Landas

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

This issue of *Landas* discusses theological issues that have profound repercussions on interfaith relations and on social and moral questions that affect the ecclesial community.

Felix Körner, S.J. ("The Human Person, Subject of Religious Freedom: Arguments in Christianity, Arguments in Islam") explains to both Muslim and Christian readers the importance of a dynamic understanding of what *faith* is, and what *person* really is, in ensuring a pluralistic society and respect for natural law. His discussion has a bearing on how the Bangsamoro Organic Law (Republic Act No. 11054) can guarantee the religious freedom of non-Muslim Filipinos residing in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region.

Lancy Monteiro, S.J. ("Jesus Christ: Partial or Fullness of Truth?") upholds the Catholic belief that Jesus is the fullness of God's revelation even though various religions may have some knowledge of the inexhaustible Divine Mystery. How can Jesus who is finite embody the Eternal Truth of God? To explain this paradox, Monteiro makes a distinction between *Truth* and *truths*. *Truth* is "the very manifestation of God's being/self in the person of Jesus of Nazareth—God enfleshed, Emmanuel, God to humans as humans" (p. 31–32). This is clearly how the New Testament proclaims Jesus—he is the incarnate Word of God, Son of God, etc. Whereas *truths* refer to "everything that leads to humankind's knowledge about God" (p. 32). These seminal truths (*logoi spermatikoi*) about God are not purely human inventions but are offered by the Holy Spirit to humankind throughout salvation history.

Ana Maria Q. Faustino ("Understanding the Church Position on Adoption by Same-Sex Couples") explains why the Church is not in favor of allowing same-sex partners to adopt a child. According to Church teaching, it is in the best interest of the child that she or he be born and raised within a natural family founded on marriage between husband and wife. The lack of sexual complementarity in same-sex couples can undermine the development of an adopted child. Although there are studies claiming that children raised by same-sex couples fare just as well as those raised by a husband and wife, the findings are inconclusive and even disputed. Moreover, Faustino argues that allowing same-sex couples to adopt a child would ultimately undermine the Church's teaching on marriage and its unitive and procreative purposes.

Ramil R. Marcos ("The Theology of Mercy in the Life and Teachings of Pope Francis") discusses various factors that influenced Pope Francis to make God's mercy the guiding light in the exercise of his pastoral ministry. Marcos examines the development of the Pope's interest in this subject by exploring not only his teachings and writings but also his personal life-witness. Francis has not only spoken frequently on God's love and mercy but also shown us—by his own gestures and actions—how divine solicitude and compassion can be shown toward our neighbor, especially the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed.

Michael C. Porcia, S.J. ("Dark Night: Weaning from One's Image of God: Toward Spiritual Maturity") explains how the human person develops a mature relationship with God. This happens when the person lets go of her/his puerile idea of God. St. John of the Cross uses an analogy to describe how God treats the human soul. He likens God to a mother who nurtures her child with the "sweet milk" of consolations but, as the child grows bigger, eventually weans it by putting "bitter aloes" upon her breast so it will lose the habit of a child and learn to take on more substantial responsibilities. Porcia detects a similar process of weaning—a dialectic between attachment and detachment, between "holding on" and "letting go"—that occurs at key transitional phases of re-imaging God in J. Fowler's seven stages of faith development in a person.

Franz Jan S. Santos ("Remembering Damaso: Ateneo de Manila High School's Portrayal of the Late 19th-Century Philippine Church [1980–1999]") discusses how social studies (*Araling Panlipunan*) and Filipino courses taught in secondary and tertiary schools in the country have unfairly portrayed the Catholic Church. This was due in part to the use of Jose Rizal's novels and post-colonial literature in instructional materials. Even the textbooks that were written for such courses highlighted nationalist ideas that maligned people and institutions perceived to be allied with the Spanish colonial regime. In 1999, some former teachers of the Ateneo de Manila High School wrote their own textbooks which provided nuanced treatment of the causes of the unrests in the 19th century and a different perspective on the Filipino clergy's fight for the secularization of the parishes. Santos concludes his essay by discussing the reasons behind the accusations against the Church and offering a nuanced and balanced view of such based on more recent research and literature.

Felipe Fruto Ll. Ramirez, S.J.

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THE HUMAN PERSON, SUBJECT OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Arguments in Christianity, Arguments in Islam

Felix Körner, S.J.

The Bangsamoro Organic Law (Republic Act No. 11054) contains this affirmation:

> The Bangsamoro Government shall guarantee religious freedom and the free exercise thereof pursuant to the Constitution, national laws, and principles of international law. The Bangsamoro Government shall protect all persons from harassment or any undue pressure, coercion, and violence on account of religion. Any establishment and institution shall be free to implement policies and undertake activities pursuant to their respective religious beliefs and values. (Article IX, Section 5)[1]

Is that credible? Is that wise? Is that faithful to religion in general and to Islam in particular? To answer this, I will first tell the Catholic story of religious freedom before studying the core concepts used in its theological justification. Finally, I want to discuss some of the problems involved in the context of Christian-Muslim relations.

Telling the Story

Religions want to shape this world. Is that frightening? And even before we discuss that question, we must look at another, namely, is that true? Do religions want to shape this world?

[1] A copy is available at https://bit.ly/3zjII6B.

Religions Fashioning the World?

You can raise three objections against the claim that religions want to shape the world:

i) "True religion is not concerned with this world but with the Other World, so stop tainting religion with this-worldly expectations!"

ii) "Real religion is something individual, interior, my soul's inner matter. Real religion can therefore be neither a social cause nor a political program, so stop instrumentalizing religion!"

iii) "'Religions' do not want anything in the first place—it is only human beings that 'want' and 'do', so stop that abstract talk!"

None of these three objections are ultimately valid.

"True religion is not concerned with this world but with the Other World." No! Against that, Muslims could, for example, state that the Qur'an is calling humanity into responsibility. That is to say, you are to remember the Last Judgement; you already now know God's standard for judging you then—so act accordingly![2]

Christians, too, could say that through the "Kingdom of God," the coming of which we already sense, we are being transformed to live the new life and thus let the whole world sense that hope, doing so also through our action.[3]

So, there are religions that want to make the world a better place precisely because they proclaim that this world is not the ultimate place—or source—of happiness.

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[2]F. Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1989), 37.

[3]W. Pannenberg, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen. Menschsein, Erwählung und Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 23.

"Real religion is something individual, interior, my soul's inner matter—real religion can therefore be neither a social cause nor a political program." No! Here a category from comparative religious studies is helpful. One can distinguish between "mystical" and "prophetic" religiosities.[4] In all religions, you can find more spiritual and introverted elements, members, groups, schools, traditions, and practices (the mystical side) and others that are more concerned with today's social problems and with how to solve them according to God's will (the prophetic side).

"'Religions' do not want anything in the first place—it is only human beings that 'want' and 'do'." A person making this objection is calling us to move from reflection on "religion" in general to a specific religion; the objection would then go on to say, "Even when you refer to only one specific form of religion, that is illegitimate generalizing!" Well, no![5] You *can* also refer to a religion as a reality with a certain inner plurality and institutional representation, with a certain coherence in logic and continuity of tradition, one that can be studied and be taken seriously and that has more to tell us than only individual opinions.

Who's Afraid of Religion?

Now back to our initial claim that "religions want to shape this world." Is this frightening?

People who are afraid of this say that nobody should claim to shape the world! But then they are only covering up the fact that human actors are actually—individually and structurally—shaping this world—think of the effects of globalized capitalism.

People who are afraid of religions shaping the world may also say that it is non-religious institutions that should shape the world; a secular state, first of all! Well, such slogans are prone to create conceptual

[4]F. Heiler, *Das Gebet. Eine religionsgeschichtliche und religionspsychologische Untersuchung* (München/Basel: 1918, 1969), 346, following a distinction by N. Söderblom.

[5]F. Körner, "Das Dialogverständnis der katholischen Kirche: Eine theologische Grundlegung," *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 101:1/2 (2017): 89.

confusions. What is a secular state? If it is anti-religious, it tends to become a brutal monster. This has been proven by 20th-century totalitarian ideologies. Think of Hitler and Stalin. They were *de facto* anti-religious.[6] If "secular state" means separating state and religion, that can create new problems, as we see in today's France; the French President Emmanuel Macron may be rethinking this at present.[7] But so far, the state is there but in no constructive relation to the fact that many citizens want to be shaped by their religious sources more than by the idea of *laïcité*, which is what the French call secularity. The state, therefore, is forgetting that both need each other: the secular state and faith traditions.

The ideal should not be a "*separation* of state and religion" but a "*distinction* of state and religion." They *are* different: religions must not use physical force (the state has the monopoly on that) and the state must not tell religions what to confess, nor must the state privilege a particular religion. State and religions must interact, collaborate, and acknowledge their mutual dependence. That is what we need to discuss today with more precision.

The Paradigm Shift of 1965

To understand the Catholic story of religious liberty, we need to start from the insight that "religions want to shape this world." The big question that people of religions keep asking themselves is this: *how* can we shape this world—and thus fulfill our Lord's will today? And here the story becomes exciting in Catholicism.

For 100 years, from 1864 to 1965, the Roman Church officially kept a list of 80 views that all Catholics had to reject, an error list of sorts. Technically, it was Pius IX's famous *Syllabus Errorum*. Among the so-called "errors" were these two statements (nos. 77f):

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[6]R. Bucher, *Hitlers Theologie* (Würzburg: Echter, 2008).

[7]Discours du Président de la République, Emmanuel Macron, à la Conférence des évêques de France au Collège des Bernardins (April 9, 2018), available at https://bit.ly/32xYu27.

1) In the present day, it is no longer expedient that the Catholic religion should be held as the only religion of the State, to the exclusion of all other forms of worship.

1) Hence it has been wisely decided by law, in some Catholic countries, that persons coming to reside therein shall enjoy the public exercise of their own peculiar worship.

Note that we need to read this with a double negation: these two statements were considered wrong, indeed dangerous, and a reason for the one who held them to be declared a non-Catholic, but only until 1965. The Catholic Church has learned by now that her old rejection of these statements was unnecessary, indeed un-Christian. So, we can now declare a Roman Catholic "no" against the old Roman "no" against those two statements.

Why did the Roman Pontiff and many of his advisors at the end of the 19th century hold the position that Catholic religion should be the religion of the state and that no other religion should be permitted in Catholic countries? For one, they thought that this had always been the Church's view, the Church's desire, and the Church's best practice; secondly, these "errors" were condemned by the Popes because they were afraid to lose power.

One need not see that as stupid or selfish. Church leaders thought that religion should shape this world, and that meant for them, of course, that *true* religion should shape this world—so, their own religion. Therefore, any non-Catholic religious practice should be hindered by state authority—in other words, it is the will of God that our religion should have power.

Now that had not always been the case in history.[8] First, the Church was a weak and suppressed minority; then, some countries made Christianity the religion of the state: Armenia in 301, Ethiopia

[8]N. Tanner, *New Short History of the Catholic Church* (London/New York: Burns & Oates, 2011).

in 331. In the Roman state, Christian worship became legitimate in 313 and the one official religion in 391. However, while one should not imagine Latin Europe and medieval Christendom to be an organized world of established Catholicism through and through, it is true that Christian heretics and people of other faiths were in phases discriminated against, prosecuted, expelled, or even killed in the name of the Christian religion.

The Reformations brought a new plurality into Europe, although the rulers were normally intolerant within their own territory. They thought that stability could only be granted by confessional uniformity. This was true of all Early Modern rulers in Europe: Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Anglicans.

People who did not share their ruler's creed had to leave. Many of the immigrants to what are today the United States of America were such Christian faith refugees. They became the founders of a different polity: a state that allowed for a certain confessional plurality. Here the way to real freedom of religion was opened.

It was only during the horrors of World War II that the Allies declared certain "freedoms" to be the point of orientation for all humanity—at that point, they were on the way to a declaration of universal human rights. These were first formulated as the four freedoms: freedom of speech and worship, from want (that is, lack) and fear.[9]

The Roman Church at the time was unable to support the idea of freedom of worship. Why? The Popes and many of their advisors believed that it was absurd to give *right to error*. That is why Pius XII declared that the Catholic Church

> is a perfect society and has as its foundation the truth of Faith infallibly revealed by God. For this reason, that which is opposed to this truth is, necessarily, an error, and the same rights which are objectively recognized for truth cannot be afforded to error. In this manner, liberty of thought

[9]From Franklin Roosevelt's State of the Union address in 1941, known as "The Four Freedoms speech."

> and liberty of conscience have their essential limits in the truthfulness of God in Revelation.[10]

Now this is a statement made in October 1946. In June of that same year, the United Nations' Commission on Human Rights was established, the body that would meet for the first time in January of the following year and, in 1948, formulate what was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Article 18 (of altogether 30) reads:

> Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change [their] religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest [their] religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.[11]

The post-war Catholic Church thus lived through a severe clash of two mentalities. On the one hand, there was one century of inter-Catholic criticism of the aforementioned error list, Pope John XXIII's attitude of acknowledging others, and the experience—especially of Catholics in the United States—that collaboration with people of other denominations and religions was possible, indeed fruitful, for all. On the other hand, there was the fearful question: how can religion—Catholicism, for that matter—shape the world if worship in other religions is allowed, that is, if error receives a right?

So, there was great tension which broke in 1965. While the Second Vatican Council was already going on in Rome, American Jesuit John Courtney Murray (1904–1967) was called in to participate as theological adviser.[12] Fr. Murray was seminal in changing the mentality of the

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[10]Discorso di sua Santità Pio XII al tribunale della sacra Romana Rota (Palazzo Pontificio di Castel Gandolfo: Sunday, October 6, 1946), available at https://bit.ly/38iKxop (accessed November 20, 2018 [author's translation]).

[11]United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (Paris: United Nations, 1948), article 18.

[12]As a Jesuit scholastic, Murray lived and taught at Ateneo de Manila University from 1927 to 1930 and later studied at the Gregorian University for a doctorate in theology, which he concluded in 1937.

bishops gathered concerning freedom of religion. In December 1965, a short text then came out which marked the breakthrough: the declaration on religious freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, the first document approved in the last phase of Vatican II.

Studying the Concepts

How does Catholic theology argue for religious freedom today? To understand this, we will look at the two key theological concepts of religious freedom: faith and person. They also feature, alongside "dignity," "freedom," and "conscience," as the core hinges of the Vatican II declaration.

Faith

Catholic theology's fundamental argument for religious freedom consists in a reflection on what faith is:

- Faith is a relation of love,
- faith is a response in recognition,
- and faith, therefore, cannot be produced by human force.

People sometimes try to opt into something they are not really convinced of. For example: I am not sure whether I can manage to stay on that slippery trunk there which leads over this creek … well, I make up my mind telling myself that it will work out fine … and whoops! I slip into the water. Or, at other times, wow! It works. This kind of self-produced conviction is not a big problem; it is part of the playful risk of everyday life. However, it is not at all what we call faith. Thinking of faith in terms of an auto-suggestive conviction is "decisionism."[13] It would mean creating my own reality—an artificial world, a fantasy universe. A trusting relation is not such a wishful thinking game one plays in one's head.

[13]W. Pannenberg, "Wahrheit, Gewißheit und Glaube," in *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie. Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Vol. 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 247.

Rather, relational trust arises because one's personality is touched by someone else. One loves someone because one's heart is on fire for the beloved. Faith is our love relation with God. That is why faith needs to be understood as a response. It is not the product of my arbitrary decision; I am moved by God's giving of God's self to me.

True, our own faith story is often much less dramatic. For most of us, our way of learning to believe was quite similar to our way of learning our mother language, and that does not make it less valid or a lesser faith. Faith can begin to live within us because others make us the gift of faith. Faith can be a community practice. Many of us started by imitating others singing "Hallelujah." But later on, we came to believe more consciously, we learned to speak about it, many of us even became able to explain to others why it is not stupid to believe, and perhaps we were able to re-experience more deeply our loving relation to God in prayer.[14]

Since faith is a relational response, it can only start in a kindled heart. Therefore, faith cannot be produced by human force. And that is true in a double sense. For one, we cannot force someone else to believe. The other person may *say* she believes, but that is not the heart's fire of love. Strikingly, that is also true of oneself. That is the other side. Just like one cannot force oneself to love, to decide artificially to have that fire in one's heart, one cannot force oneself to believe. St. Paul describes well his experience of what faith is when he says he was "seized" (*katalambanesthai* [Philippians 3:12]).

Now, looking at it clearly, we see another striking fact. If one is seized by love, one is at the same time fully in the beloved and fully oneself. One is fully in the beloved since one senses that the source and aim of one's love is the other, not oneself, and one is fully oneself because one senses that there is no other force exerted on oneself

[14]By way of example, the prayer path at the heart of the Ignatian spiritual tradition is: interior sensing of all the good I have received—which leads to profound gratitude—which leads to serving God lovingly in everything (*cognoscimiento interno de tanto bien recibido, para que yo enteramente reconosciendo, pueda en todo amar y servir a su divina majestad*) (Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, no. 233).

but that fire which is in one's own heart. Those are the very particular dynamics of love. They make it difficult to speak about love other than in strange words. That is why we use contradictory sounding words in faith. Our faith speech seems paradoxical. We must say at the same time that in love we are passive *and* active; we are seized *and* we are ourselves; we are not deciding *and* we are willing; it is not at all arbitrary *and* we are free!

If faith is a relation of love, then it is impossible to produce it by force. That is the basic line of argumentation of Catholic theology concerning freedom of religion. With that explanation in mind, one may be able to sense both the story of tensions and the theology of love between the lines of this key paragraph of *Dignitatis Humanae* (no. 10):

> It is one of the major tenets of Catholic doctrine that [the human] response to God in faith must be free: no one therefore is to be forced to embrace the Christian faith against [their] own will. This doctrine is contained in the word of God and it was constantly proclaimed by the Fathers of the Church. The act of faith is of its very nature a free act.…[15] It is therefore completely in accord with the nature of faith that in matters religious every manner of coercion on the part of [human beings] should be excluded. In consequence, the principle of religious freedom makes no small contribution to the creation of an environment in which [human beings] can without hindrance be invited to the Christian faith, embrace it of their own free will, and profess it effectively in their whole manner of life.[16]

According to this theology, faith really becomes only possible in an atmosphere of freedom.

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[15]One sentence has been omitted from the above quote because it requires another explanation. The sentence runs thus: "[Human beings,] redeemed by Christ the Savior and through Christ Jesus called to be God's adopted [children], cannot give [their] adherence to God revealing Himself unless, under the drawing of the Father, [they offer] to God the reasonable and free submission of faith [*rationabile … obsequium*]." The last words are not very well translated into English. They are, in fact, alluding to Paul's encouragement of the believers: dedicate yourselves just like a sacrifice, so that your lives become "spiritual / intelligent / reasonable / logos-oriented service" (*rationabile obsequium* [Romans 12:1]).

[16]Paul VI, *Dignitatis Humanae*, no. 10.

Person

In the Middle Ages, the Church seemed to have lost contact with the Biblical understanding of faith. Faith had become separated from love. The full understanding of what faith is had to be rediscovered. Lutheran-Catholic dialogue was a great help here.[17] Today, we see that the relational and responsive view of faith was already its notion in the Old Testament. The Semitic root that expresses the grateful entrusting of oneself to another is *ʾ-m-n*—cf. "Amen/Amīn" and the Arabic word for "faith," *imān*. Things are quite different in the case of the word we need to study now: the Christian concept of person. It has no direct Semitic predecessor. "Person" has a surprising history.[18] It received its life in Christian theological reflections. Briefly put,[19] the history of the word "person" is this: a Greek word meaning "face" was mixed with a Latin word meaning "mask, role" and this was used in the description of the interrelation between Jesus and the one whom Jesus called his "heavenly Father." Under those inspirations, the concept of person was then applied as well to the human being in general but now transporting four specific aspects: dignity, relation, conscience, and history.

Person in dignity. The Old Testament already saw that every human being is a carrier of a very high dignity. A key passage for Biblical anthropology is this one from the Book of Psalms:

> What is a human being that you [o Lord] remember him, / a son of man that you look after him? / You made him little less than God / and crowned him with glory and honor. (Psalm 8:4f)[20]

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[17]The Lutheran World Federation & Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *The Apostolicity of the Church* (Lutheran University Press, 2006), nos. 105, 130.

[18]W. Pannenberg, "Person," *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Vol. 5 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1961), cols. 231–235.

[19]W. Pannenberg, *Anthropologie in theologischer Perspektive* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 229 (ch. 5,3).

[20]Biblical passages are taken from the *Christian Standard Bible* unless otherwise indicated.

God has no problem, the Psalm sees, in sharing God's own holiness with us. And the Torah says that every human life is legally protected, the reason for this protection being, again, one of a special elevation:

> Whoever sheds human blood, / by humans his blood will be shed, /
> for God made humans in his image. (Genesis 9:6)

If human beings have such a high position, one can also apply another (not explicitly Biblical but Stoic) title to us: "dignity," and one can say that dignity is what *all* human beings *always* have not because of their performance and achievement but simply because they are human beings. So, here is expressed a principal equality of all humanity. Now from that equality one can also conclude that if people of one particular religion should be free to believe and worship, all human beings of whatever religious view should be free to have, practice, and propagate their conviction.

In short, then, we are all human beings, that is, dignified; that is, we have equal rights. But there is more in the concept of person.

Person in relation. A fascinating explanation of what is really meant by "person" is this: *person is the reality that finds itself in its other*.[21] To understand this, we should make a comparison. Though originating in "theological theology" (in the Christian doctrine of God), "person" became the programmatic word in Christian *anthropology*, that is, our theological answer to the question "What is the human being?" Now, by contrast, a key word of the Enlightenment answer to that question is that the "human being is fundamentally the *individual*."[22] If one focuses on individuality, one underlines that each of us is different and needs space and respect. While this is an important emphasis, one is now in danger of seeing humanity as a huge number of lonely originals. The dynamics of mutuality, dependence, interaction, solidarity, community, society, and responsibility seem to be marginalized. Are they not fundamentally human, too?

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[21]Pannenberg, *Anthropologie in theologischer Perspektive*, 264 (ch. 6,2a).

[22]W. Pannenberg, "Person und Subjekt," in *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie*, 80–95.

Person, therefore, is the foundational concept of Christian anthropology. Let us see in more detail how it came into the picture. Christian theology witnesses to God as being fully relational.

- Jesus glorifies his heavenly Father and makes all space for him so that the Kingdom of the Father can come (thus Jesus is "the Son");
- the heavenly Father glorifies his Son, Jesus, in not withholding from him any honor, even the glory that is reserved to God alone (and thus God is "Father"); and
- the Holy Spirit glorifies the Father and the Son by letting creatures participate in the acknowledging love which Jesus and his Father share (and thus the Spirit is the spirit of communion).

So, we must say that Father, Son, and Spirit owe their reality to each other. Father, Son, and Spirit are what theology first called "persons." Now one can see why we say that person is that reality that has its life in the other, that receives itself from the other, that arrives at its fullness in giving itself to the other. Let us continue here: it is altogether meaningful to rediscover human nature in light of what we learned from the Biblical witness about God. The human being, too, is best described as that reality which finds itself in its other. This is the reason why Christian theology answers the question "What is the human being?" by saying "person"!

What is the link between the human being as person and religious freedom? The understanding of human beings as persons underlines their relationality. Relationality lives from giving to and receiving from *the other*. This relation of mutual giving is free. It would be destroyed if the giving happened under an exterior force. However, if lived in respect, otherness and difference are not problematic but fruitful. Persons are realities that can discover how productive tensions can be. Contrasts and even contradictions are part of personhood because they are part of relationality. This discovery comes through in the Church

formula that the encounter with people of other faiths is a "positive challenge," a "purification and enrichment."[23]

In short, then, we are persons and therefore relational, therefore in need of the other's free giving of that which I myself do not have, therefore in favor of living together in diversity and also in religious diversity. And yet there is still more to the concept of person.

Person of conscience. As we have just seen, one alternative model in anthropology for describing what a human being is other than person is "the individual." Now another proposal in the Enlightenment tradition is to respond to the question about human nature by saying subjectivity—that is to say, the human being is first and foremost a subject. Again, this offer makes good points. It underlines that each of us must be warranted to ourselves rights and freedoms, that each of us is capable of rationality and responsibility, and that each of us has his or her own perception and perspective.

However, if one overemphasizes subjectivity, one runs into serious problems. If one focuses on "the subject," one underlines the fact that different people have different points of view, different ways of seeing and understanding, and one tends to hold that whatever truth there may be, it is seen only from one's own perspective. There are important insights in this, but one is now in danger of fragmenting reality into a huge number of perspectives and ending there. With all the subjective perspectives, one loses sight of intersubjectivity and one might give up one's aspiration to objectivity. Are there no matter-of-fact arguments anymore? Does one not have to admit sometimes that one was mistaken and had to correct oneself because one later saw reality more clearly? Are there only "alternative facts"?

[23]John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 56: "Other religions constitute a positive challenge for the Church: they stimulate her both to discover and acknowledge the signs of Christ's presence and of the working of the Spirit…"; cf. also John Paul II's address to the Secretariat for Non-Christians on March 3, 1984, *Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission*, no. 21: "Religious experiences and outlooks can themselves be purified and enriched in this process of encounter."

Of course, no human being can claim to possess the truth, understand it fully, and be able to express it indisputably beyond all controversy. All truth claims will be challenged. That is part of our relationality. It helps us to become humble. However, we now seem stuck between the call for *objectivity* beyond the fragmentation of subjectivity and the reminder of humility. Christian anthropology comes in with another key observation here: we all have a conscience; that is to say, I have as a human being a certain capacity to understand reality and myself and a certain capacity to see, in light of that, how I must act. Conscience is already a New Testament word; indeed, Paul uses it (1 Corinthians 10:29 etc.). And it is also Paul who offers us the word to describe what we are doing in our conscience:

> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may *discern* [dokimazein] what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2 [English Standard Version])

Each person has the ability to discern in his or her own conscience, and people cannot judge whether or not another person's discernment is correct. What everyone must always do, however, is help others to form their conscience—to understand what loving action is and to see other perspectives of reality. Faith traditions have a key role to play in the formation of conscience.

The institutions of society will still punish someone who, though obeying their conscience, goes against current norms, yet according to the Christian understanding one is morally free to discern, decide, and act according to one's own conscience; indeed, one is obliged to do so (cf. Acts 5:29). St. Thomas Aquinas famously said, already in the 13th century, that one must obey one's conscience even if it is in error. With Pope Francis, this view has become important once again; indeed, the Church no longer uses the judgmental language of "error" in this context. We say, rather, that the Church cannot take the place of the personal conscience in its discernment. However, we try to form the human conscience to be a truly personal conscience, one that includes the self-critical question of whether one is listening to one's conscience shaped by a growing understanding of oneself, the world,

and the Gospel or only following some selfish instinct or artificial ideology. One cannot have absolute certainty in this, but such is the risk of personhood; indeed, it is the risk of freedom, of humanity. However, we are not just left alone with individual consciences in their own final judgements; we are persons and that includes, after dignity, relationality, and conscience, a fourth aspect: history.

Person in history. The Vatican II document on religious liberty was an enormous breakthrough and offers conceptual backup for what we have said so far. However, we must go beyond the teachings of *Dignitatis Humanae* in this last aspect. The text has already offered important elements but it did not draw out the lines to their conclusion—that the human person is the "I" of religious freedom because it lives in history. History does not simply mean "past"; history means "in time, temporal existence," and temporal existence means that we are in the present, separated by the flow of moments from the past and from the future. We have a certain access to the past through memory and record. We have a certain access to the future through hypothetical anticipation. This is true, and yet these are strong limitations which fundamentally mark our way of life. The historicity of personal existence has three vital consequences for the theological justification of religious liberty.

i) Anticipation as humility. We want to hold our faith convictions as being absolutely reliable. We can be seized in our hearts by the experience of love, the core of faith. In those moments, there is no exterior question of argument and controversy. But when thinking about our faith at other moments, alone or together, we can also see that absolutely certain knowledge is not possible for us within time. So, we can become aware of the epistemological status of our faith as trust. That is not a lack of faith, not an evil doubt. It is just a fair way of seeing it in context. We can then accept that in faith, when we are, say, on fire in praising the glory of Christ, we are in fact anticipating the end of history. We sense that the Easter encounters of the first disciples were already intuiting what will be eternity: the life communion of creatures with the heavenly Father. However, through reflection we may come to see that other people can actually anticipate the end of days differently. Since we have no absolute knowledge of the future, we

know at least that *our* way of anticipating the end and meaning of all things is not the only possible way of anticipation. Only when the end is there will we see. In this sense, there is a hypothesis in all faith. If we accept this, we can also accept that other people anticipate the fullness of everything differently, and that is why the insight of the human person as historical existence is a reason to accept religious freedom.

ii) Mystery as dignity. Second, we must never forget that the person we encounter in this life is at this present moment unable to show us their full reality. Even of ourselves we by no means know everything as of yet. Many sides of our personality will manifest themselves only later. If one treats someone as a person, one also acknowledges that this limited impression one gets now from him or her is only a part of the greater reality which is more whole and more holy than what can be perceived now. In this sense, each person is a mystery, and to respect that mystery and give them space to unfold more and more is to acknowledge that person's dignity. Part of this respect is respecting their present state of truth discovery. So, from our "historical" existence as persons, it follows that we also respect the liberty of the other person's conscience in their faith discernment.

iii) The learning process as dialogue. Many faith traditions have foundational texts like the Bible and the Qur'an. It would be wrong to say that in the light of new discoveries we have to eliminate those old texts and write new ones. They are unchangeable. However, it would be wrong to say that our understanding of our texts is also unchangeable. In the light of ever new experiences and scientific progress, we also better understand the real contents of our belief. We need to see that the contents were formulated for a certain historical situation and mentality, and that they must be understood and realized in ever new historical situations. This process of ever better understanding is part of our historical existence, and it is not a disturbing but an interesting process of discovery. Now this process of discovery is not exclusive. We do not exclude persons of other convictions from contributing to that process. While not using the concept of historicity, even *Dignitatis Humanae* already saw how good and necessary this process of truth finding by encounter is:

> Wherefore every [human being] has the duty, and therefore the right, to seek the truth in matters religious in order that [they] may with prudence form for [themselves] right and true judgments of conscience, under use of all suitable means.
>
> Truth, however, is to be sought after in a manner proper to the dignity of the human person and [their] social nature. The inquiry is to be free, carried on with the aid of teaching or instruction, communication and dialogue, in the course of which [human beings] explain to one another the truth they have discovered, or think they have discovered, in order thus to assist one another in the quest for truth.[24]

Discussing the Problems

In Discussion with Islamic Views

In Christian-Muslim dialogue, there is concern that some Muslims—individuals, preachers, movements—might reject the human right of religious freedom on the ground that it is "un-Islamic." But is it, really?

Throughout history, Islamic polities tended to be more welcoming toward Christians and Jews than Christian polities were to Muslims and Jews. Still, the history of Islam cannot be presented as a series of instances of religious freedom. If the Jews did not become Muslims, Muḥammad would have had them driven out of Medina or killed. The reason, however, was not their divergent religious professions; rather, he was concerned about political unreliability, and outside Mecca and Medina Islam soon had a legal instrument to let most non-Muslims survive under Islamic supremacy: the *ḏimma*, the protective citizenship for followers of "religions of the Book." While this is not equality, the status of the *ḏimmī* offered security, for example, to Jews fleeing to the Ottoman Empire from the "Catholic" Reconquista of Spain.

[24]Paul VI, *Dignitatis Humanae*, no. 3.

But what about the human right of religious freedom, that is, the legal and social equality granted to all members and groups of all religions and convictions, including unbelievers and apostates?

God's rights "or" human rights. Muslims sometimes perceive the concept of a "human right" to be offensive. "Human rights" (Arabic *ḥuqūq al-ādamiyīn* or *ḥuqūq al-ʿibād*) can be the antonym to the rights of God (*ḥuqūq Allāh*). Both terms appear in a particular Islamic legal discussion from the 11th century onwards that deals with a question concerning the five offences expressly sanctioned in the Qur'an, the *ḥudūd* ("borders"; singular *ḥadd*), namely, violent street robbery, fornication, the false accusation thereof, alcohol consumption, and theft. The *ḥudūd* concept can be extended to other serious crimes and can be systematized as a disturbance of public order. Who is the holder of the legal interest concerned? Who is the aggrieved party? For the great Transoxanian legal scholar as-Saraḫsī (d. ca. 1096), it is God. So, if draconian corporal punishments are imposed, the community acts in the place of God.

In the terminology being proposed here, "human right" is precisely not the opposite of God's right. "Human" stands here rather because the respective rights apply not only to a certain group but to each member of humanity. As we have seen when we were studying the "dignity of humanity," it is given to us, according to the Biblical witness, by God himself. So, granting human rights can be seen as an application of God's will rather than as an infringement of God's rights. The same can be said from a Muslim perspective, as we will soon see.

Compatibility with Qur'anic Views

The weakest form of Qur'anic argumentation is simply adducing verses, for what the verses mean is always controversial. Nevertheless, it is worth considering four Qur'anic themes before looking into a basic "gesture" of the Qur'an.

i) Natural law. Christian anthropology argues in the light of Christian revelation but claims that the human realities it discovers in this light can also be seen by those who do not acknowledge this revelation. In

this sense, Christian anthropology appeals to natural reason and has a natural law aspect. What about the Qur'an?

The Qur'an is even less preoccupied with the particularity of its own message. For the Qur'an, the history of humankind is not an event of ever new surprises but a sequence of events in "repetitions of patterns."[25] One of the patterns that appear over and again is that of a prophet with his or her divine message leading a people out of ignorance (*ǧāhilīya*). However, this divine message is not something that people cannot discover by themselves through careful observation of the orders of nature and thorough reflection.

Sura 30 points to natural structures six times: they are a "sign" of God (vv. 20–25). The listener is then called to come before God like Abraham, in that pure form of faith undefiled by later distortions. In the Qur'an, anyone who believes in such an undistorted manner is called a *ḥanīf*.

> Now turn your face to the religion! As a *Ḥanīf!* That is the natural way (*fiṭra*) in which God created humankind. The way in which God created cannot be exchanged for anything else. This is the straightforward religion. But most people do not know. (30:30)

The Qur'an considers its contents to be rational—every human being can understand these, even find these independently from the Qur'an. This has three consequences. The first, upon hearing that Christians sometimes start wondering whether the Qur'an is, then, not ultimately unnecessary, is the Muslim claim that it does not furnish anything new. The first prophet was Adam, that is, the first human being, and all true prophets have proclaimed the same message: there is only one God, prepare for God's final judgment, and do justice. The Qur'an's newness is only in that it corrects what has been distorted

[25]F. Körner, "Gottes Weltregierung im Prozess der Geschichte. Handlungstheorien bei Wolfhart Pannenberg und in der islamischen Theologie," in G. Wenz, ed., *Offenbarung als Geschichte. Implikationen und Konsequenzen eines theologischen Programms*, Pannenberg-Studien, Vol. 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 200: "Musterwiederholung."

by false religious traditions and brings the divine message across in a particularly intensive, beautiful, and catching manner.

Secondly, can Muslims argue for human rights in a philosophical manner? Yes, it is humanly possible because of the access to truth that we already have as human beings. Simply look and reflect.

Lastly, this also has consequences for the Qur'anic theology of religions. For the Qur'an, all religions make basically the same claim. Indeed, while everything that does not correspond to the Qur'anic teaching in another religion must be a later distortion, the principle that all religions convey basically the same contents is also a kind of tolerance. It is not an acknowledgment of the difference in contents but an argument to let the others live.

ii) The meaning of plurality. One verse speaks of religious diversity as desired by God; from this is drawn a remarkable conclusion for living together:

> For each of you we [God] have determined a custom (*šir'a*) and a way (*minhağ*). And if God had wanted, he would have made you into one community (*umma*). But he wanted to put you to the test through what he gave you. Now compete for the good things! (5:48b)

The meaning is obviously this: different groups of people with different God-given traditions exist to incite each other to more righteousness. That means, no less, that it is good for Muslims that there are others, that is, the "religious other."

iii) Freedom of religion. The Qur'an provides two series of statements that are difficult to subsume under one category. Almost every religion knows a similar tension. On the one hand, the divine will happens in everything; on the other hand, people are called intensely to conversion, making them seem to be involved in working for their own salvation after all.

> The one that wills therefore believes, and the one that wills believes not. (18:29)

Punishment for unbelief is announced; it is, however, an exclusively eschatological punishment. By contrast, there is a verse addressed to the proclaimer of the Qur'an that runs thus:

> And if thy Lord had willed, all that are upon the earth would have believed together. Will you then compel human beings to believe? (10:99)

The context and meaning here is that the preacher of faith—then and now—is disappointed by so little resonance in view of his or her tireless commitment; the consolation given here, however, argues that one simply cannot force people to believe. More famous—and more clear—is what the Qur'an will state later in Medina:

> In religion there is no compulsion. The right way has become clear in the face of error. He that believes not in idols but believes in God, therefore, holds unto the firmest rope, where there is no tearing. And God hears and knows. God is the friend of those who believe. He brings them out of the darkness into the light. But the unbelievers have idols for friends. They bring them out of the light into the darkness. They will be inmates of the fire of hell and remain therein. (2:256–257)

However, even if the meaning of both passages is, first of all, that one *cannot* force people to believe, they are often used as a reason for stating that one *must not* force them. There is justification for this because here the Qur'an presents coercion in matters of faith as something contrary to faith.

iv) Dignity and honor. The Qur'an also provides a theological basis for the idea of human dignity—the human being is God's "representative." That is mostly the way *ḫalīfa* in Sura 2:30 is understood. Everything is placed at the service of the human being (32:20). She or he must be honored by the angels (38:72f), and the Qur'an says, "We (God) have honored the children of Adam" (17:70).

Muslims use such verses as apologetic proof texts to show that human dignity is something originally Islamic or as a help for understanding human dignity in a characteristically Muslim manner. That is plausible—according to the Qur'an, God has manifested that God honors us by giving us special care in protecting us and providing for us. The Qur'an also does not make any gradations within humanity here but speaks of the human being without excepting anyone.

However, there are other verses that place men above women (4:34) and believers above unbelievers (3:31f).

A Qur'anic quotation obviously does not end all discussion. There are conflicting Qur'anic statements, and interpretations are necessary and will always be controversial. So, citing individual verses is not enough; instead of searching only for isolated proof texts, we should look for fundamental Qur'anic patterns of thought. These will demonstrate more convincingly why it is Qur'anic to esteem others—even those with other religious convictions.

v) A fundamental Qur'anic gesture. The Qur'an presents God as the one who addresses people, admonishes them to conversion of heart, and invites them to believe. Basically, the Qur'an is God's call to human beings. God calls humanity to conversion from all paths of perdition because God wants us to go along the right path. However, God does not beat human beings onto that path. God does not steer them like puppets; rather, God speaks to them. God advertises and reminds and argues; God treats people as mature, insightful beings that can be reached with reasons and through their reason. If for Muslims the Qur'an is God's call to conversion from disorientation to faith and justice, then the Qur'an presupposes that human beings are free. Therefore, whoever wants to treat people as God treats them in the Qur'an must take them seriously as thinking creatures capable of making decisions, as free. The Tunisian Muslim writer Mohamed Talbi (aṭ-Ṭālbī [d. 2017]) argued along those lines for a Qur'anic justification of religious freedom, and he has a point there.

Concerns

By way of conclusion, I will point briefly at five areas of possible legal and religious problems and indicate in which direction one should proceed.

Collisions with other human rights? How are conflicts between different fundamental rights to be dealt with? For example, the call to prayer should be allowed since it is part of public religious practice. On the other hand, people have a right to be left undisturbed at night, and a call to *ṣalāt al-fağr*, the ritual morning prayer, shortly after four o'clock in

the morning can be perceived as a disruption. Other such discussions include the right to conduct male circumcision[26] vis-à-vis the right to physical integrity. In such conflicts between different fundamental rights, one cannot find a mathematical solution. A transparent legal debate based on rational arguments must be employed to find viable solutions.

Heretics? Often more problematic than dealing with persons of *other* religions is another challenge, viz., dealing with those one considers heretics of one's own religion: sectarians, deviants, whatever the respective tradition calls them. Family conflicts, those from one's intimate story and one's credentials, are often more painful than tensions with people farther away from home.

Some experiences and insights gained from intra-Christian dialogue may be helpful here.[27] It seems that both Christians and Muslims develop cultures of intra-religious plurality and religious freedom more easily during times when the majority mentality is one of grateful self-esteem. An inferiority complex, by contrast, seems to flip over to poor oversimplifications of one's own religious tradition and then to intolerant exclusions and identity-grasping agitations. If this is true, intra-religious tolerance and freedom can be promoted best by improving a religious culture's self-knowledge and self-esteem.

Public practice? Should Islam allow other believers to practice their religions audibly and visibly in areas under Muslim sovereignty? On the way toward a response, the author of the following shares a personal experience.

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[26]What is euphemistically and misleadingly called "female circumcision" is in fact a dangerous mutilation where the only rationally conceivable solution is the complete abandonment of the tradition.

[27]I hope to publish soon an article that has grown out of my 2017 *Pakighinabi* contribution at Ateneo de Davao University; so far, one may confer "Exploring Intra-Religious Dialogue through ADDU's Al Qalam Institute with Fr. Felix Koerner, S.J." at https://bit.ly/3cIZYZa (accessed November 20, 2018).

> At the end of a high ranked dialogue event, the first seminar of the "Catholic–Muslim Forum," in Rome 2008,[28] we wanted to sign a communiqué which stated among other things that religious minorities have the right of public religious practice. Several members of the Muslim delegation, however, wanted that passage to be eliminated. They said [that] where Islam predominates [they] do not want Church bells to challenge the expression of Islamic rule. The turning point came through a Muslim leader from a formerly communist country. He said: "If we do not allow the churches to ring their bells, we behave like the communists. They feared to lose power and therefore prohibited public *adān* (the Muslim call to prayer). We should not imitate the communists; we should grant liberty to the churches!" That was a wise and effective statement.

In future life under the Bangsamoro Organic Law, even if the legal situation guarantees religious freedom, what can be done against a turn in the mentality of majority of the population toward a society that does not allow a clearly perceptible public practice of non-Muslim faiths? An answer will be given at the end of the next section.

Apostates? How can Muslims deal with people who decide to leave their religious community? Another personal note may be in place here.

> I lived in Turkey for six years. There, Christians are a small minority. They amount to less than 1% of the total population. Still, the Turkish majority society sometimes made us feel that they were afraid of us "missionaries": we might convert Muslims to Christianity and baptize them; we might do that by giving them money. We never gave anybody any money to make him or her a Christian. And none of those (few) who were baptized had received any money from us.

Still, religious freedom also implies that all religions can practice their faith, and the practice of most faith traditions includes propagation of the message, mission, *tablīġ*, *da ʿwa*, invitation—with different methods and means of motivation. In theory, this can include missionary groups inciting people to conversion by giving them money,

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[28]F. Körner, "Das erste Seminar im katholisch–muslimischen Forum. Theologische und islamwissenschaftliche Auswertung," in M. Delgado & G. Vergauwen, eds., *Interkulturalität. Begegnung und Wandel in den Religionen*, Religionsforum, Vol. 5 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2009), 229–248.

which can also result in individuals changing their religion. In Turkey, Muslims who defect from Islam are not subject to legal prosecution, although some Muslims consider them apostates (*murtadd*) and exert social pressure. In some countries, becoming an apostate can lead to being killed. Thus, even if the legal system also grants religious freedom to the individual, what can be done against such abuses which may lead to societal sanctions all the way down to murder? The key point is that laws do not automatically shape society. The most humane legal code does not guarantee a humane society; for that, education in school, at home, in preaching, and in the media is vital. Credible religious leaders must show convincingly that state legislation is in accordance with God's will as expressed in the holy texts and the tradition. The above reflections are meant to serve this purpose.

Losing Influence? An Epilogue

"All religions will lose influence under a rule of religious freedom." Claims such as this one call for a sober, precise, and multidisciplinary discussion. As an epilogue, four notions can be hinted at, four observations from four angles, from four different academic disciplines.

1) The political sciences can provide a concept that is helpful in describing the power of religions to shape the world when the state has the monopoly of physical force. When religion has no power to coerce, it is not powerless. It has power to persuade; it is a *soft power*.[29]

2) Legal scholarship offers an impressive reflection that explains why the secular is in need of such soft powers, especially those of a religious grounding. In a state that grants civil freedom and rule of law, people cannot be forced physically to go by the rules; much, in fact, cannot be regulated legally. The society in such a state is built on trust. It must rely on the honesty and

[29]J. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

solidarity of most citizens. To secure such a mentality, which is vital for a state that grants freedom, one needs *moral inspiration*, that is, institutions that care for the internalization, interpretation, and refreshment of ethical intuitions like honesty and solidarity. Such structures exist on a large scale only within religions. The classical formulation of this insight is the dilemma that "the free and secularized state lives by prerequisites which it cannot guarantee itself."[30]

3) Moral theology shows us that the truly religious influence of religions on societies should be the *formation of consciences*.[31]

4) Finally, political theology reminds us of another aspect of religious freedom. Religions are not to be the functionaries of a state; instead, religions are *critical interlocutors* of politics. They need to be free to remind leaders of their limits—where they go wrong, where they fail to perceive problems, and where they overrate their capacity to produce a perfect world with human hands, which will always remain an empty promise and a totalitarian one at that. Religions need to remind all actors of their merely preliminary, relative, and limited power.[32]

[30]E.-W. Böckenförde, *Staat, Gesellschaft, Freiheit. Studien zur Staatstheorie und zum Verfassungsrecht* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976), 60 (author's translation).

[31]Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 222.

[32]W. Pannenberg, *Systematische Theologie*, Vol. 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 70 (ch. 12,2a).

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JESUS CHRIST
Partial or Fullness of Truth?

Lancy Monteiro, S.J.

The presence of and encounter with the world religions have given rise to a view that Jesus Christ is only a partial revelation of God rather than its fullness, and that revelation across the religions altogether make up the fullness of God's revelation. Simply put, truths found in all religions make up the Truth. Paul Knitter is one such Christian theologian who holds such a view, which is obviously contrary to Christian faith. This essay argues that Jesus is the Truth or the fullness of God's revelation from the standpoint of the New Testament. At the same time, an attempt is also made to uphold Knitter's idea, namely, that there are "truths" in religions.

The presence of metacosmic religions in the world has been a persistent challenge for the Church's mission of proclaiming the Truth, Jesus Christ. Having encountered the phenomena of religions, some theologians of religions are of the view that the Divine Mystery is inexhaustible and that every religion, whether gnostic or agapeic, is a partial knowledge of the same inexhaustible Divine Mystery.[1] Paul

[1]Dupuis, too, holds that Jesus's human existence and his human consciousness (or his historical particularity) impose limits and, therefore, that revelation in him cannot be full and complete. A finite/limited reality cannot reveal fully the Absolute/Divine reality-in-itself. Jesus's revelation of God in his humanity, therefore, is incomplete:

Knitter is one such theologian of religious pluralism who submits to and propounds such a view. For him, Jesus was not and cannot be the fullness of the Truth simply because the Divine Mystery is inexhaustible. Consequently, God's revelation in him was partial and never full. This is because of the following: 1) Jesus never claimed to be God; instead, he proclaimed God and God's kingdom. They were the controlling horizon of his mission and ministry and the vision and inspiration behind whatever he said and did from the beginning until the end. He was ultimate not to himself but to God and God's kingdom. He was not the fullness of God and God's kingdom. 2) The Divine Mystery ever remains the Absolute and can never be exhausted in its manifestation in the particular/finite. In its finite manifestation, it is always multifaceted. Hence, the Truth in a limited or partial way is

> God remains beyond the man Jesus as the ultimate source of … revelation.… Jesus' revelation of God is a human transposition of God's mystery.… The personal identity of Jesus as Son of God in his human existence notwithstanding, a distance continues to exist between God (the Father), the ultimate source, and he who is God's human icon. Jesus is no substitute for God. (J. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* [Marykoll, NY: Orbis, 2001], 298)

For Dupuis, the mystery of God ever exceeds the humanity of Jesus; therefore, it can never be exhausted by anything particular. Cf. M. Yenson, "Jacques Dupuis and Chalcedon," *Theological Studies* 80:2 (2019): 273. Nevertheless, Dupuis defines the fullness of revelation in Jesus as the best possible revelation that has occurred and is available in human history in terms of its intensity, which cannot be superseded by any other revelation of God. It is not absolute revelation, however, for only the Divine reality-in-itself and not any finite reality can be absolute. For some, Jesus is God but they deny the inverse statement that God is Jesus Christ since it is only the Son who incarnated and not the Father and the Spirit; the whole Trinity did not incarnate. Hence, God cannot be identified with Jesus fully and the latter cannot be the fullness of revelation. Others ask how, if in Jesus the fullness of God dwells, can God still be omnipresent while incarnated. Similarly, if God is omnipresent and also present in the immanent trinity while incarnated, can God's incarnation not manifest the fullness of divinity? Cf. J. Cassidy, "Review of Karl Barth and the Incarnation, by Darren O. Sumner," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 79:2 (2017): 378–379.

found in all religions. All religions, therefore, are fragments and limited expressions of the one Truth. Any one religion's truth is not the entire Truth or the fullness of Truth. The historical consciousness of our times only affirms this fact. 3) For Knitter, all this means that Jesus is not the fullness of God's revelation but the partial, indefinite, and surpassable revelation. Hence, all of Jesus is God, but Jesus is not all of God—Jesus is *totus Deus*, not *totum Dei*. *Deus semper Major*. We may have met God in Jesus but it does not mean that we have the fullness of God in him. He does not exhaust God. Knitter's definition of Jesus is that he is *truly* but not *solely* divine and the savior because, as mentioned, God is more than Jesus. For as long as God remains God, no one can have the final word on such a God. Jesus as the fullness of God's revelation, found in the New Testament Christologies, is the product of particular times, i.e., of the presence of classicist culture, the disciples' Jewish eschatological-apocalyptic mentality, and a technique of survival (or of carving out a new identity). 4) From a Christian viewpoint, insofar as the Holy Spirit and the Logos are present and active in the world, more of God can always be revealed. The Word revealed in Jesus Christ has been, is, and will be revealing in salvation history. Therefore, for Knitter, the Word revealed in Jesus is partial and, therefore, Jesus along with other revealed words makes the fullness of the Word.[2]

Obviously, Knitter's elaboration of Jesus Christ is in dissonance with the New Testament revelation. While it is to be affirmed that Jesus is the fullness of God's revelation, the presence of revelation in religions cannot simply be ruled out. Certainly, from the Christian standpoint, we cannot tread Knitter's path. Jesus cannot be a fragment of God's revelation. In disagreement with Knitter's view, this essay argues that a distinction between "Truth" and "truths" can uphold both the fullness of revelation in Jesus Christ and truths in other religions. By "Truth," I mean here the very manifestation of God's being/self in the person of Jesus of Nazareth—God enfleshed, Emmanuel,

[2]P. Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," in J. Hick & P. Knitter, eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 178–200.

God to humans as humans. "Truths" refer to everything that leads to humankind's knowledge about God/the Absolute/transcendence gained either naturally or supernaturally and to the elements that aid meaningful human/religious existence. The former is an explicit and direct presentation of God-in-God's self (1 Jn. 1:1) while the latter is our knowledge of God which is other than God's being revealed in Jesus and comes by way of human effort or through revelation that is of aid to humans for their human/religious existence. One is revelation of the very Godself which is qualitatively different and the other is revelation about God (God's nature, qualities, presence, etc.) and humans (their nature, origin, existence, destiny, etc.) through other diverse means. Besides knowledge about God, the latter may also include elements that aid human-religious existence. "Truths," therefore, preclude revelation of God's self. "Truths" do not add to or complement the "Truth" in any way.

This essay, therefore, is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the New Testament titles of Jesus and tries to show that they refer essentially to Yahweh himself or to Jesus's belonging to the same sphere as that of God. Hence, when they are used for Jesus, they refer to him as God. The later creed and trinitarian doctrines articulate the same with expressions such as "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten and not made, of the same substance of the Father," eternal generation, consubstantiality, perfect union of two natures, and so on. Consequently, God's revelation in Jesus cannot be anything other than the revelation of God's self; Jesus, therefore, is the fullness of God's revelation. In the second section, I wish to discuss the distinction between the "Truth" and "truths," the presence of "truths," their origin, and their relation to Christocentrism.

I. Revelation of the Truth

The specificity of Jesus lies in the fact that he is God. He is the manifestation of the very Godself, God's very self-communication, the very being of God, God in human flesh, the epiphany of God, the perfect visible expression of the reality of God. That is the Truth. The

New Testament affirms this by describing him as the Logos (Jn. 1:1), pre-existing/begotten Son of God (Heb. 1:2, 5, 8; Phil. 2:6; Mk. 1:1; Lk. 1:35; 22:70; Jn. 3:16, 18; 5:25; 20:31; 1 Jn. 4:19; Rom. 8:3), man from heaven (1 Cor. 15:47), Christ/Messiah, and Lord. In him, the fullness of God dwelt (Col. 1:19; 2:9) and the invisible had become visible (Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:4). Apart from John's Gospel, the Letter to the Hebrews is the most explicit declaration of the Son's ontological relation and resemblance to the Father in calling him the very imprint of God's glory/nature (Heb. 1:3); indeed, the intent of Heb. 1:3 is that "since the Son bears the 'impression' of his Father, he accurately represents his very being."[3] He radiates and reflects the Father's glory. The epistle also attributes the quality of eternity (which belongs to God alone) to Jesus with the words "forever and ever" (Heb. 1:8): "God's eternity is most often used to make a distinction between God and all creation. Apparently, the author applies this criterion to Jesus in this verse to show that he is God."[4] The New Testament in general ascribes to him pre-existent (Jn. 1:1–3; Phil. 2:6) and post-resurrection stages, which belong to God alone. As John tells us, Jesus himself was aware/conscious of his own identity as God: He and the Father are one (Jn. 17:11); to have seen him is to have seen the Father (Jn. 14:9); he is in the Father and the Father is in him (Jn. 14:11; 17:21); before Abraham he was (Jn. 8:58).

> Throughout the Old Testament, when God's presence is represented as dwelling with His people, there is always a manifestation of that shekinah glory—the pillar of cloud, the pillar of fire, the bright light that filled the Tabernacle and the Temple. But the Son is the very radiance of the glory of God (Heb. 1:3), the image of God in whose face the glory of God shines in fullness (2 Cor. 4:4, 6). He is the exalted Lord seated on the throne of heaven, the train of whose robe fills the heavenly temple, of whom the angels declare, "The whole earth is full of His glory" (Isa. 6:1–8; cf. Jn 12:37–41). Before the world was, the

[3]S. Mackie, "Confession of the Son of God in the Exordium of Hebrews," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 30:4 (2008): 444.

[4]V. Rhee, "Christology in Hebrews 1:5–14: The Three Stages of Christ's Existence," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 59:4 (2016): 725.

> Word that became flesh and dwelt among us was eternally existing in the very nature, essence, and glory of God.[5]

Jesus's genealogy (because the Son of God was to come from the Davidic descent[6]), his hometown of Bethlehem (city of David), the annunciation account, Mary's virginity, Jesus's virginal birth (in Matthew and Luke), his miracles, the voice from heaven, etc. are credentials that underscore emphatically that Jesus was God. The Gospel of Matthew even uses earth quaking, rocks splitting, tombs opening, and the raising of many who had died (27:51–52) to affirm the same since these phenomena are reminiscent of Old Testament theophanies of the divine warrior (Ps. 18:7; 46:3; Nah. 1:5–6):

> At the moment of Jesus' death, Matthew describes a series of portents, some of which draw on the theophany of the divine warrior. Matthew has the centurion and his soldiers make their declaration only when they see these portents. Their declaration is a response to the earthquake and the other happenings (27:54). Among them, Matthew highlights the earthquake; it is therefore reasonable to infer that he intends to portray the guards and centurion as responding to the theophany of the divine warrior in Jesus crucified. This lends support to the suggestion that the declaration of 27:54 portrays Jesus as the divine warrior.[7]

Similarly, walking on water and the stilling of the stormy sea also echo the divine warrior tradition of Israel (Job 26:11–12; Ps. 65:7; 89:9–10). "Therefore, in Matt 14:33, the disciples make their confession that Jesus is the son of God in recognition that Jesus is God the divine warrior who conquers the forces of chaos."[8] More importantly, however, is the evangelists' use of titles such as Son of God and

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[5]M. Riccardi, "Veiled in Flesh the Godhead See: A Study of the Kenosis of Christ," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 30:1 (2019): 122.

[6]Jesus was of Davidic descent because, as prophesied, the Son of God was to come from the line of David's descendants. Davidic heritage was a prerequisite to his Messianic status.

[7]A. Angel, "'Crucifixus Vincens': The 'Son of God' as Divine Warrior in Matthew," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 73:2 (2011): 314.

[8]Angel, "'Crucifixus Vincens': The 'Son of God' as Divine Warrior in Matthew," 310.

Messiah. Obviously, these titles—although belonging to the Jewish religious world and used by Jewish disciples—conveyed best the experience of the apostles and preserve a credible memory of Jesus in the Church. In the following section, I wish to elaborate further on how certain titles attributed to Jesus conveyed that he was God.

Jesus's Titles. Paul and other New Testament writers rarely use the term "God" for Jesus. Instead, Jesus is addressed as "Lord" (not ὸ θεός but κύριος), Son of God, Messiah, Son of David, Son of the Most High, prophet, and so on. More clearly for Paul, it is "one God, the Father" and "one Lord, Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 8:6). This is not because Jesus was attributed less divinity or subordinated to God; for the early Christian community, Jesus as God was not simply identical with the Father[9] since he was not the Father but was of the same realm and substance of the Father, an idea which the later trinitarian doctrine substantiated with the term "consubstantiality." Here, I wish to pick five New Testament titles of Jesus—Logos, the "I am" sayings, Son of God, Christ/Messiah, and Lord—and attempt to show that in their use the evangelists were clearly saying that Jesus was God (the Truth) and thereby affirm that his historical existence was the fullness of God's revelation.

Logos. While the synoptic Gospels predominantly use the titles "Son of God" and "Messiah" to communicate the fullness of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, John's Gospel emphatically uses the term "Logos/Word," among other titles, at the beginning of the gospel to communicate that Jesus was God. In no unequivocal terms, it is stated that "in the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God and the same Word became flesh" (Jn. 1:1). However, the term is introduced without any definition or explanation; hence, we have no clue as regards what the evangelist really meant by it. The Greek term "logos," from the verb *legō*,[10] meant speech, word, language,

[9]Cf. R. Bauckham, "Markan Christology according to Richard Hays: Some Addenda," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 11:1 (2017): 24–25.

[10]"The three basic meanings of the verb are: first, objective meaning: the rational ground or basis for something; second, subjective meaning: the power

argument, reason, explanation, order, and measure, depending on the context.[11] Its use as a metaphysical principle extends back into the pre-Socratic past and survives in the fragments of Heraclitus (535–480 BCE).[12] Logos, for Heraclitus, was a rational order and the universal principle that animated and ruled the world.[13] It is "the principle through which the universe was formed and is sustained, [that] maintains order in a universe essentially in flux … [and] is also common to all human beings, unifying the species with the rest of the universe."[14] It was also refined and expanded by Greek and Roman Stoicism to account for

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or faculty of reasoning or thought; and third, impressive meaning: thought or reason as expressed in speech or in writing" (J. Thomaskutty, *The Gospel of John: A Universalistic Reading* [New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2020], 40). The author emphasizes the meaning of the term as dialogue; therefore, it refers to the Logos as the internal dialogue of God. Accordingly, John used the term to refer to God's dialogue with the world in Jesus. Jesus is God's dialogue with the world in flesh.

[11]Cf. R. Norris, "Logos Christology as Cosmological Paradigm," *Pro Ecclesia* 5:2 (1996): 185–186.

[12]Cf. L. Eveleth, "Clement of Alexandria and the Logos," *American Theological Inquiry* 6:2 (2013): 40.

[13]Cf. L. Bausch, "Śakti and Logos: Material Manifestations of the Divine," *Religion East & West* 8 (2008): 99.

[14]C. De Wet, "Mystical Expressions and the Logos in the Writings of St. John of the Cross," *Neotestamentica* 42:1 (2008): 39. According to Heraclitus, fire is the fundamental, unchanging substance that underlies the world.

> But if fire is the stuff from which all things are made, how is it that the world appears quite different from fire? Because, responded Heraclitus, the world is in constant flux. Fire transforms itself by a process of thickening, or quenching, into water, then earth, then back to fire. This process is perpetual and universal. We live in a River of Time and a River of Space. Nor are these changes merely accidental or random; they occur systematically and according to law. The term used by Heraclitus for the law governing this process is λόγος: reason or intelligence. (Norris, "Logos Christology as Cosmological Paradigm," 186)

the reasonability of the cosmos. For the Stoics (4 BCE), too, logos was reason, a rational, ordering principle always embodied in matter, the rational principle/element by which the universe was governed.

> While logos permeated and ordered all of nature, it was present in different parts of nature in different ways. Only in human beings was logos present as part of their very nature. In other words, only human beings were rational. For the Stoics, human rationality (logos) was intimately connected with and reflected the rationality of the universe as a whole.[15]

The Stoics

> discerned between different types of *logoi*, namely: (a) the *Logos spermatikos*, indicating a germinal indwelling of the Logos within all human beings; (b) the *Logos endiathetos*, an unspoken thought in the mind of God "having potential for articulation" and (c) the *Logos prophorikos* [which] is then the expression of the latter mentioned divine thought. Especially with the Stoics, the Logos is already associated with the notion of expression.[16]

For the Stoics, therefore, logos was not merely a rational principle of order that pervaded and controlled the whole universe through seminal reasons (*logoi spermatikoi*) but was God's thought/reason and its expression. As the divine Reason, it pervaded and controlled all things in such a way as to produce beauty, harmony, and unity of the whole, and the knowledge of which delivered the soul from the ruinous ignorance[17] of Greek philosophy. In Stoic thinking in general, logos referred to "the governing faculty of a human being and *the pervasive, divine force that created the material world* and subsequently imposed order

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Cf. V. Tirimanna, "Logos: A Bridge-Builder for Interreligious Dialogue?", *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 19:2 (2009): 196.

[15]Tirimanna, "Logos: A Bridge-Builder for Interreligious Dialogue?", 196.

[16]De Wet, "Mystical Expressions and the Logos in the Writings of St. John of the Cross," 39–40. The λόγος σπερματικός is the structural law which determines each element of nature. It is the σπέρμα (seed) which has within itself the principle of its own development.

[17]Cf. E. Miller, "The Johannine Origins of the Johannine Logos," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112:3 (1993): 448–449.

on it … a cosmic and pervasive, semi-divine force or being at work in the universe."[18] In the Stoic perspective, moreover, logos, God, and nature were, in reality, one.

Philo of Alexandria (ca. 25 BCE–50 CE) was another person who employed the term "logos" abundantly in his writings. Borrowing from Greek philosophy (Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics), he attempted to synthesize the term with Hebrew monotheism. God, for Philo, was infinite, unknowable, and distinct from the world, and related to the material world only through intermediaries.

> These mediating agents are summed up in the λόγος, the highest created being next to God. For Philo, as for Heraclitus, the λόγος is that cosmic law which binds the universe together in a harmonious unity. The λόγος is the reason or God's mind; and yet it is a being distinct from God, God's "first begotten Son." It is the image (εικσν) or copy of God; the mediator between God and the material world; a second God (θεός but not ὸ θεός); the agent of creation and the instrument of providence. At the same time, the λόγος is conceived as pluralizing itself into myriads of subordinate λόγοι, similar to the λόγοι σπερματικοί of the Stoics.[19]

Philo's logos has also been interpreted as the God-immanent that holds together and administers the entire chain of creation. Human reason, a copy/fragment of the logos through its rational activities, is so closely a part of the rule of the logos in the universe. From Philo's viewpoint, in sum, the logos is "the mind of God containing the ideal archetypes of the cosmos, the creative instrument of God, the bond and preserver of all existing things, the mediator between the creator and creature, etc." which is "the Beginning, the Name of God, the Image of God."[20] For Philo, then, the logos clearly is the mediator through which God creates the cosmos and the link/mediating figure between God and the cosmos since God does not interact directly with the cosmos but through the operation of the logos (the same is

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[18]J. Lashier, "Irenaeus as Logos Theologian," *Vigiliae Christianae* 66:4 (2012): 344 (emphasis added).

[19]Norris, "Logos Christology as Cosmological Paradigm," 187.

[20]Miller, "The Johannine Origins of the Johannine Logos," 448–449.

expressed by Clement of Alexandria). The logos is the agent of creation and the agent through whom humans understand God.[21]

There are also modern views (Rudolf Bultmann, Raymond Brown) that hold that John's logos has more to do with the personification of the σοφία of Old Testament wisdom literature, which is equated with God (Prov. 1:20–33; 3:13–18; 4:5–9; 8:1–9:5; 31:11–31; Sir. 24; 51; Wis. 7–9; as well as Job 28 and possibly the Song of Songs). The verses, such as "At God's word were his works brought into being" (Wis. 42:15), "For he spoke, and it came to be" (Ps. 33:9), and "He sent forth the word to heal them, snatched them from the grave" (Ps. 107:1–20), are only a few of the references to the presence and power of God's σοφία. It is argued that the late Jewish σοφία "is personified and represented as the first of God's creations and the attendant craftsman in all subsequent creation, a pure emanation of the glory of the almighty, a reflection of eternal light, an image of God's goodness.…"[22] It has been seen as the hypostatization and personification of the "eternal, creative, sustaining, healing, redemptive, prophetic" word of God, God's first creation (*dābār*). John was probably referring to this Old Testament personification of σοφία than to the Greek logos. However, some hold that the Old Testament wisdom literature itself is influenced by the Greek "logos" and, hence, that the σοφία of the Old Testament is actually Greek. As per wisdom theology, God projected logos (thoughts & words) onto a formless, unreal matter and made it a real, rational universe.

The logos is also seen as "the Torah in which the Law is portrayed as interchangeable with 'the word of the Lord,' and preexistent, eternal, etc."[23] as the "divine hypostasis/substance," as in the *targums* of the Old Testament, as the intermediary between the material and spiritual

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[21]Cf. J. Kavunkal, "The Logos as the Basis of Biblical Universalism," in T. Karimundackal, ed., *Logos Proclaiming and Witnessing to God's Word* (New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2021), 193.

[22]Miller, "The Johannine Origins of the Johannine Logos," 448–449.

[23]Miller, "The Johannine Origins of the Johannine Logos," 448–449.

realms (found in Gnostic sources such as the Hermetic literature from Egypt, especially the *Poimandres*) and as related to the descent and ascent of the redeemer (found in pre-Christian Hellenistic-Gnostic redeemer myths and probably modified by John).

Is John's "Logos" the same as Heraclitus's and the Stoics' rational principle of order that pervaded and controlled the whole universe? Is it the same as the Greek philosophical link that overcomes the distance between the spiritual and material worlds? Is it the hypostatization/personification of wisdom from the Old Testament literature? Opinions vary. Philo's logos may find resonance with John's Logos; according to some, Philo's interpretation of the logos, despite the influence of the philosophy of the Stoics and Plato, is Biblical and that the logos that emerges from the divine is fundamentally associated with God and is God.[24] It is also held that it was Philo who provided a theistic understanding of the Greek philosophical logos. The transcendent God, a pure being without quality, relates to the material world through the intermediary agent present everywhere in creation called the Logos.[25] Philo provided the link between God and the world by interpreting Plato's world of eternal ideas/forms (the intelligible world that is different from the sensible world, which is but a copy of the former) as God's thoughts and that "first among the ideas is the Logos, whom Philo called the firstborn Son of the uncreated Father."[26] Hence, since the experience of Jesus's disciples was that he was God's Son, "it could not have been problematic for the early church to effect the transition from Philo's depiction of the Logos as the 'firstborn of God' to the Christian doctrine that the Logos, identified with Jesus Christ, is the 'only begotten Son of God' (i.e., the Father)."[27]

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[24]Cf. J. Hoblík, "The Holy Logos in the Writings of Philo of Alexandria," *Communio Viatorum* 56:3 (2014): 248–249, 253.

[25]Cf. Bausch, "Śakti and Logos," 99.

[26]V. de Beer, "The Cosmic Role of the Logos, as Conceived from Heraclitus until Eriugena," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 59:1/4 (2014): 20.

[27]de Beer, "The Cosmic Role of the Logos," 20.

The Church Fathers' interpretations of the logos, too, seem to take a cue from Greek philosophy, although these, of course, are aimed at affirming the fact that Jesus was God. According to them, the logos is the Father's immanent reason, eternal like him and coequal with him, and is his outgoing, active, and creative Word.[28] The early Christian philosopher Athenagoras, in his apology identifying the Son with the logos, affirms that God, the eternal mind, had the Logos/Son from eternity with him;[29] the logos, therefore, is God from eternity. In whichever way they made the presence of the logos intelligible (in explaining creation/rationality), the Fathers in general always had in mind that the logos was God and were merely defending that proposition.

> Logos, then, is the Word of a transcendent God differentiated in creation. The principle of God's discursive presence is embodied in Jesus Christ, who is seen theologically as the second person of the Trinity.… In Christianity, the logos principle is understood as reason and the indwelling of Jesus, which is also the wisdom that leads to salvation.[30]

The identification of the logos with God is expressed by the Fathers (Athenagoras, Theophilus, Justin) in terms such as rational mind, rational word, and the relation between them. Just as the rational mind expresses itself in the rational word, the Father expresses himself in the Logos (begets the Son). Just as the rational word is present in the rational mind, likewise is the Son in the Father. The relationship between the Father and the Son is similar to the relationship between the mind and the word. "The λόγος, as God's 'Word,' is in a sense God's 'Son,' and the 'begetting' of the λόγος is accomplished when God 'speaks' him and 'sends' him forth."[31] Tatian and Theophilus, borrowing from the Stoic distinction between the inner (λόγος ενδιατητετος, mind/thought) and outer (λόγος προπηορικος, word borne forth/spoken) word, affirm the same: the logos is forever within the mind of God.

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[28]Cf. Bausch, "Śakti and Logos," 100.

[29]Cf. de Beer, "The Cosmic Role of the Logos," 24.

[30]Bausch, "Śakti and Logos," 101–102.

[31]Norris, "Logos Christology as Cosmological Paradigm," 191.

He is God's own word from the beginning. He is the eternal thought of God. He was before anything came to be.[32]

For Justin, the Old Testament theophanies are the logos because the Father who does not speak has the logos as his voice in creation. The logos is the Power of the ineffable (ἀρρητος) Father.[33] In other words, Justin's identification of the logos with Yahweh, in spite of the distinction which the doctrine of the Trinity elaborated later on, affirms that the logos belongs to the same realm as that of Yahweh and is God. For Irenaeus, God is the creator proper and the logos is the mediating agent through whom God creates. This, however, does not mean that the logos is of lesser power and divinity. God creates with God's own logos and does not need any other instruments.[34] Since the logos is very much part of God's creative function, the logos is God. Only God creates and the logos is involved in God's act of creation; hence, the logos shares the same status as that of God.

Irenaeus also affirms, as is revealed in the Gospel of John, that the logos reveals God the Father. Obviously, the logos in person cannot reveal other than what the logos is in its very nature, namely, God. For Clement of Alexandria, the logos is

> in a timeless realm, in the absence of a cosmos. Logos refers to ideas and plans for creating the cosmos and its human inhabitants in the mind of God. Because God is One and utterly Simple, he is not separated from his own ideas and plans; thus the *Logos* is God, because God cannot be said to have parts.[35]

If the logos is God and if Jesus is that logos, then he is the revelation of God.

> The Word is what God wishes us to know about Himself; it is God speaking about Himself. Christ is all that we can bear to know about

[32]Cf. Norris, "Logos Christology as Cosmological Paradigm," 192.

[33]Cf. Lashier, "Irenaeus as Logos Theologian," 346–347.

[34]Cf. Lashier, "Irenaeus as Logos Theologian," 361.

[35]Eveleth, "Clement of Alexandria and the Logos," 40.

> God.… God has communicated something of Himself as recorded in Scripture. Christ is the completeness of truth for human understanding.[36]

While the just-mentioned interpretations of the Fathers exhibit the influence of Greek philosophy and stress Jesus's status as that of God, John further highlights the uniqueness of the pre-existence and incarnation of the logos:

> It is important to note that the use of logos in the hymn in John's prologue moves beyond Hellenistic Jewish speculations about logos/wisdom in that it identifies this logos with Jesus of Nazareth. Neither Jewish wisdom literature nor the kind of Hellenistic Jewish speculation represented by Philo ever sought to identify either wisdom or logos with a specific human being. The hymn in the prologue is the clearest example in first-century Christian literature of both an incarnational and a pre-existent Christology. It affirms both that the logos has become flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and that Jesus of Nazareth existed before the incarnation, indeed before the creation of the world, as God's divine logos.[37]

"The prologue, after introducing the Logos without definition or explanation of its origin, asserts that from the very beginning of its independent, autonomous being—even before it served as the agent of creation—the Logos was προς τον θεόν."[38] Similarly, not only was the logos pre-existent; it was also of the same substance as the Father and, therefore, was God: "The Logos, even before it serves as the divine agent of creation [through him everything came to being], is initially προς τον θεόν, its participation in the divine essence, resulting in its identity as θεός.…"[39] Furthermore, the same pre-existent logos who was God unites itself with human flesh in the mystery of the Incarnation: "For, in contrast to its primordial movement προς τον

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[36]Eveleth, "Clement of Alexandria and the Logos," 41.

[37]Tirimanna, "Logos: A Bridge-Builder for Interreligious Dialogue?", 198.

[38]H. Waetjen, "Logos προς τον θεον and the Objectification of Truth in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 63:2 (2001): 268.

[39]Waetjen, "Logos προς τον θεον and the Objectification of Truth in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel," 270.

θεόν … which united it with its Originator and resulted in its identity as θεός, the Logos has now united with flesh."[40] The logos has become human in flesh and blood, and, consequently, also with the frailty, limitations, and temporality of humans. "Through enfleshment … God can now be seen, not in metaphysical visions which autonomous reason contemplates, but in the total physical life of a human being."[41] The logos of the prologue unites itself with a human being and the glory of the Lord, which filled the tabernacle of the tent of meeting (Ex. 40:34–38), is visible in Jesus who claimed to be the temple (Jn. 2:19–21). Hence, the logos is identical with God and not the second in order.

Thus far, we have tried to show that John's Logos referred to God by delving into views expressed about the Greek λόγος and the Hebrew *σοφία*. Miller, however, has a unique viewpoint. For him, the meaning of John's Logos is from neither Greek philosophy nor some other outside source but the gospel itself since the word "word" (words) is a pervasive theme in it. Jesus is predominantly discoursing and addressing; "words" dominate the gospel, revealing Christ, the saving Truth. In fact, λόγος and ῥήμα are used interchangeably in Johannine literature:

> Here, we suggest, is the origin of the Johannine Logos, here in these numerous occurrences of λόγος and ῥήμα, which may be read at one level as meaning "word," but may transparently point at the same time to a "Word," the saving truth, and thus involve an implicit christological significance. Here, that is, we are on our way to a christological title.[42]

The Logos/Word, a full-blown Christological title in the prologue and found in the first epistle of John, is the summary in one word of the significance of "word/words" in the gospel and in the epistles. To put

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[40]Waetjen, "Logos ρος τον θεον and the Objectification of Truth in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel," 278.

[41]Waetjen, "Logos ρος τον θεον and the Objectification of Truth in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel," 278.

[42]Miller, "The Johannine Origins of the Johannine Logos," 452.

it another way, it is the title of Johannine literature that sums up the content, especially the theme "word/words." It is present implicitly in the gospel proper. Hence, to trace the term's meaning, albeit Greek in its origin, it is not necessary to look beyond the gospel itself. It is to be found properly in Johannine literature itself and not in any other outside sources, even though the latter might have aided, abetted, and reinforced the term in the process of the community's Christological reflection due to its awareness of the role played by the word "Logos" (or its equivalent) in other traditions. In other words, Miller argues that the meaning of the term "Logos" is rooted in the community's reflection on the words of the historical Jesus and only then was he given the title, first in the epistle and then incorporated in the prologue. Just as the Jewish tradition conceived the historically creative and active word of God/wisdom as permanently fixed in the heavens (Ps. 119:89), so too did the Johannine community, after Christological reflection over a period of time, conceive the historical existence of Jesus to be one with the pre-existent Word.[43] Miller argues that the "Word" refers to the objective, historical, and empirical embodiment and expression of the eternal Truth in the teaching and activity of Jesus himself.

> It is personified, hypostatized, and historicized throughout, and, it is specifically identified as preexistent, identified as God, identified as the creator, identified as the source of spiritual life and light, identified as the object of salvific belief, and identified with the person of Jesus Christ.[44]

There are voices similar to that of Miller. The Logos of Christianity (Jesus, the Word of God) greatly differs from the Hellenistic logos speculation:

> The Greek concept of λόγος was a reflection of human *ratio*, which could be rediscovered in both nature and God. The movement was from the human to the divine. The New Testament concept of λόγος moves in the opposite direction, from the divine to the human. Further, the λόγος as found in Philo and the Stoics is not historically unique, but part of a never-ending, metaphysical unfolding of being that cannot

[43]Cf. Miller, "The Johannine Origins of the Johannine Logos," 456.

[44]Miller, "The Johannine Origins of the Johannine Logos," 455.

> be fixed in time. The New Testament begins with the resolve of a personal God to intervene in human history at a particular time and place. And in fact, the particularity of the λόγος is fundamental for New Testament Christology.[45]

As already seen, the origin of the New Testament Logos is attributed to the σοφία of late Jewish religious literature or to Greek philosophy. For Norris, as is for Miller, John's Logos is neither Greek philosophical interpretation nor the exalted σοφία of late Jewish Wisdom speculation:

> But regardless of the origin of the Johannine λόγος, there was little chance the Evangelist would have been philosophically misinterpreted. The λόγος of the Fourth Gospel is clearly the incarnate Word, Jesus of Nazareth, the Word made flesh; an idea totally foreign to either the exalted σοφία of late Jewish Wisdom speculation, or the metaphysical concept of λόγος found in Hellenistic and Stoic philosophy. Johannine use of the term λόγος emerges from deep theological reflection on the life of Jesus as the central revelation of God. The Evangelist speaks not of some philosophical abstraction, but of the λόγος incarnate in human form, who is the λόγος for precisely that reason.[46]

This means that "through the incarnation, the Word fully took on the human condition, and came to be present, dwell, or live among us, so that 'we' … could through faith contemplate his divine glory, or the visible manifestation in him of God's presence and power."[47] Jesus is the logos's enfleshed presence in the world; the logos is synonymous with Jesus.

> In its incarnation the Logos has not ceased to be itself; its union with flesh and blood in Jesus of Nazareth is so complete, so perfect, that that human being can claim to be all that the Logos is. Accordingly, Jesus will assert: "Before Abraham happened, I am."[48]

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[45]Norris, "Logos Christology as Cosmological Paradigm," 187.

[46]Norris, "Logos Christology as Cosmological Paradigm," 189.

[47]G. O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation of God's Self-Revelation in Jesus Christ* (London: Oxford University Press, 2016), 10.

[48]Waetjen, "Logos προς τον θεον and the Objectification of Truth in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel," 283.

Hence, Jesus's descent in John is diverse.

> While other proto-orthodox authors (especially Paul and Matthew) were concerned with Jesus' lineal descent from the "seed" of David or gentile Christians' relationship to the "seed" of Abraham, for John it is God's own σπέρμα that issues forth. The seed of David is mentioned in John only by a crowd questioning Jesus' origins (7:42), and descent from Abraham is never claimed as positive during the debate over lineage (8:31–59). For John, as for many proto-heterodox Christians in the second century, earthly lineage was trumped by divine begetting.[49]

The identification of the logos with Jesus was the outcome of eventual theological reflection unlike the title "Lord" which had its origin in very early Christian worship itself.[50] John's description of Jesus as the Logos, therefore, is neither accidental nor concocted; it was the fruit of inspiration by the Holy Spirit and of theological reflection and was meant to express that Jesus was God. This can be corroborated from the fact that the commencement of John's Gospel has a resemblance with the commencement of the book of Genesis in that both start off with "In the beginning.…"

> John emphasizes more strongly than other New Testament writers the cosmic dimensions of the Word, and specifically the participation of the pre-existent Christ in the creation of the world. It is significant that the Gospel of John begins with the same words found in the first book of the Hebrew Scriptures. The Greek text of Genesis opens with the words εν αρχή, as does the Gospel of John. In Genesis 1:1 we read: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." In John we read: "In the beginning was the Word … all things were made through him." The evangelist offers a new Genesis account, a new creation story, one centered in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the incarnate λόγος of God.[51]

In Genesis, God speaks and creates both light and all living creatures; in John, the Logos is the purveyor of light and life. In

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[49]M. Peppard, "Adopted and Begotten Sons of God: Paul and John on Divine Sonship," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 73:1 (2011): 104.

[50]Cf. Norris, "Logos Christology as Cosmological Paradigm," 187–188.

[51]Norris, "Logos Christology as Cosmological Paradigm," 189–190.

other words, "the realities of the God of Israel are fully present in the Logos."[52] This is to say that the Logos existed with and as God before time. If the Logos is described as someone who was part and parcel of the whole process of creation and through whom creation came into being, and if Jesus is the manifestation of the same Logos that existed from the beginning, then Jesus cannot but be God. This precreational rhetoric, reminiscent of the book of Genesis, is also found in the letter to the Hebrews (1:2, 10): "Jesus as Son is creator and heir of all things."[53] God brings everything into being and the Logos is very much part of it.[54] The very fact that Jesus enjoys his status as creator means that his status is no less than that of God.

The identity of Jesus as the Logos/Word is what distinguishes him from the Old Testament prophets. He was not a prophet in the Old Testament sense of the term because he did not receive and transmit the word of God or speak the word of God but was the Word of God. If he received the words and spoke as the Old Testament prophets did, then that would imply that Jesus was not in fact God or the Word of God. Hence, he says "it was said, but I say unto you" with the authority of God's own self. He was not a prophet like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, John the Baptist, etc. who brought revelation of God's word; he was God's revelation himself, the Word[55] who spoke through the words of the prophets even before becoming flesh.[56]

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[52]C. Skinner, "'Son of God' or 'God's Chosen One' (John 1:34)? A Narrative-Critical Solution to a Text-Critical Problem," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 25:3 (2015): 346.

[53]Cf. R. Hall, "Pre-Existence, Naming, and Investiture in the Similitudes of Enoch and in Hebrews," *Religion & Theology* 18:3–4 (2011): 312.

[54]Cf. Tirimanna, "Logos: A Bridge-Builder for Interreligious Dialogue?", 198.

[55]Cf. D. Boerman, "The Self-Revelation of God in Jesus," *Calvin Theological Journal* 52:1 (2017): 12–13.

[56]Justin Martyr said: "But when you hear the utterances of the prophets spoken as it were personally, you must not suppose that they are spoken by the inspired

In conclusion, opinions concerning the origin and meaning of John's "Logos" are diverse. There are arguments to suggest that it has a Greek philosophical meaning and is also the fruit of deep theological/Christological reflection. As discussed above, however, with all its specific natures (rational order, universal-metaphysical principle, reason/mind, word/speech, God, oneness with God, pre-existence) and functions (creation, permeation, pervasion, sustenance, ordering, control, mediation), the predominant feature of the Logos, irrespective of whether it is from Greek philosophy or from deep theological reflection, is that it is transcendent-immanent, eternal-temporal, heavenly-earthly. If it is the embodiment of the rational metaphysical principle in the manner of Greek philosophy (non-matter present in matter), then John has used it to attribute its transcendent-immanent character to Jesus. Similarly, if it is the result of theological/Christological reflection, it cannot but be an affirmation of the full presence of the eternal Truth in Jesus. In him, the abstract/conceptual/invisible became fully concrete/real/visible. This was true of his disciples' experience. More specifically, God the Son, who was with God and was God and in and through whom everything came into being, was fully present in Jesus's historical existence. In other words, the eternal Logos was fully manifested in the temporal existence of Jesus. Consequently, we may say that John's Logos is nothing but Jesus's title to express the revelation of God's being in him.

Son of God. The plural in Gen. 1:26 ("Let us make…") clearly suggests the "pre-existence" of the Son. In the New Testament, on the occasion of his baptism, transfiguration, and death (through the centurion's confession), Jesus's identity as the "Son of God" was

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themselves, but by the Divine Word who moves them." Origen also makes a similar claim:

> And by the words of Christ we do not mean those only which He spoke when He became man and tabernacled in the flesh; for before that time, Christ, the Word of God, was in Moses and the prophets. For without the Word of God, how could they have been able to prophesy of Christ? (cited in Boerman, "The Self-Revelation of God in Jesus," 15–16)

explicitly revealed. The demons refer to him as the "Son of the Most High God." The high priest addresses him as the "Son of the Blessed One." The disciples make their confession of him as the "Son of the living God." Paul even adds his resurrection to confirm the same: "He descended from David according to the flesh and declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:3–4). "This suggests that the idea that Jesus had been raised from the dead and exalted into heaven was closely associated with the idea that he was 'Son of God' in a divine sense."[57] The "Son of God" is not simply the son of some god or gods or of some human being; it is an unequivocal portrayal of Jesus as God or of having his origin in God.

"In the OT and Second Temple literature, 'Son of God' (υἱος θεού) or simply 'Son' and 'sons' (υἱός /υἱοί) typically refer to Adam (Luke 3:38); God's angels; God's chosen people Israel; God's chosen leaders; and God's chosen king from the line of David."[58] Hence, Israel as a whole was God's son (Ex. 4:22–23; Jer. 31:8) and David especially so (Ps. 2:7; 89:26–27; 2 Sam. 7:12–14). The Roman rulers were called gods and their sons "sons of god," too, although the title "Son of God" in the Old Testament and in Jewish literature designated

> supernatural agents such as angels, the divine council, the heavenly hosts, and perhaps fallen angels … kings and rulers, charismatic individuals, and even Israel as the people of God, in a specific sense, it came to define the messianic son of David, one adopted in a particular way by Yahweh and deemed the "anointed one," or messiah.[59]

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[57]A. Collins, "Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Greeks and Romans," *Harvard Theological Review* 93:2 (2000): 97.

[58]H. Bateman, "Defining the Titles 'Christ' and 'Son of God' in Mark's Narrative Presentation of Jesus," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50:3 (2007): 545.

[59]J. Horrell, "Translating 'Son of God' for Muslim Contexts, Part 1: Tensions and the Witness of Scripture," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 172:687 (2015): 273. The use of the expression "one adopted" in the quote does not have the tones of the heresy of adoption.

Moreover, "the fundamental and central concept of Israelite royal ideology was that the king of Israel was a superhuman, divine being"[60] as in Psalm 2:7. Israel's king was Yahweh's son in some sense.

In the New Testament, however, the term used for Jesus by the evangelists does not have the same Old Testament meanings even though there can be certain resonances in some places. Indeed, the meaning even differs from other uses in the New Testament, namely from Adam as "son of God" (Lk. 3:38) and believers themselves as "sons" because they are born of God (Jn. 1:12–13) or adopted into filial relationship with God (Eph. 1:5).[61] Jesus, in the strictest sense, is "Son" but not in these aforementioned senses. Jesus as "Son" properly refers to his divine status as the pre-existent eternal Son of the Father (Jn. 1:14; 11:27). This is also said in the precreation rhetorolect found in Colossians 1:15–17. Jesus, who manifested God in the world, lived previously as God in the eternal realm:[62] "The point of the precreation discourse overall … is not merely to offer [a] Christological description, but to state that the son stands from before creation as the supreme manifestation of God."[63] He shares the entire life of God. Paul's text actually picks up the Genesis account of creation and recontextualizes it by focusing on the Son rather than on God as in Genesis. Through intertexture, the

> readers/hearers are immediately persuaded to recall and imagine what they already know about God as the precreational divine existence and active creator of "all things" (τα πάντα, 1:16, 17), and now to add to that knowledge by visualizing and understanding that the [Son] was already

[60]A. Collins, "Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Jews," *Harvard Theological Review* 92:4 (1999): 394.

[61]Cf. Horrell, "Translating 'Son of God' for Muslim Contexts," 273–274.

[62]Cf. R. Jeal, "Starting Before the Beginning: Precreation Discourse in Colossians," *Religion & Theology* 18:3–4 (2011): 290–293.

[63]Jeal, "Starting Before the Beginning," 293.

> present with God prior to creation, is preeminent over creation, was himself engaged in creative activity, and sustains the creation.[64]

The Son, therefore, was present at creation, participated with God in creative acts, and was God's agent in the world. This is further affirmed in the same text, which describes Jesus as the "image of the invisible God" (occurs also in 2 Cor. 4:4) to mean that he is of the same likeness, form, nature, and a representative, of God. What is

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[64]Jeal, "Starting Before the Beginning," 295.

> In Sociorhetorical Interpretation the term "intertexture" refers to the features in texts that reflect, drawn on, and are blended from the entire world of ideas and *topoi*, thereby producing rhetorolects, rhetography and rhetology. The study of intertexture consequently involves identifying, analyzing and explaining the connections between a text and the "phenomena in the world" outside it. This task looks at the ways in which a text being read and interpreted uses materials from other texts, and also the ways in which it blends cultural, social, historical, and ideological notions recognizable in various ways by its audiences in order to convey particular meaning. Examination of intertextures in the precreation rhetorolects in Col sheds some very interesting light through the way it helps us move beyond issues of structure and basic statements about preexistence theology toward seeing how Early Christians learned to convey their understandings so that they could be grasped by their contemporaries in other locations. (pp. 294–295)

> [In Colossians,] the intertextures of the precreation rhetorolect, that is, the ideas that have been drawn from the textual and cultural world of knowledge which the recipients would recognize, become blended together to create a new space where the Colossians can envision themselves as being free from the authority of the various powers. Rather than cosmic or human authorities, it is the precreational son/Christ, the true divine creator and sustainer, who is the power in whom the recipients must trust. No other being in the purview of Christians in Asia Minor, whether cosmic being or imperial, provides a true manifestation of God. (p. 307)

seen in the Son is God, the Father. "The 'image of God' is the one who makes God seen or known, offering a representation of God in human imaginations."[65] The term "bodily" in 2:9 of the same epistle refers to corporeal reality and "it is in Christ, in bodily form, that the eternal God is recognized and encountered."[66]

For some interpreters, the title "Son of God" and the divine status attached to it spring from Jesus's claim to "sit at the right hand of God" (Mk. 14:62). According to them, Jesus in the claim tells of a transcendent future about himself in which he has raised himself to the status of God. To the high priest's question in the text, "Are you the Messiah, Son of the Blessed One?", Jesus not only answers in the affirmative but also says that "he will see him coming seated at the right hand of God." According to J. Marcus, the title "Son of God" may have referred to an earthly king in the line of David and may not have infuriated the authorities. However, what may have infuriated the high priest and prompted him to utter that Jesus was blaspheming was the latter's claim to sit at the right hand of God since it was a claim about participation in God's cosmic lordship and equality with God:

> It is this participatory understanding of sonship that gives rise to the charge of blasphemy.… The Markan Jesus implies in 14:62 that he will sit at God's right hand and come with the clouds of heaven, and that this description of a transcendent future indicates part of his understanding of the title he has just accepted, "Son of God." An approach to equality with God, then, is suggested, and this approach leads naturally to a charge of blasphemy on the part of his opponents.… The charge of blasphemy is plausible when "Son of God" is understood as participation in God's lordship, for some Jewish sources imply that claiming a heavenly enthronement for someone other than God could be considered blasphemous.… The exaltation of a human being to God's right hand suggests an approach to equality with God that infringes the incommensurateness and unity of God.[67]

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[65]Jeal, "Starting Before the Beginning," 297.

[66]Jeal, "Starting Before the Beginning," 305.

[67]J. Marcus, "Mark 14:61: 'Are you the Messiah-Son-of-God?'", *Novum Testamentum* 31 (1989): 139–141.

The charge leveled by the high priest clearly alleges that Jesus has insulted God or arrogated to himself divine prerogatives. This definitely suggests that Jesus is identifying himself with God.[68]

It has also been argued that the eschatological revelation of Yahweh in the Son of Man mentioned in Daniel 7:13–14 refers to Jesus and is attested to by Mark in 8:38, 13:26, and 14:62. The repetition of words, themes, and the Old Testament concepts in all three passages work together with the rest of the story and render clearly Jesus's identity, i.e., as the Son of God.[69] The language, namely "coming with the clouds," "glory," "the subjugation and worship of the nations," "everlasting dominion," etc., draws on the Old Testament theophanic imagery and refers to Jesus as God. Jesus himself, with apocalyptic self-references (i.e., his vindication as the Son of Man after suffering and rejection), takes an active role in explicating his identity in these texts. Jesus's ascription to himself of the prerogative of divine judgment, of coming in the glory of his Father, and as the revelation of the Father already finds mention in other Old Testament texts, such as Is. 42:8 and Zech. 14:5. Hence, Jesus's reference to "coming in glory and power to gather the elect" is the coming of Yahweh himself. In the Old Testament, the elect belong to Yahweh and Jesus as the Son of Man participates in the activity and identity of Israel's God (Mk. 13:26–27). For Israel, only God liberates/saves; thus, if Jesus as Son of Man has brought about salvation, he cannot but be the filial embodiment of Yahweh. Jesus is the eschatological hope of the Jewish Scriptures, the coming of Yahweh to his people, the revelation of the Father's glory. Jesus, the glorious Son of Man, announces judgment and salvation (Mk. 13:24–30) similar to that of Yahweh of the Old Testament. Jesus's words are similar to/the same as the words of Yahweh (Mk. 13:31 // Is. 40:1–8). He commands the angels, an activity that is God's prerogative in the

[68]Cf. Angel, "'Crucifixus Vincens': The 'Son of God' as Divine Warrior in Matthew," 314–315.

[69]Cf. J. Leim, "In the Glory of His Father: Intertextuality and the Apocalyptic Son of Man in the Gospel of Mark," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 7:2 (2013): 213–232.

Old Testament; he, therefore, is not Yahweh's agent like the angels are for gathering the elect but has Yahweh-like status and is above the angels. He claims to share in God's cosmic sovereignty by sitting on his throne, which is actually a conflation of that claim with the theophanic image of Daniel's Son of Man (exalted over his enemies, vindicated in his identity and mission). He has exalted himself to eschatological privileges or assumed them to himself, which, as already mentioned, results in the accusation of "blasphemy … for allotting to himself the prerogatives of God."[70] In Mark, the Son of Man is the Son of the Father and the fulfilment of Israel's hopes for Yahweh's eschatological coming. He is not Yahweh's agent but one who, as Son of Man, has assumed God's prerogatives for himself.

That the Son of God is Jesus himself is substantiated from Mark's references to "Son," which is actually a reference from Ps. 2:7 and the basis for the first-century messianic expectations. In Mark, Jesus is declared as "Son" by God at the baptism and the transfiguration (1:9–11; 9:2–10). Bateman believes that both references have the first-century messianic connections and are a divine declaration about Jesus from Ps. 2:7.

> In both cases, a near-exact quotation from Ps 2:7 is employed. Originally, Psalm 2 served to reinforce Yahweh's appointment of and support for a king over Israel prior to Nebuchadnezzar's dismantling of the Davidic dynasty and destruction of Solomon's temple in 586 BC. Perhaps it was initially used during the coronation of a royal Davidite (Ps 2:2, 6, 7). Central to the Psalm is the proclamation of Yahweh concerning his unique relationship with the king: "You are my son! This very day I have become your Father" (v. 7). In fact, verse 7 appears to echo Yahweh's covenant of promise to David. Much later, after Pompey's entrance into the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem (Jos. Ant. 1.152–53) and the subsequent Roman occupation of Palestine in 63 BC, Jewish hopefuls made more explicit connections between Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7 to speak of their particular hoped-for Anointed One (4Q174 3:7–13; Pss. Sol. 17:21). Thus the concept of "sonship" in Ps 2:7 appears to be a way of speaking about a hoped-for anointed one during the first century. For some, it more pointedly spoke of a royal Davidite. It seems likely that Mark

[70]Leim, "In the Glory of His Father," 229–230.

> shared a similar conceptual understanding of sonship, which compelled him to place Ps 2:7 strategically in his Gospel as an alternative way to speak of Jesus as "the Christ."[71]

The link of royal sonship is evident in Ps. 2:7. Hence, reference to Jesus as "Son" from the psalm is in keeping with first-century Jewish expectations about a messianic figure and "serves to be God's endorsement, commissioning, and empowerment of Jesus for ministry as 'the Christ'."[72]

> As son, however, he shares in God's βασιλεία, his kingly power, and becomes the instrument of its extension into every corner of the creation. Thus, Jesus is God's Son, "the Son of God," "the Christ."[73]

> In keeping with first-century Jewish expectations for an Anointed One, we can safely say [that] "Son" in Ps 2:7 was seen as another way to refer to "the Christ" or God's chosen king.[74]

I Am. That Jesus is the fullness of God's revelation can also be shown from Jesus's use of "I am" in John's Gospel. It is Yahweh's name in the Old Testament and the theophanic self-revelatory formula[75] that expresses Jesus's claims to disclose the Father totally and to being divine and fully God. The Gospel is full of these sayings that reveal Jesus's true identity[76] and point to his total oneness with Yahweh.

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[71]Bateman, "Defining the Titles 'Christ' and 'Son of God' in Mark's Narrative Presentation of Jesus," 546.

[72]Bateman, "Defining the Titles 'Christ' and 'Son of God' in Mark's Narrative Presentation of Jesus," 547.

[73]Bateman, "Defining the Titles 'Christ' and 'Son of God' in Mark's Narrative Presentation of Jesus," 548.

[74]Bateman, "Defining the Titles 'Christ' and 'Son of God' in Mark's Narrative Presentation of Jesus," 550.

[75]"I am the bread of life" (Jn. 6:35), "I am the light of the world" (Jn. 8:12), "I am the door of the sheep" (Jn. 10:7), "I am the good shepherd" (Jn. 10:11), "I am the resurrection and the life" (Jn. 11:25), "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn. 14:6), "I am the true vine" (Jn. 15:1).

[76]Cf. O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, 7–12.

> The absolute use of "I am" as a way of speech was cryptic and mysterious to the Israelite. The name "I am" is too sacred to be pronounced (YHWH). John's attribution to Jesus of this tetragrammaton is a pointer to Jesus' divine nature: his preexistence, changelessness, and uniqueness of being.… Unlike the biblical prophets through whom special revelation was given, Jesus does not say, "The word of the Lord came to me" or "The Lord said"; rather he authoritatively declares, "I say to you" or "I am." Thus in Jesus is revealed the essential nature of life and of God (Heb 1:1–3).… The Christological term "I am" is a revelatory formula that goes back to the Old Testament narrative of Moses in the presence of Yahweh (Exod 3:14).… [The] employment of the expression "I am" (*ego eimi*) is "to identify Jesus as an historical theophany of the eternal being of God and thus to assert his full deity." This christological affirmation of Jesus's deity is found in the consequent faith that God, the Eternal and Almighty, is like Jesus Christ, that his essence is the essence of Jesus (14:9).… "Before Abraham was, I am" (8:58). The syntactical change from the past tense to present tense indicates the preexistent, eternal being of Jesus. He is timeless. He never came into being and he will never cease to be. In Jesus the eternal God shows himself to all (Heb 13:8). The contrast in the tenses is between an existence initiated by birth and an absolute existence.[77]

Jesus, therefore, is clearly the historical revelation of the "I am" of the Old Testament, the very being of God himself. This gets confirmed further in the Gospel when Jesus says "he who has seen me has seen the Father" and "I and the Father are one."

Messiah/Christ. The Hebrew term "Messiah" (Greek Χριστός), meaning "anointed," was widely used to speak in the context of the anointing of kings. However, its use by Jesus himself and by the early Christian community was not simply for the anointing of Jesus as king. More specifically, as per the Jewish hopes, the term Messiah referred to Yahweh himself coming to deliver the people of Israel; hence, the title of Messiah has a connotation of God. That Jesus as Messiah was God resides in the fact

[77]A. Okorie, "The Self-Revelation of Jesus in the 'I Am' Sayings of John's Gospel," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 28:5 (2001): 487–488. The purpose of precreation discourse is to indicate realities behind and prior to what is present.

> that Jesus had an explicitly messianic self-consciousness.… More than that … the early church believed that Jesus was the Messiah only because it believed Jesus believed himself to be the Messiah. And it is an illusion for us to think that we can believe in him as the Messiah if he had no self-consciousness of being what we confess him to be.[78]

Analyzing Isaiah 11, Goswell argues that the Messiah Israel hoped for was not any human military deliverer but Yahweh himself. Yahweh himself comes to gather his remnant people on the holy mountain and establish and rule his kingdom.[79] This prophesied Messiah, as the early Christian community believed him to be, was none other than Jesus Christ, God himself.

It was part of first-century Jewish belief that when the Messiah comes there will be "through the Messiah, the resurrection of the dead, the healing of the critically wounded, and the sending of the good news to the afflicted."[80] The synoptic Gospels amply narrate Jesus's ability to realize these. He is the Holy One of God who confronts and casts out the unclean spirits (Mk. 1:23–28). He overpowers the uncontrollable (the storm at sea [Mk. 4:37], the demoniac [Mk. 5:4], the persistent hemorrhage of a woman [Mk. 5:26], and the death of Jairus's daughter [Mk. 5:35]). He had authority and power over sin, disease, death, demons, and the domain of nature; indeed, Jesus's work was very much in keeping with first-century Jewish expectations of a coming Messianic figure—Jesus was called "the Son of the Most High"; "You are the Son of God." John the Baptist probably shared that same belief; hence, while in prison, he sent his disciples to Jesus with the question, "Are you the one who is to come?", to which Jesus answered, "Go tell John what you hear and see: the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the

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[78]D. Via, "New Testament Theology: Historical Event, Literary Text, and the Locus of Revelation," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 19:4 (1992): 376–377.

[79]Cf. G. Goswell, "Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 11," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 79:1 (2017): 123–135.

[80]Bateman, "Defining the Titles 'Christ' and 'Son of God' in Mark's Narrative Presentation of Jesus," 542.

poor have good news proclaimed to them" (Mt. 11:2–5). Peter seems to have known and confessed Jesus to be "the Messiah" because he was a witness to Jesus's ministry.

Lord. "Lord" is yet another title that affirms Jesus's identity as God. The early Christian community's use of this title for the risen Jesus was for communicating that he was of the same realm as that of Yahweh.

> The earliest Christian confession of faith is the New Testament affirmation κύριος ιησους: "Jesus is Lord" (Rom. 10:9; I Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11). This in itself was a staggering claim. The first disciples were nearly all Jews. They would clearly have understood the word "Lord" (κύριος) as the Greek equivalent of *adonai*, the Septuagint's circumlocution for the Hebrew tetragrammaton [YHWH]. To confess Jesus as Lord was to make an implicit connection between this itinerant rabbi and the God of the covenant, the Creator of heaven and earth.[81]

Paul takes Jesus to the same realm as that of the Father in attributing this title. Although in the Jewish confession ("Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength" [the Shema, Dt. 6:4–5]) the Lord and God are the same, Paul, "drawing on what he had experienced through revelation and using the classic monotheistic text of Judaism, recast his perception of God by introducing Jesus as 'Lord'." In Paul, they are split and refer to two distinct persons of the Trinity, taking Jesus to the same realm as that of the Father.

> The apostle glossed "God" with Father and "Lord" with Jesus and so putting Jesus as Lord alongside God the Father: For us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and from whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist (1 Cor 8:6). Here the title "one Lord" and the explanation added to it (through whom are all things and through whom we exist) expanded the *Shema* to include Jesus Christ.[82]

In sum, Jesus's New Testament titles contain the unequivocal message that he is the very Godself and, therefore, the fullness of God's

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[81]Norris, "Logos Christology as Cosmological Paradigm," 187.

[82]O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, 17.

revelation (Col. 1:19). By "Logos" it is revealed that the eternal is fully present in the temporal; by other titles it is disclosed that Jesus is God himself either through Yahweh's names or through the significance of what the titles stood for. Jesus as the revelation of God's self is what distinguishes Christianity from revelations in other religions. From a Christian scriptural and theological viewpoint, therefore, Knitter is completely erroneous in holding that Jesus of Nazareth was a partial revelation of God and that the fullness of revelation can be had only when we put together all of God's revelations in all religions since the mystery of God can never be exhausted by any one of God's revelations. Thus, Knitter's position that the mystery of God remains ever inexhaustible and that Jesus is only a partial revelation or one of the revelations of that great mystery is flawed from the Christian viewpoint. Knitter's view of Christ relativizes Jesus and contradicts the New Testament revelation and the Church's teachings on Christ in her dogmas and doctrines. In Jesus alone is God's self/Son manifested and that is the fullness of revelation. However, Knitter's contribution can still be appreciated if we distinguish between the Truth and truths, between the being of God and knowing about God, between knowledge of God in God's very self-communication and knowledge of God in concepts and by other means.

II. Revelation of Truths

Having shown from Christological titles that Jesus's identity is God and that he is the fullness of God's revelation, I wish to take forward Knitter's idea of "truths" which may aid us in better understanding the world religions. As already mentioned, for Knitter, contrary to Christian faith, the Truth in its entirety cannot be known except in truths. However, we may make a clear distinction between the "Truth" and "truths" to indicate what is specific to Christianity and to other religions. The following paragraphs are an attempt to elaborate on such.

The notion of "revelation," a foundational concept in Christian theology, is of aid to us here in distinguishing between the "Truth" and "truths." Although the term "revelation"—used in the headings

of the two parts of this essay to elaborate "Truth" and "truths"—may have elements such as something previously closed to humans that is opened up and is beneficial to their life or something mysterious that is made known in a mysterious/ordinary manner, theologically speaking "it is always knowledge which comes from outside the formal sphere of knowledge, and which [human persons] cannot gain by [themselves] but which is given to [them], which unexpectedly and suddenly has meaning in [their] life, either for salvation or for damnation."[83]

Having said that, we may say that there is a distinction between the personal revelation of God (the Truth) and revelation about God and humans (the truths), i.e., between God's self revealed in Jesus Christ and the revelation of theological truths about God/the Transcendent and humans that aid human-religious existence. In the former, God's being/self is presented to us in the person of Jesus; in the latter, certain knowledge/information of things that are true of God (and of humans)—for example, that God is creator, savior, redeemer, sustainer, sanctifier, liberator, transcendent, absolute, incomprehensible, the uncaused cause, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, the source of all being, good, true, holy, perfect, infinite/boundless, all encompassing, indestructible, etc.—is given to us either in written or oral material found in religions. In the former, God, the Truth (Jn. 14:6), discloses God's self in the mystery of incarnation/kenosis, which is different from God disclosing/mediating truths[84] about God's self (God's nature/qualities), human beings, their nature and condition, and their destiny through means such as myths, stories, theophanies, divine laws, commandments, doctrines, wisdoms, enlightenments, philosophies, sacred writings, fables, classics, events, the lives of saints/prophets and other great religious personalities, and in the experience of the sages and use of reason:

> Any theology that proposes dramatic, special events as the *only* appropriate means of mediating the divine would be a diminished version of revelation. God can certainly use "ordinary" channel[s] to

[83]J. Smith, "Emil Brunner's Theology of Revelation," *Landas* 20 (2006): 23.

[84]Cf. O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, 3–4.

> communicate with human beings and shed light on the human and divine mystery.[85]

One channel is God's self-communication/self-presentation in Jesus (God's manifestation of God's self)[86] and the other is a communication of knowledge about God/the Transcendent, metacosmic reality, or truths that bring meaningfulness and purposefulness to human-religious existence, or truths that are pointers to the Truth, or truths concerning a way of living and relating to other human beings and to God/the transcendent. The truths, even with their distinct contents, are related and articulate either explicitly or implicitly this one primordial Truth. Hence, Christian

> revelation is not primarily a matter of revealing truths (plural) about God or even the truth (singular) about God. It involves God disclosing the Truth or Reality that is God. Primarily, it reveals a person, or rather three divine Persons, rather than information about a person or about three Persons.[87]

In Jesus, God "reveals Himself through Himself … Revealer, Revelation, and Revealedness … the personal identity of God Himself."[88]

> God himself has come to [humankind] in Christ Jesus and personally made this known to [humanity] in word and in deed. This is the meaning of revelation in Christ. God has revealed himself personally, his nature, and his will in Christ Jesus.…[89]

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[85]O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, 149–150, 154. The Biblical wisdom literature is just one such example of this. God can speak and trigger faith through various means.

[86]Cf. J. Roller, "Dei Verbum: A Fine Consensus on Revelation," *Journal of Theta Alpha Kappa* 37 (2013): 51.

[87]O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, 7.

[88]Cf. S. Stahl, "The Concept of Revelation in the Theology of Karl Barth," *Saint Luke's Journal of Theology* 23 (1980): 116.

[89]D. McGaughey, "Revelations in Jesus Christ: An Apologetic for Today," *Restoration Quarterly* 6 (1962): 247.

> If we follow the lead [of] John's Gospel, [Jesus] is not merely the final access to the truth, but is the Truth (upper case) of God in person.[90]

Emil Brunner's words underscore better what the meaning of the Truth is:

> Jesus Christ is the revelation, the totality of revelation, for in him the Word of God is personally present, revealing the Father. Jesus Christ is not a mere genius with a wholly original thought, nor a messenger bearing to [humankind] a general truth of reason, as the liberal theologians would portray him. He is not merely a very original teacher, nor merely a perfect model and exemplar of what he taught. He is the perfect and complete revelation because he is himself divine. He alone stands on the other side of the boundary beyond which only God can stand … that which alone makes Jesus Christ the perfect revelation of God is his divinity, his identical nature with the Father, the fact that he himself is "from above," from true transcendence, who "came" and became man.[91]

"Speaking through the Son" (Heb. 1:1), the kenotic hymn (Phil. 2:6–11), the "pre-existence and enfleshment of the Word" (Jn. 1:1–18), and "coming down" (Jn. 6:38) or "becoming poor" (2 Cor. 8:9) or "emptying himself" (Phil. 2:7) communicate precisely the same thing. The Truth, therefore, is the person of Jesus in whom the relative and absolute are perfectly united. In him are present the two whole, perfect, and distinct natures (full divinity and full humanity) which are inseparably joined together. God is human and the human is God in him alone. He is God's complete, decisive, unsurpassable, perfect, full, definitive, and final[92] self-disclosure in history until the end of times

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[90]O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, vi.

[91]Smith, "Emil Brunner's Theology of Revelation," 30 (Brunner paraphrased here).

[92]O'Collins notes that *Dei Verbum* uses the terms "definitive and final" in speaking not of revelation in Christ but rather of the fullness of revelation in Christ. To speak of revelation in Christ as definitive and final is to say that all God's revelations are over and done with and is incompatible with the New Testament teaching on the final revelation to come. The historical revelation in Jesus belongs to the "already" and not to the "not yet." From this viewpoint, according to O'Collins, even the document *Dominus Iesus* of the Congregation

when we meet God face-to-face. In him, the whole of the eternal Logos has become human and not, as Knitter seems to suggest, in parts or bits and pieces to be revealed in other religions to complete its fullness. The eternal Logos has never been enfleshed before the Incarnation and has not left anything behind to be enfleshed after the Incarnation. Some parts/aspects of the Logos did not remain unincarnate when the Logos incarnated. "Jesus ought to be identified with the Word in His fullness, and not merely as the enfleshed portion of His greater existence,"[93] which in his particularity/finitude may seem partial. This amounts to saying that the eternal Word is fully the enfleshed Word, the Truth. He is the Truth because "the divine nature is 'most intimately' and 'personally' united to the humanity of Christ."[94]

Although we have knowledge of God by way of the "Truth" and "truths," knowledge of God through the Incarnation—which traditional Christian theology has called knowledge through supernatural revelation—is not the same knowledge of God obtained through some other means as mentioned above. In general, the latter has been known in traditional theology as knowledge gained through general/natural revelation. Hence, knowing who God *is* is very different from having God with us (Emmanuel) and knowing God personally. It is one thing to say that God is the Truth and it is another thing to say that Jesus is that Truth. Knowledge of God in Jesus's person, the Truth, is through personal and historical presence while knowledge of God in concepts or by other means belongs only to the cognitive and other such realms. "Revelation, it was said, is not about God, but God himself. God does not reveal knowledge, or information in propositional statements; rather, God reveals [God's self] through personal encounter, which … is most clearly experienced

for the Doctrine of the Faith also diverged from the teaching of *Dei Verbum*. It "ignores the gap that remains between the historical divine revelation which took place in Jesus Christ and God's final revelation at the *eschaton*" (O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, 108–109).

[93]Cassidy, "Review of Karl Barth and the Incarnation, by Darren O. Sumner," 374.

[94]Cassidy, "Review of Karl Barth and the Incarnation, by Darren O. Sumner," 379.

in confrontation with Jesus Christ."[95] The Truth, therefore, is not information/truths about God but God himself, the incarnate Son/Logos. In him alone, we have knowledge of the being of God. Only the Logos incarnate fully reveals the Father, which is very different from revealing knowledge about God through his presence in the economy of salvation, because he belongs to the very substance of the Father or to the very being of the Trinitarian God. The Logos incarnate beholds the face of God. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ is the absolute unique event in history. As *Dei Verbum* states, knowledge of God had through revelation in Jesus Christ is primarily personal, unlike the knowledge of God had through truths—God meets human persons in Jesus Christ as human persons, not through abstract and impersonal concepts/ideas, appearances, and visions but as a real person in flesh and blood.[96]

Having made this distinction ("Truth" vs. "truths") and from a Christian viewpoint, it will be possible to affirm, unlike with Knitter, that Jesus is the fullness of God's revelation: in Jesus alone and in no other has God's being been manifested to us. This is in spite of the fact that the "seeds of the Word," which Justin Martyr affirmed (using the Stoic notion of *logoi spermatikoi*) in his *Apology*, and the Spirit (which is the Spirit of Christ) were present in the salvation history of humankind. Their presence and action are only pointers to the Truth and do not reveal God's being as revealed in Jesus Christ. The Truth may be known implicitly and indirectly in truths, but these cannot be the explicit presentation of the Truth which has happened only in Jesus Christ. As Truth, Jesus in his own person revealed the Truth and was not a pointer to the Truth as truths are. There may be insights, intuitions, glimpses of transcendent being, and implicit knowledge of God in truths, but they are not the revelation of God's being. Did the Church Fathers see and describe these as the seminal word (*logos spermatikos*) and the Perfect Word (*ho pas logos*)? It makes sense.

[95]McGaughey, "Revelations in Jesus Christ," 248.

[96]Cf. Paul VI, *Dei Verbum*, nos. 1–4.

> Clement [of Alexandria] approached his task with an unswerving conviction that God is the ultimate source of all reality and all truths. Wherever and whenever knowledge, wisdom, or truths emerge, Clement maintained that these must have their origin in Him. Like the sower of seed in the Gospel, God "rained down the Word" on all persons.… If some of God's wisdom exists among other peoples in other places, we are morally bound to seek out those truths, precisely because they are truths which are grounded in God. No one race or people has all of God's truths, and we must bring everything to bear on our search for truth, culling whatever is useful for guarding the faith.[97]

Hence, as *Dominus Iesus* teaches, truths about God known apart from Jesus Christ do not essentially add to or change anything about the fullness of God's revelation in Jesus simply for the fact that God's being/self is not given to us in truths but only in the Truth.[98] The immanent self of the Son is fully revealed only in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, in the union of two natures. Nothing new is added or changed in the content of revelation; he is the total self-revelation of the eternal Logos. The Truth revealed in Jesus is distinct, unique, full, and directly present in flesh, which the truths are not. Jesus is not one seed among other seeds but the very source of those seeds himself, not the ray but the very source of that ray itself, the eternal Word.

The distinction should also highlight the fact that the existence of truths about God/the Transcendent in other religions need not be, from a Christian viewpoint, mere human invention, that it could be the outcome of the presence and action of the Logos and the Spirit—the two hands of the Father—in the economy of salvation. All that is "true, good, holy and of grace,"[99] "transforming human persons" is from God and cannot be human invention but received by human persons in good faith. We can have nothing to do with "true, holy, good" and any knowledge of God/Transcendence without

[97]Eveleth, "Clement of Alexandria and the Logos," 39–40.

[98]Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus*, no. 6.

[99]Cf. Paul VI, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 2; Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 16; Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 92; Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes*, no. 9.

already being borne by God's grace.[100] All knowledge about God is the work of the Logos, as Irenaeus held;[101] no one can have knowledge about the Father except through the Logos. The Logos incarnate (the Word as such) was present in history from the very inception of creation and giving the knowledge about God through truths. God's grace predisposes one *a priori* and is the condition of the possibility to receive all that is true, good, and holy. Human persons, since their inception and because of God's grace, have looked and continue to look for the Truth, and they are provided with truths that are "rays of that Truth"[102] and "seeds of the Word."[103] Truths about God cannot exist and cannot be known unless God gratuitously reveals them. God does not abandon people to their own destinies, for God's care and guidance are universal and extend to all peoples at all times (1 Tim. 2:4). Since God is involved in human history, God will obviously provide humanity with truths in many and diverse ways (Heb. 1:1), in all kinds of common/uncommon, dramatic/ordinary, and positive/negative experiences (propositions, visions, ecstasies, dreams, mystical experiences, theophanies, new and great awareness, historical events, ordinary inner states of anxiety/sorrow and joy, current events, everyday sights) and through persons (prophets, priests, kings, sages, saints, godwomen and godmen, philosophers, wise women and wise men)[104] that are helpful for their human/religious/spiritual living and meaningful existence—for perfection, holiness, truthfulness, and goodness. Consequently, God provides humankind with resources through God's Logos and Spirit to come to the knowledge of God in

[100]Cf. K. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), 146.

[101]Cf. Lashier, "Irenaeus as Logos Theologian," 356.

[102]Paul VI, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 2.

[103]Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes*, nos. 11, 15.

[104]They have an uncommon capacity to discern, interpret, and express truths given in revelatory experiences and play a special role in communicating them. They are specially gifted. Cf. O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, 72.

Jesus Christ. This is even considered to be general revelation because the divine light shines into creation through the Son who is the ground and source of all reason in creation.[105] If there are truths concerning God, such as the meaning of human/religious/spiritual existence and truths that prompt specific spiritualities, they have to be, from a Christian viewpoint, due to the presence and action of the Word and the Spirit in salvific history. The Son and the Spirit are the sources of every grain of truth found in the economy of salvation.

Truths and Christocentrism. The Biblical accounts describe that the same God who was at work in the history of God's people was also at work in the world and in the history of others. For example, the triune God was at work in bringing forth creation and in the histories of the families of Adam and Noah, the representatives of the whole of humanity. Here the triune God speaks/relates to the whole of humanity despite its sinfulness. God's covenant with Noah "discloses [God's] desire to sustain faithfully the whole world and care for the well-being of all creatures."[106] Those who originated from the sons of Noah, the representative of the human race, inherit God's blessings. God used Balaam, a diviner from Mesopotamia and who is no Israelite, to communicate oracles and blessings (Num. 22:1–24:25). The book of Jonah shows that God is also God of the Ninevites who wishes their moral conversion and is content when it happens. God reveals God's self to him in God's cosmic power. The prophet Malachi does recognize God's presence among the nations and praises their worship (Mal. 1:11). These accounts are representative of God's universal relationship with humankind, God's closeness to humanity. The Bible indeed celebrates the universal revelation of God communicated through the created world (Ps. 19:1–4). It is the book of nature alongside the sacred scripture.[107] God who is at work in the history of the people of Israel is also present in other people's histories.

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[105]Cf. D. Law, "The Double Life of the Logos: The Nestorian Kenoticism of Hans Lassen Martensen," *Zeitschrift für neuere Theologiegeschichte* 17:2 (2010): 212.

[106]O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, 186. See also G. O'Collins, *Salvation for All* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[107]Cf. O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, 188.

The Old Testament also testifies to the fact that God was present and active in God's Word and God's Spirit (Gen. 1:2, 3, 26; Ps. 33:6–9; 104:30; 107:20; 139:7; Wis. 1:7; 11:24–12:1; Job 34:14–15), even though the latter were not yet recognized as persons then. They served as personified agents of God's revelation and other activities. The presence and action of the Logos and of the Spirit in the economy of salvation, therefore, are not to be doubted. All this is to say that the triune God is indubitably at work in the histories of peoples in God's Logos and in God's Spirit. God has revealed God's self as "I am" to the people of Israel and has also revealed God's self to others in God's Logos and Spirit. "The Word of God, present with [God's] handiwork from the beginning, reveals (*revelat*) the Father to all, to whom he wills, when he wills and how the Father wills."[108] John's prologue (1:l–5) celebrates the pre-existent Word and its activity in guiding and illuminating human beings in creation.[109] The Word enlightens everyone (Jn. 1:9) and the Spirit blows where it wills, revealing truths about God. For Justin, therefore, all God's interventions in the world are attributed precisely to the Logos.[110]

> The second pre-incarnational function of the Logos in Irenaeus's work [besides being mediating agent through whom God creates all things] is his role as the sole revealer of God/[the] Father. Irenaeus believes that the unique identity of the Second Person as the divine Logos gives him the ability to reveal God, both prior to and during the incarnation.[111]

Nevertheless, affirming the presence and action of the Logos and of the Spirit in the economy of salvation does not deviate from Christocentrism, for Christ is the Omega point in whom everything has to culminate; it is he who gathers all things, subjects himself to the one who put all things in subjection under him, and hands everything

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[108]O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation*, 202.

[109]Cf. Tirimanna, "Logos: A Bridge-Builder for Interreligious Dialogue?", 199. Also cf. Waetjen, "Logos προς τον θεον and the Objectification of Truth in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel," 265.

[110]Cf. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 57.

[111]Lashier, "Irenaeus as Logos Theologian," 355.

over to the Father so "God will be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28). Prior to the Incarnation, the Logos acted in creation and in the enlightenment of human beings. He continues to enlighten even now (Jn. 1:9) after the Incarnation, in addition to its propaedeutic action, as Dupuis holds.[112] The Logos sowed, sows, and will sow seeds. The universal presence and action of the Logos and of the Spirit need not be abrogated by the event of the Incarnation. This does not mean that they bifurcate and constitute separate economies of salvation: of the eternal Logos, of the incarnate Logos, and of the Spirit. Consequently, there are no three parallel economies of salvation apart from the economy realized in Jesus Christ. The presence and actions of the Logos and of the Spirit are not parallel to the presence and action of Jesus Christ but lead everything to Christ, the Omega, in the one economy of salvation realized in him, for

> with the incarnation, all the salvific actions of the Word of God are always done in unity with the human nature that he has assumed for the salvation of all people … the action of the Spirit is not outside or parallel to the action of Christ.[113]

Moreover, there is one destiny for all humanity that is realized in Jesus Christ in his Paschal Mystery and all are associated to this mystery because of the possibilities offered by the Holy Spirit.[114] The focus of the presence and activity of the Logos and the Spirit is always Jesus Christ.[115] The Christ event ever stands at the center in the one economy of salvation. Hence, as Karl Rahner has it, God self-communicates in God's Spirit in the economy of salvation to self-communicate God's self in Jesus Christ. God's self-communication in God's Spirit seeks God's full/complete self-communication in history in God's Truth/Son (Jn. 14:6). Similarly, the *Logos asarkos* (the Word as such) is present

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[112]Cf. J. Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), 160.

[113]Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus*, nos. 10, 12.

[114]Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22.

[115]Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus*, nos. 10–12.

in history to lead all that it has brought/brings/will bring forth in history to *Logos ensarkos* (the Word incarnate), the summit. In the *Logos ensarkos*, all truths find fulfillment. The Logos and the Spirit can reveal truths in their pre-incarnational and post-incarnational times that may give humanity clues to its destiny accomplished by Jesus Christ's cross and resurrection. They have brought and may bring forth spiritualities for meaningful human/religious existence. Their operations in the world, whether before or after the Incarnation, are to lead everything ultimately to Christ. In other words, all truths revealed because of the presence and action of the *Logos asarkos* and of the Spirit are related to and ought to culminate in the knowledge of the Truth as per God's plan of salvation. They predispose persons and communities to receive the Truth. This is exactly what the Fathers (Justin, Irenaeus) affirmed. The Word as such, through his presence, was leading the Greeks through their philosophies and others through their religious and other traditions to his incarnate presence just as he was leading the people of God (Clement of Alexandria). The Logos is the OT theophanies and he is the voice of the Father in creation (Justin).[116] To recognize truths and, at the same time, to rule out the presence and action of the Logos and the Spirit that lead to and culminate in Christ would be to affirm the theocentrism of John Hick and Paul Knitter.

However, the Logos enfleshed in history, the Truth, and his abiding eternal presence and action in history revealing truths are not two separate persons. The same person who was/is/will be present and acting in history, revealing truths, is enfleshed in Jesus Christ, the revelation of God's self. It is the Logos enfleshed, personally present to humankind. The affirmation of the presence of the eternal Logos, therefore, does not mean that there are two Logos in salvation history, one incarnate and the other unincarnate:

> There are not two Christs here, nor are there two *logoi*. There is one Christ, the Eternal Son or the Eternal Word, whom we know to have been God who was to become manifest in the flesh.… There are not

[116]Cf. Lashier, "Irenaeus as Logos Theologian," 346–347.

> two different *logoi* at the source of our knowledge of God, the logos *ensarkos* and the logos *asarkos*. There is one eternal Logos.[117]

It is the same one Logos that was/is present in the history of all peoples and has become flesh whom we call the Truth, the fullness of God's revelation.

Conclusion

The paradox of Christian faith is that the eternal Son, despite his being beyond space and time, is, in being in time and space, in his humanity, the full manifestation of God. In him, the eternal is made fully visible in the temporal, the immutable is fully revealed in the mutable, the creator is fully manifested in creation, the maker is tangible in the made, and the immaterial is made present in the material. In other words, the humanity of Jesus, although difficult to comprehend, reveals God fully. The faith viewpoint of the Christ event in history has been that he was God-incarnate and the fullness of revelation. Human nature is a limitation, yet in Jesus's case, it expresses, from a faith viewpoint, God in God's fullness, i.e., God's self.

Knitter's thesis of Jesus as a partial revelation of the inexhaustible Divine Mystery is a flaw from the viewpoint of the New Testament and its theology. His view that a collection of words revealed in history make up the fullness of the Word and that Jesus is only a fragment of that fullness is flawed as well. The fullness of revelation, as Jesus's titles underscore, refers to the very manifestation of God's self, to the very disclosure of God's being. More specifically, it is the eternal Son fully present in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The Logos may be present revealing truths in the histories of peoples, but in that presence God's self has not been manifested. Simply put, it is not incarnate presence. God's other revelations (truths)—natural or supernatural—do not add anything to this unique revelation. In Jesus alone has the Godself been communicated. From a Christian viewpoint, the presence of truths

[117]Cassidy, "Review of Karl Barth and the Incarnation, by Darren O. Sumner," 379–380.

cannot but be the work of the presence of the eternal Logos and of the Holy Spirit, the two hands of the Father who lead everything to Christ.

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UNDERSTANDING THE CHURCH POSITION ON ADOPTION BY SAME-SEX COUPLES

Ana Maria Q. Faustino

The practice of adoption as a means of promoting the welfare of children arose in the middle of the 19th century as a result of complex factors, among which are religion and a change in perspective with regard to childhood.[1] Welcoming a stranger into one's family was motivated by Gospel values while nurturing children in a familial rather than institutional setting was given importance. Moreover, childcare institutions were faced with the difficult experience of a surge in the number of children needing care and the high costs of living. These conditions, plus the stigma of the institutionalization of children, led to the practices of adoption and foster care becoming preferred alternatives for promoting the welfare of children who were orphaned or abandoned. It was deemed much better for children to be provided with a permanent or temporary home with a family through adoption or foster care, respectively, than be cared for in an institution.

Facilitating adoptions became one of the important social service ministries of the Church. Starting with the creation of childcare institutions and then through child placement or adoption, along with

[1]S. Presser, "Law, Christianity, and Adoption," in T. Jackson, ed., *The Morality of Adoption: Social-Psychological, Theological, and Legal Perspectives* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2005), 223.

the formation of persons willing to adopt a child, the Church has "provided children with good, safe and traditional homes with a male husband and female wife" for more than a century.[2] However, having no mechanism to secure the fact of adoption, the Church defers to what the civil law on adoption provides. The 1983 Code of Canon Law[3] prescribes that "children who have been adopted according to the norm of civil law are considered the children of the person or persons who have adopted them" (Canon 110). The intent was obviously to promote public order, but it did not foresee that civil law on adoption would one day conflict with Church teaching.

The legalization of same-sex marriages in numerous countries all over the world, starting in the Netherlands in 2000 and most recently in Costa Rica in 2020,[4] is a new historical development that has ruffled the peace and calm of the Church's adoption ministry. Firstly, it compels adoption agencies to treat same-sex couple applicants just like they would other married couples who wish to adopt a child. Secondly, non-discrimination laws and funding from the government in some areas place Catholic adoption agencies in a corner where the only option that will not violate Church teaching is for them to discontinue their adoption services.

For example, the Archdiocese of Boston's Catholic Charities, faced with this untenable situation, decided to cease its 103-year-old adoption service in 2006 after its request for religious exemption was refused by the state of Massachusetts. This was a terrible loss for the Church's adoption ministry since "Catholic Charities of Boston, specializing in placing 'minority and older children,' claimed to be the leader in special needs adoptions in Massachusetts, in cooperation with state and federal

[2]D. Weaver, "Adoption, Social Justice, and Catholic Tradition," *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 13:2 (2016): 197–213; J. La Plante, "Tough Times for Catholic Adoption Agencies," *Our Sunday Visitor* (accessed March 2, 2018).

[3]*Codex Iuris Canonici auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983). Hereafter cited in-text.

[4]D. Masci, E. Sciupac, & M. Lipka, *Same-Sex Marriage Around the World* (Pew Research Center, October 28, 2019).

programs."[5] The same difficult decision was also made by Catholic Charities of San Francisco in 2006, Washington, D.C. in 2010, Illinois in 2011, and New York in 2018. Catholic adoption agencies all over the United States continue to encounter a similar dilemma where they are obliged by civil law not to discriminate against same-sex couples who wish to apply as adoptive parents. All this provides the backdrop for the Church to formulate its position on adoption by same-sex couples.

The Church Position on Adoption by Same-Sex Couples

The Church grounds her stance on a tradition of children being born and raised within a family that is founded on the marriage between a man and a woman. At the same time, she refers to the United Nations 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which the Holy See ratified in 1990, employing both its perspective of the best interests of the child and its language of rights.

The Criterion of Best Interests of the Child

The main magisterial document in which the Church position can be read is *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons* released by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2003.

> As experience has shown, the absence of sexual complementarity in these unions creates obstacles in the normal development of children who would be placed in the care of such persons. They would be deprived of the experience of either fatherhood or motherhood. Allowing children to be adopted by persons living in such unions would actually mean doing violence to these children, in the sense that their condition of dependency would be used to place them in an environment that is not conducive to their full human development. This is gravely immoral and in open contradiction to the principle,

[5]L. Cahill, "Adoption: A Roman Catholic Perspective," in Jackson, ed., *The Morality of Adoption*, 155.

> recognized also in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, that the best interests of the child, as the weaker and more vulnerable party, are to be the paramount consideration in every case.[6]

Even before this document came out, the Holy See had already expressed its plea to the U.N. during its Special Session on Children in 2002 that

> careful watch should be kept so that adoptions … when truly advisable and in respect for the principle of the "best interests of the child" … will be made by married couples who give real guarantees of stability, moral solidity, ability to accompany and exemplarity.[7]

According to the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child, the concept of the best interests of the child, on the whole, is aimed at ensuring not only the "full and effective enjoyment of all the rights recognized in the Convention" but also "the holistic development of the child" which includes the physical, mental, spiritual, moral, psychological, and social dimensions.[8] The Church does not have its own formulation of the concept of the "best interests of the child," and in the mere ten times (from 1998 to 2016) that it is mentioned in mostly minor Church documents, all such instances allude to the principle enshrined in the U.N. CRC that the best interests of the child are the paramount consideration in matters of adoption (Art. 21).[9]

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[6]Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons* (June 3, 2003), no. 7.

[7]A. Trujillo, Intervention at the special session of the United Nations on Children (May 9, 2002), https://bit.ly/3lRmYtZ (accessed March 2, 2018).

[8]United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, *General Comment No. 14 (2013) on the Right of the Child to Have His or Her Best Interests Taken as a Primary Consideration* (United Nations, 2013), 4. Here the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child asserts that the concept of the best interests of the child has three dimensions: a right, a principle, and a rule of procedure. From 1989 to 2013, the Committee left the interpretation of the best interests of the child entirely up to the States Parties that ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

[9]United Nations General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (United Nations, 1989).

In 2015, Pope Francis reiterated the position of the Church on the issue of adoption by same-sex couples by emphasizing the children's need for both a father and a mother:

> And in these old marriages, like good wine that gets better with age, one sees this daily work of the man to make his wife more a woman and the wife to make her husband more a man. They are not afraid of the differences! This challenge of carrying differences forward, this challenge enriches them, matures them, makes them great and they have eyes shining with joy, of so many years lived thus in love—what a great treasure is this diversity, a diversity that becomes complementarity and reciprocity. There is a knot there, one with the other. And this reciprocity and complementarity in difference is so important for the children. Children mature seeing father and mother like this; they mature their own identity in confronting the love that father and mother have, in being confronted with this difference.[10]

The absence of this sexual difference in a same-sex couple is the basis of the Church's judgment that adoption by same-sex couples is contrary to the best interests of the child. On an abstract level and based on a history of human experience, it can be said that the ideal environment in which children grow optimally is provided by the stable, low-conflict family founded on the marriage of biologically different parents. This is where the best interests of the child can flourish to a great degree. Children made available for adoption have lost this ideal environment for various reasons, and so approving their adoption by any parent or parents strives to compensate for their loss by providing them a home that approximates the ideal environment to an acceptable degree. "In an adoptive family, the child's right to the fundamental and irreplaceable experience of a father and a mother, as in a natural family, should be recognized."[11] The violation of this right does not serve the best interests of the child.

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[10]Francis, Address to participants in Rome's diocesan conference (June 14, 2015), https://bit.ly/33lX8rP (accessed March 2, 2018). Incidentally, this event came a day after the city of Rome staged a gay pride march.

[11]V. Rallo, Intervention at the general assembly of the International Commission of the Civil State (September 15, 2004), https://bit.ly/33aY41P (accessed June 14, 2018).

The Language of Rights

When examining Church teaching on children's rights, one discovers that it contains very little sustained focus on the child who is usually subsumed in discussions on the family.[12] In a non-exhaustive list of rights offered by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, he indicates the importance of the family for children's rights: the child has "the right to live in a united family and in a moral environment conducive to the growth of the child's personality."[13] The *Charter of the Rights of the Family* states that "the family has a right to assistance by society in the bearing and rearing of children" and that "children who are handicapped have the right to find in the home and the school an environment suitable to their human development."[14] These assertions are coherent with the Church's high valuation of marriage and family for the sake of children. As regards orphans or children who are deprived of the assistance of their parents or guardians, the Church

[12]C. Gudorf ("Rights of Children," in J. Dwyer, ed., *The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought* [Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1994], 143–144) asserts that the Church lacks a developed treatment of the rights of the child and ascribes the deficiency to three reasons, namely: 1) the Church's suspicion of rights language, 2) the Church's tendency to treat children indirectly through a focus on families, and 3) the potential conflict of the assertion of children's rights with the order maintained by parental authority.

[13]John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, no. 47. The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004) states: "The first right of the child is to 'be born in a real family,' a right that has not always been respected and that today is subject to new violations because of developments in genetic technology" (no. 244). M. Roche ("Children and the Common Good," in C. Griffith, ed., *Prophetic Witness: Catholic Women's Strategies for Reform* [New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2009], 127) criticizes this claim about the right to a real family and sees it as a rhetorical trap that fails to focus on concrete well-being. She asks: "What is a real family? How do we secure such rights? Who is obligated to provide it?"

[14]The Holy See, *Charter of the Rights of the Family*, Art. 3, c and Art. 4, g.

maintains that they must receive particular protection from society, although this is not explicitly presented as a right.[15]

The reticence of the Magisterium in using a language of rights seems to continue today. Nonetheless, the Holy See is guided by the following seven key principles

> which [promote] an authentic perspective of the rights and duties of the child according to international law: … 1) the child has inherent dignity as a human being and human person from the moment of conception until natural death; 2) the child's rights and duties must be viewed within the context of the family; 3) full respect of the child's rights and duties require[s] special protection and promotion of the family's rights and duties; 4) the child's well-being is the primary responsibility of his or her parents and family; and 5) the child has rights and duties with respect to the protection of his or her own life and parents have co-relative duties and rights to safeguard the child's life, from the moment of conception until natural death; 6) the child has a right and duty to be educated and parents have corresponding duties and rights to educate the child; and 7) the child has rights and duties concerning religious freedom taking into consideration the parents' duties and rights to educate their child according to their own moral and religious beliefs.[16]

Apart from these principles, the Holy See does not have a systematic list of the rights of the child.

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[15]Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 52 and *Charter of the Rights of the Family*, Art. 4, f. E. Regan ("Barely Visible: The Child in Catholic Social Teaching," *The Heythrop Journal* 55:6 [2014]: 1024) laments in particular that Pope John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris*, which "marks the first systematic treatment of human rights in official Catholic social teaching … makes no mention of the rights of the child." In her article, Regan reviewed about a dozen Church documents, including the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, and concluded that two weaknesses of Catholic social teaching concerning children are its failure to provide an adequate treatment of the issue of justice for children and its imbalanced consideration of unborn and born children.

[16]S. Tomasi, Presentation of the periodic reports of the Holy See to the Committee on the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols (January 16, 2014), https://bit.ly/3GxbnYQ (accessed December 23, 2020).

Some Objections to the Church's Position

Objections to the Church's position on adoption by same-sex couples come from both secular sources and the faithful. According to same-sex couples, "lesbians and gays seek adoption for the same reasons as heterosexuals do: to fulfill a desire to be a parent; to provide a home for a child; and also, to protect a non-legally sanctioned parent-child relationship."[17] While the second and third motivations might appear in favor of the best interests of the child, the first motivation, if solely that, might pose a danger of objectifying the child (whether in the case of same-sex or heterosexual couples). Beneath the second and third objections to the Church's position are two claims.

The Claim to Rights

The rhetoric one frequently hears today in adoption debates is the claim to the right to adopt a child. However, there is no such right even for married heterosexual couples. Instead, there are eligibility and suitability requirements that need to be fulfilled by prospective adoptive parents. The eligibility criteria for who may adopt may include age, civil status, citizenship, residence, childlessness, and religious affiliation. Some laws disqualify those suffering from physical or mental difficulties.[18] Other factors that determine suitability are moral character, emotional, psychological, and financial capability and stability, reputability, and any existing relationships with the child, among others. If a couple is not able to fulfill the requirements, then they may not adopt a child. The criteria by which applicants are screened vary across the respective laws of countries, states, and territories.

What same-sex couples actually seek is the right of *access* to adoption. There are places where the following are prohibited by law from adopting a child: single persons, unmarried couples, homosexual

[17]A. Appell, "Lesbian and Gay Adoption," *Adoption Quarterly* 4:3 (2001): 75–76.

[18]"Adoption," in *Wex* (New York: Legal Information Institute, Cornell Law School, n.d.), https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/adoption (accessed March 9, 2019).

persons, and same-sex couples.[19] In places where "same-sex marriage" is not legally recognized, the prohibition against unmarried couples has usually been sufficient to deny same-sex couples access to adoption (although roundabout ways remain for them to gain access to adoption). However, in places that have legalized "same-sex marriage," the access of qualified same-sex couples to adopt a child is presumed. Hence, the outright rejection of a same-sex couple's application to adopt a child on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is considered a form of discrimination. Indeed, homosexual persons, as do all human beings, have the right to be protected from discrimination of any kind since all share the same human dignity from which human rights emanate.[20]

The Claim to "No Difference"

For many decades now, social science research has claimed that the no-difference hypothesis is true, namely, that children raised by two lesbian mothers or two gay fathers fare just as well as those raised by a mother and a father, which is the natural two-parent structure. In other words, neither the sexual orientation nor gender identity of the "parents" reportedly has a bearing on the outcomes of child-rearing as measured in various areas such as in the development of sexual identity, psychological well-being, and mental health.

Professional organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American Psychological Association (APA) have upheld the no-difference hypothesis in a policy statement and a review of literature, respectively.[21] On the other hand, about a

[19]A. Stanton, "Adoption Law and Controversies," in Jackson, ed., *The Morality of Adoption*, 258–259.

[20]*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), no. 2358. Hereafter cited as CCC.

[21]The Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health of the American Academy of Pediatrics published "Coparent or Second-Parent Adoption by Same-Sex Parents" (*Pediatrics* 109:2 [2002]: 339–340) and then a policy statement entitled "Promoting the Well-Being of Children Whose Parents Are Gay or Lesbian" (*Pediatrics* 131:4 [2013]: 827–830). The American

decade after AAP issued its initial statement, the American College of Pediatricians (ACP) asserted that "children benefit from the unique parenting contributions of both men and women" and that "courts should act with extreme caution in making social and constitutional policy when relying on provisional social science data" that is "significantly limited and actually suggests differences that do not bode well for children."[22] Research that challenges the no-difference hypothesis maintains that same-sex parenting actually puts children at a higher risk for negative outcomes or, at the very least, results in different outcomes which may not necessarily be deficits. A British sociologist makes a wise reminder:

> There is a duty to examine the veracity of studies cited to back proposals that may have a dramatic impact upon children and society, rather than look away so as not to offend the sensibilities of activists.… Failure to design the study properly, failure to properly measure the relevant variables, failure to control for extraneous variables, and failure to use the proper statistical tests invalidates a study.[23]

In fact, critiques of those studies reveal that most if not all of them contain at least one fatal flaw in design or execution and that the critical limitations were not properly addressed according to accepted standards of scientific research.[24] Therefore, no empirical

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Psychological Association published *Lesbian & Gay Parenting* in 2005 (https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/parenting-full.pdf [accessed December 8, 2018]) which had an earlier edition in 1995 entitled *Lesbian and Gay Parenting: A Resource for Psychologists*.

[22]In March of 2013, the American College of Pediatricians presented their position paper entitled *Defending Traditional Marriage for the Well-Being of the Family and the Child.*

[23]P. Morgan, *Children as Trophies? Examining the Evidence on Same-Sex Parenting* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: The Christian Institute, 2002), 47.

[24]Here are six critiques: 1) J. Stacey & T. Biblarz, "(How) Does the Sexual Orientation of Parents Matter?", *American Sociological Review* 66:2 (2001): 159–183; 2) S. Nock, Affidavit as Exhibit C in Court File No. 684/00 (Canada: Ontario Superior Court of Justice, 2001), https://bit.ly/3IEAI5d (accessed March 28, 2019); 3) R. Lerner & A. Nagai, *No Basis: What the Studies Don't Tell Us About*

generalizations can be made based on any of those research studies. Newer studies that attempted to correct the fundamental data bias of previous ones by using large random samples either still fall short of commonly accepted standards or are not numerous enough. To date, the social sciences have not provided adequate scientific evidence to compare properly the outcomes of same-sex parenting with those of heterosexual parenting and to check whether differences occur and the reasons behind them.

What is the basis of the Church's position, which maintains that the lack of sexual complementarity alone in a same-sex couple is a decisive obstacle to a child's human development and therefore subverts the best interests of the child to the point that no same-sex couple can ever be judged capable of serving the child's best interests? Civil laws on adoption establish criteria regarding the eligibility and suitability of prospective adoptive parents to ensure that the best interests of the child are met.

Exploring the Precautionary Principle

That the Church opposes same-sex adoption despite lacking robust scientific evidence for debunking the no-difference hypothesis seems to indicate that the Church is applying the precautionary principle here. The precautionary principle was originally formulated in consideration of environmental concerns.

> *The authorities called to make decisions concerning health and environmental risks sometimes find themselves facing a situation in which available scientific data are contradictory or quantitatively scarce. It may then be appropriate to base evaluations*

Same-Sex Parenting (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 2001); 4) D. Allen, "More Heat Than Light: A Critical Assessment of the Same-Sex Parenting Literature, 1995–2013," *Marriage & Family Review* 51:2 (2015): 158; 5) W. Schumm, "A Review and Critique of Research on Same-Sex Parenting and Adoption," *Psychological Reports* 119:3 (2016): 641–760; and 6) F. Perales, L. Reeves, S. Plage, & J. Baxter, "The Family Lives of Australian Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People: A Review of the Literature and a Research Agenda," *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 17 (2020): 43–60.

> *on the "precautionary principle", which does not mean applying rules but certain guidelines aimed at managing the situation of uncertainty.* This shows the need for making temporary decisions that may be modified on the basis of new facts that eventually become known.… This precautionary approach is connected with the need to encourage every effort for acquiring more thorough knowledge, in the full awareness that science is not able to come to quick conclusions about the absence of risk.[25]

Using the precautionary principle, the Church takes a tentative stand after weighing benefits against risks, including the fact that there is a lack of conclusive scientific data that supports her stand. Applied to child adoption, one might suggest that the Church prohibits adoption by same-sex couples as an exercise of prudence that protects the best interests of the child so long as thorough knowledge of the outcomes of same-sex parenting is not yet available. At this point, studies of the social sciences that compare the outcomes of children raised by same-sex couples versus heterosexual couples have not fulfilled scientific research standards. Thus, their conclusions, whether asserting no difference or a significant difference in outcomes, are not yet valid.

By articulating the precautionary principle in addressing environmental concerns, the Church acknowledges the possibility of revising its position on the matter if more conclusive evidence can be found to warrant such. However, there seems to be no indication that the Church is open to revision in the matter of prohibiting same-sex adoption even if scientific evidence can be found that affirms no significant difference in parenting outcomes between same-sex and heterosexual couples. Thus, the precautionary principle does not quite fit the issue at hand. Similarly, arguing the position of the Church from the best interests of the child seems to be problematic. This author tests this further using casuistry in the case of embryo adoption.

The best interests of a child, or of a vulnerable human being, are at stake in another category of adoption, namely, embryo adoption. Here, however, the Church takes a position that does not prioritize or pursue these interests. Embryo adoption in itself is the subject of

[25] *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 469 (italics in the original).

an ongoing debate among theologians.[26] The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) has expressed serious moral reservations about it, but without explicitly condemning it as immoral.

> With regard to the large number of *frozen embryos already in existence* the question becomes: what to do with them?…
>
> Proposals to *use these embryos for research* or *for the treatment of disease* are obviously unacceptable because they treat the embryos as mere "biological material" and result in their destruction. The proposal to thaw such embryos without reactivating them and use them for research, as if they were normal cadavers, is also unacceptable.
>
> The proposal that these embryos could be put at the disposal of infertile couples as a *treatment for infertility* is not ethically acceptable for the same reasons which make artificial heterologous procreation illicit as well as any form of surrogate motherhood; this practice would also lead to other problems of a medical, psychological and legal nature.
>
> It has also been proposed, solely in order to allow human beings to be born who are otherwise condemned to destruction, that there could be a form of "*prenatal adoption*." This proposal, praiseworthy with regard to the intention of respecting and defending human life, presents however various problems not dissimilar to those mentioned above.
>
> All things considered, it needs to be recognized that the thousands of abandoned embryos represent a *situation of injustice which in fact cannot be resolved.*[27]

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[26]It should be noted that even the use of the term "embryo adoption" is under contention as theologians differ on what the object of the act is. G. Surtees says that the object is to "adopt the child prenatally, giving it a home first in the womb of the wife and then in the home provided by her and her husband." On the other hand, W. May and G. Grisez say that the object is to "transfer the frozen embryo, a child orphaned before its birth, to the woman's womb in order to protect its life … [and that] a single woman could [rightly] choose to do this and, after the child's delivery, offer it for adoption to a married couple." See G. Mackinnon, *Can Frozen Embryos Be Saved?*, Catholic Answers (January 1, 2002), https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/can-frozen-embryos-be-saved (accessed September 9, 2019).

[27]Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dignitas Personae*, no. 19 (italics in the original).

It is consistent with an earlier instruction which holds that these embryos are "exposed to an absurd fate, with no possibility of their being offered safe means of survival which can be licitly pursued."[28] The Church cannot allow embryo adoption because it would mean formal cooperation with embryo transfer, surrogacy, and *in vitro fertilization*—all of which the Church judges as immoral. "The risk of scandal is also ever present, and an endorsement of embryo adoption might not only be seen as an endorsement of IVF and surrogacy, but could actually lead to an *increase* in the practice of both, especially among Catholics."[29] Hence, the moral option, for the time being, is to continue to store the embryos in their frozen state. Similarly, the Church cannot allow adoption by same-sex couples because it would mean formal cooperation with "same-sex marriage" and the denial of human sexuality as male and female. An endorsement of adoption by same-sex couples might be seen as an endorsement of "same-sex marriage." In short, the Church ultimately grounds her opposition to same-sex adoption not in the argument of the "best interests of the child" but rather in the wider context of her interrelated teachings which she will not change. This author thus proposes another approach to the debate.

Doctrinal Integrity

As a preliminary note, this author wishes to cite J. Keenan's belief that Church teaching is "more interested in consistency and universality than in the contextual questions, more willing to suppress moral beliefs, differences, and exceptions for the sake of identity."[30] This author agrees that consistency for its own sake may be a superficial aim and may even be an erroneous goal at times when it means

[28]Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Vitae*, no. I. 5.

[29]R. Mayer, "Is Embryo Adoption a Form of Surrogacy?", *The National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 11:2 (2011): 256 (italics in the original).

[30]J. Keenan, *A History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century: From Confessing Sins to Liberating Consciences* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 119.

ignoring contexts. However, consistency remains significant, especially as it is an element of integrity or ordered wholeness which ought to characterize Church teaching. Related to this is an argument for identity which is a value to be cherished in this postmodern time of pluralism and relativism. However, this author does not agree with suppressing differences and exceptions which is what happens when there is a narrow understanding of Catholic identity as merely about taking a "Catholic stand" against moral issues like abortion, contraception, HIV prevention, same-sex unions, etc. Catholic identity is about sharing a Catholic Christian vision, values, and the apostolic mission from Christ himself, and living these out in one's daily life.

In one edition of the Catholic magazine *America* back in the 1960s, one can read a viewpoint that was as relevant then as it is today:

> The traditional Christian morality governing marriage and sexual relations was and is an ordered whole, a coherent structure whose parts all hang together. We cannot change any fundamental part of the code without affecting them all. To be specific, we cannot have stable monogamous marriage as our civilization has understood it for millennia if we accept contraception, premarital sexual intercourse and easy divorce as morally approved practices.
>
> These practices are incompatible with the inner principles of marriage as understood in the Christian tradition; and that some people do not see this is quite irrelevant if the fact is so. Any structure of human relationships has its own objective laws which must be generally observed, or the structure decays and falls apart.[31]

The writer was making his commentary on the so-called sexual revolution in Britain, the essence of which—the denial of procreation as the natural purpose of sex—"pulled out the key pin that holds our sexual moral code together."[32]

Adoption by same-sex couples may not deny procreation as the natural purpose of sex since there is already a child, but it rejects the idea that parenting, the natural corollary of procreation, is sex-

[31]T. Davis, "Sexual Revolution," *America* 108:16 (April 20, 1963): 526.

[32]Davis, "Sexual Revolution," 526.

differenced and complementary.[33] Indirectly, it also rejects marriage as it is understood in Church tradition. Similarly, therefore, this author would like to add to the statement above—we cannot have stable monogamous marriage as our civilization has understood it for millennia if we accept adoption by same-sex couples and, implicitly, "same-sex marriage" as morally approved practices. The Church will not change her position on adoption by same-sex couples because she cannot undermine the doctrinal integrity of her teachings on human sexuality and marriage that are based on a physicalist interpretation of natural law. The possibility of change in Church position can come only on the basis of a better understanding of human realities but without changing the underlying values. The Catholic Charities of Boston and of San Francisco may have allowed the adoption of children by same-sex couples based on the best interests of the child, but what prevailed afterward was doctrinal integrity as they decided to discontinue their adoption services in their respective dioceses when exemption from civil law that allows adoption by same-sex couples was not granted to them.[34]

To better appreciate doctrinal consistency, integrity, and identity, one needs to take on a perspective of Church teaching as a system of values, principles, and norms of behavior. Simply saying, for example, that "the Church does not allow adoption by same-sex couples" as if it is merely an authoritarian pronouncement that demands assent may shroud the underlying values that the Church upholds and protects. For example, if marriage practices are perceived merely as religious customs without a rational conviction of the values that comprise the Catholic faith, then traditional practices can be easily discarded for the sake of modern social conditions. More fundamental than norms is the integrated system of values that is held in common by the Catholic

[33]In single parenting, there is room for a different-sexed parent figure to compensate for the lack of sex-differenced and complementary parenting in the single parent situation.

[34]C. Rutledge, "Caught in the Crossfire: How Catholic Charities of Boston was Victim to the Clash Between Gay Rights and Religious Freedom," *Duke Journal of Gender Law & Policy* 15 (2008): 299–300.

faithful. However, it cannot be safely assumed that the values upheld by the Church's principles and norms and the interplay between them are clear to the laity or maybe even to some clergy. These need to be explained and modeled clearly to be imbibed. Only then can the principles and norms of behavior be understood and appreciated as moral expressions of faith, and only then can new practices be interpreted in terms of old principles and values. Francis explains that the "pastoral care for families … consists not merely in presenting a set of rules, but in proposing values that are clearly needed today.…"[35]

Values Upheld

The Church tradition that affirms the existence of an objective morality based on the paradigm of natural law uses today the language of "values" which can be understood as "realities or aspects of reality that are important in themselves, that command our respect and observance, and that call for a response in our everyday behavior."[36] Some examples of new articulations of values within the last century are the sanctity of life, consistent life ethics, the preferential option for the poor, and solidarity.[37]

In her negative evaluation of adoption by same-sex couples, the Church upholds the following objective values: the dignity of the child, marriage, human sexuality, the family, and the common good. Their interrelatedness demonstrates that the Church position on adoption by same-sex couples cannot be separated from her negative evaluation of "same-sex marriage" and homosexual activity, her defense of the complementarity of man and woman in marriage, the purposes of marriage and the family, and its relation to the common good.

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[35]Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 201.

[36]T. O'Connell, *Making Disciples: A Handbook of Christian Moral Formation* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1998), 21, 57.

[37]Keenan, *A History of Catholic Moral Theology*, 84.

The Dignity of the Child

The Church teaches that every child is endowed with the dignity of a human person created in the image and likeness of God and ought to be treated as a person with rights from the moment of their conception.[38] Its helplessness demands the care and protection of the parents who by their marital act brought the child into this world. It is the parents' original and primary responsibility to provide for the child's needs and educate the child. When this is not possible, adoptive parents commit to the responsibility of raising the child.

Marriage, Together with Human Sexuality and the Family

The second value that the Church upholds in her negative evaluation of adoption by same-sex couples is marriage. Marriage for Catholics is a "covenant by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life, and which of its own very nature is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children" (Canon 1055 §1). Here the Church makes a profound link between human sexuality, marriage, procreation, child-rearing, and family. However, it is a link "which the modern culture of sexuality threatens to divide."[39]

Allowing same-sex couples to adopt a child contradicts the Church's belief in the institution of marriage as an exclusive union of a man and a woman oriented to the bearing and raising of children. The Church holds that marriage is a God-given design that assures a child of both a father and a mother in a permanent relationship that gives rise to a stable family.

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[38]CCC 2378; CDF, *Donum Vitae* I, 1 and III, 8.

[39]G. Campanini, "Change in the Family and the Challenges of Contemporary Culture," in L. Cahill & D. Mieth, eds., *The Family*, Concilium 1995/4 (London: SCM Press, 1995), 38.

However, two caveats are in order. The first is that this belief in the institution of marriage does not imply that a family based on marriage between a man and a woman guarantees the security of child rights. The second is that it does not imply that a child cannot enjoy some of those rights in an environment other than a family based on marriage nor that a single, remarried, or even same-sex parent cannot secure some of those rights. While exceptions are a possibility, the Church teaching on same-sex adoption excludes exceptions for same-sex parents even as canon law, in deference to civil law, allows exceptions for single and remarried parents. It must be recognized that there is tension between what the Church teaches and possible exceptions for same-sex couples.

In today's open societies, there is an upsurge in the variety of forms of families. Aside from single-parent families, divorced families, and reconstructed or blended families, there are also multi-parent families and same-sex-parent families. Amidst all this, the Church asserts that the "normal reference point by which the different forms of family relationship are to be evaluated" is the natural institution of "a man and a woman united in marriage, together with their children" (CCC 2202).[40]

It must be clarified that by this insistence on a family structure based on the marriage of a man and a woman, the Church does not intend to reject those who are in situations that do not meet the ideals of family and marriage. After all, the Church recognizes that not all instances that fall short of the ideal are severely and destructively impaired. Francis warns the Church against an "excessive idealization" in proposing a "far too abstract and almost artificial theological ideal of marriage, far removed from the concrete situations and practical possibilities of real families."[41] There are single parents and their children, divorced families, abandoned children taken in by their grandparents or relatives, families blended from two separated spouses who live together with

[40]The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* asserts that states need to recognize "indissoluble monogamous marriage as the only authentic form of the family" (no. 229).

[41]Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 36.

their children from previous marriages, *de facto* unions, family members separated by poverty, and many others. In the words of L. Cahill:

> Our own sins and our need for forgiveness should make all Christian families slow to judge others and quick to offer support, even while we persistently and courageously speak up for the family relationships and social conditions that we believe will enhance family life for all. The Christian family is not the perfect family but one in which fidelity, compassion, forgiveness, and concern for others, even strangers, are known. In striving to embody these virtues, however imperfect its success, a family lives in the presence of God and begins to transform its surroundings. A Christian family is such a family.[42]

Family life with all its challenges, joys and sorrows, daily routines, and successes and failures provides members of the family bound by love with a strategic setting for learning values. The family is the "domestic church"[43] and a "school of deeper humanity" where "various generations come together and help one another grow wiser and harmonize personal rights with the other requirements of social life,"[44] thus preparing children for life and service in the bigger community of society.

Social Order and the Common Good

The Church's negative evaluation of adoption by same-sex couples can be understood not only on behalf of the best interests of the child but also against the backdrop of the Church's understanding of marriage and the common good. After all, "a Christian ethic of children … asserts that one's own good is inextricably linked to the common good, the good of others, [and] the good of the whole."[45]

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[42]L. Cahill, *Family: A Christian Social Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 137.

[43]Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11.

[44]Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 52.

[45]B. Miller-McLemore, *Let the Children Come: Reimagining Childhood from a Christian Perspective* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 169.

Same-sex couples claim a right to adoption that is consequential to a "right" to marriage (or what they call "marriage equality"). The Church rejects such rights claims to safeguard the institution of marriage and, with it, the common good. For the sake of social order and the common good, marriage itself warrants protection while it "protects the identity, security, and flourishing of children"[46] by providing a means of regulating sexual behavior for the purposes of reproduction and a stable environment for the development and education of children.

"The current definition of marriage has a place in the law … for providing a paradigm [that sets] a comparative standard for the complexity of relationships in which children might otherwise find themselves."[47] Already there are new practices like homoparenting, transparenting, shared parenting, group parenting, and fragmented parenting (biological, gestational, legal, and social) that replace natural parenthood and raise questions about what entails maternity and paternity. The ambiguity and confusion arising from these new trends will necessitate judicial/legal intervention that can adversely affect children while the "real" parent responsible for the child's upbringing is being determined. Given the institutional importance of the family for society and the common good, the Church insists that public authorities and societies have the obligation to assist the family by providing resources and support and to protect the family from whatever may threaten its foundations, like these practices which are opposed to natural law.[48]

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[46]D. Cooper-Clarke, A. Cameron, D. Palmer, C. Meney, R. Benson, J. McClean, J. Wallace, & N. Tonti-Filippini, *Revising Marriage? Why Marriage is the Union of a Man and a Woman* (Sydney: Catholic Women's League Australia, 2011), 5.

[47]Cooper-Clarke et al., *Revising Marriage?*, 9.

[48]*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 229; Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, no. 23; John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, no. 49; Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 45.

The Pontifical Council for the Family sheds light on the interrelatedness of human sexuality, marriage, family, and the common good:

> The truth about conjugal love also makes it possible to understand the serious social consequences of the institutionalization of homosexual relations: "We can also see how incongruous is the demand to grant 'marital' status to unions between persons of the same sex. It is opposed, first of all, by the objective impossibility of making the partnership fruitful through the transmission of life according to the plan inscribed by God in the very structure of the human being. Another obstacle is the absence of the conditions for that interpersonal complementarity between male and female willed by the Creator at both the physical-biological and the eminently psychological levels." Marriage cannot be reduced to a condition similar to that of a homosexual relationship: this is contrary to common sense. In the case of homosexual relations, which demand to be considered de facto unions, the moral and juridical consequences take on special relevance. "Lastly, 'de facto unions' between homosexuals are a deplorable distortion of what should be a communion of love and life between a man and a woman in a reciprocal gift open to life." However, the presumption to make these unions equivalent to "legal marriage", as some recent initiatives attempt to do, is even more serious. Furthermore, the attempts to legalize the adoption of children by homosexual couples adds an element of great danger to all the previous ones. "The bond between two men or two women cannot constitute a real family and much less can the right be attributed to that union to adopt children without a family." To recall the social transcendence of the truth about conjugal love and consequently the grave error of recognizing or even making homosexual relations equivalent to marriage does not presume to discriminate against these persons in any way. It is the common good of society which requires the laws to recognize, favor and protect the marital union as the basis of the family which would be damaged in this way.
>
> Marriage and the family are a social good of the first order: "The family always expresses a new dimension of good for [humankind], and it thus creates a new responsibility. We are speaking of the responsibility for that particular common good which includes the good of the person, of every member of the family community."[49]

[49]Pontifical Council for the Family, *Family, Marriage and "De Facto" Unions*, nos. 23 and 24.

The Church's system of values is not closed in on itself and interacts bilaterally with the socio-political realm. The legalization of adoption by same-sex couples in some places is a new socio-political context that needs to be considered as we turn to a related prescription in canon law that seeks to preserve social order with respect to adopted children.

The Problematic of CIC 110

As already mentioned, the 1983 Code of Canon Law prescribes that "children who have been adopted according to the norm of civil law are considered the children of the person or persons who have adopted them" (Canon 110). The term "person" may have originally referred to a stepparent who is adopting the child borne by his or her spouse from a previous marriage. However, it has also been interpreted to mean a single/unmarried person. "By mentioning 'person or persons,' canon 110 allows for single-parent adoptions."[50] This raises the question about the propriety of adoption by a single/unmarried person whose parenting fails to approximate what the child has lost. Clarification is definitely in order as the Church herself is now caught between her own moral teaching and the law. How can the Church be historically rooted and engage the present concerns of adoption while preserving her doctrinal integrity?

Handling Differences and Exceptions

While maintaining doctrinal integrity at the theoretical level is possible, addressing the moral complexity present in diverse situations is a challenge. Fulfilling Church precepts derived primarily from the need to maintain doctrinal integrity can be daunting under certain circumstances where the objective concrete norm fails to capture the whole of moral truth.

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[50]J. Beal, J. Coriden, & T. Green, eds., *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 150.

Since adoption by same-sex couples is a relatively new issue, this author turns to the issue of contraception to discover what examples we have in Church history of how the magisterium handled differences and exceptions in the application of its teaching and protection of doctrinal integrity.

The call to change Church teaching that prohibits contraceptive use in marriage is several decades old. In the 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI did not heed the recommendation for a change in Church teaching on contraception in the majority report of the Pontifical Commission on Birth Control (which included scientists, theologians, married couples, physicians, bishops, and cardinals). Instead, he pronounced that each and every marital act must be open to procreation because of the inseparable connection between its unitive and procreative ends:

> The Church, nevertheless, in urging [men and women] to the observance of the precepts of the natural law, which it interprets by its constant doctrine, teaches that each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life.
>
> This particular doctrine, often expounded by the magisterium of the Church, is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which [human persons] on [their] own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act.[51]

According to this teaching, the morally acceptable way for husband and wife to postpone or avoid pregnancy for a good reason is periodic continence. Even as periodic continence has been embraced by many married couples as their response to the call to responsible parenthood and with a view of marriage as a "path to holiness,"[52] some find it irrational, excessive, impractical if not too difficult, and a serious

[51]Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, nos. 11–12.

[52]Cf. Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 41 and Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 48.

impasse in fundamental theological ethics on the theoretical level.[53] A similar impasse is looming in the case of adoption by same-sex couples.

How has the Church been addressing the impasse as regards contraception? Behind this doctrinal status are pastoral adaptations and approaches offered to married couples to resolve the gap between the norms set by the Church and their human experience of married life. These allow the Church to remain firm in its position on contraception based on the inseparability principle. Keenan identifies three pastoral adaptations from the late 1960s: compromise ("which did not sit well with Catholics"), the law of gradualness, and the distinction between objectively grave matter and subjective non-culpability—all of which attend to the couple's particular circumstances.[54]

As a moral category (which is different from the moral principle of compromise), compromise is used here in the ordinary sense of the word and thus classifies some moral actions as being between right and wrong, with the justification that such a best possible solution (compromise) can be tolerated in view of a situation that manifests the sinfulness of the world.[55]

As regards the law of gradualness, the faithful who accept Church teaching but struggle in living it out are encouraged to continue striving to realize such teaching gradually in their marriage with the aid of the sacraments of reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist. The

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[53]M. Barberi & J. Selling, "The Origin of *Humanae Vitae* and the Impasse in Fundamental Theological Ethics," *Louvain Studies* 37:4 (2013): 382.

[54]Keenan, *A History of Catholic Moral Theology*, 146–151. J. Bretzke (*A Morally Complex World: Engaging Contemporary Moral Theology* [Quezon City, Philippines: Jesuit Communications Foundation, Inc., 2004]) explains that the end of the moral principle of compromise is not to reduce the good but rather to seek its maximum possible realization in the concrete situation at hand (p. 204). The principle was illustrated by John Paul II (*Evangelium Vitae*, no. 73) using the case of elected government officials who are faced with pro-abortion laws which they cannot repeal but limit the harm done by such laws.

[55]Keenan, *A History of Catholic Moral Theology*, 147.

gradualness can be thought of as an "ongoing conversion and growth in moral virtue."[56]

As regards the distinction between objectively grave matter and subjective non-culpability, confessors recognize extenuating circumstances in the lives of the faithful that can make them subjectively non-culpable of objectively grave matter, thereby maintaining Church teaching and sparing the penitent from unjust condemnation.

As regards addressing other contexts, "while the Church has always taught that marital acts of contraception are morally wrong, the use of contraceptives can sometimes be acceptable within certain other contexts outside of consensual conjugal acts."[57] Two such contexts are the following: in the case of rape that has already happened, the use of contraceptives would be an act of self-defense; in the case of therapeutic medical treatment that has a secondary contraceptive effect, it would be an act of medical therapy.

These approaches and manners of addressing other contexts demonstrate how the Church stood by its teaching on contraception despite a clamor for change and yet was able to address differences and exceptions. Nevertheless, this author does not subscribe to the moral category of compromise because of its ambiguity and finds that the law of gradualness and the distinction between objectively grave matter and subjective non-culpability are not suitable for responding to the issue of adoption by same-sex couples. The simple reason is that adoption by same-sex couples is a definitive and permanent arrangement involving a child. The two pastoral adaptations consider only the moral agency of the same-sex couple and not the best interests of the child. An alternative pastoral adaptation that is more appropriate for adoption by same-sex couples would be the principle of tolerance,

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[56]J. Bretzke, *Handbook of Roman Catholic Moral Terms* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013), 100.

[57]T. Pacholczyk, "Catholics and Acceptable Uses of Contraceptives," *Making Sense of Bioethics* Col. 129 (March 30, 2016), https://bit.ly/3AfXKd6.

which is also in the tradition of the Church (this would be applicable only for those same-sex couples who have already adopted children).

Handling Conflict Between Civil Law and Morality

Cognizant that civil law may not always correspond to the moral law as it is in the case of adoption by same-sex couples, the Church humbly accepts her role as a "sign of contradiction" as she journeys with and proclaims the teachings of Christ to a secularized and pluralistic world.[58] Nonetheless, this is to be done with gladness "as joyful messengers of challenging proposals, guardians of the goodness and beauty which shine forth in a life of fidelity to the Gospel."[59]

The Church officially endorses two different approaches to address conflict between civil law and morality. According to C. Curran and R. Gula, the first (older) approach sees civil law in the light of natural law as directing persons to do what nature dictates. Here Catholics should participate in law-making to make civil law reflect Catholic morality. The second (newer) approach is guided by the principle that considers the rights and freedom of conscience of the individual as enshrined in the declaration on religious freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, and thus acknowledges that civil law is less influential in a pluralistic society. Here Catholics should influence the moral climate "through example, education, and service" so that Catholic moral values and principles are conveyed and experienced in the community.[60]

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[58]Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, no. 18.

[59]Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 168.

[60]C. Curran, *Ongoing Revision: Studies in Moral Theology* (Notre Dame, IN: Fides Publishers, 1975), 110–134; R. Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith: Foundations of Catholic Morality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 254–255. Gula also cites examples for each of the approaches. The first approach is employed in the *Declaration on Procured Abortion* by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1974): "The law is not obliged to sanction everything, but it cannot act contrary to a law which is deeper and more majestic than any human law: the natural law engraved in [people's] hearts by the Creator" (p. 21). The second approach is employed in

In the first approach, public discourse and authentic dialogue with civil authorities are of utmost importance in being able to influence public policy. It is not about Catholics imposing their views on everyone else but rather about expressing them as a right, using rational arguments in a consistent and balanced manner. Also, the bishops' conferences play a crucial role in the public domain. Any structural weaknesses or inappropriate strategies on their part could have detrimental consequences for authentic dialogue on moral issues.[61]

Meanwhile, the second approach is simply about witnessing to Gospel values which every Catholic is called to do as a way of life. The Catholic married couple's example of responsible care for the children they bring into this world and their witness of the good news that Christian marriage is are educative ways of mediating Roman Catholic moral values to the community.

> Authentic conjugal love will be more highly prized, and wholesome public opinion created about it if Christian couples give outstanding witness to faithfulness and harmony in their love, and to their concern for educating their children also, if they do their part in bringing about the needed cultural, psychological and social renewal on behalf of marriage and the family.[62]

An even more compelling witness is adoption as a family apostolate, a loving service to the adoptee, and an expression of solidarity for the common good of society. "Christian charitable activity … is not a means of changing the world ideologically, and it is not at the service of worldly stratagems, but it is a way of making present here and now the

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Donum Vitae, also by the CDF: "[The law] must sometimes tolerate, for the sake of public order, things which it cannot forbid without a greater evil resulting" (III).

[61]An assessment of how Catholics debated the Reproductive Health Bill in the Philippines and the lessons to be learned from it can be found in E. Genilo, "The Catholic Church and the Reproductive Health Bill Debate: The Philippine Experience," *The Heythrop Journal* 55:6 (November 2014): 1044–1055.

[62]Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 49.

love which [the human person] always needs."[63] The Christian way of life itself reflects Christ and proposes Gospel values to the community and larger society. The integrity of moral teaching then would not just be on a doctrinal level but truly embodied by Christians striving to live out their faith in our morally complex world.

[63]Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 31.

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THE THEOLOGY OF MERCY IN THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF POPE FRANCIS

Ramil R. Marcos

Since the beginning, Pope Francis has made it known through his words and actions that the theme of mercy would be the guiding principle of his exercise of ministry. His earliest addresses and homilies invoked divine mercy as the most important attribute of God to which he wants to lead the Church back. In 2015, Francis proclaimed an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, accompanied by his own reflections on how to understand, appreciate, and live this theme in the Church and in the world.[1] Mercy had a personal importance for this pope, evidenced by his episcopal and later papal motto, *Miserando atque Eligendo*.[2]

This essay will concentrate on the influences that contributed to Francis's choice of a personal and pastoral ideal—divine mercy. It will look into the maturation of his interest in the subject by delving into his personal testimony as a Christian, Jesuit, priest, and bishop. It will also present the gist of his teachings on mercy as Vicar of Christ and

[1]On April 11, 2015, Pope Francis promulgated the bull of indiction *Misericordiae Vultus* (cited in-text as MV) in which he expressed what he hoped the Jubilee Year of Mercy would accomplish.

[2]W. Kasper, *Pope Francis' Revolution of Tenderness and Love: Theological and Pastoral Perspectives* (New York: Paulist Press, 2015), 31.

leave behind his Scriptural catechesis during the Jubilee Year of Mercy which, by its extensiveness, deserves a separate article.

Mercy in the Vision of a Shepherd

Exhilaration and Expectations for Newness

D. Dorr considered the papal resignation of Pope Benedict XVI as one of just two "*kairos*" moments in modern Church history, comparable only to the resolve of Pope John XXIII in leading the Church toward a new direction through the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II). Benedict XVI's decision also presaged the blossoming of new possibilities for the Church in our age.[3] It was time for a dedicated but enervated servant of God to turn over the reins of ministry to a vigorous successor. In Buenos Aires, the unsuspecting Archbishop Jorge Bergoglio later "praised the decision as a 'revolutionary act' that had been carefully thought out in the presence of God."[4]

When expressions of sympathetic paeans for the resigning Pope were over, the spotlight was turned on to the popular celebrity cardinals who could well fill in the "ideal type" of candidate who had "Pope Pius XII or Paul VI's instincts for governance, John XXIII's warmth, John Paul II's evangelical charisma, coupled with Benedict XVI's intellectual qualities"[5] impossibly contained in just one person. Management experts opined that the time was ripe for a pope who possessed the quality of "global fluency" or cultural intelligence—a leader who could "engage comfortably with a great range of cultural experiences."[6]

In his 2009 book *The Future Church*, J. Allen argued for an increasing relevance of the global South in the future of World Catholicism and

[3]D. Dorr, *The Pope Francis Agenda* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Communications Foundation, Inc., 2018), 10.

[4]A. Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2014), 350.

[5]B. McCarthy, "The Best Fit for Office?" *The Tablet* 267:8988 (March 9, 2013): 10.

[6]McCarthy, "The Best Fit for Office?" 10.

already presaged a "third-world" pope, one with either a black or a brown face, or from Latin America, sitting on St. Peter's throne.[7] While Bergoglio's crucial role as runner-up to Cardinal Ratzinger in the 2005 conclave was mentioned in the book, the media paid scant attention to this elderly former contender who was no longer perceived as a frontrunner in the 2013 conclave, perhaps due to his age.

Veering away from the sensationalism of the moment, theologians contributed to serious reflections on the qualities and priorities the next pontiff must bring to his office.[8] Fordham theologian C. Camosy came closest to a prophetic rendering of the next pope's character and mission:

> Like Jesus, the next pope should be able to get out of his comfort zone and meet with his people—especially on the margins—and minister to them on a regular basis. He should choose to dress in simple robes, and avoid ostentatious dress which separates him from the lives and experience of his flock. He should listen first, but when it is time to speak he must be a skilled communicator who, like Jesus, should address his people in a language they can understand.[9]

Modern popes have indeed shown acute sensitivity to the signs of the times, as Vatican II envisioned for the whole Church,[10] in the way they exercised their pastorate in a gradual crescendo of sincerity and simplicity. Pope Paul VI surrendered his tiara and started international pastoral visits to be close to the people. Pope John Paul II's more than a quarter-century of service made the universal shepherd more visible, humble, and accessible to people through his myriads of creative

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[7]J. Allen, *The Future Church* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 47.

[8]Cf. E. Conway, T. Beattie et al., "A Humble Heart and a Thick Skin," *The Tablet* 267:8989 (March 16, 2013): 10–11.

[9]Conway, Beattie et al., "A Humble Heart and a Thick Skin," 11.

[10]J. Kroeger, "Always Alert to God's Signs," in K. Krämer & K. Vellguth, eds., *Evangelii Gaudium: Voices of the Universal Church* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Communications Foundation, Inc. 2015), 85–96.

initiatives. Benedict XVI removed the tiara from the papal crest, replacing it with the more pastoral image of the mitre.[11]

A towering concern was the quality of administration the new pope must exercise, first over the Curia and then the rest of the Catholic world. While the last two popes were, as brilliant scholars, "supreme teachers of the faith in word and deed," they both grappled with an institution that had complex, controlling, clashing, and self-serving tendencies. Such a situation called for simplification and better supervision in the hands of their successor.[12] The next pope was expected to "show a greater interest in administration than his predecessor did. That includes carrying out an internal bureaucratic reform at the Vatican."[13]

Finally, when, on the rainy evening of March 13, 2013, the conclave adjourned after only a swift process of five ballots, Catholics met their new Vicar of Christ and the world gazed at the new representative face of the Catholic Church for the first time. A stunned silence after the announcement of the name of Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio showed how unexpected and unknown was the man finally elected as the 265th successor of St. Peter. Neither included in the shortlist of Vatican watchers' *papabili* nor a known insider in the bureaucracy of the Vatican, little was known internationally of his identity and character.[14]

Emerging from the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica was a 76-year-old Pope from the global South, an Argentinian with an Italian surname, a member of the religious family of the Society of Jesus, and the first ever pope in history to take the name Francis. Pope Francis's appearance, his first words, and his disarming gestures immediately elicited a positive reception.

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[11]H. Pabel, "Farewell to an Aura," *The Tablet* 267:8988 (March 9, 2013): 13.

[12]"A Pope for the World," [editorial] *The Tablet* 267:8989 (March 16,2013): 2.

[13]R. Mickens, "A House that Needs Putting in Order," *The Tablet* 267:8989 (March 16, 2013): 6.

[14]C. Lamb, "Five-Ballot Wonder," *The Tablet* 267:8990 (March 23, 2013): 4.

Some observers saw in that maiden encounter between people and Pope the dawning of a new springtime for the Church while others called it a "Vatican II" moment, a resurgence of the spirit of renewal or *aggiornamento*.[15] *The Tablet* writer R. Mickens described it as a Pentecost coming early for the Catholic Church.[16] That publication's other columnist, P. Stanford, sounded convinced when he wrote that the choice was truly divine, an act orchestrated by the Holy Spirit.[17]

Francis appeared in a simple white cassock and addressed the crowds "with an open heart—and ear."[18] He joked a little and he begged for a moment of prayer for the pope emeritus Benedict XVI. He spoke of brotherhood, love, and trust.[19] R. Mickens capsulized the moment the earliest image of the new pope surfaced:

> Shunning the red shoes and *mozetta* (shoulder cape) worn for the occasion by his predecessors, he was dressed only in the white papal cassock with a pewter pectoral cross around his neck. He did not gesticulate with outstretched hands as almost all previous popes had done. Instead, he asked the tens of thousands of people gathered in the square below to "pray over" him silently before he gave his first *Urbi et Orbi* blessing to the city and the world. Many in the crowd wept. Then in a break with custom, he recited the special blessing rather than sang it.[20]

The impression he imprinted in the minds of the ebullient crowd that evening was that of a man of "humility, gentleness, and prayerfulness, tinged with humour."[21]

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[15]"A Pope for the World," 2.

[16]R. Mickens, "Francesco di Roma," *The Tablet* 267:8990 (March 23, 2013): 6.

[17]P. Stanford, "If I Had Ever Needed Irrefutable Evidence of the Holy Spirit at Work, Here It Was," *The Tablet* 267:8990 (March 23, 2013): 9.

[18]A. Brenninkmeijer-Werhahn, "Signs of a New Beginning," *The Tablet* 267:8991 (March 30, 2013): 26.

[19]Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 365.

[20]Mickens, "Francesco di Roma," 6.

[21]F. McDonagh, "Pontiff of a Different Order," *The Tablet* 267:8989 (March 16, 2013): 5.

Acute observers were quick to notice the prophetic nuances of his early actions. Mickens writes: "Given this emphasis on being Bishop of Rome, and judging by the handful of addresses and few ceremonies he's had, one might deduce that the new Pope is taking steps to purify the papacy of its monarchical trappings and court-like ambience."[22] It was enthralling to see a pope who declined the offer of opulent cars in favor of simple vehicles and demonstrated, on the evening of his election, just how comfortably he could sit with his cardinals in a coach to catch dinner. Returning to the priest hostel he checked into prior to the conclave, he packed his scant possessions in a suitcase and paid the bills at the counter.[23]

Naturally, of course, all this external gesture was symbolic, albeit holding so much promise.[24] Was he really the leader who would bring about the shift not just in tone but in theology?[25] Would he be committing himself to work for more collegiality among bishops and sincere reform of the Church's governing structures?[26]

Mercy, the New Papacy's Central Theme

In the days following his election, the Catholic faithful and both religious and secular media did not merely observe the outward gestures and actions of Francis. They also awaited and analyzed the first words that came from his lips, hoping to catch glimpses of what might be the novel thrust of this ministry to the Church and to the world. Being in awe of his simplicity and humility was not enough to decipher the catchphrase of this man from "the ends of the earth."[27] It did not take long for this message to emerge as the Pope started speaking about it in

[22]Mickens, "Francesco di Roma," 6.

[23]Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 366.

[24]Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 366.

[25]"Pope of Good Promise," *The Tablet* 267:8990 (March 23, 2013), 2.

[26]"Pope of Good Promise," 2.

[27]Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 365.

the first instances of his preaching and public speaking appointments. A. Tornielli has traced the chronology of the unfolding new papal vision for the Church.[28]

On March 17, 2013, the first Sunday after his election, Francis celebrated his first community Mass at the church of St. Anne, Vatican City's only parish, a few steps away from the eponymous entrance gate to the city state along Rome's Borgo Pio. The Pope preached on the Gospel of John centering on the Lord Jesus's encounter with the adulteress brought to him by the people (Jn. 8:1–11). It was his second homily as pope, following the one at the Mass with the cardinals.

Francis started by recalling Jesus's time alone on the mountain in prayer to the Father—the solitude of prayer. Then he dwelt on Jesus's return to the Temple where the scribes and Pharisees brought him the woman to be judged and condemned. Eventually, the woman was left alone with Jesus and she experienced "the solitude of his mercy."[29] The Pope identified a double tendency among Christians—the desire to listen to the Lord and the desire to "find a stick to beat others with, to condemn others."[30]

However, Jesus has a singular message and challenge for us: "I think—and I say it with humility—that this is the Lord's most powerful message: mercy."[31] Francis then returned to another Gospel passage where he imagined Jesus responding to the call to stone the woman: "'I did not come for the righteous.' The righteous justify themselves. Go on, then, even if you can do it, I cannot! But they believe they can. 'I came for sinners'."[32]

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[28]A. Tornielli, "Francis' Vision," in Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy*, trans. O. Stransky (New York: Random House, 2016), ix–xx.

[29]Francis, homily at the parish of St. Anna, Vatican City (March 17, 2013), available at https://bit.ly/39dxjcR (accessed January 2, 2020).

[30]Francis, homily at the parish of St. Anna, Vatican City.

[31]Francis, homily at the parish of St. Anna, Vatican City.

[32]Francis, homily at the parish of St. Anna, Vatican City.

Then Francis quoted snippets from other passages—one to recall the gossipers' murmurings against the Lord after the call of Matthew (Mk. 2:16) and another to describe the arrogance of the Pharisee, in prayer before God, comparing himself to the lowly publican (Lk. 18:11–12). He insisted that while it is not easy to surrender oneself to God's mercy, there can be no experience of joy without doing so. It is difficult but it is an imperative.[33]

Some people, Francis said, find their sense of sinfulness a barrier to approaching God. He assures them that all the more does Jesus want such people to unburden their hearts to him. He forgets, kisses, embraces, and forgives sinners by simply saying, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more" (Jn. 8:11), the climactic statement at the end of that day's Gospel. Francis said something at the end that he would eventually repeat many times in written or verbal form: "The Lord never tires of forgiving: never! It is we who tire of asking his forgiveness. Let us ask for the grace not to tire of asking forgiveness, because he never tires of forgiving."[34]

On the same day, at his Angelus address, Francis greeted the people from the window of the papal apartment where he echoed Jesus's striking attitude to the adulterous woman: "We do not hear words of scorn, we do not hear words of condemnation, but only words of love, of mercy, which are an invitation to conversion."[35] He further ascribed mercy to God:

> God's face is the face of a merciful father who is always patient. Have you thought of God's patience, the patience he has with each one of us? That is his mercy. He always has patience, patience with us, he understands us, he waits for us, he does not tire of forgiving us if we are able to return to him with a contrite heart. "Great is God's mercy," says the Psalm.[36]

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[33]Francis, homily at the parish of St. Anna, Vatican City.

[34]Francis, homily at the parish of St. Anna, Vatican City.

[35]Francis, Angelus address (March 17, 2013), available at https://bit.ly/3tN7Gcl.

[36]Francis, Angelus address.

Francis shared two anecdotes with the jubilant, appreciative crowd: one, about an interesting book he just read, and another, about an unforgettable human encounter. First, he spoke of a book that he found personally beneficial. Given to him prior to the conclave by the author himself, he readily pored over the material, gaining insight into its surprising theme which, providentially, was mercy. The author was the scholarly German theologian and cardinal Walter Kasper,[37] former president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. While the Pope joked that he was not in the business of promoting his cardinals' books, his comment, working as "the mother of all endorsements," actually helped catapult the book to immense popularity in Church circles.[38]

Francis summarized Kasper's book by saying that the cardinal

> said that feeling mercy, that this word changes everything. This is the best thing we can feel: it changes the world. A little mercy makes the world less cold and more just. We need to understand properly this mercy of God, this merciful Father who is so patient.… Let us remember the Prophet Isaiah who says that even if our sins were scarlet, God's love would make them white as snow. This mercy is beautiful![39]

Second, Francis recounted his encounter with a humble, elderly woman, who was over eighty years old, when he was still an archbishop. In a conversation with her about Confession, the woman inspired then-Cardinal Bergoglio with her strong conviction about God's steadfast mercy through forgiveness. The old woman said that "if the Lord did not forgive everything, the world would not exist."[40] Francis adopted a jovial mood, adding that he wondered whether the woman learned this from the Gregorian University. However, he was certain that the

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[37]W. Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, trans. W. Madges (New York: Paulist Press, 2013).

[38]W. Kasper & D. Moloney, "Cardinal Kasper Responds to First Things Review of 'Mercy'," *First Things* (March 23, 2015), available at https://bit.ly/3lyawhR (accessed on June 26, 2019).

[39]Francis, Angelus address.

[40]Francis, Angelus address.

woman's conviction was "wisdom which the Holy Spirit gives: inner wisdom focused on God's mercy."[41] In closing, the Pope echoed his teaching on forgiveness given earlier at Sunday Mass, asking the people,

> Let us not tire, let us never tire! He is the loving Father who always pardons, who has the heart of mercy for us all. And let us too learn to be merciful to everyone. Let us invoke the intercession of Our Lady who held in her arms the Mercy of God made [human].[42]

From the foregoing instances of preaching on mercy, it became clear that Francis developed the theme of mercy not by expounding exclusively on the topic but in connection with related themes and motifs. Thus, he found a connection between mercy and joy, forgiveness, patience, justice, conversion, Mary, and wisdom from the Holy Spirit. From this point alone, it seems that Francis equated mercy with the goodness of God in general and that he would continue to find a link between mercy and other attributes of God that denote a predilection toward his children.

The inaugural Mass for the start of Francis's Petrine ministry was held on March 19, 2013, on the liturgical celebration of the Solemnity of St. Joseph, the husband of Mary. Here, too, he used the occasion to focus attention on mercy and compassion especially for children, the elderly, the needy, and those ignored in society.[43] Describing the saint of the day, he said that

> Saint Joseph appears as a strong and courageous man, a working man, yet in his heart we see great tenderness, which is not the virtue of the weak but rather a sign of strength of spirit and a capacity for concern, for compassion, for genuine openness to others, for love. We must not be afraid of goodness, of tenderness.[44]

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[41]Francis, Angelus address.

[42]Francis, Angelus address.

[43]W. Madges, translator's preface, in Kasper, *Mercy*, ix.

[44]Francis, homily at inaugural Mass (March 19, 2013), available at https://bit.ly/3hCwyyE (accessed January 2, 2020).

Although his predecessors resided in the papal apartment in the Apostolic Palace, it was widely known that Francis had foregone such living arrangements. Having stayed instead at Casa Santa Marta, the Vatican guesthouse, during the conclave, he preferred to live there permanently. The move was motivated primarily not by a spirit of poverty but by his strong need for a community. He told Fr. A. Spadaro in their first interview together that the former papal lodging is

> not luxurious. It is old, tastefully decorated and large, but not luxurious. But in the end it is like an inverted funnel. It is big and spacious, but the entrance is really tight. People can come only in dribs and drabs, and I cannot live without people. I need to live my life with others.[45]

Accounts of Francis's daily homilies appeared daily in *L'Osservatore Romano*, the official Vatican newspaper. The new pope started the practice of inviting Vatican workers, such as gardeners, garbage collectors, greenhouse workers, telephone operators, photographers, and people in various offices, to participate in his daily Eucharist. The short homilies, later published as a book series, stood out for their originality of content, simplicity of development, and interactive, dynamic, and distinctly pastoral applications of the Gospel message.[46]

In his brief Scriptural reflections, Francis held fast to his favorite theme—God's mercy, patience, and forgiveness. Referring to a woman's anointing of Jesus's feet in Bethany (Jn. 12:1–11), the Pope extolled the mysterious patience of God seen in the behavior of the Lord. Then he linked the topic to the parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11–31) where the father waited patiently every day for the return of his wayward son.[47] Comparing the "night" of Judas's betrayal to the "sweetness" of Jesus's forgiveness, the Pope recalled another night, a "temporary

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[45]A. Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God: An Interview with Pope Francis," *America* 209:8 (September 30, 2013): 17.

[46]I. Biffi, Introduction, in Francis, *Morning Homilies*, trans. D. Livingstone (Bengaluru, India: Theological Publications in India, 2018), x.

[47]Francis, *Morning Homilies*, 5.

night" where, in the midst of darkness, any sinner can still hope to experience the Lord's kindness, "the Lord's tendernesss."[48]

A careful analysis of the daily homilies at the chapel of the Pope's residence will show that given almost any topic he discusses, the Pope almost always delivers his messages without veering too far from the certitude of God's infinite love and palpable mercy for God's children. When he speaks of the evangelist Matthew's account of personal conversion (Mt. 9:9–13), he stresses that the fact that God is merciful is not at all a parable but a historical reality that happened to the evangelist. When Jesus looked at Matthew, the former tax collector was filled with joy. He consented to follow the Lord in an instant because it was "a moment of mercy received and accepted."[49]

Francis entrusted the message of mercy and its diffusion to the entire Church to the members of his Curia. On October 14, 2013, he delivered an address to the participants of a plenary gathering of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization. To this body, newly created by his predecessor and charged with the spread of the Gospel to contemporary cultures, Francis expressed his desire that their efforts be done with mercy. He said:

> We need Christians who make God's mercy and tenderness for every creature visible to the[people] of our day. We all know that the crisis of modern [humanity] is not superficial but profound. That is why the New Evangelization, while it calls us to have the courage to swim against the tide and to be converted to the true God, cannot but use a language of mercy which is expressed in gestures and attitudes even before words.[50]

Furthermore, he stressed that the goal of the New Evangelization is a new focus on what is essential, "which is the encounter with Christ,

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[48]Francis, *Morning Homilies*, 6.

[49]Francis, "Mercy, Feast and Memory," in *Morning Homilies*, 192–193.

[50]Francis, address to the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization (October 14, 2013), available at https://bit.ly/3zgs5HO (accessed January, 2, 2020).

with his mercy and his love, and to love our brothers and sisters as he has loved us."[51]

Francis's consistent adherence to a discernibly favorite topic, his persistent development of this subject, and his habit of finding ways to connect this theme to other areas in his early homilies, talks, and addresses discretely unfurled the focal point and central theme of his ministry. Keen observers noticed an important detail very early on in Francis's ministry. Mickens writes: "Emphasizing the inexhaustible mercy of God has emerged as an early theme of his pontificate. His episcopal motto, which he has kept as Pope, emphasizes God's mercy.…"[52] What the motto in the Pope's coat of arms subtly reveals his teaching would soon more substantially express, expound, and explain. Tornielli, after both a distant observation of Francis's early days and a close encounter with him in a comprehensive interview, wrote that the message of mercy might as well have been the new pope's "unwritten encyclical."[53] The Church is now ready for the pope of mercy.

Mercy in the Testimony of a Christian

Mercy as Mark of Personal Spirituality

Popes of recent memory have each displayed a unique personal style and spirituality. A spirituality is a distinctive way of living the faith, much like revealing a spiritual "fingerprint."[54] The papal spiritual style is usually imbedded in the pontiff's coat of arms and inscribed in his personal motto for service, like the *Miserando atque Eligendo* of Francis.

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[51]Francis, address to the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization.

[52]Mickens, "Francesco di Roma," 6.

[53]Tornielli, "Francis' Vision," xii.

[54]C. Sedmak, *A Church of the Poor: Pope Francis and the Transformation of Orthodoxy* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016), 174.

John Paul II placed the words *Totus Tuus* or "totally yours" on his heraldry to show his outstanding devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, in whose honor he wrote an impressive encyclical, *Redemptoris Mater*.[55] Benedict XVI was a stellar teacher of fundamental theology,[56] *peritus* or expert in Vatican II,[57] and professor at Regensburg before being elected Archbishop of Munich and Freising. His motto, *Cooperatores Veritatis* (3 John 1:8), signified his past life as a professor and his ministry as a teacher-bishop and, soon after, as pope.[58]

Francis has also given a hint of his own spiritual fingerprint. Called to episcopal ministry, then-Fr. Bergoglio remembered the Latin words from the homily of Venerable Bede in the Office of Readings for the Feast of St. Matthew: *"Vidit ergo Jesus publicanum, et quia miserando atque eligendo vidit, ait illi, 'Sequere me'"* (Jesus therefore sees the tax collector, and since he sees by having mercy and by choosing, he says to him, "Follow me").[59] His three-word episcopal slogan then became *Miserando atque eligendo*, a choice that can be traced to a milestone in his spiritual development.

As a youth just a few weeks shy of his seventeenth birthday, Francis had a powerful experience of divine love and mercy in a church confessional on the feast of St. Matthew in 1953.[60] His vocation to the priesthood was born there, and two years later he would take leave of his family and friends to enter the diocesan seminary. He would later transfer to join the Jesuits.

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[55]A. Dulles, *The Splendor of Faith* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999), 39.

[56]G. Weigel, *God's Choice: Pope Benedict XVI and the Future of the Catholic Church* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005), 168.

[57]Weigel, *God's Choice*, 169.

[58]Weigel, *God's Choice*, 177.

[59]Sedmak, *A Church of the Poor,* 175.

[60]Sedmak, *A Church of the Poor,* 175.

Speaking to A. Spadaro, Francis presented his self-identity as, first and foremost, "a sinner whom the Lord has looked upon … a sinner who is looked upon by the Lord."[61] This makes the motto "very true for me," he insisted.[62] The Pope explained further: "I think the Latin gerund *miserando* is impossible to translate in both Italian and Spanish. I like to translate it with another gerund that does not exist: *misericordiando* ('mercy-ing')."[63] In another *bergoglismo*,[64] the Pope believed that God took mercy on him that day; he was "mercy'd" by God in a humble confessional in his hometown of Flores.[65] When offered to take on the daunting mission of pope, he said (in Latin): "I am a sinner but I trust in the infinite mercy and patience of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I accept in a spirit of penance."[66]

In one of his earliest homilies at the chapel of Casa Santa Marta, Francis again stressed the overflowing presence of mercy in the encounter between Jesus and Matthew. Jesus's merciful look revealed that the heavenly Father was indeed a God of mercy. Matthew's experience was personal and real; in fact, "it wasn't a parable: it's a historical fact; it happened."[67] The most natural reaction happened in an instant. "Matthew says yes; he leaves everything and goes off with the Lord. It's the moment of mercy received and accepted: I am coming with you."[68]

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[61]Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God," 16.

[62]Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God," 16.

[63]Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God," 16.

[64]This is the term writers use to refer to the puns Bergoglio was fond of creatively coining and using.

[65]Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 222.

[66]Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God," 16.

[67]Francis, "Mercy, Feast and Memory," 192.

[68]Francis, "Mercy, Feast and Memory," 193.

Francis concluded by saying that this Scriptural episode must remind us of "two moments and a time" in our own lives. The first moment is the *moment of meeting Jesus*, so full of mercy, so full of kindness, that causes a change in a person's life. The second moment is the *moment of feasting, partying*, or celebrating that resonates with the joy mentioned in Luke 15 when the lost are found again. The party includes, among the invited, other sinners, the poor, and the sick—people Jesus longed to meet and associate with. Then comes the *time to remember*. The party cannot go on forever but the fire of the encounter must be kept alive. One has to remember constantly the two moments until one's life ends.[69]

M. Hebblethwaite observed how September 21 is also the first day of spring in the southern hemisphere: "'Spring' is *primavera*, and 'first' is *primero* and so Bergoglio says in a beautiful pun that '*Dios primerea*'—God is the spring in us, the first in us, loving us first—in a way that is reminiscent of Gerard Manley Hopkins' phrase about God '*eastering*' in us."[70] Bergoglio humbly accepted the primacy of God over his life, a fact that eclipsed the instant worldwide attention and adulation at his election. In response to the cheering, adoring crowd in Rome, he once said, "All of you in the square shouted out 'Francis, Francis, Pope Francis,' but where was Jesus?… From now on enough of Francis; just Jesus!"[71]

Mercy as Mark of Jesuit or Ignatian Spirituality

Having first entered the diocesan seminary of Villa Devoto in his native Buenos Aires in 1956, the young Bergoglio, who observed and admired his Jesuit formators, later sought admission into and was allowed to enter the Society of Jesus in 1958.[72] "Bergoglio was, by his

[69]Francis, "Mercy, Feast and Memory," 193–194.

[70]M. Hebblethwaite, "From Dark Days to Spring," *The Tablet* 267:8990 (March 23, 2013): 12.

[71]J. Carr, "The Francis Factor," *America* 209:11 (October 21, 2013): 11.

[72]S. von Kempis & P. Lawler, *A Call to Serve* (Macau: Claret, 2013), 157.

own admission, attracted to join the Jesuits because of their character as 'an advance force of the Church, speaking military language, developed with obedience and discipline.'"[73] To Fr. Spadaro, he confided that there were three traits that struck him the most about the Jesuits: "the missionary spirit, community and discipline."[74]

Jorge Bergoglio started his novitiate in 1958, took his first vows in 1960, was ordained a priest in 1969, and took his final vows in the Society in 1973.[75] As a Jesuit, he served as a teacher of literature and psychology, as a novice master and advisor to the provincial superior, as provincial superior of the Argentine Jesuit Province, as Rector of the Colegio Maximo San Jose, and as a pastor in several parishes or communities entrusted to the Society.[76]

The Jesuits follow Ignatian or Jesuit spirituality, a distinctive way of living the Christian life based on the teachings and practice of St. Ignatius of Loyola and of the community he founded.

According to J. Martin, Ignatian spirituality is marked above all by its practicality since St. Ignatius intended it to be shared with as many people as possible, not just with Jesuits.[77] Modras identifies six major hallmarks of Ignatian spirituality (centeredness on Christ with a mission, Trinitarian sweep, liberality of grace, faith as trust, service in the world, and praying with discernment)[78] as well as minor traits such as the emphasis on respect for freedom or for God's mercy in the

[73]von Kempis & Lawler, *A Call to Serve*, 157.

[74]Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God," 17.

[75]C. Lowney, *Pope Francis: Why He Leads the Way He Leads* (Quezon City, Philippines: Jesuit Communications Foundation Inc., 2013), appendix.

[76]von Kempis & Lawler, *A Call to Serve*, 157.

[77]J. Martin, *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything: A Spirituality for Real Life* [Kindle edition] (HarperCollins e-books, 2010), loc. 72 of 7379.

[78]R. Modras, *Ignatian Humanism* (Quezon City, Philippines: Jesuit Communications Foundation, Inc., 2005), 38–49.

sacrament of Confession.[79] Martin condenses the Ignatian spirituality into four primary components: finding God in all things, becoming a contemplative in action, looking at the world in an incarnational way, and seeking freedom and detachment.[80]

One of the main repositories for imbibing Ignatian spirituality is the book of St. Ignatius called *Spiritual Exercises*. Written by St. Ignatius over nearly 20 years—between 1522 and 1548, the book's main goal was to guide people in making a proper discernment or in deciding freely to make good decisions, particularly within the context of a spiritual retreat that is adapted today to the various needs and situations of those taking part.

The *Exercises* follows a structure of four "weeks" patterned after a process of Christian conversion based on the personal experience of the saint. The first week's reflections focus intensely on sin although the real underlying theme is love.[81] While the goal of the first week is to invite people to repentance, caution is taken not to lead people into "sadness, discouragement or self-hatred."[82]

Once a person realizes that they have loved wrongly or unwisely, "the point is not to look at oneself and wallow in self-recrimination or shame but to look at God and realize that one is loved and graced despite all failures and offenses."[83] Although a sense of repentance may ensue, it should not lead to crushing sadness; otherwise, it will not be a sense of sorrow that comes from the Holy Spirit. Repentance in the

[79]Modras, *Ignatian Humanism*, 49.

[80]Martin, *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything*, loc. 197 of 7379.

[81]Modras, *Ignatian Humanism,* 26.

[82]A. de Mello, *Seek God Everywhere: Reflections on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (New York: Image/ Doubleday, 2010), 16.

[83]Modras, *Ignatian Humanism,* 27.

Spiritual Exercises bears the characteristic grace of peace and joy that the Holy Spirit brings.[84]

De Mello explains that although repentance is viewed in the first week as a means of encountering Christ, this is only a partially accurate statement. It is the encounter with Christ that is the basis of a true grace of repentance.

> There is, no doubt some initial repentance that helps us to experience Christ more deeply, but it is only after we have met him that we understand what sin is and what love is. It is only after [one] has come out into the light from a dark dungeon that [one] understands how dark it was down there and what a precious, lovely thing light is.[85]

In other words, the first week actually leads a retreatant to experience her/his sinfulness so that she/he can more authentically meet the God of love, the God of mercy. In Ignatian spirituality, being a sinner has a deeper meaning. It "does not mean 'having done things wrong' (although that is true). It doesn't even mean that we will always do things wrong in the future (also true). It means that humans are—at root, ontologically—always in need of the living mercy of God."[86]

In the landmark exclusive interview with Fr. A. Spadaro, who represented major Jesuit journals around the world, Francis made a stunning statement when asked, "Who is Jorge Mario Bergoglio?" The reply came unhesitatingly: "I am a sinner. This is the most accurate definition. It is not a figure of speech, a literary genre. I am a sinner."[87]

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[84]A. de Mello, *Contact with God: Retreat Conferences* (Anand, India: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1990), 122–123.

[85]de Mello, *Contact with God*, 122–123.

[86]P. Gilger, "In Need of Mercy," in B. Cupich, S. White et al., "Francis in 'America'," *America* 209:11 (October 21, 2013): 24–25.

[87]Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God," 16.

While some writers attributed this comment to Francis's innate humility,[88] Jesuit commentators easily saw a connection to Ignatian spirituality's strong emphasis on God's mercy for sinners. Jesuit P. Gilger explains that those who live the Ignatian life deeply know that

> God's mercy reframes our interpretation of everything, institutions included. It does so because having understood the joy of being wrong, we have learned to hold our own plans loosely so as to be better led by God. This is what St. Ignatius means by another famous spiritual term, "indifference"—the freedom to be led by God into the previously unimaginable.[89]

Francis knew himself to be a sinner who has received mercy and so, therefore, a "loved sinner"[90] who confidently entrusts his whole life to God. It is without doubt, then, that the Jesuit Bergoglio grew in his relationship with God through his religious formation and apostolic life in the all-encompassing context of merciful love. This conviction that God is ever faithful in spite of human infidelity elicited the response of a grateful heart that Francis carried with him all through his life.

A. Ivereigh shows how Ignatian spirituality's preference for the theme of mercy colored the way Bergoglio lived his ministry from priest to pope. In all these roles, Bergoglio "always insisted that the Church should offer people what he called this 'primary proclamation'—the experience of God's merciful love—prior to (in the sense both of precedence and importance) the rest of Christian teaching."[91] Francis always insisted that the Church should avoid being fixated on minute, self-serving issues, whether moral or doctrinal, and open up instead to the freshness of the Gospel message.[92]

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[88]S. Bullivant, "I Am a Sinner," in Cupich, White et al., "Francis in 'America'," 24.

[89]Gilger, "In Need of Mercy," 24.

[90]Gilger, "In Need of Mercy," 24.

[91]Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer,* 53.

[92]Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God," 24.

Francis also views the Church as a field hospital right after the battle. Instead of asking useless questions, the Church must first turn her attention to healing. "You have to heal [their] wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds.… And you have to start from the ground up."[93] To disclose and impart fully the mercy of God, the most important reform to undertake is that of attitude. "The ministers of the Gospel must be people … who walk through the dark night with them, who know how to dialogue, and to descend themselves into their people's night, into the darkness, but without getting lost."[94]

In Ignatian retreat, a person is introduced to a *theologia crucis* and the first week is a "purgative and preparatory 'hell of self-knowledge' (*Theologia Germanica*), which strips the sinner as [she/he] stands before the cross of Christ, of any consciousness of [her/his] own goodness."[95] Francis's spiritual encounter with Christ on the cross explains both his passion for God and his compassion for the poor. Borghesi writes:

> Here we find the source of his embrace of the poor, the suffering, the humiliated: the hard wood of the cross. Cross and *realism* are the two poles of an agonic, tensioned way of thinking that deeply and tenderly loves the ephemeral and particular reality of the world but that, at the same time, does not wish to possess it.[96]

Mercy in the Teachings of a Pope

Francis presented his most substantial teachings on mercy, both in its conceptual and practical aspects, during the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, from December 8, 2015 to November 20, 2016. Tumeinski reflects:

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[93]Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God," 24.

[94]Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God," 24.

[95]M. Borghesi, *The Mind of Pope Francis*, trans. B. Hudock (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press Academic, 2017), 232.

[96]Borghesi, *The Mind of Pope Francis*, 233.

> In light of Pope Francis' declaration, the church is being called upon once more—in a formal and prayerful manner—to celebrate a jubilee as a way of growing together and being built up as a people of peace. Proclaiming and practicing the jubilee calls for deeply trusting the Lord who continually shows us his mercy and who provides us what we need.[97]

The Expediency of the Message of Mercy

Francis believes that our time is "a time for mercy."[98] This is the most appropriate moment to reveal the maternal side of the Church. The world is badly wounded and looking, therefore, to the Church above all as mother. The Church cannot afford to settle merely as an observer and must find ways to encounter her children in gestures of gathering, embracing, and caring. Our age is the opportune time to proclaim and live mercy; it is "a *kairos of mercy*."[99]

Francis does not identify a defining moment or tipping point that prompted him to proclaim the jubilee year since he never trusts first reactions. The centrality of mercy was nevertheless always something of a conviction that he kept in his mind and heart. He admits that this cornerstone, this personal discovery of mercy as Jesus's most important message, has slowly evolved over the years in his ministry as a priest, in his work as a confessor, and in his encounter with many inspiring and encouraging stories of people's lives.[100]

Francis, however, also allows his discernment to be influenced by others. The firm resolve to proffer mercy vigorously to the world, he says, came "through prayer, through reflection on the teachings and declarations of the Popes who preceded me, and by thinking of the Church as a field hospital, where treatment is given above all to those

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[97]M. Tumeinski, "Proclaim the Jubilee," *America* 213:18 (December 7–14, 2015), 14–16.

[98]Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy*, 6.

[99]Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy*, 6.

[100]Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy*, 5–6.

who are most wounded."[101] This formula of prayer, reflection, and challenge imparts the way of Francis, an inductive method based on the steps "see-judge-act" preferred in Latin America.[102]

Mercy in the Witnessing of the Church

In *Misericordiae Vultus*, Francis states that "we need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it" (MV 2). Witnessing hinges on mercy, for "we are called to gaze even more attentively on mercy so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father's action in our lives" (MV 3). Christians are called primarily to be witnesses of the Father, not of an institution or a community. Contemplating on and exercising mercy, they become "certain and effective witnesses."[103] The Pope believes that focusing on mercy is not only good but also necessary for the Church: "In this era of profound changes, the Church is called to offer her particular contribution, rendering visible the signs of the presence and closeness of God."[104]

The Pope emphasizes the deep link between witnessing and mission: "This is a time for the Church to rediscover the meaning of the mission entrusted to her by the Lord and on the day of Easter: to be a sign and instrument of the Father's mercy (cf. Jn 20:21–23)."[105] Thus, the whole Church needs to be acquainted with the value of tenderness. The Church has to "know how to welcome the numerous

[101]Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy*, 8.

[102]G. Whelan, "Theological Method in *Evangelii Gaudium*: A Dialogue with Bernard Lonergan and Robert Doran," *Gregorianum* 96:1 (2015): 51–75.

[103]Francis, "Why Have a Jubilee of Mercy?" (December 9, 2015), available at https://bit.ly/3FKvlPp (accessed August 3, 2020).

[104]Francis, "Why Have a Jubilee of Mercy?"

[105]Francis, homily for the First Vespers of Divine Mercy Sunday (April 11, 2015), available at https://bit.ly/3AjUUon (accessed June 4, 2020).

signs of the tenderness which God offers to the whole world, and above all, to those who suffer, who are alone and abandoned, without hope of being pardoned or feeling the Father's love."[106] A person who is touched and transformed by the Lord's mercy becomes a witness of mercy to others. They can heal other people's wounds, showing them that God is close, always offering to everyone God's forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace.[107]

In the Church, there is always an awareness of sin, and people, in their own lives, too, feel a constant temptation to disobedience. The Pope, however, relies on a superior power. He trusts in "the love of God which precedes, anticipates and saves."[108] Even the history of sin "can only be understood in the light of God's love and forgiveness.… Were sin the only thing that mattered, we would be the most desperate of creatures. But the promised triumph of Christ's love enfolds everything in the Father's mercy."[109]

Francis recalls the event of the Second Vatican Council which for him is more than just a collection of documents; it was, above all, an encounter between the Church and people. It was also an encounter between the power of the Spirit and the Church that resulted in the transition from self-enclosure to a new missionary journey.[110] In this new sense of mission, going where people are, the Church brings "the joy of the Gospel, and the mercy and forgiveness of God."[111]

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[106]Francis, homily for the First Vespers of Divine Mercy Sunday.

[107]Francis, homily for the First Vespers of Divine Mercy Sunday.

[108]Francis, homily for the opening of the Holy Door of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy (December 8, 2015), available at https://bit.ly/3nR9orK (accessed June 4, 2020).

[109]Francis, homily for the opening of the Holy Door of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy.

[110]Francis, homily for the opening of the Holy Door of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy.

[111]Francis, homily for the opening of the Holy Door of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy.

Mercy in the Teachings of the Popes

Kasper recalls that there exists a tradition of mercy in the lives of many great saints of the Church.[112] Francis traces this same tradition in the magisterial emphasis of previous popes, some of them also canonized saints. He admits that he derives inspiration from their teachings on mercy and from their challenge to the Church to promote and exercise mercy. He discusses in particular how mercy was made manifest in the pontificates of the Vatican II popes: John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI.

John XXIII. Francis openly expresses his admiration for the pope who convened the Second Vatican Council. The spirit and style adopted by the Council Fathers owed a lot to the direction vigorously initiated by John XXIII. *Misericordiae Vultus* recalls the impressive vision of this pope at his opening speech for the Council:

> Now the Bride of Christ wishes to use the medicine of mercy rather than taking up the arms of severity.… The Catholic Church, as she holds high the torch of Catholic truth at this Ecumenical Council, wants to show herself a loving mother to all; patient, kind, moved by compassion and goodness toward her separated children.[113]

In these select sentences, some of Francis's favorite themes appear: mercy, the Church as mother, and compassion.

Paul VI. Francis then turns his attention to the pope who concluded the Second Vatican Council in 1965. In his closing address, Paul VI upheld Jesus's story of the Good Samaritan (cf. Luke 10), a parable of mercy, as the paradigm for the spirituality of the Council.[114] It is uncommon knowledge that in his controversial encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, Paul VI, far from advocating stern rigorism, encouraged pastors to exercise mercy in guiding the consciences of Christian couples.

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[112]Kasper, *Pope Francis' Revolution of Tenderness and Love*, 33.

[113]John XXIII, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, 2–3, as cited in MV 4.

[114]Paul VI, speech at the final public session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (December 7, 1965), as cited in MV 4.

The pope also taught that the Holy Spirit is active not only in the magisterium but in the hearts of the faithful as well.[115]

John Paul II. The documents on mercy from Francis benefit from the "great teaching offered by Saint John Paul II in his encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia*,[116] which at the time of publication came unexpectedly, its theme catching many by surprise" (MV 11). Francis alludes to two passages in that encyclical which he finds of lasting relevance. In the first passage, John Paul II laments that mercy has travelled the path of oblivion in today's milieu (DM 2).

In the second passage, John Paul II enthusiastically endorses the proclamation of mercy to the world (DM 15). However, while *Dives in Misericordia* brought the theme of mercy to the fore, it remained part of the theoretical pedagogy of his papacy since it did not translate into official programs or concrete measures in spite of its papal tribute to mercy as the most amazing attribute of God and the encouragement for the Church to proclaim, live, and lead people to the font of mercy.[117]

John Paul II, however, instituted a permanent liturgical feast of Divine Mercy on the Sunday after Easter (*Domenica in Albis*).[118] He canonized St. Faustina Kowalska (1905–1938), the Polish visionary and Apostle of the Merciful Jesus, as the first saint of the new millennium and made her messages universally recognized.[119] Seen by pious

[115]D. Clemmer, "Seven Things Paul VI Did Before Pope Francis Made It Cool," *USCCBlog* (October 14, 2014), available at https://bit.ly/3tOwssw (accessed June 4, 2020).

[116]John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia.* Cited in-text as DM.

[117]Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy*, 7.

[118]Benedict XVI, Regina Caeli address (March 30, 2008), available at https://bit.ly/3nCxBm8 (accessed July 29, 2020).

[119]W. Skowronska, "So You Think You Understand Mercy?" *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* (July 31, 2018), available at https://bit.ly/3hYPDvp (accessed June 26, 2019).

devotees as most auspicious, this pope, a true apostle of mercy, died in 2005 on the vigil of the feast he established.[120]

Benedict XVI. Francis remembers his predecessor as an ardent supporter of John Paul II's teaching on divine mercy. The most famous quotation from Benedict XVI regarding the topic comes from his tribute to John Paul II on the first anniversary of his death. Benedict XVI offers his condensed thoughts on mercy and on the witness of the Polish pope:

> Indeed, *mercy is the central nucleus* of the Gospel message; it is *the very name of God, the Face with which he revealed himself* in the Old Covenant and *fully in Jesus Christ, the incarnation of creative and redemptive Love*.… The whole of his *(John Paul II's)* mission at the service of the truth about God and [humankind] and of peace in the world is summed up in this declaration, as he himself said in Krakow-Łagiewniki in 2002 when he inaugurated the large Shrine of Divine Mercy: "Apart from the mercy of God there is no other source of hope for [humankind]." John Paul II's message, like St. Faustina's, thus leads back to *the Face of Christ, a supreme revelation of God's mercy*. Constant contemplation of this Face is the legacy he bequeathed to us which we joyfully welcome and make our own.[121] (emphasis added)

Benedict XVI has repeatedly expressed his admiration for Francis and fully endorsed his vision of mercy for the Church. A. Tornielli recounts the contents of an interview the Pope Emeritus gave in 2016 and which was published in Italian as *Per Mezzo della Fede: Dottrina della Giustificazione ed Esperienza di Dio nella Predicazione della Chiesa e negli Esercizi Spirituali*.[122]

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[120]Kasper, *Mercy*, 8.

[121]Benedict XVI, Regina Caeli address.

[122]Cf. A. Tornielli, "Benedict XVI: 'It's Mercy That Steers Us Towards God'," *Vatican Insider* (March 16, 2016), available at https://bit.ly/3kgKEHE (accessed July 2, 2020).

Mercy in the Ministry of Merciful Priests

Francis cherished his personal experiences of mercy in the lives of simple and ordinary priests he met in his childhood and in his ministry as priest and bishop. He knew and admired these priests for their outstanding examples of compassion and availability to sinners. Not all of them were famous, but they all cast an influence on the Pope's determination to be a merciful shepherd. In his popular interview-book *The Name of God is Mercy*, Francis speaks of the following ordinary priestly models of mercy: Fr. Carlos Duarte Ibarra, Fr. Enrico Pozzoli, an unnamed Franciscan Capuchin, St. Leopold Mandic, and Fr. Jose Ramon Aristi.

Fr. Carlos Duarte Ibarra was the confessor whose meeting with the teenage Jorge Bergoglio on September 21, 1953 led to an unexpected denouement in the young person's vocational journey. While confessing to Duarte, Bergoglio "felt welcomed by the mercy of God."[123] When the priest lost his battle with leukemia, Bergoglio was inconsolable yet grateful to the man who introduced him to the mercy of God.

Fr. Enrico Pozzoli of the Salesian order was the Bergoglios' family priest. He officiated the wedding of the future pope's parents and played the role of a merciful confessor whom everyone could approach comfortably and to whom penitents could unburden a heavy conscience.[124]

An *unnamed Franciscan Capuchin* priest in Buenos Aires was renowned for compassion in the confessional. This priest felt guilty at times that he forgave too much. Whenever this happened, he would enter the chapel and, before the Blessed Sacrament, say to Jesus, "Lord, forgive me if I have forgiven too much. But you're the one who gave me the bad example!"[125] He gives mercy to himself and so can give it to others.

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[123]Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy*, 12.

[124]Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy*, 12.

[125]Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy*, 13.

St. Leopold Mandic was a Franciscan priest who was beatified by Paul VI and canonized by John Paul II. Francis remembers a homily that Albino Luciani (later Pope John Paul I) gave about St. Leopold. In it, Luciani related how the saint knew that no one could avoid sin for very long, and so he was generous with forgiveness. Chided for this, the saint pointed to the example of the Lord Jesus Christ in his generosity to sinners. He also lived by the advice of St. Francis de Sales, who told confessors to encourage fallen sinners to rise up, "get back on the road, and … pay more attention next time."[126]

A Blessed Sacrament Father known as a great confessor, *Fr. Jose Ramon Aristi* was another priestly model of mercy whom Francis knew when he was an auxiliary bishop. In each Confession, Aristi asked the penitent to hold the cross at the end of his Rosary and kiss it. He gave absolution using the same cross. Francis admits that when Fr. Aristi died, he, seeing himself alone at the wake, took the cross of the dead priest's Rosary and kept it on his person ever since. He fervently prayed at that time: "Give me half of your mercy!"[127]

Conclusion

Mercy had been associated with the ministry of Francis long before he assumed his universal pastoral office, even in his role as archbishop of Buenos Aires. After the sudden resignation of now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, speculations about a successor included, among other things, the people's longing for a pope who would exemplify simplicity, proximity, capability for reforms, prophecy, and mercy. Upon Francis's election, an electrifying euphoria flowed through Church circles, especially as people saw in him the promise of a fresh approach to service and a new momentum for evangelization.

Diverting attention from himself, Francis spoke copiously of the God of mercy who is ready to forgive, unafraid to show tenderness,

[126]Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy*, 14.

[127]Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy*, 14.

and kind and understanding to all God's children but especially to sinners and the suffering. Complementing his earliest words were surprising and delicate actions toward those in the peripheries, actions that exhibited his pedagogy of mercy. He has officially enshrined mercy as the theme of his papacy, the guiding star of his program for the evangelization of the Church and of the world.

Mercy has deep roots in the personal life of Francis. Far from being mere academic speculation, mercy has had an existential meaning for him from the moment he experienced being touched by mercy in his formative teenage years. While mostly reticent about the exact nature of this experience, he was nevertheless surrounded by signs of divine mercy (both through persons and events) as he was maturing and choosing a vocation.

As a Jesuit, Francis's experience of mercy was reinforced through the Spiritual Exercises. Francis firmly recognized, above all, that he was a sinner in need of mercy, a sinner forgiven and loved. Flashes of his Ignatian spirituality have shone through in his actions and in his words. His simplicity, love for the poor, and pastoral orientation have been shaped by his ruminations on mercy as a Jesuit priest and, later on, as bishop and pope.

In the Jubilee Year of Mercy, Francis had multiple opportunities to proclaim his message and to present his nuanced interpretation of this theme. Aside from homilies and speeches, the Pope wrote short documents on mercy which give out condensed but clear teachings. His year-long Wednesday catechesis and jubilee-related events provided his most organized and extended discussions.

Francis's theme of mercy casts a strong influence on his dream of a missionary option for the Church, one that lives and breathes the spirit of mercy as a form of witness to the world. Mercy is the core of Francis's evangelizing Church which is illustrated best by models of a community that goes forth, that accompanies people, and that lives poor for the sake of the poor.

Landas 34:1 (2020) 135–151

DARK NIGHT
Weaning from One's Image of God Toward Spiritual Maturity

Michael C. Porcia, S.J.

St. John of the Cross, in his magnum opus *Dark Night of the Soul*, gives a poignant and vivid image of God as a mother nurturing her child:

> The soul, after it has been definitely converted to the service of God, is as a rule, spiritually nurtured and caressed by God, even as is the tender child by its loving mother, who warms it with the heat of her bosom and nurtures it with sweet milk and soft and pleasant food, and carries it and caresses it in her arms.[1]

Such a relationship speaks of a loving tenderness of the mother for the child in his/her fragility. It presupposes a passive dependence on the mother on the part of the child for all that he/she needs for survival as regards physiological needs—couched in the words *sweet milk* and *pleasant food*—and psycho-emotional well-being—expressed tactilely as *heat of her bosom* and *caresses [of the mother's] arms*.

However, the child needs to be weaned from maternal dependency to find himself/herself independent from his/her mother yet united in the profound reality of the mother-child bond. And by juxtaposition

[1]John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, ed. & trans. E. Peers (NY: Doubleday, 1959), 38. Inline citations indicate chapter and paragraph numbers.

of the image of God as mother, one must move eventually beyond the infantile image of God if one is to mature in the spiritual life. St. John of the Cross refers to this transition of imaging God through his words:

> But, as the child grows bigger, the mother gradually ceases caressing it, and, hiding her tender love, put[s] bitter aloes upon her sweet breast, sets down the child from her arms and makes it walk upon its feet, so that it may lose the habits of a child and betake itself more important and substantial occupations.[2]

This essay supposes that this transition of one's image of God is an experience of the dark night of the soul. It attempts to capture the experience of the dark night as one of being weaned from his/her nurturant image of God proper for an infant to find his/her image of God as revealed through the Scriptures: as the *Other* who enters into a relationship with the *other*—having the disposition of freedom and responsibility—in mature intimacy.

God as Mother in the Sacred Scriptures

The Sacred Scriptures in the Old Testament are not void of the maternal image of God "related to birth and motherhood":

> Isaiah 42:14 speaks of God "cry[ing] out like a woman in labor" with gasps and pants. Similarly, Isaiah 46:3–4 describes God as having carried the house of Jacob "from the womb." In Numbers 11:12, Moses tells God that having birthed Israel, God (not Moses) should "carry [the nation] in your bosom, as a nurse carries a sucking child" to the Promised Land. In Isaiah 66:13, the Lord tells Jerusalem, "As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you."[3]

In the New Testament, Jesus alludes to himself the image of mother in Luke 13:34 as he "expresses the wish to gather Jerusalem's

[2]John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, 38.

[3]K. Attanasi, "Can We Call God 'Mother'?" *U.S. Catholic* 79:6 (2014): 46.

people like a mother hen."[4] St. John of the Cross must have had this image of God as mother which found its way into his writings such as *Dark Night of the Soul* I, 1, 2.

Two other metaphors—*breast* and *milk*—associated with the personification of God as mother stand out in *Dark Night of the Soul* I, 1, 2, which could provide a glimpse into the mother-child bond. The "child at its mother's breast" captures an "intimacy" that no other image can profoundly express:

> Isaiah invites Israel to rejoice and to "nurse and be satisfied" from the "consoling breast" of Jerusalem (shodh, 66:11), a metaphor for contentment, peace, and security.…[5]

Whereas in the New Testament, such intimacy is expressed in the relationship between "Jesus and the Beloved Disciple" as the "latter reclines against Jesus' breast … at the Last Supper (John 13:23)" in as much as "Jesus is 'close to the Father's heart,' literally, 'in the breast … of the Father' (John 1:18)."[6]

Milk as the other metaphor sustains and nourishes the body with its nutritional value. It is a "symbol of fruitfulness" together with honey in Ex. 3:8. In the New Testament, it is a "symbol for learning or teaching."[7] In reference to 1 Cor. 3:2, Claassens writes

> that [Paul] has fed the young converts with milk, not solid food. Milk … functions as an image for elementary Christian teachings that are easily digested by those who are "babies" in the faith.[8]

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[4]P. Tull, "Mother," in K. Sakenfeld, ed., *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009), 156.

[5]B. Reid, "Breast," in K. Sakenfeld, ed., *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 501.

[6]Reid, "Breast," 501.

[7]L. Claassens, "Milk," in Sakenfeld, ed., *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4, 86.

[8]Claassens, "Milk," 86–87.

Hence, bringing together the metaphors of breast and milk into the image of God as mother speaks of a maternal bond between mother and child, one characterized by nurturance and dependence on the former for the latter's physical survival and psychological security, which are basic prerequisites for learning the rubrics of the faith. The mother-child bond can even be the precursor for the child's maternal imaging of God based on early experiences with his/her own maternal figure.

Human Developmental Theories of the Imaging of God

A-M. Rizzuto, taking on Winnicott[9] and Kohut,[10] proposes that the child's "first integrated experience—and representation—of the mother is used in the formation of the God representation."[11] Rizzuto writes:

> The eyes of the mother, and the entire face of the mother, are the child's first mirror. Later on, the experience is to be used directly in the first representation of God, whose mirroring function … echoes the biblical account of [humankind's] creation.… The first elaboration of a God representation … begins with eye contact between mother and child. It also shows that to create a God that is not oneself, the child has to pass through the glass of the mirror to where the real mother dwells.[12]

Nevertheless, the relational dynamic is grounded on the fact that the "child needs the other, whether mother or God. All the child can do is hope to be found acceptable."[13]

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[9]D. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (New York: Routledge, 1971).

[10]H. Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1971).

[11]A-M. Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 185.

[12]Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God*, 186–187.

[13]Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God*, 188.

Meissner thinks along the line of Rizzuto:

> The child's earliest imaginings about God are cast … in the image of the parents. From about the age of three or four years, the child has no difficulty in imagining a God. But the universe of the divine is filled with fantasy and fascination, not unlike the world of fairy tales. And from the beginning, the child's image of God is colored with ambivalence; while there may be feelings of trust [in] and dependence on a kind, loving, and protecting God, there are also elements of awe and fear. This ambivalence can be colored by the child's emerging experience with the mother.[14]

For Vergote and Tamayo, one's image of God is closely "bound up with the symbolic parental figures that belong to the psychological realm."[15] However, more often than not, the representation of God is attributed to the mother than to the father:

> The representation of God integrates to a high degree the two parental dimensions, and is therefore more complex than the father figure.… The representation of God is more maternal than paternal because it stresses more the maternal qualities than the paternal.… Thus the divine presence is perceived, as an affective relation, as immediate as the attachment of the child to the mother.[16]

Contextualizing the Imaging of God in Faith Development

James W. Fowler, in his book *Stages of Faith* (1981),[17] proposes seven developmental-stage models in faith development: 1) undifferentiated

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[14]W. Meissner, *Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience* (New Haven, CT / London: Yale University Press, 1984), 139.

[15]A. Vergote & A. Tamayo, *The Parental Figures and the Representation of God: A Psychological and Cross-Cultural Study* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1980), 19.

[16]Vergote & Tamayo, *The Parental Figures and the Representation of God*, 206.

[17]J. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1981).

faith; 2) intuitive-projective faith; 3) mythic-literal faith; 4) synthetic-conventional faith; 5) individuative-reflective faith; 6) conjunctive faith; and 7) universalizing faith. A. Desrosiers describes them as a

> progression from one stage to the next [which] is hierarchical and sequential, with each new stage incorporating and expanding on the operations of the previous stage. Backward movement, however, also may occur, requiring reworking of faith issues in the previous stage.[18]

Moreover, Fowler's model is based on "faith stage transitions" that "represent significant alterations in the structures of one's knowing and valuing and, therefore in the basic orientation and responses of the self."[19] Hence, the transition from one stage to the next does not put the milestones of the previous stage into oblivion; rather, these are either modified or integrated into the new scheme of grasping and giving meaning to life's experiences toward the maturity of faith. These contents of faith organized into schemas give witness to the experiences of the human person as they unfold through temporal time and space according to the signification that the experience-r bestows on them. Fowler elaborates:

> In the process of transition … "everything nailed down is coming loose." Because of new operations and comprehensiveness in our knowing and valuing, both our previous knowledge and values and our ways of verifying and justifying our perspectives and our actions undergo change and must be reworked.[20]

The notion of transition in the stage theory of faith development as applied to the representation of God implies that the human person also reworks his/her image of God. One's image of God is not formed in a sterile vacuum; rather, it is worked and re-worked progressively according to the meaning that the experience-r attributes to a string

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[18]A. Desrosiers, "Development of Religion and Spirituality Across the Life Span," in J. Aten, K. O'Grady, & E. Worthington, Jr., eds., *The Psychology of Religion and Spirituality for Clinicians* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 14.

[19]J. Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 58.

[20]Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian*, 58.

of significant experiences which is expressive of his/her level of psychological development as lived out in the faith life. Henceforth, one's image of God is challenged from its core, making the experience-r question his/her conception of God at each crucial point of life's transitions. However, one's image of God is founded on previous conceptions by holding on to those that are still in synchrony with and letting go of those that are contradictory to the newly emerging image of God. The dynamic at the point of transition is self-correcting and self-transcending to a personal encounter with God in depth, width, and breadth.

While they do not deny the transitions between stages, there seem to be two landmark transition points in Fowler's faith-stage model in relation to one's imaging of God. The first transition unravels between Stages 1–3 and Stage 4. Stages 1–3 presuppose a rather long period of unarticulated perception of an omnipotent Being, one borne from the relationship of mutuality between the mother or primary care giver and the child which Fowler labels as Stage 1: Primal Faith. He writes:

> The first symbols of faith are likely to take primitive form in the baby's hard-won memories of maternal and paternal presence. As dependable realities who go away but can be trusted to return, our primary care givers constitute our first experiences of superordinate power and wisdom, as well as [of] our dependence.… [Their] mixtures of rigidity and grace, of arbitrary harshness and nurturing love, are doubtless present in the images of God that take more or less conscious form.[21]

Stage 2: Intuitive-Projective Faith is initiated with the child's acquisition of his/her first words through the interaction between mother and child. For the child, God can be identified with the mother or the father as expressed through human language. The idea of God gets it meaning through the child's relationship with his/her primary caregiver.

> The preschool child who has access to the symbols, stories, and shared liturgical life of a religious tradition awakens to an expanded horizon of meanings. Though such symbols, in their archetypal power, can be misused … they also enrich the child's stores of meaning and can

[21]Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian*, 53.

> provide powerful identifications and aspirations, as well as sources of guidance and reassurance.[22]

In Stage 3: Mythic-Literal Faith, the school-age child learns to think concretely in terms of causal relationships.[23] Moreover, the child learns that "good" behavior is rewarded while the "bad" is punished by the parent/s. And the child's image of the parent as one who both rewards and punishes could be projected unto one's image of God. J. Fowler expounds:

> One does not yet, however, construct the interiority (the feelings, attitudes, and internal guiding process) of oneself or others. In making sense of the larger order of things, therefore, this stage typically relies on the external structures of simple fairness. It most frequently constructs an ultimate environment on the analogy of a consistent, caring, but just ruler or parent.[24]

And just before one enters Stage 4: Synthetic-Conventional Faith, the adolescent could go into a transitional phase of existential questioning of one's "values, commitments, and relationships … as central to identity and worth."[25] The adolescent tends to fight against any imposition of authority based on reward and punishment. The word of any authoritative figure is challenged for its rationality and justifiability rather than accepted as it is. Institutional faith falls into the crevices of skepticism as one challenges his/her image of God in view of one's assertion of identity and independence from the parental influence. Hence, it is in this stage where one will have to reshape his/her imaging of God based on the premise that God is qualitatively different from that of parental representations. Fowler exhorts:

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[22]Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian*, 55.

[23]J. Fowler, "Faith and the Structuring of Meaning," in C. Dykstra & S. Parks, eds., *Faith Development and Fowler* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1986), 28.

[24]J. Fowler, "Pluralism, Particularity, and Paideia," *Journal of Law and Religion* 2:2 (1984): 297.

[25]Fowler, "Faith and the Structuring of Meaning," 29.

> the images of self that one discerns that others have constructed do not necessarily fit nicely together. Nor are they necessarily congruent with one's felt images of self.[26]

It is at this stage that the kernel of desire for a personal relationship with God is discernible as one searches for and establishes who he/she is. There is a seeming simultaneity between the encounter of self and of God. Fowler writes:

> This stage holds together a vital but fragile dance in which we try to shape the movements of our life to give expression to a way of being forming from within, while at the same time trying to maintain connections and exchanges with all those to whom our becoming seems integrally connected.… From within this stage, we construct the ultimate environment in terms of the personal. God is one who knows us better than we can know ourselves—knows who we are and who we are becoming—and, in connecting deeply with others and ourselves, we are somehow linked with the depth, or height, of ultimacy.[27]

Stage 5: Individuative-Reflective Faith makes explicit that which is implicit in the previous stage. "It is occasioned by a variety of experiences that make it necessary for persons to objectify, examine, and make critical choices about the defining elements of their identity and faith."[28] As one moves through individuation of self, the image of God surfaces as distinct from the foreground of the parental image. And as the person eventually begins to articulate explicitly the answers to his/her question—"Who am I?"—God reveals God's self as Yahweh—"I Am who Am." This could be the point of an authentic encounter between the person and God to forge a relationship of mutuality founded on faith, hope, and love rather than on the primitive dynamic of reward and punishment from childhood experiences, a relationship freed from the neurotic compulsions of the "Letter of the Law" in view of the "Spirit of the Law" and from ritualism in favor of dialogue through the discernment of the heart in God. Maturity in

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[26]Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian*, 59.

[27]Fowler, "Faith and the Structuring of Meaning," 29–30.

[28]Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian*, 62.

faith would have to entail purifying the image of God of one's parental representations and identifications.

The second transition point takes place between Stage 5 and Stage 6: Conjunctive Faith. The integrity of the self at mid-life which has been held by the person after the Individuative-Reflective stage would be challenged by its own vulnerabilities of "contradictions, polarities, or at least, paradoxical elements."[29] Fowler explains:

> Faith … learns to be receptive, to balance initiative and control with waiting and seeking to be part of the larger movement of spirit or being. It develops a second willed naivete, an epistemological humility in [the] face of the intricacy and richness of mystery.[30]

One would have to live within the tensions of life. Tension places the polarities of the self into a dialectical relationship rather than taking them as extreme opposites of the axes. Existential life is a tension between the conscious and unconscious selves. It is through dynamic interaction that the clarification and purification of experiences that lead to greater understanding can take place so as to arrive at a judgement of values of the transcendental order that would bring one to a decisive act.[31] And, as applied to faith development, it is in the existential questioning of "Who is God?" vis-à-vis "Who am I?" that one lives through the tension between holding on to the image of God arising from his/her parental representations and letting go of such infantile images as one comes face-to-face with faith-life experiences such as pain, suffering, death, and separation that challenge one's integrity and authenticity. Nevertheless, it is also in the creative fidelity and openness of living through the tension that the opposites clarify and purify each other's pretension or unknowing. And in the internal push-and-pull of the believer in search of himself/herself, an image of God apart from parental representations springs forth

[29]Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian*, 64.

[30]Fowler, "Faith and the Structuring of Meaning," 30.

[31]B. Lonergan, *Understanding and Being: The Halifax Lectures on Insight* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1990), 33.

contemporaneously with an image of self. God, Who Is I Am Who Am, manifests God's self to encounter the believer as who he/she truly is.

Finally, Stage 7: Universalizing Faith is the movement of inclusive expansion of one's radius of relationship emanating from the centrality of one's self-identity in God from the previous stage. One

> decenters in the valuing process to such an extent that he/she participates in the valuing of Creator and values other beings—and being—from a standpoint more nearly identical with the love of the Creator for creatures than from the standpoint of a vulnerable, defensive, anxious creature.[32]

And, as Fowler puts it explicitly, "[a]n identification with or participation in the Ultimate brings a transformation in which one begins to love and value from a centering located in the Ultimate."[33]

Weaning from the Maternal Figure of God

Transitions in the faith development theory can be seen from the point of view of weaning oneself from an upheld image of God that has become an inflexible faith scheme in relating with the Transcendent Being, one that can prevent growth toward maturity in a person's spiritual life. This is expressed implicitly in the explicit words of St. John of the Cross:

> But, as the child grows bigger, the mother gradually ceases caressing it, and, hiding her tender love, puts bitter aloes upon her sweet breasts, sets down the child from her arms and makes it walk upon its feet, so that it may lose the habits of a child and betake itself more important and substantial occupations.[34]

Such poignant verse speaks of the internal struggle that the mother needs to grapple with herself—between holding on and letting go of her child. It is a painful experience for the nurturant mother having

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[32]Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian* (2000 ed.), 55–56.

[33]Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian*, 31.

[34]John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, 38.

to let her child stand with his/her own feet and take the initial steps on the path of faith. In the same manner, it is also difficult for the child to be out of sight of his/her mother's protective love and care. It opens the child to the world of uncertainty, doubt, and insecurity. As the mother painfully detaches herself from her child, the child helplessly attaches himself/herself to the mother almost with a quality of desperation. And yet the mother must decide to cut the umbilical cord that breeds mutual dependency if she desires the self-autonomy of her child as contemporaneous with establishing the child's self-identity. Moreover, the autonomy-and-identity-giving detachment of the mother-child bond opens the child to an image of God as Father who is also motherly in His nurturing care. Hence, the child's new image of God is an integration of paternal and maternal qualities but one that transcends the child's parental representations. As St. John of the Cross puts it:

> The loving mother is like the grace of God, for, as soon as the soul is regenerated by its new warmth and fervor for the service of God, He treats it in the same way; He makes it to find spiritual milk, sweet and delectable, in all things of God, without any labour of its own, and also great pleasure in spiritual exercises, for here God is giving to it the breast of His tender love, even as a tender child.[35]

The nature of spiritual weaning in this context is attributed to the transitional phases between Stages 1–3 and 4 and between Stages 5 and 6 as the defining leap in re-imaging God from the infantile to the adult representation of God rooted in a personal encounter of intimacy-in-relationship that opens to the consolidation and integration of the transcendent qualities of the God-image. Furthermore, the language of "weaning" being equated with "transition" in faith development could be analogous, in spirituality parlance, to St. John of the Cross's "Dark Night."

[35]John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, 38.

Weaning as Analogous to the Dark Night

Bäumer and Plattig echo the notion of the Dark Night as a transitional movement in the "spiritual development of [human persons] … in the context of … the decisive stages of transition, [in the] steps of development and maturation."[36] The authors continue:

> Becoming a Christian person therefore means growing to maturity, and this is a task of discerning, of separating. Regressive infantilism, longing in a certain sense to return to the womb, should therefore be distinguished from creatively giving shape to spiritual childhood in the correct proportion of dependence, freedom and self-reliance.… Convictions and principles of faith valid in the past, images of God hitherto shaped by experience, and a fulfilling prayer life are fundamentally called into question. To use the same metaphor, [the human person] weaned from the mother's breast and put [on their] own feet feels repudiated by God. Nothing is the same as before, the safety of spiritual wellbeing has turned into cold distance.[37]

Spiritual weaning is the dialectical movement between attachment and detachment. One must detach from one's infantile image of God to allow a new and more authentic image of God to surface into the consciousness of one's psychological and faith life. The human person is freed from the obsessive fear of punishment that breeds neurotic guilt which only leaves the human person with the compulsively ritualistic trappings of self-defined perfections. Holding on to one's image of God could be defensive maneuvering to evade having to confront an uncharted territory of the spiritual life. The human person clings to that which is seemingly comfortable and familiar, even to the point of controlling and manipulating the expression of the faith life according to the cognitive scheme that comes with one's image of God. Compulsive attachment is a movement favoring spiritual regression that follows the unending path of a vicious cycle. This is contrary to the promise that detachment offers to the human person who takes the risk of letting go of one's fears and inhibitions in favor

[36]R. Bäumer & M. Plattig, "Dark Night and Depression," *Carmelus* 61 (2014): 88.

[37]Bäumer & Plattig, "Dark Night and Depression," 88.

of a real encounter with a living God, not just a mental image or construct, thereby leading one to spiritual progression. It could be the key, perhaps, to breaking out of suffocating circularity and open to the immensity of the transcendental horizon. Bäumer and Plattig write:

> As long as these closed systems function for individuals … as long as they yield the desired results, they continue to exist unchallenged. But if they are called into question by external or internal occurrences, e.g. by experiences of suffering and death, of dryness and absence of comfort, they enter a state of crisis and must be revised, restructured and maybe even completely left behind. This is the only way … development, maturation and growth will happen, which therefore are inextricably linked to abandonment, questioning, and crisis. This process, of course, might be more or less distinct, [for] the crises of human growth and maturation have varying degrees of intensity, but it remains to emphasize that every positive development includes an element of crisis.[38]

Dark Night of the Soul Experience

St. John of the Cross distinguishes between two phases of the dark night experience: the night of the senses and the night of the spirit, both with active and passive aspects. These are two phases of a single phenomenological experience. May writes:

> During the dark night of the senses, the soul finds freedom from its attachments to particular sensory gratifications, while the dark night of the spirit releases attachments to rigid beliefs and ways of thinking, frozen memories and expectations, and compulsive, automatic choices. Since the intellect, memory, and will cannot grasp God, they, like the senses, need to be "darkened," emptied of the false gods they cling to.[39]

The dark night can be a threatening experience for the human person. It situates one face-to-face with one's own vulnerable self. It can be a crisis of personal integrity and identity that challenges one's view of oneself and eventually impinges into one's image of God.

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[38]Bäumer & Plattig, "Dark Night and Depression," 89.

[39]G. May, *The Dark Night of the Soul: A Psychiatrist Explores the Connection Between Darkness and Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2004), 80.

Such vulnerability of self challenges the human person's core being by lifting off the layers of superficiality and pretensions built through psychological defense mechanisms. Thus, the dark night of the senses exposes the human person's defenses of un-freedom while the dark night of the spirit purges them. Here it is stressed empathically once again: an encounter of self is an encounter with God.

St. John of the Cross gives practical points for living through the dark night of the soul during the active phase. May summarizes:

> The active night of the senses usually involves spiritual practices such as prayer, meditation, journaling, retreats, and spiritual guidance.… The active night of the spirit is characterized by similar disciplines and restraints applied to the intellect, memory, will, and imagination.… [T]hree theological virtues … are instrumental in freeing the spirit from its attachments. Faith darkens and empties the intellect, hope frees the memory, and love liberates the will.[40]

> Both of the active nights involve disciplines of restraint, [and] attempts to reverse usual habits of stuffing oneself with sensory, intellectual, spiritual, or any other kind of gratification. Both are movements toward subtraction rather than addition, simplification rather than complication, emptying instead of filling, relinquishment rather than accumulation.[41]

And, in the words of Bäumer and Plattig,

> In terms of developmental psychology the active Night of the Spirit signifies the process of [the human person's] coming of age, of weaning [oneself] from "the sensory breasts" (*Dark Night of the Soul* 1, 13, 13) and from the mother's milk of sweet attachment to religious experience.[42]

St. Thomas Aquinas's dictum "grace builds on nature" would probably encapsulate the active night of the soul. God's grace penetrates into the seeming void that is left over from the self-emptying dynamic of the passive night. It seeps into every crevice of the human soul to heal it from its pain and suffering. God empties God's self into the hollowness of the human heart that one's decision of self-

[40]May, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, 81.

[41]May, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, 83.

[42]Bäumer & Plattig, "Dark Night and Depression," 90.

emptying has created. It is in this space that one encounters God to forge an alliance of intimacy. It is in this space that a new image of God contemporaneous with one's self-image comes to a new dawn in one's spiritual journey. May summarizes it well:

> Though we don't realize it at the time, when habitual senses of God do disappear in the process of the dark night, it is surely because it is time for us to relinquish our attachment to them. We have made an idol [out of] our images and feelings of God, giving them more importance than the true God they represent. This can happen with any image or sense of the Divine.… No matter what specific form they may take, all such [rigidly] held feelings about God restrict our openness to the incomprehensible divine reality.[43]

Nevertheless, God never promised that this path will always be a bed of roses. In the words of Bäumer and Plattig:

> The seriousness of the [dark] night experience, however, will only be achieved in the passive Night of the Spirit, when all the soul's activity is overtaken by the divine activity. For the soul this feels like being cast out into the darkness, abandoned by God, an experience of poverty and misery.[44]

Conclusion

The dialectic between attachment and detachment or holding on and letting go, respectively, of the dark night experience gives a concrete perspective to Lonergan's transcendental method of experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding. The dialectical relationship clarifies, purifies, and liberates one's image of God from its preconceived prejudices as influenced by the psychological developmental context of the human person, viewed specifically through Fowler's faith development theory. The dialectical dynamic is put into play through the transitional phase of weaning the human person from dependency on an infantile image of God that is based

[43]May, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, 91–92.

[44]Bäumer & Plattig, "Dark Night and Depression," 90.

on reward and punishment to an independent reliance on a personal God that invites him/her into a relationship of intimacy in faith, hope, and love without losing his/her identity. In Lonergan's conception, the dark night is the experience itself that, through reflection, leads the human person to an understanding of the limitations of one's imaging of God whereby holding on to it brings no promise, only the falling into the trap of a regressive and vicious cycle.

On the other hand, the glimpse of understanding, although not crystal clear, opens the human person to a transcendental image of God that goes beyond one's parental representations. However, it calls for a constant judgement of values and the subsequent decision to act on them to come closer to the "I Am Who Am" inasmuch as one becomes "who I am." Hence, an encounter of God is an encounter of self.

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REMEMBERING DAMASO

Ateneo de Manila High School's Portrayal of the Late 19th-Century Philippine Church (1980–1999)

Franz Jan S. Santos

In 2010, the late popular tour guide and activist Carlos Celdran protested against the Catholic Church's opposition to the Reproductive Health Bill by interrupting an ecumenical service at the Manila Cathedral while holding a placard that said "Damaso." Appealing his case years later, Celdran said, "The time of Damaso is not yet over.… As a matter of fact, Damaso is flexing his muscles to get back."[1]

That instance reminded this author of similar sentiments heard in the past as an educator in secondary and tertiary education and as a teacher-trainer. I have heard many times during classroom discussions or teacher trainings both students and teachers describe the 19th-century Philippine Church by citing the friars found in Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere*[2] and *El Filibusterismo.*[3] It was quite a surprise

[1]T. Arceo-Dumlao & E. Sauler, "Celdran found guilty in 'Damaso'," *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (January 29, 2013), http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/348713/celdran-found-guilty-in-damaso (accessed July 14, 2020).

[2]J. Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere*, trans. V. Almario (Quezon City, Philippines: Adarna House, 1998).

[3]J. Rizal, *El Filibusterismo*, trans. V. Almario (Quezon City, Philippines: Adarna House, 1999)

for me to find out how such a characterization has endured not just in popular memory but even in formal education. It reminded me of how misrepresented the Philippine Church was in discussions related to the Spanish colonial period.

This lack of accurate Church representation in both academic circles and public discourse was also noted by J. Schumacher, S.J. whose works brought to light the Church's role in the formation of the nation.[4] In part, this paper aims to validate Fr. Schumacher's observation on the level of basic education, focusing in particular on Ateneo de Manila High School (AHS). In this study, I look at how 19th-century Philippine Church history was discussed in *Araling Panlipunan* or Social Studies and in Filipino subjects during the 1980s and 1990s, and argue that the 19th-century Philippine Church was largely—yet understandably—misrepresented in classroom discussions, reflecting mostly its characterization in Rizal's novels. This in turn contributes to a larger misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the Philippine Church in popular knowledge.

For this study, I relied heavily on interviews with Filipino and Social Studies teachers who taught in Ateneo de Manila High School during the period studied, as well as textbooks and references used by these departments.

Background: Rizal Law and Nationalist Education in the Philippines

The image of late 19th-century Philippine Church in the popular mind is heavily influenced by two factors: the widespread reading of Rizal's novels and the type of nationalist education in the Philippines during the postwar decades.

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[4] J. Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy: The Filipino Clergy and the Nationalist Movement, 1850–1903* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1981). In the preface to his book *Revolutionary Clergy: The Filipino Clergy and the Nationalist Movement, 1850–1903*, Fr. Schumacher noted that the Church's role in the revolution is often not recognized, with nationalist historians highlighting the perceived anti-friar and anti-clerical sentiments of Filipino revolutionaries.

The first was brought about by Republic Act No. 1425 of 1956 or what is commonly referred to as the Rizal Law, which mandated educational institutions to include the study of the life and works of Jose Rizal and especially of his two novels, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, in their curricula.[5] From its inception, the bill faced great opposition from the Catholic Church hierarchy and several Christian lay organizations for a number of reasons, ranging from accusations that it violated freedom of conscience and religion to branding it as the work of communists.[6] One of the issues brought up in the debates had to do with how the late 19th-century Catholic Church was depicted, especially the portrayal of friars who figured heavily in the novels.

Even the defense of the bill touched on friar depiction. Among those who criticized the Church for its opposition to the bill was former Philippine President and revolutionary Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo, who said that the Church remained "under the yoke of the old Spanish friars, against whom the Filipinos of 1896 had risen in arms for their tyrannies."[7] Sen. Claro M. Recto also criticized the Church hierarchy, saying that it was more intolerant than the friars in Rizal's time.[8] Given that the Rizal Law required all Filipino students to study the *Noli* and *Fili,* the novels became popular references for information on the late 19th-century Philippines in general, and even on the late 19th-century Philippine Church.

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[5]See the Rizal Law of 1956 (Republic Act No. 1425) at http://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1956/06/12/republic-act-no-1425/ (accessed July 14, 2020).

[6]R. Constantino & L. Constantino, *The Philippines: The Continuing Past* (Quezon City, Philippines: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1978), 297–298.

[7]T. Agoncillo, *The Revolt of the Masses: The Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan* (Quezon City, Philippines: University of the Philippines, 1956). As mentioned also by T. Locsin in his article "The Church Under Attack" (*The Philippines Free Press* [May 5, 1956], available at https://philippinesfreepress.wordpress.com/1956/05/05/the-church-under-attack-may-5-1956/).

[8]More details about the debates around the bill can be read in S. Totanes, "The Historical Impact of the *Noli Me Tangere* and the *El Filibusterismo*," in S. Reyes, ed., *The Noli Me Tangere: A Century After: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Quezon City, Philippines: Phoenix Publishing House, 1987), 22–25.

Another factor that played a significant role in how the Philippine Church was portrayed was the type of education Filipinos received during the postwar decades. Decolonization gave rise to a resurgence of nationalism that would figure not just in the political landscape but in different academic fields as well. In the field of history, there was an intellectual battle for what type of nationalist framework the country should adhere to, and many politicians and intellectuals looked back at the late 19th century for guidance.[9]

Arguably the most influential of these nationalist historians was Teodoro Agoncillo who rose to prominence after the publication of *The Revolt of the Masses: The Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan*.[10] He set the tone and direction for writing Philippine history, claiming that his work presented history from the perspective of Filipinos. Following the same trend was Renato Constantino[11] who launched a scathing attack on the neocolonial nature of the Philippine educational system and called for the application of more relevant ideologies and frameworks in the study of Philippine history and society. He also wrote two influential textbooks in the 1970s: *The Philippines: A Past Revisited*[12] and its sequel, *The Philippines: The Continuing Past*.[13]

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[9]In his article "Heroes, Historians, and the New Propaganda Movement, 1950–1953" (*Philippine Studies* 58:1/2 [2010]: 223–238), R. Ileto discussed three efforts by several groups in crafting a postwar framework for Philippine nationalism: the Communist "Huk Movement" and its offshoots, the "New Propaganda Movement" led by Elpidio Quirino's writer Jose Lansang, and the Catholic-nationalist perspective led by Fr. Horacio de la Costa, S.J.

[10]Agoncillo, *The Revolt of the Masses*.

[11]R. Constantino, "The Mis-education of the Filipino," in *The Filipinos in the Philippines and Other Essays*, ed. R. Constantino (Quezon City, Philippines: Malaya Books, 1966), 39–65.

[12]R. Constantino & L. Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited* (Quezon City, Philippines: Tala Publishing, 1975).

[13]Constantino & Constantino, *The Philippines: The Continuing Past*.

Since a key idea in the Filipinization of history and the social sciences was the breaking away from colonial narratives, the movement resulted in a marginalization—and sometimes malignment—of perceived colonial ideas and institutions. This was especially true for the Catholic Church and its clergy of the late 19th century. These developments in Philippine historiography would have a profound effect on education from universities down to basic education. Prominent historians of the postwar decades would influence not just a generation of students and future educators but also be the basis for textbook writing for decades to come.

While Agoncillo and Constantino proved to be two of the most influential figures of the time, there were other notable historians who adhered to a different nationalist framework, one that would be more accommodating to the role of religion and Catholicism in nation-building. First among them is Jesuit historian Fr. Horacio de la Costa, S.J., who served as the "Catholic voice" in the nationalist debates of the 1950s and was even consulted by a committee of bishops during the heated debates on the Rizal Bill.[14] He was followed by fellow Jesuit Fr. John N. Schumacher, S.J. and Nicholas Cushner. Despite being heavily involved in Ateneo de Manila at different points in their lives, these historians were not the most cited sources by Ateneo de Manila High School educators during the period studied in this paper.

The Late 19th-Century Philippine Church in Ateneo de Manila High School in the 1980s and 1990s

Before beginning this section of the study, it is important to note that teachers of the humanities and social science subjects of the Ateneo de Manila High School have always been liberal in their approach in teaching, and this was especially true prior to the late 2000s. Individual teachers were allowed to teach their subjects with

[14]Ileto, "Heroes, Historians, and the New Propaganda Movement, 1950–1953," 233–237; J. Schumacher, "The Rizal Bill of 1956: Horacio de la Costa and the Bishops," *Philippine Studies* 59:4 (2011): 529–553.

a considerable amount of freedom as long as they followed the curriculum prescribed by the Department of Education. Since the task of balancing teacher individuality and compliance falls on department chairpersons, I decided to interview them for this study. Based on their curricula, two departments have deliberate discussions on the late 19th-century Philippine Church: *Araling Panlipunan* and Filipino.

The Late 19th-Century Church as Discussed in *Araling Panlipunan*

Philippine history is usually discussed during the first year of high school in what is known as Social Studies or *Araling Panlipunan*. Prior to the late 1980s, AHS students were not provided with a common textbook for studying Philippine history in their classes. Based on my interviews with certain social studies teachers and those who served as department chairpersons in the 1980s and 1990s, the most popular reference material used by teachers during that period was Teodoro Agoncillo's *History of the Filipino People*,[15] his most published and widely-read work.[16]

Like Agoncillo's previous books, *History of the Filipino People* was nationalist in orientation and largely anti-Church. Despite undergoing eight editions, the book's theses and themes remain the same. Since Agoncillo's book was written primarily to give "Filipino history"

[15]T. Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People* (Quezon City, Philippines: Malaya/R. P. Garcia, 1967–1986). Various editions of Agoncillo's book had co-authors: O. Alfonso (1967 edition) and M. Guerrero (1970, 1973, 1977, 1984, and 1986 editions). The first edition was published in 1961 with the title *A Short History of the Filipino People*.

[16]V. Totanes, "'History of the Filipino People' and Martial Law: A Forgotten Chapter in the History of a History Book, 1960–2010," *Philippine Studies* 58:3 (2010): 317–322. I was able to interview two former department chairpersons of the Social Studies department—Mr. P. Meris and Ms. M. Olavides-Correa—as well as Social Studies teachers Mr. J. Hernando and Mr. M. Macaventa. In those interviews, Agoncillo's *History of the Filipino People* figured considerably. V. Totanes also gave a good discussion on the history of Agoncillo's *History of the Filipino People* in his article "'History of the Filipino People' and Martial Law."

more attention, he did not devote much discussion to the country's experience under Spain. As noted by V. Totanes,[17] Agoncillo dedicated only three chapters—out of thirty—of the entire book to discuss the entire Spanish colonial period. A more detailed and nuanced approach to studying Spanish colonization was—as may be expected—not presented.

As may be expected as well, Agoncillo was critical of the Philippine Church of the late 19th century. In his discussion on Spanish colonial education, for example, he wrote that the civil government attempted to secularize the colony's educational system after "realizing the detrimental effect of its abandonment of the field of education to friar control." He added,

> The narrowness of its policies and the obvious slant of the various curricula toward religion, however, seriously handicapped the educational system.…
>
> It was not until late in the 19th century that the friars reluctantly gave primary instruction to native children in makeshift classrooms in their stables. The children were daily subjected to physical and mental tortures so that shame and fear of corporal punishment forced them to drop out of school.[18]

Accusations were also thrown at the Spanish friars at large. Agoncillo mentions, for example, that the friars were enemies of progress, opposing any efforts of reform from the Spanish government and consumed by greed as shown by "arbitrary increases in land rents, [the] unjust eviction of farmers and fraudulent land measures that disposed many small farm owners."[19]

Aside from Agoncillo, Renato Constantino was also commonly cited, especially his book *The Philippines: A Past Revisited*. Constantino's materialistic view of history was evident in his analysis and evaluation of

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[17]Totanes, "'History of the Filipino People' and Martial Law," 318.

[18]Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People* (1977 ed.), 109–110.

[19]Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People* (1977 ed.), 123–136.

the secularization movement,[20] regarding it as one of the manifestations of the native priest's desire for a higher social and economic status. He also highlighted the economic gains from increased rights and participation by Filipinos in the priesthood.[21]

By the start of the 1990s, AHS started using textbooks from publishing houses that catered primarily to high school students. Textbooks used by the AHS were usually selected by each department through its chairperson and then approved for use by school administrators. An example of the textbooks used by the Social Studies department in the 1990s was *Pilipinas: Kasaysayan at Pamahalaan* [Philippines: History and Government] by Vibal Publishing.[22] This particular textbook is a good example of how the late 19th-century Philippines was discussed in many high school textbooks during the timeframe under study. Since textbooks during that time placed a high value on nationalism, there was a tendency—and sometimes a deliberate effort—to highlight Filipino concepts, deeds, and heroes, and malign people, events, and institutions that were perceived to be in the way of nationalism. Colonizers in general were accused of various forms of abuses, and these abuses were highlighted especially during the late 19th century when the concept of the Filipino nation was being formed.

A good example of this trend in textbook writing can be found in the authors' introductory paragraph to their discussion of the late 19th-century Philippines. The book stated:

> Dahil sa sila ang mga mananakop, kumilos ang mga Kastila na animo mga hari-harian sa Pilipinas. Kontrolado nila ang lahat ng bahagi ng pamumuhay ng mga Pilipino.…

[20]The term "secularization movement" refers here to the demand of the Filipino clergy in the 19th century for the Church to hand over the parishes administered by the religious orders (mostly Spaniards) to the secular clergy who were mostly native Filipinos.

[21]Constantino & Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited*, 145.

[22]T. Vivar, G. Sobritchea, R. Quiray, E. Viloria, N. dela Cruz, & P. Jacob, *Pilipinas: Kasaysayan at Pamahalaan*, new ed. (Quezon City, Philippines: Vibal Publishing House Inc., 1994).

> Napakababa ang pagtingin ng mga Kastila sa mga Pilipino noon. Ipinalagay nila ang mga ito na mga mangmang at hindi sibilisado. Kinutya nila ang hangarin ng mga ito na mag-aral at humawak ng anumang katungkulan sa pamahalaan at kahit sa simbahan. Galit sila sa marurunong na mga Pilipino at pinagbintangan nila ang mga ito sa pagtataksil sa Espanya at ipinatapon sila sa ibang bansa. Kinamkam nila ang mga lupa ng mga Pilipino at pinagsamantalahan ang mga kababaihan.
>
> Tiniis ng mga Pilipino ang lahat ng mga pagmamalabis. Yuko ang kanilang ulo sa pagtanggap ng mga alipusta, pananakit at lahat ng uri ng abuso ng Kastila. Dinagdagan nila ang kanilang paumanhin at pagtitiis tulad ng natutunan nila sa relihiyong Katoliko.[23]
>
> [As conquerors, the Spaniards acted like kings in the Philippines. They controlled every aspect of Filipino life.…
>
> They looked down on Filipinos. They considered them illiterate and uncivilized. They mocked Filipinos' desire to learn and hold positions in government and the church. They despised intelligent Filipinos, accused them of treason, and threw them into exile. They stole the land of the Filipinos and abused their women.
>
> The Filipinos endured the abuse. They could only bow their heads in shame in the face of the humiliation and all kinds of abuse which they suffered from the Spaniards. They extended their patience and endured their suffering in accordance with what they were taught in Catholicism.]

Given the limited perspectives and inaccuracies in textbooks prevailing at the time, some *Araling Panlipunan* teachers decided to write their own textbook in 1999 entitled *Lupang Hinirang: Kasaysayan at Pamahalaan* [A Land Chosen: (Philippine) History and Government].[24] Aware of the limitations of current high school textbooks, the authors

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[23]Vivar et al., *Pilipinas: Kasaysayan at Pamahalaan*, 95.

[24]M. Olavides-Correa, O. Habana, A. Verzosa, & V. Galvez, *Lupang Hinirang: Kasaysayan at Pamahalaan* (Quezon City, Philippines: Anvil Publishing, 2000). The textbook was written by former Araling Panlipunan [Social Studies] teachers in Ateneo de Manila High School with the help of classmates in Ateneo's M.A. History program. This included Dr. O. Habana, faculty member and former chairperson of Ateneo de Manila's History Department. Dr. Habana was also primarily responsible for the discussion on the 19th-century Philippines in the textbook and was interviewed for this study.

deliberately avoided using them as references and utilized mostly primary sources and more recent literature for the different topics in Philippine history.

Lupang Hinirang's discussion on the late 19th-century Church showed its intended departure from the narrative that was dominant in texbooks during that time. In the beginning chapter on the rise of Philippine nationalism, for example, the authors noted the important role of the Church in keeping peace in the colony:

> Ang mga pari ay madalas nakikiusap at humihingi ng amnestiya para sa mga nag-aalsa. Madalas din sigurong ginagamit nila ang kanilang impluwensiya at kapangyarihan upang pigilin ang pagsali ng mga tao sa armadong pag-aalsa. [Priests often mediate and ask for amnesty for natives who rebelled. They might have also used their power and influence to prevent people from joining armed rebellions.][25]

The book also provided a more nuanced discussion of the causes of unrest in the Philippines during the 19th century. For example, accusations of land grabbing were not solely pinned on Spaniards and the Church; it was noted that even wealthy Filipino landowners robbed fellow Filipinos of untitled lands. It also gave a sufficient explanation as to why the value of lands increased in the first place and how this affected tenant-owner relationships, thus avoiding oversimplifications that usually identified friar greed as the source of the issue.[26] Perhaps more noteworthy was that the book gave a different perspective on the secularization movement by linking it directly to the rise of Philippine nationalism.[27] There was also a conscious effort to discuss the Jesuits' history in the 1800s, noting their contributions and their relationship with Jose Rizal.

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[25]Olavides-Correa et al., *Lupang Hinirang*, 119.

[26]Olavides-Correa et al., *Lupang Hinirang*, 122–123.

[27]Olavides-Correa et al., *Lupang Hinirang*, 125.

The Late 19th-Century Church in *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*

Aside from Philippine history in *Araling Panlipunan*, the late 19th-century Philippine Church was also briefly taken up with high school students in their Filipino subject during discussions on *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*. To get more information on how the Filipino department in AHS portrayed the Philippine Church through the two novels, I again relied mostly on interviews with former department chairpersons and faculty members of the Filipino department from the 1980s and 1990s.

The late 19th-century Philippine Church was usually discussed in Filipino classes to contextualize the novels. According to Filipino teachers interviewed for this study, a common strategy in discussing *Noli Me Tangere* was to do so thematically. Characters in the novels were lumped together and discussed according to an appropriate theme related to the overall objectives of the topic. The friars in *Noli* were then discussed as one group, with each cleric representing a particular flaw of the Church during that time. Commonly highlighted issues of the Church included greed, immorality, racism, and her influence in the political sphere. Other "good" priests in the novel such as Padre Florentino were viewed as exceptions.[28]

Other important sources for learning *Noli* and *Fili* in the AHS were T. Ongoco's *Mga Tulong sa Pag-aaral sa Noli Me Tangere* [Helpful Aides in Studying *Noli Me Tangere*][29] and *Gabay sa Pag-aaral sa El Filibusterismo*

[28]A former AHS Filipino teacher and current faculty member at the Ateneo de Manila University's Filipino Department, Dr. C. Santos mentioned the theme of a "broken church" when discussing friars in *Noli*. She mentioned, for example, that specific characters in the novels like Padre Damaso and Padre Salvi represented the institution's sins and weaknesses during that time, which included immorality, greed, and the desire for power.

[29]T. Ongoco, *Mga Tulong sa Pag-aaral sa Noli Me Tangere* (Quezon City, Philippines: Manlapaz Publishing Company, 1969).

[Helpful Guides in Studying *El Filibusterismo*].[30] Both books served as study guides for the Rizal novels and were said to be favorites of students in AHS during the 1980s and 1990s.[31] As the titles suggest, the books aimed to help students understand the novels by giving chapter summaries, defining vocabulary, and expounding on key concepts.

While the books made attempts at explaining the historical context of the novels, the discussions were understandably brief and insufficient for an accurate understanding of 19th-century Philippine history, especially the 19th-century Philippine Church. Ongoco also mostly echoed Rizal's own view of Philippine society, making it difficult to ascertain at times whether the views presented in his books reflected his own or Rizal's.

Given that the discussion on the historical context behind the novels was understandably brief, a more detailed or nuanced discussion on the Church during that time was often not presented. Therefore, the Damaso or Salvi friar stereotypes stuck, with former AHS Filipino chairperson Mr. Gabriel Mallillin even noting that the discussions about the priests were usually "biased"—though not necessarily prejudiced—due to Rizal's context and his objectives in writing the two novels.

The AHS Depiction of the Late 19th-Century Philippine Church: Summary and Evaluation

The portrayal of the 19th-century Philippine Church in AHS classes reflected the general trend in history education during the decades studied. To summarize observations made previously in this study, the late 19th-century Philippine Church was portrayed as an enemy of progress, corrupt, hungry for power, and immoral. In this section, I attempt to explore the reasons for such charges and nuance them based

[30]T. Ongoco, *Gabay sa Pag-aaral sa El Filibusterismo* (Quezon City, Philippines: Manlapaz Publishing Company, 1967).

[31]Filipino teachers mentioned that while students like to use the Ongoco books, teachers rarely used them as reference materials.

on more recent literature in the hopes of helping fellow educators navigate this controversial topic in Philippine history.

Enemy of Progress

> "Mga Tsino? Baliw ba kayo?" bulalas ni Fray Damaso. "Magtigil kayo! Inimbento iyon ng isang Pransiskano, isa sa aking orden, si Fray … Savalls yata ang ngalan noong siglo … siyete!" ["Chinese? Are you crazy?" Fray Damaso exclaimed. "Just stop it! It was invented by a Franciscan, from my order, Fray … Savalls if I'm not mistaken, in the … 7th century!"][32]

In the opening chapter of *Noli Me Tangere*, Rizal insulted the friars' intellect by poking fun at Fray Damaso's character when the latter stubbornly asserted that a member of his religious order discovered the use of gun powder. The example above is just one of the many ways Rizal and fellow propagandists used sardonic humor in their different anti-friar campaigns, some of which faulted the friars for the Philippines's low intellectual and cultural achievements.[33]

While the *ilustrados*—and postwar historians—branded the friars as the enemies of progress, the Church's perceived aversion to progress must be evaluated based on a sound understanding of the context of 19th-century Philippines and Spain. However, sufficient discussion on this topic is usually not carried out given the limitations of time, and probably due to teacher preference as well.

One must also be specific in defining just what it was that the Church was supposedly against or lagging behind in to merit being branded as "an enemy of progress." For example, the Church being called an enemy of progress can be understandable if one equates progress with liberal ideas prevailing in Europe during that time. The Church's opposition would then be understandable—and expected—

[32]Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere.*

[33]A good source on how Rizal used humor to poke fun of and criticize certain characters in Philippine society is M. Bernard's "Humor and Craftsmanship in the Opening Chapters of the *Noli*," in Reyes, ed., *The Noli Me Tangere: A Century After*, 39–51.

given how the Church suffered under liberal governments in Spain. Liberal ideas like secularization and freedom of religion were therefore perceived by some clerics as threatening the very survival of the Church in the Philippines.[34] An appreciation for this context is necessary to understand why the friars—and the Church hierarchy—acted the way they did in the late 19th-century. Given time constraints in many high school syllabi, however, not much time was allocated for the discussion of this important context.

Another issue used to substantiate the charge of incompetence and intellectual backwardness against the Church was the description of the poor state of education in the Philippines, which was almost entirely under Church administration. As Agoncillo wrote,

> As deterrents to progress, they undermined the administrations of liberal governors like Basco and de la Torre. While they were responsible for the "civilization" and "Christianization" of many towns, they were major stumbling blocks to the education of the Filipinos.[35]

This supposed failure of the Church in educating Filipinos also figured in Rizal's novels. A schoolteacher's lament to Crisostomo Ibarra, for instance, showed the supposed sorry state of Philippine education under the friars.[36] While it is understandable why such a perception permeates popular imagination, facts show otherwise. It is rarely discussed, for example, that the Philippines was the most educated colony of Spain, with its literacy rate rivaling that of Spanish cities in

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[34]J. Schumacher, *The Propaganda Movement, 1880–1895: The Creation of a Filipino Consciousness, the Making of the Revolution*, rev. ed. (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1997), 305. The effects of the political turmoil in Spain and its implications for the Church were detailed by R. Herr, "Flow and Ebb, 1700–1833," in R. Carr, ed., *Spain: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 173–204 and R. Carr, "Liberalism and Reaction, 1833–1931," in Carr, ed., *Spain: A History*, 205–242.

[35]Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People* (1977 ed.), 90.

[36]Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere,* 102. The schoolteacher who was talking to Ibarra narrated how the friars encouraged rote learning, taught through fear and intimidation, and opposed any attempt at veering away from traditional pedagogy.

the 19th-century.[37] Historian R. Mojares even noted that nowhere in colonial Asia was there such an opportunity for higher learning made available for a colonized race.[38]

Friar Lands and Material Greed

> Pinalawak ng mga prayle ang kanilang mga lupain sa pamamagitan ng mga donasyon ng mga Pilipino. Sa ilang mga pagkakataon, kinuha nila ang mga lupain ng mga katutubo. [The friars expanded their landholdings through the donation of Filipinos. In some cases, they stole the lands of the natives.][39]

One of the most salient criticisms against the Church in the 19th century had to do with the issue of friar lands, which critics—then and now—associate with friar greed. But while it was a fact that some religious orders owned vast amounts of land in the Philippines, the details regarding the purchase and use of these lands were usually not included in high school textbooks and classroom discussions. It hardly mattered, for example, that these lands were legally obtained by way of royal grants, legacy, or outright purchase.[40] It was also hardly mentioned that not all religious orders owned vast lands in the 19th century. The Jesuits and Franciscans, for example, did not own

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[37]Schumacher, *The Propaganda Movement, 1880–1895*, 303–304.

[38]R. Mojares, *Brains of the Nation*: *Pedro Paterno, T. H. Pardo de Tavera, Isabelo de los Reyes, and the Production of Modern Knowledge* (Quezon City, Phippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2006), 418–419. Schumacher (*The Propaganda Movement, 1880–1895*) argued that institutions of higher education in the country were at par with those available in Spain in terms of curricula offered and quality of instruction. He also stated that even if unintended, these institutions became venues where nationalist thoughts fermented. This high quality of education was also thoroughly discussed by R. Mojares (*Brains of the Nation*), an education that would produce an enlightened generation that was more than capable of working in the very institutions that the Spaniards built in the Philippines.

[39]Vivar et al., *Pilipinas: Kasaysayan at Pamahalaan*, 71.

[40]N. Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines: From Conquest to Revolution* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University, 1971), 213.

haciendas in the 19th century—the former due to circumstance and the latter due to principle. It was also not usually discussed how these lands were used and managed. Some textbooks do not even define concepts like *inquilinos* and *kasama,* which are crucial for understanding the land disputes of the 19th century.

Most importantly, rarely was there any discussion on how the profits from haciendas were used by the religious orders—not in Agoncillo, Constantino, nor in any other Social Studies textbook used in Ateneo de Manila High School. It was never mentioned that income from these lands was used to fund missions and educational ministries in the Philippines and overseas.[41] In many ways, the income the Church received from these lands was used for education and social services which should have been financed by the State in a modern society.

Lastly, while historians like Agoncillo cited vast Church lands as part of the abuses of the Spaniards and the friars, it is also questionable just how much of a factor the land issue was in the minds of the propagandists and revolutionaries. Studying the works of prominent *ilustrados*, Schumacher noted that the friar land question was "but of secondary importance to Rizal and of none at all to Del Pilar."[42] The founding documents of the Katipunan were also silent on the issue of friar lands.[43]

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[41]Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines*, 212. As N. Cushner noted, Dominican holdings in Biñan, Santa Rosa de Malabon, and Navotas supported a rector, five lecturers, and fifty students in the University of Santo Tomas. He also noted that haciendas of Pandi and Lolomboy supported missionaries in China. Other colleges supported ministries that included orphanages and hospitals.

[42]Schumacher, *The Propaganda Movement, 1880–1895*, 302.

[43]J. Richardson, *The Light of Liberty*: *Documents and Studies on the Katipunan, 1892–1897* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2013), 1–40. The 1892 document *Casaysayan; Pinagcasundoan; Mga daquilang cautosan*, for example, did not mention any issue related to the friar lands despite enumerating other grievances in detail.

The Church and Its Political Power

> The clergy competed with the civil officials in amassing wealth and, through foul and other means, fought the latter in the drive for more political power in the colony … the parish curates caused much oppression and suffering among the masses.… [They] shackled the masses and their petty tyrannical officials to [their] will. Indeed, in the eyes of the people, the parish priest was the real representative of the king. Many acknowledged the fact that the king had in each parish priest, or any friar for that matter, a captain general and a whole army.[44]

Another common criticism against the Church of the 19th century was that it wielded too much political power in the country as described by Agoncillo in the excerpt above. But while Church encroachment in politics was an undeniable fact, what was lacking in textbooks and classroom discussions was a holistic understanding and discussion of the context of why this was so.

Key to any study of the Spanish colonial period in the Philippines is the concept of *patronato real*.[45] In its most basic sense, *patronato real* was a mutual exchange of privileges and responsibilities between the Spanish Crown and the Spanish Church, with the former being bestowed with the right to appoint Church officials. In return, the King, as the Royal Patron of the Church, was expected to fund and support the Church's mission of evangelization. This is crucial in understanding why there was no such thing as separation of Church and State during the entire history of Spanish colonization in the Philippines. Many of the perceived encroachments of the Church in civil affairs were, in fact, delegated to her by law, and civil officials were also tasked to support evangelization.[46]

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[44]Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People* (1977 ed.), 90.

[45]Cushner (*Spain in the Philippines*, 74–75) gave a good explanation of this concept, along with how it materialized, evolved, and was used in Spain and the Philippines.

[46]Schumacher, *The Propaganda Movement, 1880–1895*, 11; J. Go, "Governmentality and Political Meaning in the Late Nineteenth-century Philippines," in I. Donoso, ed., *More Hispanic Than We Admit: Insights into Philippine Cultural History* (Quezon

In most textbooks and classroom discussions, however, *patronato real* was usually only loosely defined. In one particular textbook used by AHS, the concept was not discussed at all.[47] On the other hand, the *Lupang Hinirang* textbook showed a better understanding and appreciation for this concept:

> Ang kaharian ng Espanya ay may tampok na katangian: ang pagkakaisa ng simbahan at pamahalaan. Nagmula ito sa patronato real, na nagbigay ng karapatan sa pamahalaan sa pagpili ng mga pari o obispo (ecclesiastic). Ang kapalit nito ay ang pagtustos ng pamahalaan ng mga gastos sa pagbinyag. Sa gayon ang mga kolonya ng Espanya ay nakaranas ng kakaibang pagsakop: politikal at relihiyoso na iisa ang layunin, bagaman kadalasan, ay nagtatalo sila sa paraan ng pagtupad sa mga layunin nila. [The Kingdom of Spain has a distinct characteristic: the union of Church and State. This union originated in the *patronato real* which gave the government the right to choose priests and bishops (ecclesiastic). In return, the Spanish government was expected to fund and support the Church in evangelization. In this manner, the colonies of Spain experienced a different kind of colonization: political and religious institutions had similar objectives, though in many instances, conflict occured regarding how these objectives were to be carried out.][48]

City, Philippines: Vibal Publishing, 2008), 170–172. Schumacher listed some of the tasks of the parish priest in the Philippines, from being the local health inspector to being a consultant for cases of treason, noting that all these tasks were delegated to him by law. J. Go ("Governmentality and Political Meaning in the Late Nineteenth-century Philippines") also noted the intersecting responsibilities of civil and Church officials. He mentioned, for example, that *gobernadorcillos* were also tasked to ensure that town residents attended Mass on holy days of obligation, and that government officials were also expected to sponsor town-wide fiestas and religious celebrations.

[47]Vivar et al., *Pilipinas: Kasaysayan at Pamahalaan*, 74–77. The closest reference to the *Patronato* was a short paragraph that stated, "Batay sa kapangyarihan ng 'Royal Vice-Patron', may karapatan ang Gobernador-Heneral na sakupin ang mga pinuno ng simbahan. Siya ang humihirang sa mga kura paroko" [Based on the power of the Royal Vice-Patron, the Governor-General has the right to rule over church leaders. He appoints parish priests].

[48]Olavides-Correa et al., *Lupang Hinirang*, 98.

Immorality

> Friars fornicate with women, so that in the provinces it is rare for the majority not to have children, and it is rare, too, that they have not violated the young women. The parents and other relatives of these women who detest this conduct have to say immediately that it did not really happen, because otherwise they will be deported far away.[49]

While the founding documents of the Katipunan were silent on the friar land issue, these mentioned specific grievances related to the alleged immorality of the friars. Rizal's novels and other written works from *ilustrados* like Marcelo H. del Pilar and Graciano Lopez Jaena were also filled with such charges, and these works have always been part of the discussions in basic education both in Filipino and Social Studies classes. This alleged fault of the friars may also be considered the most pervasive in popular culture and memory while at the same time being one of the most difficult to verify due to lack of documentation and the biases of both the propagandists and the friars who wrote during the period. Schumacher suggested that academics today can have an idea of the general moral standing of friars and other members of the clergy by reading observations from foreigners who documented their experiences in the Philippines during the late 19th century. He noted, for example, that impartial observers, and at times the propagandists themselves, agreed that the moral level among the friars was greatly superior to that of most of the Filipino clergy.[50] R. Reyes[51] also noted that while many of the propagandists personally knew cases of friar immorality, the issue was clearly secondary to them. Whatever the case, what seems certain is that while these charges against the friars were not without basis, they must be scrutinized and appreciated with an analytic eye given the context and aim of the propagandists from

[49] *Casaysayan; Pinagcasundoan; Mga daquilang cautosan*

[50] Schumacher, *The Propaganda Movement, 1880–1895*, 303.

[51] R. Reyes, *Love, Passion and Patriotism: Sexuality and the Philippine Propaganda Movement, 1882–1892* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2009), 117–121.

whom most students and teachers derive much of their perception of the 19th-century Church.

Possible Additions to the Narratives

This section of the paper points out some possible additions to the narratives, aside from those already mentioned above, that are usually included in discussions of 19th-century Philippine Church history in basic education.

1. A Tale of Two Nationalisms

> And in the end, he was a Spaniard. The friar had won the Philippines for Spain. He would defend his conquest against heretics, liberals, Masons, Protestants, filibusteros, progressives, intellectuals, separatists, nationalists, or whatever they chose to call themselves.…
>
> But he the friar, for one, would be a true Spaniard to the last, even if he were to be the last Spaniard in the Philippines … this, then, was the great antagonist of the first Filipino.[52]

Another way to study the Church's involvement in political affairs is to view the matter through the lens of friar nationalism.

As was discussed earlier, friar nationalism may be less a product of the Church's inherent love and loyalty for Spain than it is perhaps of self-preservation, with the friars believing that their survival hinged on Spanish sovereignty in the colony. As a consequence, their worth became tied to their usefulness in colonial administration from both their point-of-view and that of the Spanish Crown. Members of the clergy—from the friars to the secular priests like Pelaez and Burgos—were explicit and generous in their pledge of loyalty to the Crown despite their demands for reforms.[53] Unfortunately for the Church,

[52]L. Guerrero, *The First Filipino* (Guerrero Publishing Inc., 2010), xxiii.

[53]Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 1–33; C. Sánchez Fuertes, "The Franciscans and the Philippine Revolution in Central Luzon," trans. B. Cadwallader, in F. Rodao & F. Rodriguez, eds., *The Philippine Revolution of 1896: Ordinary Lives*

this nationalism would clash with another type of nationalism by the end of the 19th century.

More importantly, what textbooks and classroom discussions on the late 19th-century Philippine Church lacked was some recognition or appreciation for how the Philippine Church contributed to the rise of Philippine nationalism. Most of the discussions about the 19th-century Church dealt with the friars and their abuses but did not take into account the rise and role of the native clergy, with the exception of a limited discussion on the secularization movement and the martyrdom of GOMBURZA. Both secular priests and religious orders played crucial roles in the birth of nationalism, whether through the humanist education they imparted in higher education or through active involvement in the revolution and even in the Philippine-American War.[54]

2. The Entrenchment of Catholicism

Any study of the Philippine Church in the 19th century must also take into account the fact that Catholicism had been deeply entrenched in Philippine society after more than 300 years of colonial rule. While this assertion is accepted by most historians and educators in principle, interpretation of this fact varies. Uncritical discussions of Christianization and conquest in textbooks and classroom discussions, for example, often lead to a simplistic understanding of the significant role of Christianity and the Church in the lives of Filipinos, especially toward the end of the 19th century. Despite being maligned by propagandists, friars—and the Philippine Church in general—had figured significantly in the material development of the nation, acted as

in Extraordinary Times (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2001), 211.

[54]That the Philippine Church played a crucial role in the making of the nation was the thesis of Schumacher's book, *Revolutionary Clergy*. Schumacher would argue that the Church had always been a constant guide to the formation and maturity of Philippine nationalism from the time of Fr. Pedro Pelaez to the revolutionary struggles of the Katipuneros and even beyond.

fiscalizers of the conduct of abusive officials, and been seen by many Filipinos as the champions of their rights for the longest time, even up to the 19th century.[55] The fact that most Filipinos chose to remain Catholic after ousting the Spaniards is also a testament to the success of the Church. The 1918 census, for example, showed that most Filipinos remained Catholic despite aggressive attempts by Protestant missionaries to evangelize and convert the natives.[56]

Lastly, it may be important to contextualize or de-emphasize the anti-friar or anti-Church nature of the Philippine Revolution. A more nuanced analysis would reveal that majority of Filipinos who fought for independence in the late 19th century were not anti-Church nor anti-clergy and were not necessarily wholly anti-friar as well. The fate of the friars and the Church varied greatly depending on geography, the extent of Christianization, and parishioners' relationships with their parish priests, among others.[57]

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[55]J. Schumacher, *Readings in Philippine Church History* (Quezon City, Philippines: Loyola School of Theology, 1987), 233; Sánchez Fuertes, "The Franciscans and the Philippine Revolution in Central Luzon," 224.

[56]Schumacher, *Readings in Philippine Church History*, 402. It must also be noted that the Protestant missionaries were at an advantage during the first few decades of American occupation. Public school teachers were mostly Protestants, the educational system was secularized, many *ilustrados* and American officials who occupied the early government positions in the colony held anti-friar sentiments, and the Philippine Catholic Church was in disarray during this time. However, despite all these and more, only 1.3% of Filipinos converted to Protestantism based on the 1918 census.

[57]D. Doeppers, "The Philippine Revolution and the Geography of Schism," *Geographical Review* 66:2 (1976): 158–177; J. Schumacher, *The Making of a Nation: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Filipino Nationalism* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1996), 476; Sánchez Fuertes, "The Franciscans and the Philippine Revolution in Central Luzon," 179–216. While Doeppers's analysis focuses more on identifying which geographic areas joined the Philippine Independent Church, his findings also point to the reality that Filipinos did not have a uniform hatred for the Church and the friars and that the fate of the Catholic clergy depended on a number of factors. He mentioned, for instance, that in east central Philippines, 95% of the population remained Catholic and that

Conclusion

This paper presented a preliminary analysis of how the late 19th-century Philippine Church was studied in Ateneo de Manila High School during the 1980s and 1990s. It looked at the main references used in classroom discussions and sought insights from key resource persons who were part of the Social Studies and Filipino departments during the timeframe studied. In this analysis, it was found that the presentation of late 19th-century Philippine church history in AHS was consistent with the nationalist narrative prevailing at the time. It also showed that due to the context of the time and the constraints in the curriculum, the portrayal of the late 19th-century Philippine Church was largely consistent with how the Church was portrayed in Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, with a few exceptions toward the end of the 1990s. Being a preliminary study, it invites other researchers to expand its analysis to cover other aspects of Philippine Church history.

A possible expansion of this study would be to look at how other chapters in Philippine Church history are being discussed in Social Studies classes. A good topic to start with would be the conquest and Christianization of the Philippines in the 16th and 17th centuries since this period is usually covered in great detail in high school textbooks and classroom discussions. However, based on my personal knowledge and experience, teaching about this topic could use some nuancing as well. The usual theme of the "Sword and the Cross" is often oversimplified and sometimes literally interpreted even today.[58] It is also worth noting that the 1582 Synod of Manila is rarely discussed—or

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in Panay, the Filipino priests did not even see the need to replace their Spanish bishop due to the good relationship between Spaniards and Filipinos in the area. Sánchez Fuertes also gave a detailed discussion on the different experiences of the Franciscans in Central Luzon during the 1896 and 1898 revolutions.

[58]In the Department of Education's current curriculum guide for Araling Panlipunan, for example, an entire section was entitled "Pamumuno ng mga Prayle" [Rule of the Friars] and friars in particular were equated with the term "conquistador."

even mentioned—in many high school Social Studies classes or even in Philippine history classes at the tertiary level.

There is still much to discover about how Filipinos remember the history of the Philippine Church. I say this though with the recognition that this is just one small area in the effort to improve historical consciousness among Filipinos through basic education, and I chose this particular topic given the Church's lack of representation in history and because of her critical role in Philippine society from the Spanish colonial period until today. An accurate knowledge of the Church's historical role in nation-building can hopefully provide firmer ground for the Church's mission today, both for its clergy and for Filipino Catholics who claim to profess the faith. It is also timely as we commemorate the 500th-year anniversary of Christianity's arrival in the Philippines in 2021.

CONTRIBUTORS

Ana Maria Q. Faustino is Assistant Professor at the Don Bosco School of Theology where she has been teaching since 2012. She has also been teaching religious education and values education courses to college students at the St. Paul University Quezon City since 2004. She obtained an undergraduate degree in Industrial Engineering from the University of the Philippines-Diliman in 1982 and worked in the banking industry before shifting to pastoral work in 1992. She then completed with High Distinction the M.A. in Education, Major in Values Education, at the University of Asia & the Pacific in 2000 and the M.A. in Theological Studies (with specialization in Moral Theology) at the Ateneo de Manila University in 2013. Annie received her Ph.D. in Theology with the same specialization and from the same institution in 2021. Her dissertation was entitled *A Theological Investigation of Adoption by Same-Sex Couples*.

Felix Körner, S.J., is the director of the Institute for the Study of Religions and Cultures and professor at the faculty of missiology at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome. His publications include *Revisionist Koran Hermeneutics in Contemporary Turkish University Theology: Rethinking Islam* (2005) and *Kirche im Angesicht des Islam* (2008) as well as numerous articles and essays. Körner holds a B.A. from Heythrop College and an M.A. from Bamberg University. He earned his doctorate from the University of Fribourg for his studies on modern Turkish theologians of the so-called Ankaran School. From 2002 to 2008, he lived in Ankara, Turkey, and had a teaching position at the Philosophical-Theological University of Sankt Georgen in Frankfurt, Germany. He was a delegate-participant to the 2008 and 2011 Catholic-Muslim Forum. In 2012, he was appointed by Benedict XVI to the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with Muslims.

Ramil R. Marcos obtained his Master of Arts in Theological Studies degree from San Carlos Graduate School of Theology, Manila (1996), Licentiate in Sacred Theology (Dogma) from the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome (2000), and Doctorate in Sacred Theology (Systematic) from Loyola School of Theology, Quezon City (2021). His

expertise is in ecumenical and interreligious relations. He has taught at San Carlos Seminary, Immaculate Conception Seminary, Recoletos School of Theology, Don Bosco Center of Studies, and Silliman University and has published several devotional books and Biblical reflections through St. Paul's Publications as well as theological articles in Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute's *Ecumenical Trends*, East Asian Pastoral Institute's *East Asian Pastoral Review*, and Loyola School of Theology's *Loyola Papers*. He also has ebooks available on Amazon Kindle. For the past twelve years, his blog *ourparishpriest.blogspot.com* has faithfully provided readers with weekly reflections on Biblical readings and Catholic doctrines. He currently devotes time to research, teaching, and outreach to marginalized sectors of society.

Lancy Monteiro, S.J., teaches theology at Karnataka Regional Theology Center, Bengaluru, India. He obtained his doctorate from the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, for his dissertation entitled *Christian Revelation and Non-Christian Religions in Aloysius Pieris, the Catholic Magisterium and Karl Rahner: Hospitality within Catholic Universality and Rationality* (2012) which was later published with the title *Revelation and Religions: Hospitality within Catholic Universality and Rationality* (Bangalore: ATC Publications, 2016). Among his recent scholarly publications are "God's Divinizing Presence: An Adequate Notion of Revelation for a Theology of Interreligious Dialogue," *VJTR* 81:11 (2017): 845–867 and "Adherence to Symbols: A Theology of Faith for Interreligious Dialogue," *VJTR* 82 (2018): 454–473.

Michael C. Porcia, S.J., earned his M.A. in Pastoral Ministry degree with a concentration on family and marriage counseling from Loyola School of Theology in Quezon City, Philippines. He holds a Licentiate in Psychology degree from the Institute of Psychology—Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, Italy and had his clinical training in psychological assessment and psychodynamic psychotherapy for priests, religious, and seminarians from the Institute's *Centro di Consultazione*. His pastoral experiences include diocesan college seminary and religious formation, vocation promotions, prison chaplaincy, and the screening of candidates for the priestly and religious life. Currently, he is the director of the Spiritual Pastoral Formation

Year (SPFY) program of San Jose Seminary, Quezon City. He is also a registered nurse.

Franz Jan S. Santos is a lecturer at the Department of History of the Ateneo de Manila University. He is also the Subject Area Coordinator for Social Sciences at the Ateneo de Manila Senior High School where he has been teaching for the last fifteen years. He attained his M.A. degree in History from the Ateneo de Manila University. Aside from teaching history, he is also a teacher trainer under different non-government organizations, including the Ateneo Center for Educational Development, as well as a textbook editor and courseware writer for high school and college subjects. His research deals mostly with Philippine Church history and history education.