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CONTEXTUALIZING ECUMENISM IN THE PHILIPPINES THROUGH *LOOB* AND *KAPWA*

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Abstract. The two-fold ecumenical approach – inter-ecclesial ecumenism (Global North) and trans-ecclesial ecumenism (Global South) – reaches its limitations when viewed through the Philippine context. This gap refers to the distinct ecumenical challenges that need to be addressed. Thus, this study proposes a unique ecumenical model that integrates the inclusive ethos of *loob* and *kapwa*. Appropriating Stephen Bevans' synthetic model of contextual theology, the author argues that this proposed framework takes advantage of the existing models' contributory insights while addressing their conceptual deficiencies. It considers the shared charismatic experiences between Protestants and Catholics as *loci theologici* or resources of theology that can boost the ecumenical model's inclusive thrust. Finally, this study suggests that, through "lived ecumenism" that embodies *loob* and *kapwa*, the proposed ecumenical model can explore the possibility of welcoming other Christian churches that fall within the grey area between strict ecumenism and interreligious relations.

Keywords: Ecumenism, *Loob* and *Kapwa*, Philippine Context

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Introduction

Contemporary theologians have labored much in the field by navigating the tension between the classical method and the emerging social realities. Among the significant frameworks produced is the twofold ecumenical approach articulated by Aloysius Pieris, which highlights the tension between inter-ecclesial ecumenism in the Global North, which focuses on doctrinal and institutional dialogue, and trans-ecclesial ecumenism in the Global South, often centered on liberation and interreligious praxis. While recognizing its inherent contributions, the two-fold model encounters conceptual deficiencies when applied to the unique religio-cultural landscape of the Philippines. The Philippine context—marked by a distinctive blend of colonial Christianity, indigenous spirituality, and a vibrant charismatic renewal—tends to reject a simplistic version of ecumenism, suggesting the need for a more nuanced theological framework.

This paper seeks to address the following queries: *How can the Philippine indigenous values of loob and kapwa overcome the limitations of inter-ecclesial and trans-ecclesial ecumenical frameworks? What is the significance of this attempt when applied to the unique religio-cultural setting of the Philippines?* To do this, the author seeks to overcome the conceptual deficiencies existing in the current ecumenical frameworks by incorporating *loob* (interiority/holistic self) and *kapwa* (shared identity/the self) as cultural/theological enrichment. It results in a nuanced ecumenical framework suitable to address the unique ecumenical situation in the Philippines. This paper considers the shared charismatic experiences between Protestants and Catholics as "lived ecumenism," strengthening the model's conceptual pillars necessary in the promotion of a solid ecumenical praxis on the grassroots level. In this light, the proposed ecumenical model addresses the possibility of accommodating some Christian groups that do not strictly adhere to the traditional Trinitarian doctrine, which is a basis for ecumenical unity.[1] It is due to the inclusive ethos of *loob* and *kapwa*

[1] In the succeeding paragraphs, the paper adheres to the ecumenical movement's standard definition, anchoring on the doctrine of the Trinity. The Dicastery for the Promotion of Christian Unity clearly states that the "basis of the

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that can extend beyond the parameters of standard ecumenism, namely, adherence to Trinitarian belief within the Christian churches involved. In exploring this dimension, this enriched ecumenical framework does not intend to deviate from the established ecumenical guidelines; rather, by examining possible alternatives, it seeks to account for the fact that

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common Christian faith" is the "Christological confession of Nicaea" expressed in the following words: "*one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, born of the Father as only begotten, that is of the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, not created, consubstantial with the Father, through whom all things in heaven and on earth have come to be* (italics mine for emphasis)." According to the Dicastery, this Nicaean confession "represents an important, albeit not yet completed, stage on the way to the great confession of faith of Nicaea-Constantinople in 381," where it includes and reinforces the divinity of the Holy Spirit, "enabling the formulation of the dogma of the Divine Trinity in the specifically Christian form of monotheism." See Dicastery for the Promotion of Christian Unity, "Council of Nicaea – A Unifying Moment in the Life of the Early Church With Its Continued Impact on the Diverse Realities of the Present Day Church," *Lecture at the Christian Study in Rivalpindi*, March 27, 2025, available at https://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/cardinal-koch/2025/Conferenze/en2.html (accessed January 30, 2026). Within the Philippine context, certain ecumenical initiatives have expanded their traditional boundaries to include the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). This inclusion is notable because LDS theology regarding the Godhead departs significantly from the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Trinitarian doctrine that typically defines ecumenical fellowship. Article of Faith states: *"We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost. We believe They are Three distinct personages, not one singular being. We call Them the Godhead* (italics mine for emphasis)." See the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, "Do Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Believe in the Trinity," available at https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/comeuntochrist/article/do-latter-day-saints-believe-in-the-trinity (accessed January 30, 2026). Despite these doctrinal distinctions, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) is frequently invited to participate in major ecumenical events in the Philippines. A primary example is the local observance of the International Week of Prayer for Christian Unity facilitated locally through the collaboration of the CBCP Episcopal Commission on Ecumenical Affairs and the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP). See The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, "Christians Participates in Week of Prayer for Christian Unity," January 21, 2022, available at https://news-ph.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/church-participates-at-the-week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity (Accessed January 30, 2026).

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some Christians, even though they do not profess the same Trinitarian faith, are willing to engage in ecumenical dialogue.

Ecumenical Challenges in Global Perspective

The call for Christian unity finds its root in the words of Jesus praying to the Father: "that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."[2] Over the years, Jesus' prayer has remained a work in progress for Christians across generations because the actual practice of ecumenism has encountered significant challenges.

Inter-Ecclesial Ecumenism

On the conceptual level, Matthias Haudel voices a shared opinion by "individual theologians" in the 19th and 20th centuries, stating that the "fundamental ecclesiological differences" are results stemming from "different doctrines of…God," most specifically the "differing priorities set by their trinitarian theologies in referring to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."[3] The doctrinal divergences are issues that "inter-ecclesial (classical) ecumenism"[4] of the Global North continues to

[2] Vatican II, *Unitatis Redintegratio,* no. 2. Cf. Jn 17, 21. Christian unity refers to the standard English term "ecumenism" which comes from the Greek word *"oikoumene,"* which means "the whole inhabited world." It refers to the "promotion of cooperation and unity among Christians." See USCCB, *"Ecumenical"* available at https://www.usccb.org/committees/ecumenical-interreligious-affairs/ecumenical (accessed January 29, 2026).

[3] M. Haudel, "The Relation Between Trinity and Ecclesiology as an Ecumenical Challenge and Its Consequences for the Understanding of Mission," *International Review of Mission* 90, no. 359 (October 2001): 401–8, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6631.2001.tb00310.x.

[4] Aloysius Pieris defines inter-ecclesial ecumenism as a "traditional movement" that works for unity of the churches not in the sense of uniformity previously expressed in restoring "communion with Rome." Instead, this unity is derived from an effort to consider "one another's denomination as a 'church.'" See A.

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address, arguing that the obstacles to Christian unity come in "varying degrees," considering the unique circumstances found in the "Church of the East, the Orthodox and Protestant."[5] Bernard Leeming calls it the "status of separated church communions" identified as "real and shows itself in doctrine, in worship, in methods of administration and…in psychological attitudes and general outlook."[6]

While these churches struggle to attain what Haudel calls "an agreement on the understanding of the church" as a basis for "ecumenical progress," the consequences of Christian disunity at the grassroots level pose a significant threat to realizing this ecumenical vision. They are manifested in the "lack of sympathy,… prejudices, misunderstanding…unhappy historical memories"[7] and a "distressing lack of charity which Christ commended so strongly to all his followers."[8] That said, ecumenism faces a twofold challenge:

Pieris, SJ, "Contemporary Ecumenism and Asia's Search for Christ," in *Towards a "Dialogue of Life" Ecumenism in the Asian Context*, ed. Pedro S. de Achútegui, SJ, Cardinal Bea Studies, IV (Makati, Rizal Philippines: Carmelo & Bauermann, Inc., 1976), 156.

[5] A. Cardinal Bea, *The Unity of Christians*, ed. Bernard Leeming, SJ (Wimbledon, London: Geoffrey Chapman Ltd, 1963), 40.

[6] B. Leeming, SJ, *The Vatican Council, and Christian Unity: A Commentary on the Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council, Together with a Translation of the Text* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1966), 36 – 38.

[7] Cardinal Bea, *The Unity of Christians*, 44.

[8] Leeming, *The Vatican Council, and Christian Unity*, 54 – 55. Pedro de Achútegui calls this ecumenical challenge as a form of "Christian apartheid," explaining the existing "splits and divisions… in mission territories, the very planting of the various churches was…planting of a division…a Christian monster to regions and peoples which did not deserve such an un-Christian treatment." Consequently, these occasions led to "insurmountable obstacle in…missionary churches and societies" on account of the "drive and effort to bring all men to Christ." See P. de Achutegui, SJ, "Mission and the Ecumenical Dimension," in *Ecumenism and Vatican II: Select Perspectives*, ed. Pedro S. de Achútegui, SJ, Cardinal Bea Studies, III (Quezon City: Loyola School of Theology: Ateneo de Manila University, 1972), 117, as quoting A. Cardinal Bea, *Unity in Freedom* (London:1964), 82.

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to overcome divergent theological viewpoints on the Trinity and ecclesiology at the conceptual level, and to address increasing animosity among Christians at the practical level. As a starting point, Pedro Arrupe offers an illuminating piece of advice to theologians: "to put more theological value on Orthopraxis."[9]

While agreements on doctrinal standpoint remain essential, it is equally important as well to consider other non-theological elements (psychological and social dispositions) that are embodied within the Christian personhood. They can serve as resources in the proper actualization of ecumenical goals. As Leeming argues, "it is not merely doctrines which have to be reconciled, but living human beings who exist in complicated associations with one another."[10] Cultivating an inclusive disposition is fundamental because the ecumenical movement demands the proper attitude to carry out the ideals pronounced in doctrines. In this sense, Raedel argues for a renewed Christian disposition by turning the obstacles into opportunities to "encourage the churches to unite" and to address the current ecumenical status in a new light.[11] Thus, it suggests a "future of ecumenism (that) will no longer be primarily imprinted by confessional differences," and this calls for a transformed ecumenical ethos.[12] Furthermore, Lorenz Cardinal Jaeger calls for spiritual conversion, describing the ecumenical predicament as "sin and to overcome it by forgiveness and reconciliation."[13]

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[9] P. Arrupe, *Pro Mundi Vita* (PMV), Special Note 36 (1975), 4. As quoted in Pieris, SJ, "Contemporary Ecumenism and Asia's Search for Christ," in *Towards a "Dialogue of Life,"* 154.

[10] Leeming, *The Vatican Council and Christian Unity*, 35.

[11] C. Raedel, "Unity to the Greater Glory of God. Promising Paradigms in Current Ecumenism," *Review of Ecumenical Studies* Sibiu 8, no. 2 (August 1, 2016): 172, https://doi.org/10.1515/ress-2016-0015.

[12] Raedel, "Unity to the Greater Glory of God," 172.

[13] L. Cardinal Jaeger, *A Stand on Ecumenism: The Council's Decree* (Great Britain: Geoffrey Chapman Ltd, 1965), vii.

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From this perspective, a real ecumenical progress occurs through the actualization (living out) of a renewed ecclesiological ethos enriched by a solid Trinitarian foundation. As Vatican II teaches, the ecumenical movement, more than just mere theory, advocates for "the restoration of unity among all Christians" made concrete in the lives of Christians "who…invoke the Triune God and confess Jesus as Lord and Savior."[14] Orthodox John Zizioulas expresses much optimism.

> If we are to seek unity on a stable and healthy basis, we need a sound doctrine of God as Trinity and of the divine economy in Christ in relation to the work of the Holy Spirit. These doctrines are… indispensable presuppositions for an ecclesiology of communion as well as for all the efforts to overcome division with the help of such an ecclesiology.[15]

It clearly defines the parameters of the ecumenical movement, that member churches must explicitly confess their belief in the Trinity as the foundation for unity. Moreover, a solid Trinitarian foundation is what makes the Church truly of Christ. According to Vatican II, this Church "subsists in (*subsistit in*) the Catholic Church," adding that "although many elements of sanctification and truth can be found outside her structure, such elements as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ are forces impelling Catholic unity."[16] *Subsistit in* is

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[14] Vatican II, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 1. The Trinitarian nature of the Church is explicitly pronounced in *Lumen Gentium,* no. 4 in the words "…the Church has been seen as 'a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.'" See Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 4.

[15] J. Zizioulas, "The Church as Communion," in Best, T. and Gassmann, G. eds. *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia: Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order, Santiago de Compostela 1993*, WCC, 1994.

[16] K. Becker SJ, "The Church and Vatican II's '*Subsistit In*' Terminology," *CNS* 35 no.31 (January 19, 2006): 514-522. To properly understand the history behind such development, one needs to know that *subsistit in* as a replacement to *est* in paragraph 8 is a direct consequence of the Council's intent to establish spaces "… for the recognition of components of the genuine Church beyond the confines of the Catholic Church," amidst theological disagreements. The choice of *subsistit* in assists the Church of Christ in finding her fullest expression, aligning with the Spirit's all-encompassing nature and inclusive disposition. This decision is also a

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the hermeneutical key to understanding the ecumenical significance of the Church as it implies the creation of spaces where other Christians join the faith conversation on the Trinity regarding salvation. Interestingly, the inclusive disposition associated with the term finds its fullest expression in *Unitatis Redintegratio* concerning the promotion of "Christian unity" both on the levels of orthodoxy and orthopraxy.[17]

Doctrinal differences must not be the starting point. As Walter Kasper argues, "the Catholic understanding of unity…presupposes a given unity within the Catholic Church and its partial communion with the other churches…in order to reach full communion with

crucial aspect in reinstituting an ecumenically inclined ecclesiology. Thus, *subsistit in* facilitates a renewed expression of the same doctrine with the sole purpose of lessening the exclusivist tendency associated with est, in accordance with Peter Luning's analysis. P. Luning, "Das Ekklesiologische Problem der Subsistit In (LG 8) im Heutigen Okumenischen Gesprach," *Catholica* 52 (1998): 1-23, at 6, as cited P. Gamberini, "*Subsistit* in Ecumenical Ecclesiology: J. Ratzinger and E. Jungel," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 72 (2000): 68.

[17] A significant portion of the paragraph is quoted in length to emphasize the various precedents justifying the unity of the Church and her propensity for ecumenical movement. Vatican II writes: "The term 'ecumenical movement' indicates the initiatives and activities planned and undertaken, according to the various needs of the Church and as opportunities offer, to promote Christian unity. These are: first, every effort to avoid expressions, judgments and actions which do not represent the condition of our separated brethren with truth and fairness and so make mutual relations with them more difficult; then, "dialogue" between competent experts from different Churches and Communities. At these meetings, which are organized in a religious spirit, each explains the teaching of his Communion in greater depth and brings out clearly its distinctive features. In such dialogue, everyone gains a truer knowledge and more just appreciation of the teaching and religious life of both Communions. In addition, the way is prepared for cooperation between them in the duties for the common good of humanity which are demanded by every Christian conscience; and, wherever this is allowed, there is prayer in common. Finally, all are led to examine their own faithfulness to Christ's will for the Church and accordingly to undertake with vigor the task of renewal and reform." Vatican II, *Unitatis Redintegratio,* no. 4.

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them."[18] This finds inspiration in the Triune God, who is the source of unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as stated in *Lumen Gentium*. This urges Christians, especially the Catholics, to heed the call for self-transformation. As *Unitatis Redintegratio* teaches, "There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart."[19] Through inter-ecclesial ecumenism, the Churches in the Global North, despite present challenges, have the means to push for greater unity of Christians. Ecumenism of this sort offers a way to heal and reconcile doctrinal divides as opportunities to advance the work of reconciliation, emphasizing what holds in common among Christians rather than seeing divisions as obstacles to attain unity.

Trans-Ecclesial Ecumenism

However, the classical approach to ecumenism encounters a conceptual (and practical) deficit when strictly implemented in a non-Western environment, specifically the distinct Asian context marked by multi-cultural and multi-religious conditions. Thus, Aloysius Pieris suggests another ecumenical model known as "trans-ecclesial ecumenism," introducing a four-fold movement consisting of evangelism, dialogism, spiritualism, and activism as appropriate Christian (faith) approaches to God's revelation in Christ (Word and Sacrament) in the Asian context's cultural and religious diversity.[20]

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[18] W. Kasper, *That They May All Be One: The Call to Unity Today* (London: Burn & Oates, 2004), 68.

[19] Vatican II, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 7.

[20] A. Pieris, SJ, "Contemporary Ecumenism and Asia's Search for Christ," in *Towards a "Dialogue of Life" Ecumenism in the Asian Context,* ed. Pedro S. de Achutegui, *SJ*, Cardinal Bea Studies, IV (Makati, Rizal Philippines: Carmelo & Bauermann, Inc., 1976), 156-158. Trans-ecclesial ecumenism aims to provide unique ways to address the predicament by refining what has already been offered by inter-ecclesial ecumenism: the greater desire for Christian unity through a radical change of attitude. A change of heart is the first step; it needs to be properly internalized, and that desire for unity must flow from the mind (cognitive) to the heart (affective). This is essential for an informed ecumenical action. In this sense, ecumenism offers renewed vistas that transcend mere

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Transitioning from mere "transplantation of Christian ideals," classical evangelism takes a nuanced perspective, arguing that there is more than "one-sided missionary initiatives."[21] Transcending such limitations results in what Francisco calls the "Christianization beyond mere transplantation,"[22] a process to rectify an incomplete representation

disagreements generally caused by "giving an exaggerated importance…to the *bible* and the *church*," forging a balanced perspective to form "one evangelical strand."

[21] Some theologians in Asia argue that the one-dimensional nature of Western missions in the region manifests in various ways. Aloysius Pieris characterizes the introduction of Christianity into Asia as an "unholy alliance of the missionary, the merchant, and the military," a description that tarnishes the image of Christianity and portrays it as an unwelcome presence, largely attributable to the associated atrocities. A. Pieris, "Asia's Non-Semitic Religions and the Mission of Local Churches," in *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1988). Similar to the imperialists who sought to exploit the resources of Asia, Edmund Chia declares that Christianity was perceived to arrive with intentions to exploit the souls of Asian peoples. This perception is valid in as much as Christian missionaries prioritized the salvation of souls and the establishment of churches, often with minimal regard for the cultures and religions of the local population. E. Chia, *Asian Christianity and Theology: Inculturation, Interreligious Dialogue, Integral Liberation* (London: Routledge, 2021). Furthermore, Joseph Kitagawa observes that Christian doctrines have been, and continue to be, presented through Greco-Roman thought patterns and Christian practices, a phenomenon he designates as the "European Captivity." J. Kitagawa, *The Christian Tradition: Beyond Its European Captivity* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992). Stanley Samartha employs the metaphor of a helicopter to illustrate the introduction of Christianity in Asia. According to Chia's interpretation, as the helicopter descended from above, it metaphorically cleared the ground, creating a pathway for the European Church to establish itself. S. Samartha, "The Making of a Revised Christology," in *One Christ, Many Religions: Toward a Revised Christology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991).

[22] J. Francisco, SJ, "Translating Christianity into Asian Tongues: Cultural Dynamics and Theological Issues," in *Thought the Harder, Heart the Keener: A Festschrift for Soledad S. Reyes*, eds. Eduardo Jose E. Calasanz, Jonathan Chua, and Rofel G. Brion (Quezon City: Office of Research and Publications, Loyola Schools, Ateneo de Manila University, 2008), 93-107. This article was based on Fr. Francisco's Gasson Endowed Professorial Chair Lecture delivered at Boston College on 27 November 2005 and was republished in Jose Mario C. Francisco,

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of Christian evangelization by recovering the dynamic role of cultural context in reshaping Christian ideals based on local customs and language. The limitations caused by classical evangelism set the stage for a more dialogical approach.

Pieris' notion of dialogism seeks fresh and innovative interpretations of the same divine reality of Christ and the Spirit. It states that "the Christ he encounters in the Bible is a salvific phase of an Event still waiting to be revealed beyond the Bible; that the Christ he encounters in the church is an intensive moment of a Presence still seeking to be recognized beyond the church."[23]It speaks of dialogism's inclusive and expanding nature to accommodate other means to discover Christ beyond the scriptures and the Church. Furthermore, the integration of spiritualism is valuable as it grounds one's subjective experience of Christ upon the identity of the Messiah, whose "salvific role predominantly resides within the inner realm of the individual soul or spirit."[24] This appeals to one's spiritual interiority, leading to a profound realization that "liberation in Christ embodies a profound psychological inclination."[25] The spiritual depth of a dialogist is commendable when s/he actualizes what s/he knows and believes about Christ being in solidarity with fellow human beings through transformative actions. This has resulted in a kind of activism which Pieris believes to be the "most audacious example of trans-ecclesial ecumenism," given that "its focus is on social liberation, which is clearly in stark contrast to the psychological approach of the third group."[26] Authentic Christian unity is measurable through what it contributes to social liberation.

SJ, *Between Celebration and Critique: Snapshots from 500 Years of Philippine Christianity* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2021), 376-378.

[23] Pieris, "Contemporary Ecumenism," 158. The ecumenical significance of dialogism addresses the root cause of persisting divisions among Christians, that unless Christian faith is authentically grounded in a cultural context, ecumenical initiatives cannot flourish as intended by the Spirit.

[24] Pieris, "Contemporary Ecumenism," 158.

[25] Pieris, "Contemporary Ecumenism," 158 – 159.

[26] Pieris, "Contemporary Ecumenism," 160.

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Addressing Gaps in the Existing Models

While inter-ecclesial (classical) ecumenism and trans-ecclesial ecumenism provide significant insights useful in this paper, they nevertheless contain ideas born out of different cultural contexts. For instance, the dominant Western culture influences inter-ecclesial ecumenism, while the broader Asian realities push Pieris to come up with trans-ecclesial ecumenism, whose distinct socio-religious realities do not reflect the same way in the Philippine context. Thus, appropriation or nuancing is necessary to come up with the proposed ecumenical model. Guided by Stephen Bevans' synthetic model,[27] it reinterprets the following areas of concern: the value of the gospel message, referring to Jesus' priestly prayer in John 17: 21 (*that all may be one*), the value of inter-ecclesial ecumenism, specifically on the importance of doctrinal clarity, and the value of trans-ecclesial ecumenism, specifically in the area of spiritualism and dialogism, in the light of the author's embodied experience of *loob* and *kapwa*. It hopes to see the correlation of these insights and discover what lies in common amidst distinctiveness and peculiarities. This helps generate an enriched ecumenical model.

[27] The author of this paper takes careful nuancing of Stephen Bevans' synthetic model to align with the objectives. Accordingly, it explains "synthetic" as a process of preserving "the importance of the gospel message and the heritage of traditional doctrinal formulations while at the same time acknowledging the vital role that context has played and can play in theology…In addition, the synthesis will include the importance of reflective and intelligent action for the development of theology that does not ignore the complexities of social and cultural change. Second, the synthetic model reaches out to the sources of other contexts and other theological expressions for both the method and content of its own articulation of faith…Third…this model is synthetic in the Hegelian sense of not just of attempting to put things together in a kind of compromise but of developing, in a creative dialectic, something that is acceptable to all standpoints." See S. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 89 – 90.

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Current State of Ecumenism in the Philippines

As stated, the unique cultural ethos makes the ecumenical situation in the Philippines distinct from the mainline ecumenism of the Global North, as well as the general Asian perspective. Borrowing the ideas of Felix Wilfred, ecumenical responses in the Philippines necessarily require a culturally sensitive approach distinct "from the (Global) North."[28] Thus, the author explores the inclusive ethos embedded in *loob* and *kapwa* in creating a contextualized ecumenical approach while recognizing the value of other models.

The Exclusivist Tendency as an Ecumenical Challenge

Despite some efforts of the Catholic Church in the Philippines concerning the promotion of Christian unity,[29] Broderick Pabillo

[28] The abridged statement comes from a foreword written by Felix Wilfred for Jose Mario C. Francisco, SJ's published work entitled Between *Celebration and Critique: Snapshots from 500 Years of Philippine Christianity* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2021).

[29] The Catholic bishops in the Philippines reaffirm the relevance of ecumenical dialogue in the context of New Evangelization. Bishops write: "…New Evangelization calls us to continue more earnestly the initiatives and projects which have been ongoing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We are called to examine more deeply the pastoral situation that we all face together as the Church in the Philippines!" This renewed evangelization hopes to create new strategies to effectively proclaim Christ in the culture, and this requires listening to the Spirit's promptings. Initially addressed to Catholics, this evangelization ministry hopes to inform and transform them to become genuine followers of Christ who treat other Christians well. This culminated in designating 2020 as the Year of Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue, fostering a renewed sense of being a Catholic through exploring the opportunities for strengthening the "ecumenical and interreligious relationships (that) emphasize open, honest, respectful, and loving dialogue of life, prayer, and action." This vision stems from reflection on peace and harmony in contexts of "armed conflict, social change, societal healing, integrity, and justice in the land." See Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, "Pastoral Exhortation on the Era of New Evangelization (Longer Version)," https://cbcponline.net/cbcp-pastoral-exhortation-on-the-era-of-new-evangelization-longer-version/ (accessed 6 February 2025).

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observes some discrepancies in the proper implementation of its vision. He writes:

> There is already a consciousness among Church leaders about the need for ecumenism, but this is not yet so among ordinary Catholics in the Philippines. In fact, there is much suspicions among Catholics towards the Protestants and the Evangelicals. The aggressive behaviors of the 'Born Agains' in recruiting members or attacking traditional Catholic practices do not help in allaying the suspicions. So, there is much yet to be done in the field of ecumenism, especially during this year of 2020, when our theme is on ecumenism, inter-religious dialogue, and indigenous peoples, that is, in building harmony through dialogue with those who are different from us.[30]

This outcome reveals a level of ambivalence in the ecumenical movement. It only proves that ecumenical vision, while clearly written and expressed in the official Church documents, does not necessarily translate into practice without a proper attitude or disposition to fulfill its mandate. In the 1976 Report on Ecumenism, Pedro S. de Achutegui quotes the PCP II as recognizing Vatican II's contributions in "reducing the hostilities between Catholics and Protestant churches, resulting in mutual understanding, tolerance, and occasional joint prayer"[31] but asks "what might have prevented the Council members from drawing out the logical consequences and coming out with a real ecumenical stand and program which could have opened a new era in the Philippines."[32]

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[30] B. Pabillo, "Prayer for Christian Unity," *Panaghoy, CBCPNews*, https://cbcpnews.net/cbcpnews/prayer-for-christian-unity/ (accessed 6 February 2025).

[31] P. de Achútegui, SJ, "Report on the Philippines," in *Towards a "Dialogue of Life" Ecumenism in the Asian Context*, ed. Pedro S. de Achutegui, SJ, Cardinal Bea Studies, IV (Makati, Rizal, Philippines: Carmelo & Bauermann, Inc., 1976), 270 – 271. Citing PCP II, 216.

[32] de Achútegui, enumerates some compelling reasons to this predicament: "History of antagonism between Catholics and other Christian churches and individuals;…the arrival of Protestant missionaries who came to 'evangelize' the Philippines and carried with them not a few anti-Catholic prejudices and entered into conflict and polemics with Catholics who carried in turn their anti-Protestant prejudices." See P. de Achútegui, SJ, "Ecumenism in the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines," *Landas*, no. 6 (1992): 180–202, 191.

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This makes ecumenical challenges in the Philippines increasingly distinct and complex, highlighting several obstacles that impede the advancement of the ecumenical movement.

> a) The peculiarity of the religious situation is the prevailing context why the ecumenical situation in the Philippines cannot be compared with European and North American contexts…b) With divisions still recent and mostly imported, quite a few non-Catholic Christian groups are openly proselytist and aggressive. Many Catholics, in turn, have adopted, at least until the recent past, an attitude of 'aggressive defense…' c) A kind of stubborn traditionalism may be at the root of reluctance to change.[33]

The problem points to an exclusivist attitude, a dispositional refusal to recognize the shared humanity or valid experience of others' faith. It is the opposite of the inclusive ethos written and expressed in Church documents. The problem is fueled not only by conflicting opinions regarding doctrines but by cultural differences as well. It reveals that Christian disunity is not essentially a doctrinal or religious in nature, but it concerns much of the people's attitude as a precondition, for such an exclusivist propensity has become part of the culture.

Divergent Socio-Political Standpoints: Hindrances for Relational Unity

As previously stated, the human propensity for exclusive attitude is, first and foremost, a socio-cultural phenomenon. The lived Christianity in the Philippines has assumed a distinct cultural form that embodies both the religious reality and the "social reality."[34] While this section

[33] de Achútegui,, "Report on the Philippines," 274.

[34] Jayeel Cornelio identifies key factors contributing to Christianity's diverse phenomenon. First, Roman Catholicism as "the religion of the Filipino majority" exists side by side with the presence of other emerging Christian groups. He frames this kind of Christian diversity under the rubric of "recognition and visibility" known for Christian groups to stay in a "competitive religious environment" as a method to gain recognition among others. See J. Cornelio, "The Philippines," in *Christianity in East and Southeast Asia* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 242-243.

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mentions Christianity as religious in nature, it focuses more on its sociological significance. The socio-cultural worldview contains positive and negative elements that can significantly affect Christian practices, making it susceptible to certain issues regarding the mistranslation of the authentic Gospel values. This has repercussions for the divergent socio-political positions of various Christian groups. This argument draws the logical conclusion that cultural attitudes or orientations play a significant role in rearticulating and living out Christian ideals.

For instance, the social justice issues trigger most Christians of various denominations, including Roman Catholics, to speak up against the oppressive social structures. As a case in point, Cornelio and Maranon mention that the "official leaders of Catholics, Protestants, and Evangelicals have issued statements against the drug war, expressing concern over human rights, due process, and extrajudicial killings among the poor"[35] Despite Christian initiatives to counteract the culture of corruption and violence, there are also cases where some Christian groups foster ambivalent positions on socio-political issues. For instance, Jose Mario Francisco's delineation of *Dutertismo* has generated "conflicting reactions among Christians" to the "contradicting behavior by the president towards Christianity."[36] Some Christian movements support Duterte's war on drugs, such as "Apollo Quiboloy's Davao-based Kingdom of God and the *Iglesia ni Cristo*, known for electoral bloc voting."[37] Furthermore, they resonate

[35] J. Cornelio and I. Maranon, "A 'Righteous Intervention': Megachurch Christianity and Duterte's War on Drugs in the Philippines," *International Journal of Asian Christianity* 2, no. 2 (October): 211-230, https://doi.org/10.1163/25424246-00202005. Mentioned in Francisco, *Between Celebration and Critique*, 433.

[36] Francisco, *Between Celebration and Critique*, 433. This statement is drawn from a shortened and revised version of the author's journal article titled "Challenges of Dutertismo for Philippine Christianity: Revisiting Populism and Religion" originally published in the *International Journal of Asian Christianity* 4, no. 1 (March 2021): 145-160.

[37] Francisco, *Between Celebration and Critique*, 433. Interestingly, they belong to what Cornelio calls "individual churches" embodying ideals of a "Restorationist theology" that tends to disregard other groups as having inauthentic Christian

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a strong indigenous position resisting foreign elements as a method of forging out a uniquely contextualized religious institution befitting its fundamentalist sentiment.

While the discussions involve Christian members with conflicting socio-political standpoints, the paper does not intend to play the blame game as to who among them is on the right or wrong side. Nor does it specify a serious concern in ecumenism yet. It refers to the propensity for conflicting judgments rooted in divergent socio-cultural predispositions. As mentioned earlier, Filipin@[38] Christians from various traditions carry within themselves culturally conditioned values and beliefs that may affect their reactions to certain issues. What needs to be done so that Christians may recognize the value of relational unity amidst conflicting positions? This attitudinal crisis calls for critical scrutiny of Filipin@ cultural value system. Proposing a conceptual solution to the problem does not necessarily translate into practical action. It intends to create a dispositional posture that guides one's actions in promoting this relational unity.

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revelation and regard their groups as having a "true and faithful form of Christianity" instead. See Cornelio, "The Philippines," in *Christianity*, 246. Moreover, this is not to prejudge that non-indigenous churches like the Roman Catholic Church are exempt from exclusivist and conflicting positions on social-political realities, nor throw a biased opinion against these individual churches due to their conflicting socio-political standpoints. Instead, this exposition points to the overall human condition, the weakness of Christian movements constituted by imperfect individuals that may result in such judgments, irreconcilable with the Christian spirit of truth, accountability, and moral decency. The continuing task is to keep identifying potential risks to address certain gaps. Thus, Christianity has the moral imperative to speak against structures that oppress people.

[38] To promote gender inclusivity, the term "Filipin@" is used throughout this work to refer to people, language, and culture. Direct quotations and bibliographic references retain the original term "Filipino."

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Unleashing the Inclusive Ethos of *Loob* and *Kapwa*

Understanding *loob* and *kapwa*[39] goes beyond a dualistic or binary conception of reality, as in the West. The breadth and depth of these indigenous values lead the author to appreciate what is necessary and relevant for this study.[40] Thus, the discussions will focus on the articulation of an inclusive ethos in *loob* and *kapwa*, serving as a dispositional posture shared with the other. It is a fundamental step to bring into awareness the cultural value of shared identity that, despite conflicting forces, Christians may recognize that what unites them is more important than what divides them.

The *Loob* (Inner Self) and the Filipin@ Interiority

The preference for the *loob* to be described rather than defined sparks interest among scholars to unravel its significance to related field of studies. This is to establish parameters that distinguish it from a conceptualist definition, mostly common in places influenced by the Enlightenment tradition, not uniquely the same in the Philippine context. In this objective, the author finds Rowan Rebustillo's scholarly work engaging, as it offers a groundwork for subsequent analysis

[39] The author emphasizes the relational dynamics of *loob* and *kapwa* sourced from various studies in the field. *Loob* refers to distinct Filipin@ interiority. It is a central concept to which *kapwa* is attached. The foregoing discussions follow this main idea.

[40] The author limits the discussion on the moral value of *loob* that spells out its inclusive ethos. Thus, it does not explore much of its negative connotations, evident in what Rowan Rebustillo calls vicious *loob (masamang loob)* in which "*loob*, instead of fostering a loving relationship together with the *kapwa* becomes an instrument of division and destruction." Although, this can be nuanced as an exclusive force that affects one's predisposition, resonating the previous section on the ambivalent attitude that this paper wants to address. See R. Rebustillo, "A New Look at Intersubjectivity and Theology: A Retrieval of Filipino *Loob-Kapwa* Relationality In Dialogue with Gabriel Marcel and Ludwig Binswanger" *Melintas* 33 no. 3 (2017): 251.

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of varying elements on *loob*, which he diligently gathers from other scholars.[41]

The uniqueness of *loob* lies in its tendency for "surplus meaning," which Rebustillo shares with Leonardo Mercado, Albert Alejo, Jeremiah Reyes, among other related scholars in the field.[42] The rich meanings associated with *loob* are a supplementary perspective that grounds it to the very core of the cultural context to rediscover its authenticity. Mercado argues that more than its literal sense, *loob* acquires a personalist character understood as "*sarili*" that differs from the traditional notion

[41] Rebustillo, "*Loob-Kapwa Relationality*," 247.

[42] Rebustillo mentions Dionisio Miranda, arguing that understanding loob is "pregnant with meanings." Miranda writes: "*Loob* is a Filipino term rich in many meanings, as found in its various cognates or derivatives. Consider, for example, these terms: *looban, kalooban, pagloloob, panlolоob, pinaglooban, pinakaloob, kaloob-looban, kaloob, loobin, pagbabalik-loob, kusang-loob, kapalagayang-loob, lamang-loob, kabutihang-loob, kasamaang-loob, utang na loob, buong-loob, tamang-loob, maling-loob, malakas ang loob, mahina ang loob, maruming loob, malinis na loob, maliit na loob, malaking loob, sirang-loob, maayos na loob, panloob*, (Italics mine) etc. Because of this, there is more than a little truth to the observation that loob is initially best described rather than defined" D. Miranda, *Loob: The Filipino Within* (Manila: Divine Word, 1989) 1. Rebustillo also acknowledges the extensive scholarly contribution of A. Alejo, *Tao Po! Tuloy!: Isang Landas ng Pagunawa sa Loob ng Tao*. In terms of *loob*'s distinct features, Rebustillo cites Jeremiah Reyes to strengthen the argumentative position that the concept of *loob* is distinguished from the value understood by Kluckhohn as a "conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of the individual or characteristic of a group…" See C. Kluckhohn, "Values and Value-Orientations in the Theory of Action," in *Towards a General Theory of Action*, eds. Talcott Parsons and Edward A. Shils (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1951), 395. Instead, Rebustillo acknowledges Reyes' point, stating that a value "must describe a positive value towards it. It does not say what it is, but only that it is considered good, desirable or important." J. Reyes, "*Loob* and *Kapwa*: Thomas Aquinas and a Filipino Virtue Ethics," (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Hoger Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte, KU Leuven, 2015). In this perspective, Reyes argues that *loob* is "holistic and relational will…(that gives birth to) Filipino virtue ethics." Reyes, "*Loob* and *Kapwa*," 73.

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of self but "embodies the 'essence' of the Filipino 'cosmic self."[43] In this regard, Rebustillo adds that *loob* is not to be "conceived in a compartmentalized way of thinking of the West."[44] Rather, Mercado states that *loob* perfectly captures how "Filipino looks at himself as a self, as one who feels, as one who wills, as one who thinks, as one who acts: as a total-whole- as a 'person,' conscious of his freedom, proud of his human dignity, and sensitive to the violation of these two."[45]

Loob prefigures a wide array of enriching discussions since *loob* encompasses thought, emotion, and will.[46] These contents of *loob* clearly refer to the embodied self, manifested in their dynamic interaction and correlation. Alejo argues that "the *loob* is not only the combination of the *lawak* (breadth) and *lalim* (depth) of the walls, floors, and eaves of a room but the *laman* (content) which are gathered in the center and that which moves from the center unto the corner and out in the front."[47] Interestingly, Rebustillo connects it with Reyes, stating that the embodied self that is *loob* "is and will always be directed towards something, especially towards other people."[48]

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[43] Rebustillo interprets Mercado's "*sarili*" in three different senses: "First, *sarili* means self. Second, by extension, *sarili* connotes freedom or independence. Third, *sarili* extends itself to property and possession. L. Mercado, *The Filipino Mind* (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994), 32, 34. However, Rebustillo observes in Mercado's argument about the conceptual limitations of *sarili*, stated as "superficial and does not capture the essence of Filipino 'self' as much as the Tagalog word *loob*…characterized as (1) holistic and (2) as interior." See L. Mercado, "Reflections on *Buut-Loob-Nakem*," *Philippine Studies* 20, no. 4 (1972): 597-598.

[44] Rebustillo, "*Loob-Kapwa* Relationality," *Melintas*, 249.

[45] L. Mercado, "Reflections on *Buut-Loob-Nakem," Philippine Studies* 20, no. 4 (1972): 598, 600-601.

[46] Rebustillo, "*Loob-Kapwa* Relationality," *Melintas*, 250.

[47] Alejo, *Tao Po! Tuloy!*, 79. Quoted in Rebustillo, "*Loob-Kapwa* Relationality," Melintas, 250.

[48] J. Reyes, "*Loób* and *Kapwa*: An Introduction to a Filipino Virtue Ethics," *Asian Philosophy* 25, no. 2 (2015): 148-171, 154 doi:

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Jeremiah Reyes further intensifies the action-oriented principle of *loob* through his analysis of Aquinas' doctrine of potency and act, wherein he correlated it with *loob* as *potentia* (potency) that is likened to an idea of a seed charged with potentiality to become a tree (act).[49] Through this analogy, Reyes states that *loob*, more than just an inner self, "can be properly comprehended not just through the process of intellection but through living in relationship with others."[50] Here, the notion of *loob* expands and continuously acquires enrichment. The moral potentialities in *loob* receive actualization through the virtue of *kagandahang-loob,* defined as connoting "all that is good in someone, a quality of being which has its roots in the very heart of the person, and which is given expression in the totality of one's life of interrelationship."[51] In this sense, *loob* expresses its fundamental and authentic notion in *kagandahang-loob*.

The *Kapwa* (Shared Inner Self) and Relational Ontology

The previous discussions on *loob* reveal not only its inclusive tendency (containing one's thought, intention, and feeling) but also the dynamic interaction of these elements. When a person (P1) knows another person (P2), P1 knows P2 not through a strict intellectual cognition of the Enlightenment tradition. Rather, P1 lets P2 enter into P1's *loob*, creating this shared identity (*kapwa*). It makes the notion of *kapwa* transcend the standard definition of the other understood as

10.1080/09552367.2015.1043173. Quoted in Rebustillo, "Loob-Kapwa Relationality," *Melintas*, 250.

[49] J. Reyes, "*Loob* and *Kapwa*: Thomas Aquinas and the Filipino Virtue Ethics," (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Hoger Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte, KU Leuven, 2015), as quoted in Rowan Rebustillo, "A New Look at Intersubjectivity and Theology: A Retrieval of Filipino Loob-Kapwa Relationality In Dialogue with Gabriel Marcel and Ludwig Binswanger" *Melintas* 33 no. 3 (2017): 240-278, 10.26593/mel.v33i3.3072.240-278.

[50] Rebustillo, "*Loob-Kapwa* Relationality," *Melintas*, 251.

[51] De Mesa, *In Solidarity with Cultures*, 47, quoting Erlinda Reyno, "Maling Akala, Maling Pangarap," in *Liwayway* 57 no.33 (Enero 12, 1981), 41-43.

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totally different from the person, a "total stranger…or outside him or herself."[52] Virgilio Enríquez argues:

> When asked for the closest English equivalent of *kapwa*, one word that comes to mind is the English word 'others.' However, the Filipino word *kapwa* is very different from the English word 'others.' In Filipino, *kapwa* is the unity of the 'self' and 'others.' The English 'others' is actually used in opposition to the 'self,' and implies the recognition of the self as a separate identity. In contrast, *kapwa* is a recognition of shared identity, an inner self shared with others.[53]

This shared identity that is in *kapwa* resonates with other scholars. Alejo argues that "*loob* is not just the whole aspect of self for herself/himself alone but the gift of self is shared with and for *kapwa* (others)."[54] Considering this, *kapwa* is best translated as what Reyes calls "together with the person" since the point of departure in its understanding is the term "togetherness."[55] The state of "togetherness"

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[52] De Guia, *Kapwa*, 28. Cited in Rebustillo, "A Retrieval of *Loob-Kapwa*," 252.

[53] V. Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology* (Quezon City: The University of the Philippines, 1992) 52. Cited in Rebustillo, "A Retrieval of *Loob-Kapwa*," 253. Enriquez's kapwa as shared identity resonates in Brazal's work when correlating utang na loob (debt of human solidarity) in *kapwa* as an "appreciation of *kapwa* solidarity." Agnes Brazal, "Reinventing *Pakikipag-Kapwa*: An Exploration of Its Potential for Promoting Respect for Plurality and Difference," in *Fundamentalism and Pluralism in the Church* ed. Dennis T. Gonzales (Manila: DAKATEO, De La Salle University), 64. It is noticeable that *utang na loob* in no way produces an uncomfortable feeling rooted in an idea that bothers one's conscience to immediately pay back the goodness one provides to another in a rather forceful way. Instead, *utang na loob* transcends this notion by making it simplified and straightforward. It is responding to the call for mutual solidarity and respect. This results in how a person relates and treats others (*kapwa*) with respect and genuine love despite differences.

[54] A. Alejo, SJ, *Tao Po! Tuloy!: Isang Landas ng Pag-unawa sa Loob ng Tao*, (Quezon City: Office of Research and Publications, AdMU, 1990), 30. Original Cited Text: *"Ang loob, ayon parin kay de Mesa, ay hindi lamang buod ng pagkatao sa kanyang sarili kundi siyang sarili ng tao bilang kapwa."*

[55] Rebustillo prefers Reyes' translation of *kapwa* as "together with the person," as more inclined with the distinct reality of Filipino cultural ethos, compared

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attributed to *kapwa* cosmology transcends the limitations of the word "self," which is already a loaded term in English translation, as Enriquez argues.[56] Moreover, the actualization of *kapwa* refers to the virtue called *pakikipag-kapwa*, the act of being together with the person. In principle, as well as in reality, the inherent goodness existing in *kapwa* actualized in *pakikipag-kapwa* emanates from the inherent goodness existing in *loob* actualized in *kagandahang loob*. Simply put, a genuine *pakikipagkapwa* reveals a genuine *kagandahang loob*, vice versa. In this sense, something good springs from this dynamic interaction.

Loob and *Kapwa* in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement

The previous discussions illuminate the significance of *loob* and *kapwa* in terms of their inclusive ethos. While remaining cultural, *loob* and *kapwa* can correlate with the inclusive ethos mostly evident in theological resources. The theological significance of these cultural values helps establish a nuanced ecumenical model that honors the contributions of the two-fold ecumenical approach previously discussed. In strengthening this proposed model, it recognizes the role of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement. It introduces the value of this dispositional posture associated with "charismatic ecumenicity,"[57]

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to the translation of "self" provided by Enriquez and De Guia. Reyes' notion of "togetherness" is a product of his critical analysis of ancient texts which Rebustillo mentions in his paper. Reyes writes: "Compare my translation with the old *Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala* where capoua means 'Ambos a dos igualmente (both two equally) and capoua co tauo means 'hombre como yo' (man like me). See De Noceda and De Sanlucar, *Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala*. Reyes, "*Loób* and *Kapwa*: An Introduction," 156.

[56] Rebustillo mentions Charles Taylor about the English word "self" as an already loaded category, "sculpted by a long and complex history of ideals and upheavals in modern times." See C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1989).

[57] Koichi Kitano, "Spontaneous Ecumenicity between Catholics and Protestants in the Charismatic Movement: A Case Study," (PhD dissertation, Centro Escolar University, Philippines, 1981), 28. Kitano describes ecumenicity as the "quality or state of being ecumenical in terms of nonstructural ecumenism" which is

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defined as "a desire and an effort to experience a feeling of togetherness and cooperativeness among Christians, rather seeking organized or structural unity among the churches." C. Stanley Lowell, The Ecumenical Mirage (Grand Rapids, Michigan: baker Book House, 1967), 11-12. Cited in Kitano, "Spontaneous Ecumenicity," 28. This sense of being ecumenical encapsulated in the term "ecumenicity" is understood in its historical precedents. As Protestantism was introduced in the Philippines, it emerged due to the American expansionist movement which, according to scholars, was an important factor in propelling the evangelizing mission in the country. See K. Clymer, *Protestant Missionaries in the Philippines, 1898-1916* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986); G. Anderson, ed., "Providence and Politics Behind Protestant Missionary Beginnings in the Philippines," Studies in *Philippine Church History* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1969); M. Apilado, "Revolution, Colonialism, and Mission: A Study of the Role of Protestant Churches in the United States' Rule of the Philippines, 1898-1928," (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, August 1976), D. Gardinier, "Ecumenism Among Philippine Protestants," *Philippine Studies* 50 no.1 (First Quarter 2002): 3-22, 4. In the context of different Protestant groups coming in, an agreement called comity was established to designate certain places where these Protestant groups can only conduct their missionary activities, instilling a new consciousness, religious liberty attributed to Protestant missionary effort. Over the years, nationalism has become the hermeneutical key for independence and therefore, it coincided with the clamors of the native Protestants of the country to be free from foreign domination. Such an event paved the way to rethink and reimagine its ecumenical task. Consequently, it led to the creation of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP). Speaking about its ecumenical character, Oscar Suarez argues that the Council "represents the largest organized form of interfaith cooperation among mainline Protestants" because for him, it is "…one of the most tangible evidences *(sic)* of Protestant participation in society (that) occurs at the level of ecumenical work." O. Suarez, *Protestantism and Authoritarian Politics: The Politics of Repression and the Future of Ecumenical Witness in the Philippines* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1999), 5. According to T. Valentino Sitoy Jr., the NCCP's constitution consists of a somewhat looser structure since it does not mention of union in terms of uniformity or uniting all Protestant Churches into a single unified body, a significant aim held by its predecessors since Evangelical Union. See T. Valentino Sitoy Jr., *Comity and Unity: Ardent Aspirations of Six Decades of Protestantism in the Philippines* (1901-1961) (Quezon City: National Council of Churches in the Philippines, 1989). NCCP's ecumenical vision as "Christian unity without union" finds resonance with the then "new Catholic attitude" espoused by Pope John XXIII in convening the Second Vatican Council. In

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as an antidote to what scholars call the "scandal of disunity."[58] This ecumenicity, as a sentiment of belongingness, implies an inclusive posture, which is an important baseline for institutionalizing ecumenical initiatives. As an implication, institutionalizing ecumenicity relies on its dynamic correlation with ecumenism from a non-structural point of view. This means that for an authentic ecumenical movement to emerge, it must be grounded in what unites Christians first before focusing on the differences, resonating with Kasper's viewpoint mentioned earlier. In this case, ecumenicity as a feeling of belongingness must guide the institutionalization process.

The Charismatic movement in the Philippines can strengthen and support this structural aim for ecumenicity.[59] Christl Kessler and Jürgen

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this new pathway inaugurated by the NCCP, ecumenical endeavors have been more fruitful. The NCCP's shift in ecumenical vision becomes an opportunity not only for its inward task to unite Protestant Churches but also provides an impetus that builds ecumenical relationships with the Roman Catholic Church, although the NCCP is declared as "an ecumenical fellowship of non-Roman Catholic denominations in the Philippines working for unity in faith and order." The National Council of Churches in the Philippines, "Brief History," https://nccphilippines.org/about-us/brief-history/ (Retrieved 17 October 2025). In the end, Catholicism and Protestantism share many things in common, the greatest of which is the belief that Jesus is Lord, and He is found in all cultures and traditions.

[58] Kitano mentions several authors speaking about this "scandal of disunity" between the Catholics and the Protestants. Kitano understands David Moberg's work, arguing that "most analysis of Catholic-Protestant relationships is distinctly partisan because the subject is emotion-laden for so many people." D. Moberg, *The Church as A Social Institution* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Pretice-Hall, Inc., 1962), 300. Kitano also mentions Karl Adam, stating that "The special characteristic of Protestantism is isolation, abrupt separation and schism, not only in the sphere of church government, but in that of religion generally. K. Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, trans. by Dom Justin Mccann (New York: Image Books, 1954). Kitano cites the work of Robert Brown, arguing that "neither group (Catholic or Protestant) is particularly happy about the other. On almost every level of relationship, there is irritation and ill-will, if not active dislike." Robert Brown, *The Spirit of Protestantism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 159.

[59] The Charismatic movement is understood in terms of its "organizational structures, cognitive patterns, and practices of people from different

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Rüland recognize the movement's ecumenical significance, stating that "the Charismatic worldview transgresses not only class, but also denominations. Although ecumenical cooperation in terms of joint institutional activities is virtually nonexistent, Pentecostals and Catholic Charismatics acknowledge their similarities."[60] This resonates with what Kitano observes in his study, the inclusive potential of ecumenicity. Before the explicit intent to achieve Christian unity in a more formal and structured sense as described in ecumenism, this ecumenicity, as a spiritual disposition that binds Protestants and Catholics, is more enhanced through "charismatic experiences," a potential ingredient for the institutionalization of this desired goal. It also reveals how the inclusive ethos of *loob* and *kapwa* resonates with the Charismatic Christians' welcoming and open disposition. In this lived ecumenism, the implicit ecumenicity can become part of the overall ecumenical framework. This becomes part of the renewed Christian praxis. In this way, ecumenical initiatives bear the practical fruits of authentic Christian dialogue and unity of Christians in a local context.

Toward a Contextualized Ecumenical Model

Guided by Bevans' synthetic model, the proposed ecumenical framework is a product of contextualizing the relevant concepts from established models (inter-ecclesial ecumenism and trans-ecclesial ecumenism) using the inclusive ethos of *loob* and *kapwa* as a cultural and theological lens.

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backgrounds." Following the dynamic flow of ecumenicity-ecumenism articulated earlier, the principle of institutionalization refers to the Catholic Church's response in overcoming "its initial suspicions…and instead of fighting it, the hierarchy sought to integrate it." Its integration into the Church's hierarchy is not to be seen as gaining total control of the entire movement, as it is categorized as "transparochial," which is not "under the direct supervision of the priest." See C. Kessler and J. Rüland, *Give Jesus a Hand! Charismatic Christians: Populist Religion and Politics in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2008), 116, 118-119.

[60] Kessler & Rüland, *Charismatic Christians*, 125.

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Appreciating the Two-Fold Ecumenical Framework

As mentioned at the outset, the primary challenge of ecumenism lies on the level of praxis. Inter-ecclesial ecumenism ultimately finds inspiration and expresses cooperation in Jesus' prayer to the Father in Jn 17:21 (*that all may be one*). This finds concrete manifestations in how Christians from the Global North can reach a consensus on the nature of the church, grounded in a solid Trinitarian basis. This aim for doctrinal clarity is necessary to guide the ecumenical process amidst the consequences of Christian disunity felt on the ground. Trans-ecclesial ecumenism, while recognizing the valuable contributions of the first model, is a response to the latter's inability to address the specific ecumenical concerns of the Global South, highlighting its multi-cultural and multi-religious identification. As the paper develops a distinct ecumenical model, the inclusive ethos of *loob* and *kapwa* helps the reader reread and reinterpret the significant features common among the existing models while acknowledging their distinct particularities.

The dispositional (inclusive) posture precedes the identification of a unifying principle essential for promoting relational unity. Vatican II mentions the importance of the conversion of the heart (*metanoia*) as the primary step. Walter Kasper, among others, has expressed a similar point of view, stating that achieving unity begins by looking at the commonalities rather than the differences. This aim for unity begins by paying attention to the common humanity that Christians share. This shift in focus results in fostering avenues for mutual collaboration and enrichment that are vital in developing a more solid Trinitarian basis influencing ecclesiology. This inclusive path, while distinct, resonates a similar disposition shared by trans-ecclesial ecumenism. Like the first model, it expresses its fundamental intention to promote Christian unity. It emphasizes as well the value of spirituality that ushers a conversion of the heart, a primary component of a dialogical posture. Where lies the distinction points to its desired goal: to consider other cultural/religious realities exclusively found in the Global South, like the multi-cultural and multi-religious identification.

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The Uniqueness of the Proposed Ecumenical Model

The proposed ecumenical model, like the other ones, expresses the same intention to promote Christian unity, but it differs when considering the peculiar socio-cultural and socio-religious perspectives in the Philippines. The inclusive ethos of *loob* and *kapwa* serves as a cultural and theological lens to see the values of conversion of heart, relational unity, and dialogue not merely as concepts but as lived experiences. Through a cultural lens, *loob* is a central concept that manifests as an interior space within the person where thinking, feeling, and willing interact, collaborate, and negotiate. Through a theological lens, *loob* becomes a sacred spring within the person who espouses a Christian affinity towards other Christians. Considering this fact, it establishes a distinct Christian *loob* that, transcending mere differences, forms solidarity and offers help to the Christian *kapwa* who is not a total stranger. It makes the reader more aware of what holds them together toward a common vision. Filipin@ Christians may appreciate it very well through the actualization of *loob* and *kapwa* through the virtues of *kagandahang loob* (good will) and *pakikipag-kapwa* (relational will). The shared charismatic experiences between Protestants and Catholics can boost the ecumenical model's credibility and effectiveness because of this so-called "lived ecumenism." Although tensions persist in the practice of ecumenism, this model helps Christians view these problems in a different light. This model fills them not only with knowledge but with the necessary light from Christ who wills "that all may be one" (Jn 17:21).

Summary and Conclusion

The actual challenges of ecumenism in the Philippines led the author to develop a contextual model. By focusing largely on addressing conceptual gaps, it aims to create enriching spaces for further conversations in the field. This enriched framework, rooted in *loob* and *kapwa*, incorporates valuable themes from the two-fold ecumenical approach: inter-ecclesial ecumenism and trans-ecclesial ecumenism. Bevans' synthetic model helps the author unleash helpful concepts that align with the spirit of *loob* and *kapwa*. Through its

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inclusive thrust, it helps readers grasp the essence of what it means to be ecumenical, which aligns with specific cultural sensibilities. The ecumenical model's contextual nature facilitates a cultivation of values that enrich the *kapwa*. This contributes to the realization that Christians become more grounded and more aware of what holds them together. Thus, the proposed ecumenical model is a lived testimony that cultural contexts such as the Philippines contain God's presence, waiting to be revealed, nurtured, and developed through local customs and language. This model can potentially shape a Christian's dispositional posture to imbibe a more welcoming and inclusive ethos. Through this, ecumenical Christians may encounter the value of *loob* and *kapwa* as a means to transcend barriers of division and to help create theological vocabularies that can address the special case of some Christians who, though outside traditional ecumenical borders, express the same affinity for other Christians. Despite doctrinal divergences, their lived Christian experiences can be a reflection of the Trinity as they embody the spirit of relational unity, to be a Christian *kapwa* with and for others who are not totally strangers. This ecumenical model inaugurates the transformation of Christian *loob* so that it can establish this so-called Christian togetherness without borders. Lastly, this ecumenical model, when applied in context, may strengthen this inclusive disposition and convince theological experts to consider the possibility of theologically nuancing the current status of ecumenism.

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