

The compulsion of an empirical based analysis on religiosity: A theological and religious discourse from human experience

Asia Pacific Journal
of Management and
Sustainable Development
Vol. 9 No. 1, 9-18
March 2021 (Part II)
ISSN 2782-8557 (Print)

Jonathan James O. Canete

De La Salle University, La Salle College of Antipolo, Philippines
Ncanete976@gmail.com/jonathan_james_canete@dlsu.edu.ph

Date Received: October 22, 2020; Date Revised: February 27, 2021

Abstract – *In understanding religiosity in the domain of human experience, one should have an assiduous examination of the context of such experience and the factors that might affect its condition. Hence, religious studies must be multidimensional and interdisciplinary both in nature and in character. This approach to religiosity does not only affirm the richness of religious experience but also may engender novel theological and religious discourse; new way of understanding and ascertaining established theological and religious norms. However, an empirical analysis is not complete if not with the principles presented by human sciences and the methodology provided by statistics. This paper argues the necessity of an empirical based analysis of religious experiences utilizing Baring and Canete’s published empirical material, in arriving at a grounded theological and religious discourse. The paper is not a comparative analysis on the work of the aforementioned authors but a literary review in affirming the indubitable use of an empirical based analysis in arriving at a well-grounded theological and religious discourse.*

Keywords – *Discourse, Empirical Analysis, Human experience, Religiosity, Theology*

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, several studies have been conducted in the field of religiosity because it is believed to be an “important part of life for many people” [19]. In an empirical study conducted by Chaeyoon Lim [26], she found out that in a sample size of over 1.3 million respondents, there is a positive relationship between religiosity and the domains of subjective well-being. Therefore, a sense of religiosity is essential to developing a person’s “self-concept” and the temperament of one’s existence. One can posit that religiosity has something to do with the human person's existential condition; it has something to do with a person’s sense of self. Hence, religiosity deals with the way people look at the world either at the macrocosmic or microcosmic level, the way an individual would interact with his/her environment, with other people, and even with non-human beings. In other words, religiosity pertains to the human interface with the elements and aspects ostensible to it. Considering this premise, a sense of religiosity could not be limited to the domains of institutionalized religion [6] because, as a condition of human existence, religiosity has something to do with existential perception and a person’s disposition. In this case, religious phenomena are human conditions concerning the beliefs of an individual; religiosity is an experience of the human person concerning something profound that affects the condition of their existence [29, 43]. Understanding

religiosity in the domain of human experience, one should have an assiduous examination of the context of such experience and the factors that might affect its condition. Hence, religious studies must be multidimensional and interdisciplinary both in nature and in character.

It is in this thought that religious studies are a multidimensional investigation if it aims at making sense of various religious experiences [15, 25] as “key dimensions of human culture which can be understood in ways akin to other discipline’s understanding of their object” [16, 43, p.3]. As religious experiences integrally affect the person, the approach must be multidimensional or interdisciplinary to properly exhaust and understand the meaning of religious experiences and their probable effects on how an individual deals with oneself and with others. In the context of an interdisciplinary approach, vital to the understanding of religiosity are empirical evidence that are observable in themselves. The sets of empirical evidence are then subjected to various interdisciplinary approaches and practical and theoretical observations from different schools of thought in the fields of anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy [43], statistics, and both the applied and social sciences. This way of understanding religiosity is grounded in an individual's reality and life experiences, compared to the theological approach that appropriates and judges the sense of religiosity of an individual using

the lenses of Christian tradition precepts; theological reflections are grounded on the Judeo-Christian tradition. Such a way of comprehending religiosity “rested upon an acceptance of the truth claims of the tradition” [43, p.3].

This way of measuring and understanding religiosity has the tendency to limit the richness of religious experience by disregarding empirical accounts exclusive to the very perception of an individual and are analogous to their experiences. Theological reflection founded exclusively on Christian tradition tends to disregard the empirical dimension of religiosity and judges the quality of such experience as “religious” if it conforms with the established doctrinal and magisterial parameters of the Christian tradition. If a particular religious experience and the kind of religiosity that an individual exhibits do not coincide or even conform to the Christian tradition's categorical mandates and imperatives, it would then be a proscribed religious experience. However, this would disregard the mystery of the incarnation; the essence of *kerygma*; the way of the disciples that the Christian tradition upholds. De Mesa [12] argued that the way of the disciples and the crux of their evangelization (*kerygma*) is established in their fraternal relationship with the man on the cross; the man who created a dissonance in the cognitive, practical, and cultural fabric of society from his time to the present.

The coming of Jesus into the disciples' lives was an incarnation experience where the propinquity of God's presence was unfolded and made available in their midst. The theological significance of the disciples' evangelization is founded on their “nearness” to the presence of Jesus which provided them with an experience of the very person of Jesus; an experience like no other; a religious experience. Therefore, in this context, one can see that the Christian tradition is a theological exposition of the disciples' religious experiences on the person of Jesus who freely manifested himself and gave them new perspectives in looking at reality and in living their lives [5]. The disciples' religiosity and their new approach towards life are outcomes of their religious experiences. In context, one must be compelled into believing that religiosity only has something to do with and can only be measured through the lenses of established religion and institutionalized tradition. As a product of human experience, religiosity is an integral part of the life of an individual that has something to do with how one conducts oneself [3].

Therefore, religiosity's empirical dimension should not be discredited in any form of its theological discourse. By analyzing the empirical aspect of religiosity, one cannot know the lingering religious

temperament of an individual that might augment some theological reflections rooted in the lived experience of the individual to the rich well-spring of theology and religious studies. Hence, empirical-based analysis on religiosity and its aspects provides an avenue for a theological and religious discourse between theological reflection based on the Judeo-Christian tradition with the theological reflection based on contemporary religious experiences. This discourse would then create newfangled theological reflections that deconstruct and reconstruct previous theological and religious beliefs to arrive at new models of theological and religious discourse [46] that makes faith relevant and rooted in the contemporary context of the human person [22]. Hence, theological reflections based on empirical analysis of religious experiences constituting an individual's religiosity gives new ways of excavating more effectively the richness of faith and religiosity in the lenses of society's ever-changing context.

This is precisely what Baring of the Theology and Religious Education Department of De La Salle University and Cañete, an Applied Theology student, did in their respective published papers. Both authors were able to examine the sense of religiosity of selected individuals in the context of their religious perceptions and experiences. Baring's [2] manuscript entitled *Children's image of God and their parents: Explorations in children's spirituality* and Cañete's [7] work entitled *Teaching basic theological doctrines on love, marriage and religiosity: Reconciling the Church's teaching and the perspectives of Catholic teens* offer a theological discourse on religiosity and all its aspects, particularly in the field of youth spirituality on the level of empirically-based data gathered from their respondents and the statistical treatment they used in interpreting and making sense of the same data they have gathered in relation with the respondents' religious perception.

Hence, this paper aims to explore further and analyze the methodology and statistical treatment utilized by the authors mentioned above to know their respondents' religious perception. Knowing how they make sense of the empirical data they have gathered is crucial for understanding how religiosity is seen in the way their respondents look at reality, the idea of God, religion, moral precepts, spirituality, and the like. Likewise, this also attempts to assess that empirical-based analysis on religiosity provides adequate theological and religious reflection that appropriates the faith and the relevance of God in today's context.

LITERARY REVIEW

An Initial Look at Baring's Children's Image of God

As mentioned, religiosity has something to do with a person's disposition towards something that one believes, and how this disposition affects the way one looks at reality, and the manner of relationship that one has with himself or others, that comprises the person's very mode of existence [1, p.10]. In this case, the Filipino theologian and religious educator Baring had excavated, in his empirical research the area of religiosity that has something to do with the interconnectedness on "how children's experiences with their parents are expressed together with their image of God" [2, p. 277] which tells a person as to the kind of spirituality that they have. In other words, in this case, children's religiosity can be seen in their spirituality, closely tied up with their image of God in connection to their relationship with their parents.

The study of Baring aims to discover and probate with the use of empirical data and statistical analysis the interconnection of children's perception of their mother and father to their image of God. Here, one can determine two predominant variables – the image of God and the perception of parents. The task is to determine whether there are a close association and correlation between these two predominant variables and whether one variable affects the other predominant variable and other closely related variables. With the use of relevant literature, Baring noticed that various theories explain the effects of different factors on children's concept of God [14, 17, 33, 41], but it is the work of Rizzuto [37] that made a groundbreaking claim vis-à-vis the formation of the image of God in children through experienced-based or conceptually grounded methodologies [2]. In other words, an idea of God is formed in an individual at the early age of development through external experiences and mental introspection. "An image of God reflects one's experiences reinforces the claim that God images are formed concerning the individual's appreciation of the self and parents" [2, p. 278] [6, 38, 40]. Moreover, apparent to this is the study of De Roos [13] where the defining factor that takes utmost influence in the formation of the image of God among children is their relationship with those persons whose presence is evident in their developmental stage, or in the language of De Roos, the children's caregivers¹.

¹ Baring referred De Roos's concept of the caregiver to those who are in charge of the welfare of the children namely parents, teachers, guardians, butlers, and the like. Hence, Baring's explorations and generalizations on the notio

The quality of the relationship that children have with their caregivers has something to do with the nature of God's image formed among children. Hence, vital to De Roos for children to have a positive image of God is to have a good rapport with caregivers.

Baring [2] challenges this premise and the general assumption that one might think of when analyzing the concept on the influence of caregivers of De Roos [13], by considering the context of families in the contemporary setting and by postulating the possibility of a positive image of God amidst the unideal situation of the families. Another concern of Baring is the overabundant study of the development of God's image in children in the western context, and the little to no study on the same topic in the eastern setting, especially in the Filipino context. That is why the objective of Baring's empirical research in this field is to test the idea of De Roos if it is apparent in the context of Filipino children and among Filipino families; this, in itself, is revolutionary for the Philippines, as a nation with strong Catholic heritage [27], is used to theologizing that is directed by the strong doctrinal and magisterial influence which is often tends "unable to link with realities of life, issues, questions, and problems of the 21st century" [5, p.2].

A theologizing grounded in principles and ideas rather than empirical evidence; it is theology from above [21] whereby the cultural discourse of magisterial teachings appropriates an individual's faith and religiosity. Hence, Baring's approach in discovering the image of God is countercultural in the context of human experience, for it is foreign and pristine in the context of Filipino religiosity. That is why the study of Baring gives a new way of understanding the faith through how the faithful appropriated it in their context and experiences that comprises their sense of religiosity by empirically analyzing how children from selected government schools look at God based on how they see their caregivers, in Baring's study the children's parents.

An Overview of Canete's Study on Catholic Teen Religiosity

The published research of Cañete that this paper examines was induced by the seeming dualism existing between Catholic teens' sense of religiosity and their perception of love and marriage issues. What particularly

of caregiver gives a person an idea that the formation of the image of God in the consciousness of children is not limited to their experiences with their parents but is apparent to everyone who has direct influence on the formation of their identity.

moving in his study was the possibility of this perception on the variables above to openness to homosexual union while considering their Catholic upbringing, and to describe the kind of religiosity that they have whether it is in accord with the precepts of the Church (which is described as being religiously conservative) or not (hence categorizing them as liberal). If their notion on love and marriage is parallel to what the theological discourse of the Church or the demands of their faith, then they might be considered as practicing, but if they perceived and understand love and marriage apart from what is standardized by the Catholic faith, then they fall under the liberal wing [7]. Hence, there appears to a tension between the conservative wing and the liberal wing of the Catholic faith.

One of the objectives that Cañete has in mind in writing his work was to know, based on empirical evidence and statistical interpretations on the gathered results from various respondents, whether liberality or being part of the liberal wing means unfaithfulness to the teachings of the Christian faith, and therefore not irreligious, or one can still be considered religious or faithful to the precepts of the Catholic faith while taking a liberal stance. Hence, Canete has ventured to see how teens understand their Catholic faith and practice it in their ways, forming a theological discourse on Christian love and marriage that is germane and meaningful in today's social context, challenging the faithful to engage in a theological dialogue that leads to an advent of a contemporary novel religiosity. In doing so, he conducted an empirical study inviting some of his grade 12 students in the Senior High School Department of Pasig Catholic College as respondents.

The result of the said study proved interesting for it gives an idea of the relationship between liberalism and conservatism as applied in religious perception. The scholar R.N Van Wyk [45] has mentioned that liberalism in religious understanding is a school of thought that quashes conventional understanding and appropriation of religious belief. This paradigm of understanding has affected how liberal Christians live the faith, comprehend Christian tradition, and appropriates the Christian values in the demands of their current socio-personal setting and context. In other words, liberal Christians find meaning in their religious beliefs in the circumstances of their lived experience, whereas conservative Christians find a hard time in going beyond established religious norms and accept novel appropriations of the faith. Hence, there is a conflict between their understanding of the faith and their religiosity [7].

The result of the empirical study bridged the gap between religious liberalism and conservatism. It is known that, because of the religious temperament of the young that comprise the kind of religiosity they have [20], young people are always being labeled as liberal and therefore, heretics. However, the result of Canete's study shows that young people can still be religious even though they have a liberal stance on the doctrinal dimension of their faith and an unconventional appropriation of this doctrinal dimension to the present context. By examining and interpreting the perception of the respondents on love, marriage, and religiosity, Canete was able to come up with the conclusion that young people are open to the possibility of the homosexual union while maintaining faithfulness to the essence of the Christian teaching on love, and their belief in the centrality of God in their life as well as the importance of religion.

FRAMEWORK

The framework of Baring and Canete's respective work would help their corresponding readers know their apparent contribution to the world of religious education and draw possible interconnections between the two studies, especially on their significant contributions to the field. Nevertheless, one must determine the two works' overarching themes and subsequent analysis of their interconnectedness in religious studies.

The overarching theme of Baring's work, as mentioned above, has something to with the prevailing image of God among children as a result of their parental upbringing or their perception of their parents, caregivers, or those charged to look after them in relation with the manner on how they are raised. The children's experience of the way they are treated or taken care of constitutes their overall image of God as prescribed in the study of De Roos [13], Benson and Spilka [4], Rizzuto [38], Spilka, Shaver, and Kirkpatrick [40]. The idea of the possible relationship of one's image of God with parental perception is the working hypothesis in Baring's study. This working hypothesis was tested and probed in Filipino children using a research-made survey instrument formed by conducting a focus group discussion (FGD). The author deemed it essential that the respondents came from nonsectarian schools, "considering the challenging circumstances affecting the family backgrounds of most children enrolled in these schools" [2, p. 280]. From these nonsectarian schools, there were 241 identified respondents from the Grade five-level selected through convenience sampling.

The study's objective is to describe the predominant image of God using gathered empirical data from the selected grade five respondents. The working hypothesis, which is the subject of Baring's study, constitutes other relevant issues necessary to capture the essence of the working hypothesis. Issues like "experiences with father and mother that characterize respondents' perceptions, the qualitative relationship between their image of God and parents, and the possibility of any relationship between boys' and girls' perception in terms of selected religious experiences at home concerning parental or divine influence" [2, p. 279] are all part of the working hypothesis which determines the possible relationship between the image of God with parental perception. These variables, both nominal and ordinal were presented using crosstabulation, make up the very foundation of Baring's study or the very theme of his published work.

On the other hand, the cornerstone of Canete's work revolves around the moral question of the permissiveness of homosexual union about the sense of religiosity as perceived by selected Grade 12 Senior High School students of Pasig Catholic College. The author determined 214 samples out of 473 overall population sizes of Grade 12 students using Krejcie and Morgan's [23] table to determine samples. From these samples, Canete [7] determined their perception of homosexual union by giving them the self-constructed research instrument that would measure their religiosity and perception of love and marriage. These variables are necessary to determine if their notion of love and marriage inclines tolerance of homosexual union. The outcome of their response would establish the nature of their religiosity as belonging to the conservative wing or liberal wing of Christianity. Hence, the author had determined the potential permissiveness of homosexual union as the working hypothesis, while religiosity would be the independent variable, and the notion of love and marriage would be the dependent variables.

Looking closely at their overarching themes and their subsequent elements, one might draw a clandestine connection between the two-novel work themes about religious education. Religious education is not just a mere platform on which faith is known and understood [9] and where students learn about God, but it has something to do with how a person is changed and transformed by the things that one learns from the faith and of God [35]. Hence, knowledge has an indirect connection between attitude; Cognition influences emotions and behavior [30].

In religious studies, to make sense of learners' religious or theological concepts, a religious education instructor must not discredit how students understand those concepts based on their same experience in life. The way learners adequately understand an idea or a principle is through practical learning; it is learning while doing. Religious concepts like God as love or any other image that theology would ascribe to God would only be meaningful to a person, especially to students, if such a concept touched the realm of their experience. The study of Baring on God's image considers how children interpret God based on their experiences with their parents. Children would initially know about an aspect of God based on how they perceived these aspects and qualities in their parents, and this would be their parameters in dealing, looking, and considering others, comprising their religiosity as seen in Canete's study. Therefore, religious studies must offer a theological discourse platform where the Christian faith or other religious beliefs are enriched. It is also offering a proper venue, in this regard, for some religious, theological, liturgical, moral, and doctrinal clarifications for learners to better understand the norms of the Christian tradition without any daunting element. An exchange of religious experience under the spirit of genuine dialogue enriches the faith of people involved and the very faith itself, along with its theological and religious trappings.

PROBLEM

The empirical dimension of religiosity should not be discredited in order to understand and describe the religious temperament of an individual and arrive at a theological reflection on how the faith is appropriated in the life of the person. This immensely enriches established theological norms and creates a dynamic movement in theological discourse. Therefore, one should take advantage and see the value of other schools of thought and disciplines in indulging in the richness of a person's religious experiences. However, knowing the right school of thought to seek counsel with and the appropriate discipline to be utilized is a riddle that one needs to resolve in this regard. These schools of thought and disciplines are tools that could help a person in describing diverse phenomena [28], in this case, the religiosity of an individual and their religious experiences. One needs to consider various factors in knowing the suitable tools to be used in understanding religious experience. Nonetheless, paramount consideration should be rendered on the nature of the religious experience and the questions that one wants to answer in the investigation process. Religious experience

necessitates a proper tool to be used in order to arrive at the proper interpretation and analysis [31] of its nature, and what one would want to investigate using the proper approach. Therefore, one must be clear about the objective of the investigation before arriving at any schools or thought or discipline to be used as a tool of investigation; the problem and possible inquiries that one wants to address in examining a religious experience or the religiosity of an individual; lastly, the nature of an individual's religiosity and its similar religious experience for "nature speaks of itself" [36].

These considerations are evident in the study of both Baring [2] and Canete [7]. Both authors are clear with their objectives, queries, and the things they wanted to investigate out of their own chosen topics of inquiry about religiosity, and how this is evident in their respondents' perception and experiences. Because of this attitude towards research investigation, Baring and Canete were able to make sense of the empirical data they have gathered and achieved their respective objectives of inquiry. By using the right tools and employing the right school of thought, both authors were able to give a straightforward narrative, characterization, and description of children's image of God in relation with their perception of their parents by Baring, and on the problem of teen religiosity as in line with the possibility of permissiveness in homosexual union by Canete.

Therefore, what tool did both authors use in their respective studies? How did they use these tools to make sense of the empirical data they have successfully gathered? What are some considerations, if there were any, did they cogitate in using those tools in their study? These are some of the questions the next part would answer, for it is vital that one understands and examine the manner of how these tools are being used, especially in the context of religious studies, in order to arrive at a plausible interpretational narrative that describes a religious experience in its very nature.

ANALYSIS

As stated, Baring and Canete's theological and religious expositions are grounded in empirical analysis and driven by grounded data from the respondents themselves. Hence, it is a must for them to draw meaning from experience based on their respective respondents' perception. Therefore, in order to arrive at sound empirical interpretations of various gathered data on their respective field of inquiry in religious education, primarily in the field of children spirituality and religiosity, both authors have utilized the disciplines of statistics and the social sciences. The very framework

that they used in their studies was grounded in psychological and sociological ideologies [2, pp.278-279] [7, pp. 52-54], and they approached the problem of their respective studies using statistical treatment, namely the Descriptive and Inferential Statistical Approach.

Descriptive statistical analysis is important for both studies for it gives the general characteristic by presenting data in an organized and summarized manner that best present a meaningful description [8, 24] Here, the children speak for themselves and the interpretation that one should be made does not go beyond what the data present in themselves. In context, in order to faithfully capture the very perception on the subject matter of both authors' corresponding respondents in their studies, Descriptive Statistics is a must. If one wants to know perceptions of a particular variable, Descriptive Statistical Analysis is the best way to utilize, for it remains faithful to what the data present in themselves. Hence, Descriptive Statistics is a fundamental element in any study that require empirical analysis and characterization of data. On the other hand, Inferential Statistical Analysis, as defined by the study of Chanoknath and Lourangrath [8, p.31], is "using the sample of descriptive statistics to make an inference" on the possibility of any relationship of each gathered data. Here, inferential statistics take one step further in analyzing what the data could mean in their association with each other that establishes part of the study's overall condition. Even though Descriptive Statistical Analysis could present sound results that might aid in the progress of a study, it is not complete without further inferentially analyzing the relationship of each data. Because every piece of data in its richness could offer a lot in building up the objective of a study, it is advisable to utilize both Descriptive and Inferential Statistical Analysis to be comprehensive in one's research.

The study of Baring entitled *Children's image of God and their parents: an exploration in children's spirituality* approached its identified problems by having a Descriptive Quantitative as its research design, which necessitates a plausible use of Descriptive Statistical Treatment. Baring has employed this kind of statistical treatment in his self-developed Likert scale and nominal scale measures given to his target respondents and was consistent with the variables defined in the study. The Descriptive Statistical treatment had given Baring a sound analysis on Nominal data using cross-tabulation frequency distribution; ordinal data were analyzed through summary statistics of the data's mean and standard deviation, and "to compare scores of religious

experiences between boys and girls” [2, p.281], an independent sample t-test was used which is a kind of an Inferential Statistical Analysis. This gives the researcher not just the answer to his research problem and questions, but more importantly, some insights that pave the way for novel theological and religious discourse in the sphere of religious education.

The result and the insight of the study of Baring in the context of Filipino children in selected government schools challenge previous and present western scholarship on the direct influence of the environment and caregivers to children’s inclusive image of God [4, 13, 38, 40], for “the children’s experience with their parents do not appear to influence them to view God in a similar light. From a psychological viewpoint, the children assigned a functional image to their mother and fathers in contrast to a positive personal impression given to God” [2, p. 286].

On the other hand, Canete’s study entitled *Teaching fundamental theological doctrines on love, marriage and religiosity: Reconciling the Church's teaching and the perspectives of Catholic teens* had approached the problem and the defined variables of his study by designing a Descriptive Mix-method Research Design, where it sought to measure the perception of the respondents on “preexisting ecclesial norm on love, marriage, and religiosity; illustrates their belief as conservative or liberal, and determines if such beliefs compliments or endangers the Church” an available, [7, p. 54]. However, to arrive at an appropriate outcome, the author had used both Descriptive Analysis and Pearson Correlation Analysis (Pearson-r) as the research’s very statistical treatment on gathered data.

“Descriptive Analysis (DA) was used in treating and describing the basic feature of the data” [7, p. 55] of each variable stipulated in the study; DA has shown the scale or level of acceptability the responses of the author’s samples fell. This is necessary for the author to determine the quality of his respondents' notion of love, marriage, and religiosity as liberal or conservative. While Pearson Correlation Analysis was operated in order to determine the possible relationship of each variable [42]; this would “determine if the sense of religiosity of the respondents has a significant relationship with their notion of love and marriage” [7, p.55]. With the aid of these statistical treatments, the result of Canete’s study gave the academe and the sphere of religious education an idea that Catholic teens “do have a strong sense of Catholic faith” [7, p. 62] by having a firm belief in God and the precepts of the Church. However, their perception of love and marriage goes beyond the restrictions of gender and

magisterial teachings, leading to the appreciation of homosexual union, which comprises their religious temperament.

The result of Baring’s study, therefore, offers an avenue for a relevant discourse on the theology of *imago Dei* (image of God), where its established doctrinal theology meets the empirical and perception-based theology, in order to arrive at a meaningful theological and religious synthesis on the subject matter. The same goes in Canete's study, where the theology of love and marriage are appropriated in the context of individuals whose gender does not belong to the conventional while maintaining the essence of such theologies. Equally, the same study has given one an idea that the young, religious and spiritual in their ways, have something to offer in making the faith and the belief in the divine relevant in the present context [34]. The voice of the young is the contextualization of faith in contemporary times. The empirical study of Baring and Canete in theology and religious education offers a way of seeing the faith from the perspective, perception, temperament, and lived experience of people. This lived experience bellows the mystery of the incarnation of God – a God who became man and dwell among humanity (Cf. John 1:14) and walks side-by-side with the entire human race (Cf. 2 Timothy 3:16).

DISCUSSION

New ways of seeing and discovering the faith would not be possible if the theological and religious discourse is trapped within the four corners of the faith's scholastic interpretation. If such would ever happen, the light of the faith with its theological and religious dimensions “might have been considered sufficient for societies of old but was felt to be of no use for new times, for humanity comes of age, proud of its rationality and anxious to explore the future in novel ways” [18, p. 4]. For the faith to be meaningful to modern times, theological and religious discourse should be done in its very arena; the theological and religious discourse should permeate the very fabric of modern thought and find its relevance in its pedagogical discourse. Hence, the discourse should ground itself in the inductive way of exploring ideas where human experience and how an individual looks at specific matters of reality.

The starting point of theological and religious discourse is the human experience and not the established doctrinal nor magisterial ideologies, giving an individual in the spectrum of theology and religious education “a fresh vision and new eyes to see” [18, p. 6] in understanding things. It is like finding God in all

things, especially in the dynamism, particularity, and littleness of human experience [10, 32]. Understanding the faith, with all its tenets, from the perspective of human experience humanizes theological and religious discourse [11, 39]. As mentioned in the introductory part of this study, an empirically based reflection paves the way for novel theological and religious discourse that is more human than conceptual, enabling an individual to take ownership of such discourse and experience the Divine's indwelling presence evident in his/her life.

Hence, it is necessary to utilize what the social, human, and statistical sciences and the like in empirical-based theological and religious analysis. Statistical tools like what Baring and Canete had used in their respective studies present a methodology in approaching gathered empirical data. At the same time, social and human sciences and the theological and religious sciences could draw some sense and make inferential analyses out of the results of statistical evaluation. Descriptive and Inferential Statistical Treatment would be helpful because it helps a researcher to precisely know the perception of an individual regarding an aspect of the faith that is being inquired based on their experiences and establish connections between data to detect "lingering phenomena." This is what Baring and Canete did in understanding how their respondents understand and look at the subject of religious and theological inquiry presented to them, and how they affect their overall behavior and outlook in life given the dimensions and variables of their study. Hence, these tools and schools of thought had satisfied the overall research design of their respective studies. Therefore, statistics and other schools of thought go hand-in-hand in the case of an empirically-based study of religiosity and theology, for one offers the methodology, and the other offers the principle.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, studies on theology and religious education would be meaningful and relevant enough if individuals can see themselves in the narrativity of each theological and religious discourse; they can "own" the discourse, reshape the sense of such discourse without taking away its essence, and enrich it in the course of self-appropriation. The appropriation of the faith in the personal context of an individual does not belittle nor deconstruct the *sensus fidei* (sense of the faith) but augments it in the ever-changing context of the lived world of human beings; with this, the faith with all its theological and religious trappings becomes meaningful and worthwhile. The faith is not just a complex narration

of doctrinal narratives and taciturn ideas, but a tangible experience on divine reality where God becomes present in the personal world of the person. This idea connotes the personalization and humanization of the faith instead of its doctrinal rigidity. Hence, theology and religious education is a narration of an expression of a personal journey where one realizes the ever-pertinent presence of God in one's life, comprising a kind of religious temperament or, in short, one's religiosity. This approach towards the faith offers novel theological and religious discourse that needs to be examined, heard, and explored. Therefore, one needs proper tools in excavating the richness of this pristine territory of an experience-based theology and religiosity seen in one's religiosity.

Moreover, one could best inquire about the aid of social and human sciences as well as statistics. The human sciences could offer principles and ideologies that one could use to examine a person's theological and religious perception; however, statistics offer the methodology on how to approach them. The utilization of these tools could present a sound and practical understanding of the object matter and lead to the subsistence of new theological and religious hypotheses that make the faith ever relevant. In context, this study, places paramount prominence on an empirical-based approach towards examining the phenomenon of personal religiosity and the practical theological and religious discourse, believing that understanding the religious temperament of people in their context would enrich the repertoire of theological and religious treatise and make the faith and God present in the here and the now.

REFERENCES

- [1] Bae, B. (2016). Believing selves and cognitive dissonance: Connecting individual and society via "Belief". *Religions*, 7(7), 86. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel7070086>
- [2] Baring, R. (2012). Children's image of God and their parents: Explorations in children's spirituality. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 17(4), 277-289. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1364436x.2012.746935>
- [3] Baring, R. V., Lee, R., Sta Maria, M., & Liu, Y. (2016). Configuration of student Spirituality/Religiosity: evidence from a Philippine university. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 21(3-4), 163-176. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1364436X.2016.1207617>
- [4] Benson, P., and B. Spilka. 1973. God image as a function of self-esteem and locus of control. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 12: 297-310.

- [5] Cacho, R. G. (2020). At the Heart of Jesus: A Theological Reflection of the 1593 Ama Namin. St. Scholastica's College, Manila.
- [6] Canete, J. O., & Pandey, D. (2020). The social dynamics of spirituality and youthfulness: A social interplay between disposition and process. *Indonesian Journal of Social and Environmental Issues (IJSEI)*, 1(2), 123-132. <https://doi.org/10.47540/ijsei.v1i2.53>
- [7] Cañete, J. J. (2020). Teaching basic theological doctrines on love, marriage and religiosity: Reconciling the Church's teaching and the perspectives of Catholic teens. *International Journal of Research Studies in Education*, 9(2), 51-65. <https://doi.org/10.5861/ijrse.2020.5814>
- [8] Chanoknath, S., & Lourangrath, P. I. (2015). Descriptive and Inferential Statistics. *International Journal of Research and Methodology in Social Science*, 1(1), 22-35.
- [9] Clayton, M., & Stevens, D. (2018). What is the point of religious education? *Sage Journal*, 16(1), 65-81. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1477878518762217>
- [10] Cueto, A., & Del Castillo, F. (2017). Finding God in the ordinary: Exposition of the little flower's spirituality. *Asia Pacific Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 5(1), 160-174.
- [11] De Gruchy, J. W. (2018). Christian humanism, progressive Christianity and social transformation. *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 31(1). <https://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3027/2018/v31n1a3>
- [12] De Mesa, J. M. (1996). Following the Way of the Disciples: A Guide for Doing Christology in a Cultural Context. EAPI Pastoral Resources.
- [13] De Roos, Simone, Iedema, Jurjen, Miedema, Siebren. April 2001. Young children's descriptions of God: Influences of parents' and teachers' God concepts and religious denomination of schools. *Journal of Beliefs and Values: Studies in Religion and Education* 22(1): 19-30.
- [14] Dickie, J.R., A.K. Eschleman, D.M. Merasco, M. Vander Wilt, and M. Johnson. 1997. Parent-child relationships and children's images of God. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36: 25-43.
- [15] Erricker, C. (2010). *Religious education: A conceptual and interdisciplinary approach for secondary level*. Routledge.
- [16] Flood, G. (1999). *Beyond phenomenology: Rethinking the study of religion*. A&C Black.
- [17] Fowler, James. 1989. Strength for the journey: Early childhood development in selfhood and faith, in, *Faith development in early childhood*, ed. D.A. Blazer. Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1-36.
- [18] Francis. (2013, June 29). *Lumen Fidei*. Vatican. https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_encyclica-lumen-fidei_en.pdf
- [19] Hope Channel Southeast Asia. (2020, March 16). The importance of religion. Hope Channel South East Asia | Christian Television. <https://hopetv.asia/articles/the-importance-of-religion/>
- [20] Khoynezhad, G., Rajaei, A. R., & Sarvarazemy, A. (2012). Basic Religious Beliefs and Personality Traits. *Iranian Journal of Psychiatry*, 7(2), 82-86. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3428642/>
- [21] Krasevac, E. L. (1987). 'Christology from above' and 'Christology from below'. *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 51(2), 299-306. <https://doi.org/10.1353/tho.1987.0032>
- [22] Kreilein, A. (2017, April 18). The importance of faith in our lives. Medium. https://medium.com/@AK3R303_63416/the-importance-of-faith-in-our-lives-43b3e6eb4ff8
- [23] Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30(3), 607-610. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001316447003000308>
- [24] Laerd. (2018). *Descriptive and inferential statistics. SPSS Statistics Tutorials and Statistical Guides*. <https://statistics.laerd.com/statistical-guides/descriptive-inferential-statistics.php>
- [25] Liagkis, M. K. (2016). Teaching religious education in schools and adolescents' social and emotional development. An action research on the role of religious education and school community in adolescents' lives. *Journal of Cultural and Religious Studies*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.17265/2328-2177/2016.02.004>
- [26] Lim, C. (2015). Religion and subjective well-being across religious traditions: Evidence from 1.3 million Americans. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 54(4), 684-701. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12232>
- [27] Lipka, M. (2015, January 9). 5 facts about catholicism in the Philippines. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/01/09/5-facts-about-catholicism-in-the-philippines/>
- [28] Lumen. (n.d.). *Psychological perspectives: Introduction to psychology*. Lumen Learning – Simple Book Production. <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wsusandbox/chapter/psychological-perspectives/>
- [29] McCutcheon, R. T. (1997). *Manufacturing religion: The discourse on Sui generis religion and the politics of nostalgia*. Oxford University Press.
- [30] Millar, M. G., & Tesser, A. (1989). The effects of affective-cognitive consistency and thought on the attitude-behavior relation. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 25(2), 189-202. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031\(89\)90012-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031(89)90012-7)
- [31] Moser, P. K. (2019). *Understanding religious experience: From conviction to life's meaning*. Cambridge University Press.
- [32] Nagy, B. (2011). *Personal relationship between God and human persons: In the center of our human reality and Christian theology* [Master's thesis].

- <https://dlib.bc.edu/islandora/object/bc-ir%3A101852/datastream/PDF/view>
- [33] Nye, C. W. (1981). The development of the concept of God in children [Paper presentation]. 11th annual interdisciplinary USC-UAP International Conference on Piagetian Theory and the helping professions, Los Angeles, CA.
- [34] Pease, R. B. (2020). Contextualization: The continuing search for relevance. Alliance World Fellowship. <https://awf.world/consult/contextualization-the-continuing-search-for-relevance/>
- [35] QCA. (2009). Planning, teaching and assessing the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties Religious education. Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/19899/1/P_scales_RE.pdf
- [36] Resnick, M. D. (2008). Res ipsa loquitur. *Family & Community Health*, 31(1), S5-S14. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.fch.0000304013.82760.71>
- [37] Rizzuto, Ana Maria. 1970. Critique of the contemporary literature in the scientific study of religion. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, in New York, NY.
- [38] Rizzuto, Ana Maria. 1979. *The birth of the living God: A psychoanalytic study*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- [39] Schweiker, W. (2009). Humanizing Religion. *Journal of Religion*, 89(2), 214–35. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444392814.ch2>
- [40] Spilka, B., P. Shaver, and L. Kirkpatrick. 1985. A general attribution theory for the psychology of religion. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 24: 1–20.
- [41] Tamminen, Kalevi. 1996. Gender differences in religiosity in children and adolescents. In *Research in Religious education*, Leslie Francis, William Kay and William Campbell, eds. Herefordshire: Gracewing Fowler Wright Books and Macon, Georgia: Smyth and Helwys Publication Inc., 163–88.
- [42] The University of Minnesota. (2020). Types of statistical tests. Retrieved from <https://cyfar.org/types-statistical-tests>
- [43] Tomalin, E. (2007). *Religious Studies and Development: A Literature Review* (6th ed.). International Development Department, University of Birmingham.
- [44] Van Camp, D., Barden, J., & Sloan, L. (2016). Social and individual religious orientations exist within both intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 38(1), 22-46. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15736121-12341316>
- [45] Van Wyk, R. N. (1987). Liberalism, Religion and Politics. *Public Affairs Quarterly*, 1(3), 59-76. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40435651>
- [46] Ventura, M. C. (2000). Theological Deconstruction and Reconstruction in the Fight against Racism. World Council of Churches. <https://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/echoes/echoes-17-06.html>

COPYRIGHTS

Copyright of this article is retained by the author/s, with first publication rights granted to APJMSD. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4>).