

# Religious orientation, orthodoxy, attachment and fundamentalism:

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A research on a Northern-Italian  
sample

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## Introduction

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- Islamic fundamentalism or religious fundamentalism?
  - Religious fundamentalism or fundamentalism as a personality trait?
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Over the last few years many acts of violence, abuses of power, and mutual intolerance between the western world and the eastern Islamic world have been witnessed. The mass media tend to speak of “Islamic fundamentalism” and to forget that fundamentalism is also common to the Christian world.

The general hypothesis, which is not addressed in this research work, is that fundamentalism (or extremism) is a psychological dimension that best realizes itself in its religious application.

Therefore, attention has been focused on religious fundamentalism in the Italian world and on variables that could be connected to it, above all by attempting to translate and/or devise instruments to detect it.

## Aim

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- To translate and adapt to an Italian sample some specific instruments to measure fundamentalism and religiosity
  - To explore the relationship between religious and political orientation and fundamentalism, attachment and personality traits
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The first step and therefore also the general aim of this specific investigation is the translation, adaptation, and possible standardisation in Italy of some measurement instruments for the study of religious fundamentalism and religiosity. A second aim is to study the relationships between the variables measured by these instruments and political orientation, attachment and personality traits, variables that all are somehow connected to religious fundamentalism.

## Materials

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- ❑ Demographic data (age, gender, educational level, occupation) and some independent variables (political orientation)
  - ❑ RFS-Religious Fundamentalism scale (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992)
  - ❑ ROS-Religious Orientation Scale I-E Revised (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989)
  - ❑ ORT-Religious Fundamentalism Scale (Martin & Westie, 1959)
  - ❑ RSQ-Relationship Scale Questionnaire (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994)
  - ❑ ACL-Adjective Check List (Gough, 1960)
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A questionnaire made up of 5 tools and of a series of socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, educational level, occupation and political orientation has been used in this research.

The instruments utilised are:

Altemeyer and Hunsberger's (1992) Religious Fundamentalism Scale to measure religious fundamentalism; Gorsuch and McPherson's (1989) Religious Orientation Scale to measure intrinsic, personal extrinsic and social extrinsic religiosity; Martin and Westie's (1959) Religious Fundamentalism Scale, which actually measures Christian orthodoxy; Griffin and Bartholomew's (1994) Relationship Scale Questionnaire, which measures adult attachment.

All of them were translated into Italian by the authors.

Lastly, Gough's (1960) Adjective Check List (ACL) to detect some personality traits.

The choice of using a questionnaire to measure adult attachment is linked to the many research works that try to explain religious choices with the type of attachment established with the mother. The choice of ACL depends on the instrument being hardly invasive and easy to apply, but in any case able to give a general idea of which personality traits can be linked to religiosity and fundamentalism.

## Samples

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- 339 participants from Milan, Bergamo and surrounding areas (stratified by gender, age and place of residence)
  - 35 Jehovah's Witnesses from Milan
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The first (main) sample used in this research counts 339 participants and was put together between December 2004 and March 2005 in the cities of Milan and Bergamo and their districts, in separate groups, according to age, gender and number of inhabitants in their place of residence.

The second (smaller) sample includes 35 participants who are all Jehovah's Witnesses. The main purpose of this second sample was to check whether the fundamentalism and the orthodoxy scales actually managed to distinguish between orthodox and non-orthodox individuals and between fundamentalists and non-fundamentalists. Jehovah's Witnesses are characterized by the openly declared propensity to read the Bible in a literal meaning.

## Sample 1 (N=339)

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		%	f
<b>Gender</b>	<i>Male</i>	47.2	160
	<i>Female</i>	52.8	179
<b>Age</b>	<i>18-30 y.o.</i>	36.0	122
	<i>31-55 y.o.</i>	44.0	149
	<i>&gt; 55 y.o.</i>	20.0	68
<b>Residence</b>	<i>Village &lt; 10,000 inhab.</i>	56.0	190
	<i>Small town &lt; 55,000 inhab.</i>	21.2	72
	<i>City &gt; 55,000 inhab.</i>	22.7	77

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Gender subdivision is fairly well balanced and mirrors population distribution. Age distribution is also fairly well balanced, but difficulty was met with the individuals that can be defined as elderly. Half the people in the sample come from places with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants and the remainder is equally divided between large and medium-size cities.

## Sample 1 (N=339)

		<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>
<b>Religious behaviour</b>	<i>Believers and practising</i>	<b>32.7</b>	<b>111</b>
	<i>Believers but not practising</i>	<b>45.1</b>	<b>153</b>
	<i>Neither believers nor practising</i>	<b>19.5</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Political orientation</b>	<i>None</i>	<b>23.3</b>	<b>79</b>
	<i>Right</i>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>34</b>
	<i>Centre</i>	<b>30.7</b>	<b>104</b>
	<i>Left</i>	<b>35.4</b>	<b>120</b>

One of the first questions asked to indicate one's own position towards their reference religion: almost half the participants state they are "believers, but non-practising", one third "believers and practicing" and the remaining 20% "neither believers nor practising". Only 3% declared they were "non-believers, but practising for personal or social reasons". Among those that declare themselves "believers", 98% makes reference to the Catholic religion.

Political orientation was measured on a 1-10 scale, where 1 indicated "left" and 10 indicated "right" in accordance with Jennings and van Deth's (1989) indications. Subsequently, the people that were positioned at the centre of the scale were asked to explain whether they actually perceived themselves as being "in the centre" or if their choice was due to their not having any political preference. This measure was used both as sub-divided in four categories and as a continuous variable. Understood as categories, 23% declared not to have any political orientation, 10% declared to be on the right, 31% on the centre and 35% on the left. This variable does not seem to mirror the current Italian political division. Nevertheless, gender, age groups and political orientation are statistically independent between one another.

## Reliability (Cronbach's alpha)

		Italian sample	Original sample
Fundamentalism		.91	.92
Orthodoxy		.89	unpublished
Religiosity	Intrinsic	.65	.83
	Extrinsic (personal / social)	.78 PE = .76 SE = .83	.65 PE = .57 SE = .58
Attachment	Secure	.42	.41
	Preoccupied	.46	.45
	Dismissing	.65	.70
	Fearful	.47	.50

All the tools used (with the exception of ACL) were applied to the Italian context for the first time.

Scale reliability is fairly similar to the reliability of the original English instruments, with the exception of religious orientation, where it is decidedly higher for extrinsic religiosity and decidedly lower for intrinsic religiosity. In a subsequent work (not presented here) the factor structure of some of these scales was investigated and the Religious Orientation Scale did not turn out completely comparable to the original one. Nevertheless, in this study the scales were used as they had been proposed by the authors that had devised them.

## Means comparison

		Italian sample		Original sample		d
		mean	SD	mean	SD	
Fundamentalism		81.7	31.6	84.6	33.0	
Orthodoxy		3.3	9.5			
Religiosity	Intrinsic	23.4	5.7	37.2	5.8	-2.4
	Extrinsic	16.1	5.2	25.6	5.7	-1.7
	Social Ext.	5.9	3.0			
	Personal Ext.	10.2	3.3			
Attach- ment	Secure	2.9	0.5			
	Preoccupied	2.8	0.6			
	Dismissing	3.3	0.7			
	Fearful	2.6	0.7			

Comparing the overall means of the Italian sample with those available for the samples of the original research works, a statistically significant difference does not emerge for fundamentalism, but lower values for intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity are found. The difference with the original sample is statistically significant and the effect size is very large.

As regards attachment, we have not made a typology classification, because our interest was the relationship between attachment and the other variables.

## Anova for age

		<30 y.o.	30-55 y.o.	>55 y.o.	<i>p</i>
Fundamentalism		69.4	82.0	103.3	.001
Orthodoxy		0.1	3.7	7.9	.001
Religiosity	Intrinsic	21.8	23.4	26.3	.001
	Extrinsic	14.2	16.2	19.4	.001
	Social Ext.	5.0	6.1	7.0	.001
	Personal Ext.	9.1	10.0	12.3	.001
Attachment	Secure	2.9	2.8	2.9	
	Preoccupied	2.8	2.7	2.8	
	Dismissing	3.3	3.2	3.3	
	Fearful	2.7	2.6	2.6	

For all the scales, an analysis of variance for gender and age group was carried out.

Fundamentalism, orthodoxy and intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity are statistically meaningful for age group. Orthodoxy and extrinsic religiosity are also statistically different for gender.

Fundamentalism score statistically increases with age. The group of the elderly turns out to be the most fundamentalist. Considering that fundamentalism and orthodoxy have a correlation of .73, it is not surprising that orthodoxy score grows in an analogous way.

## Anova for gender

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		male	female	<i>p</i>
	Fundamentalism	84.2	85.7	
	Orthodoxy	2.4	5.3	.01
Religiosity	Intrinsic	23.7	23.9	
	Extrinsic	15.8	17.3	.001
	Social Ext.	5.9	6.2	
	Personal Ext.	9.9	11.1	.001
Attach- ment	Secure	2.9	2.8	
	Preoccupied	2.7	2.8	
	Dismissing	3.3	3.2	
	Fearful	2.5	2.6	

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Only orthodoxy and extrinsic (particularly personal) religiosity are statistically different for gender.

Females show a higher score of orthodoxy and extrinsic religiosity on both variables as compared to males.

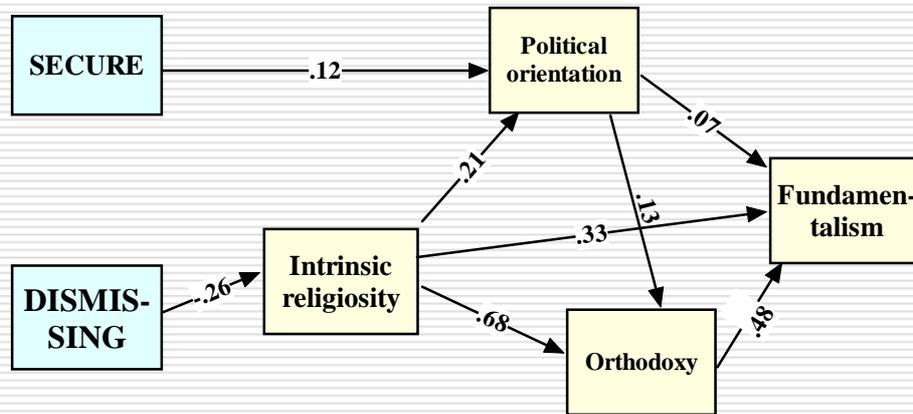
## Sample comparison

	Sample 1 (N=399)		Jehovah's Witnesses (N=35)		p	d
	M	sd	M	s		
Fundamen- talism	81.70	21.59	148.60	10.79	***	-2.8
Orthodoxy	3.29	9.46	14.63	2.34	***	-1.6
Intrinsic	23.40	5.66	34.43	2.05	***	-2.6
Extrinsic	16.10	5.21	20.46	3.88	***	-0.9
Pers. Ext.	10.21	3.32	8.49	2.51	**	0.6
Soc. Ext.	5.94	3.01	11.97	1.74	***	-2.4

The Jehovah's Witnesses sample records smaller standard deviations than the larger sample. This underlines the remarkable homogeneity of its members.

The very high fundamentalism and orthodoxy scores are another point to be noted. As a matter of fact, all the scales record higher means in the Jehovah's Witnesses sample with the only exception of personal extrinsic religiosity. In all the scales, mean difference is statistically significant at 1 per thousand (1‰) or 1 percent (1%) and the effect size is very high in all the comparisons.

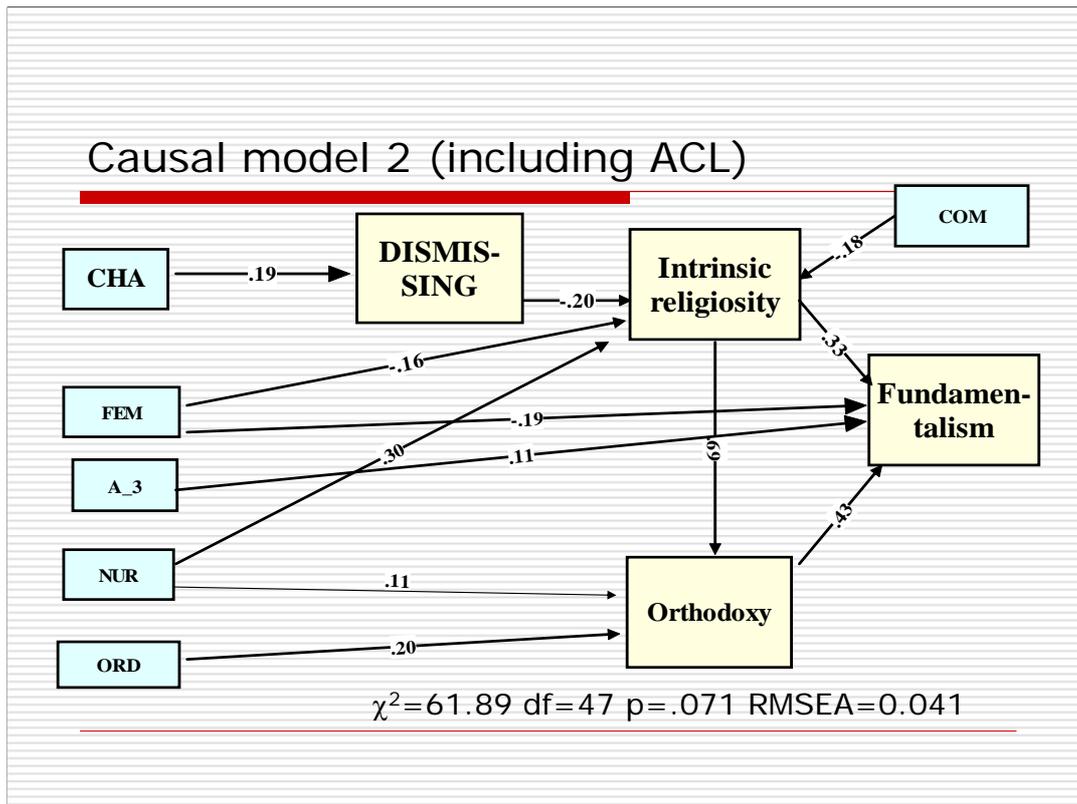
## Causal model 1



$$\chi^2=5.37 \text{ df}=7 \text{ } p=.615 \text{ RMSEA}=0.0$$

We studied the causal relationships in the first -larger- sample, with the only exclusion of the participants without any political orientation.

Among the adult attachment variables only the secure and dismissing models have a possible relationship with the other variables. In the final model, secure attachment explains a part of political orientation which, in turn, contributes to explain fundamentalism. The relationship between dismissing attachment and fundamentalism passes through intrinsic religiosity, which largely explains orthodoxy, part of fundamentalism and religious orientation. Fundamentalism, therefore, would seem to depend on intrinsic religiosity, on orthodoxy and on political orientation, but somehow also on secure or dismissing attachment.



When repeating the previous model and considering also the ACL personality traits, but still excluding those who do not have a political preference, we can see that the main model is reduced. Secure attitude attachment and political orientation disappear.

The personality traits that play a role are: the *need for change* (CHA) that influences dismissing attachment; the *need for protection of others* (NUR) and *female orientation* (FEM) that explain intrinsic religiosity; orthodoxy is influenced by the *need for protection of others* (NUR) and by *need for order* (ORD); lastly, fundamentalism is influenced by *female orientation* and by *poor originality and poor intelligence* (A\_3).

This schema of causal relationships is not easy to interpret also because the group of participants is remarkably reduced (N=195); nevertheless it seems to suggest the existence of bonds between some personality traits and the psychological variables studied.

## Conclusions

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- ❑ Both Religious Fundamentalism scales (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Martin & Westie, 1959) seem to work in Italy
  - ❑ Used as external criteria, the Jehovah's Witnesses record noticeably higher values
  - ❑ ROS-Religious Orientation Scale I-E Revised (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989) does not seem to work so well
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The Religious Fundamentalism Scale and the orthodoxy scale seem to work in Italy, too; in fact they measure noticeably higher values for the group of Jehovah's Witnesses used as external criterion.

The Religiosity Scale does not seem to work so well as it does not produce values comparable with the original ones. A confirmatory factor analysis could very likely help to verify whether the extrinsic and intrinsic values valid for the American sample are actually valid also for the Italian culture.

Lastly, the association with the attachment scale and with the ACL personality traits yields interesting results that are already being studied with other applications of the same instruments.

## Questionnaires

### *Intrinsic/Extrinsic-Revised (I/E-R) Scale*

(Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989)

		<b>Original</b>	<b>Italian translation</b>
1	I	I enjoy reading about my religion	Mi piace leggere argomenti che riguardano la mia religione
2	Es	I go to church because it helps me to make friends	Frequento la chiesa perché mi aiuta ad incontrare altre persone
3	I	It doesn't much matter what I believe so long as I am good	Non è molto importante in cosa io credo, l'importante è essere una buona persona
4	I	It is important to me to spend time in private thought and prayer	Per me è importante passare del tempo in meditazione e preghiera
5	I	I have often had a strong sense of God's presence	Spesso ho avuto la forte sensazione che Dio fosse presente
6	Ep	I pray mainly to gain relief and protection	Prego principalmente per avere aiuto e protezione
7	I	I try hard to live all my life according to my religious beliefs	Trovo difficile vivere tutta la mia vita secondo i miei principi religiosi
8	Ep	What religion offers me most is comfort in times of trouble and sorrow	Quello che la religione in prevalenza mi offre è il conforto nei momenti di difficoltà e di dolore
9	Ep	Prayer is for peace and happiness	La preghiera dà pace e felicità
10	I	Although I am religious, I don't let it affect my daily life	Sebbene sia religioso, non permetto che questo influenzi la mia vita quotidiana
11	Es	I go to church mostly to spend time with my friends	Frequento la chiesa soprattutto per passare il tempo con altre persone
12	I	My whole approach to life is based on my religion	Il mio approccio alla vita è interamente basato sulla mia religione
13	Es	I go to church mainly because I enjoy seeing people I know there	Frequento la chiesa sostanzialmente perché mi piace incontrare le persone che conosco lì
14	I	Although I believe in my religion, many other things are more important in life	Sebbene io creda nella mia religione, ci sono molte altre cose più importanti nella mia vita.

### **Religious Fundamentalism Scale**

(Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992)

	<b>Original</b>	<b>Italian translation</b>
1	God has given mankind a complete, unailing guide to happiness and salvation, which must be totally followed	Dio ha dato all'umanità una guida completa ed infallibile per la felicità e la salvezza da seguire totalmente
2	All of the religions in the world have flaws and wrong teachings	Tutte le religioni del mondo hanno difetti e insegnamenti sbagliati

3	Of all the people on this earth, one group has a special relationship with God because it believes the most in his revealed truths and tries the hardest to follow his laws	Tra tutta la gente di questa terra, c'è un gruppo che ha una relazione speciale con Dio perché crede nella verità rivelata e cerca di seguire le sue leggi.
4	The long-established traditions in religion show the best way to honour and serve God, and should never be compromised	Le tradizioni antiche della religione mostrano la via migliore per onorare e servire Dio e non dovrebbero mai essere compromesse.
5	Religion must admit all its past failings and adapt to modern life if it is to benefit humanity	Se fosse un beneficio per l'umanità, la religione dovrebbe ammettere tutti i suoi errori passati ed adattarsi alla vita moderna.
6	When you get right down to it, there are only two kinds of people in the world: the Righteous, who will be rewarded by God and the rest, who will not	Ci sono solo due generi di persone nel mondo: i giusti, premiati da Dio e gli altri che non lo saranno.
7	Different religious and philosophies have different versions of the truth and may be equally right in their own way	Religioni e filosofie diverse hanno diverse versioni della verità e possono essere ugualmente giuste nel loro modo di essere.
8	The basic cause of evil in this world is Satan, who is still constantly and ferociously fighting against God	La principale causa del male nel mondo è Satana, che costantemente e ferocemente continua a combattere contro Dio.
9	It is more important to be a good person than to believe in God and the right religion	È più importante essere una brava persona che credere in Dio e nella sua religione.
10	No one religion is especially close to God, nor does God favour any particular group of believers	Nessuna religione è particolarmente vicina a Dio, né Dio favorisce un particolare gruppo di credenti.
11	God will punish most severely those who abandon his true religion	Dio punirà severamente coloro che hanno abbandonato la vera religione.
12	No single book of religious writings contains all the important truths about life	Nessun libro sacro contiene tutte le verità importanti della vita.
13	It is silly to think people can be divided into "the God" and "the Evil". Everyone does some good, and some bad, things	È stupido pensare che la gente possa essere divisa in "buoni" e "cattivi". Ognuno fa qualcosa di buono e qualcosa di cattivo.
14	God's true followers must remember that he requires them to <i>constantly</i> fight Satan and Satan's allies on this earth	Coloro che seguono la verità di Dio non devono dimenticare di combattere costantemente Satana ed i suoi alleati.
15	Parents should encourage their children to study all religions without bias, then make up their own minds about what to believe	I genitori dovrebbero incoraggiare i loro figli a studiare tutte le religioni senza pregiudizi, per scegliere poi in cosa credere con la propria testa.
16	There is a religion on this earth that teaches, without error, God's truth	C'è una religione su questa terra che insegna, senza errori, la verità di Dio
17	"Satan" is just the name people give to their own bad impulses. There really is <i>no such thing</i> as a diabolical "Prince of Darkness" who tempts us	"Satana" è solo il nome che la gente dà ai propri impulsi cattivi. Non c'è veramente nulla che sia un diabolico "principe delle tenebre" tentatore.
18	Whenever science and sacred scripture conflict, science must be wrong	Ogni volta che la scienza e le sacre scritture sono in conflitto è la scienza ad aver commesso un errore.
19	There is <i>no</i> body of teachings, or set of scriptures, which is completely without error	Non c'è nessun Insegnamento o insieme di Scritture che sia completamente senza errori

20	To lead the best, most meaningful life, one must belong to the one, true religion	Per condurre la miglior vita possibile si deve appartenere all'unica, vera religione.
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## Religious Fundamentalism Scale

(Martin & Westie, 1959)

	Original	Italian translation
1	The Bible is the inspired word of God	La Bibbia è la parola di Dio ispirata
2	The religious idea of heaven is not much more than superstition	L'idea religiosa di paradiso non è più che una superstizione
3	Christ was a mortal, historical person, but not a supernatural or divine being	Cristo era un mortale, un personaggio storico e non un essere divino soprannaturale
4	Christ is a divine being, the Son of God	Cristo è un essere divino, il figlio di Dio
5	The stories in the Bible about Christ healing sick and lame persons by His touch are fictitious and mythical	Le storie della Bibbia su Cristo che guarisce gli infermi sono fittizie e mitiche
6	Someday Christ will return	Un giorno Cristo ritornerà
7	The idea of life after death is simply a myth	L'idea di una vita dopo la morte è semplicemente un mito
8	If more of the people in this country would turn to Christ we would have a lot less crime and corruption	Se più persone in questo Paese si rivolgessero a Cristo avremmo meno crimini e corruzione
9	Since Christ brought the dead to life, He gave eternal life to all who have faith	Quando Cristo riporterà in vita i morti darà vita eterna a tutti coloro che hanno fede.

## Relationship Scale Questionnaire

(Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994)

	Original	Italian translation
1	I find it difficult to depend on other people	Trovo difficile dipendere dagli altri
2	It is very important to me feel independent	È molto importante sentirmi indipendente
3	I find it easy to get emotionally close to others	È facile per me avvicinarmi emotivamente agli altri
4	I want to merge completely with another person	Voglio fondermi completamente con un'altra persona

5	I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others	Ho paura di soffrire se mi avvicinano troppo agli altri
6	I am comfortable without close emotional relationships	Sto bene senza relazioni significative
7	I am not sure that I can always depend on other people	Non sono sicuro di poter dipendere sempre dal fatto che gli altri ci siano quando ho bisogno di loro
8	I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others	Sul piano emotivo voglio avere un rapporto totalmente intimo con gli altri
9	I worry about being alone	Mi preoccupa il fatto di essere solo
10	I am comfortable depending on other people	Mi fa sentire a mio agio il fatto di dipendere dagli altri
11	I often worry that romantic partners don't really love me	Sono spesso preoccupato che il mio partner non mi ami veramente
12	I find it difficult to trust others completely	Trovo difficile fidarmi completamente degli altri
13	I worry about others getting too close to me	Mi preoccupa che gli altri si avvicinino troppo a me
14	I want emotionally close relationships	Voglio relazioni intense
15	I am comfortable having other people depend on me	Mi fa sentire a mio agio il fatto che altre persone dipendano da me
16	I worry that others don't value me as much as I value them	Mi preoccupa che gli altri non mi apprezzino tanto quanto io apprezzo loro
17	People are never there when you need them	Le persone non ci sono mai quando tu hai bisogno di loro
18	My desire to merge completely sometimes scares people away	Il mio desiderio di fondermi completamente con gli altri a volte li mette in fuga da me
19	It is very important to me to feel self-sufficient	E' molto importante per me sentirmi auto-sufficiente
20	I am nervous when anyone gets too close to me	Divento nervoso quando qualcuno si avvicina troppo a me
21	I often worry that romantic partners won't to stay with me	Mi preoccupa spesso che il mio partner non vorrà stare con me
22	I prefer not to have other people depend on me	Preferisco che gli altri non dipendano da me
23	I worry about being abandoned	Mi preoccupa il fatto di essere abbandonato
24	I am uncomfortable being close to others	Mi fa sentire a disagio stare vicino agli altri
25	I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like	Trovo che gli altri siano riluttanti a starmi vicino quanto io vorrei
26	I prefer not to depend on others	Preferisco non dipendere dagli altri
27	I know that others will be there when I need them	So che gli altri ci saranno quando avrò bisogno di loro
28	I worry about having others not accept me	Mi preoccupa che gli altri non mi accettino
29	Romantic partners often want me to be closer than I feel comfortable being	Spesso il mio partner mi vuole più vicino di quanto io voglia
30	I find it relatively easy to get close to others	Trovo relativamente facile avvicinarmi agli altri

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