

The religion of the mind vs the religion of the spirit

Marion Steward

ANZURA conference 21-24 October,
2022

Port Arthur, Tasmania

Overview

- ▶ Religion of the Mind and Religion of the Spirit Galilee AD29
- ▶ What is the goal?
- ▶ RoM and RoS in world religions today
- ▶ Are we making progress?

Galilee AD29

▶ Gentile religions included:

- ▶ The pagan cults
- ▶ The mystery religions - broke with tradition and focused on individual salvation

121:5

▶ The Hebrew religion

- ▶ Jews worshipped the letter of the law
- ▶ Jewish theology was forever fixed
- ▶ The scribes, Pharisees and the priesthood held Jews in a terrible bondage of ritualism and legalism
- ▶ Everyday life dominated by minute regulations of conduct

121:7.1-3

Key ideas from Jesus: Paper 155 (pp. 1729-1732)

Religion of the Mind

- ▶ established and fossilized
- ▶ security and conformity
- ▶ Authoritative certainty
- ▶ The gruelling bondage of institutional religion
- ▶ The darkness of authority and the lethargy of tradition

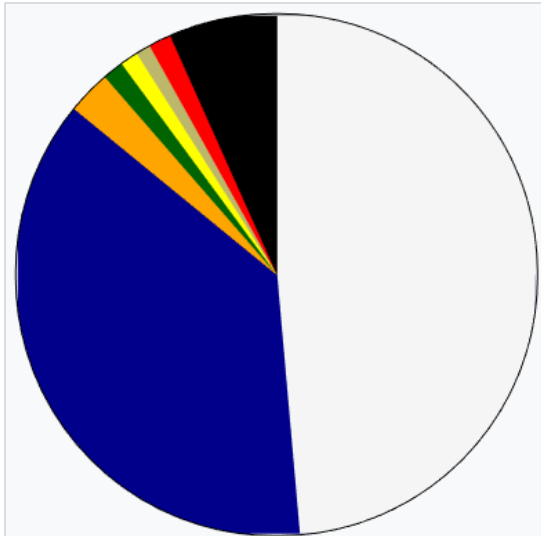
Religion of the Spirit

- ▶ Adventurous and progressive
- ▶ Uncertain and troublous future
- ▶ Effort, struggle, conflict, faith, determination, love, loyalty and progress
- ▶ The faith adventure of grappling with the rigorous realities of progressive human experience
- ▶ Spiritual freedom and religion liberty- at the individual level

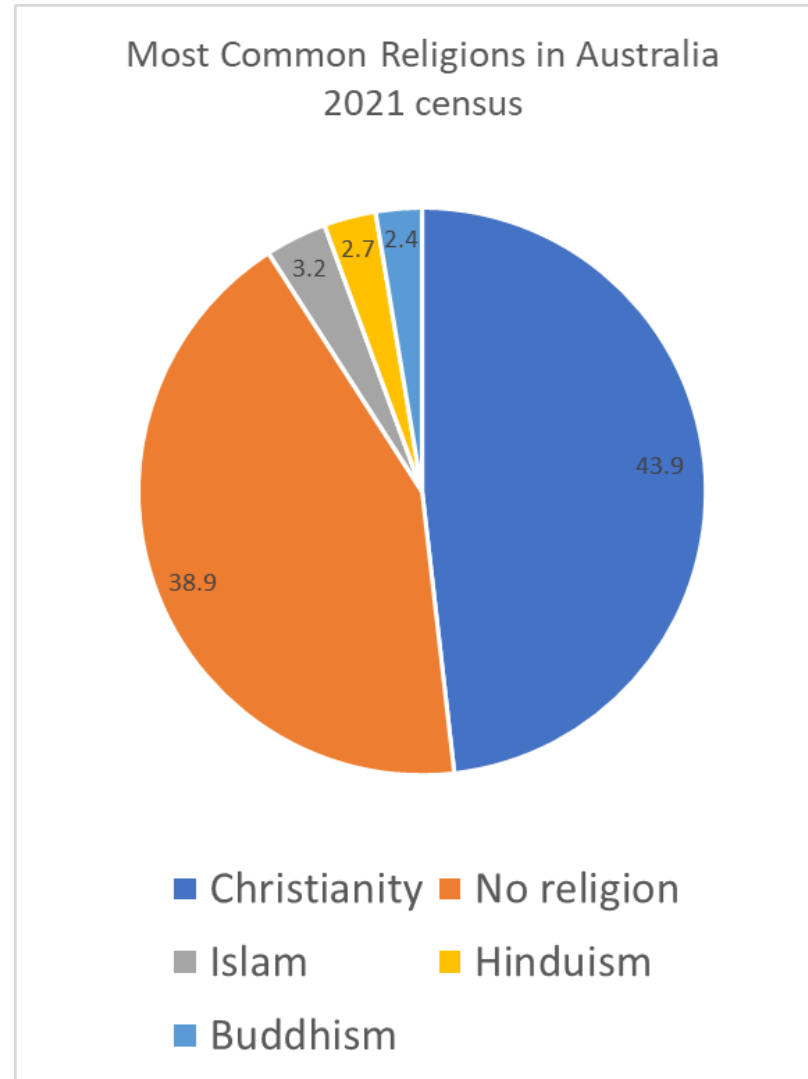
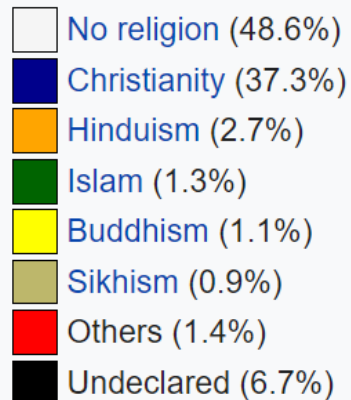
What is the goal?

- ▶ *“Until the human race progresses to the level of a higher and more general recognition of the realities of spiritual experience, large numbers of men and women will continue to show a personal preference for those religions of authority which require only intellectual assent, in contrast to the religion of the spirit, which entails active participation of mind and soul in the faith experience of grappling with the rigorous realities of progressive human experience.”*
- ▶ 155:5.6

The situation today



Religions in New Zealand, 2018 census^{[1][a]}



- ▶ From a personal/Western perspective:
 - ▶ Social change in the 1960s - hippies, drugs, protests
 - ▶ Eastern religious ideas start to influence Western thinking



- ▶ Revival of more ancient belief systems/ paganism
 - ▶ Wicca and Druidry
 - ▶ Ceremonies at Stonehenge and other such sites- celebrating the solstices
 - ▶ Indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices- Maori, Aboriginal, Native American
 - ▶ Popularity of Mindfulness/meditation - while not necessarily spiritual practices, nevertheless are opening the door to the possibility of a spiritual experience

Are we making progress?

- ▶ Great diversity between and among religions/spiritual groups



- ▶ Not a dichotomy, but a spectrum
- ▶ Julie's story

Conclusion

- ▶ In Galilee AD29 Jesus criticized the Hebrew religion as being far too authoritative, fossilized and restricting, providing intellectual surety but spiritual stagnation.
- ▶ He promoted the religion of the spirit, the individual search for God, spiritual freedom and religious liberty, a great adventurous leap into the unknown.
- ▶ On Urantia, in 2022, the situation is far more diverse and constantly changing, but the essentials of this viewpoint still hold true.
- ▶ Progress can be discerned, depending on where you look.