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Religious Freedom and Peace: Modern Catholic Perspectives and Contemporary Taiwan Society
JEFFREY G. L. CHANG, S.J.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

A poignant theme in Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'* is the intrinsic link between environmental stewardship, social justice, and ethical responsibility (nos. 15–16). This theme underscores the interconnectedness of all creation and the moral obligation to protect our shared home, not just for its intrinsic value but also as a means of caring for the most vulnerable in society. The encyclical critiques our irresponsible exploitation of Earth's resources and emphasizes the need for a global ecological conversion, where care for the environment goes hand-in-hand with social justice and ethical living.

This issue of our journal resonates deeply with this theme presented in *Laudato Si'* (nos. 139–140). Each article in the compilation explores different facets of this interconnection, ranging from interreligious dialogue and religious freedom to environmental ethics and the challenges of translating sacred texts. The articles collectively underscore the importance of a holistic approach to our environmental and societal challenges, as advocated by Pope Francis.

In "Cultivating Interreligious Dialogue as an Effective Peace-Building Mechanism in the Academe" by Ramil R. Marcos, the emphasis is on fostering understanding and cooperation among different faiths within academic settings. This approach aligns with *Laudato Si'*s call for dialogue and collective action in addressing environmental and social issues (nos. 116–117). Marcos highlights how interreligious dialogue can lead to a deeper appreciation of our shared responsibility for

the planet, mirroring Pope Francis's vision of a world where diverse communities work together in harmony for the common good.

Jeffrey G. L. Chang, S.J., in "Religious Freedom and Peace: Modern Catholic Perspectives and Contemporary Taiwan Society," discusses the importance of religious freedom in fostering peace and harmony. This article echoes *Laudato Si'*s perspective on the need for mutual respect and understanding between different belief systems (nos. 210–211) as a foundation for a sustainable future. It underscores the encyclical's view that peace with the environment and among peoples is a collective responsibility, nurtured through freedom and respect.

Renato Taib Oliveros's "A Trinitarian Pneumatology for Evangelization in Asia" explores the role of the Holy Spirit in uniting people across diverse religious traditions. This concept is akin to *Laudato Si'*s call for an inclusive approach to ecological and social issues. Oliveros's emphasis on the Holy Spirit's role in creation mirrors Pope Francis's view of the divine's presence in all aspects of the natural world, urging a deeper respect and care for the environment rooted in spiritual values (nos. 241–242).

Abundio R. Babor, Jr., M.S.C., in "'That They All May Be One': A Virtuous Community, a Paradigm for Environmental Sustainability," proposes a community-based approach to environmental sustainability. This reflects *Laudato Si'*s emphasis on community action and the moral imperative of environmental stewardship as a collective responsibility (nos. 179–180). Babor's vision of a virtuous community aligns with the encyclical's call for societal and environmental harmony, rooted in mutual respect and ethical action.

Archie R. Magarao, Sch. P., in "A Reframed Consistent Ethic of Life on Nuclear Energy: Exploring the Moral Implications of the Revival of the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant," addresses the ethical dilemmas surrounding nuclear energy. This discussion resonates with *Laudato Si'*s call for careful consideration of the environmental impact of our technological and economic decisions (nos. 165–166). Magarao's ethical exploration of nuclear energy reflects the encyclical's emphasis

on the need for a sustainable approach that respects the environment and human dignity.

Lastly, in "The Indispensability of Back Translation: Mediating Faithfulness and Naturalness in the Translation of the Bible into an Unfamiliar Tongue" by Rhoneil M. Arevalo, the focus is on the challenges of translating sacred texts while maintaining their integrity. This mirrors *Laudato Si'*s broader theme of respecting the diversity of creation, including cultural and linguistic diversity (nos. 143–146). Arevalo's work underscores the encyclical's call for a deeper understanding and appreciation of different cultures and traditions, which is essential for building a more inclusive and respectful global community.

The articles in this journal issue of *Landas* collectively underscore the importance of an integrated approach to environmental and social issues, echoing the sentiments of *Laudato Si'*. They highlight the need for global ecological conversion, grounded in a deep respect for nature, cultural diversity, and ethical responsibility. These diverse yet interconnected perspectives offer a multifaceted approach to understanding and addressing the challenges facing our world, in line with the vision set forth by Pope Francis.

Dr. theol. Markus Locker, Ph.D.
Editor-in-Chief

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CULTIVATING INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AS AN EFFECTIVE PEACE-BUILDING MECHANISM IN THE ACADEME

Ramil R. Marcos

Abstract. Efforts are underway to introduce and/or strengthen peace education in the Philippine educational system, an endeavor that necessarily includes interreligious relations as a program component, especially in consideration of the diverse religious profiles of many stakeholders in the academe. This article contributes essential Scriptural and pastoral backgrounds that undergird the Catholic approach to and method of dialogue. It explores the possibilities for incorporating both ecumenical and interreligious dialogue in the training and formation of Filipino students, a move encouraged by sociologists and academicians. The article revisits the dimensions of dialogue that promote active relationships, the common pursuit of goals, respect for other people's beliefs, and the sharing of people's experiences of God. Originally delivered at a 2023 national conference sponsored by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity (OPAPRU), this paper incorporates the concerns and contributions of conference participants representing various institutions of higher learning.

Keywords. peace education; ecumenism; interreligious dialogue; principles of dialogue; best practices on dialogue

To deepen classroom lessons on dialogue, a teacher brought a group of students to an Islamic-Christian center in Mindanao for some days of interfaith study and interaction. While the students were enthusiastic, their parents were hesitant at first and apprehensive about granting permission. Once in the center, the students received text messages and calls from their worried parents around the clock.

Although adventurous, the students had their own struggles as well. For instance, they confessed that they rarely had a good sleep on the first few nights, fearful that something untoward might happen to them (Muslims and Christians shared the same sleeping quarters at night). A Muslim youth also admitted that he, too, was afraid that the Christians might be planning something sinister against him. The feeling—or rather the suspicion—was mutual!

This episode describes the situation of interreligious dialogue in the Philippines. Most are for dialogue and want to try it, yet one must admit that there are challenges along the road given the degree of ignorance some people may have, our inherited prejudices, and the portrayal of religious conflict in the media and online. In this article, this author would like to present some reflections and points pertaining to the appropriateness, timeliness, and usefulness of interreligious dialogue for society and for the educational sector in particular that can prepare young Filipinos for citizenship in the global community.

Encounter with the "Others": From Jesus to Francis

Proceeding from the Christian tradition, we briefly explore the way of the Lord Jesus Christ who, as a man for others, a man of solidarity and peace, is the inspiration for many people in their journey of meaningful encounter with members of other faiths who are "God's other peoples," "others," or "outsiders," understanding these general

terms in a positive sense instead of referring to people through negative labels.[1]

The theologian Walter Cardinal Kasper wrote of the unique role of Jesus in the history of humanity:

> The solidarity of God with [human persons] manifested and realized in Jesus Christ establishes a new solidarity among [humankind]. The Christian idea of representation then assigns to Christians and to the Churches the world as the place of their service and binds them to co-operate in a new order of peace in freedom sustained by the idea of solidarity. Then Christian love, realizing the love of God and thus accepting every [human person] unconditionally, also becomes an absolute commitment to justice for everyone.[2]

The Scriptures attest that Jesus Christ is the man for others. Therefore, his followers, too, must imitate his way of dealing and interacting with others to usher in a new order of peace and understanding, of brotherhood, sisterhood, and mutual upliftment in the world.

While Jesus called the people of Israel to follow him, those he encountered showed varied ways of responding to his call. Did he intend everyone in Israel to become his disciple?[3] Gerhard Lohfink stressed that while some were chosen to be disciples, many people took part in the mission of Jesus in different ways and were not disciples in the strict sense of the word. Some were participants in his story, resident members of the movement he started, occasional but reliable helpers, or mere beneficiaries of his actions. Nevertheless, whatever the degree of contact or relationship with Jesus, no one was turned away or sidelined.[4]

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[1] G. O'Collins, *Salvation for All: God's Other Peoples* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), vii.

[2] W. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997), 225.

[3] G. Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth: What He Wanted, Who He Was*, trans. L. Maloney (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 86ff.

[4] Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 86ff.

Jesus's life was not restricted to the Jews since he also clearly interacted with non-Jews.[5] He even performed miracles for Gentiles, like the Roman centurion whose servant was sick and the Canaanite woman whose daughter needed an exorcism—the only two miracles Jesus performed in a "long-distance" manner.[6] Jesus felt comfortable performing miracles for Gentiles and in predominantly Gentile settings. When Jesus healed the Samaritan leper, he blessed a person who was doubly an outcast—both a leper and a non-Jew. Jesus showcased a "Good Samaritan" as the protagonist in one of his parables, and discussed salvation with a Samaritan woman he briefly met.[7]

More compelling than Jesus's gestures of accommodation was the content of his own preaching. His message, which had a transcendent and universal appeal, was intended for everyone. He gathered around him a new family, a new final community: "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."[8] This and other "whoever" statements clearly did not imply the condition of race or creed and had a generalized applicability to people everywhere. Jesus's parables as well as his prayers moved beyond a homogenous audience to include all people of good will. His teachings clearly spoke to everyone and continue to resound with people today: "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Mt. 5:9). When Christians engage in ecumenical dialogue among themselves and interreligious dialogue with other great religions, their primary motivation is to imitate Jesus in his openness to people and in his desire to sow peace in every heart, to heal wounds of division, and to usher in a new form of universal brotherhood and sisterhood.

Among the universal voices today that echo Jesus's call for solidarity among people of different faiths is that of Pope Francis. Even as an Argentinian archbishop, then-Cardinal Bergoglio already opened his doors not only to his Catholic flock but to people of other confessions

[5] O'Collins, *Salvation for All*, 80.

[6] O'Collins, *Salvation for All*, 81.

[7] O'Collins, *Salvation for All*, 83–84.

[8] O'Collins, *Salvation for All*, 88.

and traditions. He was discovered to have "developed strong bonds with leaders of the historic Protestant and Orthodox churches, as well as with Jewish and Muslim leaders."[9] Convinced of the validity of the charismatic experience of the Holy Spirit, he welcomed Pentecostal Christians, attended meetings with them, allowed them to preach to his priests, and prayed with them.

An enduring image of the future pope was of him kneeling on the floor surrounded by Christian pastors and ministers with their hands extended over him in prayer and blessing. The late Jean-Louis Cardinal Tauran observed how the future pope became a master builder of "cross-frontier relationships" which sometimes blossomed into deep friendships with people of other faiths. He admired Bergoglio's "Argentine model of interreligious dialogue, unique in the world."[10] Among the notable interfaith friendships the future pope had in Buenos Aires were with Muslim leader Adel Made, Jewish rabbi Abraham Skorka, and an Anglican evangelical bishop, Tony Palmer.[11]

When he was elected head of the Catholic Church, Francis enshrined ecumenical and interreligious dialogue in the programmatic document of his reign, *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG).[12] He believed that ecumenical relations among various Christian denominations could contribute to the unity of the human family and thus called for the healing of the divisions in the Body of Christ that would enable Christians to become true peacemakers as envisioned by the Lord Jesus Christ.[13] He valued interreligious dialogue as a "necessary condition for peace in the world" and acknowledged relations with the followers

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[9] A. Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2014), 290.

[10] Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 321.

[11] Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 321.

[12] Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (Pasay City: Paulines, 2013). Hereafter referred to as EG.

[13] EG nos. 244, 255.

of Islam as being of great importance, especially at a time when their growing presence was perceived even in traditionally Christian regions. He championed religious freedom for Muslims in Christian nations and called for reciprocal respect for Christians in countries with a Muslim majority.[14]

In his document on universal human fraternity, *Fratelli Tutti*,[15] Francis once again upheld dialogue as a way for believers in God to contribute significantly toward the building of a civilization of brotherhood/sisterhood and justice. He reiterated that the goal of dialogue "is to establish friendship, peace, and harmony, and to share spiritual and moral values and experiences in a spirit of truth and love."[16] Religious leaders, he said, should be "true people of dialogue" cooperating toward building peace as authentic mediators.[17]

In 2019, Francis also co-signed the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*[18] in Abu Dhabi in which, together with the Grand Imam of Al-azhar, he called for the adoption of "a culture of dialogue among religions as the path; mutual cooperation as the code of conduct; [and] reciprocal understanding as the method and standard" for living in a world marked by divinely inspired goodness, love, and peace.[19]

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[14] EG nos. 250–253.

[15] Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* (October 3, 2020), available at http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html (accessed April 20, 2023). Hereafter referred to as FT.

[16] FT no. 271.

[17] FT no. 284.

[18] Francis & Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* (February 4, 2019), available at https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html (accessed April 20, 2023).

[19] Francis & Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together.*

The initiatives of Francis in the arena of interreligious dialogue and interfaith relations should not come as a surprise to his observers and commentators. As the first post-conciliar pope, his formation and the years after his priestly ordination transpired within the context of the gradual implementation of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. As priest, bishop, and pope, he certainly made his own the impulse of the Council's doctrinal document on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, namely, for dialogue and openness with the great religions of the world, which began with a re-appraisal of the Jewish roots of Christianity,[20] referring to the people "to whom the testament and the promises were given and from whom Christ was born according to the flesh."[21] Furthermore, Vatican II affirmed that "this people remains most dear to God, for God does not repent of the gifts [God] makes nor of the calls [God] issues."[22] The Council acknowledged, too, that the plan of salvation encompasses believers from other religious traditions, foremost among them those who extol God as the Creator. The lordship of God over all creation is manifested glowingly, for example, in the conviction of our Muslim brothers and sisters.[23]

Speaking on the fiftieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* (1965–2015), the Vatican II document on interreligious dialogue, Francis expressed his belief that dialogue with religions needs to be

> open and respectful, and thus prove fruitful. Mutual respect is the condition and, at the same time, the aim of interreligious dialogue: respecting others' right to life, to physical integrity, to fundamental

[20] In the practice of the Catholic Church, relations with Judaism are classified under ecumenical, not interreligious, initiatives.

[21] Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964), no. 15, available at https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html (accessed May 13, 2023). Hereafter referred to as LG.

[22] LG no. 15.

[23] LG no. 15.

> freedoms, namely freedom of conscience, of thought, of expression and of religion.[24]

The Council, animated by the spirit of communion manifest in LG, was for the Pope

> an extraordinary time of reflection, dialogue and prayer which aimed to renew the gaze of the Catholic Church on herself and on the world. A reading of the signs of the times in view of an update oriented by a twofold faithfulness: faithfulness to the ecclesial tradition and faithfulness to the history of the men and women of our time.[25]

By promoting and engaging in constructive relationships with other religions toward understanding, reconciliation, and peace, the Church lives its mission of truly being a proclaimer of Christ, the true Light of the nations who sends his Church as "sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race."[26]

Encounter with the "Others" in the Academe

Today, it is even a needless cliché to say that the world has become a global village. It is obvious that interdependence among peoples, communities, and nations continues to increase in terms of economics, politics, media, and especially the new social media brought about by new communication technologies. And, instead of the death of religion, developments show that there is a new awareness of its revival and its plurality.[27]

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[24] Francis, Interreligious General Audience [address] (October 28, 2015), available at https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20151028_udienza-generale.html (accessed May 13, 2023).

[25] Francis, Interreligious General Audience [address].

[26] LG no. 1.

[27] Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Dialogue and Proclamation* (May 19, 1991), available at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/

The global situation has become more and more "multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious."[28] The role of religion in the lives of people and even of nations cannot be overlooked. Thus, in addition to cooperation in other aspects of human society, interreligious dialogue at every level and every context is a pressing and urgent necessity.[29]

Young people are the first to benefit from and avail of the advancements that transcend national and continental frontiers and boundaries. They are more open to new visions, behaviors, and encounters. Distant from the experiences of their forebears, they carry less historical baggage and traditional prejudices against people who belong to different cultures, races, and religions. Of course, they are also most vulnerable to misguided concepts and portrayals of people outside their circles, particularly those who are strange and incomprehensible to them.

The opening narrative of this article would have been different if the young people mentioned—both Muslim and Christian—did not bear the religious prejudices against and mutual fear of each other from their domestic upbringing and present environment. It is important for young people to be steadily exposed to the genuine reality of others so that they can grow in understanding, compassion, and empathy.

In school, young people do not only learn academic skills and cognitive competence. Academic institutions are also venues for "education for life" since their specialized environment reflects society and the world in a microcosmic form given the varying backgrounds of students, faculty, and staff. Students are introduced and thrust into a world of diversity, including the world of religious differences.[30] And

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interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html (accessed April 20, 2023).

[28] O'Collins, *Salvation for All*, ix.

[29] O'Collins, *Salvation for All*, ix.

[30] A. Abdool, F. Potgieter, J. Van der Walt, & C. Wolhuter, "Inter-religious Dialogue in Schools: A Pedagogical and Civic Unavoidability," *HTS Theological Studies* 63:2 (2007): 553.

since the academic environment has a bridging function, utilizing what the learners bring from their families, communities, and religions, it has the potential to prepare learners for life in the larger society. Schools are important as instruments that enable students to manage diversity through activities that encourage engaging with others, not least in the aspects of religion and faith.

A study by Filipino sociologists proposed that the education system can be a feasible and appropriate ground for the pursuit of interreligious understanding.[31] Due to the increased mobility of populations today, the homogeneity of classrooms has given way to an experience of diversity, exposing students to a multiplicity of cultural and religious identities and expressions.

The learning institution can also offer students safe spaces for discussing other people's customs, beliefs, and practices. If these are handled competently, students can delve deeper into religious issues that divide people and explore possibilities that promise harmony, going beyond superficial discussions on practice, attire, and behavior. Furthermore, the academe can also elicit from the youth a vitality and motivation not only to understand each other's culture and religion but also to inspire them toward empowerment and cooperation. Understanding, respect, and acceptance of the other can blossom into a dialogue of life, a practical dialogue that can lead to a common vision and united action for the good of society and for peace in the world.[32]

Has interreligious dialogue been tried on our campuses, especially in congregational and diocesan institutions? Have there been successful programs for the members of the academic community? Many of the successful ventures in promoting interreligious relations on campus appear to come from other countries, with only some modest and tentative initiatives from our local institutions.

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[31] J. Cornelio & T. Salera, "Youth in Interfaith Dialogue: Intercultural Understanding and Its Implications on Education in the Philippines," *Innovación Educativa* 12:60 (2012): 55.

[32] Cornelio & Salera, "Youth in Interfaith Dialogue," 56–58.

Faith-based universities in the United States of America have expanded their concepts of campus ministry by introducing chaplaincies staffed with interfaith chaplains and by providing sacred spaces on campus for the use of adherents of different religions, be it for individual prayer or group reflections.[33] In fact, one of these universities recently completed the construction of the first-ever mosque "on a U.S. college campus with ablution stations (places for ritual washing), a spirituality and formation hall, and a halal kitchen."[34] Secular or public universities also run interreligious affairs programs for their students by forming associations of campus religious workers from diverse faiths, promoting student clubs on religion, faith, and spirituality, and managing university offices that promote interreligious harmony and cooperation.[35] In Australia, the Archdiocese of Melbourne has come up with a document on guidelines for interfaith education for all the schools of the archdiocese.[36]

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[33] See the Chaplains and Staff page on the Georgetown University website, available at https://campusministry.georgetown.edu/ourstaff/chaplainsandstaff/# (accessed April 20, 2023), and Campus Ministry page on the Fordham University website, available at https://www.fordham.edu/about/living-the-mission/campus-ministry/ (accessed April 20, 2023).

[34] J. Burger, "Georgetown Boasts Islamic First on U.S. University Campus," *Aleteia* (May 6, 2023), available at https://aleteia.org/2023/05/06/georgetown-boasts-islamic-first-on-u-s-university-campus/?utm_campaign=EM-EN-Newsletter-Daily-&utm_content=Newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_source=sendgrid&utm_term=20230507 (accessed May 8, 2023).

[35] See the Association of Campus Religious Workers page on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln website, available at https://www.unl.edu/acrew/home-0 (accessed April 20, 2023); the Office for Religious & Spiritual Life page on the Stanford University website, available at https://orsl.stanford.edu/ (accessed April 20, 2023); and the Religious, Spiritual, Secular, Interfaith Clubs page on the New York University website, available at https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/student-diversity/spiritual-life/religious-and-spiritual-life-on-campus/spiritual-life-clubs.html (accessed April 20, 2023).

[36] Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, *Welcoming Each Other: Guidelines for Interfaith Education in the Schools of the Archdiocese of Melbourne* (October 30, 2019), available at https://www.

In the Philippines, a few educational institutions provide ecumenical or interfaith chapels for their students; examples are a faith-based university in Mindanao and a state university in Manila.[37] A private university in Central Visayas opened a common meditation and prayer room for their multi-faith student population.[38] Familiar to this writer are the instances of a Catholic school that instituted programs for the knowledge, respect for, and appreciation of the cultural gems of its sizable Muslim enrolment population and another school that initiated ecumenical and interfaith representation of students and their respective faith leaders in select campus activities.

Educators who participated in a recent conference on the topic of interreligious dialogue on campus expressed their hopes for training sessions, seminars, and conferences for developing competence in establishing ecumenical and interfaith programs in school settings. A leading public university in Mindanao, for instance, integrates the study of religions in its peace program as an exercise of freedom and basic rights. It also encourages the participation of students from all faith backgrounds, whether Muslim, Christian, or indigenous, in all activities that promote peace and harmony. An exchange of greetings during the religious feasts of each faith tradition is also a priority on campus. Moreover, while the academe does not deal with the sensitive doctrinal divide between believers, this university periodically invites a panel of interfaith leaders to explain the tenets of their communities to students.[39]

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multifaitheducation.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/EIC-Interfaith-Education-Guidelines-2018_V9-2.pdf (accessed April 20, 2023).

[37] See the Campus Ministry Office page on the Ateneo de Zamboanga website, available at https://www.adzu.edu.ph/campus-ministry/ (accessed April 20, 2023), and the PUP-Manila Campus Ministry Home Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/PUPCampusMinistry/ (accessed April 20, 2023).

[38] See "Meditation Room Reinforces Inclusive Faith-Nurture" (July 14, 2016) on the Silliman University website, available at https://su.edu.ph/2157-meditation-room-reinforces-inclusive-faith-nurture/ (accessed April 20, 2023).

[39] Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity, "Learning and Reflection Session on Cultivating Interreligious Dialogue as

Providing religious spaces for different religious groups is a good thing. Orientation on students' varying backgrounds, cultures, and faiths is commendable. Periodic gatherings or joint activities are laudable and inspiring. However, dialogue that leads to peace among peoples must aim at the progressive intensification of mutual engagement with and between students from different faith backgrounds. This can be done if interreligious dialogue is conducted in such a way that it touches on the different aspects of dialogue instead of merely superficial celebrations of diversity or mere formality in co-existence and acceptance of the presence of others. It will be affirmatively propitious for dialogue partners to be trained to imbibe certain attitudes necessary for facilitating the flow and progress of dialogue.

A Proposal for Interfaith Encounters

A. *Explore the different areas of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue or relations*. This may need the application of the most appropriate area according to the context of the school and considering the level of religious or spiritual awareness of the students. Interreligious dialogue on campus aimed at promoting a culture of respect, openness, and peace needs to consider the various forms or levels of interreligious dialogue to avoid being mere lip-service or a superficial concession to people of different religions. The following are important components or aspects of interreligious dialogue:[40]

Effective Peacebuilding Mechanism in the Academe" [online conference] (April 27, 2023). Hereafter referred to as the OPAPRU Conference. This author was the main speaker at the conference.

[40] This article employs the categories mentioned in the document *Dialogue and Proclamation* and which were also popularized in the talks and conferences of Francis Cardinal Arinze, emeritus President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, now referred to as a Dicastery. Muslim scholar Muhammad al-Sammak used the following instead: dialogue of life, dialogue of action, dialogue of discussion, and dialogue of experience. See T. Scheffler, "Interreligious Dialogue and Peacebuilding," *Die Friedens-Warte* 82:2/3 (2007): 176.

First, we have the *Dialogue of Life*, where people strive to live in an open and neighborly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations. Dialogue is not mere co-existence with others or acknowledgment that they exist. It is not meant to be a merely passive recognition of another person's faith. The dialogue of life happens when there is a desire to enter into relationship with others. This can happen for students in several ways: by stimulating an active interest in the other; reading or watching films about them or engaging in direct contact with them; paying reciprocal visits to their places of worship; being present at important occasions in their lives such as marriages, births, deaths, or emergencies; and sending greetings on special celebrations or feasts.

Then there is the *Dialogue of Action*, where women and men of different religions collaborate in the pursuit of a peaceful world and for the integral development of peoples. Promoting peace means working together to achieve it. Interfaith dialogue among the youth carries the potential for youth empowerment, as already mentioned above; they not only attend lectures or talks but can also be inspired to deepen friendships and make more tangible contributions to society. Indeed, some youth interfaith groups already in existence prove that people of different faiths can work together.[41]

There is also a *Dialogue of Theological Exchange*. It is not easy for religions to understand each other fully and agree on each other's beliefs and practices. Theological dialogue, for the most part, is the realm of specialists. If done in the school setting, those who are guiding the students must be well-intentioned and well-formed, especially in their own traditions. To be successful, theological dialogue must be preceded by serious preparation that leaves room for spontaneous discussions. It must avoid polemics and most certainly disavow proselytism while refraining from being merely academic. Some researchers strongly suggest a gradation in this kind of dialogue, one that respects the

[41] Cornelio & Salera, "Youth in Interfaith Dialogue," 57–58.

capacity of students to understand their own religion as well as that of another.[42]

Finally, we have the *Dialogue of Religious Experience or Spirituality*. People well-grounded in their own faith tend to share their spiritual riches. They want to speak about their life of prayer and contemplation, their ways of searching for God, and their path to finding God's will. People of different faiths can come together to pray especially in times of crisis and disaster. They can also pray together in private, although it might be difficult to find forms of prayer that can easily be shared. Integrity, respect, and humility are necessary for a dialogue of holiness to be successful.

It is worth noting that in Asia, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) previously identified and established the triple dimensions of dialogue proper to the social situation and religious climate of this vast continent. In the words of His Eminence Orlando Cardinal Quevedo at the 2009 FABC Plenary Assembly in Manila,

> the vision of [the] FABC for the Church in Asia is to be in triple dialogue—dialogue with the poor, with cultures and with religions … by organizing seminars, institutes, assemblies, [and] meetings in the areas of inculturation, interreligious dialogue, and human development.[43]

The resources of the FABC can be a profitable mine of wisdom, expertise, and experience for those who wish to explore the possibility of interreligious relations as an educational program that does not touch exclusively on religious matters but also involves integral human promotion as one of its goals.

The FABC's vision of dialogue is committed to the attainment of the peace and harmony of all peoples in Asia, for it believes that "dialogue is always oriented outward in service of people and of God's kingdom."[44] While Asians are a people of diverse religions and pertain

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[42] Abdool et al., "Inter-religious Dialogue in Schools," 554–557.

[43] J. Kroeger, "Dialogue: Interpretive Key for the Life of the Church in Asia," *FABC Papers* 130 (May 2010), 2.

[44] Kroeger, "Dialogue," 50.

to a rich cultural melting pot, they are, at the same time, in the "common quest for Peace, Justice and Harmony."[45] As the FABC called on "all social forces, organizations, civil society and all people of good will" to contribute toward a culture of dialogue and peace, it is inevitable that academic institutions, especially those belonging to the Church and its affiliates, be concerned with the furtherance of interreligious dialogue in this important sector of society.[46]

B. *Keep in mind the necessary dispositions for entering into interreligious dialogue.* Venturing into interreligious dialogue demands something from both proponents and participants. Among other things, here are five attitudes or dispositions people need to have toward the movement:

a) There is need for a balanced attitude. While not everything in other traditions is good, these must not be dismissed outright as evil or without value. It is always important to adopt a stance of openness, receptivity, and discernment.

b) Participants must possess a strong religious conviction. This is vital for avoiding indifference toward religious values. One needs to avoid aggressive or defensive attitudes. Leaders and participants must have a respectful and receptive approach to others at all times.

c) Openness to truth is another essential disposition. Even if one is convinced that one has the truth or the fullness of truth (as do Christians, for example, in their faith in Christ), this does not rule out openness to the truth others profess.

d) A contemplative spirit is also needed to discover and admire what God is doing through the Holy Spirit, in the world, and in the whole of humanity. Prayer as a

[45] Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences [FABC], "Journeying Together as Peoples of Asia" [Bangkok Document] (March 15, 2023), no. 3.

[46] FABC, "Journeying Together as Peoples of Asia," no. 3.

solid foundation is a trait that those who engage in dialogue must practice and possess.

e) One needs to have patience and perseverance. One cannot look for quick results since there are many obstacles one will encounter, such as ignorance, prejudice, suspicion, self-sufficiency, and sociopolitical factors. One should not get easily discouraged if the desired results are long in coming.

This writer's own experience of working together with people of other faiths attests to the results of a personal assimilation of the aforementioned attitudes. Once, in a Ramadan celebration he attended, the leader of the Muslim community unexpectedly introduced him to the crowd as his "brother." Surprised by these words, he asked the Muslim leader to explain why, for the first time in many years, he introduced his dialogue partner in this way. The Muslim leader then said that it took him many years to realize his Christian partner's sincerity and perseverance in relating with him and his community through joint activities. Once he ascertained the authenticity of the goodwill extended to him and his people, he made the decision to consider his Christian friend as a true brother, even promising that once a Muslim extends this kind of kinship, it signifies his willingness to lay down his life for the person he has spiritually adopted. Years later, when the same Muslim leader was critically ill and nearing death, he allowed only this writer to visit him in the hospital and humbly asked him for a healing prayer and a blessing. It was a powerful experience and witness to interreligious dialogue that will forever linger in this writer's memory.

Conclusion

By works and words, the Lord Jesus Christ revealed his universal predilection toward all peoples, be they Jews, Samaritans, or Gentiles. By the same token, we find, in the actions and magisterial writings of Pope Francis, material for kindling interest in interreligious relations in our day. These inspirations can help people today explore the academe as fertile ground, as a fitting avenue for the pursuit of peace

and harmony through interreligious dialogue, especially if this will be done in an authentic spirit and with the proper attitudes.

The final question on our minds may be this: Is interreligious dialogue effective in bringing about peace? Hans Küng, a theologian who labored in the area of dialogue until the end of his life, once said that "there will be no peace between the civilizations if there is no peace among religions! And there will be no peace between the religions without a dialogue between the religions!"[47] Scheffler pointed out that while no interreligious dialogue, so far, has been instrumental in "ending" conflicts (peacemaking) anywhere in the world, it has been proven that such initiatives were most effective in terms of conflict prevention (peacekeeping) and stabilizing peace after violent conflict (peacebuilding).[48]

Local schools that have implemented peace education programs involving interreligious harmony on campus attest to the efficacy of interfaith relations in dispelling conflict and instilling peace. A participant in the previously mentioned conference of educators and peace promoters noted that there has not been a single instance of conflict ignited by religious motives on his campus, which maintains the tri-people representation of Muslims, Christians, and *Lumads* or indigenous peoples. Instead, the students develop friendships and bonds that continue beyond their school days. Representatives from other schools echoed the same observation based on their own experience with their campus ministry or student affairs programs.[49]

The academic environment can indeed be a promising locus for conflict prevention or peacekeeping since it aids in the formation of attitudes and values that promote respect, unity, and peace. It can also do the same in terms of stabilizing peace or peacebuilding when it offers an environment where everyone, regardless of culture, race, or

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[47] Cf. Scheffler, "Interreligious Dialogue and Peacebuilding," 173.

[48] Scheffler, "Interreligious Dialogue and Peacebuilding," 184.

[49] From the group sharing session of the OPAPRU Conference.

religion, feels safe, accepted, protected, and valued as a person made in the image and likeness of the God who created us all.

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RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND PEACE

Modern Catholic Perspectives and Contemporary Taiwan Society[1]

Jeffrey G. L. Chang, S.J.

Abstract. After a brief review of the Biblical background of peace, this presentation will address the theme of religion and peace from the perspective of modern Catholic principles, especially with guidance from the Second Vatican Council's *Dignitatis Humanae* and John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris*, both of which affirm the primacy of conscience in a personalist conception of society where the role of government is to provide for the common welfare, including the right to religious freedom. Such a social order is instrumental to establishing peace on earth.

Taiwan offers an Asian example of a democratic society in which the state does not intervene in religious affairs and religions participate in public affairs without actively seeking to control the state. Religious groups enjoy freedom within Taiwan society, which in turn enjoys the benefits of religions contributing to the common good.

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[1] An abridged version of this paper was presented at "Conversations on Asian Theologies and Cultures," a joint project of the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific (JCAP) and Jesuit Conference of South Asia (JCSA) (online, March 2, 2022). An earlier version of this paper was originally prepared for and presented at "Peace and Religion in East Asia—International Academic Conference commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the March First Independence Movement" by the Korean Religious Education Association and Institute for Life and Culture (Sogang University, Seoul: November 23, 2018).

Keywords. religious freedom; peace; Taiwan

Nearly seventy-five years ago, the United Nations General Assembly's *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* proclaimed that the "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world."[2] *That* religious freedom and peace in the world are inextricably related is not widely controverted; *what* that relationship may be, however, remains a matter of some dispute.

In the popular imagination, much of human history seems to highlight wars in which religions played no small part—for example, from Constantine to the Crusades, the Medieval Inquisition and Northern Ireland, the War of the Three Henrys[3] and the Thirty Years War,[4] World War II with the Jewish genocide, Israel and Islamic extremists in the Middle East, the Sri Lankan civil war between Buddhist Sinhalese and Hindu Tamils in South Asia, and Muslim separatist movements in the predominantly-Catholic Philippines in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, the hypothesis that religion is a primary cause of war has been, hopefully by now, sufficiently repudiated. The sweeping three-volume study *Encyclopedia of Wars* chronicled 1,763 wars in human history and concluded that less than seven percent of them were religious in nature.[5] Nonetheless, there still seems to be some need to elaborate upon the relationship between religion and peace.

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[2] United Nations General Assembly, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (Paris: 1948), Preamble.

[3] The War of the Three Henrys in France (1587–1589) involved King Henry III, the Huguenot leader Henry of Navarre, and Henri de Guise as the leader of the Catholic League. See R. Knecht, *The French Religious Wars 1562–1598* (Oxford: Osprey, 2002).

[4] The Thirty Years War in central Europe (1618–1648) started as a conflict among the Catholic and Protestant states that formed the Holy Roman Empire.

[5] C. Phillips & A. Axelrod, *Encyclopedia of Wars*, 3 vols. (New York: Infobase, 2004–2005). An evaluation of the methodology and statistical specificity of that

After a brief review of the Biblical background for conceiving peace, this study will address the theme of religion and peace from the perspective of modern Catholic principles. Regarding *human dignity*, one of the decisive documents for Roman Catholicism is *Dignitatis Humanae* (Declaration on Religious Freedom), issued in 1965 out of the Second Vatican Council.[6] On *peace in the world*, an essential contribution is to be found in *Pacem in Terris* (On Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty), the 1963 papal encyclical of John XXIII.[7] Along these lines, modern Catholic thought affirms the primacy of conscience in a personalist conception of society where the role of government is to provide for the common welfare, including the right to religious freedom. Such a social order is instrumental to establishing peace on earth.

After revisiting these universal Catholic principles of religious freedom and peace in the modern world, this study will consider the example of contemporary Taiwan society, where a relatively high level of religious freedom and peace prevails. Public policy regarding the relationship between religion and society depends upon a particular set of historical and cultural influences, as well as upon the specific political organization that governs the respective society. Taiwan offers an East Asian example of a democratic society in which the state does not intervene in religious affairs, and where religions participate in public affairs but do not actively seek to control the state. In this context, diverse religious groups enjoy freedom within society, and society enjoys the benefits of religions that contribute to the common good.

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study is beyond the scope of this present treatment. For present purposes, it is sufficient to observe that at least some scholarly analysis concludes that religion—at least religion alone or primarily—is not a widespread primary cause of war. Such observations, however, do not deny that there are widespread appeals to religion as a mask for ethnic, political, or other motives in waging war.

[6] Paul VI, "Dignitatis Humanae" (1965), *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 58 (1966): 929–941. Hereafter cited in-text as DH with paragraph numbers.

[7] John XXIII, "Pacem in Terris" (1963), *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 55 (1963): 257–304. Hereafter cited in-text as PT with paragraph numbers.

1. A Biblical Vision for Peace

For an examination of modern Catholic principles, at least a brief review of the Biblical vision of peace is indispensable. For Christians, peace is rooted ultimately in relationship with God, the Creator of heaven and earth, source of life for all humanity and well-being for the entirety of creation. The Hebrew concept of *šālôm*, as invoked in the Old Testament, involves wholeness, health, harmony, prosperity, security, and order. God is the source of peace for the community as a whole as well as for the individuals who keep the covenant.[8] In the words of the book of the prophet Ezekiel:

> I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David will be prince in their midst. I, the LORD, have spoken. I will make a covenant of peace with them and rid the country of wild beasts so they will dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the forests. I will settle them around my hill and send rain in its season, the blessing of abundant rain. The trees of the field shall bear their fruits, and the land its crops, and they shall dwell securely on their own soil. They shall know that I am the LORD when I break the bars of their yoke and deliver them from the power of those who enslaved them. (Ez. 34:24–27)[9]

This vision of peace is rooted in right relations—"the work of justice will be peace; the effect of justice, calm and security forever" (Is. 32:17). In the New Testament tradition, Christ himself is peace. The Pauline epistle to the Ephesians declares:

> For [Christ Jesus] is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh, abolishing the law with its commandments and legal claims, that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile both with God, in one body, through the cross, putting that enmity to death by it. He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members

[8] R. Musto, *The Catholic Peace Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1986), 12–14.

[9] Scripture quotations in this paper are taken from the Revised Edition of the *New American Bible* (NABRE).

> of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. (Eph. 2:14–20)

Such peace is both an inner disposition and an external ordering, understood in relation to harmony, justice, and the kingdom of God. This Christian vision of peace offers more than the public "peace and quiet" or "law and order" of the *Pax Romana*.[10] Indeed, Jesus challenged accepted norms of security and earthly values (e.g., Lk. 12:49–59) to establish a new order.

This very brief survey of the Biblical vision of peace identifies several important considerations for contemporary peace studies. First, peace involves a holistic appreciation for creation and human life, including innately human religious dimensions. Purely secular notions of public security may not adequately provide for a full appreciation of peace. Second, consistent with the Biblical understanding of the human person, peace has both communal and individual dimensions, and those dimensions are interrelated. Third, the communal character of human life inevitably involves the relationship between Church and State or, to express that issue more explicitly and fundamentally, between Religion and Society. In the Christian claim to citizenship in the household of God, the epistle implicitly acknowledged the civil status of strangers and sojourners who formerly lacked full rights.

2. Modern Catholic Perspectives on Peace on Earth

Pope John XXIII addressed the encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris* not only to Catholics but also to "all people of good will," with the intention that the purpose and rationale advanced for peace therein would be relevant and comprehensible to everyone, regardless of their faith or lack thereof. The Pope issued this encyclical between the first and second sessions of the Second Vatican Council in which the Catholic Church would make a decisive turn, embracing its place in and solidarity with the modern world. While proceeding from the

[10] Musto, *The Catholic Peace Tradition*, 20.

divine order, *Pacem in Terris* endeavors to articulate generally-acceptable principles for ordering human society.

From the outset, *Pacem in Terris* recognizes the fundamental role of human dignity which faith informs as being created by God and experience claims as being endowed with intelligence and freedom (PT 3). Human and social order are imprinted in the human conscience (PT 5). Thus, the fundamental premise for peace in the world is articulated as follows:

> Any human society which is well-regulated and productive demands the acceptance of one fundamental principle: that each individual is truly a human person. This human nature is endowed with intelligence and free will. As such the person has rights and duties, which together flow as a direct consequence from human nature. These rights and duties are universal and inviolable, and therefore altogether inalienable. (PT 9)

That fundamental principle of order among individuals implies certain rights and duties: "also among human rights is that of being able to worship God in accordance with the right dictates of one's own conscience, and to profess religion both in private and in public" (PT 14). The affirmation of rights also implies duties for protecting such rights:

> in human society one person's natural right gives rise to a corresponding duty in other persons; the duty, that is, of recognizing and respecting that right. Every basic human right draws its authoritative force from the natural law, which confers it and attaches to it its respective duty. (PT 30)

Human society and governmental authority mediate those rights and duties. The extent of civil authority is tempered by the priority of conscience. "Authority is before all else a moral force. For this reason, the appeal of rulers should be to the individual conscience, to the duty which everyone has of voluntarily contributing to the common good" (PT 48). While respecting the diversity of forms of political organization, the Catholic Church affirms a limited, constitutional scope of civil authority which is ordered to the common good; indeed, "the attainment of the common good is the sole reason for the existence of civil authorities" (PT 54). The common good

is understood holistically as integral human development in which prosperity is not only material but also spiritual.

The schema of *Pacem in Terris* begins with order between persons and proceeds to consider, progressively, relations between individuals and the public authorities, relations between the states, and the relationship of persons and political communities within the world community. The encyclical concludes by presenting pastoral exhortations.

On a particular note, *Pacem in Terris*, in acknowledging the increasingly globalized character of the modern world, concludes that national governments are inadequate for protecting the common good globally.

> We are thus driven to the conclusion that the shape and structure of political life in the modern world, and the influence exercised by public authority in all the nations of the world are unequal to the task of promoting the common good of all peoples. (PT 135)

Accordingly, international organizations such as the United Nations are affirmed. While limitations are forthrightly acknowledged, the apostolic encyclical endorses the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a step in the right direction (PT 142–145), and Christians are encouraged to participate actively in public life, cooperating with others in the pursuit of the common good and peace for the whole human race.

In summary, peace on earth is best pursued in the modern world through a society of persons where the primacy of conscience is prized and protected, and where lawful civil government exists to promote the attainment of the common good by all.

3. Modern Catholic Perspectives on Human Dignity and Religious Freedom

While John XXIII passed away less than two months after issuing the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, the Second Vatican Council which he had convoked would continue to develop the Church's stance in the

modern world. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World declared:

> Peace is more than the absence of war: it cannot be reduced to the maintenance of a balance of power between opposing forces nor does it arise out of despotic dominion, but it is appropriately called "the effect of righteousness" (Is. 32:17). It is the fruit of the right ordering of things with which the divine founder has invested human society and which must be brought about by humanity in its thirst for an ever more perfect reign of justice. But while the common good of humanity ultimately derives from the eternal law, it depends in the concrete upon circumstances which change with time; consequently, peace will never be achieved once and for all, but must be built up continually. Since, moreover, human nature is weak and wounded by sin, the achievement of peace requires a constant effort to control the passions and unceasing vigilance by lawful authority. (GS 78)[11]

This approach to peace, human society, and civil order for the common good is articulated more specifically in the Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae* (human dignity), which proceeds along the basic principles already articulated in *Pacem in Terris* but with further development regarding the protection of religious freedom and the reasons proffered for such duties by civil authorities.

The declaration's purpose is identified as follows: "In dealing with the question of liberty the sacred council intends to develop the teaching of recent popes on the inviolable rights of the human person and on the constitutional order of society" (DH 1). This explicit intention would also bear significant implications for the relationship between religion and society. The thesis is stated forthrightly:

> The right to religious freedom is based on the very dignity of the human person as known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself. This right of the human person to religious freedom must be given such recognition in the constitutional order of society as will make it a civil right. (DH 2)

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[11] Paul VI, "Gaudium et Spes" (1965), *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 58 (1966): 1025–1115. Hereafter cited in-text as GS with paragraph numbers.

This claim is rooted in a fundamental principle: "All are bound to follow their conscience faithfully in every sphere of activity so that they may come to God, who is their last end" (DH 3). In human society, the implication for civil authority and respect for conscience is clear:

> Therefore, the civil authority, to which is committed the care of the common good in the temporal order, must recognize and look with favor on the religious life of the citizens. But, if it presumes to control or restrict religious activity it must be judged to have exceeded the limits of its power. (DH 3)

More specifically:

> The protection and promotion of the inviolable rights of the human person is an essential duty of every civil authority. The civil authority must therefore undertake effectively to safeguard the religious freedom of all the citizens by just legislation and other appropriate means. (DH 6)

Several developments merit attention. Firstly, religious freedom is claimed on both sacred and secular grounds.[12] For those informed by Christian faith, the theological foundation of the Church's right to freedom is to be found in the revelation of Jesus Christ. This principle is not accessible or subject to secular powers. For secular consideration, the political foundation of the Church's right to freedom is rooted in the dignity of the human person and the necessary freedom of life in society. This principle is attainable through reason which should be the legitimate realm of secular powers. This twin rationale—on the one hand rooted in divine revelation and on the other hand rooted in human dignity as accessible through reason—is utilized by the declaration in claiming religious freedom. While members of society may accept one rationale or the other, depending on their personal faith perspectives, acceptance of the claim would remain intact.

This argumentation also serves as a model for the Church's engagement with secular society in general. While a religion's values

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[12] J. Murray, ed., *Religious Liberty: An End and a Beginning—the Declaration on Religious Freedom: An Ecumenical Discussion* (New York: Macmillan, 1966) analyzes accordingly the case for religious freedom as a human right and the case for religious freedom and Christian revelation in separate parts.

and views may well be based on religious revelation which satisfies the faith of adherents, such grounds are not accessible to or subject to evaluation by secular authorities. While a religious community has the right to promote its own values and views freely in the larger society, the reasons they offer ought to be rooted in human dignity, the common good, and reason itself which are accessible and attractive to that society which may not accept that same agenda's faith-based grounds. Religious freedom, of course, admits to a religious community's right to evangelize and attract others to faith adherence, although that is a separate matter from organized religion's participation in politics.

Secondly, rights in a personalist society are accorded to the person who is obliged to follow individual conscience, even if conscience may err. Whereas classical political thought would have denied that error has any right to exist, modern personalist society affirms the person's right to exist.

> Therefore, the right to religious freedom is based not on subjective attitude but on the very nature of the individual person. For this reason, the right to such immunity [from external coercion] continues to exist even in those who do not live up to their obligation of seeking the truth and adhering to it. The exercise of this right cannot be interfered with as long as the just requirements of public order are observed. (DH 2)

In other words, error does not obviate rights; the Inquisition would be no more. Yet, of course, the important responsibility of forming consciences not only remains but is affirmed even more emphatically. Nevertheless, religious efforts to form the consciences of society members who do not share the same religious convictions are to be rooted accordingly in appeals to human dignity, the common good, and reason. Differences in religious beliefs need not be a reason for disquiet in the broader society; in fact, discourse among members with different religious beliefs may contribute peacefully to society's pursuit of the common good and respect for human dignity.

Thirdly, religious freedom is thus seen as a secular good, one to be protected, even promoted, by the state, regardless of the respective society's religious or secular persuasion. The Church in the modern world relinquishes traditional notions regarding a sacral function

for government. In a personalist conception of society, the human person is seen as the foundation, goal, and primary actor in society. Accordingly, political doctrine embraces the juridical state in which government is constitutional and limited in function, protecting and promoting human rights and facilitating the performance of human duties.[13] Acceptance of the secular state implies agreement that government has no reason to protect or promote any religious truth. Rather, the primary function of the state is the protection of human rights and promotion of human dignity. Religion is a social good, not merely a matter of private conscience; thus, the state has an obligation to protect and promote religious freedom as a fundamental human right. "This is a secular function, since freedom in society—notably religious freedom—is a secular value."[14] Civil authorities, therefore, regardless of their respective religious affiliation or even lack of any religious beliefs, have an obligation to promote the common good and protect fundamental human dignity, including the right to religious freedom.

These modern Catholic principles were discerned and articulated in keeping with an increasingly secular and globalized world. Acceptance of religious pluralism and secularism is seen not only as unavoidable but also as an affirmation of the primacy of conscience. Rejection of a sacral function for the state facilitates a juridical conception of government that protects the rights of individuals and promotes the common good, including religious freedom and peace. The Church may therefore accept a diversity of forms of political organization that may reasonably serve these objectives.

While the theory seems reasonable, peace is to be found in practice. Modern Catholic principles of social order emerged mostly in the context of Western European societies that had legacies of strong Church-State coordination giving way to liberal democracies. Yet the "American experiment" of how to separate Church and State is not the

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[13] J. Murray, "The Issue of Church and State at Vatican Council II," *Theological Studies* 27:4 (1966): 586.

[14] Murray, "The Issue of Church and State at Vatican Council II," 587.

only pattern for organizing religion and society. Moreover, American experiences of difficulties in peacefully navigating Church-State relations counsel against other countries uncritically and automatically accepting such a model as the standard system. If such principles are to be genuinely universal, which is one of the root meanings of "Catholic," examples and studies should extend across the human world, including Asia.

4. Contemporary Taiwan Society, Religious Freedom, and Peace

Human society throughout history and in the present day has and continues to witness to a rich range of religious institutions as well as diverse systems of political organization, including various models for modern democracies. It is not surprising, therefore, that there may not be any single ideal arrangement for the relationship between religion and society or for public policy regarding religion. Particular historical and cultural influences, prevailing religious attitudes, and specific forms of political organization all affect the role of religion in society and the relationship between civil order and religious expression. In short, human rights, religious freedom, the common good, and peace need to be discussed in specific circumstances, even while acknowledging that what works in one set of circumstances may not be similarly suitable for a different place or period.

Taiwan[15] offers an East Asian example of where a relatively high level of religious freedom and peace prevails. Civil authorities do not intervene significantly in religious affairs. Various religious groups participate in society without substantial efforts to control civil authorities. Currently, there are no significant internal threats to social order and peace within Taiwan society.

[15] While Chinese-language sources have necessarily been part of this research into Taiwan society, citations are limited to English-language or English-translation sources for the convenience of international readers.

Taiwan society is governed by the "Constitution of the Republic of China," first adopted on December 25, 1946, by the National Assembly which convened in Nanjing.[16] For present purposes, contemporary Taiwan society is understood as being subsequent to the lifting of martial law in 1987 and after the seventh revision of the constitution in 2005.[17]

Taiwan society is organized with a democratic form of government in service of the common good.

- "The Republic of China, founded on the Three Principles of the People, shall be a democratic republic of the people, to be governed by the people and for the people." (Article 1)
- Religious freedom is affirmed: "All citizens of the Republic of China, irrespective of sex, religion, race, class, or party affiliation, shall be equal before the law." (Article 7)
- "The people shall have freedom of religious belief." (Article 13)
- Religious expression and association are protected. (Articles 11 and 14)

[16] An English translation is available from the Office of the President: "Constitution of the Republic of China (Taiwan)" (June 10, 2005), available at https://english.president.gov.tw/Page/94 (accessed October 1, 2018). Hereafter cited in-text by article numbers.

[17] Of course, the restoration of constitutional rights and establishment of the democratic process did not occur immediately or entirely in 1987. Post-martial law parliamentary elections would occur only in 1991 and 1992, and transitional justice remains a social issue even up to the present. Nevertheless, for the present purposes of discussing constitutional law, society, and religion in Taiwan, it is sufficient to restrict the scope of discussion to post-martial law Taiwan, with the 2005 revisions to the Constitution possibly serving as a conservatively late point of demarcation insofar as one may be needed.

- Government is juridical and limited in favor of the common good: "All other freedoms and rights of the people that are not detrimental to social order or public welfare shall be guaranteed under the Constitution." (Article 22)

As part of other basic human rights, such religious freedom in Taiwan has become substantial rather than merely nominal. When the Republic of China government took refuge in Taiwan, many Catholics and Protestants accompanied this migration after 1949. These Christian minorities maintained relatively good relations with political authorities in Taiwan, who welcomed missionary social assistance to the needy and found common ground in opposition to communism and religious oppression across the Taiwan Strait.[18] With Taiwan's end of martial law in 1987, pragmatic considerations continued to favor the practice of religious freedom in tandem with the development of democratic society—in marked contrast to competing communist developments that threatened Taiwan's autonomy.

Efforts still arise periodically to establish laws regulating religious organizations and activities. Sometimes such efforts are aroused by concern over cases of fraud involving individual religious leaders.[19] At times, some religious organizations even support such legislation. Nonetheless, Taiwan society has thus far not passed any legislation significantly regulating religion. The various religious groups and leaders do not agree on the need for such legislation. Political leaders are also generally reticent in pursuing such legislation as doing so could be interpreted as being authoritarian or opposed to religious freedom.

[18] A. Laliberté, "Irreconcilable Differences: Law, Religion, and Taiwan's Relationship with China," *Canopy Forum* (February 7, 2023), available at https://canopyforum.org/2023/02/07/irreconcilable-differences-law-religion-and-taiwans-relationship-with-China/.

[19] V. Chang, "When Fraud Wears Religious Cassocks," International Conference on the Social Sciences, International Academic Forum (Hawaii: 2017).

In legal theory and actual practice, Taiwan exercises a separation between religion and state which may be characterized as mutual toleration.

> The Taiwanese government has embraced the principles of freedom of conscience and of separation between religion and state. By doing so, it has adopted the principle of twin toleration, meaning that the state refrains from intervening in religious affairs, while religious organizations refrain from unduly influencing the political process to defend their narrow institutional interests.[20]

This twin toleration does not preclude interaction between religious and civil spheres. Civil authorities welcome the charitable and social services provided by numerous religious groups, in some cases at considerable scale. Political candidates, regardless of party affiliation, are eager to visit temples and churches in hopes of procuring election support. And although appealing to Taiwan religious senses may help candidates, such efforts necessarily reach out simultaneously to a wide range of religions such that the influence of any single religious affiliation remains decidedly limited.

At this point, it is relevant to identify some of the salient characteristics of Taiwan society and religion. In terms of religions, Taiwan is a diverse society.[21] While 44% of the population identifies with folk religions, such affiliation is dispersed among many different temples and religious institutions which, for the most part, rarely act

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[20] A. Laliberté, "The Regulation of Religious Affairs in Taiwan: From State Control to *Laisser-faire*?," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 38:2 (2009): 75.

[21] According to an independent study, religious affiliation in Taiwan in 2010 was 21.3% Buddhist, 5.5% Christian (including 1.4% Catholic), 44.2% Folk Religions, <1% Hindu, <1% Jewish, <1% Muslim, 16.2% Other Religions, and 12.7% unaffiliated (the study includes Taoism under "Folk Religions," and many Taiwanese may participate in Taoist, folk religions, and even Buddhist activities at different stages of life). See Pew Research Center, "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010–2050," Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project (April 2, 2015), available at https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/ (accessed October 31, 2018).

as a cohesive unified body in political or other activities. Buddhism, the second-largest affiliation with 21% of the population, also includes various sects and a range of commitments to participation and support by religionists. Christians collectively constitute little more than 5% of the populace. The religious diversity of Taiwan ensures that it is practically impossible for any single religion to exercise effective control over government. Mutual respect or social tolerance, at the very least, may be the most pragmatic method for protecting the existence and interests of the respective religious bodies. Religious freedom and separation of religion and state suit this religious context relatively well.

Taiwan is influenced by a Chinese cultural heritage, although the political founding of the republic took place in opposition to the imperial legacy of China. While Japanese colonialism also played a historical role in Taiwan social organization and development, the official Japanese state worship of Shinto never extended beyond the close of that colonial period. The influence of the People's Republic of China, which continues to assert sovereignty over Taiwan with the potential for exercising military force at some future time to enforce said claim, is complicated and goes beyond the scope of this present study. Nonetheless, Taiwan society by and large, at least in contradistinction, is attracted to religious freedom.

Conclusions

Implications for the Church in Taiwan

Although the scope of this study does not permit a comprehensive survey of the Catholic Church and its mission in Taiwan, the preceding analysis of religious freedom and peace does offer some implications for the life and mission of the Catholic Church in the republic.

1) *Civic Participation.* Although no political system *in terris* may ever fully or perfectly fulfill all the aspirations of the Christian faith, the Church is encouraged to participate actively in public life for the pursuit of the common good and peace for the whole human race. In

Taiwan, Catholicism encounters a society that ranks highly in terms of religious freedom[22] and the upholding of human rights.[23] Insofar as this civic society serves as a foundation for further promoting respect for human dignity, the Church is counseled to engage actively whether at the level of Taiwan civic society or through participation in international forums. Catholic efforts to engage Taiwan in international organizations whenever possible can have positive contributions especially in light of the observation in *Pacem in Terris* that national governments are inadequate for protecting and promoting the common good of all peoples. Efforts for peace in the world would benefit from more successful examples of free societies that uphold respect for the rule of law and the dignity of human life.

2) *Public Advocacy*. Taiwan's democratic society allows for the participation of religious organizations, and the Catholic bishops' conference in Taiwan has expressed interest in advocating for social policy. Disappointingly, though, the Church has met with limited success thus far in political processes.

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[22] See, e.g., S. Majumdar & V. Villa, "Globally, Social Hostilities Related to Religion Decline in 2019, While Government Restrictions Remain at Highest Levels," Pew Research Center (September 30, 2021) and Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2021: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021). The recognition of the reliability of such indices, especially regarding detailed rankings, is, of course, subject to review. Some indices, moreover, such as those related to United Nations agencies, exclude consideration of Taiwan for political reasons. Nevertheless, practically all scholarly studies affirm a relatively high level of religious freedom in Taiwan.

[23] See, e.g., I. Vásquez, F. McMahon, R. Murphy, & G. Schneider, *The Human Freedom Index 2021: A Global Measurement of Personal, Civil, and Economic Freedom* (Washington, DC & Vancouver, BC: Cato Institute & Fraser Institute, 2021). The recognition of the reliability of such indices, especially regarding detailed rankings, is, of course, subject to review. Some indices, moreover, such as those related to United Nations agencies, exclude consideration of Taiwan for political reasons. Nevertheless, practically all scholarly studies affirm a relatively high level of respect for human rights in Taiwan.

In recent years, Catholics cooperating with other religious and civic groups have advocated against abortion, same-sex marriage, and gender equity education with some symbolic success in general referenda[24] but subsequent setbacks in the substantive legislative arena.[25] As one commentator observed, "Religion-based conservatives were mostly unsuccessful in realizing their main agenda in spite of their activism [for] over a decade, as Taiwan's government and society gradually evolved in a more tolerant and inclusive direction."[26] At the same time,

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[24] In 2018, the following Proposals were adopted by referendum and approved by the Central Election Commission in Taiwan:

- No. 10: "Do you agree that marriage defined in the Civil Code should be restricted to the union between a man and a woman?";
- No. 11: "Do you agree that the Ministry of Education and schools (elementary and junior high schools) should not implement the gender equality education defined by the Enforcement Rules for Gender Equity Education Act [for] students under primary and junior high school education?"; and
- No. 12: "Do you agree to implement the protection of same-sex couples' rights of permanent cohabitation by ways other than amending the marriage definition in the Civil Code?"

The following Proposals, on the other hand, were rejected by referendum:

- No. 14: "Do you agree to implement the protection of same-sex marital rights with the marriage definition in the Civil Code?"; and
- No. 15: "Do you agree that the 'Gender Equality Education Act' should stipulate the implementation of gender equality education in every stage of primary and junior high school education, including relationship education, sex education and Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity education?"

See Central Election Commission, "Referendums Profile," available at https://www.cec.gov.tw/english/cms/rProfile (accessed February 2, 2022).

[25] J. Lu, "Shifting Public Opinion in Different Cultural Contexts: Marriage Equality in Taiwan," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 21 (2020): 213.

[26] M. Ho, "The Religion-Based Conservative Countermovement in Taiwan: Origin, Tactics and Impacts," in D. Chiavacci, S. Grano, & J. Obinger, eds., *Civil*

public attitudes are simultaneously committed to various underlying values which may come into conflict when forming policy.[27] Taiwan society's attitudes toward moral issues in particular reflect both a cultural conservatism, favoring traditional Confucian family values, and a liberal democratic social tolerance, accepting freedom of personal choice. This complexity characterizes not only different sectors within society but also conflicting attitudes within the same sectors and even at the individual level of mixed feelings. Amidst such tensions, the potential results for such public moral policy debates are, at the very least, far from foregone conclusions.

The key to success in public advocacy regarding moral issues may well be found in the twin rationale invoked by Vatican II. While Catholic moral values can—and should—be formed by divine revelation and faith, advocacy in political society should appeal nevertheless to human dignity, the common good, and reasons that are accessible and attractive to a diverse society. The small minority of Catholics may find some common ground and alliance for more effective public advocacy in other religions and in the local culture. In view of the complexity of such social cooperation as well as the intricacies of political processes, the Catholic Church can also benefit from the establishment of a social policy center, including leadership by educated laity, to advocate more effectively on an ongoing basis.

3) *Evangelization*. Any mention of religious freedom in Taiwan would be remiss without some consideration of evangelization, even though that is not the primary focus of this exposition. Taiwan allows great latitude for evangelization by religious groups.

After rapid growth in membership through the 1950s and 1960s,[28] the Catholic Church in Taiwan has struggled to grow in subsequent

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Society and the State in Democratic East Asia: Between Entanglement and Contention in Post High Growth (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 151.

[27] S. Jou & B. Hebenton, "Support for the Death Penalty in Taiwan?: A Study of Value Conflict and Ambivalence," *Asian Journal of Criminology* 15 (2020): 163–183.

[28] Taiwan's small Catholic Church with about 10,000 lay faithful in 1948 grew to over 30,000 by 1954, and over 300,000 in 1969. M. Chang, "The Internal

decades. That rapid growth had been spurred by a significant influx of ecclesiastical personnel and resources fleeing mainland China. Evangelization gains have slowed alongside an acceleration in economic and social development as well as the attainment of stability and security in a democratic society. While the Catholic Church in Taiwan continues to be recognized for its contributions to social welfare and education, announcing the Gospel in ways that are attractive in modern technological society remains a challenge.

Still, the freedom and social space to evangelize remain as invitation and encouragement for the Catholic Church in Taiwan. In response to divine mission, in the belief that communities of faith contribute to the common good, and in recognition that in far too many lands such religious freedom is far too scarce, the Church is encouraged to enhance and increase evangelization efforts—for the fulfillment of the divine mandate, for the contribution to the common good and human dignity, and also in service of peoples throughout the world.

Issues for Further Reflection

The social structures and values that prevail in other countries obviously differ from those in the contemporary Taiwan context. The inculturation of the Gospel and establishment of local churches necessarily take place in diverse local contexts, each with its own respective social analysis, theological reflection, and consequent implications for apostolic planning. The Catholic Church is called in each respective place and period to read the signs of the times and discern the workings of the Holy Spirit. Conscious of diverse Asian contextual realities, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences recognized that

> the Catholic Church, with its international links, has many opportunities to bring about genuine peace and justice. As the Asian Churches are now detaching themselves from their colonial past, they can contribute to a

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Development of the Taiwan Catholic Church: 1950s–1960s," in F. So, B. Leung, & E. Mylod, eds., *The Catholic Church in Taiwan: Problems and Prospects* (Singapore: Springer, 2018), 27–55.

> universal solidarity, even while being fully inculturated and immersed in the life of their respective nations. They can contribute ideas and experiences which have been tried out in other countries and adapt them to local needs.[29]

The present series of "Conversations on Asian Theologies and Cultures"[30] as well as other exchanges among Asian theological centers offer such an opportunity to learn from what has been tried out in other countries and what may perhaps be adapted to local needs. Moreover, and even more importantly, surveying the experiences of other countries may stimulate more critical and creative reflection on the Church's mission for peace in each of the various local contexts. The Church's prophetic calling counsels against presuming too quickly that there always has been, always is, and always will be only one way of organizing social life in the world. Human flourishing and peace benefit from a deeper appreciation of the dignity and creativity of human life in which the pursuit of the common good depends upon concrete circumstances which change with time. *Pacem in Terris* exhorts everyone to

> take an active part in public life, and to work together for the benefit of the whole human race, as well as for their own political communities. It is vitally necessary for them to endeavor, in the light of Christian faith, and with love as their guide, to ensure that every institution, whether economic, social, cultural or political, be such as not to obstruct but rather to facilitate human self-betterment, both in the natural and in the supernatural order. (PT 146)

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[29] Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, Theological Advisory Commission, "Asian Theological Perspectives on Church and Politics," *FABC Papers* 63 (1992): no. 4.5.7.

[30] "Conversations on Asian Theologies and Cultures" is a theologico-cultural online "coffee or tea room" where theology students, alumni, and faculty can converse with each other periodically. This virtual space features students, alumni, or faculty sharing their theological reflections on select aspects of their various Asian cultures in the Jesuit Conference of South Asia and the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific.

Insofar as Christ's faithful enjoy freedom to participate actively in public life, such ongoing efforts, even despite momentary frustrations and difficulties, are in service of the Kingdom of God and peace on earth.

In place of a univocal final conclusion, the following questions are offered for reflection. Hopefully they will elicit appropriate conclusions that may be offered in different contexts.

1. What is the situation of religious freedom in your country? What is the relationship between Church and State?
2. What are the corresponding implications for the Church and its mission in your country?
3. How does your local church invoke the twin rationale of sacred and secular reasons for pursuing Catholic objectives in relations with the State?
4. Especially if you are in a context where religion is a primary cause of violence and division, what can the Catholic Church do to promote peace and protect human dignity?
5. While this presentation proceeded from universal principles and Catholic perspectives which were then illumined by the experience of contemporary Taiwan society, are there any distinctively Asian elements (from Taiwan or elsewhere) that could enrich Catholic thought on, and the practice of, religious freedom, dialogue, and peace?

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A TRINITARIAN PNEUMATOLOGY FOR EVANGELIZATION IN ASIA[1]

Renato Taib طيب *Oliveros*

Abstract. Asian religions may differ in their belief in the Spirit yet the Spirit is the same Spirit that has been present amongst Asians since creation. In *Redemptoris Missio*, St. John Paul II acknowledges that the Holy Spirit is active in the heart of every person and that the Spirit's activity can also affect "society and history, peoples, cultures and religions."[2] The Spirit of God communicates the Word as the Christ incarnate, the same Word revealed by the Spirit to non-Christians as divine wisdom and guidance. The Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit

[1] The term "evangelization" and not "mission" is used because for centuries the term "mission" has been synonymous with conversions. In the Philippine context, conversions from Islam to Christianity have negative consequences that breed distrust. "There is no compulsion in religion," the Qur'ān reminds us; ideally, all peoples are free to choose their religion. A convert finds God in the new religion which leads them to moral conversion and transformation into a better person.

[2] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 28. This encyclical is a successor to documents of the Second Vatican Council, including *Lumen Gentium* and *Ad Gentes*, and to Pope Paul VI's document on evangelism, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. It is also a predecessor to Pope Francis's *Evangelii Gaudium*. *Redemptoris Missio* is an important elaboration on the theme of New Evangelization often cited by John Paul II. The most striking part of the document is the fourth chapter, where John Paul II details what is involved in the mission *ad gentes* to the non-Christian world.

of God for other faiths. In the 21st century, the Church as the Body of Christ in Asia experiences the Spirit in the following three signs: 1) *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2) the beatification of Matteo Ricci, and 3) the Holy Spirit being present in the ancient religions and cultures of Asia.

Keywords. Trinitarian pneumatology; Holy Spirit; Asian religions; Asian cultures; mission in Asia

Asia is home to the ancient religions of Shintoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Hinduism. From South Asia are India's Hinduism and Buddhism; from East Asia, China's Lao-Tzu Taoism and Confucianism. The civilizations of China and India were shaped by Confucianism and Hinduism, respectively, while Thailand, Singapore, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Japan were formed by Buddhism. For the past five centuries, Christians have remained a minority in an Asia dominated by Muslims and Hindus.

In 2021, the Philippines celebrated the 500th anniversary of the first Holy Mass in 1521 at Mazaua Island. Forty-four years after, conversions to Catholicism commenced with the arrival of Miguel López de Legazpi (1502–1572) accompanied by Catholic missionaries. By 2022, 83% of the Philippines' 110 million population is Catholic. East Timor is the other Catholic country in Southeast Asia, yet the Philippines, given its bigger Catholic population and longer history of Christianity, is in the best position to take the lead in the evangelization of Asia, especially now that a Filipino in Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle is a Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization (formerly known as the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples).

Discerning the Spirit in Asia

> Pope Francis encourages members of the Federation of Asian Bishops gathered in Thailand … to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to them, while maintaining fraternity and embracing the poor, young people, and dialogue.[3]

[3] D. Lubov, "Pope to Asian Bishops: What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?," *Vatican News* (October 12, 2022), available at https://www.vaticannews.va/en/

In mentioning *dialogue* in the Asian context where Christians are the minority, Francis opens the discernment of the Holy Spirit to believers of other religions in Asia. In the spirit of *Fratelli Tutti*, that we all are *magkakapatid*,[4] Francis's call to discern includes believers of other religions as co-discerners. This affirms the pioneering effort of St. John Paul II who had gone further than any pontiff in history to reach out to non-Christian religions. In his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, he acknowledges that the Holy Spirit is active in the heart of every person and that the Spirit's activity can also affect "society and history, peoples, cultures and religions."[5] "The Spirit manifests … in a special way in the Church and in her members. Nevertheless, [the Spirit's] presence and activity are universal, limited neither by space nor time."[6]

Discernment is always a discernment of spirits. In the Asian context, it is to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to Asians as we co-discern God's will with all believers in Asia. Different religions may differ in their understanding of the Spirit, yet the Spirit is the same Spirit who has continued to guide and inspire religions since the time of creation. Christianity finds affinity with ancient religions given the shared immersion in the Spirit as revealed in Gen. 1:1–2: "When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God (*Ruah Elohim*[7]) hovered over the face of the waters."

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pope/news/2022-10/pope-francis-message-fabc-federation-asian-bishops-conferences.html.

[4] The Filipino word *magkapatid* (siblings) is an inclusive term for *fratelli* which Francis uses to define a Christian's relationship with believers of other religions. See also John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, no. 53.

[5] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 28.

[6] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 28; see also John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, no. 53.

[7] *wərûaḥ*: "and [the] ruah," translated as "spirit" or "wind"; *ĕlōhîm*: the Hebrew term for God.

The Spirit who hovered over chaos at creation remains present today in all religions and cultures.

Before proposing a Trinitarian pneumatology, the faithful must first learn how to relate with the Spirit on a personal level. Experiencing and knowing the Spirit as a person is the start of forming a deep personal relationship with the Spirit.

The Dove is a Sign—not Symbol—of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit is a misunderstood person in the Holy Trinity. Most people refer to the Spirit as an "it" as they imagine the Spirit as a *dove*, and this has hindered the development of a personal relationship with the Spirit. The vision of a dove in the baptism of Jesus *symbolizes* the Holy Spirit who is unseen, and for John the Baptist it serves as a sign that the Spirit is present and in their midst. At Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles, the signs of the Spirit are the *ruah*, the powerful wind (Acts 2:2), the same image of the Spirit as a wind from God hovering over chaos at creation (Gen. 1:2), and the tongues of fire, which are not the Holy Spirit but serve as gifts of the Spirit and a sign of the Spirit's presence in the midst of the apostles. The wind and the fire ignited the apostles with the Holy Spirit. However, the dove has become the symbol of the Holy Spirit, who is unseen, as a result of the symbolism in the baptism of Jesus. This hinders our personal relationship with the Holy Spirit who, as the *Paraclete* (helper), helps transform our heart and mind to be like Christ.

> And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate, to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows him. But you know Him, because He abides with you, and He shall be in you. (Jn. 14:16–17)

The verse above clearly shows that Jesus is referring to the Spirit as a Person. The love of Jesus and his Father is also a Person—the Holy Spirit—who proceeds from that perfect bond of love. The teaching of the Church that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son is clearly defined. The reception of the Spirit not only by baptized Christians can be enriched if the Spirit is experienced as a person in

the same way Christians relate to the Father and the Son as persons. The relationship between the Father and Jesus the Son is a model to emulate in developing a personal relationship with the Spirit.

A Dovelike Descent of the Spirit. A way to be freed from the fixation on the image of the Holy Spirit as a dove is to emphasize instead the act of God *descending* as Spirit to communicate "You are my beloved Son" and relate the Father's love to His beloved Son. The synoptic Gospels describe the "Spirit descending dovelike: This motif also develops the idea of communication from God; the Spirit comes with a 'dovelike' (adverbial) descent, possibly an allusion to its hovering over the waters at creation [Gen. 1:2]."[8] The Spirit descending dovelike at the baptism of Jesus mirrors what scholar Fazlur Rahman reiterates as the physical appearance of the Spirit in the Qur'ān:

> One of [the] mighty powers (who) has taught him (Muhammad), one vigorous; and he grew clear to view when he was on the uppermost horizon. Then he drew near and *descended* till he was (distant) two bows' length or even nearer. (Q. 53:7–9, italics added)

Discerning the Spirit in the Signs of the Times[9]

Although the Spirit cannot be seen, the Spirit's message can be discerned through signs in the same way the *dove* at the baptism of Jesus was a sign. In the 21st century, the Church as the Body of Christ in Asia experiences the Spirit in the following three signs: 1) *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2) the beatification of Matteo Ricci, and 3) the Holy Spirit being present in the ancient religions and cultures in Asia.

Evangelii Gaudium (November 24, 2013)

Less than four months after his election, Pope Francis completed and issued the encyclical *Lumen Fidei* which Pope Benedict XVI had

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[8] D. Harrington, "Mark," in R. Brown, J. Fitzmyer, & R. Murphy, eds., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1990), 599.

[9] We can draw some insights regarding the process of communal discernment from *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission*, the *Vademecum*

started. Before the year ended, Francis issued *Evangelii Gaudium* (Joy of the Gospel) as his apostolic exhortation to the bishops, clergy, consecrated persons, and lay faithful to proclaim the Gospel in today's world. The mission to evangelize traditionally designated to clergy and religious now extended to the laity:

> In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt. 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are "disciples" and "missionaries", but rather that we are always "missionary disciples".[10]

Francis uses the term ev*angel*ize, from the Greek word *angelos*, a translation from Hebrew meaning "messenger"; to evangelize means

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for the Synod on Synodality (available at https://www.synod.va/en/news/the-vademecum-for-the-synod-on-synodality.html). This process, the *Vademecum* explains, entails a listening

> to each other, to our faith tradition, and to the *signs of the times [so that we can] discern what God is saying to all of us*.… This kind of discernment is [an ongoing process and] not only a one-time exercise … ultimately [it is] a way of life, grounded in Christ, following the lead of the Holy Spirit, living for the greater glory of God. (art. 2.2, italics added)

The New Testament Church followed this process so that the apostles could say, with confidence, that the decision taken at the end of the entire process of discernment was a joint decision between the Holy Spirit and themselves (cf. Acts 15:28) (Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences [FABC], "Journeying Together as Peoples of Asia" [Bangkok Document] [March 15, 2023], p. 19, no. 70).

[10] Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 120.

to be a bearer of "good news." We see the angel Gabriel as a bearer of "good news" to Mary at the Annunciation. Like Gabriel, every baptized Christian is a bearer of good news to those who have not heard of Christ. Given that the Word (*Logos*) and the Spirit (*Pneuma*) are in all religions, their believers are bearers, too, of good news to humanity from their religious traditions.

The Second Vatican Council reminds us that the Spirit is at work in the heart of every person through the "seeds of the Word" found in human initiatives—including religious ones—and in humankind's efforts to attain truth, goodness, and to God in Godself.[11] Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is universally experienced by every person, whether one is a theist, non-theist, or even atheist. This can be seen in the good and great works done by human beings to help humanity, for all good can come only from God through God's Spirit strengthening and inspiring human persons. It is God's Spirit who plants holy desires and inspires so that these holy desires come to fruition. The desire in every person to do what is right and just, and to help those in need, can be traced back to the Spirit, although this is sometimes wrongfully credited solely to the doer.

Matteo Ricci and Inculturation

On December 17, 2022, the Apostolic See recognized Matteo Ricci's "heroic virtues," thereby bestowing upon him the honorific of "Venerable," and proposed him for beatification by Francis. The works of Ricci in correlating Catholic practices with Chinese tradition are an exemplar of evangelization. By recognizing such, the Catholic Church further affirms that inculturation is a way to bring Christ into the cultures of these ancient civilizations in Asia. Jesuit missionaries worked from 1539–1747, beginning with Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606) in Japan; Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), Michele Pompilio Ruggieri (1543–1607), and Sabatino de Ursis (1575–1620) in China; Roberto de

[11] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 29; see also Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes*, nos. 3, 11, and 15; Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, nos. 10–11, 22, 26, 38, 41, 92–93.

Nobili (1577–1656) and Thomas Stephens (1549–1619) in Southern India; and Constantine Joseph Beschi (November 8, 1680–February 4, 1747) in South India. Mostly Italian missionaries, these *da Vincis* of the missions were, like Leonardo da Vinci, innovators and applied novel methods in their work. Through inculturation, the Italian Jesuits preached a Christ who was comprehensible to the Chinese, Indians, Japanese, Thai, and other peoples of Asia. The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) "Bangkok Document" states:

> The Italian Jesuits, Alessandro Valignano and Matteo Ricci, were unique in that they did not just insist on learning the local languages in order to communicate the faith. They also took the local cultures and faiths seriously. They came not just to teach but also to learn by immersing themselves in the worldviews of their host countries. They allowed the Gospel to take root [in] the soil of Asian culture. They realized "that the conquest model of evangelization would be absolutely fruitless in penetrating the ancient civilizations of Japan and China." The same could have been said of Robert De Nobili and his collaborators in India who sought to root the Gospel in the culture of their host countries.[12]

"One might say they lived ahead of their times and were ahead of the FABC's insistence on dialogue with Asian cultures and religions by almost four centuries!"[13] Their creative and innovative missionary efforts via inculturation continue to inspire missionaries today engaged in interfaith and intercultural dialogue with other believers in Asia. Yet despite efforts to inculturate the Gospel beginning in the 16th and 17th centuries, evangelization in Asia today is still in its infancy.

The Holy Spirit is in Asia's Ancient Religions

The Catholic Church teaches that the Spirit was present before the creation of the universe and that everything was made in Jesus Christ by God the Father as Creator Spirit. Scripture says that God breathed the Spirit (*ruh* or *ruah*) into humankind's nostrils: "And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils

[12] FABC, "Journeying Together as Peoples of Asia," nos. 142–143.

[13] FABC, "Journeying Together as Peoples of Asia," no. 142.

the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). The same narrative of the Spirit being breathed into the human being is revealed twice in the Qur'ān. In Islam, the blowing of the Spirit of God into the human person so regarded the human person's excellence that angels were asked to prostrate before humankind as a sign of respect for the pinnacle of God's creation.

> When your Lord said to the angels, "Surely I am going to create a mortal from dust: So when I have made him complete and *breathed into him of My Spirit*, then fall down making obeisance to him." (Q. 38:71–72; italics added)
>
> (It is Allah) Who made good everything that He has created, and He began the creation of man from dust. Then He made his progeny of an extract of water held in light estimation. Then He made him complete and *breathed into him of His Spirit*, and made for you the ears and the eyes and the hearts; little is it that you give thanks. (Q. 32:7–9; italics added)

By breathing God's Spirit, God ensouled the human person, thereby giving life to them. The soul which is "the breath of life"[14] is immortal. The Spirit breathed by God's self into the human person distinguishes humankind from other created beings. In this regard, humankind is made, not physiologically but spiritually, in the image and likeness of God. The soul, like the Spirit, is immortal and invisible. It comes from God and shall return to God when the body dies. It is here that the soul is properly linked to the Holy Spirit who is properly linked to the human soul. It is here how we understand that we are made in the image and likeness of God—not in the physiological sense but in the spiritual, for every soul comes from the Spirit of God and ought to return to God eventually after the physical death of the body. It is in the same lacuna within every person that the Spirit enters to sanctify the soul. The soul cannot be sanctified without the Spirit. For Catholics, it is in baptism and confirmation that the Spirit in Christ resides within each person and sanctifies each person's soul. Both Christianity and Islam narrate that Satan, the enemy of God, harbors the evil intent to destroy this relationship between the soul and the Spirit of God.

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[14] R. Clifford, "Genesis," in Brown et al., eds., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 12.

After his resurrection, the Christ breathed unto his disciples in the same way God breathed into the nostrils of Adam, the first human being, in Gen. 2:7. The resurrected Christ's breathing of the Spirit unto his apostles, announcing, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn. 20:23), is the basis of the Nicene Creed's declaration, "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son." The Spirit empowered and strengthened the apostles to overcome their fears and emboldened them to witness to and proclaim the risen Christ as savior. The event inaugurates the mission of the Church to evangelize to all nations.

The Spirit "blows where [the Spirit] wills" (cf. Jn. 3:8) and "was already at work in the world before Christ was glorified."[15] The Spirit's presence is discernible in the four theistic religions of Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and Christianity. Despite their differences in their interpretation of who the Spirit is, they mutually affirm that the Spirit is of and from God—a sound starting point, for it establishes a common ground for the four theistic religions. Hinduism, one of the most ancient of religions, teaches that the "old" Spirit who was at creation is the Supreme Spirit known as the *Brahman* who animates the material universe. Hindus believe that the *Brahman* is present in the entire universe, and that each living being has a part of *Brahman* within them. Using their language, the relationship of the Spirit and Soul is defined; the terms are used interchangeably at times. The Sanskrit word *atman* (Spirit or breath) is the life force that gives life to the individual soul (*jiva* or *jiwa*), including the universe. One can see a semblance of this in animism, the religion of indigenous peoples that puts emphasis on the uniqueness of each individual soul. On the other hand, a pantheism identified with Hinduism teaches that individuals do not have a distinct soul as everything shares in the same spiritual essence of *Brahman*. Animism attributes a "soul" (*anima*) to plants and living creatures as well as inanimate objects.

[15] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 29. See also Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes*, no. 4.

The pneumatological event when God breathed the Spirit that ensouled humankind happened at creation before the *Word* (Logos) incarnated as Jesus the Messiah and before the formation of any organized religion. This makes the infusion of the Spirit in humankind universal and thereby not exclusive to Christianity and Islam. The gift of Spirit, the gift of life, is universal and extended to all humankind. This affirms that the Holy Spirit is in all peoples and cultures, even those that are not Christian or Muslim. The stories of Jesus in the Holy Scriptures and the Gospels are so powerful that the lives and standards of peoples shall be in accord with Jesus's examples. The Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son shall reveal Jesus to all peoples who will eventually recognize that there is the God Who can be encountered in their culture and community.

What we can learn from the Eastern tradition is that the Holy Spirit is represented in various human forms, such as the three magi or Abraham's three visitors.[16] Unique to the Qur'ān is the Spirit appearing physically to the prophet Muhammad and to Mary. In *Surah Maryam* (19) of the Qur'ān, the Spirit appears as a person in human form before Mary[17] in what Muslims refer to as the Virgin Birth. The Spirit appears to Maryam as a perfect man who speaks and is spoken to. A dialogue between the Spirit and Mary ensues (19:19–22), commencing the Spirit to breathe into Maryam's womb (66:12 and 21:91) and thereby conceiving the eternal *Word* named Jesus the Christ (3:45).

Nearest in Affection: *Ruh al-Qudus* (Holy Spirit) in Islam

The Qur'ān says, "The nearest in affection to Muslims are those who say 'We are Christians'" (Q. 5:82). A leading source on the Holy

[16] Y. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* Vol. 1 (New York/London: Seabury Press/G. Chapman, 1983), 26 (endnote 11).

[17] See R. Oliveros, "Thomas O'Shaughnessy, SJ & Fazlur Rahman: The Incarnation in the Qur'ān," *Asia Pacific Mission Studies* 4:2 (2022): 11–12.

Spirit outside Christianity can be found in Islam, the religion of the Muslims who dominate Southeast Asia. The Islamic interpretation of the Holy Spirit as mentioned in the Qur'ān (Arabic: روح القدس *Ruh al-Qudus*, "the Spirit of Holiness") is generally consistent with other interpretations based upon the Old and New Testaments, that is, that the Spirit acts as an agent of divine communication or revelation.

Ruh al-Qudus, where the substantive *qudus* (holiness) is used in combination with *ruh* (Spirit), is mentioned five times in the Qur'ān. In three of these instances (Q. 2:87, 2:253, 5:110), Allah is described as "strengthening" Jesus (Eisa) with the Holy Spirit (Q. 2:87, *bi-ruu-hil-qudus*). In the fourth instance (Q. 58:22), Allah is depicted as "strengthening the faithful (Muslims) with a Spirit (indefinite article) from Himself (Allah)," and in a fifth instance (16:102), as confirming the believers by a revelation (the Qur'ān) which "the Spirit of Holiness has sent down." The verb *ayyad(a)*, "he strengthened," seems to have entered Muhammad's active vocabulary only in Medina, where it is used nine times in all—four times in the (with the) *ruh* texts (QQ. 2:87, 2:253, 5:110, 58:22) and in five other places, and in all of which Allah strengthens the good for victory over their enemies.[18] "Say that the Holy Spirit has brought the Revelation with the Truth from your Lord, to strengthen the believers as guidance and good news to the devout" (Q. 16:102).

The equivalent of "strengthened" (*ayyad*) in the Qur'ān could mean the same as "graced" in Christian theology. The Qur'ān speaks of Jesus being strengthened by the Holy Spirit; this is reminiscent of the Holy Spirit that led Jesus into the desert after his baptism. Jesus faced the temptations of the evil one yet he was graced by the Holy Spirit to overcome the temptations. With the grace of the Holy Spirit, baptized Catholics can heed the call of Francis to be evangelizers even without lengthy training. However, the Church must provide the environment that is formative of a missionary disciple in parishes and Catholic schools. Catholic institutions need to emphasize the

[18] T. O'Shaughnessy, *The Development of the Meaning of Spirit in the Koran* (Rome: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1953), 44.

mission and missionary identity of the laity, and parishes need to be known as mission-parishes to reorient their parishioners to think beyond the Philippines, where 83% of the 110-million population is already Catholic.

A Maryam Pneumatology

A Maryam dialogue between Muslims and Christians will contribute to the understanding of how the Spirit sanctifies peoples of all religious traditions. It serves as a starting point for believers to know more about Christ (*al-Masih*) as revealed in the Qur'ān and the New Testament. Mary is "full of grace" for her soul received the fullness of the Spirit—"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God" (Lk. 1:35). "Mary is the first recipient of grace and the first to have been associated with the sovereign action of the Spirit in Christ."[19] In the Annunciation, the Spirit inspired, strengthened, and sanctified the soul of Mary, making her womb the perfect vessel to bear the Word becoming flesh. It is the Holy Spirit overshadowing her and thus sanctifying her soul that made her blameless and without sin.

Mary received the fullness of the Spirit (Lk. 1:26–28). The Annunciation of Gabriel to Mary in Luke 1:28–30 and in Qur'ān 3:42–47 are essentially identical. The Incarnation in the Qur'ān is found in four surahs (Surah 3, 19, 21, and 66). When merged into a single narrative, these surahs provide explicit details and add to the Incarnation that we know of from Luke 1 and John 1. It begins with Luke 1 and Qur'ān 3, and segues to Qur'ān 19 where Maryam submits to Allah's will, the Spirit consequently blows (66:12 and 21:91) into her generative part, and the "Word" named the Messiah is conceived.

[19] Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 164.

The Spirit Incarnate (Q. 19:17–18)

> Then We sent to her Our Spirit, and he became incarnate[20] for her as a perfect man.[21] She said, "I seek the protection of the All-beneficent from you, if you fear Him (do not come near)!" (Q. 19:16–18)
>
> He (the Spirit) said, "I am only a messenger[22] of your Lord (*Rasuulu Rabbiki*) that *I may give you a pure son.*"[23] (Q. 19:19)

The Incarnation, defined as the Word becoming flesh and whose name is Messiah, is mentioned in both the Qur'ān (Surah 3) and the Gospels (Luke 2 and John 1). The Qur'ān also applies incarnation to the Spirit who appeared to Mary as a perfect human. This happened right after the angels (pl. *malaaaikatu*) announced to her that she, of all women, had been chosen. Ali Quli Qara'i, a scholar from Iran whose translation of the Qur'ān into English adheres to tradition and equates the Spirit to Gabriel, interestingly used "incarnate" (in human form) to describe the Spirit who appeared to Mary. When this author messaged him on Facebook on April 14, 2021 to ask why he had chosen the word "incarnate" in reference to the appearance of the Spirit, he replied:

> I don't remember what my thoughts were at that time. But when I think about it now, it appears to me that it was somewhat a straightforward choice, as that is how "incarnate" is defined in the dictionary: invested with bodily nature and form; embodied in human form; personified. The idea of embodiment of non-corporeal entities is replete in Shia hadith, and that might have been an influence. "Appeared" seems to me rather vague, while "became incarnate" seems more fitting for a

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[20] *The Qur'ān*, trans. A. Qara'i (London: Islamic College for Advanced Studies Press, 2005).

[21] F. Rahman describes the Spirit as one with powerful sinews or muscular power and strength (*Major Themes of the Qur'ān* [Minneapolis, MN: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980], 64). *Basharan sawiyya* also means a righteous man.

[22] The Spirit is on a mission to blow into Maryam.

[23] *Gulaaman-Sakiyya* also means an intelligent son, not just a pure one (italics added).

> spirit. Moreover "personify" and "embody" are also among [the] literal meanings of *tamaththul*.[24]

The Holy Spirit who appeared in bodily form as a person in the Qur'ān portrays an image of strength. This is not so in the Gospels where the Spirit appeared as a dove; the portrayal is not necessarily that of physical strength. Only at Pentecost, in the Acts of the Apostles, did the Spirit make His presence felt amongst the disciples as a powerful wind and tongues of fire. The disadvantage of over-stressing the physicality of the Holy Spirit is that doing so seemingly deprives the Spirit of mobility and transcendence, for the Spirit can be present in any part of the world at any given time. Perhaps the Holy Spirit's use of a physical form is a matter of necessity so humans can witness the Spirit's presence as wind, dove, fire, and, in the Qur'ān, incarnate in a person.

The Spirit is Not an Angel. In Islam, the Holy Spirit has been confused with being an angel—more specifically, that the Spirit is the Angel Gabriel. Yet the Holy Spirit being referred to is received by the human soul at baptism and leaves an indelible mark therein, an act which cannot be performed by an angel. Only the Holy Spirit has such power and influence on the human soul. The Spirit is not outside the human being but speaks from within to the conscience and heart of each of the faithful. The Spirit (الروح *al-Ruh*) is described, among other things, as the creative spirit from God by which God the Spirit continues to dwell in the faithful as in 1 Cor. 6:19: "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?" Both Muslims and Christians rely on the Spirit for strength and enlightenment of the self which is actually the soul.

The angels, on the other hand, are there to defend and protect believers from accidents, dangers, and evil forces. Prominent Muslim scholar Fazlur Rahman argues that the term "angel," strictly speaking, is not quite accurate for denoting the Spirit. For him, the Spirit is never

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[24] A. Qara'i, personal communication via Facebook Messenger on July 5, 2021. This appears as the image of a Perfect Man in Q. 19:17.

an angel (Gabriel) as traditionally understood by Muslims;[25] rather, the Spirit is the Spirit of Revelation who directly revealed the Qur'ān to the Prophet Muhammad without the need for any intermediary. Those hadith stories where the angel Gabriel is depicted as conversing directly with the Prophet and whose companions even saw him must be regarded as later fictions.[26] Rahman reiterates that the Spirit is a Person and describes the physical appearance of the Spirit as

> one of mighty powers (who) has taught him (Muhammad), one vigorous; and he grew clear to view when he was on the uppermost horizon. Then he drew near and descended till he was (distant) two bows' length or even nearer. (Q. 53:5–12)

Rahman paraphrases "one vigorous" as "the one of powerful *sinews and strong muscles* (the Spirit) [who] taught him (Muhammad)" or describes the Spirit as one who is muscular and possesses extraordinary, almost suppressive, strength.[27]

In using the "We" form, the Qur'ān manifests that God breathed God's Spirit into Mary (Q. 21:91 and 66:12) and that the role of Gabriel was to announce (Q. 3:42, 45–46) the conception of the *Word* by the Spirit of Holiness.[28] It is solely God who acts, with no intermediaries, as it is ordained that the Holy Spirit shall grant the pure son when the Spirit said, "I am only a messenger of your Lord (*Rasuulu Rabbiki*) that I may give you (Maryam) a pure son" (Q. 19:19). For Catholics, God is the Holy Spirit who came down from heaven after Gabriel announced to Mary the good news that "the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (Lk. 1:35).

The four *ruh* verses revealed at Medina make it impossible to substitute Gabriel for the Spirit like in this revelation: "We breathed

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[25] Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'ān*, 97.

[26] Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'ān*, 97.

[27] Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'ān*, 64 (italics added).

[28] O'Shaughnessy, *The Development of the Meaning of Spirit in the Koran*, 54.

into them [the generative parts] some of our Spirit (66:12, 21:91)."[29] Furthermore, the notion that Gabriel is the Spirit would mean that Gabriel "impregnated"[30] Maryam, making it awkward and problematic. If Gabriel is not the Spirit, who, then, is the Spirit? This is a dilemma for Muslims. For Christians, it is easy to allude that the Spirit in Surah 19 is the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Holy Trinity. However, this would not be easy for Muslims because it compromises the Tawhid, the Unity and Oneness of God. The worship of gods or anything else other than Allāh is blasphemous or *shirk* –a grave sin in Islam.

The Islamic *Logos*: The Word from Allah Whose Name is Messiah (Q. 3:45)

The unraveling of the Word among adherents of faiths other than Christianity is the work of the Spirit. Christian evangelizers are tasked to share the story of Jesus whose life story shall resonate in all religious traditions as they relate with the humanity of Jesus and his universal message as defined in their own salvation history. The Word as the Messiah (Christ) is revealed in John 1:1–12 and in the Qur'ān:

> Behold the angels said, "O Mary verily Allah announces to you of a Word '*Bi-kalimat-in min-hu*' (of a Word from Him [Allah])—*ismu-hul Masiihu* '*Eisa-ibnu-Maryama*' (whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary)." (Q. 3:45–46)

This Qur'ānic verse affirms Christian theology in that the "Word" (*Kalimat*) or the *Logos* that became flesh is named Messiah, the Son of Mary (*Maryam um Eisa*). The confirmation of the shared affirmation of the identity of the "Word" is in the Preface of the Holy Mass: "He [Jesus Christ] is the Word through whom you made the universe." For Christians, *Logos* (Word) is the name of Jesus Christ in John 1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word

[29] O'Shaughnessy, *The Development of the Meaning of Spirit in the Koran*, 53.

[30] Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, 96 (Q. 66–67).

was God … And the Word became flesh."[31] The Word who was there from the very beginning of creation is made finite and human in Jesus; the same Word who is not created but became flesh.

A Muslim interpretation aligned with Christian theology is that of Tabarsi, following the authority of Qatādah. Regarding the meaning of the designation of Jesus as a "word" from God, Tabarsi reports on the authority of Qatādah: "The word to which God refers as 'a word from Him' is His word 'Be.'"[32] A "Word" from Allāh means the Word is part of and inseparable from Allāh. This is seconded by Ibn Abbas who declares that "Jesus is the Word of God";[33] in Arabic, "*Bi-kalimat-in min-hu*" (of a Word from Him) (Q. 3:45). God thus called Jesus God's Word because he came into being through God's word. As part of Allah, he is inseparable.

Logos is both a proper noun and an imperative verbal command. God created with the Word: "Let there Be." In Biblical theology, "Be!" (*kun*) is God's creative "Word" as can be read in Genesis 1:3 and 6: "God said 'Let there Be' (*allahu sayakūnu hunāka*)."[34] Allah's divine command "*kun*" (Be!) is the response of the angel when Mary asked, "My Lord, how shall I have a son seeing no man has touched me?" Even so, God said, God wills what God wills. "When God decides on something, God simply says to it, *Be* (Kun), and it is" (Q. 3:47).

Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 130–202), a student of the Apostle John's disciple, Polycarp, identifies the *Logos* as Jesus by whom all things were made. He based it on John's Prologue:

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[31] B. Vawter, "The Gospel According to John," in R. Brown, J. Fitzmyer, & R. Murphy, eds., *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* Vol. 2 (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 423.

[32] M. Ayoub, *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters* Vol. 2: *The House of 'Imran* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 131.

[33] Ayoub, *The House of 'Imran*, 131.

[34] Ayoub, *The House of 'Imran*, 13.

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. (Jn. 1:1–3)
>
> And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (Jn. 1:14)

Irenaeus wrote that there is one Almighty God who made all things, both visible and invisible, by God's Word while showing at the same time through whom God created.[35] "In the beginning" in John 1:1 is an allusion to Genesis 1:1 as John wants to show that Jesus, the *Logos*, is truly the creative Word of God who already existed at the beginning of time.[36] As *Logos*, Word of God, He is co-eternal with God.

The *Logos* is uncreated in the same way that Muslims believe that the Qur'ān is uncreated. As such, Christ as Allah's Word is considered to be similar in status as the Qur'ān which is *Kalimatullah*, the Word of Allah. Muslims believe that the Qur'ān is uncreated and has always existed in heaven. Allah then sent it down to Muhammad as a revelation. The eternal *Kalimatullah* from heaven became the Arabic Qur'ān on earth for humankind. For Christians, however, the eternal *Logos* who is Christ did not become a book but became flesh in what Christians call the Incarnation.

There is a need to present a theological position to fill a gap in the theological discourse with other religions while avoiding condescension or imposing one's beliefs upon them. Although they received the Spirit at creation, ancient religions remain limited in their understanding of God's plan due to their sole reliance on scriptural texts which, in and of themselves, cannot fully reveal the plan of God. A deprived understanding will persist without the Holy Spirit revealing the "Word" (*Logos*) who is understood by Christians to be Jesus Christ. The "Word" embedded in scriptural texts must be revealed in God's fullness by the

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[35] Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies* 3.11.1, available at https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103311.htm.

[36] Vawter, "The Gospel According to John," 421.

Spirit and not rely solely on human philosophical assent. In this light, the Old Testament runs parallel with the ancient religions but is unique in its prophecy of the Word as Christ, particularly in Isaiah, where the virgin birth and crucifixion of Christ are prophesied.

Logos Spermatikoi in Non-Theistic Religions. The seed of Christ as *Word* (*Logos*) has been active in history and present in peoples since the beginning, predating even the incarnation of the Word as revealed in John 1. Even without a direct revelation from God, Jesus Christ as *Logos*, the pre-existent second person of the Trinity, has been present in all the religions formed by humankind. We trace this teaching to Justin Martyr (100–165 CE) whose theology on the *Logos Spermatikos* is inseparable from the presence of the Spirit. It is the Spirit who sows the "seeds of the Word" present in various customs and cultures, preparing them for full maturity in Christ.[37] The seed of the *Logos* was in Asian cultures and religions even before the arrival of Christian missionaries. What earlier evangelizers like Francis Xavier and Matteo Ricci did was plant the seed of the Word into Asian cultures so Christ could be recognized within them (Jn. 1:10). Through baptism, Christians receive the grace of new birth in God the Father through His Son in the Holy Spirit, for those who bear God's Spirit are led to the Word, that is, to the Son, the pre-existent Son identified as the "Word" (*dabar*),[38] the Christ.

Given that the Holy Spirit is inseparable from Christ, the Spirit has been with the Word from the time of the Christ up to the present. It is in the stirring of the Holy Spirit that Christ is known by the various human religions. Only through the Holy Spirit will non-Christian believers get to know Christ. When they hear the stories of Jesus, and presuming they have been graced to hear and understand, they will find a correlation in their scriptures and tradition. This gives missionaries confidence that their proclamation of Christ as the Word is not totally alien to other religions and cultures.

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[37] Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 17; Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes*, no. 3.

[38] Irenaeus of Lyon, *Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching* 7: SCh 62, 41–42.

The Second Vatican Council recalls that the Spirit is at work in the heart of every person through the "seeds of the Word" found in human initiatives—including religious ones—and in humankind's efforts to attain truth, goodness, and God in God's self.[39] The Word rests in the truth, and although this may not be explicitly mentioned in the sacred scriptures of Hinduism, Buddhism, and others, the Holy Spirit helps unearth the Word in their scriptures. At best, the earlier evangelizers merely cultivated or loosened the soil, allowing for air and water to circulate better and preserving soil health so the seed may thrive.

The People of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb* أهل الكتاب)[40]

The God of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism is one and the same God. All the multiple manifestations of God in nature apparently worshipped in Hinduism, which has been misconstrued as being polytheistic, actually point to the one God. Furthermore, the mistaken assertion that God's transcendence puts God beyond humanity's reach has cast doubt upon God's immanence. Christianity ascribes God's immanence to the incarnation of the Word whence Jesus Christ pitched his tent amongst us (Jn. 1:14). For other religions, God's immanence becomes plausible if the Spirit is understood as God's self being present everywhere and anywhere. Yet while this is not to be misunderstood as pantheism given that the Spirit is not a material entity manifesting physically, the Holy Spirit appears in bodily form whenever necessary, as in the case of an incarnate person in the Qur'ān (Q. 19:17).

The presence of God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, is affirmed in these four religions. When we read about God in Sacred Scripture, it is

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[39] Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes*, nos. 3, 11, 15; Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, nos. 10–11, 22, 26, 38, 41, 92–93. See also John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 29.

[40] An Islamic term referring to those religions which Muslims regard as having been guided by God's revelations, generally in the form of a sacred scripture. Hinduism, although not mentioned in the Qur'ān, has its own sacred scripture in the *Vedas*.

normal to be curious and inquisitive. Be it the Qur'ān, the Bible, or the Vedas, the stories in scripture inspire us to pray to God, to know, to love, and to submit to God. Based on what they have heard from oral tradition (*shruti*, meaning "that which is heard"), Hindus believe that their scripture is not of human origin nor a result of philosophical introspection but "revealed" and heard by their sages and seers (*rishis*). This is similar to the notion that the Holy Spirit inspires the human authors of sacred scriptures. They were moved by the Spirit of God to communicate exactly what God desires; indeed, "because written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, [the Sacred Scriptures] have God as their author."[41] God breathed upon the human authors, and the revelation of God was conveyed to God's people through the influence of the Holy Spirit. Hindus say *Śrutistu vedo vijñeyah*, which means "know that [the] Vedas are *śruti*"—scriptures considered authorless and transmitted orally across the generations, and transcribed and sealed as the *Vedas*, which are considered to be the highest authority. They are the earliest of Hindu scriptures and regarded as eternal truths, the body of most authoritative, ancient religious texts comprising the central canon of Hinduism.

The Second Vatican Council encourages Muslim-Catholic relations by affirming that Muslims and Catholics worship the one and the same God. Likewise, the Qur'ān instructs Muslims to "not argue with the People of the Book unless gracefully, except with those of them who act wrongfully. And [to] say, 'We believe in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to you. Our God and your God is 'only' One. And to Him we 'fully' submit'" (Q. 29:46). For Muslims and Christians, the unitive aspect allowing them to work together is their shared belief in the Oneness of God. In Islam, fidelity to the Oneness of God is called *Tawhid*. Muslims witness that "there is no god but God (*lā ʾilāha ʾillā-llā*)." In negating the false gods, a Muslim accentuates the one true God who is Allah. Christianity's doctrine of the Trinity and Islam's doctrine of Tawhid are of the same attestation recited in the

[41] Paul VI, *Dei Verbum*, no. 11, available at https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html.

first line of the Apostles' Creed, *Credo in unum Deum*—I believe in one God. Muslims and Catholics encounter the Word in their sacred texts similar to how Jews encounter the Word in the Old Testament. It is through the Holy Spirit that Christ can be known in the same way that the Spirit made known the Word before the Incarnation, even before the Word became flesh (Word-Spirit/Spirit-Christ).

Christianity, Judaism, and Islam as monotheistic religions trace their beginnings to Abraham, the father of faith. It is through him who worshipped the one true God that the three Abrahamic religions pray to the one God of Muhammad, Moses, and Mary, the mother of Jesus. Judaism and Islam have asserted a stricter monotheism while Christianity has adopted a more complex form of monotheism in the doctrine of the Trinity, which takes into account what Jesus himself said about his relationship with the Father, i.e., "the Father and I are one" (Jn. 10:30), while remaining within the framework of God being one. It is inherent in every human person to seek a higher form of relationship that only God can fully satisfy, one that adequately responds to humankind's deepest longings for meaning and answers to the mysteries of human existence.

Extra-Biblical Sources: A Shared Revelation

Beginning with the acceptance of the holy books of Islam and Christianity will open the floodgates of openness to the messages shared by Muslims and Christians about the existence of a living God actively engaged in human history. In a predominantly Muslim-populated Asia, Christians work with Muslims to proclaim their shared faith in the One God to peoples who have not received God or deny the existence of God. Muslims and Christians cannot be indifferent. We cannot keep the faith and gift of God to ourselves. We are compelled by the Holy Spirit (*Ruh al-Qudus*) to share God with others.

The Qur'ān (القرآن, the recitation) is the holy book (*al-kitāb*) of 1.9 billion Muslims, approximately a quarter of the world's population. It is the second most read book next to the Bible and is the most recited book given that Islamic prayer is centered on the recitation of its verses.

The Qur'ān is the supreme authority in Islam and is believed by Muslims to be the verbatim Word of Allah. Yet while *Nostra Aetate* mentions Islam and Muslims, it is silent with respect to the Qur'ān. It is noteworthy that without the Qur'ān, there is neither Islam as a religion nor Muslims that we can speak of. Thus, a missiology in Southeast Asia must seek to make the Scriptures a foundation for dialogue. The intent is not to convert Muslims to Christianity but to establish a mission relationship that proclaims God to peoples who have not heard of God, and especially in a world where the denial of God is hurting today's youth.

This author vividly recalls a conversation he had that took place decades ago with three elderly Muslim-Filipino imams. Probably thinking that this author belonged to the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, they confided in him without hesitation their disappointment with *Nostra Aetate.* They said that the document did not mention their prophet Muhammad nor the Qur'ān, without which there would be no Islam nor Muslims. Islam, the religion of more than a billion Muslims today, is based solely on the revelations received by the Prophet and which are contained in the Qur'ān. Yet while current Muslim-Christian dialogue already recognizes Muhammad as the prophet for Muslims, the challenge is for non-Muslims to affirm that the Qur'ān is God's revelation for Muslims and avoid the condescending view that it is merely an appropriation from the Bible. There will certainly be disagreements in the interpretation of passages, but the convergence of Biblical and Qur'ānic interpretations supersede those disagreements. The acceptance of the most sacred book of the Muslims is the right step on the right path.

The names *Eisa al-Masih* (Jesus the Christ), *Ruh al-Qudus* (the Holy Spirit), and *Maryam umm Eisa* (Mary, the mother of Jesus) can be found *only* in two sacred scriptures—the Qur'ān and, more so, in the New Testament. Muslims believe that the Qur'ān affirms what has been revealed in earlier scriptures; the Torah and the Gospels are earlier revelations confirmed in the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān is sparse yet so direct and clear. There is little need to expound on it since its contents have already been revealed in the first century; the Qur'ān simply confirms

these in the seventh century, with occasional differences residing in the interpretation (*tafsir*) of what seem to be parallel revelations. Nevertheless, the Qur'ān is clear and direct, although in a sparse and trite way, in its affirmation of revelations in the Bible.

According to the Qur'ān, Muslims and Christians are the nearest of kin (Q. 5:82). Their shared belief in one God and shared stories of prophets and saints are revealed in both the Bible and the Qur'ān. Central to these narratives is the Blessed Virgin Mary who is seen as the bridge in Muslim-Catholic relations; indeed, the centrality of Mary makes the term "Catholic" instead of "Christian" more appropriate in this context given that mainstream Protestants are not as open to Mary. Islam is the only religion in the world that shares with the Catholic and Orthodox Churches a deep honor and respect for Mary, the mother of Jesus. As a Catholic, this author can say that he is related, *via Scriptura*, to Muslims with the same affinity he experiences with his Muslim mother. The differences in exegesis (*tafsir*) do not take away the truth that Muslims and Catholics are brothers and sisters in relation to the one and the same God.

Why Indonesia?

Only in the 12th to 16th centuries did the monotheistic religions of Islam and Christianity reach the Malay World (*Alam Melayu*) of Southeast Asia. Indonesia, a neighbor to the Philippines, is home to the largest Muslim population in the world.[42] From the evangelization perspective, Indonesia is the ideal country which Catholic Philippines can partner with to bring God to Asians in the third millennium. Despite their population's overwhelming Muslim majority, Indonesia has refrained from declaring Islam as their national religion to preserve religious freedom and choice among its citizens. What Philippine Christianity can learn from Indonesia are their foundational principles

[42] *The Global Religious Landscape*, Pew Research Center Forum on Religion & Public Life (December 18, 2012), available at https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/.

of *Pancasila* which have formed a tolerant and inclusive Indonesian culture. The 77-year-old movement has inspired tolerance for peoples of all faiths. The hope is that it can spill over from Indonesia and inspire other Muslim majority nations in Southeast Asia.

The rise of materialistic secularism has been leading many young Christians and Muslims to experience a crisis of faith. Younger generations across the world have become more vulnerable to post-modernism which relativizes the truth and advocates atheistic materialism. Yet Islam and Christianity are in the best position to reach out to today's youth. The powerful witness of Muslims that there is no god but God (*'la illahah il-Allah'*) can be infectious and even inspire Christians who share in the same belief but might lack the conviction to evangelize.

With Indonesian Muslims and Filipino Catholics sharing the mission to preach the oneness of God, it is our hope that believers of other religions who encounter the Spirit in their traditions will also encounter the Christ who is inseparable from the Spirit. The Spirit of God is one and at the same time the Spirit of Christ—as the Word who was from the beginning with the Spirit. The Spirit cannot be severed from the universal action of the risen Christ.

The goal is not to win converts from Islam but to learn how to collaborate with Muslims in proclaiming God to a world that questions God's existence. Islam is the only religion that affirms Christians as People of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb* لهأ باتكلا) with whom Muslims intimately share Jesus the Word, Mary, and the Spirit. Although Mary is not in the tradition of other religions save for Islam, she represents the recognition of the presence of the Spirit in every culture across space and time.

Muslim-Christian relations in the West have had a history of conflict, most especially during the period of the Crusades (1095–1291). On the other hand, Muslim-Christian relationships in Southeast Asia have generally been peaceful, save for some adversarial interactions that were the result of distorted images each had of the other as taught by European and Arab missionaries who were themselves influenced

by the Crusades. *Bilang magkapatid* (as siblings), Indonesian Muslims and Filipino Catholics can find a common mission to bring God to all peoples who share the same Spirit present in their communities and cultures.

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"THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE"

A Virtuous Community, a Paradigm for Environmental Sustainability

Abundio R. Babor, Jr., M.S.C.

Abstract. The impact of human actions on the environment has created a myriad of problems. We need a moral paradigm that can facilitate an essential and substantial transformation to recover the bond between one another in the common home. Communal and environmental sustainability happens when human beings in the community live prudently, justly, steadfastly, and moderately with faith, hope, and charity.

A virtuous community focused on the habitual practice of the virtues sustains the environment because when human beings treat each other prudently, justly, steadfastly, and moderately with faith, hope, and charity, they act in the same manner toward non-human species. In a virtuous community, human actions are not motivated by dysfunctional anthropocentric desires but by the concern to care for all species.

The habitual practice of the virtues is the moral expression of our love of God and neighbor (Mk. 12:30–31), of living out God's vision of a right relationship based on communion with all of God's creation on this planet.

Keywords. creation; instrinsic value; dysfunctional anthropocentrism

The environmental crisis challenges us to explore possibilities that give us a better grasp of what we ought to do. Finding the appropriate paradigm is crucial. Sustainable development, as examined, is based on the fundamental premise that it is possible to manage environmental problems, challenging as they may be, and that the environment can be significantly adjusted by human ingenuity and utilized more efficiently for sustained economic growth.[1] From this perspective, the solutions to environmental problems are focused mainly on economic and technological interventions. Yet this approach has proven to be inadequate and inherently problematic.[2] The effort to palliate human impacts rather than probe and address underlying causes leads only to short-term solutions.

In this conversation, this author proposes that we take on the "virtuous community" as a paradigm for environmental sustainability. It offers a radical long-term approach to the problem of environmental degradation because it tries to address the roots of the problem. A human community rooted in the Christian virtues focuses primarily on having the right relationship with one another and the environment. It integrates views of the world, interconnectedness with each species, and the community's place in the web of life. An ecological relationship is proper when human persons deal with each other as subjects and

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[1] World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 49. This assertion is continually challenged by young environmental activists like Greta Thunberg. In her speech at the United Nations Climate Action Summit in 2019, she said,

> You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words, and yet I'm one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are at the beginning of mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairytales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!

The speech may be viewed at https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/read-greta-thunberg-s-full-speech-united-nations-climate-action-n1057861.

[2] A. Babor, "A Bucket Half Empty: A Critique of the Notion of Sustainable Development as a Paradigm for Environmental Sustainability," *Landas* 33:2 (2019): 90.

when they treat other species as an integral part of their whole being. It eliminates the perception of (subject-object)[3] separation between individuals, the human community and non-human species, economic and moral aspects, and spiritual and physical dimensions, among others. It helps overcome the environmental crisis by motivating each individual to reach wholeness, which is needed for communal and ecological sustainability. This sense of wholeness finds meaning in what Jesus said in John 17:21: "That They All May Be One."[4]

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[3] Martin Buber's "I-It" and "I-Thou" framework is useful for this study. Since the Industrial Revolution, the environment had become an object to be exploited by human beings for economic profit (I-It). The expansion of industrial technology largely prevented humanity from respecting the environment as more than just a standing economic reserve. Buber's I-Thou framework helps us to recover respect for the environment since the latter is not an object to be exploited but a subject, a part of our being. In "I-Thou," there is a relationship of mutuality based on the principle of respect. See M. Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Touchstone, 1970), 15–42.

[4] The text is part of Jesus's prayer for his disciples before his passion. He prayed for his disciples to be united just as he and the Father are one with the Holy Spirit. The Trinitarian mystery revealed by Jesus in his prayer for his disciples is a powerful reference for our ecological vision. All beings in the ecosystem, both human and non-human, are to find unity as everything comes from the Creator, God, the Trinity. Moreover, Jesus's prayer also discloses the context of the disciples' unity. Jesus prays to the Father that his disciples be in the world (not be taken out of the world). It implies the exigency of the disciples' unity in the concrete experiences of life. The task requires living a virtuous life as cultivating the habit of the moral virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude, sustained by the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love, can overcome "otherness." A virtuous life gives the fruit of unity. In this line of thought, the text provides the epitome of an ecological vision where the distinction between human and non-human no longer exists. Everything becomes interconnected and interrelated which, after all, is God's plan for all God's creation.

All Biblical quotations in this paper are taken from the Catholic Edition of the Revised Standard Version (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1966).

The Christian Virtues

The Christian virtues provide profound conditions for environmental sustainability. The cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, along with the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity,[5] enable us to live according to God's plan. Jesus's incisive point, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Mk. 12:30), emphasizes our fundamental interconnectedness with our creator and God's creation. God, the creator of everything, should be the ground of our being and the habitual focus of all relationships in both human and non-human dimensions.[6] In other words, loving God and God's creation has to become the consistent orientation of our being and character, an awareness that everything exists for God and one another within the whole ecosystem, that in God, "we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

The problem of "otherness" can be overcome when we understand that our interconnectedness defines who we are and everything we do. Loving all of God's creation demands living a virtuous life (prudently, justly, steadfastly, and moderately with faith, hope, and love). We ought to focus on what links us rather than what disconnects us. The epitome of love, the Incarnate Word, the "Word became flesh" (Jn. 1:14), became one like us because God "so loved the world" (cf. Jn. 3:16).

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[5] The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines the theological virtues as

> the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character. They inform and give life to all the moral virtues. They are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as [God's] children and of meriting eternal life. They are the pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the faculties of the human being. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [Manila: Word and Life Publications/CBCP/ECCE, 1994], no. 1813; hereafter referred to as CCC).

[6] See W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 155.

The Moral Virtue of Prudence

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines the virtue of prudence as

> the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it.… It is not to be confused with timidity or fear, nor with duplicity or dissimulation. It is called *auriga virtutum* (the charioteer of the virtues); it guides the other virtues by setting the rule and measures. It is prudence that immediately guides the judgment of conscience.[7]

Regarded as the mother of all moral virtues, prudence is also called practical reason[8] because it involves what the individual wants to do and how to do it correctly. For St. Thomas Aquinas, prudence is the habit of being judicious.[9] Exercising the moral virtue of prudence, however, involves several steps. First, it demands that the person who will do the action should be careful in choosing the means of acting through moral deliberation. Second, the moral agent has to form a sound judgment. Third, the person has to command correctly.[10]

Moral deliberation, which is finding the method suitable for attaining a particular objective, comes from inquiry. The good of the individual and the planetary community is always considered in moral deliberation. Indeed, St. Thomas argued that attaining the individual's good is not possible unless the common good of others is taken into account.[11] Therefore, the prudent individual makes a reasonable judgment by considering what is good for oneself and others. The

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[7] CCC no. 1806.

[8] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* Vol. III, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 1981), II-II, Q. 47, a. 1. Hereafter referred to as ST.

[9] ST II-II, Q. 47, a. 1.

[10] J. Schaefer, *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics: Reconstructing Patristic and Medieval Concepts* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 232.

[11] ST II-II, Q. 47, a. 8.

execution or command, the third step in prudent decision-making, has three essential elements: anticipation, cautiousness, and attentiveness.[12] The individual anticipates that what is being deliberated upon will last for present and future generations and is cautious in finding the proper way to attain the goal of the action while considering potentially interfering circumstances. Lastly, by being attentive, the individual is cautious in discerning between good and evil.[13]

By applying the practice of the moral virtue of prudence for environmental sustainability, the individual and the community consistently ensure that everything will be in harmony and that the planet's ecosystem will last for future generations. Being morally aware of the means suitable for preserving environmental sustainability, everyone exercises caution by avoiding what is detrimental to the environment, e.g., overconsumption of the planet's resources, irresponsible garbage disposal, etc.

The Moral Virtue of Justice

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines the virtue of justice as

> the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor. Justice toward God is called the "virtue of religion." Justice toward [women and men] disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and the common good.[14]

The virtue of justice is essential for a sustainable planet because justice is the recognition that each part of a complex system of the environment—the human community and the different species/organisms in nature—has a particular role in sustaining the whole ecosystem. Jame Schaefer points out that Aquinas argued that justice predisposes the individual human person to relate favorably with

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[12] Schaefer, *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics*, 233.

[13] Schaefer, *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics*, 233.

[14] CCC no. 1807.

others in the community to attain the *temporal* common good while they seek out the *eternal* common good with God.[15] Since everyone in the community is uniquely interconnected as part of the whole, the individual good contributes to the community's common good.[16] It is understood that everyone in the community should have enough resources to sustain themselves. It means that the moral virtue of justice must guide everyone in using the planet's resources so that all species can provide for their needs and no one is disadvantaged.

Aquinas's point on the moral virtue of justice is very relevant in arguing for a sustainable planet. Justice directs our rationality to use the world's goods in ways that ensure the planet's survival for future generations. The virtue of justice urges human beings—both individually and as a community—to use environmental resources only for what is necessary for the flourishing of every species and not according to the excessive consumption that characterizes today's society.[17]

The Moral Virtue of Fortitude

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines the virtue of fortitude as

> the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice [her or his] life in defense of a just cause.[18]

The virtue of fortitude is synonymous with courage. It can be described as persistence, determination, and firmness of the will. A

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[15] Schaefer, *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics*, 234.

[16] Schaefer, *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics*, 234.

[17] Pope Francis argues strongly about this point in his encyclical *Laudato Si'* (Pasay City: Paulines Publishing House, 2015), no. 160.

[18] CCC no. 1808.

sustainable world demands that everyone persevere in living a simple lifestyle and not give in to the vice of excessive consumption which is destructive for the environment. The moral virtue of fortitude strengthens justice to predispose human beings individually and communally to commit to looking after the good of other species by nurturing the planet.[19] It also reinforces the virtue of temperance so that the community will use environmental resources only for what is necessary for human and other species' flourishing rather than for satisfying the vices of selfishness and greed.[20]

When the practice of the moral virtue of fortitude becomes habitual, everyone acquires a particular attitude of perseverance in the minimal usage of environmental resources to ensure the planet's equilibrium.

The Moral Virtue of Temperance

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines the virtue of temperance as

> the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable. The temperate person directs the sensitive appetites toward what is good.…[21]

The moral virtue of temperance enables one to focus on having restraint from wanting to have more, recognizing that there are values higher than the immediate satisfaction of temporal and material desires. In practicing temperance, the community attains a sense of contentment and the desire to want no more than what the community already has. Thus, it urges everyone to control irrational wants and passions that cause planetary disharmony.[22]

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[19] Schaefer, *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics*, 235.

[20] Schaefer, *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics*, 235.

[21] CCC no. 1809.

[22] Schaefer, *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics*, 232.

According to Schaefer, Aquinas emphasized that God intends for the environment's resources to serve as means for sustaining human life while human beings aim, ultimately, to have eternal happiness with God. Thus, the individual and the community should not take disproportionate pleasure in material things because these will distract them from their path toward fullness of life in God.[23]

The virtue of temperance is vital for a sustainable planet because everyone would refrain from the vices of greed and self-indulgence. In other words, temperance would direct community members to cultivate and nurture self-restraint because the vice of avarice in possessing the environment's resources would be seen as contrary to union with God. After all, the ultimate goal is not happiness in possessing material things but eternal happiness with God. Thus, disproportionate living standards are ruled out in any circumstance to avoid diverting the focus of the individual and the community from the ultimate goal of attaining eternal bliss with God.

The Theological Virtue of Faith

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines faith as

> the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that [God] has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because [God] is truth itself. By faith "[the human person] freely commits [her or his] entire self to God." For this reason, the believer seeks to know and do God's will.[24]

Faith is a theological virtue that leads us to believe in God and commit ourselves entirely to God and God's purpose for all beings in the environment. It is not merely an agreement with a precept but, more broadly, about commitment and engagement to do God's will. As a theological virtue, it forms our moral conscience and entails belief in the goodness of God and God's creation.

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[23] Schaefer, *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics*, 233.

[24] CCC no. 1814.

The theological virtue of faith requires a particular commitment to respond to the attitudes of human beings toward God's creation. It demands ecological conversion that calls for repentance, discipline, and self-sacrifice. The Greek words for conversion (*metanoein* and *epistrephein*) mean "to turn around."[25] Conversion means turning around, going in a different direction, and making a new start. In other words, the old values and habits are left behind as the new path is set. As the Sacred Scriptures tell us, "the former things have passed away.… Behold, I make all things new" (cf. Rev. 21:4–5).

Human beings must recognize that the obsession for economic growth and development at the expense of the planet's subsistence is wrong and that repentance is necessary. Repentance is the first step toward conversion. Repentance means to challenge the past and correct it.[26] When repentance leads to conversion, the economic paradigm is replaced with communion. Communion in the community and with the environment means no social and environmental injustice, no obsession with economic growth and development, and no undue consumption. There is respect for the intrinsic value of each person in the community and of the different species of this planet.

The theological virtue of faith aligns our desires and inclinations with what is good for the environment and the community. It enables us to nurture one another and the environment because we see our interconnectedness and interdependence.

The Theological Virtue of Hope

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines hope as

> the theological virtue by which we desire the Kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises

[25] O. Costas, "Conversion as a Complex Experience: A Personal Case Study," in J. Stott & R. Coote, eds., *Down to Earth: Studies in Christianity and Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 35–36.

[26] W. Conn, ed., *Conversion: Perspectives on Personal and Social Transformation* (New York: Alba House, 1978), 24–32.

> and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit.… The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every [woman and man]; it takes up the hopes that inspire [women's and men's] activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps [women and men] from discouragement; it sustains [them] during times of abandonment; it opens up [their hearts] in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, [women and men are] preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity.[27]

The theological virtue of hope is understood primarily as reliance and trust that God will complete God's plan for humanity and the world. The Old Testament uses the meaning of hope as searching for "refuge in God … trusting confidently in God to fulfil the promises of blessing, and waiting patiently on God to accomplish God's plans."[28]

The individual and the community hold on to hope because God is faithful to God's promises. As human beings, our capacity to hope is one of the most important things that distinguishes us from other species on this planet. Aquinas stressed that hope is central to our Christian life because God is its efficient cause and object.[29] In his view, the ultimate object of hope is the joy of union with God.[30] Hope can lead the individual and the community to act in accordance with virtue and godliness.[31]

As a theological virtue for a sustainable planet, hope is the habit of looking at the future good as an eschatological reality. Hope allows us to affirm that God's creation is good and that humankind is an integral part of creation's flourishing. Thus, we can hope for the restoration of everything that is good in creation. We can hope that all species

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[27] CCC nos. 1817–1818.

[28] H. Cohen, *Reason and Hope*, trans. E. Jospe (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971), 122–128.

[29] ST II-II, Q. 17, a. 1, 5, 6.

[30] ST II-II, Q. 17, a. 2–4.

[31] ST II-II, Q. 20, a 3.

will thrive on this planet. With the virtue of hope, there is a moral conviction that God intends the well-being of everything God has created. We rely on God's infinite power, which exists entirely beyond the grasp of our limited understanding and finite experience.

The Theological Virtue of Charity

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines charity as "the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for [God's] own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God."[32]

Aquinas calls the theological virtue of charity "the mother of the other virtues."[33] Charity is properly understood in the context of faith and hope. It can be said that faith precedes hope because faith provides the knowledge that arouses hope for the things we have to know. Hope comes before charity because hope desires the goal which charity attains. Thus, the nature of charity is to fulfill the works of faith and hope. Charity directs faith and hope toward God. It embodies the union of God with all of God's creation in the ecosystem.

Agapé, the Greek word for charity, means unconditional commitment to another.[34] It does not depend on any action or quality of the beloved. God loves all God's creation without conditions. Human beings are called to love in the same way. "We love because God first loved us" (1 Jn. 4:19).

For a sustainable planet, loving everything God has created demands that we pay careful attention to everything affected by environmental degradation. Preventing the rise of seawater levels caused by climate change would express love for the highly vulnerable who happen to be the poor and marginalized living along coastlines. Preventing toxic waste from seeping into an aquifer expresses love for all organisms

[32] CCC no. 1822.

[33] ST II-II, Q. 23, a. 8.

[34] See J. Nollman, *Spiritual Ecology: A Guide for Reconnecting with Nature* (New York: Bantam, 1990), 87–89.

nourished by water. Indeed, the theological virtue of charity enables us to love God and all God's creation on this planet—our home.[35]

The Basic Ecclesial Community[36]

Having discussed the seven Christian virtues, we must demonstrate that a virtuous community is possible for environmental sustainability. The Basic Ecclesial Community in the Philippines is thus considered as a case in point. The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines defines the Basic Ecclesial Community as composed of

> small communities of Christians, usually of families, who gather around the Word of God and the Eucharist. These communities are united to their pastors but are ministered to regularly by lay leaders. The members know each other by name and share the Word of God and the Eucharist and their concerns, both material and spiritual. They have a strong sense of belongingness and responsibility for one another.[37]

The description explains the meaning of the three words: *Basic*, *Ecclesial*, and *Community*. The word *Basic* refers to the community's size and social location.[38] As Amado Picardal explains, "a basic community is small enough for the members to know each other well and relate deeply as friends but not too small that it turns into a primary group or *barkada* (peer group) instead of a community."[39] The members may

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[35] Pope Francis calls the planet our home in *Laudato Si'*.

[36] There are other groups/communities we can consider as well: non-government organizations, corporations, schools, etc. For the purpose of this research, the Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) is considered as a case in point. The hope, however, is that the application of the moral and theological virtues to the BEC for environmental sustainability can also be done for other groups.

[37] *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (Manila: Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines Secretariat, 1992), 138. Hereafter referred to as PCP II.

[38] PCP II, 138.

[39] PCP II, 138.

be composed of forty to two hundred families and subdivided into different cells or groupings of five to ten families each. As a social location, the members are at the grassroots or considered to be a simple group of people living together as a community.

The word *Ecclesial*, on the other hand, stresses the notion that the Basic Ecclesial Community is how the Church lives its mission. Under the principle of subsidiarity, the Church is being "realized, localized and experienced at the grassroots, in the neighbourhood."[40] As communities, they serve as a microcosm of the Church, not as administrative units within the parish structure.

The term *Community* means that the members of the Basic Ecclesial Community live as a community. They are not merely a group or an association but a community whose members live in close proximity to each other and interact regularly. The mandated organizations in the parish (Catholic Women's League, Knights of Columbus, Legion of Mary, etc.) and renewal movements (Couples For Christ, Neo-Catechumenate, El Shaddai, etc.) are not considered Basic Ecclesial Communities because these are specialized groups with a specific orientation.[41]

A Virtuous Community

A formation program centered on the environment and based on the virtues can be designed to help the Basic Ecclesial Community become a virtuous community.[42] Becoming prudent, just, courageous, and moderate while grounded in faith, hope, and love of God and

[40] PCP II, 138.

[41] PCP II, 138.

[42] This author designed a sample parish formation program titled "Basic Ecclesial Community Formation Program for a Sustainable Community." A copy is available at http://bit.ly/BECFORMATIONPROG. The author may also be reached at ababor@lst.edu.

all that exists in the ecosystem ensures the sustainability of our common home.

Living Prudently

The virtue of prudence that the Basic Ecclesial Community cultivates as a habit can help each member discern how to respond appropriately to the environmental crisis. They come to know the facts and choose the means of acting in light of the social teachings of the Church. The principle of subsidiarity is very relevant in this regard. The Basic Ecclesial Community assumes responsibility for the care of all, and everyone can participate in the communal decision-making.

Individually and as a community, the members will use available sources of information on possible strategies for action to form a sound judgment regarding the best means for stopping or at least minimizing environmental degradation. In forming a sound judgment, the members can discern how the needs of individual members and the community can be met without damaging the environment. The members will recognize that environmental balance is essential for the well-being of all that exists in the ecosystem.

By considering sustainability, the members become morally conscientious about using the resources of the environment responsibly, considering not only their individual needs but also the needs of others in the community and the next generation. As prudent members of the Basic Ecclesial Community, they exercise their foresight in discerning the appropriate means for safeguarding the common good to provide for the necessities of life that will sustain the environment. As prudent human beings, they do not see a dichotomy between themselves and the environment, their economic and social concerns, and the spiritual and moral aspects of their lives because their practice of the virtue of prudence allows them to reach the level of wholeness with one another and interconnectedness with the environment. They understand their proper place in the whole web of life.

The prudent members of the Basic Ecclesial Community know that their destiny is connected with the fate of other species. They

become deeply engrossed in their faith that it is God, not humankind, who owns the earth. They do their part, therefore, to minimize carbon emissions by using alternative means of transport such as biking. They plant trees to reforest areas of the country affected by logging. They shield water resources from contamination. They network with other environmental groups to save the coral reefs. They protect the remaining forests and lands from mining. They protest against systemic corruption. They share resources especially with the marginalized members of the community and find ways to alleviate poverty by providing means of stable livelihood.

Living Justly

As members of the Basic Ecclesial Community, the individual and the community live justly because they know the common good is at stake not only for the present generation but also for the next ones. As people who cultivate and practice the moral virtue of justice, they know that the poor and the minorities are more vulnerable to catastrophes such as flooding, landslides due to deforestation, pollutants, toxicants, and hazardous materials due to industrial wastes, rising seawater levels due to climate change, and other devastating human-made calamities. As they strive to promote the common good, they are committed to protesting against environmental and social injustice.

The members of the Basic Ecclesial Community who live justly are not engaged solely in the debate on environmental policies or technological intervention per se but also in nurturing the sense of the sacred for which an incessant preoccupation with economic growth and development is causing a lot of disequilibrium. Forests, water resources, coral reefs, and mineral resources are held in common to be shared not only by those who have power and influence in Philippine society. The overuse and abuse of natural resources are to be avoided, and regulations must be established to prevent manipulation by those in power.

Living in a just way, the members of the Basic Ecclesial Community treat each other fairly. As just people, they will demand compensation for the environmental damage in contaminated areas where toxic

wastes, for instance, from mining, have destroyed land and water. They will commit not to harm the health and well-being of all. In addition, they will require the cleanup of areas that cause injury to the vulnerable and the powerless. They will become channels for those whose voices cannot be heard, like the Filipino minorities, the poor, and the different species facing extinction.

Being just, the individual and the community will work toward personal and communal flourishing. They will actively participate in God's ongoing creation—beginning with small and communal choices—to build a more just world. They see all people and different species in the environment as members of God's family. They strive to achieve God's vision of harmony and sustainability, of a right relationship with each other and the environment, by giving everyone his or her due, treating each one fairly, and treating them as they really are—God's creation with intrinsic value. Their practice of the moral virtue of justice ensures that all human beings in the present and future will be able to sustain themselves economically, morally, spiritually, socially, and culturally as they aim for the fullness of life in God.

Living Steadfastly

The Basic Ecclesial Community members will become steadfast and courageous in resisting the lures of the excessive desire for luxury and the "throwaway culture"[43] of the present time. They are morally convinced that it is wrong to acquire disproportionate material wealth while others are destitute. By being prudent, they do not waste the natural resources of the environment. They consciously strive to integrate their faith and daily life in solidarity with one another.

In persevering to seek the common good, they maintain a courageous stance even when it is unpopular. Even if their protest seems fruitless against environmental injustice, where the poor suffer

[43] Francis uses the phrase "use and throw away" and its meaning in his discussion on the human roots of the ecological crisis. See Francis, *Laudato Si'*, no. 123.

most of the effects of environmental degradation, they persevere quietly and confidently to fight for what is right.

Fortitude or courage is what one lives out in the face of threats and uncertainty. It takes the moral virtue of fortitude to remain strong when one is threatened. It takes fortitude to avoid irrational actions when one is provoked by anger or panic. By their habitual practice of fortitude, the community members are sustained to persevere through difficult times. Since the Basic Ecclesial Community regularly gathers around the Eucharist and shares the word of God (through *"Bibliarasal"—Biblia at Dasal* or *Bible and Prayer*), they do not falter and they remain resolute—even if their actions can put them in uncertain situations—because their moral conviction is sustained by their spiritual life.

The members of the Basic Ecclesial Community can learn from the examples of Filipinos who have sacrificed their lives for the cause of the environment and for the good of others. They can learn from the Filipino environmental martyrs who, in their commitment to protect the planet, have been killed and eliminated, allegedly by plunderers of the environment.[44]

Being steadfast in their moral conviction, however, the community members avoid making harsh judgments or uncontrolled anger. They are strengthened by their use of prudent decision-making to live steadfastly for communal and environmental sustainability.

Living Moderately

In the practice of living the moral virtue of temperance, members of the Basic Ecclesial Community become modest in their use of the

[44] Human Rights Watch in the Philippines has documented a number of cases from 2011 up to the present. The victims were critics of mining and energy projects who were killed allegedly by paramilitary forces directed by the military. They were very active in opposing mining and energy operations which they said threatened the environment and would displace tribal communities from their land. See Human Rights Watch, "Philippines: Killings of Environment Advocates Unpunished" (New York: 2012), available at https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/07/18/philippines-killings-environment-advocates-unpunished.

resources of the planet. They develop the ability to control their wants and shun the vice of excessive consumerism. They acquire a sharpened moral consciousness to distinguish needs from wants. They know that the material things parodied as needs by the media lead to undue waste which has environmentally destructive consequences.

Practicing the moral virtue of temperance makes the individual and the community *selfless* rather than *selfish*. By living moderately, the Basic Ecclesial Community members go beyond mere self-preservation; they practice solidarity with one another in the spirit of the common good.

As pointed out by Aquinas, the way to cultivate and practice the moral virtue of temperance is by paying careful attention to natural desires, to consume what we need and not what we want. St. Thomas was emphatic in saying that the virtue of temperance "takes the needs of this life as the rule governing the pleasurable things one uses; namely that one should use them insofar as the needs of this life require their use."[45] As members of the Basic Ecclesial Community, the individual and the community will know how to temper their wants in relation to the needs of others in the community.

Living moderately, the Basic Ecclesial Community members follow the *Sapat* Principles:[46]

1. *Sapat na ang pagkasira ng kalikasan* (There has been enough destruction of the environment).
2. *Sapat lamang ang dapat kunin mula sa kalikasan* (Take from nature only that which is enough).
3. *Sapat lamang ang dapat kanin at bilhin* (Eat and buy only what is enough and needed).

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[45] ST II-II, Q. 142, a. 6.

[46] The SAPAT Principles have become a popular slogan among environmentalists in the Philippines. The origin of the concept can be traced to the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, a sisters' congregation with a strong environmental advocacy in their apostolate. See http://www.svdcuria.org/public/jpic/jpichb/jpichben/section1.htm (accessed January 14, 2023).

4. *Dapat mayroon ang bawat isa ng sapat sa kanyang mga pangangailangan upang mabuhay nang malusog at may dangal* (Each person must have enough to sustain a healthy and dignified life).

Living as Good Stewards with Faith, Hope, and Charity

Infused by God with the virtues of faith, hope, and charity, the members of the Basic Ecclesial Community nurture the sense of the sacred by being good stewards to one another and to non-human species. The community members know that it is their moral responsibility to care for one another and the environment as God loves and cares for them. They understand that this moral responsibility does not grant them the right to dominate other human beings and the environment in a way that is incongruous with God's own manner of governance.

Since the first moment of creation, God has provided for the needs of God's creatures and likewise ordered all of creation for their sustainability. Hence, the individual's and community's moral responsibility for creation must be exercised in accordance with God's vision. The dominion referred to in Gen. 1:26,

> And God said, "Let us make [the human person] in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth"

means responsible *stewardship*. Such stewardship must uphold the common good of all, respecting the intrinsic value and purpose that every creature possesses. If the individual and the community in the Basic Ecclesial Community exercise dominion in ways that destroy the environment, such as contributing to the emission of carbon dioxide, deforestation, irresponsible mining, and the destruction of coral reefs or wasting water resources or committing corruption, such actions constitute an offense against God's original plan for creation.

In exercising responsible stewardship, the individual and the community are committed to being faithful in doing what God intends for the good of the human community and of other species in the environment. The United States Catholic Conference, in their pastoral statement, rightly pointed out that "as faithful stewards, fullness of life comes from living responsibly within God's creation."[47]

Good stewards do not view creation as something to be abused for the ceaseless pursuit of economic growth and material development. The Basic Ecclesial Community regards God's creation as *oikos*,[48] our home that demands care. As the United States Catholic Conference explained, "human beings bear a unique responsibility before God: to safeguard the created world and by their creative labor should even enhance it."[49]

As rational beings endowed with the creative capacity to participate in God's continuing creative power over the environment, the members of the Basic Ecclesial Community will protect all forms of life on Earth and, at the same time, enhance them in a responsible manner. In this regard, technology should be at the service of responsible stewardship. The members of the Basic Ecclesial Community will not use technology to pursue relentless economic growth by cutting

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[47] United States Catholic Conference, *Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching* (November 14, 1991), III-A.

[48] First used by Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919), the term *ecology* is derived from the Greek *oikos* which means "house" or "place" to live in. Drawing from the literal meaning and inspired by its holistic interpretation, the term has now come to be used with greater profoundness and broadness. Eugene Odum, in his *Fundamentals of Ecology*, describes ecology as the study of organisms "at home" in their interrelatedness. He further notes that the term *ecology* is applied today not only to nature but also to social and cultural attitudes. "Whatever common in these understandings of *ecology*," Odum adds, "is their emphasis on the interconnectedness of the various elements that comprise the world as a whole" (see E. Odum, *Fundamentals of Ecology* 3rd ed. [Philadelphia: Saunders College, 1971], 3).

[49] United States Catholic Conference, *Renewing the Earth*, III-A.

down more trees, destroying land and forests in search of minerals, polluting rivers and seas, and emitting more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. They know that they have the power, intelligence, and moral responsibility not to satisfy their greed and selfishness but to nurture and help order the world in accordance with God's plan.[50]

The sense of the sacred by which the Basic Ecclesial Community nurtures communal and environmental sustainability will be sustained by their life of prayer and meditation. Making time for communion with God will offer a way for the individual and the community to slow down the incessant activity of modern lifestyles and awaken the profound connection between the individual, community, and environment with God.[51] The members know that integrating contemplative and ritual practices with environmental activism sustains and deepens their commitment to healing the broken relationship with one another and the environment.[52] They always find strength in their moral commitment to communal and environmental sustainability, for example, by praying constantly the Canticle of St. Francis of Assisi.[53]

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[50] See T. Derr, *Ecology and Human Need* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 122–126.

[51] K. Wilber, *The Marriage of Sense and Soul* (New York: Random House, 1998), 49–52.

[52] Wilber, *The Marriage of Sense and Soul*, 49–52.

[53] E. Armstrong says that the very structure of the Canticle reveals the search for and encounter with overall unity. The number seven in the verses shows the emergence of this deep structure; it is made up of three and four, the greatest symbols of totality and unity. Vertical and horizontal lines cross in the hymn; together, they form a well-known symbol of cosmic totality. The first moment goes upward toward God: *Most high, all-powerful, all good, Lord!* That is the search for transcendence. But then St. Francis becomes aware that he is not succeeding in singing to God alone. He turns to the horizontal dimension where all creatures are, for they speak of God. He opens the horizontal and universal dimensions of kinship. He sings to creatures that bear the likeness of God. It means that if we cannot speak of God, we can speak to creatures who are marked by the sacramentality of God's presence. See E. Armstrong, *Saint Francis, Nature Mystic: The Derivation and Significance of the Nature Stories in the Franciscan Legend* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 152–158.

A Brief Excursus

One possible criticism against the paradigm of a virtuous community for environmental sustainability is that its framework is obviously anthropocentric. Anthropocentrism is understood as the fundamental emphasis on the primacy of the human species over non-human ones in terms of significance, value, and worth. Human beings tend to assume that everything exists in the ecosystem for human purpose. In this view, *homo sapiens* supposedly holds the central position in the planet's web of life.

Anthropocentrism has long been a problematic notion. It not only established a dualism of human and non-human species but also insisted that it is God's will that the human being exploits nature for his/her proper ends. The medieval historian Lynn White, Jr. accused Christianity, especially in its Western form, of being the most anthropocentric religion the world had ever seen. He pointed out that it had desacralized nature, encouraged its exploitation, and promoted a worldview in which humans are superior to and in charge of the rest of nature.[54]

In *Laudato Si'*, Francis points explicitly to anthropocentrism, especially in its modern form, as the culprit at the root of the complexity of environmental degradation:

> Modern anthropocentrism has paradoxically ended up prizing technical thought over reality, since "the technological mind sees nature as an insensate order, as a cold body of facts, as a mere 'given,' as an object of utility, as raw material to be hammered into useful shape; it views the cosmos similarly as a mere 'space' into which objects can be thrown with complete indifference."[55]

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[54] See L. White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," reprinted in D. Van De Veer & C. Pierce, eds., *The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1994), 45–51.

[55] Francis, *Laudato Si'*, no. 115.

A distinction is necessary for this discourse—while the concept of anthropocentrism per se is morally neutral, its expression can be either good or bad, and it is the latter that has unmistakably been the dominant model of the relationship between the human and non-human throughout history. The appalling consequence of this has been the objectification/abuse of non-human species. Indeed, a lot of ecosystem disharmony and imbalance has been caused by this basic orientation toward the exploitation and manipulation of nature for the benefit of the human species.

Good anthropocentrism is necessary for turning the ecological crisis around. It is based on the life and practice of the virtues. A virtuous individual and community promote nurturance of the planet, not its destruction. If the human species has been the cause of the environmental crisis, it also has the capacity to find solutions for it by living virtuously. Other species by their nature have no faculty to effect change willfully and reasonably. The deer in the forest does not know why the forest is gone; the human species knows that irresponsible logging, mining, or other destructive human activities are to blame. The deer does not know how to bring the forest back; the human species knows that the forest can be recovered by planting trees. While this may appear to be a simplistic illustration, it drives home the point that it is the human species that has the capacity to correct what is wrong.

A much deeper understanding of good anthropocentrism lies in the claim that there is intrinsic value in all that exists in the ecosystem. Drawing on the fundamental premise that everything in this planet has intrinsic value emanating from God, the paradigm of a virtuous community argues that the flourishing of non-human species and that of human beings are fundamentally intertwined in a non-separable relationship.

The intrinsic value of the environment has its origin from God—"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1); "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Ps. 24:1). As an act of pure love, God created the world and God "founded the earth to endure" (Ps. 119:90–91). After God's creation of the earth, God gave human beings responsibility over

creation: "Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, over the cattle, and over all the earth" (Gen. 1:26). Human beings are stewards of creation which has intrinsic value because God is its owner.

It is this author's view, however, that the notion of intrinsic value has to be understood in the context of interdependence and interconnectedness. Everything finds its teleological purpose in the cycle of life. Recognizing intrinsic value does not negate the existential cycle. All that God has created has a purpose in sustaining each species' subsistence—the food cycle is a case in point. Nevertheless, it is all in accord with sustainability. The vice of excessive consumption that results in environmental degradation is contrary to the principles of intrinsic value and balance. It is the symptom of a dysfunctional anthropocentrism.

Conclusion

The impact of human actions on the environment depends on the perspective that defines the relationship between the human community and the environment. A virtuous community focused on the habitual practice of the virtues sustains the environment because when human beings treat each other prudently, justly, steadfastly, and moderately with faith, hope and charity, they act toward non-human species in the same manner.

In a virtuous community, human actions are not motivated by selfish desires but by the concern to care for one another in our common home. We need to have a shift of paradigm—from a dysfunctional anthropocentrism concerned with exploiting the world's resources to a good anthropocentrism that promotes the sustainability of the planet.

The argument in this conversation about environmental sustainability is framed within the concept of the Christian virtues. The habitual practice of the virtues is the moral expression of our love of God and neighbor (Mk. 12:30–31), of living out God's vision of right relationship based on communion with all of God's creation

on this planet. In doing so, we may be able to recover our "attitude of wonder" as Francis explains it.[56] Quoting Benedict XVI, Francis says we have to live a life "of contemplation, of listening to creation" and of being able again to interpret "the rhythm [within it] of the love-story between God and [the human person]."[57]

The Basic Ecclesial Community was used as a case in point to show that a virtuous community is a possible paradigm for environmental sustainability. The members of the Basic Ecclesial Community will become examples of virtuous living for a sustainable planet, our common home. We are reminded of the popular saying—that if we want to change the world, we have to start with ourselves. We should not forget, however, that living a virtuous life for environmental sustainability is a process, one that does not happen overnight. It is a long route because the practice of the virtues has to become habitual; in fact, it is a lifelong undertaking. We may have difficulties, but at least we resolve to go on, virtuously, so that "All May Be One" (Jn. 17:21).

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[56] Francis, *Laudato Si'*, no. 11.

[57] Francis, Message for the General Audience (June 5, 2013), available at https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130605_udienza-generale.html (accessed March 7, 2023).

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A REFRAMED CONSISTENT ETHIC OF LIFE ON NUCLEAR ENERGY

Exploring the Moral Implications of the Revival of the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant

Archie R. Magarao, Sch. P.

Abstract. This paper critically examines the moral implications of reviving the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP) of the Philippines under the lens of the Reframed Consistent Ethic of Life (RCEL). Despite the economic benefits perceived by the Philippine government, the potential risk posed by nuclear waste raises concerns about the safety and degradation of affected life forms, both human and non-human. In this relation, the paper presents the pros and cons of nuclear energy by stressing the risks and threats to life it carries. It also questions the adequacy of the government's plan for nuclear waste disposal given the geopolitical and security issues involved. With these, the paper recommends the following moral perspectives, namely, redefining our understanding of God's presence in creation, reframing our notion of the sanctity of life, and fighting against our human greed. Finally, the paper contends that we have the moral obligation to safeguard all lives, both human and non-human. This is our worship toward the God of life, our accountability to future generations, our sustaining of our only common home, and our solidarity for the common good of all that exists.

Keywords. Bataan Nuclear Power Plant; nuclear energy; morality; ecology; reframed consistent ethics of life; creation

In light of the Philippine government's plans to revive the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP),[1] a growing concern regarding the harmful effects of nuclear waste for both humans and the environment is in the loop. Some science organizations and nationalist scientists have publicly opposed the BNPP's reopening, saying that its use poses dangers to human safety and the environment.[2] The fear of replicating in the Philippines the horrors of the infamous nuclear accidents at Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, and, recently, Fukushima was also raised in opposition to the rehabilitation of the nuclear plant.[3] On the other hand, however, perceived economic and national benefits tag along with the plan of reviving the BNPP. The country's recurring energy shortage will be resolved, opines the government, by the utility of nuclear energy. With this in mind, the previous administration under President Rodrigo Duterte had high hopes for nuclear energy addressing the increasing energy demands of the country in its release of Executive Order (EO) No. 164 entitled "Adopting a National Position for a Nuclear Energy Program, and for other Purposes."[4] Given EO 164, some government officials had voiced their support for the administration's action toward energy security given the negative

[1] E. Dela Cruz, "Philippines Approves Revival of Nuclear Power to Help Replace Coal," *Reuters* (March 3, 2022), available at https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/duterte-approves-inclusion-nuclear-power-philippine-energy-mix-2022-03-03/ (accessed October 21, 2022).

[2] J. Mangaluz, "Science Advocates Renew Call Against Bataan Nuclear Power Plant Revival," *Inquirer.net* (September 22, 2022), available at https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1668766/science-advocates-renew-call-against-bataan-nuclear-power-plant-revival (accessed October 21, 2022).

[3] B. Pinlac, "Anti-nuclear Power Group Opposes Possible Rehab of Bataan Plant," *Inquirer.net* (May 25, 2022), available at https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1602531/anti-nuclear-power-group-opposes-possible-rehab-of-bataan-plant#ixzz7fb1z6l93 (accessed October 21, 2022).

[4] Office of the President of the Philippines, *Executive Order No. 164: Adopting a National Position for a Nuclear Energy Program, and for Other Purposes*, available at https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2022/02/28/executive-order-no-164-s-2022/.

impact of rising oil prices due to the Ukraine-Russian war.[5] The revival of the nuclear power plant is equally viewed as a boost to the country's economy and businesses which are highly reliant on electricity. Moreover, it can also serve as a deterrent for future power outages.

The Reframed Consistent Ethic of Life (RCEL) is a relevant moral perspective in the continuing conversation regarding the reopening of the BNPP. Given its more inclusive moral vision, it can serve as the basis of moral decisions concerning the rehabilitation of the nuclear plant. The RCEL's main thrust in this article gravitates toward the valuation of the sanctity of all forms of life and the care of our "common home."[6] Therefore, the article aims to provide an exposition concerning the moral grounds for the sanctity of all forms of life vis-à-vis our human obligation to care for all of God's creation, our common home. This moral principle will then be used as a moral lens concerning the BNPP (in particular) and nuclear energy utility (in general), most especially in the issue of generated nuclear waste.

This article first explores the pros and cons of nuclear energy alongside competing opinions regarding the reopening of the BNPP. However, the survey is not intentionally exhaustive given that the major aim of this article is to present not the advantages and disadvantages of nuclear power but rather the moral grounds of nuclear waste generation and its impact on human and non-human lives. Second, it will discuss the RCEL's moral stance on the acceptability of reviving the BNPP. Finally, the article concludes with three moral proposals vis-à-vis the BNPP.

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[5] L. Lectura, "Nuke Can Do," *BusinessMirror* (March 5, 2022), available at https://businessmirror.com.ph/2022/03/05/nuke-can-do/ (accessed October 21, 2022).

[6] Francis, *Laudato Si'*, no. 1, available at https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html (accessed October 28, 2022).

The Pros and Cons of Nuclear Energy: A Brief Survey

Nuclear energy has been dubbed a low-carbon emission energy source.[7] Its proponents assert that it is the solution to the world's high carbon emission levels. They are convinced that it can positively mitigate currently unfavorable climate change. Moreover, nuclear power plants (NPPs) produce energy with less expense compared to coal-powered plants and the burning of biomasses.[8] Compared to other power sources and producers, nuclear power plants are also considered to be the most stable in terms of generating power.[9] They likewise operate with low costs, are a dependable energy source, and have a stable base load, low pollution output, adequate fuel availability, and a high energy density.[10] To the joy of many Filipinos, nuclear power plants can lower the price of electricity to ₱2 per kilowatt hour from current electricity costs of ₱6 per kilowatt hour.[11] The reduction of power outages in the country is an added benefit of employing nuclear power, and a consistent and lower-priced power supply can predictably

[7] M. Rosen & I. Dincer, "Nuclear Energy as a Component of Sustainable Energy Systems," *International Journal of Low-Carbon Technologies* 2:2 (2007): 109–125, here at 100.

[8] A. Ong, Y. Prasetyo, J. Salazar, J. Erfe, A. Abella, M. Young, T. Chuenyindee, R. Nadlifatin, & A. Redi, "Investigating the Acceptance of the Reopening Bataan Nuclear Power Plant: Integrating Protection Motivation Theory and Extended Theory of Planned Behavior," *Nuclear Engineering and Technology* 54:3 (2022): 1115–1125, here at 1115.

[9] J. Yap, "Towards a Balanced Assessment of the Viability of Nuclear Energy in the Philippines," *Journal of Environmental Science and Management* 24:2 (December 2021): 17–29, here at 23.

[10] Yap, "Towards a Balanced Assessment of the Viability of Nuclear Energy in the Philippines," 23–25.

[11] J. Alano, "The Pros and Cons of Reopening the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant," *Power Philippines* (September 19, 2016), available at https://powerphilippines.com/pros-cons-reopening-bataan-nuclear-power-plant/ (accessed November 18, 2022).

lead to the lowering of prices of basic goods, commodities, and services that are reliant on electricity. It can open more technological progress in the country such as in education (especially given the high demand for hybrid educational learning modes), infrastructure (electricity-dependent machines and computerized equipment), and business (given that many businesses nowadays are migrating online). The IT sector, BPO companies (where many Filipinos work), schools, hospitals, government offices, supermarkets, households, etc. will all reap the economic benefits and convenience of nuclear power. Additional employment opportunities may be available as well.[12] These are but some of the advantages of having a nuclear power plant in the country, making the revival of the BNPP something that can feasibly improve the quality of life of most Filipinos.

As promising as these advantages of nuclear energy are, it has its own undeniable and inevitable dark side. First, it is expensive to build and run a nuclear power plant. The inception of the BNPP, for one, cost the Philippine government $1.9 billion.[13] It left the country with $2.3 billion worth of debt that was finally paid off in 2007.[14] Taxpayers kept paying, aware or unaware, the interest of over ₱1 billion until 2008 while the National Power Corporation paid ₱40 million for its annual upkeep.[15] Now, with the government's plan of rehabilitating the BNPP, additional costs and expenditures are foreseeable. Together with the four years needed to train operators for its commissioning, the BNPP's rehabilitation will cost another $1 billion,[16] which will become yet another debt to be shouldered by Filipinos.

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[12] Ong et al., "Investigating the Acceptance of the Reopening Bataan Nuclear Power Plant," 1123.

[13] World Nuclear Association, *Nuclear Power in the Philippines* (March 2022), available at https://bit.ly/46CHVO6 (accessed November 18, 2022).

[14] Alano, "The Pros and Cons of Reopening the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant."

[15] T. Santos, "Bishops Adamant: No to Nuclear Power," *Inquirer.net* (October 12, 2014), available at https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/644258/bishops-adamant-no-to-nuclear-power (accessed November 18, 2022).

[16] Alano, "The Pros and Cons of Reopening the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant."

Second, nuclear accidents such as those at Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, and, recently, in Fukushima, Japan are foreseeable dangers. Similar nuclear crises have a high propensity for occurring in the Philippines given the country's susceptibility to natural calamities. Third, nuclear power plants produce radioactive wastes which are very harmful to both human and non-human lives. Fourth, nuclear power plants pose security threats as these are prime targets for terrorism. Lastly, these plants have a limited fuel supply—uranium and thorium, which fuel nuclear power plants, are finite natural resources. Once these resources are consumed, nuclear power plants can no longer run. Nuclear power can only be a temporary rather than permanent source of energy.[17]

The BNPP is also located inside a geological danger zone—it is within eight kilometers of Mt. Natib volcano and within 40 kilometers of three geologic faults.[18] An earthquake or the eruption of Mt. Natib could result in a nuclear meltdown like that of Fukushima in Japan. However, the nuclear wastes that all nuclear power plants produce comprise the biggest problem confronting the BNPP. Authorities around the world continue to face the great challenge of keeping nuclear waste in perpetual safety to avoid contaminating the planet. Nuclear waste has been proven to be highly radioactive and requires safe storage for about one million years before it fully decays.[19] To elaborate further:

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[17] Yap, "Towards a Balanced Assessment of the Viability of Nuclear Energy in the Philippines," 25.

[18] B. Dumaine, "The $2.2 Billion Nuclear Fiasco," *Fortune* (September 1, 1986), as cited by Yap, "Towards a Balanced Assessment of the Viability of Nuclear Energy in the Philippines," 20.

[19] C. Ro, "The Staggering Timescales of Nuclear Waste Disposal," *Forbes* (November 26, 2019), available at https://www.forbes.com/sites/christinero/2019/11/26/the-staggering-timescales-of-nuclear-waste-disposal (accessed November 21, 2022); International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA], *Getting to the Core of Radioactive Waste: Managing the By-products of Nuclear Technologies to Protect People and the Environment*, 4, available at https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/18/10/radioactivewaste.pdf (accessed November 21, 2022).

> High level waste consists mostly of spent fuel from reactors. Some countries also reprocess spent fuel, which gives rise to additional types of high level waste. All of this high level waste and spent fuel, when declared as waste, poses a sufficiently high enough radiological risk that a high degree of isolation from the biosphere is required for a long period of time.…[20]

Radioactive nuclear waste will outlive us. Relative safety from the hazards of nuclear waste is not assured for upcoming generations—while we might be safe now from nuclear waste radiation, those coming after us may not necessarily be. Our rigorous calculations for safety are never infallible. Hence, we cannot fully assure ourselves against future nuclear waste contamination. Nuclear waste does not promise us a safe future.

It is very unfortunate to know that all countries using nuclear power lack a "sustainable and safe solution for managing the vast volumes of nuclear waste."[21] This big amount of highly radioactive nuclear waste can definitively put the entire planet in great danger not just for the peoples of today but also those of tomorrow. As such, the issue of nuclear waste disposal in relation to the utility of nuclear power involves intergenerational justice. When the problem of nuclear waste is not fully resolved, we are placing our species and our common home on the verge of extinction. Thus, it is apt to ask: Do the short-term benefits of nuclear energy outweigh the long-term risks it brings to all?

Reframed Consistent Ethic of Life: Moral Implications vis-à-vis the BNPP

Not only the country's economy and energy requirements but also, and more importantly, human and non-human lives are at stake in the revival of the mothballed BNPP. The defense of the sanctity of all forms of life is paramount vis-à-vis the BNPP. On this note, the

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[20] IAEA, *Getting to the Core of Radioactive Waste*, 3.

[21] P. Roche, B. Thuillier, B. Laponche, M. Goldstick, J. Swahn, H. Ban, & R. Alvarez, *The Global Crisis of Nuclear Waste* (France: Greenpeace, 2018), 7.

RCEL reminds us that a morally consistent demand for the respect and protection of human lives involves equal respect for and protection of non-human lives.[22] All forms of life and the right to life must be defended.[23] As such, we are morally justified in saying "no" to the commissioning of the BNPP in particular given the life-threatening, long-term risks of nuclear power plants. The precautionary principle counsels that "if there is greater proof that an activity does more harm than good, it must be prevented."[24] The dangers the BNPP poses to life overshadow its benefits. It is better to be safe than sorry; our moral stand must be on the side of safety. All developments must consider the safety of both humans and non-humans alike. In this case, governmental projects like the BNPP's reopening must give foremost consideration toward the protection of life through the prioritization of public safety. Developments, particularly human ones, must not be oblivious to this moral obligation. On this note, *Laudato Si'* further teaches that

> authentic human development has a moral character. It presumes full respect for the human person, but it must also be concerned for the world around us and "take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system." Accordingly, our human ability to transform reality must proceed in line with God's original gift of all that is.[25]

Substantial threats to life and human rights violations become blatant in activities ranging from uranium mining to nuclear waste disposal. For instance, one report says that miners in Nigeria who

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[22] See A. Aseneta, "The Consistent Ethic of Life of Joseph Cardinal Bernardin and the Crisis of Our Common Home," *Landas* 33:1 (2019): 37–62 for further and deeper discussion.

[23] J. Bernardin, "A Consistent Ethic of Life: Continuing the Dialogue," *The Priest* 40 (June 1984): 17.

[24] F. Cheever & C. Campbell-Mohn, "Principles of Environmental Law," *Britannica*, available at https://www.britannica.com/topic/environmental-law/Principles-of-environmental-law (accessed November 27, 2022).

[25] Francis, *Laudato Si',* no. 5.

were exposed to highly radioactive ores were paid only $2 a day.[26] Moreover, aside from being underpaid, these miners were placed in a life-threatening situation—they contracted bone and lung cancer due to their exposure, even at low concentrations, to these highly radioactive materials. The problem is further aggravated with uranium milling where the waste product of ore processing is "normally dumped as sludge in special ponds or piles, where they are abandoned and uncovered." The sludge reportedly contains about 85% of the ore's original radiation along with other heavy metals and toxic contaminants that become susceptible to dispersion throughout the environment.[27] Climactic conditions such as rain, wind, and floods spread these toxic contaminants to bodies of water and the surrounding air and soil, risking not only human lives but the environment as well by poisoning the local flora and fauna. In addition, "seepage from tailings piles is another major hazard posing a risk of contamination to ground and surface water." There are also the clouds of dust from controlled explosions at the open pit mines which carry radioactive gas toward towns proximate to the mines.[28] Radioactive contamination definitively is a surefire threat to both the quality of life and life per se. Such human-induced environmental pollution is a sin.[29] It is an assault on life and an insult to God, the Creator.[30]

Alongside the contamination of the environment and health problems caused by the mining of nuclear fuel near towns, there are the resulting birth defects, congenital illnesses, infertility, miscarriages, and pre-mature deliveries.[31] These negative effects on human populations

[26] Roche et al., *The Global Crisis of Nuclear Waste*, 20.

[27] Roche et al., *The Global Crisis of Nuclear Waste*, 18.

[28] Roche et al., *The Global Crisis of Nuclear Waste*, 19.

[29] An intimation of Pope Francis's notion that it is a sin to contaminate the earth's waters as these are indispensable in supporting all life forms (*Laudato Si'*, nos. 8 & 28).

[30] Francis, *Laudato Si'*, nos. 8 & 28.

[31] Roche et al., *The Global Crisis of Nuclear Waste*, 20.

near the mines must also have analogous, if not equal, consequences for animals and plants. Needless to say, corporate greed and the dismissal of human and environmental safety are nameable culprits of this sad condition—all for the sake of attaining economic gains from a nuclear power source. All these moral violations toward life will come along with the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant when it is commissioned.

The disrespect for the sanctity of all forms of life, of God's creation, climaxes with nuclear waste—in its disposal and storage. By the fact that nuclear waste will outlive us, it is clear that nuclear power plants are a definitive threat to all forms of life from their inception down to waste disposal. The BNPP will be no exception the moment it operates. Therefore, given that no country has yet devised a failsafe storage and disposal system for high-level nuclear waste, we risk exposing the Philippines (in the case of the BNPP) or the entire planet to deadly radioactive contamination. The Philippines' climatic conditions, such as frequent typhoons, can also aggravate contamination or high-level nuclear waste leaks by spreading these across a much wider area. Are we ready for such a disaster?

Besides the revival of the BNPP, do the authorities have a concrete and failsafe plan for nuclear waste disposal? At the time of the writing of this paper, the suggestion from the Philippine Nuclear Research Institute was to place the BNPP's nuclear waste on Pag-asa Island in the West Philippine Sea. However, this suggestion was judged as irresponsible and problematic.[32] It violates guidelines from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which mandate that

> nuclear waste disposal areas should be located away from populated or ecologically sensitive areas; should be in geologically stable areas safe from risks from earthquakes, flooding, or other hazards; should be located in areas where the risk to populations from transporting the waste from the nuclear facilities is minimized as much as possible; and should be in locations where site security can be easily maintained.[33]

[32] "Keep Nuclear Waste Out of WPS," *The Manila Times* (June 15, 2022), available at https://www.manilatimes.net/2022/06/15/opinion/editorial/keep-nuclear-waste-out-of-wps/1847443 (accessed November 28, 2022).

[33] "Keep Nuclear Waste Out of WPS."

Transporting nuclear waste alone poses dangers as accidents during transport can lead to the contamination of the West Philippine Sea and all life forms therein. The geopolitical contest between China and the Philippines over the territory suggests a heightened security problem. Once the BNPP is revived and the Pag-asa Island nuclear waste storage facility opens, will China not threaten, on the basis of geo-political contestation, our government or, to a greater extent, our sovereignty by holding the storage facility hostage? Moreover, even if the authorities find a much better and safer repository for nuclear waste, are we ready for comparable or greater contamination like that of the Hanford nuclear waste dump site in the United States?[34] Rodolfo notes that

> waste disposal is the very worst, unsolvable problem [of] nuclear weapons and power plants! People must understand that should the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP) be activated, its wastes will be impossible to get rid of, and will permanently harm the environment.[35]

Given the Philippines' inefficiencies in managing household wastes and landfills, we cannot be certain that nuclear waste will be managed well. Indeed, it appears that Philippine authorities do not have the capacity to manage nuclear waste effectively. Let us take note of the technologically advanced nuclear power plant in Fukushima, Japan. Despite their safety precautions and advancements in technology, they still failed to stop the nuclear meltdown and the spread of nuclear radiation. The event displaced millions of people from their homes, never again to return, exposed persons to deadly nuclear radiation, and poisoned the environment.[36] Our authorities must be wise enough to learn from this very disastrous event. How well-equipped and prepared

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[34] K. Rodolfo, "The Hanford Site: Where Nuclear Pollution Began and Still Reigns," *Rappler* (April 20, 2022), available at https://www.rappler.com/voices/thought-leaders/opinion-hanford-site-where-nuclear-pollution-began-still-reigns/ (accessed November 28, 2022).

[35] Rodolfo, "The Hanford Site: Where Nuclear Pollution Began and Still Reigns."

[36] See A. Sugimoto, S. Krull, S. Nomura, T. Morita, & M. Tsubokura, "The Voice of the Most Vulnerable: Lessons from the Nuclear Crisis in

are our national and local governments if such things happen in our country? How competent will authorities be when high levels of radiation wreak havoc on nearby areas proximate to the BNPP? How long can our government keep all life forms within the nuclear waste repository safe from being contaminated? Or, perhaps, the better question is this: do we have a nuclear waste repository that is better off than that of Fukushima to assure us of public and environmental safety? On this note, we must consider that "irreducible uncertainties exist in even the most rigorous calculations."[37] The BNPP and nuclear power plants in general, with their high potential for catastrophe, are "just too dangerous to exist, not because we do not want to make them safe, but because, as so much experience has shown, we simply cannot [do so]."[38] What we refuse to learn from history will be repeated for us to learn eventually. We should be wise enough not to let that happen while we still can.

The revival of the BNPP likewise calls for intergenerational justice as the long-lasting lifespan of high-level nuclear waste endangers the lives of upcoming generations. With the BNPP's definitive nuclear waste and accompanying life-threatening repercussions, we are putting the future and lives of our children's children on the brink of extinction instead of keeping them safe. With the dangers of nuclear power plants such as the BNPP, we are doing a grave injustice to future Filipinos. Moreover, the already forever-raped environment (forests and mountains destroyed due to incessant mining) can never fully recover from the further environmental abuse brought by harnessing nuclear energy. We will be leaving upcoming generations of all life forms a devastated environment.

Fukushima, Japan," *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 90:8 (August 1, 2012): 629–630, https://doi.org/10.2471/BLT.11.094474.

[37] J. Downer, "Disowning Fukushima: Managing the Credibility of Nuclear Reliability Assessment in the Wake of Disaster," *Regulation & Governance* 8:3 (July 22, 2013), 17, https://doi.org/10.1111/rego.12029.

[38] Downer, "Disowning Fukushima: Managing the Credibility of Nuclear Reliability Assessment in the Wake of Disaster," 17.

Everything in our common home is interconnected,[39] and what negatively affects our environment inevitably affects us. Such afflictions will be carried down to succeeding human and non-human generations. Indeed, the intergenerational injustice that accompanies the operation of nuclear power plants equally amounts to inflicting injustice toward God. It is an implied refusal to love our God who graciously reveals the God-self by bestowing abundant life in our common home. It is an offense to the life God abundantly gifted creation with. Offending life is tantamount to offending God who so generously gifted creation with life. As God's stewards, ought we not do the same? As stewards of creation, honoring God's graciousness to creation must mean pursuing human development projects that are life-promoting and -defending rather than ventures that are motivated solely by short-sighted economic gains and false human advancement.

Reframed Consistent Ethic of Life: Moral Proposals

Reframing our notion of God's presence. The prospect of reopening the BNPP to address our country's energy requirement must morally consider the theological principle of God's abiding presence in the world (Rom. 1:19). This principle can aid our moral attitude toward our common home apropos of our moral stance for the sanctity of life. W. Berry notes that we need to reconstruct our notion of "God's house."[40] He intimates that there is a need for us to rectify our understanding of God's "presence" in creation. Our notion of God's house (or God's presence) should not be identified exclusively with church buildings or holy places like the city of Jerusalem, the Vatican, pilgrimage sites, etc. It should not be exclusively and limitedly "locational." Rather, it must be inclusive of all that God has made,

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[39] Francis, *Laudato Si'*, no. 70.

[40] W. Berry, "Christianity and the Survival of Creation," *CrossCurrents* 43:2 (1993): 153. In this essay, Berry intimates "house" to God's "presence" regarding God's relationship to the world.

meaning that God's "presencing" should be recognized as omnipresent in *all* of creation—God is in all things. The whole of creation is made by God and is indwelt by God's Spirit (Gen. 1:1–30). When God made everything in creation, God hallowed every single being in it. And, more importantly, *God loves all God has made.*

Our practice of "locationalizing" God can only be suspect in our abuses toward God's creation. Such localization of God's presence has blinded us for many years to the hallowedness of all creatures. It has hindered us from seeing that God abides in farms as much as God dwells in our temples. Thus, when we empty our mountains of uranium and other radioactive substances, we step on our brethren's human dignity and endanger human and non-human lives. All because we fail to recognize God's holy presence in all that there is. We ought to remind ourselves that "creation is nothing less than the manifestation of God's presence in creatures."[41]

Our full recognition of God's holy presence in all creatures informs our moral position regarding the employment of nuclear energy, in general, and the BNPP, in particular. And when we perceive the sanctity of life under this lens, we learn that we have a moral commitment to all that exists. If we thus conceive of development for the Philippines, we need to see development with respect to that divine presence abiding in every single part of our common home. Consequently, we need to be vigilant of and evaluative toward prevailing models of global development that we employ at the service of this country's progress so that these truly serve the common good and render respect to the sanctity of all forms of life.[42] Simply put, reframing our notion of God's presence means understanding that God's self pervades the whole of

[41] P. Sherrard, *Human Image: World Image* (Ipswich, Suffolk, England: Golgonooza Press, 1992), 152.

[42] Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines [CBCP], "An Urgent Call for Ecological Conversion, Hope in the Face of Climate Emergency" (July 16, 2019), available at https://cbcpnews.net/cbcpnews/an-urgent-call-for-ecological-conversion-hope-in-the-face-of-climate-emergency/ (accessed November 25, 2022).

creation. And this "presence" must serve as a moral yardstick in our defense of the sanctity of life against those that jeopardize it, such as the BNPP.

Reframing our notion of the sanctity of life. The Reframed Consistent Ethic of Life reminds us that "protecting and promoting the life and dignity of the human person at every stage and in every circumstance entails safeguarding our common home as this is one of the conditions necessary for upholding and sustaining human life and dignity."[43] Concomitant to our rectified notion of God's presence in creation is our reframed understanding concerning the holiness of life. "Sanctity of life" must not be the exclusive turf of human beings alone. It must extend to non-human lives. God did not sanctify our human species only. God did so equally with the rest of creation. Holiness is not exclusively human. This reframed understanding affirms the inherent value and sanctity of non-human creatures.[44] As a consequence, God's holiness can also be revealed by non-human creatures as much as their lives are hallowed by God.

Our acknowledgment of the holiness of life for all that exists should measure our Christian discipleship. No steward of creation, no true disciple of Christ, can genuinely claim to be such without a sincere acceptance that non-human lives are also sanctified. They, too, possess deep meaning and value.[45] A true Christian disciple has a loving gaze toward all that God has created, and the moral consequence of this is our protection of all lives against the hazards of nuclear power plants. This is our stewardship-in-action, our discipleship-in-flesh. When life is put in great danger, not just today but also tomorrow, with the employment of nuclear power for the sake of short-sighted progress and economic benefits, we are morally compelled to stand and

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[43] Aseneta, "The Consistent Ethic of Life of Joseph Cardinal Bernardin and the Crisis of Our Common Home," 60.

[44] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003), no. 339.

[45] Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 36.

defend it at all costs. Doing so is our moral "enfleshment" of Christ's preaching of the gospel of life (cf. Mk. 3:4; Jn. 10:10).[46]

The activation of the BNPP is in the moral position of threatening life's sanctity. Focusing rather on non-life-threatening sources of energy must be our better moral course of action. The Philippines is rich with renewable energy sources such as sunlight, wind, water, ocean, geothermal, etc.—we only have to harness their power. Moreover, these have already been proven to be effective sources of energy. Efficiently collected solar energy, for example, has already helped to provide electricity to communities devastated by Typhoon Pablo in Mindanao.[47] Renewable energy is viable in the country and makes for better moral options. "From an ecological standpoint, renewable energy is the most sustainable because it is generally cleaner than fossil fuels or nuclear energy, and some forms of renewable energy (especially wind and solar) are potentially inexhaustible."[48]

The Philippine government should not solve our energy crisis with the long-term ecological hazards and damage that will be brought about by reopening the BNPP.[49] Its solution needs to prioritize utmost respect for all lives, human and non-human alike. Hence, it must pursue projects that respect human dignity and ecological integrity. It must remember that

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[46] For further discussion on the topic of Jesus preaching life, see X. Leon-Dufour, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 2nd ed. (Maryland, USA: The Word Among Us Press, 1988), 315.

[47] G. Lacorte, "Regreening Mindanao Grid," *Inquirer.net* (November 27, 2022), available at https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1698281/regreening-mindanao-grid (accessed December 3, 2022).

[48] E. Biviano, D. Cloutier, E. Padilla, C. Peppard, & J. Schaefer, "Catholic Moral Traditions and Energy Ethics for the Twenty-First Century," *Theology Faculty Research and Publications*, Marquette University (2016): 24, available at https://epublications.marquette.edu/theo_fac/625/ (accessed November 27, 2022).

[49] This is an intimation to the CBCP's "What Is Happening to Our Beautiful Land" (January 29, 1988), available at https://cbcponline.net/what-is-happening-to-our-beautiful-land/ (accessed November 25, 2022).

> energy systems that destroy the homelands and livelihoods of people in diverse places around the world contradict the protection of life. Life itself relies on a broader ecological balance that transcends geographic and temporal boundaries, and includes the conditions that support all of life on earth, now and in the future.[50]

We must morally fight against human greed. Rising electricity rates and prices of goods are results not just of the Philippines' energy crisis but also, undeniably, of unbridled human greed, of corruption. Unhampered greed fuels corruption in the ranks of government administrators and employees. And this is not new to us! A corrupt government administration plus corrupt government officials equal corporate greed—a "structural sin."[51]

Greed in its very nature is anti-poor. It robs the poor, who are the first victims of human greed, of what they justly deserve by allocating more resources of our common home to a few groups or individuals. Likewise, they are the first and the last to suffer nuclear energy's biological hazards caused by human greed. Opening the BNPP might probably ease our energy crisis, yet with greed left unchecked, we will continue to suffer, especially the poor. Indeed, greed must be diminished not just within the ranks of government workers and officials but also in every Filipino household. Greed does not just happen in government offices. It likewise happens and gets nurtured at home. Take, for example, our wanton use of goods and our highly consumeristic "throwaway culture" today. They are but products of greed—of inordinately wanting more. The greed that began at home has proliferated into a wider scale of the public sphere. It must be extinguished accordingly in our immediate environment if we truly want to fight it. We do so by refusing to be part of the "throwaway culture," living a simple lifestyle, and, of foremost importance, through

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[50] Biviano et al., "Catholic Moral Traditions and Energy Ethics for the Twenty-First Century," 8.

[51] John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 36, available at https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html (accessed November 27, 2022).

the proper formation of our conscience.[52] It is at this point where stakeholders of society (churches, schools, local government units, non-governmental organizations) need to collaborate.

Fighting against greed leads to a more Biblically-attuned notion of domination which is technically about "tending God's garden."[53] As *imago Dei*, we are not set on top of the hierarchy of creatures; rather, we are in God's image because, like God, we are tasked to tend and care for the world, the garden of God. With this, we ought to see ourselves with other creatures within the circle of life instead of conceiving ourselves as being at the apex of the pyramid of beings. If we find ourselves irresponsibly dominating God's creation under the pretense of being given the task to "dominate," this indicates that our understanding of domination is already fueled by greed and not by the Holy Scriptures. Domination untouched by greed denotes the kind of stewardship that is not exaggeratedly anthropocentric.[54] Our fight against human greed converts the excessive anthropocentric notion of domination into a genuine care for our "common home." Only with greed extinguished can we sing, with St. Francis of Assisi, his *Canticle of Brother Sun and Sister Moon.*

Epilogue

As much as we look forward to the end of the energy crisis in the Philippines and a better future vis-à-vis the planned governmental revival of the mothballed BNPP, we must also not forget that our first moral obligation to the country is the defense of all God's creation. Our moral judgments must be colored by this principle on which all

[52] This author will not elaborate further the process of attaining a well-formed conscience since it is not the main concern of this article. This author rather suggests that the reader consult Francis's *Laudato Si'* for the sufficient exposition on this matter.

[53] Francis, *Laudato Si'*, no. 67.

[54] For further discussion, see Francis, *Laudato Si'*, nos. 115–121.

else hangs. Ceasing to see the value of all creation is tantamount to existential suicide. The value we give to creation is essential to our humanity and is equally our highest form of worship of the God of life (Mk. 12:27). When proponents of the BNPP marketed nuclear energy as climate-friendly, they belied the "enormous and documented ecological and human risks and harms associated with extraction, processing, enrichment, waste storage, and nuclear accidents, as well as with uranium's potential use in weapons production."[55]

We are accountable to future generations. And this accountability is being challenged today in our moral stance regarding the BNPP. Are we not supposed to leave a safer world for our children instead of a nuclear-threatened future? Our moral action that defends all forms of life is our moral response—a response that sees the inherent value of all that God has created. Our defense for all forms of life is our sustaining of the earth and our solidarity for the common good. It is our act of justice for all generations to come, humans and non-humans alike. And it is our very own contribution toward the elimination of the sufferings of our world groaning in pain (Rom. 8:22). The poignant words of Noah Harari about *us* tell of how we are and what have we done so far in our finite existence in this common home:

> Unfortunately, the Sapiens regime on earth has so far produced little that we can be proud of. We have mastered our surroundings, increased food production, built cities, established empires and created far-flung trade networks. But did we decrease the amount of suffering in the world? Time and again, massive increases in human power did not necessarily improve the well-being of individual Sapiens, and usually caused immense misery to other animals.
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> Moreover, despite the astonishing things that humans are capable of doing, we remain unsure of our goals and we seem to be as discontented as ever. We have advanced from canoes to galleys to steamships to space shuttles—but nobody knows where we're going. We are more powerful than ever before, but have very little idea what to do with all that power. Worse still, humans seem to be more irresponsible than ever.

[55] V. Sharpe, "'Clean' Nuclear Energy? Global Warming, Public Health, and Justice," *The Hastings Center Report* 38:4 (2008): 17, DOI: 10.1353/hcr.0.0040.

> Self-made gods with only the laws of physics to keep us company, we are accountable to no one. We are consequently wreaking havoc on our fellow animals and on the surrounding ecosystem, seeking little more than our own comfort and amusement, yet never finding satisfaction.
>
> Is there anything more dangerous than dissatisfied and irresponsible gods who don't know what they want?[56]

The issue surrounding the moral implications of the BNPP is not just about the energy crisis or economy of the Philippines but, more importantly, about the future of our common home, God's creation, and all the lives that depend on it. It is a moral call to defend all forms of life in solidarity with all of God's creation. Here lies our true human moral fulfillment and living out of our sincere worship of God, the Lover of all that exists.

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[56] Y. Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (London: Harvill Secker, 2014), afterword.

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THE INDISPENSABILITY OF BACK TRANSLATION

Mediating Faithfulness and Naturalness in the Translation of the Bible into an Unfamiliar Tongue

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Abstract. Translation of the Bible into the mother tongues of peoples requires that it be faithful to the source text while seeing to it that the naturalness of the translation in the receptor language is likewise achieved. These translation ideals may appear complementary on the surface but they produce unintended tensions in the actual translation endeavor. *Faithfulness to the text* requires that the intention of the Biblical author be transferred in the most exact way possible to the target language. *Naturalness of translation* creates the burden of transmitting this authorial intention to the target language in the simplest and least artificial way possible. The faithfulness criterion unwittingly creates a line that instantly separates the translation officer from his/her translators. The officer seeks for the translation to be faithful to the source text while the translators' loyalty is to the receptor language. Naturalness of translation can only be properly assessed by the translators, not by the translation officer. He/she does not speak the receptor language. How, then, can the officer mediate faithfulness and naturalness in the translation of the Bible into an unfamiliar language? Here is where *back translation* is most indispensable. Back translation provides the tool for checking the accuracy of a Bible translation into the mother tongues of peoples.

Keywords. faithfulness; naturalness; theology of translation; translation theories; back translation; Viracnon New Testament project; generic solution

When we talk about the history of the transmission of the Bible in the Philippines, what come to mind are the historical events that paved the way for the entry of the Bible in the Philippines and its eventual use in the worship, study, public reading, and reflection of a faith community. Of course, not far behind the discussion of those significant events are the main characters who played such heroic roles in championing certain Bible causes. Often overlooked are the contributions of nameless faces in the background who labored day and night in the translation of the Bible, particularly the New Testament, into local languages. The transmission of the Bible seems to be initiated and completed by the task of translation. The translation of the sacred texts of the Bible into Philippine languages supplies the "indigenous" expressions for the stories, signs, and symbols expressed therein. It has helped immensely in making the Bible narratives become part of the popular culture.

But how can the translation be assured of its faithfulness to the source text and naturalness in the receptor language when the person assigned to check the translation, the Translation Consultant (TC), does not speak the language or dialect the Bible is to be translated into? Is there a way for them to check the accuracy of the translation?

This article seeks to probe into the usefulness of *back translation*, a tool employed in the checking of a Bible translation into a local language or dialect that is unfamiliar to the TC. Ancillaries to this main topic are a discussion on the theology of translation that illumines the translation ministry of the Philippine Bible Society (PBS) and a presentation of the principles/theories that govern the whole translation process.

Why the Need to Translate? A Theology of Translation

Do we not have sufficient Bible translations out there such that another translation is no longer warranted? When will these translations end? These are the questions usually raised when another

translation project is about to commence. But does translation really have a shelf life? The guiding principles that illumine the translation ministry of the PBS simply do not allow the shutting down of its Translation Department.

Translation as Incarnational

Translation follows the path opened up by God when the Word, which may have been one of God's many attributes, i.e., wisdom, took the form of a human being who lived in a specific location at a specific time. This self-revelation of God in the flesh is understood by Christians as *incarnation*. If God chose to *translate* God's self into the form of a living and historical being in the person of Jesus Christ, it follows then that God wanted and intended to be known unequivocally by God's own people. The "logic" of the incarnation provides the impetus for the translation of God's word as recorded in the Bible into the heart languages of peoples.

A. Walls understands incarnation as the divine activity of translation: "God chose translation as his mode of action for the salvation of humanity."[1] It is interesting to note that in Walls's view of the incarnation, God seems to abandon the usual pattern of divine intervention in human history through the display of God's supernatural powers, such as in the parting of the Red Sea, established firmly in the Old Testament. In the dispensation of the renewed covenant, God works silently in terms of translating what the deity is like before the people through the life, ministry, and teachings of Jesus Christ. In fact, this translation initiative of God was so bereft of the wonderful display of divine strength celebrated in the Hebrew Scriptures that the religious establishment based in the Jerusalem Temple refused to accept this "version" of Israel's God. Ironically, it was the ordinary people, the great unwashed of Judea, who embraced God's new self-revelation in Jesus Christ. The incarnation of God became one of

[1]A. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 26.

the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith. As Walls triumphantly proclaims, "Christian faith rests in [the] divine act of translation."[2]

Walls reflects on divinity being translated into humanity when God became Christ and Christ became a human being. However, in this process of "divine translation," God became particularized. God, in the person of Jesus Christ, assumed a human race in becoming a Jew; spoke Aramaic, the language of God's very own people; wore clothes befitting a temperate land, and so on and so forth. When Walls speaks about a divinity that was translated into a humanity that was not *generalized* humanity,[3] he may have been hinting about a "particularized" translation of divinity. This particularity has never been more adequately felt or understood as it is in the language of a people.

The language of humanity requires that translation become a continuous human activity if only to duplicate, over and over, the divine act of translation. Walls calls this endeavor the "constant succession of new translations."[4] The Incarnation did not put to an end the task of translating the divine self-revelation into the tongues of humankind. The fact that the Incarnation took place opens up the idea that God wants to be known. The first act of translation should be duplicated with the translation of the testimonies of the ancient peoples about how God's love for the whole world was made known through the ministry, deeds of mercy, radical teachings about love of God and neighbor, and death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. These early witnesses spoke in a language, *Koine Greek*, that was known to the ancients but is no longer intelligible to the contemporary world. Walls admits to the intensiveness of translation:

> Translation involves the attempt to express the meaning of the source from the resources of and within the working system of the receptor language.[5]

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[2]Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 26.

[3]Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 27.

[4]Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 27.

[5]Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 28.

The varied structures of human language complicate the translation endeavor. For incarnation to be comprehensible, it needs to be expressed in thought forms that make sense to a lay person. This is obviously not easy as certain words or concepts from the source language cannot simply be duplicated or easily reproduced in the target or receptor language. This makes the task difficult but not impossible. The conundrum that existed pre-incarnation was resolved by a God who thought out of the box, so to speak. The creativity with which the deity resolved the problem of separation from God's creation should provide the inspiration for solving this translation dilemma. The result is immense for Bible translation, which:

> aims at releasing the word about Christ so that it can reach all aspects of a specific linguistic and cultural context, so that Christ can live within that context.…[6]

The theology associating translation with incarnation finds a kindred spirit in Lamin Sanneh.

Christianity is a Translated Religion

As long as Christianity continues to be a missionary religion, translation will remain integral to its very existence. The Gospel according to Matthew reveals the sudden change of mission focus of the ancient Church from a purely Jewish standpoint into a universal one. The post-resurrection Church appeared to be breaking out from the confinement of the exclusive mission to the lost sheep of Israel (Matt. 10:5–6) to extend its missionary reach to include all the nations of the world (28:19). If the Church is to communicate Jesus's commandments (v. 20) to all peoples everywhere, translation must be the first device in its toolbox. Such is the importance of translation to the Church as to move Sanneh to reflect that "translation is the church's birthmark as well as its missionary benchmark."[7]

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[6]Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 29.

[7]L. Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 97.

Translation appears to be already present right at the very beginning of Christianity. Sanneh's birthmark analogy for translation proceeds from his position that Christianity is a translated religion:

> Being the original Scripture of the Christian movement, the New Testament Gospels are a translated version of the message of Jesus, and that means Christianity is a translated religion without a revealed language.[8]

The fact that Christianity started without the benefit of a revealed language proved to be a blessing for the budding religion. A revealed language is understood by Sanneh as "the language or originating culture of its founder."[9] Its absence proved to be a boon rather than a bane for Christianity because it did not provide the followers of the religion the opportunity or occasion to sacralize the language of the founder, diverting significantly from the path later trodden by Islam and the Qur'ān. A religion without a holy language makes it possible for translation to flourish, thereby staying faithful to its *raison d'etre.*

Translation is crucial for the comprehensibility of the Christian message. Sanneh articulates the general rule concerning translation:

> people [having] a right to understand what they were being taught was matched by the view that there was nothing God wanted to say that could not be said in a simple everyday language.[10]

"God speak" was made democratic by translation when the latter prevented the religious elite of the Church in its early days to hijack the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by insisting that the same be expressed in an untranslatable holy language. The Church fathers stayed true to the Great Commission of the risen Christ. Instead of the Gospel becoming esoteric, it was led in the opposite direction. Sanneh points out that Christians became "pioneers of linguistic development with the

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[8]Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?*, 97.

[9]Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?*, 98.

[10]Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?*, 98.

creation of alphabets, orthographies, dictionaries, and grammars,"[11] and adds that Christians transmitted the Scripture in native tongues, which was indicative of the high priority they placed on human languages. The distinguishing mark of Scriptural translation, according to Sanneh, has been the effort to come as close as possible to the speech of the common people.[12]

It is but fitting to end this survey with Sanneh's position on translation: "Christian translation work rests on the inclusive principle of the religion of Jesus."[13]

Where, then, is the Bible translation ministry of the PBS to be located in these theological positions on translation?

The Ministry of Bible Translation of the PBS

When people come into contact with the Gospel message for the first time, its power to disturb and stir human imagination about God and God's concern for God's creation proves to be irresistible. The Gospel creates a spiritual hunger that cannot be filled up unless the word of God is made available to people in a language they can fully understand. This fact is ably demonstrated in Anne Kwantes's essay on the Philippine Bible Society.[14]

Kwantes tells of a time during the 19th century when there was a law that forbade the reading or keeping of a Bible. It was also a time ripe for political and social upheaval. She recounts that there were some

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[11]Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?*, 99.

[12]L. Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (New York: Orbis Books, 1989), 192.

[13]Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 201. Here Sanneh is contrasting the openness of Christian translation with the disposition of humanistic culture to resist change.

[14]A. Kwantes, "The Bible Society in the Philippines: The Story of the Bible Society Work," in A. Kwantes, ed., *Chapters in Philippine Church History* (Manila: OMF Literature Inc., 2001), 463–481.

Filipinos who still read the Bible in secret even with the existence of such a repressive law and that this did not stop merely at private reading.

> Some who owned Bibles and who knew Spanish would gather family members and neighbors together in the evening, reading aloud by candlelight and translating into the local language while the assembled people listened.[15]

Translation of the Bible was already afoot even when there was still no Bible Society to handle such a task in the Philippines. Kwantes's story simply demonstrates the fact that there exists a need to translate the Scriptures into the mother tongues of peoples. And attempts there were! The first on Kwantes's list was the translation initiative undertaken by a Spanish Dominican missionary-priest who went by the name of Fr. Nicolas Manrique Alonso y Lallave (1839–1889). Kwantes writes,

> There in Spain, Lallave began to translate Bible portions, out of a concern for the people he had left behind in the Philippines. His first translation project was completed in 1873, the Gospel of Luke in Panggalatok. Eventually he translated most of the New Testament.[16]

There is no need to rehash the details of the history of Bible translation in the Philippines as there are other volumes already out there that adequately and exhaustively discuss the topic. The concern of the present writer is to place the ministry of the Philippine Bible Society in the "theological continuum" discussed earlier. PBS sees its mission as that of

> an inter-faith, non-profit, non-stock organization whose purpose is to promote the widest possible effective distribution of the Holy Scriptures in languages people can understand and at prices affordable to most.[17]

While the translation philosophy/theology of PBS is obscured in this mission statement—as the stress is laid on the distribution and marketing of the Bible—the clause "in languages people can

[15]Kwantes, "The Bible Society in the Philippines," 464.

[16]Kwantes, "The Bible Society in the Philippines," 465.

[17]Kwantes, "The Bible Society in the Philippines," 481.

understand" reveals much about the highest priority given to translation by the Bible Society. The theological perspectives of *incarnationality* and *translatableness* are evident in the translation works of the PBS, and its translation theology is nowhere more pronounced than in its recent project—a translation of the New Testament into the Viracnon dialect.

The New Testament translation into the Viracnon language in Bikol, Southern Catanduanes is the result of the cooperative effort by the five Bible translation agencies in the Philippines that sought to identify the languages into which the Bible had not yet been translated. These translation agencies coalesced into a group bonded by a common purpose and which later adopted the name *Tambuli Fellowship*. In a consultative meeting that gathered together these translation agencies (of which PBS is one), it was revealed that there are still 45 languages that do not benefit from any Bible translation. Of these 45 languages, 8 were assigned to PBS, all of which were languages of the Bikol region. After several meetings, it was decided that among the languages assigned to PBS, Viracnon would serve as the pilot for the translation of the New Testament.

From March 25–29, 2019, a PBS team went to Catanduanes and conducted a sociolinguistic survey as there were limited studies on the languages spoken on the island. Two months later, PBS held the Bikol Southern Catanduanes (Viracnon) New Testament Translation Workshop from May 21–24 in Virac, Catanduanes where translators were chosen from among the workshop participants. A Reviewers' Workshop, which ran from August 6–9, was then organized to train potential reviewers of the translation drafts of a New Testament book, i.e., The Gospel of Mark, in Viracnon.

Initial translation drafts passed through several stages of review. Early drafts were reviewed internally by peers and then by the Translation Consultant during the Committee Review stage. The internally reviewed drafts were then sent to external reviewers who were selected from the participants of the Reviewers' Workshop. Decisions were then made on whether to accept the recommendations of the external reviewers or retain the translations as they were. This last stage of decision-making constituted the Final Draft stage. The final

drafts of select Viracnon NT translations were then read publicly to representatives of the community last August 30, 2021. The community response to the Viracnon translations was very encouraging.

What are the guardrails that ensure the faithfulness and naturalness of a translation? The answers to these questions will be provided by the translation theories that inform and illumine the translation work of PBS.

Navigating Between Faithfulness and Naturaless: Tensions in Translation

Every translation project of the PBS seeks to achieve both faithfulness to the source text and naturalness of translation in the receptor language. These translation goals, while overarching in reach, are also in perpetual tension with each other. This tension will be the focus of this section.

The Composition of the Translation Team

A translation team is composed of the Translation Consultant and the translators—usually three in number—who are chosen from representatives recommended and sent by the Roman Catholic Church, mainline Protestant churches, Christian faith communities, fellowships, and parachurches. For the Viracnon project, translators were chosen from a pool of participants at the translation workshop hosted by PBS. During the workshop, prospective translators were introduced to translation principles and procedures observed by PBS. In this set-up, the gatekeeper of faithfulness to the source text is the TC who, by virtue of their post-graduate training in Biblical studies and/or linguistics, is assumed to be adept in the Biblical languages of Hebrew and NT Greek and possess a more than adequate knowledge of the Old and New Testament books in their historical, literary, and theological contexts. The aspect of naturalness is expected to be provided by the translators, who are native speakers of the language or dialect of the target audience or culture. This compositional make-up

of the translation team is influenced by the translation theory adhered to by PBS, the dynamic equivalence theory.

The Dynamic Equivalence Theory

The dynamic equivalence theory (DE) is a translation theory that was first developed by Eugene Nida in the 1960s. As the name suggests, DE views translation as the transfer of meaning from the source language into the receptor language. M. Larson provides a simple description of the translation process involved in the DE:

> This is done by going from the form of the first language to the form of a second language by way of semantic structure. It is meaning which is being transferred and must be held constant. Only the form changes.[18]

The DE proceeds from Nida's observation that the difficulties in translation are due to the wrong assumptions held by many about the source and receptor languages. He insists that to achieve the "goal of equivalent response," there needs to be a change in the translator's perspective of the languages in which they are working.[19] The change that Nida suggests requires the de-sacralization of the source language and a "radical rethinking of one's attitude toward the receptor language."[20] Nida's position emanates from his belief that "anything that can be said in one language can be said in another, unless the form is an essential element of the message."[21] While he admits that a perfect match between languages does not exist, the translator is confronted with the choice of what in the source language is to be retained or sacrificed. For Nida, the form of the source language can be changed but the meaning must be allowed to remain intact. Therefore,

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[18]M. Larson, *Meaning-Based Translation: A Guide to Cross-Language Equivalence*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 3.

[19]E. Nida & C. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: United Bible Societies, 1969), 3.

[20]Nida & Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 3.

[21]Nida & Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 4.

a good translation for Dynamic Equivalence is a translation that must communicate the meaning of the original message.[22]

Cardinal to the DE is the specific procedure that it prescribes, in which the source-text elements like grammar, connotations, and meaning are reduced to or analyzed as linguistic kernel that can be transferred and restructured to form target surface elements.[23] The procedure is a three-step protocol:

1. *Break the source form into a kernel sentence*. This requires an analysis of the passage from the source text (the form) by breaking it down into smaller part(s) known as the kernel.

2. *Restructure the form*. Now that the form is reduced into smaller part(s), it is easier to extract the meaning from the form. Once the meaning is extracted, the form can now be restructured into new "forms" that provide the most meaning in the receptor language.

3. *Transfer the meaning to the receptor language*. Translation happens when the meaning of the form is communicated in the receptor language.

The DE does not remain unchallenged. Later translation theories question the assumptions of the DE.

The Debate

Later translation theories find fault in the translation assumptions of Eugene Nida in the DE. One translation theory argues that translation is "not a purely linguistic operation, but rather a way of

[22]K. Barnwell, *Bible Translation: An Introductory Course in Translation Principles*, 3rd ed. (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1986), 8.

[23]C. Nord, "Functional Approaches to Translation," in C. Chapelle, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics* (West Sussex, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2013), 1–4.

facilitating communication between members of different cultures."[24] Out of this concern thus emerged *skopostheorie* or functionalism. *Skopos*, the shorter name of the theory, stands on the principle first laid down by its proponent, the German linguist Hans Vermeer, in the late 1970s, which says that "the purpose of translation determines the choice of translation method and strategy."[25] C. Nord calls it the functionality principle.[26] In *Bridging the Cultural Gap*, she notes that functionalism is based on the fundamental hypothesis that language, while certainly a part of culture, is not the only vehicle of communicative intentions between peoples and cultures. There is, in Nord's estimation, the existence of the cultural gap which makes it impossible to realize the hopes of DE in the actual translation process.

What situations bring about this intense feeling of a cultural gap? Nord is quick to point out the following:[27]

1. *The lack of culture-specific background knowledge*. This arises when what is said about a certain culture does not tally with the translator's knowledge.

2. *The mismatch between non-verbal and verbal behavior*. This takes place when translators fail to make sense of or correctly interpret the non-verbal behavior of the target culture.

Nord takes a direct swipe at the DE's prioritization of the source text. *Skopos* theory, according to Nord, "no longer considers the source text, or more precisely, its linguistic and stylistic features, to be a valid

[24]C. Nord, "Bridging the Cultural Gap: Bible Translation as a Case in Point," *Acta Theologica* 22:1 (2002): 98–116, here at 1–16.

[25]C. Nord, "Function Plus Loyalty: Ethics in Professional Translation," *Génesis: Revista Científica do ISAG* (2007), 1.

[26]Nord, "Function Plus Loyalty," 1.

[27]Nord, "Bridging the Cultural Gap," 116.

yardstick for translation."[28] The translator assumes a more pro-active role in *skopos* where she or he now acts as a "responsible mediator developing between [sic] the client, the target audience and the source text-author."[29] The translator is responsible for seeing to it that loyalty to the translation partners is not violated in the translation endeavor. Here loyalty

> means that the translator has to anticipate any misunderstanding or communicative conflict that may occur due to different translational concepts and find a way to avoid them.[30]

This commitment to loyalty is supreme in *skopos* because it presupposes that translation "takes place in specific situations set in specific cultures."[31] L. de Vries, a Dutch linguist, has a different take on *skopos*'s loyalty. His definition of loyalty, to a certain extent, approaches Nida's faithfulness to the text:

> The functional goals of a translation project strongly determine how Bible translators deal with intercultural mediation. However, loyalty to the ancient writers and redactors of the biblical text should keep translators from crossing the red line … translators should never rewrite the biblical texts in ways that violate consensus views of biblical scholarship.…[32]

De Vries's strict definition of loyalty appears to be a check on the unintended tendency to domesticate or tame the Bible, something which DE might have engendered due to its insistence on equivalence and naturalness in the transference of meaning from the source to the target language. Nord seconds de Vries by saying that equivalence is

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[28]Nord, "Function Plus Loyalty," 1.

[29]Nord, "Function Plus Loyalty," 2.

[30]Nord, "Function Plus Loyalty," 2.

[31]Nord, "Function Plus Loyalty," 2.

[32]L. de Vries, "Bible Translation and Culture: The Theory and Practice of Intercultural Mediation in the Translation of John 2.1–12," *Journal of Biblical Text Research* 10:41 (2017): 247–280.

obsolete as a standard of translation quality and proposes adequacy as the alternative norm. Adequacy takes place when the translation is adequate or fulfills the requirements of the translation brief.[33] A translation brief is a detailed plan that indicates the intended goals or functions that the translation endeavor wishes to accomplish.

To mitigate the translation problems wrought by DE, Nord proposes that the translation team make the decision outright on which audience the translation wishes to address and the purpose that it seeks to fulfill for them.[34] Nord calls these two *skopos* priorities functional categories[35] that must be reflected in the translation brief.

There is another theory that takes aim at DE. S. Pattemore, a staunch practitioner of the relevance theory (RT), criticizes DE in that it tends to minimize the source text in its quest for equivalence of meaning:

> By seeking to look behind the text, to a truly inaccessible place, Nida's theory looses [sic] sight of the very thing which contains the web of meaning, namely the text itself.[36]

The RT's thesis is built on the assumption that human communication crucially creates an expectation of *optimal relevance*—the expectation on the part of the hearer that her or his attempt at translation will yield adequate contextual effects with minimal processing cost.[37] In other words, RT assumes that the target audience will not want to exert much effort (the "processing effort," according

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[33]Nord, "Functional Approaches to Translation," 1–4.

[34]Nord, "Bridging the Cultural Gap," 116.

[35]Nord, "Functional Approaches to Translation," 1–4.

[36]S. Pattemore, "Framing Nida: The Relevance of Translation Theory in the United Bible Societies," in P. Noss, ed., *History of Bible Translation* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2007).

[37]A. Mojola & E. Wendland, "Scripture Translation in the Era of Translation Studies," in T. Wilt, ed., *Bible Translation: Frames of Reference* (London: Routledge, 2002).

to RT) in interpreting the translated text. Mojola and Wendland explain further that readers will want to pay the lowest possible price in this regard, and so a raise in cognitive costs will correlate with a drop in interest in a translated book.

H. Hill describes RT as the feeling of making sense in the communication process, that is, the experience of cognitive effects.[38] Hill explains that these cognitive effects are the changes in what we know—the more cognitive effects there are, the more relevance there is. The relevance theory works this way:[39]

1. Take the path of least effort.
2. Search for meaning until one gets enough cognitive effects to satisfy one's expectations.
3. Assume one has arrived at the intended meaning and stop processing.

These contending points were kept in full view as the actual translation of the New Testament into Viracnon commenced. But how can the translation priorities of faithfulness/loyalty and naturalness/adequacy be navigated peacefully in this translation project? This is where back translation (BT) comes in.

The Indispensability of Back Translation

Attempting to achieve both *faithfulness* to the source text and *naturalness* of translation in the receptor language inevitably creates some form of tension in the translation task. This tension is never felt more than in the task of the Translation Consultant. The TC, by virtue of their training and responsibility in the translation endeavor, bears the burden of balancing these two complementary yet somewhat opposing values. In an actual translation project, the TC might approach

[38]H. Hill, "Relevant Study Bibles," *The Bible Translator* 61:4 (October 2010): 192.

[39]Hill, "Relevant Study Bibles," 193.

the task at first with a bias toward faithfulness to the source text and may not be mindful of naturalness as she or he is not a native speaker of the receptor language. To counter this unevenness, the translators chosen for the project, who are native speakers of the target language, provide the check for naturalness. But if the TC is a stranger to the receptor culture and language, how can she or he make sense of the translation? How can the TC know if the translators understand the passages they are translating? How can she or he keep abreast of the translation and its faithfulness to the source text? Back translation provides just the tool for carrying out this verification.

Back Translation as a Translation Check Tool

Back translation is defined as an assessment tool used in international and cross-cultural social research.[40] The import of back translation, says S. Tyupa, is that it sheds light on how conceptualization operated in the translator's and back translator's minds and so helps in making some inferences regarding the comparability of source and target versions of a text. BT thus functions as an auxiliary process of clarifying the meaning (i.e., conceptualization) of the items in the source and target languages.[41]

In Bible translation, BT is used as a method or tool for checking the drafts in a language that is foreign to the TC.[42] This requires the translators to translate the drafts into an international or national language known to the TC (in the Viracnon project's case, Tagalog). While the BT is not expected to give a very accurate translation of the draft, it is expected to play two key functions in the translation process, namely, to provide insight into the level of understanding the

[40]S. Tyupa, "A Theoretical Framework for Back-Translation as a Quality Assessment Tool," *New Voices in Translation Studies* 7 (2011): 36.

[41]Tyupa, "A Theoretical Framework for Back-Translation as a Quality Assessment Tool," 38.

[42]Personal communication of author dated September 16, 2021, with a United Bible Societies Manual for Translation Officer.

translators have of the source text and a method for the TC to evaluate fairly the accuracy of this knowledge.

To ensure the accuracy of the BT, the drafters of the text are not allowed to back translate their own translation outputs. Ideally, the BT should be done by outsiders, i.e., individuals who are not part of the team; however, in actual work, the translators take the works of their own colleagues. The translation draft, together with its corresponding BT, is prepared by the translators ahead of the meeting with the TC.

The Viracnon NT Translation Project

The theoretical framework provided by the dynamic equivalence theory is the overall translation principle that governs all PBS translation projects. The DE expects the end-product of every translation endeavor to be *faithful* to the source text while maintaining the *naturalness* of the translation in the receptor language. However, this is somewhat of a pipe dream—aside from the debate surrounding the DE's theoretical assumptions already discussed elsewhere in this paper, there is also a tension that exists in the faithfulness requirement of the DE. The TC's fidelity is to the source text while that of the translators is to the receptor language (in this case, the Viracnon dialect). In this clash of perspectives, what is the middle ground?

This tension does not weigh as much on the translators as it does on the TC. To produce the best translation result, the TC and the translation project must harness the wisdom and practicability offered by the other translation principles. The *skopos* principle insists on the functionality of the translation project; hence, the Viracnon NT project needed to spell outright its specific translation goal, which was to produce a NT translation for an audience within the age range of 18–40 years old and who spoke the Viracnon dialect. Foremost among the many considerations for translation was the fact that the Bible (or parts of it) had not yet been translated into this dialect. During the initial language research, other sectors expressed their desire to produce literary materials in the mother tongue (Viracnon) instead of perpetually relying on materials originating from the Bicol mainland, particularly from Naga City. Corollary to this was the expressed

need to develop an orthography for Viracnon. These aims were thus incorporated into the project's primary goal.

The intelligibility and acceptability of the translation for the target audience must also take into account the proposals of the relevance theory, which insists that the translation must not be a "hard reading" but rather one that can be easily understood.

Back Translation at Work in the Viracnon NT Project

Back translation provides the tool that checks the "accuracy" of the translation drafts. In this section, the dynamics of BT will be demonstrated through some concrete translation examples.

Most of the difficulties in translation that the Viracnon team confronted emanated from Paul's letters. This is because Paul employs concepts more dynamically than his counterparts do in the New Testament. Because of the breadth of Paul's theological vision, he attaches more than one meaning to a certain word. The dynamism of Paul's theological thought is revealed, for example, in concepts such as *grace* and *faith*.

Grace is often understood in the NT to mean God's rich blessings or favor, as in Acts 4:33 and 6:8, among others, or kind love, as in John 1:14. In Paul, *grace* seems to refer to several things, such as God's special gift to someone (Rom. 1:5; 1 Cor. 3:10; Gal. 2:9), that God supplies all that is necessary so that humankind is put right before God (Rom. 3:24), or God's free gift (Rom. 4:16). This proves to be problematic in the translation of this theological concept into Viracnon. Which of these senses is the appropriate one?

Take, for example, Rom. 1:7. The source text says

> πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ῥώμῃ ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ, κλητοῖς ἁγίοις, χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ
>
> All to the ones (who) are in Rome, beloved ones of God, to the ones who were called holy ones, grace to you and peace from

θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

God, Father of us and of the Lord Jesus Christ. (author's translation)

χάρις or grace is understood here to mean God's undeserved love and mercy that God showers on all people. Most translations except for Today's English Version (TEV) translate this word as "grace"; the latter understands grace as "God's love." The Tagalog standard translations employ *pagpapala* for grace. Viracnon translates the same in this way:

Sa sainyo gabos na asa Roma, mga namot-an ning Dios buda inapod tanganing maging banal, mapasainyo ang *biyaya* buda katuninongan hari sa Dios na satuyang Ama buda sa Kagurangnang Jesu-Cristo.

Back translation tracks the draft in this manner:

Sa lahat na nasa Roma, mga minamahal ng Dios at tinawag para maging banal, sumainyo ang *biyaya* at kapayapaan galing sa Dios na ating Ama at sa Panginoong Jesu-Cristo.

The TC suspected that *biyaya* here is a Tagalog loan word because the translators used *bendisyon* elsewhere to refer to the same. In 2 Cor. 1:15, χάρις or grace is understood to mean benefit, joy, or pleasure. English translations vary—pleasure for the RSV, favor for the NRSV, and blessed/blessing for the GNT/CEV. Viracnon understands the passage in this way:

Ta sigurado ako sa gabos na ini, kaya nagplano ako na inot akong maagi diyan sainyo tanganing magkaigwa kamo ning dobleng *bendisyon*.

Back translation renders the following:

Sigurado ako sa lahat na ito, kaya nagplano ako na una akong dadaan diyan sa inyo upang magkaroon kayo ng dobleng *biyaya*.

The TC inquired about the reason for the discrepancy in both translations. The translator concerned reasoned out that *biyaya* is indeed Tagalog and is frequently used to refer to a wide range of meaning, from material gifts to God's manifestation of God's grace. *Bendisyon,* on the other hand, is understood to be an act of blessing someone by putting a hand on their head or actions performed in a rite that employed holy water in the blessing of the people. The translator understood χάρις in 2 Cor. 1:15 in this manner.

In Rom. 3:24, *grace* is more than *biyaya* or *bendisyon*. In Paul's mind, *grace* is closely related to God's justification of sinners. Because of God's righteousness, God is able to put sinful humans in a right relationship with God's self. Here is how the Viracnon translators showed this expressed sense of grace in this passage:

> Pero dahilan sa sainyang *karinasang-boot* (*biyaya*) na daing bayad niyang pigtao, pigturing sinda na matanos sa paagi ni Cristo Jesus na siyang gapalaya sainda.

Back translation informs the TC on how the translator understood this verse:

> Pero dahil sa kanyang *mabuting loob* na walang bayad niyang binigay, tinuring sila na matuwid sa pamamagitan ni Cristo Jesus na siyang nagpapalaya sakanila.

The translator initially chose *biyaya* to express the sense of grace here. But the TC informed the translator that *biyaya* does not capture the depth of Paul's understanding of χάρις. Paul sees in it God's "reconciling initiative" through God's righteousness that puts sinful human beings in a right relationship with God. The Greek phrase δικαιούμενοι δωρεάν, lit. being made right/justified freely, describes what grace is all about—God justifying the ungodly. The TC pointed out to the translator the attempt of the Tagalog translations to capture this deeper meaning of grace by translating the same as *kagandahang-loob ng Diyos*. The translator had chosen to follow the Tagalog example in *karinasang-boot*.

The word *faith* (Gk. πιστις) is understood differently by Paul. For most NT writers, e.g., James, Peter, John, and the authors of the Pastorals, *faith* is belief in or subscription to the Church's doctrines or may refer to the faith of the Church. Paul uses faith in a different sense; for him, *faith* is faith in Jesus Christ and so refers to the quality of that faith, that is, having complete trust in and obedience to the Lord. Rom. 3:22 captures this very well:

> Pigagibong matanos ning Dios ang gabos sa paagi ning saindang *pagtubod (pagsarig)* ki Jesu-Cristo.

Back translation renders it thus:

> Ginagawang matuwid ng Dios ang lahat sa pamamagitan ng kanilang *paniniwala* kay Jesu-Cristo.

Viracnon has two words for "to have faith," namely, *tubod*, to believe, and *sarig*, to trust or to have confidence in someone. The TC called the attention of the translator to the choice of *tubod* in translating faith in this verse. The TC explained to the translator the nuances of the word *faith* in Paul's theological scheme. The translator was convinced of the explanation and decided to change *pagtubod* into *pagsarig* to represent properly Paul's perspective on faith in Viracnon.

However, the external reviewers and the community made a big issue about the team's decision to employ *karinasang-boot* and *pagsarig* in translating Paul's distinctive theological expressions. According to them, there is no Viracnon word or concept that corresponds to *karinasang-boot*. They argued that this is obviously a "Tagalog intrusion" into Viracnon. In the case of *pagsarig*, the community agreed that *pagtubod* is more readily understandable and more commonly used. In cases like this, what must the team do to avoid a ruckus and court losing the community's support for the translation project?

The Generic Solution

The benefit of allowing translation principles to guide a translation project is that they provide mechanisms that present helpful options when problems arise. For instance, dynamic equivalence insists that faithfulness and naturalness are achieved when the meaning of the source text is transferred to the target language. The *skopos*'s concept of loyalty, on the other hand, requires that the translator maintain the equilibrium among the different interest groups in the translation project, namely, the client (in this case, PBS), the target audience, and the source text. It further tasks the translator to find ways to avert what Nord calls "the communicative conflict." Relevance theory, on the other hand, requires that the translation produce more cognitive effects and so be easy to read and understand.

While these translation principles contradict each other in the modalities that they propose and in their theoretical assumptions,

they intersect in the priority that they place on the meaningfulness or intelligibility of translation. S. MacLochlainn proposes a way to lessen the tension between faithfulness to the source text and meaningfulness of translation in the target language. He suggests the use of what he calls *generic terms*.

MacLochlainn seems to suggest that the *generic*[43] is a broad-brush concept employed by native speakers in their everyday communication which can accommodate both the general and the specific ideas about a thing or concept. For example, *gulay* generally refers to any vegetable that the speaker may have in mind at the moment. But *gulay* may also mean an *okra*, a *repolyo*, or a *talong*. Another example is when someone is asked where they are going—they are likely to say *doon* (lit., there), which could mean a marketplace, the streetcorner, or a store. The capacity of the generic to allow or permit a particular aspect of the concept to surface is what makes it very useful in Bible translation.

The final product of the DE's restructuring of the source form to find its equivalence in the target language may be characterized primarily as *generic*. This was the route taken by the Viracnon team to find a consensus regarding the translation problems referred to earlier. In the case of *pagtubod* representing Paul's concept of a dynamic faith, the team convened to discuss the pros and cons of the term. The translators informed the TC that while *tubod* has the primary meaning of belief, it also captures the element of trust and confidence that Paul's conception of faith requires. The team thus decided to use *pagtubod* in the translation of *faith* in Paul's letters for two reasons, namely, 1) its common usage and 2) both the universality and specificity that the concept requires are present in this Viracnon word.

However, in the case of *karinasang-boot*, the community insisted on the foreignness of this compound word and suggested that the word *biyaya* be used instead. The translators explained, however, that this generic term is denotationally ambivalent and that it leans more, in its current usage, toward a material kind of blessing. According to the

[43]S. MacLochlainn, "Divinely Generic: Bible Translation and the Semiotics of Circulation," *Signs and Society* 3:2 (2015): 253–254.

translators, this was not what St. Paul had in mind when he used the term in the passage in question. They asked for suggestions on what they could use to replace *karinasang-boot*. When the community could not arrive at one, the team decided to retain *karinasang-boot*.

Such matters regarding faithfulness/loyalty to the source text and the naturalness/adequacy of the Viracnon translation could not have been addressed without the immense assistance of *back translation*.

An Evaluation of the Back Translation of the Viracnon New Testament Project

Translation is not simply the transferring of the source form into the receptor language and then hoping that it makes sense there. It involves the complex task of maintaining a balance between faithfulness to the source text and naturalness in the target language. The person responsible for maintaining that balance is assisted immensely by a translation check tool provided by back translation. To recap:

1. The translation goals of preserving *faithfulness* to the source text and achieving *naturalness* of the translation in the receptor language must be preserved at all times and, therefore, are non-negotiable.
2. The Translation Consultant, the person in charge of assessing the quality of the translation, is able to follow the translation task through back translation.
3. Back translation helps the TC gauge the translators' understanding of the passages being translated.
4. Back translation assists the TC in finding "discrepancies in translator understanding" and so informs the translators of the corrective steps that need to be taken.
5. In cases of non-consensus in some translation issues among the translation partners, the "generic" approach

is to be taken without sacrificing faithfulness and naturalness of translation.

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