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God of the Rich, God of the Poor

RITA H. MATARAGNON

Is the God of the rich the same God as the God of the poor? Do the rich and the poor see the same images and qualities of God? Do they worship God and express their religiosity in the same way? Do they perceive their lives to be controlled to the same extent by God?

Far from being obvious, the relationship between religion and social class has often been controversial and equivocal. Earlier ideas about religion leaned towards an independence between religion and social class.¹ Theologically God was portrayed as a Transcendent Being "out there" to be sought, rather than a Presence or a Meaning to be experienced in social reality. Sociologically religion was seen as serving a solidarity function, through its creation and protection of a common set of values. As Durkheim defined it, religion is "a unified system of beliefs and practices related to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them. Collective worship binds men with a force above and beyond them; it is this moral force that regulates social relationships and curbs deviance."²

If one religion could unite, then, different religions or even different interpretations of one religion could divide. Thus religious wars and schisms result. Different religions also make differ-

This study, partially funded by the Faura Research Center, Inc., was initially prepared as a paper for the conference on "God: The Contemporary Discussion" held at Dorado, Puerto Rico, 30 December 1983 to 4 January 1984.

1. Unless specifically stated otherwise, the term religion is used in its general and commonly accepted sense as "a system of beliefs and practices pertaining to a deity."

2. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (New York: Free Press, 1965), p. 62.

ent pronouncements about suffering, well-being, merit and the importance or unimportance of this world vis-a-vis the next. Such pronouncements invariably have important consequences on how the adherents of a particular religion view and tolerate class differences. On the other hand, it is also recognized that wealth and status can influence the acceptance of religious beliefs and practices. As in the case of the rich young man who sought Jesus, it was said that he went away sorrowful when asked to sell all he had for the poor, for he had great possessions.³

In this century, interest in the relationship between religion and social class has been spurred by macro-comparisons of the worldly success enjoyed by groups professing different religions. Weber, in relating religious beliefs and practices (economic ethics), presented evidence for a functional relationship between Calvinist Protestantism and a speedy advance of some countries towards capitalism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (e.g., the Huguenots of the Netherlands, the Puritans of New England, and parts of Germany).⁴ Calvinists ascribe a positive ethical and religious value to work (the Protestant work ethic); since work is seen as an instrument to glorify God, wealth that results from work is taken as God's blessing.⁵

Later critics, notably Samuelsson, have cast doubt on Weber's correlation between Calvinism and capitalism by pointing to other reasons for the speedy capitalist development in the countries cited.⁶ Samuelsson also pointed to cases where Calvinism took hold but was not coupled with speedy capitalist development (e.g., Scotland and Hungary) and to cases where capitalism did develop but was not associated with Calvinist beliefs (e.g. England and Sweden).

Studies on the role of religion in social mobility within a complex society like the U.S. have also met with similar problems. The fact that different religious groups are often also racially and culturally different naturally precludes a clear relationship, and points to the need for micro-comparisons among social classes found within a single (preferably small and homogeneous)

3. Mk. 10:17-31; Mt. 19:16-30; Lk 18:18-25.

4. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1930). First published in 1904.

5. Betty R. Scharf, *The Sociological Study of Religion* (London: Hutchinson & Company, 1970), pp. 132-33.

6. K. Samuelsson, *Religion and Economic Action* (London: Heinemann, 1961).

society, bound by a common religion.

The position that religion is related to social class *within* a class society has not lacked intuitive or theoretical appeal. Marx and Engels considered religion to be an opiate and a fantasy escape from suffering for the masses.⁷ In this way religion was believed to serve the interest of the bourgeoisie in fostering complacency and preventing class antagonism.

Quite apart from any Machiavellian intention to manipulate, religion is seen to vary across social classes simply because different class groups have different inherent needs. Weber has theorized extensively on the religion of the privileged and of the non-privileged classes within a society. Regardless of the content of the religion, the need of the poor is for salvation and release from suffering while the need of the rich is for legitimation (merit) of privilege and psychological assurance of worth.⁸

Not only needs, but also interests, expectations, customs, thought categories, forms of expression and behavior make up the experience of social reality. "Hence the variation, from one social class to another, of the religious undertakings that are possible or impossible, undesirable even though possible, tolerable but up to a point (a different point in each class), acceptable but just barely, important, basic or urgent."⁹

According to Budd, "that religious beliefs and practices systematically vary by social class is indisputable."¹⁰ Even among Catholic congregations working in a fixed tradition may be observed variations in mood, decorations and the way in which priest and congregation are related in worship. There is a difference, too, in the type of religious activity practiced. In both Britain and the U.S., higher rates of *private* religious practice — private prayer and Bible reading — are reported by the poor, and higher rates of *public* worship by the upper-middle class. In doctrine, the lower class are more fundamentalist, lay greater emphasis on a literal Bible, sin and after-life, and are more devout and knowledgeable about the Bible than the middle class. For

7. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *On Religion* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1957).

8. Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (London: Social Science Paperbacks, 1966). First published in 1922, Germany.

9. O. Maduro, *Religion and Social Conflicts*, trans. Robert R. Barr (New York: Orbis Books, 1979), p. xiii.

10. Susan Budd, *Sociologists and Religion* (London: Collier-MacMillan Publishers, 1973), p. 104.

the upper-middle class, religion is more of an ethical matter, and the right to self-determination of religious beliefs is therefore emphasized. In the U.S. the denominations of the upper-middle class have a liberal theology with stress on individual ethical conduct; the denominations of the poor are predominantly theologically conservative.¹¹

The orthodox and conservative posture of the poor is said to be related to Marx and Engels' theory about alienation and religion. "Religious belief, the acceptance of particular dogmas and particular codes of behavior as absolutely and ultimately true, is more typical of the exploited class rather than of their oppressors; their lack of property, and therefore of command over the circumstances of their lives, is reflected in their religious submissiveness."¹²

The differences observed have been those of the First World, during the last few decades. Today, many changes are taking place in religion, especially in the Third World. As Ugalde puts it,

The left has long since issued its condemnation of religion. The right, by contrast, has spent the last decade revising some of its traditional certitudes. There used to be a kind of agreement on both sides that religion is the solid stanchion of the established order, good for nothing but the ideology of the dominating class. But today, in Latin America, this class is itself beginning to denounce the church as 'subversive and revolutionary.'¹³

In the Philippines, particularly in Metro Manila, various developments in recent years have left their imprint on elements of the local Catholic church, possibly disproportionately across the different social classes. These developments include the shift to less ritualized forms of worship, the encouragement of private religious practices such as Bible reading and private prayer, the new tolerance and understanding for folk religion, the emergence of liberation theology and the recent Charismatic Movement. How, then, do the different social classes now view God and religion?

While many statements about class differences in religious beliefs and practices have been based on sporadic and anecdotal observations and experiences, and occasionally on church reports,

11. *Ibid.*

12. Scharf, *The Sociological Study of Religion*, p. 83.

13. L. Ugalde, S.J., Foreword to Maduro, *Religion and Social Conflicts*.

this exploratory study attempts a systematic investigation of class differences on various important aspects of religion: images and perceived qualities of God; dimensions of religiosity including religious beliefs, closeness to God, religious practices, knowledge of religious doctrine, consequence of religion on behavior; and locus of control (God vs. self). The study is deliberately confined to a small geographic area in which reside members of different social classes but which is otherwise homogeneous in most other respects, including church influence and accessibility. Rather than test hypotheses, the study aims to investigate whether *de facto* class differences exist in the religious beliefs and practices explored. The results of this study, aside from showing yet another aspect of class differences, are expected to have serious implications for those involved in religious work.

METHOD

SITE AND SAMPLE

Katipunan was chosen as a small urban area in which residents of different social classes live. Although there are cases in which a plush residence lies side by side with a group of make-shift shanties, generally the whole Katipunan area consists of varied and disparate communities whose social class could be easily identified. Three residential communities represented in the study are the following: privately developed, plush and exclusive residential subdivisions like La Vista, Blue Ridge, White Plains, Loyola Heights, and Xavierville for the upper-middle class; Project 4, Balara, Aurora Boulevard, and Katipunan Road (the first two are government housing projects) for the middle class; and large squatter areas like Barrio Escopa, Pansol, and Marytown for the lower class. While some communities have small chapels within them, all of these communities are covered by two major parishes, St. Joseph's and Santa Maria della Strada's.

The sampling frame of this study consisted of all Catholic Filipinos residing in Katipunan. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure that the various sub-communities within each class were represented. Inasmuch as educational achievement was expected to be correlated with economic status, it was next-to-impossible to separate the two variables. However, since it was

also expected that any variance in education would most likely be found within the middle class, the middle class was divided into those with college education (Class B) and those without college education (Class C). In this way, if Class C behaved more like Class B, economic status could be judged the more influential variable but if Class C behaved more like the lower class (Class D), then education would be considered more influential.

A total of 194 respondents aged thirty to forty-five were interviewed for this study. The breakdown in terms of social class and sex follows:

Class	Description	Number of	Number of	Total
		Males	Females	
A	Upper-middle class	25	26	51
B	Middle class with college education	23	25	48
C	Middle class without college education	24	22	46
D	Lower class	20	29	49
				194

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Through research of related literature and preliminary unstructured interviews with Catholics, a questionnaire to answer the research problem was prepared originally in English and later translated to Pilipino. A few items were adapted from existing questionnaires on religiosity and many others were original.¹⁴ A theology professor was consulted for the sections on creed and knowledge of doctrine.

The final questionnaire consisted of the following parts:

I. *Images and Qualities of God*

a) Free Association (1 item)

Description: The question asked: "When you think of God, what characteristic of God comes first to your mind? God is _____."

14. John P. Robinson and Phillip R. Shaver, *Measures of Social Psychological Attitudes*, rev. ed. (Michigan: University of Michigan Institute for Social Research, 1973).

b) Choice of Two Most Important Attributes of God (1 item)

Description: A list of 18 commonly cited attributes (adjectives) of God were presented from which the respondent had to choose two adjectives which they consider to be most important in describing God.

Examples: powerful, merciful, holy, loving, protective, strong, just, etc.

c) Drawing or representation of God (1 item)

Description: The question asked, "If you were asked to draw a picture of God, or a picture to represent God, what would you draw?" It was emphasized that artistic ability was not important; in fact, both pictures and verbal descriptions were permitted.

II. *Dimensions of Religiosity*

a) Creed or Beliefs (12 items)

Description: Items expressed religious beliefs (some orthodox, some not) and were followed by five-point scales ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Themes included eternal life, divinity of Christ, Scripture as God's Word, man's accountability to God, man's need for God, salvation, miracles, Immaculate Conception, repentance, etc.

Examples: 1. I believe Jesus Christ was an exceptionally good man but not God.
2. I believe that Virgin Mary was conceived without sin.

b) Closeness to God (12 items)

Description: Items described different kinds of personal religious experience that indicated either closeness to God (positive religious experience) or distance from God (negative religious experience). Themes included personal prayer, trust in God, security against death, religion giving purpose to life, etc. Items were followed by five-point scales ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

Examples: 1. Whenever I have problems, I turn to God

for help.

2. I find God too abstract and distant to affect my life directly.

c) Religious Practices

1) Regular Practices (18 items)

Description: This section presented a list of rituals and activities that Catholics could perform at any time of the year. Each activity was followed with eight variations of frequency, ranging from "never" to "daily."

- Examples:
1. Pray the rosary
 2. Give to the collection
 3. Join a Charismatic meeting

(Note: Private personal prayer was not classified in this section on rituals since it was dealt with in the section on closeness to God.)

2) Seasonal Practices (18 items)

Description: These rituals and activities that Catholics could perform once a year, for a special season. Most of them had to do with the Lenten Season. Each activity was followed with eight variations of frequency ranging from "never" to "daily."

- Examples:
1. Read the *Pasyon*
 2. Receive ashes on Ash Wednesday
 3. Attend the *Misa de Gallo* (Advent Mass)

3) Practices that Make One Feel Closest to God (1 item)

Description: Respondent was asked to choose from the 18 regular and 18 seasonal practices which five activities he could rank as making him feel closest to God.

d) Knowledge of Religion (10 items)

Description: Multiple choice items concerning Catholic doctrine were used. Themes included definition of salvation, Immaculate Conception, Advent, etc.; recognition of four gospels, sacraments of initiation, etc.

Examples: Immaculate Conception means

1. Mary conceived Jesus Christ without sin
2. Mary conceived Jesus Christ while remaining a virgin
3. Mary was born without sin
4. Mary was conceived without sin

e) Consequence on Behavior (8 items)

Description: Items were statements expressing the "rightness" or "wrongness" of certain actions. Each one is followed by a five-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

- Examples:
1. If a neighbor meets with an emergency and asks for help, it is Christian duty to do so even if you have to sacrifice your savings.
 2. It is all right for a Catholic young man and a Catholic young woman in love to have premarital sex.

III. *Locus of Control/Responsibility* (10 items)

Description: Each item consisted of one pair of statements, one of which attributed locus of control to God while the other attributed control to self. Respondent had to choose from each pair of statements which one he or she agreed with *more*.

- Examples:
1. In the long run God makes sure the bad things that happen to us are balanced by the good ones.
 2. Most misfortunes are the result of lack of ability, ignorance, laziness or all three.

PROCEDURE

Respondents, all residents of Katipunan, were contacted at home and asked if they could be interviewed about their views and opinions on religion and on God. The interview was presented as part of a research project surveying people's attitudes about God and religion. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured. The respondent's name was not asked; however, his

religion, age, and educational background were asked. The language facility and preference of the respondent was considered, and so English was used for Classes A and B while Pilipino was used for Classes C and D. Interviewers refrained from identifying their own religious affiliation and activities to prevent any untoward influence on the respondent. The whole interview typically took about forty-five minutes. Although respondents who insisted on self-administering their own questionnaire were permitted to do so, the interviewing format was basically preserved with the interviewer's close supervision, instructions, occasional probing, and check for completion of responses after each section of the questionnaire.

RESULTS

Two images of God came out most strongly: the benevolent God (loving, kind, merciful, etc.) and the powerful God (strong, majestic, powerful, etc.). Class A respondents distinctly saw God as more benevolent than any other group. Most dimensions of religiosity were also directly correlated with social status. People with higher social status were more religious on these dimensions: creed, closeness to God, seasonal rituals and knowledge of doctrine. Finally, the different social classes were not significantly different in terms of their locus of control orientation, although significant differences were obtained for some specific items.

IMAGES OF GOD

Free association. While there were various idiosyncratic answers, the majority of answers could be categorized into two clusters of qualities about God. One cluster could be identified as the benevolent God (generous, kind, good, loving, merciful, understanding, forgiving, etc.). Another cluster could be identified as the powerful God (great, supreme, almighty, above all, etc.). For this free-association section, the majority of the spontaneous answers, especially for Class A, fell into the category of the benevolent God (102 responses) while the other qualities of God took a back seat (58 responses for "powerful" category, less than 10 responses for all other categories such as "life," "everlasting," "holy," "wise," "father/creator," and "peace/security/light." It is interesting to

note that more of the "security" answers came from Class D). A chi-square analysis which took into account only the two biggest categories (powerful vs. benevolent) showed a marginally significant association between social class and category of association. This was mainly due to the fact that more than three times as many Class A respondents gave a benevolent association rather than a powerful one. Classes B, C, and D were not very different from one another.

Choice of important attributes. On this item, the positive relationship between social class and perception of God as benevolent showed up much more clearly. A highly significant X^2 value ($X^2 = 12.78$, $p < .01$) was obtained. The four social classes were neatly arranged in terms of their benevolent vs. powerful choices. For Class A, more than twice as many respondents chose "benevolent" adjectives rather than "powerful" ones; for Class B, the split was about equal; for Class C, slightly more chose the "powerful" adjectives and for Class D, significantly more chose "powerful" adjectives over "benevolent" ones.

Drawings/representations of God. The most common of the drawings depicted conventional religious symbols such as a cross, a heart, the Sacred Heart, a chalice and host, and the chi-ro symbol. Among these, the cross was most commonly depicted. Class D had the highest percentage of respondents (28.5 percent) who used a cross to represent God; it was also the only group who drew pictures of the Sacred Heart (12 percent). The next two most common representations were persons and nature scenes. Persons were commonly depicted as happy (smiling), loving (set in a heart or with heart aflame), giving or forgiving (arms outstretched) and generally with kind and gentle expressions. These were also the most common expressions for the less than 10 percent who attempted to draw God (non-persons with angels nearby, bearded figure on throne) or Jesus (as historically portrayed). An interesting observation is that for drawings either of persons or of God/Jesus, Class C and Class D had more themes of sorrow, suffering and pain. These are expressed with arrows shot at a heart, a crown of thorns, man nailed to a cross, a bleeding heart, etc. Nature scenes (e.g., sun, moon, stars, trees, mountains) were most popular with Class B (20.8 percent), followed by Class C (10.8 percent). Only 2 percent from Classes A, B, and C tried to represent the just God (e.g., a scale, hammer used by judge).

RELIGIOSITY

Creed or belief. The most strongly held belief was the belief that "God can perform miracles if he wants to" (\bar{x} = 4.60 on a five-point scale), followed by the belief that God is a heavenly father who created man and to whom man is accountable. The negatively phrased items, although reversed in scoring, generally received lower ratings, suggesting the presence of an acquiescence response set which was, however, not specific to any one group. The lowest-scoring item was belief concerning God's action in human history.

A significant difference was obtained only between Class A and Class C for the creed. On specific items, the lower classes (C and D) showed more doubt about the divinity of Christ (item 2) and about personal accountability to God as Creator and Heavenly Father (item 4). Class A differed significantly from Class C and Class D on the matter of Christ's divinity. Class A also differed significantly from Class D on the revelation of God's Word through the Scripture (item 3), while Class A and Class B differed significantly from Class C on personal accountability and on Nature as God (item 10). In all differences, it was the higher social class which showed more agreement with the orthodox Catholic belief. Males and females showed no differences in religious beliefs except on one item: females believed more strongly in eternal life.

Closeness to God. Among various statements indicating closeness to God, respondents were most inclined to agree that they turn to God for help whenever they have problems (\bar{x} = 4.38). Many respondents also consider private prayer an important and satisfying aspect of their religious experience (\bar{x} = 4.35).

Class differences in closeness to God are very impressive. Statistically, this dimension of religiosity yielded the highest degree of class differences ($F = 4.71$, $p = .004$). On the whole Class A felt significantly "closer to God" than both Class C and Class D. Significant differences were obtained for seven of the twelve items. Class A was significantly different from Class D on the matter of religion giving (my) life a purpose. The effectiveness of religion in offering a sense of security in the face of death decreased steadily as one went down the social ladder. Class D respondents found God more abstract than all other groups, espe-

cially Class A respondents. Perhaps the most pathetic difference for Class D was reflected in their agreement with the item "When I pray, I feel as if my prayers do not reach God." On this item Class D differed significantly from all other groups! Class C and to some extent Class D were most inclined to agree with the statement that "Religion is good for some people but personally it does not mean much to me." Belief in the sufficiency of one's own morality and conscience as guide (no need for regular prayer and Bible-reading) increased as social status decreased. Trust in God despite temporary problems was surprisingly less for the middle classes especially B, than for Class A and Class D.

Males and females were found to be significantly different in their overall closeness to God. Females also rated significantly higher on these particular items:

"Whenever I have problems, I turn to God for help."

"During the happiest moments in my life, I feel the presence of God."

"Private prayer is an important and satisfying aspect of my religious experience."

"I feel that I can trust God in the long run even if he gives me temporary problems."

"Most of the time I feel quite close to God."

Religious practices. Although there were no significant class differences in overall scores of regular religious activities (all eighteen practices taken together), there were significant class differences on some specific practices:

read the Bible	A > D ^{1 5}
pray for sick and dead	A > BDC, B > DC
go to mass	AB > CD
take communion	A > BCD
visit the sick	BCD > A
give to collection	ABC > D
fast, abstain for religious reason	AB > C

Among all regular religious practices, the conventional Sunday-related public worship activities seem to be most frequent: mass,

15. For all comparisons, the group with the higher frequency for that activity is mentioned first. When groups are put together, e.g., BCD, although they are ordered according to frequency, they are not significantly (statistically) different from one another.

followed by communion, then by giving to the collection. Praying for the sick and the dead comes next, followed by a far fifth for Bible-reading. No overall sex differences were obtained, but females were significantly more frequent in reading the Bible, praying for the sick/dead, praying the rosary, taking communion, making novenas, and offering flowers.

For seasonal (yearly) activities, higher frequency was correlated with higher social status. The activities on which the different social classes differed were the following:

read the Bible during Holy Week	ABC > D
read the Pasyon	D > CBA
do the Stations of the Cross	ABC > D
fast/abstain on Ash Wednesday	AB > CD
go for confession	
during Holy Week	A > CD
have communion on Easter	
Sunday	A > CD
make sacrifices or <i>penitencia</i>	
(aside from fasting)	A > CD
receive ash on Ash Wednesday	A > CD, B > D
wear scapular medal	A > B, A > D
wear black/purple clothes	
during Lent	D > BA, C > A
do visita iglesia	A > CD, B > D
attend Misa de Gallo	
(Advent Mass)	A > D
participate in block rosary	BC > AD

Among all the seasonal religious practices, having communion on Easter Sunday rated the highest frequency, followed by receiving ash on Ash Wednesday, then by fasting and abstaining on Good Friday. Other high frequency activities were reading the Bible, going for confession, and doing Stations of the Cross during Holy Week.

Activities fostering closeness to God. Despite the proliferation of religious practices in the Philippines, it appears that nothing can take the place of mass. Attending mass ranked highest as the activity that brought one closest to God for all groups except Class A which ranked it second to communion (still in the context of mass). Taking communion, reading the Bible, praying the

rosary were the next most effective practices which made respondents feel close to God. For these basic activities there were no apparent class differences in their overall basic effectiveness. However, for the fifth rank some class differences showed up. Going to confession was a frequent choice of Class A and B, and so was doing Stations of the Cross for Class A. On the other hand, making novena made it to the top five for Class D.

KNOWLEDGE OF RELIGION

The relationship between knowledge of religion and social status was practically linear ($A > B > C > D$). Religiosity as shown in knowledge about one's own religion is obviously a pure function of general education, as far as Filipinos are concerned. Both Class A and Class B differed significantly from Class D. Males and females did not differ significantly on knowledge of religion.

Among the items in the multiple choice knowledge test, the one with the most correct answers (75.8 percent) was the item about Jesus Christ being true God and true man. This was followed by a far second for the mystery of the Trinity (63.4 percent), the four gospels (62.7 percent) and the meaning of Advent. On the other hand, fewest correct answers were obtained for the item on Immaculate Conception (27.3 percent) and for the mystery of the church (32.5 percent).

Consequence in behavior. Adherence to the moral teachings of the church was neither affected by class per se nor by sex per se. However, a significant interaction effect between social class and sex was obtained. For Class A, female respondents were stricter in their adherence to moral teachings of the church while in Class D, it was the male respondents who showed higher scores than the females! Class B and Class C had nearly equal scores for males and females, with some slight tendency for females in Class B to be higher and males in Class C to be higher. All in all, Class A females had the highest scores and Class D females had the lowest scores. Among the females, the ranked order would be A, B, C, D but among the males, the ranked order would be D, C, A, B.

	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>
A	30.54	28.52
B	29.88	28.39
C	29.32	29.38
D	26.78	30.04

For specific items two were found to be significantly affected by social class. One was, "Although I believe in religion, I refuse to let religious considerations influence my everyday life." On this matter, Class D was mostly likely to agree with this item, indicating a lack of religious influence on behavior. Class A, scoring highest, differed significantly from Class C and Class D; even Class B differed significantly from Class D.

A second item affected by social class was the stand on family planning. The item read, "A couple have had four and would like to limit their family. Since the couple prefer a most effective method, it is justified for the woman to take the pill."¹⁶ Here again, Class D was least inclined to adhere to church teaching. Thus a significant difference was obtained between Class D and Classes A and B.

Maximum agreement ($\alpha = 4.14$) was registered for the item on obedience to God's moral laws, "True love of God is shown in obedience to his moral laws." Apart from this, the two highest scores were associated with moral judgments that had to do with interpersonal relationships — helping neighbor in need and forgiving those who wrong us.

LOCUS OF CONTROL

Contrary to expectation, locus of control scores did not differ significantly according to social class. Surprisingly, though, clear patterns of differences were found for 8 of the 10 items (5 highly significant and 3 marginally significant). An examination of these specific items explains why an overall difference could not possibly be found. Different items took different *directions* of differences, suggesting the multidimensionality of the locus of control construct.

16. Frank Lynch, S.J., and Perla Makil have important related findings in this matter in particular, and on social class and religion in general, in "The BRAC 1967 Filipino Family Survey," *Saint Louis Quarterly* 6 (1968): 293-330.

On three items, higher control was positively associated with higher social status. No exceptions were found for these three items for which the scores ranked neatly from A (highest) to D (lowest). The higher the social class, the more likely the respondent was to agree with the following statements:

“What happens to me is my own doing.”¹⁷

“Becoming a success is really a matter of hard work.”

“When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.”

An examination of the three items suggests an assertion of confidence about one's lot, success, and plans carrying out.

On two items, higher control was inversely associated with social class, i.e., the lower social class had higher scores. Class D was most inclined to agree with the following two items:

“Most misfortunes are the result of inability, ignorance, laziness or all three.”

“I pray that God will give me strength to accomplish more for his glory.”

The above two items seem to have little in common except an acknowledgment of failure and an attempt to do more.

On three items, the two middle classes showed a distinct difference from the two extreme classes (BC vs. AD). For the following two items, both Class B and C, especially B, scored higher than Class A and D (B and C > A and D):

“A person can have a happy life if he or she works for it.”

“I have found that God helps those who help themselves.”

These two items express a simple belief in self-help and happiness, but without the same confidence of Class A.

Finally, for the item on political involvement, Class B and C differed from Class A and D in their pessimism about control over social change (B and C < A and D):

“By taking active part in political and social affairs, people can indirectly affect public events.”

Males and females did not show any difference on any of the locus of control items.

17. Each “locus-of-control” item given here is *internal* in direction, i.e., it attributes control to oneself. In the questionnaire, these items were paired with statements which attributed control to God (*external*), e.g. “Sometimes I feel only God has control over the direction my life is taking.”

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

1. The higher the social class, the more respondents saw God as benevolent.
2. The lower the social class, the more respondents saw God as powerful.
3. The higher the social class, the more respondents expressed belief in the official Catholic creed.
4. The higher the social class, the more respondents (especially women) expressed a feeling of closeness to God.
5. Although there was no significant difference in overall frequency of all religious activities, the most conventional church activities (e.g., mass, communion, and giving to collection) enjoyed more frequent practice as social status increased.
6. The higher the social class, the more respondents (especially women) observed seasonal religious activities.
7. The higher the social class, the more knowledge respondents had about their religion.
8. No general class or sex differences were found for adherence to moral teachings. However, for the upper middle class, females show more adherence to moral teachings than males whereas for the lower class, females show less adherence than males.
9. Females were significantly more religious than males on certain dimensions of religiosity: closeness to God and frequency of seasonal religious practices.
10. There was no significant difference in overall locus of control scores. However, significant differences in perceived control were obtained for many specific items, except that the direction of difference was not uniform, suggesting a multi-dimensional variable.

DISCUSSION

The God of the rich is perceived to be more benevolent (kind, loving, caring, forgiving, etc.) than the God of the poor. Belief in Him and in His divine revelation is stronger, emotional ties to Him are closer, more religious practices are carried out for Him, and more knowledge about Him and His inspired doctrine is transmitted.

On the other hand, the God of the poor is perceived to be more powerful (strong, majestic, above all, etc.) than the God of the rich. This attribute may explain His distance, since the poor express less proximity to God. Being distant, it is no wonder that the God of the poor is somewhat hard of hearing. The poor are most likely to believe that their prayers do not reach God. For the minority, however, who might identify more closely with God, they see Him as a suffering God or Christ (bleeding heart, arrow through heart, crucifix). This preference for the image of the suffering Christ is consistent with the poor's devotion to the Pasyon. Ileta even credited the Pasyon with providing the inspiration for the Philippine Revolution, since the suffering Christ was courageous and able to overcome suffering, emerging victorious over his enemies.¹⁸

The God of the poor seems to inspire a less orthodox and compelling system of beliefs and doctrine; there is more of a tendency to put Him aside or on a pedestal rather than to let Him influence everyday life. Personal morality and conscience are perceived to be adequate substitutes for regular prayer and Bible-reading. Practical concern and empathy, rather than official church teaching, guide the judgment of the poor about family planning. Perhaps because He is perceived as distant and impractical, the God of the poor is not as effective as the God of the rich in giving life a purpose or in giving security in the face of death.

The middle class generally fits in between the rich (Class A) and the poor (Class D). The relative position of Class C in between Class B and Class D on many results indicate that both economic as well as educational status matter. However, it must be pointed out that Class C was often nearer to Class D than to Class B, suggesting the relatively stronger influence of education.

Findings about the more benevolent image of God and greater religiosity for the upper-middle class cast doubt on the applicability of Western theories and findings about religion and social class for the Philippine situation. Both Marx and Weber predicted greater religiosity on the part of the poor. Their theories have, in fact, been corroborated by many observations of Western churches (see introduction). A more orthodox faith and adherence to a code

18. Reynaldo Ileta, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1979).

of conduct is supposedly characteristic of the exploited and submissive, whose faith legitimates for them the present order that keeps them in subjection and offers them compensation for their present deprivation by means of a promised after-life. On the other hand, although religion serves the interest of the upper and upper-middle class, it is implied that the ruling class is not truly religious. The ruling class supposedly sees through its own religion, and practices it only to keep the essential faith alive in the lower class.¹⁹ Such a contrived religiosity does not seem to apply to the upper-middle respondents in this study, as they were not just more frequent in their practices but in their beliefs and feelings of closeness to God. In a study where anonymity was the rule, and where respondents were not even aware that social class was a variable, the upper-middle class (especially the female sex) came across as a group in whose lives religion had genuine value and influence.

Why are the upper-middle class in the Philippines more religious? Three possible interpretations, neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive, could be advanced:

1. During the colonial past of the Philippines, the union of church and state dictated that the God of the rich be closer to the established church. The *ilustrados* (intellectual and social elite) of the era mixed freely (at least more freely than the masses could) with the friars. The church was therefore identified with the rich, whether or not it was also an instrument to keep the masses submissive. Christianity was a social fact before it became a living faith. The rich therefore had more exposure to the official Catholic religion. Today the upper-middle class continues to get more Catholic education through the exclusive Catholic schools. Although catechism is taught by volunteers to public schools, this structure does not have the same effect of integrating religion cognitively and affectively into so many young lives.
2. Religion, at least in the Philippines, could be seen by some as a higher order need. Maslow's hierarchy of needs starts with the basic physiological needs such as the need for food and shelter. The urban poor have not satisfied this first rank in the hierarchy. This is not to deny the belief that a God-

19. Maduro, *Religion and Social Conflicts*.

shaped vacuum exists in man or that it is impossible to keep one's faith alive amidst severe deprivation. The God-shaped vacuum, however, is more likely to show up when one has fulfilled basic needs and wonders why despite all this, something important still seems to be missing. Constant and active pre-occupation with earning for the next meal is not conducive to reflection except in the most disciplined. The poor lack both the leisure and the intellectual abstraction to think about their faith.

3. Other things being equal, it is easier to be favorably disposed to One who has been good to you. Those who have been blessed have reason for gratitude. Associative conditioning imbues God the reward-giver with the positive qualities that characterize life's rewards. The Filipinos are a very grateful people, they have a strong sense of *utang na loob* (repaying a debt of gratitude). Only a very tenuous line, though, exists between gratitude and legitimation. What starts off as humble gratitude could lapse into a feeling of deservedness. One becomes extra-religious out of gratitude and eventually one feels one is being rewarded for this religiosity. Eventually the two could be so blurred as to unwittingly produce an attitude like that expressed by the Pharisee who prayed, "I thank God I am not like so and so." In this case, the rich could get so religiously self-righteous as to thank God that they are not like the irreligious poor! Such an attitude of legitimacy could serve to insulate the rich from confronting the problem of injustice.

On the other hand, it is also recognized that the poor might be closer to God because of their greater need for God, at least from a practical worldly point of view. The poor need miracles, they need deliverance. Why then, do they not cling more closely to God? Perhaps a minimum experience of life's blessings is necessary for one to hope. Perhaps the poverty of the poor has been so consistent that they have not really tasted the goodness of God, and hence, do not expect Him to be much different in the future. Thus, a state of learned hopelessness and helplessness results. Certainly one cannot conclude from this study that the submission and tolerance of the poor are brought about by visions of compensation in a glorious life.

If the poor were deficient in knowledge and possibly even creed, this might be somewhat expected. Religious workers have often believed that the poor, despite their lack of official church knowledge and conventional religious practices, are somehow closer to God and compensate with a variety of folk religious practices. Except for reading the Pasyon and wearing black/purple clothes during Lent, however, there are no other instances in which Class D heads the other class groups. On all total scores for various dimensions of religiosity, wherever a significant difference occurs it is always the poor that emerge less religious, and this difference is especially large in the "closeness-to-God" dimension.

Before concluding this article, a few points of caution should be raised. The first point concerns how representative is the Katipunan area from which all four social classes were derived. Further replication on a wider scale would render the findings more conclusive. The second point concerns the limitation of psychosocial measures which may not tap more transcendent aspects of religiosity. Perhaps an inherent core of feeling that there must be a God because we are finite undercuts all social classes. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that this study does not conclude that urban poor Filipinos are not religious, but simply that they are less religious than the upper and middle classes, according to some conventional and common definitions of the word "religious," and as ascertained from this particular survey.

S U M M A R Y

To study the relationship between social class and religion, images of God, dimensions of religiosity and locus of control orientations were explored in four social classes. It was found that the upper-middle class consistently saw God as more benevolent while the lower class was more likely to see God as powerful but detached. Social class status was also significantly and positively related to strength of belief in orthodox creed, to closeness to God, to frequency of seasonal religious practices and to knowledge about religion. No consistent pattern was observed for locus of control (self vs. God) orientation. Results were compared to Western findings and discussed in the light of Marx' and Weber's predictions.