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# MEASURING THE IMAGE OF GOD: THE GOD IMAGE INVENTORY AND THE GOD IMAGE SCALES

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**The God Image Inventory (GII) is an 8-scale, 156-item, psychometric instrument to measure the image of God, developed for clinical and pastoral use in  $N = 1$  cases. For research use with a large  $N$ , the God Image Scales (GIS), in a 6-scale, 72-item format, or a 3-scale, 36-item format, are preferred subsets of the GII. The GII and GIS are designed on the basis of Ana-Maria Rizzuto's distinction between the God concept and the God image. They explore issues of belonging (Presence and Challenge scales), goodness (Acceptance and Benevolence scales) and control (Influence and Providence scales). The scales of the GII have demonstrated internal reliability and preliminary validity work has been done. Standards have been developed on an  $N = 1580$  sample of U.S. adults, but are applicable, at least to date, only for Christian subjects. A computerized version is expected shortly. The GIS (text in Appendix) have begun to be used by other researchers, and results to date have supported the validity of the GIS scales.**

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**T**he distinction between the God concept and the God representation or God image was introduced by Ana-Maria Rizzuto (1970) over 25 years ago. The God concept, she suggests, is an intellectual, mental-dictionary definition of the word "God," whereas the God image is a psychological working internal model of the sort of person that the individual imagines God to be. This model is not an internal reification, a thing within the mind, as some less nuanced uses of object relations language would seem to imply, but a "compound memorial process" aggregating memories from various sources and associating them with God (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 54). An analogy might be a data base of memories, with multiple codings and

accesses, with certain sets of entries coded "mother," "father," "God," etc. The roots of such a representation are therefore clearly not conceptual, but experiential. A representation of "mother" is formed from one's experiences of mother, and so forth. The God representation differs from other representations, however, in several ways. First, it is not based directly on experiences of God. Rather, as the child begins to form a content for the word "God," other memories, most often memories originally associated with primary care givers (usually one or both parents), are given an additional coding for God. Further, the God representation, because it is not tied to direct personal experiences, can be more freely adapted by the individual as needed. This freedom for reconfiguration enables the God image to function as what Winnicott (1953) calls a "transitional object" in the sense that it exists on the boundary between the internal and external worlds (p. 14).

Even if God concept and God image are not distinguished, some interesting hypotheses can be formed about the relationship between an individual's notion of God and his or her self-image. One can argue on grounds of cognitive consistency, for example, that it should be difficult for people with very low self-esteem to accommodate a notion of a God who loves and accepts them. Empirical work using adjective inventories for God have, in fact, found some such relationships, though results have not been entirely consistent. Benson and Spilka (1973), for example, found a correlation between loving God concepts and self-esteem, though not between controlling God concepts and external locus of control. Jolley (1983) compared God concepts and self concepts and found correlations for a group of prisoners but not for a group of students.

Distinguishing between the God concept and the God image strengthens the expected relationship

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between God image and self image, and points the way to the development of instruments to measure this correlation. Rizzuto (1979) argues that the God image is constructed by each person with a fair degree of freedom for the purpose of maintaining an at least minimally acceptable image of the self. Normally the God image is largely a projection or inflation of parent images, favorable or unfavorable. But not always. The raw material supplied by a parent image can be reversed, or substituted for, or subjected to any of a whole host of defense mechanisms on the way to becoming a God image. Her case studies of psychoanalytic patients show a variety of such transformations. Following her methodology and using the projective instrument she designed for this work, McDargh (1983) shows similar relationships between God image and self image in normal subjects. Similarly, Philibert (1985) outlines "symbolic" (healthy) and "diabolic" (unhealthy) images of God that might be expected to characterize success and failure in each of the Eriksonian stages of self image development.

If the God image is theorized to be distinct from the God concept and related to the self image, certain implications for instrument design follow. First, care must be taken in design to focus on the personal experience and feelings of the subject, rather than allowing the subject to default to the much more readily available God concept in responding to the instrument.

Adjective rating systems are likely on theoretical grounds to produce exactly what Gorsuch (1968) found: a result dominated by what he called the "Traditional Christian Concept of God," which greatly resembles something from a catechism or Sunday school manual. Second, the instrument should focus as much as possible on the relationship between the subject and his or her God image. Greeley (1981) attempts to do this by having the subject choose between pairs of relation-oriented labels for God, such as mother-father. This approach has merit, but risks confusion especially in smaller samples because the same name or label can have very different experiential connotations for different subjects.

On theoretical grounds, it would be difficult to improve on Rizzuto's projective instrument, but the use of projective instruments in empirical research is limited by the time and difficulty of scoring and by problems in inter-rater reliability. Even in single-subject clinical work or case-study research, the instrument is limited by the experience and skill of the

interpreter. There ought to be a niche for an objective psychometric instrument designed to capture a subject's God image, focusing on the relationship between the self image and the God image and avoiding the confound of the God concept.

## THE DESIGN OF THE GOD IMAGE INVENTORY

### *Dimensions to be Measured*

If the God image is a transitional object, closely related to the self image, then basic questions for the self image should be important questions for the God image as well. Dimensions of the God image to be measured by an instrument, then, might well be guided by answers to the question "what critical issues or areas of relationship between the God image and the self image can be identified and operationalized in an instrument?" Philibert (1985) lists three critical self image areas as feelings of belonging, fundamental goodness, and control. Spilka, Shaver, and Kirkpatrick (1985) give a similar three item list of basic self image issues: meaning, control, and self-esteem. Comparing the two, one may note that meaning can be viewed as the intellectual subset of the belonging issue: the attempt to see things as somehow fitting together, forming a comprehensible network of reality of which the self is a part.

These three topics, belonging, goodness, and control, each yield two at least theoretically interesting and measurable dimensions of the God image, the first of each pair more primitive epigenetically and more focused on the self; the second, developmentally subsequent to and growing out of the first, more focused on the object of the relationship.

The primary form of the belonging issue is the *Presence* dimension: "Is God there for me?" This captures the impact on the God image of what Winnicott (1953) posits as the first belonging question: for an infant, he suggests, the question "Do I belong?" is experienced as the question "Is mother there for me?" This first memory available for the construction of the parent image, the memory of presence or absence (relative, of course), is logically, therefore, also the first building block available for the construction of the God image.

Practically all object relations developmentalists would agree, in one phrasing or description or another, that after the symbiotic mother-infant phase, the next stage or issue to arise is the separation-individuation question, the emergence of the

infant as an individual distinct from its mother. McDargh (1983) highlights the importance of this issue for the formation of the God image. Phrased in terms of the God image, the issue would seem to be something like "Does the fact that God is there for me mean that I should stay here with God, or does God's presence in my life support or even demand that I move out into and interact with the world around me?" This second belonging issue can be labeled *Challenge*, and summed up in the question "Does God want me to grow?"

These first two dimensions correspond closely to the approach of Kirkpatrick (1986), who applies the attachment theory of Bowlby (1969), to God image work, and suggests that "safe haven" and "secure base," the twin roles of the attachment figure, are thus the twin roots of the God image. The safe haven is a figure to whom the child may retreat (and reliably find present) for succor as needed. The second role, secure base, relates to the same figure and one whose availability serves to empower (or challenge) the child to move out and explore his or her world.

The primitive form of the goodness issue is "Am I good enough for God to love?," measured on a scale labeled *Acceptance*. The secondary form of this question, focused on the object rather than the subject, poses a question something like "Is God the sort of person who would want to love me?," and this dimension is labeled *Benevolence*. This question is a little more focused on the character of God rather than on the relationship of God with the subject, and is thus a little weak on theoretical grounds because of the danger of default to the God concept, where the catechism answer is clearly "Yes, of course."

The control issue clearly divides into two obvious questions: the epigenetically prior question, which is labeled *Influence*, "How much can I control God?" and the secondary question, labeled *Providence*, "How much can God control me?" It would seem at first blush that control of God (active voice for the subject) and control by God (passive voice for the subject) are opposite ends of a bi-polar continuum. Various theologians (e.g., Niebuhr, 1962; Rahner, 1978) would argue to the contrary that God's freedom and human freedom vary directly and not inversely. But whether these dimensions vary directly or inversely in experience of the subject is a matter for psychological, not theological, investigation. Either way, the two dimensions are distinct in theory and worthy of an attempt at independent measurement.

To these six dimensions of the God image to be measured were added two shorter supplementary scales designed especially to facilitate interpretation in  $N = 1$  situations: a scale labeled *Faith*, asking "Do I believe that my God image corresponds to a being who actually exists?" and a *Salience* scale which asks "How important to me is my relationship with this God?"

### *Techniques of Measurement*

In order to avoid as far as possible the confounding default to the God concept, it would seem better to use items that are full sentences, not just words or phrases, and that the sentences used reflect as much as possible not a character statement about God, but a potential state of a relationship between the God image and the self image which can be either endorsed or repudiated by the subject as representative or not of his or her feelings. In order to force the respondent to make a choice between agreement and disagreement, a four-point Likert scale was chosen. Preliminary examination of the scales indicated that respectable internal consistency could be achieved with a set of 22 item scales, equally balanced between positively and negatively worded items for each of the six dimensions of measurement, and 12 items for each of the two supplementary scales. This gives us a 156-item instrument known as the God Image Inventory.

## PSYCHOMETRIC PROPERTIES OF THE GOD IMAGE INVENTORY

### *Reliability*

Reliability of a multi-dimensional instrument can be measured in two ways: How reliable is each scale considered in itself and how independent are the scales of each other. In view of the needs of the primary intended use in clinical and pastoral settings where  $N = 1$ , the design of the inventory aimed for high reliability for each scale. Items were selected on that basis, even at the possible expense of scale independence. The first question is best answered by computing Cronbach's alpha for each of the three rounds of testing used in the development of the instrument. The preliminary reliability sample had 650 participants, the validity study, 217, and the standardization study, 1580. The results are reported in Table 1. In a phrase, not a problem.

The histograms for the eight scales produce a

**Table 1**  
*Coefficient Alpha Reliability Estimates for the Eight GII Scales in Three Samples*

Scale	Reliability Sample	Validity Sample	Standardization Sample
Presence	.94	.94	.96
Challenge	.86	.85	.87
Acceptance	.90	.91	.91
Benevolence	.91	.90	.92
Influence	.92	.93	.95
Providence	.92	.92	.95
Faith	.91	.90	.91
Salience	.92	.90	.93

**Table 2**  
*Intercorrelation of Eight GII Scales in Three Samples*

Scale	Presence			Challenge			Acceptance		
	Rel	Val	Std	Rel	Val	Std	Rel	Val	Std
Challenge	.74	.77	.81	1.00	1.00	1.00			
Acceptance	.78	.80	.86	.71	.77	.78	1.00	1.00	1.00
Benevolence	.71	.68	.80	.74	.76	.77	.85	.83	.90
Influence	.86	.84	.94	.64	.68	.79	.64	.65	.82
Providence	.79	.74	.90	.55	.57	.73	.52	.55	.75
Faith	.79	.80	.89	.61	.55	.73	.67	.61	.81
Salience	.85	.81	.91	.71	.65	.77	.65	.65	.78
	Benevolence			Influence			Providence		
Benevolence	1.00	1.00	1.00						
Influence	.55	.53	.76	1.00	1.00	1.00			
Providence	.44	.44	.70	.83	.83	.90	1.00	1.00	1.00
Faith	.57	.47	.75	.75	.73	.85	.73	.69	.84
Salience	.58	.56	.73	.80	.75	.90	.79	.72	.90
	Faith			Salience					
Faith	1.00	1.00	1.00						
Salience	.79	.74	.87	1.00	1.00	1.00			

decent semblance of normal curves, except that there is a tendency for some subjects to “max out” on the Presence, Benevolence, Faith, and Salience scales, producing a nearly bimodal distribution. The closest fit to the normal curve is produced by the Challenge scale (Skewness, -.06, Kurtosis, .15) and the Providence scale (Skewness, -.54, Kurtosis, .28).

Much more problematic are the inter-scale corre-

lations, especially those from the final and largest study, with the most widely representative cross section of respondents. The results are reported in Table 2. Here the inter-scale correlations increased dramatically from those encountered in the previous smaller and more homogeneous groups. Most problematic are the .90 correlations between the two scales of the last two issues: Acceptance and

**Table 3**  
*Correlation of GII Scales with Other Religious and Psychological Measures*

Scale	Pres	Chal	Acce	Bene	Infl	Prov	Faith	Sali
Extrinsic	-.21	-.30	-.26	-.32	-.10	-.08	-.06	-.24
Intrinsic	<b>.69</b>	.60	.53	.44	.66	.65	.61	.76
Achievement	-.11	<b>-.04</b>	-.11	-.10	-.07	-.18	-.10	-.07
Self Esteem	.39	.48	<b>.54</b>	.42	.35	.18	.28	.27
Altruism	.22	.26	.22	<b>.23</b>	.23	.25	.13	.14
External								
Loc. Control	-.46	-.57	-.50	-.45	<b>-.42</b>	-.32	-.27	-.36
God Control	.35	.20	.16	.05	.50	<b>.63</b>	.41	.41

*Note.* Correlations with an absolute value of .16 or greater are significant at  $p < .01$ .

Benevolence, and Influence and Providence, and the equally high but less expected correlation between the Presence scale and the Influence and Providence scales.

To further investigate the association among the scales, factor analysis was performed at each stage of testing. Results of the last and largest group ( $N = 1580$ ) are summarized here. Three different factor extraction methods produced similar results: 15 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, dominated by a single large factor accounting for about 40% of all variance. On orthogonal rotation, the first factor had the largest loading for about 100 items, with around 30 items having their highest loadings on the second, and a handful on the others. Oblimin rotation did a slightly better job of separating the factors, as would be expected with scales so highly correlated. Presence, Influence, and Providence items share a number of factors. Some of the Challenge items dominate a couple of factors of their own, but the rest of the Challenge items spread over other factors. Acceptance and Benevolence items cluster together with each other over three factors and stand largely apart from the other scales. The supplementary scales, Faith and Saliency items stand out fairly cleanly, largely on a single factor that they together dominate.

While the theoretical distinction between these scales and the interesting insights that have emerged in case studies when these scores diverge argue for retaining all six scales for clinical and pastoral uses, researchers may legitimately question whether all of these scales are necessary or even useful in empirical

research when such high correlations abound, which is precisely why the God Image Scales were developed, which we will later explore.

#### *Validity*

Only a first attempt has been made to establish the convergent validity of the GII, with better results for some scales than others. In the validity study, one established scale was chosen for comparison with each of the GII scales. It was predicted that the Presence scale would correlate with the Intrinsic scale of Allport and Ross' (1967) Religious Orientation scale, and that the Extrinsic scale of the Religious Orientation scale would correlate negatively with all the GII scales; the Challenge scale with the Bendig (1964) scale for the need of achievement; the Acceptance scale with the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem scale, scored following Robinson and Shaver (1973); and the Benevolence scale with the Wrightsman (1964) Altruism scale. In a pairing that is almost exactly the obverse of the hypothesis of Benson and Spilka (1973), it was predicted that a high score on the Influence scale would correlate with a high internal locus of control (Valecha, 1972), and the final hypothesis was that the Providence scale would correlate with the Koppin (1976) God Control scale. The results are presented in Table 3. Correlations with an absolute value of .16 or greater are significant the .01 level. The predicted correlations are in boldface type. The Presence scale did correlate as predicted with the Intrinsic scale, the Rosenberg had the best correlation, as predicted, with the Acceptance scale, and the Kop-

**Table 4**  
*Correlation of GII Scales with the I-E/R Scales and Church Attendance*

Scale	Intrinsic	Exttrinsic-Per	Extrinsic-Soc	Attend Church
Presence	.82	.26	-.14	.54
Challenge	.69	.20	-.18	.41
Acceptance	.72	.19	-.21	.47
Benevolence	.65	.20	-.25	.42
Influence	.81	.31	-.10	.55
Providence	.83	.29	-.08	.56
Faith	.78	.24	-.14	.54
Salience	.85	.26	-.10	.60
Attend church	.61	.14	.05	1.00

pin correlated best with the Providence scale as predicted. The Challenge scale, however, did not correlate significantly with the Bendig (nor did much of anything else); and the Benevolence scale showed no greater affinity than the other GII scales for the Wrightsman Altruism scale. Perhaps most interesting are the correlations among the control issue scales. I noted earlier the theoretical argument about positive or negative correlation between autonomy and control by God. The data show a high correlation between the Influence and Providence scales, fairly high positive correlations between God Control and both Providence and Influence, and not insignificant negative correlations between an external locus of control and both the Influence and Providence scales. In other words, those who feel that God has the most power over them also feel that they have the most power over God, and they do not feel that their fate is in hands external to their own.

The standardization study ( $N = 1580$ ) afforded an opportunity for one final correlation study. The I-E/R of Gorsuch and McPherson (1989), a revised version of the Allport-Ross Religious Orientation scale and a measure of church attendance were included. Alphas for the I-E/R were: intrinsic, .87; extrinsic-personal, .67; and extrinsic-social, .78, and correlations among the I-E/R scales were similar to those reported by the original authors. Correlations among the I-E/R and the GII scales are shown in Table 4.

The use of the Intrinsic subscale produces better correlations than the original Allport-Ross measure, but the results are similar. Int correlates best with

Salience (not unexpected since they measure the importance of religion and God, respectively, to the subject), and the next best correlations are with the Presence, Influence, and Providence cluster.

Subsequent work by other investigators has lent further evidence of validity, but since their work used the God Image Scales rather than the full God Image Inventory, that work will be discussed later, though it may be considered to reflect back on the validity of the parent GII scale.

#### *Standardization of the God Image Inventory*

Standardization is not necessary for instruments designed exclusively for research purposes, as each study in effect produces standards of its own. But for an instrument designed for use in individual cases, standards are essential for interpretation of the subject's scores. It does no good to know that Mr. A has a raw score of 47 on scale B, unless we can somehow determine whether and to what extent this is a high or a low score compared to some reasonable reference group.

Accordingly, the GII has been standardized on a sample of 1580 adults in the United States recruited by a market research firm for this purpose. The sample was reasonably close in demographic characteristics to the adult population of the United States. The results are summarized in Table 5.

Various sub-populations were compared to determine whether separate norms would be necessary. Of the demographic variables collected, one, marital status, showed no statistically significant correlation with any scale. Two more, age, and education level showed some correlations that, while statistically sig-



**Table 5**  
*Standardization Sample Statistics for the GII Scales*

Scale	# of items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i> Est.	<i>SE</i> Mean
Presence	22	69.23	12.54	2.52	.32
Challenge	22	67.39	8.37	3.02	.21
Acceptance	22	71.52	9.42	2.87	.24
Benevolence	22	73.29	9.06	2.58	.23
Influence	22	65.93	11.93	2.66	.30
Providence	22	62.61	12.34	2.77	.31
Faith	12	37.98	7.01	2.05	.18
Salience	12	36.10	7.60	1.99	.19

nificant therefore perhaps interesting for subsequent research, were so small these variables could be disregarded in individual interpretation.

Gender showed an effect significant at the .01 level for all eight scales, but the separate male and female means are never more than one-sixth of a standard deviation from the total mean, and in no case is this more than one standard error of the estimate. In practice, therefore, separate norms for the two sexes do not seem to be warranted.

Race offered interesting but inconclusive results. The representation of persons of other than European or African ancestry in the sample was so small as to produce no meaningful information. African Americans are somewhat underrepresented in the sample (161 of 1580), and the small *N* makes any conclusion very tentative until further research is done with a larger number of African American subjects. It should be noted in the meantime, however, that on three scales, African Americans have notably higher scores than the population mean. For African Americans, the mean Presence score is 73.64, which is 4.41 points higher than the population, the mean Influence score is 71.31, which is 5.40 points higher, and the mean Providence score is 68.65, which is 5.88 points higher. In practice, therefore, pending further research, clinicians should expect scores from African American subjects about one third to one half a standard deviation higher than the population means.

Respondents reporting no religion have the consistently lowest scores on all of the GII scales. Though Rizzuto's theories would predict that people with no religion have a God image as well as God concept, it is to be expected that these nonreligious

individuals would make less use of that image and report lower scores on the questions the GII scales ask. The standardization sample included so few Islamic respondents that no meaningful data can be reported. Jewish respondents numbered only 21, so the fact their GII scores were one to two standard deviations lower than the mean tells us only two things. First, one should suspect that the language of the instrument may be unconsciously so biased in the thought patterns and vocabulary of its Christian author that it is unsuccessful at drawing out the dimensions of a Jewish God image. Second, clinical or pastoral interpretation of the GII with Jewish clients should not be considered valid pending further research and/or redesign by an author well steeped in the Jewish tradition.

Among Christians, respondents were classified only as Protestant or Catholic. Differences between the two were statistically significant for each of the scales, with the Protestants higher in each case. The differences are so small, however, as not to be clinically significant in individual interpretation, with only the Presence and Providence scales showing differences as much as one quarter of a standard deviation, and those only marginally.

It would be interesting in subsequent research to classify respondents by individual denominations. On theoretical grounds, it would be expected that members of orthopathic denominations, those which emphasize the right state of feeling about God, would show consistently higher scores than members of orthodox or orthoprax groups, where right teaching or right behavior are more the focus, since the God concept of the former may be more intertwined with, and perhaps even determinative

of, their God image, at least at the most available levels of conscious responses.

### USE OF THE GOD IMAGE INVENTORY

The length of the God Image Inventory and strong correlation of some of its scales combine to suggest that the GII is probably not an instrument of choice for research projects, especially those involving large numbers of subjects. And for depth of potential insight in casework, it cannot hope to match Rizzuto's original projective instrument. What then, if anything, is it good for?

As a pastor, I have found it very useful as a screening tool and for suggesting hypotheses to be explored with subjects. It is administered, for instance, as part of a battery given new clients for pre-nuptial or other pastoral counseling. Sometimes all the z-scores are within .5 of the standards, and nothing suggests itself for exploration. In other cases, one or more scores stand out as higher or lower than the rest, either normatively or ipsatively, and suggest an exploration of the subject's answers to the various items on that scale in order to come up with clinical hypotheses to be explored in subsequent discussions. Some interesting case studies have resulted. To give only a very brief example, a certain couple in pre-marital counseling both had Presence scores that were notably lower both than the mean for that scale and than their other scores. Subsequent discussion with them revealed that both had experienced their parents as loving and providing, but rather distant. A large emphasis in the religious discussion was therefore placed on the marriage covenant as a sign of God's covenant commitment to be present to us, and finding ways for them to be present to and for each other became a significant issue for the rest of their marriage preparation program.

To date, even individual use of the GII has been a labor intensive process, because of the need to hand score a 156-item instrument. A computerized version is in preparation, however, which will allow the subject to complete the instrument on the computer and the administrator to receive a report with scores for each of the scales and some suggestions for possible interpretations.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Interested persons should contact the author concerning the availability date, but the slippage of software availability dates is a potential dissertation topic for someone anxious to produce an operational definition of Murphy's Law. Until the computerized version is available, paper and pencil forms for administration and interpretation of the GII are available to properly qualified persons from the author.

Especially with the advent of the computerized version, the GII can serve as a relatively quick and painless way for psychologists, counselors and pastors to get some objective information about subjects' image of God. For those with the inclination, the time, and the expertise to interpret a projective instrument, the Rizzuto instrument might be given as a follow-up in those cases where the GII suggests fertile ground for further exploration.

### THE GOD IMAGE SCALES

#### *Design and Reliability*

For research use, a subset of the GII has been created called the God Image Scales (GIS) to distinguish it from the parent instrument. First, the two supplementary scales were dropped, since they had been included only to facilitate interpretation of individual results. Second, in the assumption that for research purposes alpha reliability estimates of .80 are acceptable and time and space are always at a premium, the six principal scales were reduced to 12 items each. Third, an effort was made in the choice of items to decrease the correlation among the scales. Secondary analysis of the  $N=1580$  standardization sample on the basis of the new scales yielded the correlations in the lower triangle of the matrix shown in Table 6.

The alphas, shown on the diagonal of the matrix in Table 6, are quite respectable. The correlations between each GIS scale and the parent scale from which it was drawn were between .95-.99.

The correlations among Presence-Influence-Providence and between Acceptance-Benevolence are still uncomfortably high, and factor analysis is still a messy tangle, with items for various scales loading on various factors. If only Presence, Challenge and Acceptance are included, however, an almost classic factor solution results. Five factors emerge, with the first taking all the Presence items and one negative Challenge item; the second, all six negative Acceptance items; the third, all six positive Acceptance items; the fourth, all six positive Challenge items; and the fifth, five negative Challenge items. Except for that one stray negative Challenge item, and the separation of two of the scales into negative and positive factors, it is very clean. This may suggest that researchers might prefer a 36-item form, using only the Presence, Challenge, and Acceptance items.

Another study using all six GIS scales, however,



**Table 6**  
*Intercorrelation of Six GIS Scales and Coefficient Alpha Estimates of Reliability*

GIS Scale	Pres	Chal	Acce	Bene	Infl	Prov
Presence	(.95)	.54	.74	.73	.79	.61
Challenge	.75	(.81)	.53	.60	.47	.40
Acceptance	.72	.66	(.83)	.80	.66	.39
Benevolence	.69	.68	.80	(.84)	.62	.41
Influence	.89	.69	.65	.60	(.89)	.60
Providence	.82	.57	.52	.51	.80	(.89)

*Note.* Correlations in the lower triangle from the standardization sample and in the upper triangle from Knapp (1993). Coefficient alphas for standardization sample on the diagonal.

**Table 7**  
*Correlation of the GIS Scales with Intrinsic Religious Orientation and Church Attendance*

Scale	Intrinsic	Attend Church
Presence	.82	.54
Challenge	.61	.36
Acceptance	.60	.39
Benevolence	.56	.36
Influence	.76	.52
Providence	.77	.53

(Knapp, 1993) with a sample of 100 subjects, found similarly patterned but rather lower correlations. These correlations are shown in the upper triangle of the matrix in Table 6.

In view of these data, researchers who can afford the space may want to include the full 72-item GIS, or perhaps a 60-item form, dropping only the Benevolence items, as this scale seems to add the least to the package in either set of data.

### *Validity*

As a very preliminary examination of the validity of the GIS, correlations were explored among the GIS scales and the other religious variables captured in the standardization study. The results are shown in Table 7. Note that the Presence scale, which was theorized to be epigenetically prior to all other questions, emerges as the best predictor of all other religious measures.

Much more interesting, however, are two studies by other authors that show correlations between the GIS and Bell Object Relations Inventory (BORI). The first, conducted in 1993 by Clayton L. Knapp, com-

pared the God image and object relations development of 100 subjects equally divided between active members of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) with at least two years sobriety and residents of detox centers without AA exposure. For detox residents, means on all six GIS scales were lower than the norm, though only four of the differences were significant. For the AA group, all six means were higher than the norm, five of them significantly so at the  $p < .001$  level (Knapp, 1993). Further, the GIS scales showed notable correlation with the scales of the BORI. (See Table 8.)

Of the two sets of scales, only the Social Incompetence and Providence scales consistently failed to correlate with scales from the other instrument in an appreciable degree. Knapp (1993) concluded that the two instruments measure related aspects of personality development.

Tisdale et al. (1997) reported a study of object relations and God images involving pre- and post-tests on psychiatric inpatients, most of whom were evangelical Christians. The God image was measured using the Presence, Challenge, and Accep-

**Table 8**  
*Correlation of GIS Scales with Bell Object Relations Inventory (BORI) Scales*

BORI	Pres	Chal	Acce	Bene	Infl	Prov
Alienation	.45	.32	.60	.53	.30	.25
Insecure Attachment	.33	.21	.60	.42	.23	.22
Egocentricity	.37	.41	.63	.60	.26	.24
Social Incompetence	.22	.04	.18	.11	.18	.17

*Note.* The scores for the BORI scales were inverted so that a high score indicates object relations maturity.

tance scales of the GIS. The difference in mean score between admission and discharge was significant at the  $p < .01$  level for all three scales. Correlations were calculated between the GIS and BORI scores at admission, at discharge, and on a six month follow-up. The investigators of this study found that object relations maturity as measured by the BORI subscales was positively correlated with God image as measured by the GIS subscales Presence, Challenge, and Acceptance at each of the three time periods with a few exceptions. Their battery also included the Tennessee Self Concept Scale (Personal Self), as a measure of personal adjustment, and here again correlations were high, all but one significant at the  $p < .01$  level (see Table 2 in Tisdale et al., 1997).

It takes much more than three studies to validate any instrument, and validity in any case comes in “more and less” and not in “yes and no.” I would submit, however, that the above evidence constitutes a decent start for the validation process and warrants further use of the GIS by researchers.

**CONCLUSION**

The God Image Inventory has been constructed as an objective psychometric instrument for clinical and pastoral use in measuring a subject’s image of God. The existence of standards based on a goodly number of adult North Americans, chiefly Christians of one kind or another, and the imminent availability of a computerized format for test administration and report preparation make it a potentially useful tool in work with individuals by qualified clinicians.

The God Image Scales have been derived from the Inventory for research use, and some data is already available to suggest the usefulness of this tool in either the 3-scale, 36-item or the 6-scale, 72-

item format. The GIS is in the public scholarly domain, and reports are greatly appreciated on its further use by researchers.

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## APPENDIX

*The God Image Scales in 6-Scale, 72-Item Format<sup>a</sup>*

#	Scale	Reversal	Item Text
1	Infl		When I obey God's rules, God makes good things happen for me.
2	Bene	R	I imagine God to be rather formal, almost standoffish.
3	Acce	R	I am sometimes anxious about whether God still loves me.
4	Infl	R	Asking God for help rarely does me any good.
5	Acce		I am confident of God's love for me.
6	Pres	R	God does not answer when I call.
7	Acce		I know I'm not perfect, but God loves me anyway.
8	Prov		The voice of God tells me what to do.
9	Acce	R	I have sometimes felt that I have committed the unforgivable sin.
10	Prov		Even when I mess things up, I know God will straighten them out.
11	Chal	R	God never challenges me.
12	Chal	R	Thinking too much could endanger my faith.
13	Bene		I think of God as more compassionate than demanding.
14	Infl		I get what I pray for.
15	Pres		I can feel God deep inside of me.
16	Acce		God's love for me has no strings attached.
17	Pres	R	God doesn't feel very personal to me.
18	Infl	R	No matter how hard I pray, it doesn't do me any good.
19	Acce		Even when I do bad things, I know God still loves me.
20	Pres		I can talk to God on an intimate basis.
21	Prov	R	What happens in my life is largely a result of decisions I make.
22	Bene		I think God even loves atheists.
23	Pres		God nurtures me.
24	Pres	R	I get no feeling of closeness to God, even in prayer.
25	Acce	R	God loves me only when I perform perfectly.
26	Acce		God loves me regardless.
27	Chal		God takes pleasure in my achievements.
28	Bene		I can't imagine anyone God couldn't love.
29	Chal		God keeps asking me to try harder.
30	Pres		God is always there for me.
31	Infl	R	I get no help from God even if I pray for it.
32	Chal	R	Being close to God and being active in the world don't mix.
33	Bene	R	God can easily be provoked by disobedience.
34	Acce	R	I often worry about whether God can love me.
35	Prov		God is in control of my life.

<sup>a</sup>For the 3-scale, 36-item format, delete items coded Bene, Infl, and Prov.

**APPENDIX (continued)***The God Image Scales in 6-Scale, 72-Item Format*

#	Scale	Reversal	Item Text
36	Chal		God wants me to achieve all I can in life.
37	Infl		I am a very powerful person because of God.
38	Prov		God will always provide for me.
39	Prov	R	I think God mostly leaves people free.
40	Infl	R	If God listens to prayers, you couldn't prove it by me.
41	Bene	R	God is looking for a chance to get even with me.
42	Bene		God's mercy is for everyone.
43	Acce		God's love for me is unconditional.
44	Infl		I know what to do to get God to listen to me.
45	Chal		God asks me to keep growing as a person.
46	Bene	R	I think God only loves certain people.
47	Infl		God almost always answers my prayers.
48	Chal	R	God doesn't want me to ask too many questions.
49	Prov	R	God does not do much to determine the outcome of my life.
50	Prov	R	God lets the world run by its own laws.
51	Bene		Even if my beliefs about God were wrong, God would still love me.
52	Acce	R	I am not good enough for God to love.
53	Bene		God's compassion knows no religious boundaries.
54	Pres		I sometimes feel cradled in God's arms.
55	Chal	R	God has never asked me to do hard things.
56	Bene	R	Running the world is more important to God than caring about people.
57	Prov		I often feel that I am in the hands of God.
58	Infl	R	I don't think my faith gives me any special influence with God.
59	Prov	R	Mostly, I have to provide for myself.
60	Prov		I am particularly drawn to the image of God as a shepherd.
61	Pres	R	God feels distant to me.
62	Chal		I think human achievements are a delight to God.
63	Pres	R	I rarely feel that God is with me.
64	Pres		I feel warm inside when I pray.
65	Prov	R	I am pretty much responsible for my own life.
66	Infl	R	God rarely if ever seems to give me what I ask for.
67	Bene	R	I think God must enjoy getting even with us when we deserve it.
68	Chal		God encourages me to go forward on the journey of life.
69	Infl		God sometimes intervenes at my request.
70	Pres	R	God never reaches out to me.
71	Chal	R	God doesn't mind if I don't grow very much.
72	Acce	R	I sometimes think that not even God could love me.