Recent events in the Philippines have made the relationship between religion and society an issue of great interest and even urgency. It is within this historical context that the present study attempts to discuss Filipino Christianity in two parts, the first dealing with the traditional form of faith and the second with the emergence of basic church communities.

There has been a growing consciousness of social mission among religious traditions today. Both the magisterial teaching and actual practice of these churches, especially in the Third World, reflect this consciousness with increasing intensity.

Correlated with this development is a greater sensitivity to the impact of religion on society, particularly in terms of social change. As a result, there is much interest in both theoretical and case studies dealing with this particular question. The findings of this review of literature, however, have not been generally encouraging. Brian J. Smith points this out quite succinctly in his article on religion and social change:

Classic studies of the impact of religion on society, written in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, arrived at the same general conclusion: Religion is predominantly an integrating and legitimizing force for the prevailing values and structures in society and is not a motivating force for social change. Spencer emphasized the "social continuity" provided by religion for societal values, and Malinowski stressed the contribution of religious ritual and sanctions to the preservation of a "reverence for tradition" and for "law and order." Durkheim believed that the essential character of religion was its inspirational force, by which a "society sacralizes its basic customs and holds them together." Marx was much more critical and considered religion an "opium" which, although
fulfilling a real need, prevented believers from confronting and changing the actual social forces causing human suffering.\(^1\)

On the basis of these studies, the generalization has been made that religion *per se* is for world-maintenance rather than change.

This generalization, however, has not escaped serious challenge, especially among more recent writers. First of all, it no longer applies to the experience in different countries today. On various levels, the churches in the Third World have often supported movements for social change. Institutional bodies within them speak against grave injustices and violations of human rights. Some Christian individuals and groups actively participate in the political liberation of peoples. These phenomena the classic generalization about religion and social change cannot explain. Furthermore, the ideological bias of the generalization has been detected. Even apart from contemporary examples, there had already been cases in which religion played a positive role in social change. However, many of these have been too easily categorized as “millenarian,” thus down-playing the social and political elements of the movements. According to Michael Hill, “the general pattern, which is seen in all the examples cited, is for a millennial movement with fantastic and ‘unrealistic’ expectations to arise after an organized insurrection with specific and limited objectives had got under way.”\(^2\) Once this is accepted as the general framework within which a particular religious group is to be studied, then whatever impact it had on social change would be filtered. Instead one becomes caught up with the problem of rationality in explaining these “millenarian” movements.

In the light of the inadequacy of the existing understanding of the impact of religion on social change, the need for both theoretical studies and empirical researches on the role of religion in social change becomes more pronounced. Peter Berger is correct in saying that “religion appears in history both as a world-maintaining and as a world-shaking force.”\(^3\) Which it is in any given in-

stance can only be answered by a thorough-going analysis. For instance, Brazilian Catholicism has been studied by scholars like Sanders, Bruneau, and Mutchler. Houtart, in collaboration with others, investigated the function of religion in Sri Lanka.

It is an embarrassment to turn to Filipino Christianity because there has been little systematic or sustained effort to examine it under the rubric of Christian social mission. Much of the little that has been written is often tinged by attitudes ranging from guilt-ridden mea culpa to self-righteous rationalization. Undoubtedly, the task is extremely difficult, but many of the previous attempts have suffered from a lack of sensitivity to what social science can contribute to the accomplishment of this task.

Thus even a small volume such as Bukidnon, Politics and Religion appears useful because of this.

It is within this context that the present paper wishes to focus on what it considers two important currents in Filipino Christianity today. The first can be referred to as the "traditional form of faith" where "form of faith" is understood in Dulles' terms: "I would hold that in different sociocultural situations, faith changes its forms and that it must do so in order to retain its hold on man . . ." The traditional form of faith then is the particular configuration within which Christianity has existed and operated in the Philippine situation. It is analogous to what others call "folk Catholicism" or "popular religiosity" except that these terms sometimes carry a pejorative ring.

The second current in Filipino Christianity to be discussed is the emergence of basic Christian communities in many regions of the country. If the traditional form of faith appears as the distillation of the Christian heritage of the Filipino, the growth of basic Christian communities is but a recent phenomenon.

While there are certainly other currents in Filipino Christianity today, the influence of the traditional form of faith and the appearance of basic Christian communities are likely to prove crucial

8. For a full discussion, read "Let the People Be," Pro Mundi Vita Bulletin, no. 16 (July 1976).
in the development of the local churches vis-a-vis the Christian social mission.

THE TRADITIONAL FORM OF FAITH: A MATRIX FOR UNDERSTANDING

Regardless of whether one defends or criticizes Christianity in the Philippines, one cannot deny its continuing presence and influence in Philippine life and culture. This is no longer just the expression of a pious sentiment, but the result of recent historical and sociological research. However, it is one thing to acknowledge the fact of Christianity and another to establish how it relates to the social situation. In line with this, the following section examines the traditional form of faith as it is related to the social mission of the Church.

The traditional form of faith has often been accused of being reactionary or completely allied with the interests of the ruling classes. For instance, it has been said that "the vast majority of Filipino Christians are politically inert, because of the long tradition of paternalism, patronage and manipulation which characterized both bourgeois-controlled Philippine politics and the Philippine Church before Vatican II."9 In support of such a statement, one can recall the numerous cases of abuses committed in the name of religion during the Spanish period. More recently, there was the failure of the institutional churches in the 1930's to confront the urgent social issues of the time.

And yet, on the other hand, new studies have given a more complex picture of this traditional form of faith. In his innovative study of different movements for change in Tagalog society from 1840-1910, Reynaldo C. Ileto contends that images from the Pasyong Henesis, the popular vernacular narrative of Christ's life, "nurtured an undercurrent of millenial beliefs which, in times of economic and political crisis, enabled the peasantry to take action under the leadership of individuals or groups promising deliverance from oppression."10 While there is need for some qualification in apply-

ing this to the various movements, the basic thesis is shown to be solidly founded.

In what is perhaps the best chapter in the study, Ileto establishes how Apolinario de la Cruz, more commonly known as Hermano Pule, appears as "another Christ-like figure in Philippine history, apparently remembered not for his particularly unique individual attributes but as a powerful sign of Christ’s presence among men."11 Through the effective use of imagery and ritual, Hermano Pule was able to organize a cofradia that was intensely religious and, at the same time, socially countercultural. This integration was possible because of the Christocentric focus of the pasyon:

In Christ we are acquainted with an individual who combines in his person the seemingly contradictory aspects of divinity and humanity, humility, and overwhelming strength. He is described as "unlettered," and yet exceeds all others in knowledge.12

All this was but to end in the tragic fate of Hermano Pule and his cofradia at the hands of the Spanish colonial government in 1842.

Drawing from Ileto’s study, one certainly comes up with a different picture of the traditional form of faith in relation to the social situation. Another study of consequence is the article by John N. Schumacher, "The Religious Character of the Revolution in Cavite, 1896-1897."13 While Schumacher agrees to the presence of anti-religious and anti-clerical sentiments in the revolutionary movement, he distinguishes between the leaders and the followers. For instance, he compares Bonifacio with the provincial gentry in the following terms:

Bonifacio, his fertile mind steeped in the reading of Rizal’s writings, of La Solidaridad and other publications of the Propaganda Movement, and of anticlerical European literature, was fundamentally secular in his thinking, closely akin in this respect to the European-educated ilustrados. The provincial gentry, in Cavite at least, were for the most part relatively unaffected by these secular ideals, and were bound by close relationships of friendship and even of blood with the Filipino clergy among them.14

11. Ibid. 43.
12. Ibid. 59.
14. Ibid. 400.
With this distinction made, Schumacher proceeds to discuss how the revolutionaries looked at religion, and what role the clergy played in the movement. The findings of this discussion have been summarized thus:

... without excluding a priori the possibility that some leaders of the Revolution manipulated religious feeling to attract mass support, it seems clear that in general the military and political leaders of the Revolution of 1896 did see their struggle for freedom from Spain within a religious context, as a struggle sanctioned by God, as a "holy war." Such a conviction would not have been possible without the presence of a Filipino clergy to replace the Spanish friars, and without their cooperation and counsel.  

On both counts then, the traditional form of faith has proven itself by playing a significant role in the Revolution of 1896, and shattered its stereotype of being conservative.

In the light of studies such as those of Ileto and Schumacher, there is need to look closely at the traditional form of faith.

DEFINITION OF TERMS AND METHOD

For the purposes of this paper, the traditional form of faith refers specifically to the concrete mode of being-Christian in a typical Filipino rural community. "Filipino" here is not used as a claim to uniqueness or originality; it is simply an indication of locale. Furthermore, what would be considered as "typical rural community" would be one in which modernization is not the predominant social force. But at least by way of a parenthetical remark, one should take note that even the urban Filipino cherishes a "traditional core" as studies like those of Bulatao and Licuanan show.  

To describe some of the features of the traditional form of faith as defined above, this paper will turn to religious literature and ritual as primary sources. Being what Ricoeur considers "an original expression of a community of faith," they provide as close

15. Ibid. 416.
an access to the form of faith, since they have not passed through any conceptualizing framework such as theology. Moreover, they play a crucial role in the enterprise of building a sacred namos as “reminders” of a community’s fundamental reality-definitions and their appropriate legitimations.

The results of this study of different pieces of religious literature and other religious practices will be put in thesis form, and discussed within the different levels involved in the traditional form of faith — the normative, structural, and behavioral.

TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS OF THE TRADITIONAL FORM OF FAITH

The traditional form of faith is, almost by definition, alienated from the institutional church. In most cases anyway, it has developed a life of its own apart from the institutional church. However, inspite of this non-institutional character, the traditional form of faith can be said to possess certain normative principles which colour its basic perception of social reality. Two of these principles will be discussed presently.

1. In word and deed, Christ is the exemplar for all Christians.

On the surface, this statement borders on being a pious truism of universal applicability. Christ should really be the model for all Christians. But as one puts this statement in the context of the traditional form of faith, it attains a specific meaning characteristic of this form of faith.

The history of Philippine literature during the period of Spanish colonization shows how the image of Christ as model proved to be a very apt and useful image. In a situation which was, to the Spaniards, both primitive and pagan, there was need for an embodiment of the ideal virtues and conduct to be demanded of the indios. Thus did the general image of Christ as exemplar become particularly relevant. In an article discussing the development of literature at that time, I describe the relationship between the

image of Christ and the particular historical situation in the following words:

*Bilang paglalagom, masasabi nating ang larawan ni Kristong uliran ng tao ay bunga ng isang panitikang kasangkapan sa pagtatataba ng Katolikong lipunan. Dahil dito, anumang pagbabago sa pagkakaunawa sa Katolikong lipunan ay nagdala rin ng kaukulang pagbabago sa kahulugan ng ganitong larawan ni Kristo.*

(By way of summary, one might say that the image of Christ as exemplar was the product of a literature put at the service of establishing a Catholic society. Because of this, any change in the understanding of what a Catholic society was brought about corresponding changes in the meaning of this image of Christ.)

History has indeed shown that the understanding of what constituted a Catholic society changed, and with it, the meaning of the image of Christ as exemplar. This image was domesticating as used by Padre Modesto de Castro, but subversive in the hands of Hermano Pule.

At this point, it is not so much the historical development of the image of Christ as exemplar that is most cogent for the discussion. Rather the historical perspective was brought in merely to explain the deep-rooted presence of this image in the traditional form of faith. Now it remains to be seen how this image operates as a normative principle.

The image of Christ as a model for all Christians functions as a norm for interpretation within the traditional form of faith. More specifically, it provides the key to both the understanding and practice of whatever is considered Christian. This is clearly illustrated by the tradition of religious dramatization of Christ’s life. In a scene from a *sinakulo* presented in Malolos, Bulacan up to recent times, it is explicitly said that Christ went through John’s baptism so that his disciples would follow suit:

**HUAN:**  
Pabibinyag ang Poon ko sa isang hamak na tao.

Bago ang katampatan
ako ang siyang binyagan
ng mahal mong mga kamay
sapagkat Dios kang tunay
nagkatawang tao lamang.

KORO: Sumagot po itong Berbo
KRISTO: Huan, ako ay sundin mo
nitong hingi ko sa iyo
at ng tularang totoo
ako ng lahat ng tao. 21

(JOHN: My Lord asks baptism from a mere human./ It is I who should be baptized by you, true God but made flesh./ CHOIR: The Word replied:/ CHRIST: John, do what I request, so that all would imitate me.)

The logic of imitation found in this scene dominates the thought of the traditional form of faith. Thus, whatever Christ did, the Christian too, must at least aspire to do. The Tagalog term for model — “huwaran” — carries this normative character of Christ as model. Christ is himself the huwaran, and he also enables one to see what is huwad, meaning false.

Given this logic of imitation in the traditional form of faith, it becomes crucial what Christ is known to have said and done. The first vernacular translations of the Bible came with the present century, and because of this, the sources for any knowledge about Christ were the religious folk practices such as the pasyon, panunuluyan, and sinakulo. In these sources, one finds a liberal mixture of Gospel and apocrypha. Inspite of this, however, they managed to provide the people with some familiarity with Christ, as Bishop Brent reports to the Archbishop of Canterbury early in this century:

Before the Bible Societies (American and British branches are at work here since the Americans came), the natives were not entirely without the Holy Writ in the vernacular. One night during passion tide I was reading, halting fashion, the story of the Crucifixion in Ilocano to a Filipino household and frequently I was anticipated or corrected by my hearers who had

21. Manuscript of Sinakulo from Bo. Matimbo, Malolos, Bulacan, no pagination.
been taught by the Padres before the coming of the Protestants.\textsuperscript{22}

While some might indeed have been taught by the friars, still the majority obtained their knowledge of Christ through popular devotions.

However, even with the availability of vernacular editions of the Bible, the traditional form of faith appropriates what Christ said and did in a literal and fundamentalist way. What this means is best explained by the tradition of hagiography in Philippine religious literature. From the beginnings of Christianization in the Philippines up until the Pacific War, there was a proliferation of religious biography with titles such as \textit{Buhay na Pinagdaanan ni Maria Merced na Anak ni Troadio at ni Cresencia sa Kahariang Israel}, or \textit{Cahimahimalang Buhay ni S. Francisco de Sales}, or \textit{Caaua-auang Buhay nang Magsusugal at Nacumumuhing Asal ng Lasing}.\textsuperscript{23} These works are clearly un-historical, and that is not their concern. Rather the whole tradition is premised on imitating Christ, as closely as possible, in word and deed.

For instance, in \textit{Manga Gauang Magaling ni San Juan de Dios, Buhay ni Victoria at ni Beatriz sa Ciudad nang Granada}, San Juan de Dios is shown defending his every move on the basis of what Christ did.\textsuperscript{24} In one such case, a character by the name of Beatriz is convicted of adultery and sentenced to be punished. San Juan argues against it because of Christ’s behavior toward the Samaritan woman:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Nag upuan siya at bago tinanong
nang Hermano Juan cun ano ang layon,
sagot ni D. Pedro aco nga ang Hocom
bagong inihalal niyong Emperador.}
\textit{Ang nangyaring usap aquing lilinauin,
tungcol cay Beatriz nang pagca patiguil,}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{24} Roman de los Angeles, \textit{Manga Gauang Magaling ni San Juan de Dios, Buhay ni Victoria at ni Beatriz sa Ciudad nang Granada} (Manila: Imprenta ni J. Martinez, 1923).
nabalitaang congo icao ang humiling
caya ang parusanay dapat ay napigui.
Ibig cong matanto cun ito ay tunay
sapagca nga, t, di co mapaniualaan,
maquiquilahoc ca sa di catouiran,
talastas nga, t, ito namaii, casalanan.
Sagot ng Hermano aco nga aniya
ang siyang lumacad at nang maputol na;
nang gauing co ito ito,i, aquing naalala
nangyari cay Cristo sa Samaritana.25

(After they sat down, Brother Juan asked about the purpose of the meet-
ing. Don Pedro answered that he was the Judge newly-appointed by the
emperor./ He wanted to clarify whether Juan really asked that Beatriz not
be punished./ He could not believe that Juan would be involved in ob-
structing justice./ Juan admitted doing this, saying that he thought of
Christ’s compassion toward the Samaritan woman.)

The verse narrative continues much in the same vein, justifying
every action of San Juan de Dios on the basis of what Christ is
known to have actually done in a similar instance.

In the traditional form of faith then, it is the known range of
what Christ said and did that circumscribes Christian response to
given situations. Furthermore, this logic of imitation similarly
holds true for the converse of the statement: what Christ did not
say or do is, for the Christian, a guide for what one should not say
or do. If, however, a Christian undertakes it, this particular act
would be seen as “non-Christian.”

The normative principle discussed above has significant implica-
tions in the way the traditional form of faith views any social real-
ity. Being essentially ahistorical in its understanding of the life and
words of Christ, the traditional form of faith patterns its social re-
sponses according to those of Christ and his followers. In certain
cases, this leads to action that is socially transforming; in others
or perhaps most of the time, to acceptance of the status quo.

A classic example of the latter is Aniceto de la Merced’s pasyon.
As a whole, the work represents a religiosity which incarnates the
imitation of Christ in socially conservative forms. For example,
the aral that De la Merced draws from Christ’s Passion is expressed
thus:

25. Ibid. 57.
Ani Jesus na nangusap
sa aquin cayo,i, tumulad
loob mababa,t, banayad
at ito nga,i, siyang ugat
nang cabanalang laganap.

Ini-imal at guinaua
nang nag turong pacumbaba
ito,i, malinao na lubha
isang Dios na daquila
ay nag asal tauong duc-ha.

Napaimbing napagapos
itong matingcalang Dios
napahatol napasucob
sa tribunal na baluctot
laguing cababaang loob.26

(Jesus told them to imitate him in being humble and gentle, which is the source of all holiness./ His message and life of humility clearly show that he is truly God who became a lowly person./ What great humility that this God allowed himself to be bound, judged and sentenced by an unjust tribunal.)

As presented here, the following of Christ entails an interior disposition of meekness and at least an implication of surrender to an unjust court of law.

The use of the logic of imitation in relation to Christian behavior in society is often not as straightforward as the above. In the same pasyon, De la Merced works out an ethics for debtors based on the encounter between Jesus and Zacchaeus, who promised to repay his debts fourfold as a sign of his conversion. The following is a summary of his ethics:

Ang utang ay pag bayaran
hanggang may icabibigay
cun uala pa namang tunay
ay di muna casalan
sucat ang nasain lamang

Cun ang hindi icabayad
ay tamad lamang maghanap
vicioso caya,t, bulagsac

ay nag casalanang ganap
may iba pang naragdag.\textsuperscript{27}

(Debt should be paid according to one’s ability. If one is unable to pay, the intention to repay is enough./ But if one cannot pay because of laziness, vice or carelessness, then the sin is multiplied.)

Here one sees an example of how the image of Christ as exemplar can indirectly bring about guidelines for Christian social behavior.

It has been mentioned above that this normative principle does not always end up in social conformity. A number of examples from history such as Hermano Pule attests to this. However, even today, there are manifestations of this phenomenon. In Baliwag, Bulacan, the Cofradia de Sagrada Familia traces its ancestry to Felipe Salvador and continues to live by his ideals. Felipe Salvador or Apong Ipe, as he was called, was a prominent figure in Central Luzon during the Philippine Revolution. Together with his followers, most of whom were peasants, he joined forces with Aguinaldo’s men in the fight against the Spaniards. However, he was later denounced as “anti-revolutionary” because his religious views coloured his participation in the struggle and the others did not share the same views. Ileto describes his views in the following manner:

Doctrinally, his was not a radically different religion; in fact he used approved Christian forms of worship and prayer. But prayer, he insisted, was not to be a “compartmentalized” activity. It was also to give direction to everyday existence, maintaining the loob in a state of full control and serenity so that in battle the Santa Iglesia soldier would make up for in courage what he lacked in arms.\textsuperscript{28}

The present cofradia in Baliwag is close to this in spirit, as can be seen in their song, “O Mga Kapatid,”

\begin{quote}
O! mga kapatid halina nga kayo
At ating dulugin ang ating Inang Bayan
Na sa gitna ng lagim tumatangis
Dahilan sa ’tin kaya tayo ngayon ay
Ating hanapin ang bandila ng paglaya
At tamuhin, ang Mesias na manunubos
ay kasama natin . . .\textsuperscript{29}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid. 98.
\textsuperscript{28} Ileto, “Pasion,” 273.
\textsuperscript{29} Manuscript from Cofradia de Sagrada Familia.
(Come, brethren, and help our motherland who cries in the midst of darkness. Let us look for the flag of freedom and realize that the Messiah is with us.)

Moreover, the cofradia does not only see itself as united with Christ. These descendants of Apong Ipe understand their desire for brotherhood and peace in terms of following Christ the exemplar. This is clearly evident in one of their most cherished songs, "Bayang Pilipinas,"

\[
\begin{align*}
Lakad ay patuloy huwag tayong magsisihumpay \\
At ng manaog ang pagsikat yaong bagong araw \\
Siya’y ating salubungin ng salmos natin \\
Tayo’y magsaya’t magsipagdiwang. \\
\text{Ang mga hirang ng Diyos} \\
Na sa kanya ay sumusunod \\
Ay walang alinlangan \\
Kahit saan ay di matitisod \\
Dalisay na pag-ibig at mataas na paglilingkod \\
Ito’y siyang itinuro ni Jesus aming patnugot \\
Ang araw ay natutumulin.^{30}
\end{align*}
\]

(Let us not give up our journey, so that the new day will come. We will greet it with psalms and celebration./ God’s chosen followers have no doubts. Jesus, our head, taught genuine love and great service. The day is fast approaching.)

The stanzas quoted above indicate how strong the influence of the image of Christ as exemplar is, and how it functions for the cofradia as a norm for Christian behavior.

By way of conclusion then, one can say that the image of Christ as exemplar is, within the traditional form of faith, not merely the residue of the long period of Spanish colonization. It has become an underlying norm for all Christians, and whatever is understood as Christ’s word and deed defines the parameters of Christian behavior. Thus, the Christian response to any social reality is also determined this way. This basic commandment of the traditional form of faith has, most of the time, resulted in social conformity; but at other times, it brought about the emergence of a prophetic consciousness.

30. Ibid.
2. While on pilgrimage to eternal life, the Christian must help his/her neighbor in times of need.

The traditional form of faith is usually described as utterly individualistic and devoid of any concern for others. One immediately conjures up the image of the village manang dressed in San Antonio’s abito and clutching her rosary and prayerbook, but unmindful of the dying beggar at the church door. While there is some reality behind this caricature, it does not take into account the strong ethical appeal for love of neighbor within the framework of the traditional form of faith.

A cursory reading of the different movements for change in Philippine history reveals a strikingly common element in most of them: an attempt at building social relationships based on the sharing of goods. Many of these attempts failed, and some even led to corruption and disunity. However, in the beginning, they were generally motivated by an ethical concern for their neighbor.

For example, one can point to the devotion of the followers of Ruperto Rios in Tayabas at the turn of the century: “Nawala ang pagkahilig sa hiyas ng mga tao at mula sa nakolektang pera ilang rehimiyento ng mga boluntaryo ang nabuo.”31 (People lost their desire for jewelry, and they formed several groups of volunteers with the money they collected.) It may have been that Papa Rios, as he was called, was moved by other forces within himself, but one can be certain that his following had great concern for the needy.

It is with this background that the present section will discuss the second great commandment of the traditional form of faith.

To be properly understood, the ethical concern for one’s neighbor within the traditional form of faith must be placed in the context of the human pilgrimage to eternal life. This world is passing away, and one’s true home is with God in heaven. The traditional form of faith can be said to be based on this premise. In the text of the Pasyong Henesis which is still chanted during Holy Week, the Christian is reminded of life’s vanity stanza after stanza, such as in the following excerpt:

Cristiano, sino ca man
dito ay iyong pagmasdan

pagcaualang cabuluhan
nang manga puri at dangal
dito sa hamac na bayan.

Anopa at pauang lisya
ang mundo,i, balintuna
mali ang lahat na gaua,
ang cayamanan at toua
parang asong mauuala.

Na capag may pinipita
sa iyo at inoola
totoong minamahal ca
nguni capag nangyari na
dili ca na ala-ala. 32

(Christian, whoever you are, consider the vanity of honors and good name in this wretched world./ All is awry, the world deceitful, everything wrong; wealth and joy are like smoke./ Those who want something from you love you, but when all is finished, they do not remember you.)

It becomes clear from these representative lines that in the traditional form of faith, any social concern for one’s neighbor is not to be interpreted as a denial of the life hereafter.

The more precise relationship between love of neighbor and this other-worldly orientation is expressed in the novena to San Isidro Labrador, patron of farmers in different parts of the countryside. In the meditation for the fifth day of the novena, an anecdote about San Isidro Labrador’s charity is told. A beggar once came to his house and asked for something to eat. Upon hearing this, San Isidro immediately instructed his wife to fetch some food from the kitchen. Although she knew that no food was left, she went to the kitchen so she could show them the empty pot. To her surprise, she found the pot full and thus promptly gave food to the beggar. From this anecdote, the writer of the novena concludes with the following prayer:

Alang-alang sa lubhang dakila mong pagkakawanggawa, ay ipamagitan mo sa Diyos na kami’y bahaginan nitong lubhang mahal na kabanalan at huwag kaming mag-alinlangan na dili ang hindi gagantihin ng Diyos ka-hit iisang sarong tubig ang maipagkaloob namin sa mga dukha. Malimbag nawa sa aming ala-ala, na ang pagka-awa sa mga maralita ay lubhang malakas na

32, Casaysayan nang Pasion Mahal ni Jesucristong Panginoon Natin (Manila: Imprenta de los Amigos del País, 1882) 70.
makaakit sa loob ng Diyos sa pagka-awa naman at pagpapatawad sa amin dahil sa di mabilang at malalaki naming kasalanan...

(On account of your great charity, please ask God to grant us a share in this utter holiness and to make us never doubt that God will repay even a measly glass of water that we give to the poor. May it be imprinted in our minds that mercy toward the poor draws God to be merciful and to forgive us our innumerable grave sins.)

Here there is no doubt that love of neighbor is not only encouraged of every Christian, but extolled as holiness. It also becomes clear, however, that such love proceeds from a desire to be pleasing to God, especially since God is merciful upon those who show concern for others.

Thus acts of Christian charity become part of the structure of many popular novenas. Some novenas designate a particular day out of the nine, during which this act of charity may be performed. In the Pagsisiyam sa Mahal na Puso ni Jesus, the instruction for the first day reads: "Magsikap sa pagkakawanggawa at pagnamahal sa mga kaluluwa at gawin ang lahat ng ito alang-alang kay Hesukristo, at pagsikapan ang pagbabalik-loob ng isang makasalanan." (Try to be charitable and loving to all souls, and to be repentant like a sinner.) The novena to San Vicente Ferrer, on the other hand, gives the following general instruction at the beginning of the nine days:

Sukat namang magkumpisal at makinabang ang tao sa araw ng kanyang pagnonobena upang kamtan yaong kaniyang hinihingi, at dili kinatutuwaan ng Panginoong Dios at ng mga Santos ang pagdalangin sa kanila ng taong makasalanan, hanggang di walin muna ang kasalanang dakila sa kaluluwa: sa isa namang araw ay mabuti rin namang magayunar o gumawa ng ano mang pasakit sa katawan, paninikludhod na matagal sa simbahang, o maglimos sa mga pobre, o dumalaw kaya sa mga may sakit, at ang pagsusud ng ano mang kaawaang gawa tungkol sa kaluluwa o sa katawan, alang-alang kay San Vicente Ferrer.

(One should go to confession and communion during the day of the novena in order to receive one's request; God and the saints are not pleased with the prayers of a sinner unless his/her great sin is removed: on another day, it is good to fast or to do bodily penance, to kneel for a long period in church, or to give alms to the poor, or to visit the sick, and to

33. Manuscript from Barangka, Marikina, Rizal.
35. Francisco Vidal, Pagsisiyam at Milagros kay San Vicente Ferrer (Manila: Libreria ni J. Martinez, 1947) 2.
perform any work of mercy, whether spiritual or corporal, in honor of St. Vicente Ferrer.)

The above could very well serve as an enumeration of acts considered Christian and pleasing to God, with concern for the needy being one of them.

Another element in the ethical love of neighbor which one finds in the traditional form of faith is exemplified by the quotation from the novena to San Vicente Ferrer. Love of others is commonly understood in terms of a donor giving to someone in need. Almsgiving then becomes the primary embodiment of the Christian obligation of charity. On account of this, the traditional form of faith has been able to create ritual situations in which almsgiving occurs. One such situation is the memorial of the Last Supper and the accompanying Washing of the Apostles' Feet. Initially introduced by official Roman liturgy, it has been taken over by the traditional form of faith and developed into elaborate rituals in which the poor — who are usually chosen to be apostles — are given from the bounty of the more prosperous. Nicanor Tiongson, in his book on the religious drama in Malolos, describes the local practice thus:

Sa ganap na alaskuwatro ng hapon ng Huwebes Santo, isang mahabang hapag-kainan ang nakagayak na sa kumbento ng Malolos. May tig-aanim na silya sa bawat panig ng mesa at luklukan sa kabesera. Pagdating ng paru at mga apostoles na nakasuot ng puti at may balabal na iba-ibang kulay, tuloy dulong na sila sa hapag-kainan upang pagsaluhang anhugis-korderong tina-pay na sumasagisag hindi lamang kay Kristo kundi sa korderong kinaugalian nang patayin at kainin ng mga Hudyo sa pista ng Paskuwa.36

(At exactly four in the afternoon of Holy Thursday, a long dining table is set in the rectory of Malolos. There are six chairs on each side, and another one at the head. Upon arrival, the priest and the apostles dressed in white tunics with cloaks of different colors sit at table to partake of a piece of bread shaped like a lamb to signify not only Christ but also the paschal lamb of the Jews.)

Details vary from place to place, but the spirit and motivation remain the same — that of helping the needy in fulfillment of Christ's command.

36. Nicanor Tiongson, Kasaysayan at Estetika ng Sinakulo at Ibang Dulang Panrelihiyon sa Malolos (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila, 1975) 33.
While the traditional form of faith has performed some service in encouraging — even demanding — Christian concern for one’s neighbor, its particularization of this concern in terms of almsgiving leaves it open to motives other than Gospel values. De la Merced, for instance, used it in order to justify passive acceptance of poverty:

Ang mag hirap at yumaman
ang tao sa pag buhay
Dios ang may calooban
at siya ngang nababagay
sa manga pinamigayan.

Mag tungcol mag limos lamang
ay yaong may calabisan
ang mangag aabot arao
lalo, t, cun nangungutangan
ay labis na catungculan.

Mag tulungan ang ibig nga
nang Dios Amang daquila
walang mag aalisaga
ang may lacas na sagana
ay itulong sa mahina. 37

(It is God’s will whether one is poor or rich, and each receives what is proper . . .) Those with surplus are obliged to give alms. Those in need, especially if they have debts, have no obligation. What the great God the Father desires is for people to help one another. Let no one be negligent. Those who have power should assist the weak.)

In this case, religion has become a conservative element in society.

In conclusion then, one can say that the traditional form of faith insists on an ethical love of one’s neighbor as one of its normative principles. However, this social concern is very clearly within the context of an other-worldly orientation, and becomes a way for the Christian to be holy and pleasing to God. Because this normative principle is understood in terms of giving, the concrete form that it takes is almsgiving. The traditional form of faith thus leaves itself open to becoming a socially conservative force, inspite of its strong demand for Christian charity.

The ethical demand to love one’s neighbor, together with the image of Christ as exemplar, constitute the two great commandments of the traditional form of faith. For the Christian, they articulate what one’s attitudes and behavior should be. Living by these two great commandments in the concrete, the Christian takes on a specific role in society. At times, one takes on a progressive, if not revolutionary, stance; at other times, one becomes an apologist for the status quo. What leads the individual to being one or the other is determined by factors other than these two normative principles. It is to these other factors that the present paper now wishes to turn.

SOCIAL STRUCTURES RELATED TO THE TRADITIONAL FORM OF FAITH

Normative principles, if they are to be truly operative in a given situation, need supporting social structures. So too with the traditional form of faith. These two social structures for its maintenance and growth are the extended family and the class structure in a rural setting. Without these structures, the traditional form of faith would not be the significant current that it is in Filipino Christianity today.

1. The Extended Family: A Home for the Traditional Form of Faith

Personal experience as well as social research have both established the primacy of the extended family in Filipino social relationships. Growing up in a traditional family means not much more than understanding and participating in the complex network of ate, bilas, kaka, ninong, etc., all these somehow related either by blood, affinity or ritual kinship. Mary Hollnsteiner describes the Filipino family in these words:

The Filipino is taught from childhood that his primary loyalties belong to his nuclear family and, by extension, to his other kinfolk. Any celebration in his family requiring a feast always finds relatives there, from oldest to the youngest. The child is rarely excluded from any family parties, regardless of the late hour to which they may last. From babyhood he finds security in the warmth of family ties and in the knowledge that he has a
corps of persons whose particular duty it is to aid him when he needs it, and whom he in turn should help when the occasion demands. 38

Given such a situation, one can say that for the Filipino, the family defines social and personal identity. The family is where one finds others and even oneself.

If the family is the pervasive reality that it is for the Filipino, then it is not surprising to find it play a significant role in the traditional form of faith. The Filipino receives the first lesson in catechism from elders at home, of course with an ambience totally different from what one finds in a Catholic school. Religious signs like the painted cross over the door, images such as the Santo Niño, and rituals like lighting candles before holy pictures are initially encountered in familial situations such as birth and death, marriage and transfer of residences. The Filipino first meets religion — like almost everything — at home.

Aside from this function that the family plays in religious initiation, the traditional form of faith is related to the family in another way. Because of the all-embracing character of the Filipino family, there arises a social need for occasions during which family ties may be strengthened. In a traditional setting this need is answered by religious feasts. Frank Lynch in his article on folk Catholicism enumerates the following feasts as situations of family reunion and revitalization: the fiesta, Christmas day, undras, and Holy Week. 39

In general, one can say that the relationship between the Filipino family and the traditional form of faith on the level of structure is symbiotic. On the one hand, the family provides the basic social unit which the traditional form of faith uses for its own maintenance and growth. For example, the home becomes the effective venue for the passing on of the traditional form of faith. On the other hand, the family depends on the traditional form of faith for strengthening family ties.

This symbiotic relationship is nowhere more evident than in the different examples of religious drama that is part of the traditional form of faith. Whether in the simple panunuluyan to the week-long

sinakulo, the family and the traditional form of faith mutually support each other from the planning stage to the actual production. The extended family provides a convenient organizational structure for meeting the logistical demands of putting up a religious production. Handwritten scripts are passed on from generation to generation, and guarded from outsiders like family jewels.

But perhaps the best illustration of the relationship between the family and the traditional form of faith within the context of religious drama is found in the way actors or actresses are designated for particular roles. In Tiongson’s documentation of the sinakulo in Tikay, Malolos, Bulacan, those acting major parts are mostly related to each other.40 Furthermore, roles in religious drama are often passed on from father to son or mother to daughter with earnest devotion. This is particularly true of central characters like the Virgin Mary or Jesus Christ. In these cases, the handing over of dramatic roles assumes the quality of a panata, just as a mother promises to the Nasa reno that her child, once grown up, will continue her Friday devotion. Here the realities of the family and the traditional form of faith become so intertwined that it is impossible to distinguish them from each other.

Apart from the above mentioned sociological indications of the relationship between the family and the traditional form of faith, there are other indications of the same reality from a theological perspective.

Like anything that speaks to the human, the transcendent too must take incarnate shape if it is to reach the human at all. Using this basic truth, one understands why religious language is, in essence, symbolic, and why the symbols used in religious language reveal much about the people who employ such language. With this background, an analysis of some religious symbols in the traditional form of faith takes on considerable importance.

Traditional Filipino religious literature is characterized by its abundant use of imagery. Some of this imagery is drawn from Scripture, others from nature, but the majority come from the family and other related areas of human experience. One vivid example of this is found in a novena prayer addressed to the Blessed Virgin Mary:

Tunay po na ito,i, Anac mo, nguni,t, aco,i, anac mo rin naman. ¿At pababayaan mo na baga na ang bunso mo,i, mabicasa,t, matampulan ng bagsic at lasas ng caniyyang galit at capootan? Quiniquilala co po na aco,i, di sапa-lang nagcasala sa caniya; datapua,t, tanto mo rin naman na ang puso co ay halos nalulusao sa malacing cahihiyian at masaqit na pagsisisi sa nagauang camalian. Tauad na maauain cong Ina, at tauad na naman Jesus na Panginnoon co. 41

(It is indeed true that Jesus is your child, but I am too. And would you allow your youngest to be doomed and to bear the brunt and power of his ire and anger? I admit that I have undoubtedly offended him; but you also know that my heart is practically melting with great shame and con-trition because of what I have done. Pardon, my merciful Mother, and pardon, Jesus, my Lord.)

The basic imagery above is of universal Christian application. Mary is the mother of Jesus as well as of the penitent. Furthermore, Jesus is the first-born, and all are his brothers and sisters. All these come from Scripture and Christian tradition. However, the prayer develops the imagery further by establishing the penitent as bunso (the youngest) and Jesus as kuya (the elder brother). Once this traditional family relationship is set forth, the penitent asks the Virgin Mother to intercede for him with Jesus. Christian repentance is hence expressed in traditional familial terms. Thus, one finds that even on the level of symbols, the traditional form of faith and the family remain inter-related with each other.

Another theological indication of this reality is shown by the popularity of patron saints and the attitude that people have regarding them. Within the Christian economy of salvation, the veneration of saints is based on their exemplary life of holiness. For Christians then, they are models of virtue, as well as intercessors of God’s grace. Again the traditional form of faith has taken this properly spiritual relationship and contextualized it in terms of the extended family. Lynch states that the veneration of saints in folk Catholicism is related to confianza, which is a bond of trust among one’s kin:

If one is to show friendship and confidence, he must treat the person like a kinsman, and must be in physical touch or contact. But how does one establish this kind of closeness with a heavenly saint?

41. Manuscript of Novena.
Through the image of the saint. Most images are adopted into households, in the sense that they are not the property of the Church, and are not kept in the church building during the year. Rather, when they are not in procession they are kept in private homes and are the property of the householder. They are, in effect, members of various households in the village or town.  

Since the traditional form of faith understands the veneration of saints in the context of kinship, then the saints are endowed with functions that one expects from one's relatives. That this is, in fact, the case as shown in a study of Baras undertaken by Dr. Paz Mendez. San Jose, the town’s patron, is seen as a father with both the duties and rights that an ordinary father has:

The town’s patron saint is pictured as a father who protects the villagers, relieving them of worries when they are visited by fires, typhoons, and earthquakes . . . In turn, they have to conduct themselves properly because like a family father, the patron saint can also mete out punishment.

The popular devotion to the saints then can be considered another indication of the relationship between the Filipino family and the traditional form of faith.

Thus far, this section of the paper has discussed how the extended family and the traditional form of faith are structurally related. This relationship can be described as symbiotic, in which both are mutually supportive of each other. The family provides the basic social unit which the traditional form of faith uses as venue. On the other hand, the traditional form of faith expresses religious reality in familial images. Having thus described the relationship between the traditional form of faith and the extended family, one must now pose the question of how the relationship bears upon the social role of the traditional form of faith.

Given the symbiotic relationship between the Filipino family and the traditional form of faith, it becomes obvious that the role that the traditional form of faith plays in society is a function of the role that the extended family takes in that same society. Thus

42. Lynch, "Folk Catholicism," 236.
their social roles are in linear relation with each other. In order then to understand the social role of the traditional form of faith, one must turn to that of the family.

Studies on the social role of the Filipino family have commonly pointed to its basic conservative stance. Some attribute this to the essential nature of the family, while others trace it to the peculiar configuration of the extended family. Prescinding from the reasons for this conservative stance, one can accept the consensus of these studies. What is lacking, however, in the studies is the attempt to relate the family to the wider society.

The research of Mina Ramirez on the Filipino family is one exception to this. It describes phenomenologically the Filipino family as closely knit, and then proceeds to situate this within the national social structure. The research expresses it in the following words:

The social structure in the Philippines is such that about one per cent belongs to the upper class, 29 per cent to the middle class and 70 per cent to the lower class . . . An unbalanced social structure is a situation of social injustice. It promotes a system of exploitation and oppression and enhances the atmosphere of insecurity in the country. Understandably, the family confronted with insecurity from the larger society, takes as highest value its own security.

The above presents the picture of the closely knit family within an unstable social situation. This picture leads one to understand the basic conservative stance of the Filipino family — and by implication the traditional form of faith which is tied to it.

2. Rural Class Stratification: An Economic Base for the Traditional Form of Faith

The traditional form of faith can be said to have found a home in the Filipino family. By virtue of the far-reaching extensions of the family, it has been able to maintain and promote itself in Philippine culture. However, this arrangement is not without any

45. Ibid. 31-32.
strings attached as far as the traditional form of faith is concerned. In exchange for the services of the structure of the family, it has to support values positive for the family. As a result, the traditional form of faith tends to become as socially conservative as the extended family.

This tendency is re-enforced because of the dependence of the traditional form of faith on class stratification in the rural setting. How this is the case will be discussed in the present section.

Because of its non-official character, the traditional form of faith does not share in the organizational resources that the official Church has at its disposal. This lack of a formal structure has to be compensated for, otherwise the traditional form of faith loses its vitality and eventually withers into non-existence. In effect, its relationship with the extended family is a compensatory mechanism. Another important mechanism that the traditional form of faith employs is religious ritual which involves the entire community and serves to remind it of its sacred nomos.

The traditional form of faith has developed, over a long period of time, an intricate system of religious rituals largely based on the liturgical calendar. The Christmas season witnesses the panunuluyan, the search of the Magi, and festivities for the Santo Niño. Lent and Holy Week have innumerable practices such as the pabasa, processions, Via Crucis, the sinakulo, and salubong. Maytime is the season of flores de Mayo, santacruzan, and town fiestas. There are still regional additions to this long list, like the aurora in Bicolandia, or the fertility dance in Obando.

All these rituals are effective reminders of the common religious heritage of the people, and they are effective to the extent that they are prepared for. It is in this connection that the traditional form of faith becomes tied up with the rural class structure. As illustrations of this relationship, the production of a sinakulo and the ownership of sacred images will be discussed.

Unlike a professional production that works with a budget, no matter how small, putting up any religious drama like a sinakulo immediately faces the problem of finances. These financial needs are minute compared to the expenses of even an amateur school play, but may nonetheless be burdensome for the community. In the early 1970’s, an eight-day sinakulo would normally cost a thousand pesos.
The *sinakulistas* raise the necessary money in ingenious ways. For example, the *Samahang Sinakulista* of Tikay, Malolos make use of a practice called “ananang-Juan”:

“Nananang-Juan” sila tuwing Hunyo 24 (sa pista ni San Juan Bautista, nakaugalian nang mangilik ng iba’t ibang samahan) sa mga kapanalig na inaabisuhan upang makapaghanda. Nag-iensayo pa ang mga sinakulista ng kanta at sayaw para sa pananapat na ito at di naman sila napapahiya sa pinananapatan na karamihan’ng mayayamang may-ari ng lupa sa Tikay. At hindi sa Malolos lamang kunsi sa ibang lugar ma’y dumadayo rin sila.  

(They engage in this practice every June 24 [the feast of St. John the Baptist, for which different groups usually collect contributions]. Those involved in the production of the passion play visit houses they have notified beforehand and they present well-prepared songs and dances for their hosts who are mostly rich landlords of Tikay. They carry this out not only in Malolos but even in other places.)

Another way of obtaining the amount needed is to look for families or organizations willing to undertake at least a major portion of the expenditures. In either case, what it amounts to is the ensuing dependence of the religious presentation on the upper class, usually the landlords.

The implication of this dependence is much more than meets the eye. And it does not at all concern the question of censorship or control; rather it is more subtle than this. The dependence of religious presentations on the landlord class implicitly re-enforces the division between the “big people” and the small fry. As Lynch writes,

Hence the essentially two-class system of the rural Philippines finds its image here. It is not to be concluded, however, that the poorer members of the community either resent this distinction or contribute nothing to the common effort. On the contrary (whether the observer agrees with it or not), the class division and its consequences are generally considered the natural state of affairs, and the lower class brings to each religious event its artistic and manual labor for the preparation of the feast and hearty participation in its celebration. It can be said that the upper class makes folk-religious activities a *possibility* while the lower class makes them an *actuality*.  

46. Tiongson, *Sinakulo*, 81-82.
In such a situation, the configuration of relationships between the upper and lower classes becomes patron-client. That this occurs in a religious setting gives this relationship some religious legitimation, and thus makes the traditional form of faith identified with the existing class stratification.

However, the most striking example of this identification of the traditional form of faith with the rural class structure involves the ownership of holy images used in religious processions. The following discussion focuses on the experience of a town in Central Luzon, which can be said to be representative of this religious phenomenon. 48

As in any town founded during the Spanish period, religious processions are an essential part of the faith in Sta. Catalina (a fictitious name used to protect the identity of the people involved). The Holy Week procession boasts of more than twenty floats depicting holy persons or religious events found in the Bible and other pious books. For instance, the karo of Simon of Cyrene consists of five life-size statues (Christ, Simon, the centurion, a young boy and someone with a trumpet), and costs ₱10,000. Aside from the cost of the float, there are additional expenses for decorations, lights, labor and food which can amount to more than a thousand pesos. Given all the money needed for a float, it becomes obvious that only the upper class can afford such expenditures.

What is more significant, however, is the process by which particular families came to have such religious images for use in processions. The published documentation states that the appearance of these elaborate floats coincides with the time of prosperity in Sta. Catalina brought about by increased agricultural production in the later part of the nineteenth century. Since then, the care and management of the floats have been handed on from generation to generation. This handing over is often accompanied by an inheritance of land, the profit of which is to be used solely for the float:

Kasama sa pagmamana ng poon ay ang pagmamana ng isang lupain na pagkukunan ng gugugulin para sa paglabas ng karo sa prusisyon. Sa kaso ng mga Araneta, ayon kay G. Araneta, mayroong nakatakdang 13 1/2 hektarya para dito sa baryo Sikat sa Guimbal, Aurora. Dalawampung hektarya

namang palayan sa baryo San Agustin ang nakatakda sa pamilya dela Cruz upang gugulin sa paglabas ng Pagtatanggal. Isang tumana ang dating nakata-
ka da sa pamilya ng Naty Santos upang gugulin sa paglabas ng Nazareno. Isang asyenda naman sa baryo Legarda ang nakatakda sa mga Santos upang
gugulin sa paglabas ng kanilang mga karo.49

(Inheriting a holy statue also means inheriting a piece of land which pro-
vides money for the decoration of the float for procession. According to
Mr. Araneta, in the case of his family, there are 13.5 hectares in Barrio
Sikat, Guimbal, Aurora set for this purpose. Twenty hectares of ricefields
in Barrio San Agustin are earmarked by the De la Cruz family for the pro-
cession of the float depicting the taking down from the cross. The family
of Naty Santos has previously reserved a ricefield for the Nazarene float. A
hacienda in Barrio Legarda is kept by the Santoses for the expenses of
their floats.)

The above data show how directly the ownership of holy images is
tied up with the semi-feudal structure of the agricultural economy. Most
of these relationships date back to Spanish colonial times, as typified by the
Santos family which owns major floats (Santo Entierro, Paciencia, and Dolorosa), and is descended from Kapitan
Andoy Santos who was gobernadorcillo from 1884.

While the semi-feudal structure described above still persists to
some extent today, there have been changes in class stratification
even in the rural setting of Sta. Catalina. The changes are brought
about by the emergence of the nouveau riche, families without
any lineage to speak of but made suddenly rich because of com-
merce and trade. Needless to say, this has repercussions in the
realm of the religious.

Just as the ilustrado built a religious float simultaneous with the
construction of their antillian house, the nouveau riche commis-
sion a “modern” float soon after establishing themselves. In the
case of Sta. Catalina, the Concepcion family embodies the emerging
class. It spent P20,000 for a karo of the Last Supper, with images
seven feet tall and patterned after a sculpture in the Cathedral of
Notre Dame. All this, it becomes clear, is carried out in a spirit of
having to prove oneself:

Naglalakihan ang mga bagong karo sa Sta. Catalina, sa kagustuhan mahi-
gitan ang lahat. Sa kagustuhan ipamalas ang namumukod na kayamanan.
Maaaring sa pagpasok sa tradisyunal na pamamaraan ng “social reinforce-
49. Ibid. 62.
ment”, ito’y nagrerebelde laban sa institusyon o sa mga lumang pamilya. Sa halimbawa ng mga Concepcion, bukod sa kalakihan ng karo, sila’y nagpagawa ng isang espesyal na dyip na humihila sa karo. Dalawa lamang ang gulong ng dyip na ito at ang tanging silbi’y hilahin ang karo minsan sa isang taon.  

(The new floats in Sta. Catalina outdo each other in magnitude, every owner desiring to show social status. Perhaps in the light of the usual way of establishing social status, this is a form of rebellion against the institution or the rich old families. In the case of the Concepcions, they had a special jeep designed to pull the massive float. The jeep has only two wheels, and its only purpose is to pull the float during the yearly procession.)

While it is true that there is an incipient antagonism against the established families, the nouveau riche end up as victim. By trying to defeat the ilustrado families at their own game, they have paradoxically accepted the rules.

In the last analysis, however, whether the religious float is owned by an ilustrado or nouveau riche family, the implications for the traditional form of faith remain the same. Because of its dependence on the rural upper class for its holy images, the traditional form of faith is inextricably allied with the existing class structure, even to the extent of actively participating in the economy that sustains this structure. As a result of this class affiliation, the ability of the traditional form of faith to be a socially progressive element becomes greatly reduced. There is no imputation here of malice on the part of the upper class, nor of inauthenticity with regards to the traditional form of faith. Rather what is affirmed here is the structural relationship between the traditional form of faith and rural class stratification.

On the level of social structures then, one sees how the traditional form of faith is linked up to the extended family and the rural class structure. The over-extended character of the Filipino family provides a venue for the maintenance and growth of the traditional form of faith. On the other hand, the rural class structure gives it the economic support that it needs. In the context of this alliance with these social structures, the social role of the traditional form of faith becomes a function of the roles of these structures.

50. Ibid. 70.
As social structures, the extended family and the rural class structure can be said to be integrative and conservative, rather than critical and progressive. Social structures, after all, simply arise out of the human needs from living in community, and involve but a definition of roles within that community. Inspite of their basically stabilizing role, however, these structures are constantly open to testing from experience and to challenge as a result of changes in the community. To this extent, the Filipino family and the rural class structure — social structures related to the traditional form of faith — can have a part to play, no matter how limited, in social charge.

UNDERLYING BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRADITIONAL FORM OF FAITH

The present paper has discussed thus far some normative principles and social structures associated with the traditional form of faith, especially insofar as they affect its perception of social reality and its function in the social equation. There remains, however, the task of describing some of its characteristics on the behavioral level. In this way, a more rounded picture of the traditional form of faith vis-a-vis the social situation becomes possible.

1. Because life is understood wholistically, the religious easily surfaces in the other areas of existence.

The development of Philippine religious literature accurately illustrates that religion is not a reality confined to the sanctuary. Ever since the Spanish friars used oral and written literature as a tool for evangelization, vernacular literature had been very much concerned about how religion could permeate the other areas of human life. This historical process can be summarized in the following way:

Halos parang prusisyon ang kasaysayan nito. Nagsimula ito sa mga akdang may kinalaman sa pagsamba at doktrina na ginagamit sa loob ng simbahan. Pagkatapos lalabas ito at daraan sa mga akdang ginagamit sa bahay tulad ng pasyon, awit, at korido; hanggang sa humantong ito sa liwasang pinagta-tanghalan ng sinakulo at komedya. Pagdating tuloy ng siglo 19, laganap na ang Katolikong lipunan at nanunuot hanggang talampakan na ayon sa
Urbana at Feliza’y hindi dapat ipakita.  

(The history of this literature can be compared to a procession. It starts with works that have to do with worship and doctrine, and are usually read inside the church. Afterwards come works which are used at home, such as the pasyon, awit, and korido; finally, there are the sinakulo and the komedy which are presented in the town plaza. Thus by the 19th century, Catholicism has been so entrenched in the social fabric that the work Urbana at Feliza forbids even the showing of one’s feet in the name of religion.)

Historically then, religious literature moved from the shelter of the church right into the public plaza; and along the way, it blessed everything in sight that it deemed worthy.

That the development of Philippine religious literature occurred in this fashion is no mean accident of history. It is actually based on a fundamental acceptance of the presence of the religious in the totality of human experience.

The place of religious ritual in Philippine life confirms this basic truth. Especially during Holy Week, religious activities such as the visita iglesia, pabasa, and the salubong appear in any typical rural town. Over and above this proliferation, what is of greater significance is the total spirit which characterizes these rituals.

In order to understand this spirit, the following phenomenological description of a pabasa may be a useful starting point:

_Nang dumating ang Mahal na Araw, tumingkad ang ganitong takbo ng buhay. Sumulpot na parang kabuti ang pagbasa ng pasyon. Mayroong mag-asawang tahimik na nagbasa nito sa kanilang kubo, at mayroon din namang mga bahay na pinutakti ng mga kabaryo at kamag-anakang bumaba pa sa bundok._

_Sa bahay na aming pinuntahan, sasalubungin ka agad ng akala mo’y giniginaw na himig ng pasyon, lalo pa’t sinasabayan ito ng kalatog ng pinggan, iyak ng bata at paghuhuntahan ng matatanda. Madaling maubos ang buong maghapon sa ganito. At bago ka dalawin ng antok, Sabado na ng umaga at katatapos mo lang awitin ang huling saknong ng makapal na pasyon._

(On Good Friday, the rhythm of life took a different turn. The reading of the pasyon mushroomed all over the place. Some couples read it privately

52. Ibid. 187-88.
in their huts, while some houses were swamped with neighbors and relatives who came from the outlying villages just for the occasion. Coming to the house where we stayed, you would be greeted by the chattering voices, mixed with the sounds of plates, the crying of babies, and the gossip of the older people. The whole day would pass quickly, and before you know it, it is already Saturday morning and you have just sung the last verse of the long *pasyon*.

The details from the account show that the *pabasa*, while being a religious ritual, is deeply rooted in everyday existence, and that no trace of a "formally solemn" spirit exists. This clear absence of a "solemn" atmosphere does not indicate a corresponding lack of reverence, but an underlying continuum between the religious and the other aspects of life. In fact, whatever embellishments the *pabasa* has were originally carried in this same spirit. For instance, the practice of broadcasting the *pabasa* over the neighborhood is intended to envelop the ordinary activities in the neighborhood with the spirit proper to Holy Week. It is unfortunate that the practice has degenerated in some places into a contest of loudspeakers with social prestige as the prize for the winner.

The basic continuity between the religious and the other aspects of life is also reflected in some rituals which are employed for purposes other than religious but still retain some religious character. The primary example of this ritual would be the *panawagan* practiced in some rural areas. The *panawagan* is basically a courtship ritual in which the suitor exchanges verses with the owner of the house, as the text itself says, "*Panauagan sa may bahay, na paghahandugan ng toua at ligayang ninanasa na caraniuang gamitin ng manga cabinataan sa kinalalag-yan ng mahinhin at may hustong cabaitan na mga dalaga.***53 (A call to the houseowner, to whom we offer the joy and happiness given by young men to houses where proper and gentle young women reside.) The ritual begins with the suitor outside the house, and proceeds until he has entered the house at the invitation of the owner. As the ritual progresses, its various stages are marked off by appropriate references to religious matters. For example, at the threshold of the house, the suitor compares himself to the Magi and mentions an apocryphal story about how Mary mistook them to be men of bad will:

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Siyang pagcakita niyong tatlong Mago niyong maralita na Cuevang bato,
agad nagsilunsad na sa dromedario
pumasok sa Cuevang toua’i di magkano.

At agad dumulog sa Virgen Maria
natacot ang Virgen at nag-ala-ala,
ang akala’i moro at itinago na
ang mahal na Niñong Dios ng pagsinta.

Dito na lumuhod nanalangin agad
nangunang nagdasal yaong Haring Gaspar,
ang uica’i aba po na lubhang banayad
Santa Mariang Hari naming hinahanap. 54

(Then the three Magi saw this dreary stone cave, got off their camels, and
entered with great joy./ They immediately approached the Virgin who
thought they were moslems, and so hid the child out of fear./ But they
knelt and prayed; the first, King Gaspar, gently said, “Hail Queen Mary
whom we seek.”)

Interpreted within the context of the ritual, what the above reference does is to assure the owner of the house of the pure intention
that the suitor has. Whereupon the owner replies:

Guihintating puso nadi nauualay
ang tacot at sindak niyaring kaloooban
bagama’t naringig nakayo’i nabagay
sa tatlong dumalao Magong manga mahal.

Ngayon ang nasa co’i cun baga’t totoo
na kayo’i may nasang dumalao sa Niño,
oot makikita’t manggaguloy kayo
gao-in ang marapat paggalang sa Verbo.

Nguni hintay muna ang billis ng lakad
at may roon akong dapat isiyasat,
bufat ng umalis ng kayo’i gumayak
among nangakita sa inyong paglacad. 55

(There remain fear and awe in my shocked heart, because though I heard
you, I was reminded of what transpired with the three Magi./ What I ask if
you truly wish to pay homage to the child is for you to show deference to
the Word./ But wait, things are going so fast. I would first like to ask what
you saw along your journey.)

54. Ibid. 10.
55. Ibid. 12.
The ritual continues in this fashion up to the end — always marked by these amusing references. While it may be charged that the suitor is simply using religion, the ritual *per se* does not. The use of religious references merely indicates to what extent the religious has permeated the other aspects of human life.

It is relevant at this point to bring up the use of the categories, "sacred" and "profane." In contrast to Western technological society, Philippine society has often been described in terms of the integration between the sacred and the profane. The foregoing discussion of the continuum between the religious and the other aspects of everyday experience confirms, in one sense, this commonly-accepted integration of the sacred and profane in Filipino culture. However, a word of qualification is necessary.

The categories, "sacred" and "profane," are drawn from the experience of the modern West, and do not exactly fit Philippine experience. A closer look at the categories shows that they assume the existence of a sphere that is properly religious in contrast to another that is not. But the Philippine experience precisely negates this assumption, since one finds a continuum rather than a distinction of these spheres. To put it another way, human existence is understood in the traditional point of view as a whole, not fragmented.

The implications of this qualification can be considerable, especially in any study of the traditional form of faith. For example, in the anthology, *Readings in Philippine Religious Values*, Flor B. Malicay studies religious practices among female office workers in Manila, and comes up with the following comments:

In the higher echelon of office workers, female executives sit in conferences to map out plans for a year, a triennium or a decade, scientifically forecasting the future based on evaluations of past events, attempting objective assessments and come out with objective proposals too devoid of personal subjective valuations.

However, their individual personal lives are not treated as objectively as their jobs. The same ladies who work in a comparatively "modern" office put their lives completely in the hands of a "God" often seen as Lady Luck or _sverte_. They carry out practices that verge between religion and animism, or practices that are totally animistic.56

The data gathered by the study remains valuable, but the above assertions betray an uncritical acceptance of a fragmented view of life, separating sacred and profane. Such an acceptance eventually leads to a distorted picture of the traditional form of faith.

Granted the continuum between the religious and the other aspects of human existence in the traditional form of faith, it may be asked why the traditional form of faith does not seem to have much impact on social reality, particularly the economic and political. The answer or, at least, the beginnings of one lies in the understanding of how God works with humans — which leads to the discussion of the second underlying behavioral characteristic of the traditional form of faith.

2. Because of human dependence on God, good fortune is a sign of God’s favor.

Because the traditional form of faith sees the relationship between the religious and the other aspects of existence as a continuum, the entire range of human experience becomes completely open to God’s intervention. Whether the situation involves a malignant disease or a new business venture, the matter of divine action is a reality that one needs to confront. This is in no instance clearer than in the deeply entrenched practice of saying novenas in the traditional form of faith.

In the structure of most novenas, there is a part in which the devotee asks for a particular intention. For example, a prayer in the very popular novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help reads: "Buong gililw mong tunghayan kaming iyong mga anak na ngayon ay humihindi ng iyong tulong sa lahat ng aming pangangailangan, lalung-lalo na ang biyayang ito... (tumigil at sabihin ang iyong mga hangarin)."57 (Look tenderly upon us, your children who now ask for your help in all our needs, especially this particular grace... [here pause and make your requests]). Some places even have the practice of having the devotee write out letters like the following:

My dearest Mother of Perpetual Help,

This is thanksgiving letter for the endless blessings you have given me, my boyfriend and our family. First, it was my parent’s entering the cur-

57. Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help.
sillo. Then my parent’s approval of my boyfriend, and lastly, my boyfriend’s getting a job. All these, dear Mother, make me feel so happy but I feel I have done so little to repay you. I pray that all my work and sacrifices measure up in some way to show my gratitude.

Your loving daughter,
Christina

With letters such as this, the cycle from petition to thanksgiving is complete, and the sacred is not alien to any moment or matter in that cycle.

Since the human situation is regarded in this light, the posture of the person before God becomes one of utter dependence. Philippine religious literature has, in fact, always stressed dependence on God as one of its basic themes. The classic pasyon of Gaspar Aquino de Belen written in 1704 already developed this particular theme to perfection. The primacy of dependence as the basic religious posture can be expressed by the accompanying excerpt from an analysis of Macario Pineda’s story, “Ang Langit ni Ka Martin”:

*Dito maliwanag na napapaloob ang pagkaunawa sa pananampalataya bilang ganap na pagtitiwala sa Diyos. Sa ganitong pagkakaunawa, hindi pangunahin ang intelektuwal na pagtanggap sa proposisyon ng doktrina. Higit na mahalaga ang taos-pusong pag-asa sa Diyos.*

(What is clearly expressed here is the understanding of faith as complete trust in God. Intellectual assent to doctrine is not primary in this view. What is more important is wholehearted hope in God.)

In the story, the main character is presented as being dependent on God, not only in the realm of the religious but in the entirety of his life since the religious is not a sphere that can be separated from the rest.

Sociological studies have confirmed the prevailing attitude of dependence upon practitioners of the traditional form of faith. For example, in a research among devotees to the Black Nazarene, it was found that almost 70% of the respondents made the novena

60. Ibid. 192.
to ask help — meaning good health, material and spiritual blessings, good family life, and salvation. Julian Dacanay in a different study makes the following observations:

God is seen as a Father whose outstanding quality appears to be pity. Christ is a suffering Christ and this aspect summons a close identity with the Filipino males; the Blessed Mother, on the other hand, is identified with the women in her kindness, sorrow, understanding and role as mother. Also the Filipino has great confidence in the intercession of the saints and makes them his own. He is pre-disposed to miracles and miraculous results and thinks it almost God’s ordinary way of dealing with people.

The last sentence in the paragraph quoted above is particularly significant, because it describes how the traditional form of faith sees God’s action in human life. As mentioned earlier, this provides the key to understanding why on the behavioral level, the traditional form of faith has had little impact on the economic or political spheres inspite of the wholistic view of human existence that it has.

No matter how one may define a miracle, if one sees the totality of human life as completely open to God’s direct action, then obtaining God’s favor becomes the primary consideration. There is no denial here of human activity, only an affirmation of its relativity in relation to divine action. And this holds true for all human concerns, whether it be personal or meta-personal. Thus, the little impact that the traditional form of faith exhibits on the meta-personal level does not mean the absence of the religious on this level. It is an indication that, even on this level, what matters is God, not the human — God’s favor above all else.

The traditional form of faith gauges God’s favor in terms of good fortune. One who enjoys good fortune is in God’s favor. On the theoretical plane, this underlying behavioural characteristic is quite clear. However, what good fortune refers to in the concrete is not as easily determined.

Partly because of the wholistic view of life found in the traditional form of faith, and partly because of its insistence of depend-

ence on God as the basic human posture, good fortune is at least associated closely with tangible success. This is shown, for instance, in one of the predominant reasons why families request for house blessing. One study found out that "here 'blessings and graces' mean some outward benefits descending automatically upon the house."\textsuperscript{63} The benefits may be positive such as material welfare, good luck in business, and good health; or they may be negative in the sense of protection from calamities, evil spirits and misfortunes. Inspite of this close association between good fortune — and therefore God’s favor — and tangible success, the traditional form of faith is not premised on the attainment of these benefits. In fact, novena devotees when asked about the denial of their petitions answered unanimously that they would continue their devotion.\textsuperscript{64} Thus the picture of the traditional form of faith as being a \textit{quid pro quo} relationship with God is both simplistic and untrustful.

The underlying behavioral characteristics of the traditional form of faith discussed above have important social implications. Insofar as a continuum exists between the religious and the other aspects of human experience, the sacred is not at all alien to social realities. However, by itself, this produces ambiguous results. On the one hand, the social dimension becomes open to the religious. Yet, on the other hand, this very openness brings about an utter dependence on God on social matters, resulting in a practical denigration of human activity as contrasted to God’s intervention. The close association of God’s favor with concrete blessings even strengthens the basic ambiguity of these behavioral characteristics vis-a-vis social change. How this ambiguity is resolved in a particular instance does not only depend on these behavioral characteristics, but also on the normative principles and social structures associated with the traditional form of faith.

The present section has considered the traditional form of faith on the normative, structural, and behavioral levels. It did this by presenting what really amounts to a matrix for understanding the traditional form of faith. The matrix itself is not a photographic reproduction of this form of faith as found in a particular situa-

\textsuperscript{63} Gerlock, "Readings," 38.
\textsuperscript{64} Jacob, "Black Nazarene," 85.
tion, but an instrument through which a better insight into the traditional form of faith could be obtained.

In a later section, what this matrix has revealed about the traditional form of faith will then be seen in the light of Christian social mission.