works;
	1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____ 6_____ 7_____ I strongly disagree almost disagree disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
97)	As a God of love, God is faithful; He doesn't abandon men but instead He cares about them and guards Them;
	1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____ 6_____ 7_____ I strongly disagree almost disagree disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
98)	God is the creator of the world: He, in His knowledge and wisdom, gave the beginning to all things;
	1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____ 6_____ 7_____ I strongly disagree almost disagree disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
99)	God created men in a state of grace, holiness, and in harmony with God, with himself, and with the creation;
	1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____ 6_____ 7_____ I strongly disagree almost disagree disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
100)	Jesus Christ is God made man: in His person He embodies both divine and human nature;
	1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____ 6_____ 7_____ I strongly disagree almost disagree disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
101)	Jesus Christ came to earth to do God's will: to save men from eternal death;
	1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____ 6_____ 7_____ I strongly disagree almost disagree disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
102)	Christ was tried in every way that man is, but, never yielded to sin. He therefore overcame all temptation – the same temptation that man has always been subject to but has never been able to overcome;
	1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____ 6_____ 7_____ I strongly disagree almost disagree disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
103)	The scourging, suffering, agony and death Christ experienced were not just consequences of unfavourable circumstances. Instead, it all played a part in God's mystery;
	1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____ 6_____ 7_____ I strongly disagree almost disagree disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree

104)	Jesus gave His life as a free offering in the sense that He voluntary chose to die. He did so because by so doing He made manifest His glory through humility and obedience;						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree
105)	On the Cross Christ took upon Himself the sins of all mankind. His sacrifice consists of the eternal salvation of men.						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree
106)	Jesus experienced death in the sense that He experienced the literal separation of His Spirit and body;						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree
107)	While Christ's body remained in the tomb, His divine nature continued to exist;						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree
108)	After His death, Christ went to the kingdom of the dead as the Saviour of all righteous men and there announced His salvation to those who had died;						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree
109)	The dead have the chance to hear the Word of God and be saved. Those that receive the Word will be resurrected;						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree
110)	After His death and resurrection Jesus appeared in flesh and bone to many people;						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree
111)	In the resurrection Jesus passed to an eternal dimension of life beyond time and space;						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree
112)	The risen Christ is the fount of the resurrection of man;						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree
113)	After the resurrection Christ ascended to heaven, and by so doing showed the entrance to the kingdom of God to all humanity;						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree
114)	The ascension of Christ into heaven consisted of His participation in the power and authority of God Himself;						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree

115)	<p>The Holy Spirit is love with which God accomplish His designs for the salvation of the world;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree completely agree disagree disagree</p>
116)	<p>The Holy Spirit being the origin of life gives to men the gift of the divine birth: He reconciles the man to God and puts them again on communion with Christ;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree completely agree disagree disagree</p>
117)	<p>The Holy Spirit is a transforming power which changes and renews that which is touched;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree completely agree disagree disagree</p>
118)	<p>The Holy Spirit being the soul of the Church edifies, animates, and sanctify the Church by assisting in his apostolic ministry and being the living vessel of God;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree completely agree disagree disagree</p>
119)	<p>The Holy Spirit brings man to Christ and turns the heart of man towards God;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree completely agree disagree disagree</p>
120)	<p>The Holy Trinity is the unity of thee persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who are at the same time are the same and yet distinct and constitute the only one God;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree completely agree disagree disagree</p>
121)	<p>The three persons of the Holy Trinity are in perfect communion of love and live among them as in perfect unity;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree completely agree disagree disagree</p>
122)	<p>In the resurrection of Christ the Holy Trinity acts in a perfect manner among the redemption of man;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree completely agree disagree disagree</p>
123)	<p>The ministry of the Holy Trinity will be completely revealed to man in everlasting life;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree completely agree disagree disagree</p>
124)	<p>The blessed Virgin Mary has been preserved from original sin and remained pure of personal sin during her existence;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree completely agree disagree disagree</p>
125)	<p>The blessed Virgin Mary has been chosen by God before the creation of the world as Mother of his son;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7</p>

	<p>I strongly almost disagree not almost agree completely disagree disagree sure agree agree</p>
126)	<p>The blessed Virgin Mary accomplished her role by doing the will of God and thus opens the way to the realisation of the saving plan;</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>I strongly almost disagree not almost agree completely disagree disagree sure agree agree</p>
127)	<p>The conception of Jesus by the blessed Virgin Mary came only through the work of the Holy Spirit;</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>I strongly almost disagree not almost agree completely disagree disagree sure agree agree</p>
128)	<p>The blessed Virgin Mary is the “forever Virgin” which means a virgin in all her being in hearth and in body before and after the birth of Jesus;</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>I strongly almost disagree not almost agree completely disagree disagree sure agree agree</p>
129)	<p>The blessed Virgin Mary is the Mother of Jesus and she did not have any other children besides Jesus;</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>I strongly almost disagree not almost agree completely disagree disagree sure agree agree</p>
130)	<p>The blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph in their married life honoured their virginity within their marriage, and their life together was one of profound communion and reciprocal help;</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>I strongly almost disagree not almost agree completely disagree disagree sure agree agree</p>
131)	<p>The pain of the blessed Virgin Mary for the sacrifice of Her son Jesus signifies humble obedience to the will of God and absolute trust in God;</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>I strongly almost disagree not almost agree completely disagree disagree sure agree agree</p>
132)	<p>The assumption of the blessed Virgin Mary to heaven was done in both soul and body;</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>I strongly almost disagree not almost agree completely disagree disagree sure agree agree</p>
133)	<p>The blessed Virgin Mary continues her maternal role among the Church and among all men</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>I strongly almost disagree not almost agree completely disagree disagree sure agree agree</p>
134)	<p>The entire human story is signed with the guilt of original sin which has as a result inclined man to evil;</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>I strongly almost disagree not almost agree completely disagree disagree sure agree agree</p>
135)	<p>Original sin is inherited by all men for which by the disobedience of one, all are made sinners;</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>I strongly almost disagree not almost agree completely disagree disagree sure agree agree</p>

136)	Sin makes man devoid of communion with God. It is necessary that man must undertake a purification;						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree
137)	If man had not chosen to sin, he would be exempt from death;						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree
138)	Sin and death are by the resurrection						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree
139)	The Kingdom of God is already on the earth, even though it has not yet completely been revealed to man in its perfection;						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree
140)	The Kingdom of God already manifests its power through the signs that accompany the Word;						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree
141)	To enter the Kingdom of God, one must embrace the Word of Christ and adhere to this all-encompassing choice, their whole life;						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree
142)	Although Christ is resurrected, the Kingdom of God on earth is still affected by the power of the devil;						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree
143)	The Kingdom of God will be perfectly completed when Christ comes again to the earth;						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree
144)	The Church is the universal Community of believers gathered by God and unified in the Body of Christ.						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree
145)	The Church is the dwelling of God with man and the instrument for the Communion between God and man.						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree
146)	God, through the Church, consigns man to salvation with an invitation to be converted. In fact, God's aim is the sanctification of men.						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree

	disagree	disagree	sure	agree	agree
147)	The Church has been unfailingly established though the nourishing Word and the Body of Christ.				
	1	2	3	4	5
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree
	6	7			
	agree	completely agree			
148)	The Church is one, as in the Church all believers of the Church form only one body. This unity is formed by human as well as divine elements.				
	1	2	3	4	5
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree
	6	7			
	agree	completely agree			
149)	Although the Church is formed by sinners, the Church is Holy, as God is its Holy author: Christ gave Himself to sanctify it.				
	1	2	3	4	5
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree
	6	7			
	agree	completely agree			
150)	On earth the Church is already adorned by a true Holiness, although it is not perfect because of the sin, but it will have its glorious realisation in the final age.				
	1	2	3	4	5
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree
	6	7			
	agree	completely agree			
151)	The Church announces the totality of faith as supported by Christ in the announcement of the truth and it is founded through the workings of Holy Spirit.				
	1	2	3	4	5
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree
	6	7			
	agree	completely agree			
152)	The Church brings and administers with it the means of salvation through the Sacraments				
	1	2	3	4	5
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree
	6	7			
	agree	completely agree			
153)	The Church's role is to interpret the Word of God. Its magisterium is principally based on the Holy Scriptures.				
	1	2	3	4	5
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree
	6	7			
	agree	completely agree			
154)	The Church in its ministry of interpretation of the Holy Scriptures is unfailing because it is guided by the Holy Spirit who guarantees that the truth will be preserved.				
	1	2	3	4	5
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree
	6	7			
	agree	completely agree			
155)	The magisterium of the Church unfailingly proclaims the moral Doctrine.				
	1	2	3	4	5
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree
	6	7			
	agree	completely agree			
156)	The Holy Father unfailingly proposes a belief as revealed by God and taught by Christ.				
	1	2	3	4	5
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree
	6	7			
	agree	completely agree			
157)	The Apostles are the original witnesses of Christ and construct the foundation of the ministry priesthood				
	1	2	3	4	5
					6
					7

	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree	
158)	In the ecclesial hierarchy the bishophood succeeds to the apostles, and the Holy Father is the successor of Saint Peter.	1 _____	2 _____	3 _____	4 _____	5 _____	6 _____	7 _____
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree	
159)	The Holy Father is the foundation of the unity between the ecclesial hierarchy and believers.	1 _____	2 _____	3 _____	4 _____	5 _____	6 _____	7 _____
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree	
160)	Referring to divine institution of the ministry of priesthood, priest possesses the authority of Christ. Therefore he acts in His name and in His place.	1 _____	2 _____	3 _____	4 _____	5 _____	6 _____	7 _____
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree	
161)	The Angels are spiritual beings that have been created free. They are provided with intelligence and will. They do not have a body;	1 _____	2 _____	3 _____	4 _____	5 _____	6 _____	7 _____
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree	
162)	The Angels worship, glorify, and serve God. They collaborate with God's project for man's salvation;	1 _____	2 _____	3 _____	4 _____	5 _____	6 _____	7 _____
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree	
163)	The devil was originally created as a good angel, rebelled deliberately against God and His Kingdom. The devil acts in a perverse way against God;	1 _____	2 _____	3 _____	4 _____	5 _____	6 _____	7 _____
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree	
164)	The devil is a living being made blind from pride and from love for himself. Having chosen to refuse God, he attempts to associate man to his rebellion against God;	1 _____	2 _____	3 _____	4 _____	5 _____	6 _____	7 _____
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree	
165)	The devil organises human perdition but he can act just until God allows it because the devil is not superior to God;	1 _____	2 _____	3 _____	4 _____	5 _____	6 _____	7 _____
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree	
166)	The Communion of Saints consists of the communion of the spiritual goods among Those who are living or dead in Christ;	1 _____	2 _____	3 _____	4 _____	5 _____	6 _____	7 _____
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree	
167)	The communion of the spiritual goods consists of charisms, faith to the Sacraments, prayers, and in the good deeds of those who have realised salvation;	1 _____	2 _____	3 _____	4 _____	5 _____	6 _____	7 _____
	I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree	

168)	<p>The Communion of Saints is a supernatural link of unity and of the mystical Body of Christ;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree disagree disagree</p>
169)	<p>Through the Communion of Saints there is an exchange of holiness of one to another;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree disagree disagree</p>
170)	<p>Jesus will come from His Kingdom with all His glory;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree disagree disagree</p>
171)	<p>Christ's second coming can happen anytime;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree disagree disagree</p>
172)	<p>When Christ will come, He will triumph. The bad will be banished and the Kingdom will be fully accomplished;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree disagree disagree</p>
173)	<p>When Christ will return on the earth the dead will rise by coming out from the tombs; They will be resurrected in their body and their flesh;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree disagree disagree</p>
174)	<p>The spirit of the human being continues to exist although death of the flesh;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree disagree disagree</p>
175)	<p>With the resurrection of dead the soul will be reunited with the body;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree disagree disagree</p>
176)	<p>In the day of the last judgement all men will appear with their body before Christ;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree disagree disagree</p>
177)	<p>Christ, at His coming, will judge the living and the deeds revealing the hidden disposition of man hearts.</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree disagree disagree</p>
178)	<p>At the last judgement day behaviour will be enlightened because of the love towards one another.</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree disagree disagree</p>

179)	<p>Heaven is the encounter with God in which man experiences a perfect communion of love with the Creation and all Creatures.</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not almost agree agree completely disagree disagree sure agree agree agree</p>
180)	<p>Heaven is the eternal and definitive condition of supreme participation in the joy of salvation in the shining vision of God.</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not almost agree agree completely disagree disagree sure agree agree agree</p>
181)	<p>In heaven man reaches perfect happiness and enjoys the perfect realisation of himself.</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not almost agree agree completely disagree disagree sure agree agree agree</p>
182)	<p>In Purgatory the dead individuals purify themselves from sin and they strive to reach a holy disposition in order to have a life in perfect Communion with God;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not almost agree agree completely disagree disagree sure agree agree agree</p>
183)	<p>Believers' solidarity through prayer facilitates purification of the dead;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not almost agree agree completely disagree disagree sure agree agree agree</p>
184)	<p>Hell essentially consists of the privation of God's eternal love;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not almost agree agree completely disagree disagree sure agree agree agree</p>
185)	<p>The torment of hell does not happen by chance; it is the sinner, that chooses it;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not almost agree agree completely disagree disagree sure agree agree agree</p>
186)	<p>The torment of hell is eternal desperation that weighs on the entire being, leaving no room for refuge or relief;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not almost agree agree completely disagree disagree sure agree agree agree</p>
187)	<p>Hell is sin that becomes definite because of stubborn refusal of God's forgiveness;</p> <p>1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 I strongly almost disagree not almost agree agree completely disagree disagree sure agree agree agree</p>

“The Mutuality Scale of the Relationship with God”

The Holy Communion is the source of a deep intimacy and unity with God

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7
 I strongly almost disagree not almost agree completely
 disagree disagree sure agree agree

God's presence is very strong in my life

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7
 I strongly almost disagree not almost agree completely
 disagree disagree sure agree agree

God is the centre of my interests: I share my plans with Him and I give him my activities

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7
 I strongly almost disagree not almost agree completely
 disagree disagree sure agree agree

My life is part of God's plan

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7
 I strongly almost disagree not almost agree completely
 disagree disagree sure agree agree

I find peace and refuge in God.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7
 I strongly almost disagree not almost agree completely
 disagree disagree sure agree agree

God is essentially the meaning of my existence

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7
 I strongly almost disagree not almost agree completely
 disagree disagree sure agree agree

After confessing my sins and receiving their absolution I am certain of God's forgiveness

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7
 I strongly almost disagree not almost agree completely
 disagree disagree sure agree agree

I always try to carry out God's plans in my life

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7
 I strongly almost disagree not almost agree completely
 disagree disagree sure agree agree

Before taking a decision I look into God and pray the Holy Spirit to help me in finding the right direction

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7
 I strongly almost disagree not almost agree completely
 Disagree disagree sure agree agree

I ask God to serve him according to his will

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7
 I strongly almost disagree not almost agree completely
 Disagree disagree sure agree agree

I usually feel attached to God

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
disagree disagree

I have had an experience of God in which I felt transformed by his great love for me. I am re-born into a new life

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
disagree disagree

In order to receive God's forgiveness I confess my sins to a priest

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
disagree disagree

Without God my life would be meaningless

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
disagree disagree

For me it is essential to improve my relationship with God

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
disagree disagree

My relationship with God is essentially centred on the participation of the Holy Mass and practice of Sacraments

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
disagree disagree

I need to ask God a deep attitude of prayer in my heart

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
disagree disagree

My relationship with God is essentially based on prayer and on meditation of the Holy Scriptures

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
disagree disagree

I am joyful, happy and very open to God

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
disagree disagree

I am comfortable that whatever might happen to me, hurtful or worrying because God would provide for me

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not almost agree agree completely
Disagree disagree sure agree agree agree agree

In taking decisions I usually ask myself what the will of God would be for me in that situation

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not almost agree agree completely
Disagree disagree sure agree agree agree agree

I despise or scorn God: his ways are wrong and mine are better

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not almost agree agree completely
disagree disagree sure agree agree agree agree

I feel very tense, shaky, wary, fearful with God

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not almost agree agree completely
disagree disagree sure agree agree agree agree

I angrily leave God out from my life. I completely refuse to have anything to do with Him

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not almost agree agree completely
disagree disagree sure agree agree agree agree

I keep myself as much distance between me and God

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not almost agree agree completely
disagree disagree sure agree agree agree agree

I do not take care about God

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not almost agree agree completely
disagree disagree sure agree agree agree agree

Sometimes I feel disappointed with God

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not almost agree agree completely
disagree disagree sure agree agree agree agree

God has a plan of love for my life

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not almost agree agree completely
disagree disagree sure agree agree agree agree

God is very joyful, happy and very open to me

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
disagree disagree

God manifests a caring loving tenderness to me

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
disagree disagree

God clearly understands me and loves me even if I differ from His commands or I do the wrong

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
Disagree disagree

God takes care about his relationship with me although I sometime do not

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
Disagree disagree

When I am going through suffering and pain God's compassion and love are even stronger

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
disagree disagree

Even if I am in the wrong God seeks and looks after me. He never abandons me

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
disagree disagree

God does not seem to have attention to me at all specially when I would need his support

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
disagree disagree

God is always with me and He seeks for me with loving tenderness

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
disagree disagree

God's ultimate desire for me is my happiness.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I strongly almost disagree not sure almost agree agree completely agree
disagree disagree

God's love for me is unconditional: He loves me the way I am

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I strongly disagree	almost disagree	disagree	not sure	almost agree	agree	completely agree
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I am certain about God's patience towards me for anything I do wrong or I can't help

1 I strongly disagree	2 almost disagree	3 disagree	4 not sure	5 almost agree	6 agree	7 completely agree
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God would like me to improve my relationship with him

1 I strongly disagree	2 almost disagree	3 disagree	4 not sure	5 almost agree	6 agree	7 completely agree
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God warmly and joyfully recognises the good I do

1 I strongly disagree	2 almost disagree	3 disagree	4 not sure	5 almost agree	6 agree	7 completely agree
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God doesn't love me enough as he never answers my prayers

1 I strongly disagree	2 almost disagree	3 disagree	4 not sure	5 almost agree	6 agree	7 completely agree
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God does not care about my problems

1 I strongly disagree	2 almost disagree	3 disagree	4 not sure	5 almost agree	6 agree	7 completely agree
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God is distant and detached to me

1 I strongly disagree	2 almost disagree	3 disagree	4 not sure	5 almost agree	6 agree	7 completely agree
-----------------------------	-------------------------	---------------	------------------	----------------------	------------	--------------------------

God does not take in account my real needs

1 I strongly disagree	2 almost disagree	3 disagree	4 not sure	5 almost agree	6 agree	7 completely agree
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God's attitude towards me is incoherent and contradictory. Sometimes he seems to be caring about my needs, sometimes he does not care

1 I strongly disagree	2 almost disagree	3 disagree	4 not sure	5 almost agree	6 agree	7 completely agree
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God angrily leaves me out from His care

1 I strongly disagree	2 almost disagree	3 disagree	4 not sure	5 almost agree	6 agree	7 completely agree
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