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Religion in the Philippines

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Ricardo G. Abad

In 1998, the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), a consortium of over twenty-five countries engaged in an annual survey on a common topic, replicated its 1991 survey on religion to obtain updated data on religiosity and religious behavior for cross-country comparisons. The ISSP questionnaire for both 1991 and 1998 included questions on religious behavior and religiosity as well as items on religious beliefs, moral standards, and attitudes towards various social issues. While new questions were added in the 1998 survey, most of the items paralleled those found in the 1991 survey round.

The Philippine surveys were conducted in July 1991 and December 1998 by the Social Weather Stations (SWS). Each was administered to a national probability sample of 1,200 adult respondents, aged eighteen years and over, evenly divided into females and males, and proportionally distributed across urban and rural areas as well as different regions of the country. The sampling errors for both surveys range from ± 3 percent. In addition to religion-related items, both surveys also gathered socio-demographic data to permit analysis of religiosity and religious behavior across social categories.

This report presents an overview of the 1998 results in comparison, whenever possible, with the 1991 survey of religion.¹ Five main topics are considered: religious affiliation, religiosity and religious behavior;

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religious beliefs; moral standards; religion as an institution; and social concerns. Subsequent analyses of the data, it is hoped, will provide more detail on each of these main topics. Several analyses of the 1991 data have also been done and these can serve as baselines for later studies.²

Religious Affiliation, Religiosity and Religious Behavior

A basic set of questions in both the 1991 and 1998 surveys asked about religious socialization—the religious affiliation of the respondents and their parents as well their ritual and other church-related practices. Respondents were also asked to rate their own religiosity.

Religious Affiliation

In both survey periods, the majority of Filipino adults—84 percent in 1991 and 85 percent in 1998—were Roman Catholics (see table 1). The rest were affiliated with other religious groups, notably Aglipayan, Protestant, Iglesia ni Kristo and Islam, while a very small fraction—less than 1 percent in both years—claim to have no religious affiliation. The persistence of religious affiliation is also strong, with adults belonging to the same faith that they held as children. The majority of Filipinos, 86 percent in 1991 and 89 percent in 1998, grew up as Roman Catho-

Table 1. Religion to which respondent was raised: SWS July 1981 and December 1998 National Surveys

Religious Affiliation	<i>Question: In what religion were you raised?</i>									
	R's current religion		R's religion as a child		Father's		Mother's		Spouse's*	
	1991	1998	1991	1998	1991	1998	1991	1998	1991	1998
Catholic	84	85	86	89	87	89	87	88	65	86
Aglipay	4	-	4	1	4	1	4	1	2	2
Protestant	3	-	4	2	3	2	3	2	3	2
Iglesia ni Kristo	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
Islam	1	3	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2

*The percentages of single (unmarried), widowed and separated respondents were 24 percent in 1991 and 25 percent in 1998.

lics, suggesting that only a small proportion of those who were Catholics as children (2 percent in 1991 and 4 percent in 1998) shifted as adults to another faith or belonged to no religious group at all. Similar patterns hold for the other religious groups.

One of the reasons for this persistence is that parents socialize their children to the same faith. In both 1991 and 1998, for example, the large majority of fathers and mothers (87 percent or higher) were also Roman Catholics. Similarly, the majority of Catholic married respondents—65 percent in 1991 and a higher 86 percent in 1998—have spouses who are also Catholics. The same pattern prevails for the other religious groups. Religious endogamy, or the tendency to marry into the same faith, is a modal feature of Filipino family life.

Religious Behavior

Filipino religious behavior shows a mixed pattern. While slight declines in church attendance and to some extent, the frequency of prayer, appear from 1991 to 1998, a marked increase in church participation other than attending services shows up over time.

In 1991, following table 2, 61 percent of the respondents attended religious services once a week or more; in 1998, the percentage dwindled to 45 percent. Part of the reason may stem from similar declines in church attendance during the respondents' formative years. Table 2 also shows that as children, the percentage of respondents who attended church services once a week or more dropped slightly from 53 percent in 1991 to 51 percent in 1998. Frequent church attendance among fathers also fell from 46 to 44 percent, while among mothers, who attend church more frequently than fathers, remained steady at 54–55 percent over time.

Filipinos also pray a little less than before. In 1991, 27 percent of the respondents say that they pray more than once a day; in 1998, the percentage dropped to 21 percent (see table 3). While slightly more adult Filipinos pray at least once a day, 45 percent in 1991 to 48 percent in 1998, the proportion of people who pray *less* than once a day grew slightly from 27 to 31 percent over time.

More encouraging is adult Filipino participation in Church activities and organizations over time. Table 4 shows that in 1991, 48 percent of the respondents participated in Church activities other than attending services; in 1998, the figure rose to 77 percent. The increase appears in several frequency categories—from 14 to 18 percent for those participating once a week or more, from 16 to 23 percent among those in-

volved nearly every week to about once a month, and from 18 to 36 percent for those who join Church activities and organizations several times or at least once a year. Over time, then, the data show a slight decline in personal devotion and a greater intensity in church involvement other than ritual.

Table 2. Frequency of Attending Religious Services as a Child, SWS July 1981 and December 1998 National Surveys

Question: When you were a child, how often did you attend religious services?

Frequency	<u>Respondent</u>		<u>Father</u>		<u>Mother</u>	
	1991	1998	1991	1998	1991	1998
Less than once a week	47	49	54	56	54	55
Less than once a year	2	1	2	2	2	2
About once or twice a year	4	3	6	4	3	2
Several times a year	2	5	3	7	2	4
About once a month	10	11	13	11	9	8
2-3 times a month	10	14	7	17	7	10
Nearly every week	16	12	12	5	15	8
Once a week or more	53	51	46	44	54	55
Every week	46	45	40	38	46	47
Several times a week	7	6	5	6	7	8
Once a day	0	-	0	-	0	-
Several times a day	0	-	1	-	1	-
Total Participation	99	97	89	90	92	95
Never	0	0	1	1	0	.5
Can't say/can't remember	1	3	8	14	6	11

Table 3. Frequency of Prayer, SWS July 1991 and December 1998 National Surveys

Question: How often do you pray?

<u>More than once a day</u>		<u>Once a day</u>		<u>Less than once a day</u>	
1991	1998	1991	1998	1991	1998
27	21	45	48	27	31

Table 4. Incidence of Taking Part in Activities/Organizations in Church other than Attending Services, SWS July 1981 and December 1998 National Surveys

Question: How often do you take part in the activities or organizations of your Church/synagogue other than attending services?

Frequency	Total	
	1991	1998
Less than once a year	6	15
About once or twice a year	9	10
Several times a year	3	11
About once a month	9	12
2-3 times a month	4	6
Nearly every week	3	5
Every week	9	14
Several times a week	5	4
Once a day	0	0
Several times a day	0	0
Total Participating	48	77
Never	42	24
Can't say/can't remember	10	6

Self-rated Religiosity

Yet, on balance, Filipinos still claim to be a religious people. Asked to describe the extent of their religiosity, the majority of Filipinos—over four-fifths of adult Filipinos—rate themselves as religious (see table 5). While the percentage of those who say they are slightly religious fell from 84 percent in 1991 to 81 percent in 1998, and while the margins (or the difference between those who rate themselves as religious and those who say they are non-religious) dropped from +77 to +75, the 1998 figures are still large enough to conclude that by and large, Filipinos see themselves as basically religious persons.

Religious Beliefs

Adherence to religious beliefs comprises one indicator of religiosity, at least of orthodox religiosity. Moreover, the extent of this adherence over time can be used to detect changes in religiosity. For this reason,

the ISSP/SWS survey included several items on religious belief, all of which can be classified as follows: belief in God and the bible, belief in religious concepts, beliefs about life and fate, and supernatural beliefs. On these, the Philippine data show that in general, there has been a rise in religious orthodoxy among adult Filipinos over two time periods.

Table 5. Respondent's Assessment of Own Religiosity, SWS July 1991 and December 1998 National Surveys

<i>Question: Would you describe yourself as. . . ?</i>		
	1991	1998
RELIGIOUS		
Extremely Religious	6	8
Very Religious	28	17
Slightly Religious	50	56
<hr/>		
Neither Religious nor Non-religious	10	11
NON-RELIGIOUS		
Somewhat Non-religious	4	5
Very Non-religious	2	1
Extremely Non-religious	1	0.4
<hr/>		
Margin	+77	+75

Beliefs about God and the Bible

Table 6 gives two test statements about belief in God, and the respondents were asked to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement. The first statement read: *"There is a God who concerns Himself with every human being personally."* Large majorities, 79 percent of the respondents in 1991 and a higher 88 percent in 1998, strongly agreed or agreed to the statement, giving relative high margins of +86 and +84 over the two periods. Of interest is the increase in the percentage of adult Filipinos who "strongly agreed" to the statement, from only 28 percent in 1991 to an almost double 51 percent in 1998. The second statement, *"To me, life is meaningful only because God exists,"* also drew majorities—79 percent in 1991 and 74 percent in 1998—towards agreement. Despite the decline of 5 percentage points over time, and despite a lower margin of agreement and disagreement from +74 to +61 percent, the number of persons whose belief in God makes life meaningful remains relatively large. Note as well the

Table 6. Test Statements on Belief About God, SWS July 1991 and December 1998 National Surveys

Test Statement and Year	Response					Margin of Agreement*
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
<i>"There is a God who concerns Himself with every human being personally."</i>						
1991	28	51	8	3	0	+86
1998	51	37	7	3	1	+82
<i>"To me life is meaningful only because God exists."</i>						
1991	18	61	16	5	0	+74
1998	34	40	13	11	2	+61

*Margin of Agreement—Strongly Agree/Agree minus Disagree/Strongly Disagree

substantial rise in the percentage of people who "strongly agree" with the statement, from 18 percent in 1991 to a nearly double 34 percent in 1998.

Filipinos thus remain as a whole to be avid monotheists. But a few more in 1998 have doubts about God's existence. The ISSP/SWS surveys asked respondents to "indicate which statement comes closest to expressing what they believe about God." These statements appear in table 7 together with their corresponding percentages. The figures show that the majorities in both periods, 86 percent in 1991 and 78 percent in 1998, believe that "I know God really exists and I have no doubts about it." They also show, however, a decline of 8 percentage points over the two time periods. At the same time, one notes a five-point increase, from 9 percent in 1991 and 14 percent in 1998, in the proportion of people who say that "While I have doubts, I find that I do believe in God." Both groups, however, remain believers and together form an overwhelming majority of people who do believe in God, 95 percent in 1991 and 92 percent in 1998.

And this belief stands strong. Asked "which (statement) best describes your beliefs about God," the substantial majority in both time periods, 94 percent in 1991 and 91 percent in 1998, conform to the statement "I believe in God now and I always have," Those who say "I don't believe in God now and I never have," however, grew by only one percentage point, from 2 percent in 1991 to 3 percent in 1998.

Table 7. Beliefs about God, SWS July 1991 and December 1998 National Surveys

<i>Question. Please indicate which statement below comes closest to expressing what you believe about God.</i>		
<i>Statement</i>	<i>1991</i>	<i>1998</i>
I don't believe in God.	0.4	1
I don't know whether there is a God, and I don't believe there is any way to find out.	0.2	1
I don't believe in a personal God, but I do believe in a higher power of some kind.	3	4
I find myself believing in God some of the time, but not at others.	2	3
While I have doubts, I feel that I do believe in God.	9	14
I know God really exists and I have no doubts about it.	86	78
<i>Question. Which best describes your beliefs about God?</i>		
<i>Statement</i>	<i>1991</i>	<i>1998</i>
I don't believe in God now and I never have.	2	3
I don't believe in God now, but I used to.	1	2
I believe in God now, but I didn't use to.	3	3
I believe in God now and I always have.	94	91

The general impression remains that Filipinos are by and large a religious people. And by 1998, this religiosity appears to be renewed by a fundamentalist spirit, specifically in the belief in a literal interpretation of the bible. Table 8 shows that in 1991, 55 percent of the respondents said that *"The bible is the actual word of God, and it has to be taken literally word for word."* In 1998, the figure rose to 72 percent, or an increase of 17 percentage points. The more liberal appreciation of the bible as the *"inspired word of God, but not everything should be taken literally, word for word"* declined from 26 to 15 percent over time. A similar decrease from 16 to 9 percent was also seen in the non-Christian position that *"The bible is an ancient book of fables, legends, history and moral teachings recorded by man."*

Belief in Religious Concepts

The rise in fundamentalism may explain the stronger adherence to major Christian concepts. Table 9 presents the proportions of adult Filipinos who believe or do not believe in these concepts, four of

which are beliefs in life after death, heaven, hell, and religious miracles. The figures show dramatic increases in the percentage of people who "definitely believe" in each of these concepts and a decline in the percentage of people who do not believe in them. In 1991, only 31 percent of the respondents believed in life after death; in 1998, the figure rose to 64 percent. Similar increases appear for belief in heaven (38 to 76 percent), hell (26 to 62 percent), and religious miracles (25 to 43 percent). Filipinos appear then to have become more orthodox in their faith.

Table 8. Beliefs about the Bible, SWS July 1991 and December 1998 National Surveys

<i>Question: Which of these statements come closest to describing your feelings about the bible?</i>		
<i>Statement</i>	1991	1998
The bible is the actual word of God, and it to be taken literally word for word.	55	72
The bible is the inspired word of God, but not everything should be taken literally, word for word.	26	15
The bible is an ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral teachings recorded by man.	16	9
This does not apply to me.	2	2
Can't choose.	1	3

Table 9. Beliefs in Specific Religious Concepts, SWS July 1991 and December 1998 National Surveys

	<i>Question: Do you believe in . . . ?</i>							
	Response							
	Definitely believe		Probably believe		Probably not believe		Definitely not believe	
	1991	1998	1991	1998	1991	1998	1991	1998
Life after death	31	64	43	21	16	7	6	6
Heaven	38	76	53	19	6	2	3	1
Hell	26	62	50	23	12	8	10	5
Religious Miracles	25	43	54	31	12	12	6	11

Beliefs about Life and Fate

This religious orthodoxy takes on an active position towards life. Table 10 shows that although 52 percent of Filipinos in both 1991 and 1998 agree or strongly agree that *"There is little people can do to change the course of their lives,"* more of them say that life is meaningful when people do something about it. The finding is consistent in the two surveys, and in some cases, shows a greater intensity over time. The statement that *"Life is only meaningful if you provide meaning yourself"* finds agreement among 77 percent in 1991 and an equally large 74 percent in 1998. In turn, the statement *"We each make our own fate"* met the agreement of 64 percent of the sample in 1991 and a larger 70 percent in 1998.

Table 10. Beliefs about Life and Fate SWS July 1991 and December 1998 National Survey

Test Statement and Year	Response					Margin of Agreement*
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
<i>1. "There is little people can do to change the course of their lives."</i>						
1991	6	46	22	26	1	+25
1998	16	36	17	25	6	+25
<i>2. "In my opinion, life does not serve any purpose."</i>						
1991	2	16	15	2	16	-50
1998	3	10	12	47	28	-62
<i>3. "Life is only meaningful if you provide the meaning yourself."</i>						
1991	11	66	16	6	0	+71
1998	31	43	13	10	2	+62
<i>4. "We each make our own fate."</i>						
1991	10	54	18	16	47	+1
1998	34	36	14	11	5	+55

*Margin of Agreement = Strongly Agree/Agree minus Disagree/Strongly Disagree

Beliefs in Supernatural Phenomena

It is commonplace to assume that Filipinos are superstitious and more prone to believe in supernatural phenomena. While this assumption holds cross-culturally, i.e. when Filipinos are compared to citizens of Western countries, the percentages are not as great as one would expect.³ In both time periods, following table 11, only about a third of adult respondents regard as true the beliefs that horoscopes can affect the future (31 percent in 1991, 32 percent in 1998), that fortune tellers really foresee the future (29 and 34 percent), or that good luck charms bring good luck (30 and 36 percent). About the only exception is the relatively larger group who believe that faith healers have God-given powers, with 51 percent in 1991 and 53 percent in 1998 believing it as true. But even in this case, the majority is not too large. Note, however, the percentage increases in all these items over time.

Thus, while there is a streak of supernaturalism in Filipino religiosity, far more salient are beliefs, alluded to earlier, that people make their own fate and that life is meaningful when one puts meaning into it. This belief, accompanied by a strong conviction of God's existence, a fundamentalist perspective toward the Bible, and an orthodox regard for religious concepts, characterizes much of Filipino religiosity. One

Table 11. Beliefs regarding Supernatural Phenomena, SWS July 1991 and December 1998 National Survey

Test Statement	Definitely True		Probably True		Definitely Not True		Probably Not True	
	1991	1998	1991	1998	1991	1998	1991	1998
"Some faith healers really do have God-given healing powers."	6	13	45	40	26	19	21	25
"A person's star sign at birth or horoscope can affect the course of his future."	4	7	28	25	36	25	30	40
"Some fortune tellers really can foresee the future."	3	6	26	28	38	24	22	39
"Good luck charms sometimes do bring good luck."	4	6	24	30	38	23	31	38

may be tempted to add an acceptance of folk rituals as a valid expression of one's faith, but this aspect was not included in the ISSP surveys.

Moral Orientation

The religious orthodoxy of Filipinos finds more support in their position towards sexual relations, abortion, and other situations where moral choices have to be made.

Sexual Relations

The ISSP/SWS surveys asked respondents the extent to which they thought extramarital sex, premarital sex, and same sex relations between two adults were wrong. Table 12 summarizes the results. In both 1991 and 1998, large majorities considered these unorthodox relations as "always wrong," with the objections stronger for extramarital and same sex relations than for premarital sex. In both periods, 85 percent judged extramarital relations as "always wrong." For same sex relations, the percentages show a slight increase over time: 82 percent in 1991 and 84 percent in 1998. And while a smaller but still substantial percent felt that premarital sexual relations was "always wrong," the objections have increased over time, from 59 percent in 1991 to 64 percent in 1998.⁴

Abortion

The surveys also sought the respondent's opinion regarding abortion under two mitigating circumstances—first, if there was a strong chance of serious defect in the baby, and second, if the family had a very low family income and cannot afford to have any more children. On both counts, and in both time periods, the majority of adult Filipinos thought that abortion is "always wrong." Moreover, these objections have increased over time. In 1991, as table 13 shows, 54 percent said that abortion is "always wrong" even if there is a strong chance of a serious defect in the baby; in 1998, the objections rose to 70 percent, an increase of 16 percentage points. In 1991, 63 percent thought abortion was "always wrong" even if the family was poor and could not afford to have any more children; in 1998, the same sentiment rose to 70 percent. In 1991, there were less objections towards abortion in cases where the baby may have a serious defect (54 percent) than when the family is very poor (63 percent). In 1998, the two situations ranked equally, each registering widespread disapproval from respon-

Table 12. Attitudes on Sexual Relations, SWS July 1991 and December 1998 National Surveys

Questions	Always Wrong		Almost Always Wrong		Wrong Only Sometimes		Not Wrong At All	
	1991	1998	1991	1998	1991	1998	1991	1998
What about a married person having sexual relations with someone other than his or her husbands or wives, is it . . . ?	85	85	11	11	3	3	1	1
Do you think it is wrong or not wrong if a man and a woman have sexual relations before marriage?	59	64	19	15	11	11	11	8
And what about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex. Is it . . . ?	82	84	10	11	6	2	2	0.5

Table 13. Attitudes towards Abortion, SWS July 1991 and December 1998 National Surveys

Question	Always Wrong		Almost Always Wrong		Wrong Only Sometimes		Not Wrong At All	
	1991	1998	1991	1998	1991	1998	1991	1998
<i>What is your opinion of a pregnant woman having an abortion? Is her intention. . . .</i>								
. . . if there is a strong chance of a serious defect in the baby?	54	70	21	12	15	10	9	7
. . . if the family has a very low family income and cannot afford any more children?	63	70	19	16	11	8	6	5

dents. One could, however, argue that a sizeable majority of Filipinos—about 30 percent—remains open to abortion under certain mitigating conditions.

Moral Choices

To tap other ethical dimensions, the ISSP/SWS surveys presented respondents with a series of situations and asked them about their moral choices in each case. In the 1998 survey, respondents were asked what they thought about two situations that involved withholding information to the government. The first asked: *Do you feel it is wrong or not wrong if a taxpayer does not report all of (his/her) income in order to pay less income taxes?* Table 14 shows that nearly three-fourths of the respondents, or 73 percent, think that underreporting income to pay less income taxes is wrong or seriously wrong. Only 12 percent say the act is not wrong.

The second situation asked: *Do you think it is wrong or not wrong if the person gives the government incorrect information about (himself/herself)*

Table 14. Opinion on Withholding Information from Government, SWS December 1998 National Survey

Question: Do you feel it is wrong or not wrong if a taxpayer does not report all of (his/her) income in order to pay less income taxes?

Response	1998
Not Wrong	12%
A Bit Wrong	13
Wrong	40
Seriously Wrong	33
Can't choose	1

Question: Do you think it is wrong or not wrong if a person gives the government incorrect information about (himself/herself) to get government benefits that (he/she) is not entitled to?

Response	1998
Not Wrong	12%
A Bit Wrong	11
Wrong	42
Seriously Wrong	35
Can't choose	1

to get government benefits that (he/she) is not entitled to? Table 14 again shows that Filipinos take the morally orthodox choice: 77 percent of them say it is wrong or seriously wrong to furnish incorrect information to the government in order to receive benefits. Only 12 percent, as above, say it is not wrong to do so.

In 1998, a new item was added, presenting respondents with this hypothetical situation: Suppose you were riding in a car driven by a close friend. You know he is going too fast. He hits a pedestrian. He asks you to tell the police he was obeying the speed limit. Two questions were then posed. The first listed several statements and asked respondents "which statement comes closest to your belief about what your friend has a right to expect from you?" Table 15 shows that 44 percent of the respondents gave the most ethical response, namely that the friend has "no" right to expect them to testify that he was obeying the speed limit. About a third or 30 percent said the friend has "some" right to ask them to lie for him, while 17 percent replied that the friend has a "definite" right to expect them to testify in his favor.

The second question then inquired what the respondent would actually do in this situation. The most ethical response would be to say that they would "definitely tell the police that (their) friend was going faster than the speed limit." Less than half, or 47 percent of the respondents made that claim, with 18 percent saying that they would probably report the truth to the police. A little over a quarter, however, or 27 percent, replied that they would lie to the police, with 21 percent admitting that would probably then definitely tell the police "that (their) friend was not going faster than the speed limit."

Thus, while adult Filipinos, in general, can be expected to make the most ethical response in a moral dilemma, personal constraints will prompt many others to take less desirable moral choices. The chances of risking moral codes appears less likely to occur, however, where unorthodox sexual relations, abortion, or withholding information to the government are concerned although even here, changing social circumstance and personal interests may prevail in a few instances. It is perhaps in this area of personal constraints and social circumstances that faith and culture need more dialogue.

Religion as an Institution

Several items in the ISSP/SWS surveys deal with people's view about religion as an institution, in relation to other social institutions. These items can be grouped as follows: religion and politics, religion

Table 15. Moral Choices in Hypothetical Situations
SWS December 1998 National Survey

Situation: Suppose you were riding in a car driven by a close friend. You know he is going too fast. He hits a pedestrian. He asks you to tell the police he was obeying the speed limit.

Question: Which statement comes closest to your belief about what your friend has a right to expect from you?

Statement	Percent
My friend has a DEFINITE right as a friend to expect me to testify that he was obeying the speed limit.	17
My friend has SOME right as a friend to expect me to testify that he was obeying the speed limit.	30
My friend has NO right as a friend to expect me to testify that he was obeying the speed limit.	44
Can't choose	9

Question: What would you do in this situation?

Definitely tell the police that your friend WAS going faster than the speed limit.	47
Probably tell the police that your friend WAS going faster than the speed limit.	18
Probably tell the police that your friend WAS NOT going faster than the speed limit.	21
Definitely tell the police that your friend WAS NOT going faster than the speed limit.	6
Can't choose	8

and science, and religion and social conflict. The last two sets of items are unique to the 1998 survey.

Religion and Politics

In both the 1991 and 1998 surveys, three items dealt with how respondents felt about the power and influence of the Church on political matters. One item asked people if, in their opinion, churches and religious organizations in the country have too much or too little

power. Table 16 shows that for both years, the majority (53 percent in 1991 and 55 percent in 1998) felt that the church and religious organizations have "*just the right amount of power.*" Yet the direction of the percentages, as suggested by the margin of +25, skew the responses towards the belief that religious groups tend, on balance, to have much power than little power. This same margin appears for both 1991 and 1998, suggesting no change in public opinion on this issue over time.

**Table 16. Attitudes on the Influence of Religion on Politics
SWS July 1991 and December 1998 National Surveys**

<i>Question: Do you think that churches and religious organizations in this country have too much power or too little power?</i>		
	1991	1998
Far too much power	9	11
Too much power	27	22
Just the right amount of power	53	55
Too little power	9	6
Far too little power	2	2
Margin	+35	+22
 <i>Test Statement: "Religious leaders should not try to influence how people vote in the elections."</i>		
	1991	1998
Strongly Agree	11	33
Agree	53	33
Undecided	18	11
Disagree	16	18
Strongly Disagree	1	4
Margin	+47	+44
 <i>Test statement: "Religious leaders should not try to influence government decisions."</i>		
	1991	1998
Strongly Agree	13	33
Agree	50	31
Undecided	24	14
Disagree	12	18
Strongly Disagree	1	4
Margin	+50	+42

Two other items asked respondents the extent of their agreement on two test statements on church influence. The first statement read: "*Religious leaders should not try to influence how people vote in the elections.*" Table 16 shows that in 1998 far more people believe that the church should stay out of election issues, with 66 percent saying they strongly agree or agree to the statement and 22 percent saying they disagree or strongly disagree to the statement. The margin of +44 percent remains high, although it is slightly less than the margin of +47 percent registered in the 1991 survey.

The second statement read: "*Religious leaders should not try to influence government decisions.*" Again, far more people believe that religious leaders should maintain distance from matters of state. In 1998, 64 percent strongly agree or agree with the statement, with only 22 percent who disagree or strongly disagree. The margin of +42 percent remains high, though lower than the margin of +50 percent observed in 1991. The slight decline in the margins for the two test statements suggests that over time, slightly more interest was seen in greater church involvement in political matters. But what, one may ask, will the Filipinos think of government leaders who seek the influence of church leaders in making political decisions? The item is unavailable in either survey.

The 1998 survey also asked respondents how much confidence they have in the Church and other institutions, among them the Congress, the courts/legal system, business and industry and the schools or educational system. Table 17 shows that in 1998, respondents expressed a more complete and a greater confidence in both the Church and the schools (72 percent) over political institutions like the courts (46 percent) and Congress (44 percent). Confidence in business and industry, in turn, garnered a 43 percent confidence vote. The percentages suggest that overall, Filipinos look favorably upon existing institutions but place greater trust in the Church and the educational system. No comparative data for 1991 are available.

Religion and Science

In 1998, two new items sought the people's views regarding science and religion. One item asked if "*overall, modern science does more harm than good.*" The results are not convincingly in favor of modern science: 38 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, a close 30

Table 17. Confidence in the Church and other Institutions
SWS July 1991 and December 1998 National Surveys

Institution	Complete Confidence	A Great Deal of Confidence	Some Confidence	Very Little Confidence	No Confidence At All	Can't Choose
Churches/ Religious Org.	30	42	21	5	2	1
Congress	13	31	36	14	2	4
Business & Industry	9	34	38	12	3	3
Courts/ Legal System	14	32	34	14	3	3
Schools/ Educational System	31	41	21	5	1	1

percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with it, and a little over a quarter, or 28 percent, neither agreed nor disagreed (see table 18). The margin of +8 percent, while positive, remains small.

Another test statement read as follows: "*We trust too much in science and not enough in religious faith.*" Again, the results do not clearly favor science. Table 18 shows that while 33 percent strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, a slightly larger 35 percent disagreed or strongly agreed with it, suggesting that in their view, people generally tend to rely more on faith than science. In turn, nearly a third of the sample, or a relatively sizeable 30 percent, neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. This spread of opinions indicates public uncertainty about the roles of religion and science as a source of knowledge. It is, however, not a very encouraging climate for scientific work, especially now when state and schools seek to upgrade the level of technological competence in the country.

Religion and Social Conflict

The 1998 survey also included a battery of four items that tap possible sources of conflict between religion and social life. Three of these items asked respondents to agree or disagree with a series of test statements. A fourth item posed a question regarding conflict between civil law and religious principles.

The first test statement read: *"Looking around the world, religions bring more conflict than peace."* Table 19 shows that adult Filipinos were more likely to disagree (45 percent) than agree (34 percent) with this statement, while about a fifth or 21 percent took neither position on the matter. The results suggest that despite people's awareness of religious conflict in many parts of the world, Filipinos think that, on balance, religions bring more concord than conflict.

The second test statement was: *"People with very strong religious beliefs are often too intolerant of others."* Table 19 shows that again, Filipinos are more likely to disagree (47 percent) than agree (31 percent) with this statement, with a margin of -16 percent. But about a fifth of the sample, or 22 percent took neither position on the matter.

The third statement echoes an earlier item on religious influence: *"The Philippines would be a better country if religion had less influence."* Considering earlier results that showed the people's greater confidence in the Church relative to economic and political institutions, the results in table 19 are surprising. While 34 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, a slightly larger 39 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, believing that the country would be better if religion had less influence. The margin of +5 percent is not, of course, large. Neither does it reflect a rejection of religion by a substantial majority. Yet the direction of the percentages, with more people thinking that religion should have less influence, is surprising. Add to this the finding that over a quarter or 27 percent of the sample neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. The finding may mean that while Filipinos define themselves as religious persons, both in belief and practice, and place much confidence in the Church, they do object to certain Church practices, particularly in the public sphere. The people's objection to Church involvement in elections and government decisions reflects this sentiment.

A fourth item posed this hypothetical situation: *"Suppose a law was passed which conflicted with your religious principles and teachings."* Respondents were then asked if they would, in this instance, follow the

Table 18. Attitudes toward Religion and Science
SWS December 1998 National Survey

Test Statement: "Overall, modern science does more harm than good."

Response	Percent
Strongly Agree	8
Agree	30
Neither Agree nor Disagree	28
Disagree	25
Strongly Disagree	5
Can't Choose	3

Test Statement: "We trust too much in science and not enough in religious faith."

Response	Percent
Strongly Agree	7
Agree	26
Neither Agree nor Disagree	30
Disagree	28
Strongly Disagree	7
Can't Choose	2

law or their religious principles. Table 19 shows that 46 percent of the respondents would definitely or probably follow the law, while a lower 38 percent would probably or definitely follow religious principles. The difference of six percentage points is small, but shows a slight favor for temporal than spiritual power. But because the difference is small, one would expect a strong debate on issues where law and religion are at odds, as in the case perhaps of the death penalty and pornography. The side in favor of religious principles will not be the majority, but can be vocal enough to stir the hornet's nest.

In sum, while Filipinos highly value their faith and pay great respect to their Church, they are a little wary of a strong religious presence in civil affairs. Filipino religiosity thus appears to be a private affair—a matter of personal beliefs and devotion—rather than a social force that shapes and transforms public life.

Social Issues

Both the 1991 and 1998 ISP/SWS surveys contain several items on social issues that bear on religious behavior and religious attitudes.

Table 19. Attitudes toward Religion and Social Conflict
SWS December 1998 National Survey

Statement: "Looking around the world, religions bring more conflict than peace."

Response	Percent
Strongly Agree	8
Agree	26
Neither Agree nor Disagree	21
Disagree	36
Strongly Disagree	9
Can't Choose	1

Statement: "People with very strong religious beliefs are often too intolerant of others."

Response	Percent
Strongly Agree	7
Agree	24
Neither Agree nor Disagree	22
Disagree	35
Strongly Disagree	12
Can't Choose	1

Statement: "The Philippines would be a better country if religion had less influence."

Response	Percent
Strongly Agree	9
Agree	30
Neither Agree nor Disagree	27
Disagree	25
Strongly Disagree	9
Can't Choose	1

Question: Suppose a law was passed which conflicted with your religious principles and teachings. Would you. . . ?

Response	Percent
Definitely follow the law	19
Probably follow the law	27
Probably follow your religious principles	27
Definitely follow your religious principles	11
I have no religious principles	6
Can't Choose	9

Among these issues are gender roles, social welfare, social relations, volunteer work, and images of the world and of human nature. Later analyses of the data will explore the connections between these social issues and religion. It is sufficient for this overview to report on where Filipinos stand on these issues.

Gender Roles

In both the 1991 and 1998 surveys, respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with two statements on gender roles. The first statement dealt with traditional family roles: *"A husband's job is to earn money; a wife's job is to look after the home and the family."* In both years, over three-quarters of adult Filipinos strongly agreed or agreed with the statement (see table 20). But the margin of agreement has decreased over time, from +74 in 1991 to +63 in 1998, suggesting that the working wife has become more acceptable in Philippine society. As well, in 1991, only 23 percent of the respondents strongly agreed with the test statement; in 1998, nearly double the number, or 53 percent, agreed with the statement.

Is this greater acceptance of working wives a sign of more liberal times ahead? Probably not yet, as suggested by responses to the next test statement—*"All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job."* In 1991, following table 20, 50 percent of the sample strongly agreed or agreed with this statement; in 1998, the figure rose slightly to 57 percent. Note as well that in 1991, only 6 percent strongly agreed with the test statement. In 1998, the figure grew fivefold at 30 percent, and raised the margin of agreement from +20 in 1991 to +29 in 1998. Thus, while adult Filipinos are more open to working wives, their openness is tinged with the anxiety that when wives are at work, especially full-time work, family life suffers. The same results appeared in an analysis of attitudes toward women's work based on the ISSP/SWS 1994 survey on Gender and Family Life (Abad 1998).

Social Welfare

The 1998 survey also added two questions on social welfare. Respondents were asked if they thought it should or should not be the government's responsibility to (1) provide a job for everyone who wants one, and (2) reduce income differences between the rich and the poor. On both counts, the majority of Filipinos display a pro-welfare

stand. But while a substantial 85 percent of the sample think that the government definitely or probably should provide a job for those who want one, only 64 percent say that the government should reduce income differences between the rich and the poor (see table 21). Similar findings surfaced in an analysis by the 1992 ISSP/SWS Survey on Social Inequality (Abad 1997, 447-77).

Social Relations

The 1998 survey also included two new questions that tapped people's perception of their social relations with others. The first question asked "How often do you think people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance and how often would they try to be fair?" Table 22 shows that 37 percent of the respondents said that people would try to take advantage most or almost all of the time, while a larger 56 percent said that people try to be fair most or almost all of the time. The margin of -19 percent is not overwhelmingly large, but reveals that Filipinos by and large think that other people will treat them fair and square.

Table 20. Attitudes on Gender Roles
SWS July 1991 and December 1998 National Surveys

Test Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Margin of Agreement	
	1991	1998	1991	1998	1991	1998	1991	1998	1991	1998	1991	1998
<i>"A husband's job is to earn money; a wife's job is to look after the home and family."</i>	23	53	59	25	10	8	8	13	0	2	+74	+63
<i>"All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job."</i>	6	30	44	27	20	14	29	22	1	6	+20	+25

**Table 21. Attitudes toward Social Welfare
SWS December 1998 National Survey**

<i>Question: On the whole do you think it should or should not be the government's responsibility to . . .</i>					
Question	Definitely should be	Probably should be	Probably should not be	Definitely should not be	Can't choose
Provide a job for everyone who wants one?	63	22	9	5	1
Reduce income differences between the rich and the poor?	36	28	21	13	2

This does not mean, however, that Filipinos will automatically trust others, even those whom they may perceive as fair. The second and more direct question asked, "*Generally speaking, would you say that people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?*" Table 22 shows that only about a quarter of the sample, or 26 percent, say that people can always or usually be trusted. The majority, or 70 percent, says that one usually or almost always can't be too careful in dealing with people. Filipinos thus appear to be generally suspicious of others, and perhaps for this reason, tend to value cultural mechanisms that insure acceptance and solidarity with one's allies.

Volunteer Work

Another indicator of people's concern for others comes from a 1998 survey item on volunteer work. "*During the last 12 months,*" the question asked, "*did you do volunteer work in any of the following areas?*" Four areas were listed: political activities, charitable activities, religious and church-related activities, and other kinds of voluntary assistance. Table 23 presents the results: Filipinos do engage in voluntary activities and the most common of these are charitable activities (57 percent). Other activities are less common. Some 41 percent undertake voluntary work for religious and church-related purposes while a smaller proportion, or 23 percent, do voluntary service of a political nature. A much smaller 11 percent do volunteer work of other kinds.

Table 22. Trust in Others
SWS December 1998 National Survey

Question: How often do you think that people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance and how often would they try to be fair?

Response	Percent
Try to take advantage almost all of the time.	7
Try to take advantage most of the time.	30
Try to be fair most of the time	38
Try to be fair almost all of the time.	18
Can't choose.	8

Question: Generally speaking, would you say that people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?

Response	Percent
People can almost always be trusted.	6
People can usually be trusted.	20
You usually can't be too careful in dealing with people.	49
You almost always can't be too careful in dealing with people.	21
Can't choose	4

Images of the World and Human Nature

Volunteer work reflects people's altruistic disposition, and when coupled with a trust in others and a perception that people will treat others fairly, may produce a positive image of the world and of human nature. What is the Filipino image of the world and of human nature?

A new item in the 1998 survey presented respondents with a seven-step scale on which to place themselves relative to two sets of polar statements. One set tapped the people's image of the world, the other their image of human nature. The first polar statement asked respondents to place themselves on this seven-step scale where on the lowest end (1) is the statement "*The world is basically filled with evil and sin,*" while on the topmost step (7) is the statement "*There is much goodness in the world which hints at God's goodness.*" Grouping the first three steps as reflecting a negative image of the world and the last three steps to represent a positive image, table 24 shows that 37 percent of the Filipinos see a world basically filled with evil and sin, and a slightly larger 44 percent who see a world with much goodness. The

Table 23. Volunteer Work in the last 12 Months
SWS December 1998 National Survey

Question: During the last 12 months, did you do volunteer work in any of the following areas?

Area	Frequency			
	No	Yes, once or twice	Yes, 3-5 times	Yes, 6 or more times
Political activities (helping political parties, political movements, election campaigns, etc.)	76	16	3	5
Charitable activities (helping the sick, elderly, poor, etc.)	43	27	11	19
Religious and church-related activities (helping churches and religious groups)	59	21	7	13
Any other kind of voluntary activities	89	6	2	3

seven-point difference is not very large, suggesting no definite Filipino consensus on the matter.

The second set of polar statements dealt with the people's image of human nature. Again, respondents were presented with a seven-step scale. On the lowest step is the statement "*Human nature is basically good,*" while on the topmost step is the statement "*Human nature is fundamentally perverse and corrupt.*" The results are more positive than the first set of statements. Grouping the steps as above, table 12 shows that 45 percent of the respondents perceive human nature as basically good, while smaller 29 percent see human nature as basically corrupt and perverse. The margin of +16 percent is again not overwhelmingly large, but more positive than the Filipino's image of the world. Among Filipinos, then, both the world and human nature are basically good. Of these two, however, it is the nature of the world that is more evil than human nature.

**Table 24. Images of the World and Human Nature
SWS December 1998 National Survey**

Situation: Look at the first set of contrasting images. If you think that "The world is basically filled with evil and sin," you would place yourself at 1. If you think "There is much goodness in the world which hints at God's goodness," you would place yourself at 7. If you think things are somewhere in between these two, you would place yourself at 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6.

Question: Where would you place your image of the world on each of the scales below?

The world is basically filled with evil and sin.

There is much goodness in the world which hints at God's goodness.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18%	9%	10%	20%	10%	10%	24%

Human nature is basically good.

Human nature is fundamentally perverse and corrupt.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20%	12%	13%	26%	9%	8%	12%

Summary

Over the seven-year span from 1991 to 1998, Filipinos, mainly Roman Catholics, continue to see themselves as religious people, possessing a strong belief in God and remaining even more faithful—some would say more fundamentalist—to both the bible and to major religious tenets. They are not fatalistic about life, most of them believing that although very little can be done to change things, people still shape their own destinies and give their own meaning to their lives. Neither do the majority adhere too strongly to supernatural or superstitious beliefs, except perhaps in the case of faith healers, although in this and other phenomena, slight increases in the percentage of believers appear over time. They do not attend religious services as regularly in 1998 as they did in 1991, nor pray as often now as they did then.

But many more in 1998 than in 1991 are involved in church activities other than ritual, and respectable percentages of them have been involved in volunteer work for charitable, religious or church-related activities.

Perhaps because of their stronger fundamentalist spirit, Filipinos have become more intolerant of unorthodox sexual relations. More adult Filipinos in 1998 than in 1991 express disapproval towards pre-marital, extramarital and same sex relations as well as towards abortion, even in cases when there is a serious defect in the baby or in cases where the family is too poor to afford another child. Filipinos also take the morally upright position in cases where citizens withhold information from the government, as in matters of taxation or the receipt of government benefits. Moral choices are, however, constrained when an illegal act involves people who are close to them. Confronted by the choice of whether or not to report an illegal act to authorities or lie in favor a friend, most Filipinos will still take the morally orthodox choice, but a sizeable minority will choose to protect close relations.

The Church remains a favored institution for most Filipinos. The institution is perceived as powerful and like the schools, is given a greater vote of confidence compared to Congress, the courts and business and industry. Equally strong is the conviction that the Church should temper its involvement in politics, though in 1998 that conviction slightly waned compared to its 1991 level. That the Church remains an influential social force is also seen in people's belief that despite religious conflicts around the world, the Church remains a positive force for peace and harmony and that religious people are generally more tolerant of others. People also believe that we place more trust in science than in religious faith. But church influence is not all that encompassing. Filipinos also believe that the country will be better if the Church has less influence, perhaps in public affairs. They are also slightly more likely to side with the law if it conflicts with religious teachings and principles.

Filipino response to social issues may or may not relate to their religiosity or religious behavior, and these relationships need to be explored in further analysis. Filipinos, for example, remain generally traditional in their assignment of gender roles, and while they are in 1998 more tolerant of working wives than they were in 1991, they now experience greater anxiety that the wives' active participation in the labor force will have negative effects on family life. Are beliefs in traditional gender roles associated with religious orthodoxy? Filipinos are

also very supportive of government welfare programs. But while they are overwhelmingly in favor of providing jobs for anyone who needs them, they are not, surprisingly, as enthusiastic in programs that reduce the gap between the rich and the poor. Does religion have an effect on beliefs about social inequality?

A sizeable percentage of Filipinos engage in volunteer work, particularly in charitable activities, though less so in religious or church-related missions, and even less so in political activities. If they succeed in these efforts, it will be in part because they have surmounted one aspect of Filipino social life, the view that though other people will generally treat others fairly, it is best to be careful in trusting other people. Despite this suspicious streak, Filipinos tend to be optimistic about the world and human nature. By and large, the world is filled with God's goodness and not with evil and sin, and human nature is basically good rather than perverse and corrupt.

It is important to see how these general impressions vary by people's position in the social world—their gender, age, socioeconomic status and place of residence, among others. It is also important to examine how different aspects of religiosity affect each other and relate to social issues as well. Later analyses of the ISSP survey data will thus shed more understanding on Filipino religion, its time series data offering valuable insights unavailable in other studies of religion.

Notes

1. For an overview of the 1991 survey data, see Mahar Mangahas and Linda Luz Guerrero (1995).

2. Among them: Jasmin E. Acuña (1991); Dennis M. Arroyo (1991); Gerardo A. Sandoval (1992); Ricardo Abad and David John P. de los Reyes (1994); Ricardo G. Abad (1995): 195–212; Ricardo G. Abad (1995).

3. For an international comparison, see Abad (1995a): 201–3.

4. A recent analysis of the 1998 data has shown that religiosity and religious practice are weak correlates of attitudes towards unorthodox sexual relations, thus raising the question of the source for the disapproval of premarital, extramarital and same sex relations. See Carijane Dayag-Laylo and Patricia Angeli Montalban (2000).

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