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Editor's Preface

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Editor's Preface

This is an era of questionnaires, opinion surveys and statistical studies of all kinds. Such social science methodology has slowly but inexorably become so predominant that the ordinary college undergraduate seems to presume it is the only way to respond to any question, no matter what its provenance. This issue of *PS* clearly manifests this bias: it starts with a study of the results of a questionnaire investigating Filipinos' idea of God and their religiosity, followed by a factual survey of the Philippine Government's policies regarding forest management and use, and then by a presentation of the works of a scholar in Philippine history. The clearest example of social science methodology is the article on the new *Catholic Directory of the Philippines*, with all its tabulated data; but even the note on the educational conference for gifted children consists primarily in canvassing the major positions presented at the conference. For this issue at least, then, it seems *PS* has adopted social science methodology.

There are, of course, major differences in the articles. In "God of the Rich, God of the Poor," Rita Mataragnon provides a very provocative study of concrete Filipino religiosity in a particular, defined community. It is obviously a question not of two gods, but of how God is viewed by the rich and poor — and this, not only in conceptual terms, but also in their religious practices, convictions and moral attitudes. Two conclusions — that poor Filipinos are *less* religious than their middle and upper class countrymen, and that religion is a higher order need arising only after the basic physiological needs have been satisfied — might well spark reactions. Much depends on the particular community tested, as well as on the adequacy of the questionnaire itself. But the article does raise the spectre of the Catholic religion — or

what ordinary Filipino Catholics think of their religion – gradually becoming a reality only for the moneyed and leisured class. This might well sound an important warning note at a time when, throughout the Christian world, on the one hand, religious education has never been so professional, so highly studied and experimented with, so articulate, yet, on the other hand, we face large numbers of drop-outs from regular Church attendance and traditional practices of the faith. Some claim to be unconcerned with “numbers,” while stressing the quality and intensity of those who remain, but a Catholic Faith that is only – or even primarily – for the rich and leisured, contradicts not only the explicit teaching of the Church today, but more importantly, the New Testament witness of its Founder.

Perla Q. Makil’s survey of Philippine forest policies represents another type of social science research, involving a stress on the concrete, factual historical process of forestry legislation, together with a close interpretative evaluation. This article complements the essay of Filomeno V. Aguilar, Jr., in our last issue. Next, our indefatigable Book Review Editor, Florentino H. Hornedo, introduces a figure familiar to *PS* readers, William Henry Scott, teacher, missionary and scholar extraordinary. Scott’s bibliography represents still another, more traditional, type of academic methodology and research. Its value is enhanced by Susan Evangelista’s review of Scott’s *Cracks in the Parchment Curtain*. From both we get a picture of the man and his work which goes far to concretize what Philippine history from a nationalist perspective can be.

Fr. Pedro S. de Achútegui’s “statistical overview” of the Catholic Church in the Philippines provides enough factual data to delight any social scientist. What effect (if any) it may have on local theologians and the Philippine hierarchy remains to be seen. There is no doubt of the importance of the Catholic Church in the Philippines today; but it is another thing to accurately assess its present condition, and still more to predict its future.

Finally, our Associate Editor, Joseph A. Galdon, S.J., offers a critical glimpse into the recent educational conference on gifted children, which once again wrestled with the perennial dilemma: whether to use our limited resource for mass education, or for the elite?

Joseph L. Roche, S.J.