# Landas

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# EDITOR'S PREFACE

This issue of *Landas* presents essays on various topics, including reviews of three books on Ignatian spirituality.

James H. Kroeger, M.M. ("Damien of Molokai and Missionary Compassion") presents the missionary witness of Damien de Veuster. A Flemish priest of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Damien volunteered at age 23 to spend the rest of his life with the lepers of Molokai, Hawaii. He ministered not only to their spiritual but also to their temporal needs—he dressed their sores and provided them with emotional support, made coffins and dug graves for the dead, worked tirelessly with the local Board of Health to improve the social welfare and services of the leper colony, and organized the construction of hospitals, orphanages, houses, reservoirs, roads, and chapels. He already identified himself with them even before contracting the disease himself after 11 years of caring for the sick and the dying, addressing them as "we, the lepers...." He epitomized the ideal priest who, in the words of Pope Francis, is a "shepherd living with the smell of the sheep."[1]

When John Paul II beatified Damien on June 4, 1995, he pointed out how this "apostle of the lepers is a shining example of how the love of God does not take us away from the world. Far

[1]Cf. Francis's Chrism Mass homily on March 28, 2013 (St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City). Available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130328_messa-crismale.html.

from it: the love of Christ makes us love our brothers and sisters even to the point of giving up our lives for them."[2] At Damien's canonization on October 11, 2009, Benedict XVI also paid him tribute for his heroic deeds:

> His missionary activity, which gave him such joy, reached its peak in charity. Not without fear and repugnance, he chose to go to the Island of Molokai to serve the lepers who lived there, abandoned by all. Thus he was exposed to the disease from which they suffered. He felt at home with them. The servant of the Word consequently became a suffering servant, a leper with the lepers....[3]

Reflecting on the missionary spirituality of Damien, Kroeger has this to say:

> Profoundly modeled on the ministry of Jesus, Damien practiced what can be called "active compassion," a self-sacrificing charity that promotes human relief and restoration and thereby leads to an encounter with God. As a "martyr of charity," St. Damien's missionary "compassionate faith-in-action" was his selfless pathway to profound sanctity. (p. 40)

He emulated the compassionate ministry of Jesus through 1) his deep awareness of the sufferings of others and his sympathy for them; 2) his personal commitment toward and effective action in doing something about their suffering; and 3) his desire to deepen people's faith in God in the process.

Leo-Martin Angelo R. Ocampo ("Solidarity as *Pagdadamayan* in the Filipino Version of *Laudato Si'*: An Experiment in Inculturated

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[2]Cf. John Paul II's message for the beatification of Damien de Veuster on June 4, 1995 (Brussels, Belgium). Available at http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/JP950604.htm.

[3]Cf. Benedict XVI's homily at the canonization Mass for de Veuster on October 11, 2009 (St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City). Available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2009/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20091011_canonizzazioni.html.

Translation") expounds on the translation of "solidarity" with the term *pagdadamayan* by first tracing the development of the concept in Catholic Social Teaching and then, second, exploring the value of *pagdadamayan* in Filipino culture before, third, finally drawing attention to the points of convergence between the two concepts to show their dynamic equivalence.

Ocampo's interdisciplinary research on theology and culture thus provides a foundation and model for the inculturated translation of theological works. His pioneering work in this field has resulted in a series of scholarly translations of various Church documents into Filipino—*Liham Ensiklikal Laudato Si' ng Banal na Papa Francisco ukol sa Pangangalaga sa Tahanan nating Lahat* (2015), *Amoris Laetitia ng Banal na Papa Francisco ukol sa Pagmamahalan sa Loob ng Pamilya* (2016), and *Misericordia et Misera ng Banal na Papa Francisco sa Pagwawakas ng Di-pangkaraniwang Hubileyo ng Awa* (2017) as well as Pope Francis's book, *Ang Pangalan ng Diyos ay Awa* (2018), all published by Claretian Publications in the Philippines.

Francis D. Alvarez, S.J. ("A Test Case for Recent Reflections on Inspiration: How Can Psalm 137 Be Inspired?") deals with the question of how imprecatory passages in the Bible such as those found in Ps. 137 can be inspired by God. In what sense can they be salvific? Using the insights of Ormond Rush and the Pontifical Biblical Commission's latest document on inspiration, Alvarez explains that the Holy Spirit is active—through the interplay of the *sensus fidei* of individuals and the *sensus fidelium* of communities—in all of the three dimensions of Sacred Scripture: 1) the historical process which produced the sacred texts, 2) the ecclesial process which produced the canon of Scripture, and 3) its reception in history.

God therefore is not just the originator of the sacred texts; He also helps the faithful to grow in receiving and assimilating their salvific message. Alvarez explains:

> We can say that God is the author of Ps. 137 because God relates with the pray-er where she is and helps her to grow. It is in Ps. 137 that we have a snapshot of the "raw edges in our lives that do not easily submit to the religious convictions we possess on good days." But if this is where our sense of the faith is, the Holy Spirit still comes to be with us and show care for us there. (p. 79)

What is salvific in Ps. 137 is how the imprecatory passages must be read in context and in tension with other Biblical passages.

> The point of going through the sadness and anger in Ps. 137 is to go beyond them, even if this might take longer than we expect. Yet an inspired reception, an inspired "going through," must also be held in tension with loving one's enemies and blessing persecutors.... If being in a relationship means entering the other's process, we must also try to enter God's process as God enters ours and see where God desires us to go. (p. 80)

Markus E. Locker ("The Eternal Body of Man is the Imagination: Imagining the Book of Revelation through the Eyes of William Blake") uses the work of the English poet and visual artist William Blake as a lens through which to explore the apocalyptic visions of the Book of Revelation. Largely ignored, if not condemned, by his contemporaries for both his idiosyncratic views on religion and hostility toward his church, Blake has gained many adherents over the course of time and is now highly esteemed by literary critics for the imaginative creativity and provocative expressiveness of his poems and paintings.

Locker uses Blake's critique of religion as a hermeneutical key to unlock the enigmatic message of the Book of Revelation. The essay argues that the author of the book, John of Patmos,

> finds a church in tribulation in which, due to the emerging "reason[ing]" of the world—as Blake would call it—the gift of the imagination, i.e., the Holy Ghost, is on the verge of vanishing. Accosted by the ideology of the Roman imperial cult, the Christian imagination is partially replaced by a rationality that allows for compromises with Satan. Through visions of

"terror," "beauty," and "sublimity" enclosed in an epistolary framework, Revelation seeks to restore the "first" imagination of the Christian churches. (Locker's *Abstract*)

Felipe Fruto Ll. Ramirez, S.J.

Landas 32:1 (2018) 1–41

# DAMIEN OF MOLOKAI AND MISSIONARY COMPASSION

## "He stretched out his hand and touched the leper" (Mark 1:41)

*James H. Kroeger, M.M.*

"The joy and contentment of heart that the Sacred Hearts deluge me with, make me consider myself the happiest missioner in the world" are words written by St. Damien in a November 9, 1887 letter to his brother, Fr. Pamphile. Damien knew that his death was nearing, for in the same letter he noted that "leprosy has a pretty strong hold on my body." He continued: "Please help me with your good prayers to obtain persevering strength, till I happily arrive at the top of Calvary."[1] On March 23, 1889, less than a month before death, Damien remarked, in a conversation with Fr. Wendelin, "How happy I am to have given all.… Now I die poor, having nothing of my own."[2]

Indeed, deep joy and profound happiness mark the life of this extraordinary missionary priest. In Damien's final letter to his parents before he set sail to Hawaii from Bremerhaven (October 30, 1863), he wrote, "It is He [Jesus] Who in the midst of trials, contradictions, and sufferings, will cause us to enjoy a happiness of which he who has

[1] P. de Veuster, ed., *Life and Letters of Father Damien: The Apostle of the Lepers* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1889), 142-143. Hereafter referred to as *Life and Letters*.

[2] *Life and Letters*, 146.

never experienced it can form no idea."[3] He also declared, in another letter to his parents, "Do not worry about me in the least, for when one serves God, one is happy anywhere."[4]

Damien wrote again to his parents after his arrival in Hawaii (the letter is dated March 22, 1864), saying that it is "impossible to express how immensely happy a missionary is when he sees the new land that he must water with his sweat to gain civilized souls for God."[5] Writing to his parents and brothers from Molokai (November 25, 1873), he noted: "I am the happiest of men because I can serve the Lord in the poor and sick children rejected by others."[6]

After six years in the leper settlement, Damien wrote to his superior general in Paris on February 4, 1879: "I am still happy and content among my beloved lepers of Molokai."[7] When his death was approaching, he noted: "I die as a leper, but I am the happiest missionary in the world."[8] Pope John Paul II beatified Damien on June 3, 1995 and noted the latter's joy and happiness. During the canonization on October 11, 2009, Pope Benedict XVI said of Damien: "His missionary activity, which gave him such joy, reached its peak in charity."[9]

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[3]*Life and Letters*, 48.

[4]G. Daws, *Holy Man: Father Damien of Molokai* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 35.

[5]J. de Volder, *The Spirit of Father Damien: The Leper Priest—A Saint for Our Time* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010), 20.

[6]John Paul II, "Discover the Heart of God in Prayer," *L'Osservatore Romano* (English) 28:24 (June 14, 1995): 7. These words are inscribed on Damien's tomb in the church crypt in Louvain.

[7]de Volder, *The Spirit of Father Damien*, 61.

[8]R. Obbels, "Damien de Veuster: A Leper among Lepers: Centenary of Death," *L'Osservatore Romano* (English) 32:15 (April 10, 1989): 5.

[9]Benedict XVI, "Heroes in Holiness Go Against the Tide" [Canonization Homily], *L'Osservatore Romano* (English) 42:41 (October 14, 2009): 5.

Pope Paul VI often spoke of the "joy of evangelizing," asserting that people readily

> receive the Good News not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ, and who are willing to risk their lives so that the Kingdom may be proclaimed and the Church established in the midst of the world.[10]

Damien, the joyful evangelizer, the "happiest missioner in the world,"[11] remains a contemporary witness of profound holiness and authentic charity for the entire Church.

## Brief Biographical Sketch

As a prelude to exploring the missionary witness of Joseph Damien de Veuster, readers will benefit from a brief narrative of the life of this remarkable saint. It will allow one to appreciate the confluence of many events and their contribution to a holistic understanding of Damien's missionary witness. Indeed, an account of Damien's missionary journey without a brief timeline would lose some of its potential impact on readers.[12]

Joseph de Veuster was born in Tremelo, Belgium on January 3, 1840, the seventh of eight children of Frans and Anne-Catherine de Veuster. The family was rather well-off—they owned a small farm and had a modest house at Tremelo, a Flemish-speaking village near

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[10]Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (December 8, 1975), 80.

[11]*Life and Letters*, 143; see also John Paul II, "Holy Father's Letter for the Hundredth Death Anniversary of Father Damien de Veuster," *L'Osservatore Romano* (English) 32:15 (April 10, 1989): 2.

[12]Detailed footnotes are not supplied for the materials used in this biographical narrative as they are commonly known and are found in various print and online sources within the public domain. A historically accurate presentation of the life of St. Damien is available in the 112-minute film by Paul Cox entitled *Molokai: The Story of Father Damien*.

the city of Louvain, and Joseph's father was involved in business as a grain merchant. After his primary schooling, Joseph worked for a few years on the family farm before continuing his college studies at Braine-le-Comte, Belgium. His father dreamed that he would succeed him in the grain-marketing business.

The spirituality of the family with its many devotions, typical of Catholics of the day, made a deep impression on all the children. In January of 1859, Joseph entered the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts at the age of 19. His brother, August, had preceded him in entering the same Congregation, which in Europe is known as the "Picpus Fathers" from the *Rue de Picpus* in Paris on which the motherhouse is located, while two sisters, Eugenie and Pauline, became Ursuline nuns. Joseph made his first vows on October 7, 1860 and took the name Damien, having known of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, two brothers who, according to tradition, were medical doctors and twins. It was in these missionary saints that Joseph saw parallels for himself and his brother August.

Damien proceeded with his spiritual and academic formation as is common in religious congregations, although it was doubted whether he could become a priest due to his lack of proficiency in Latin and other prerequisites for theological studies. He was finally accepted to study for the priesthood with the assistance of his brother August, whose religious name was Pamphile. Damien's passion was to serve as a foreign missionary; during his student days he would pray daily before an image of St. Francis Xavier, apostle to the Far East.

When his brother Pamphile fell ill during a typhus epidemic in Louvain in 1863, Damien, though not yet an ordained priest, wrote directly to the superior general in Paris, requesting to replace his brother in the mission band setting out for Hawaii, then known as the Sandwich Islands. His request, in God's providence, was granted; along with five other priests and brothers and ten sisters of the same congregation, he set sail on October 20, 1863. The journey took five months, with Damien arriving in Honolulu on March 19, 1864, his own patronal feast day of St. Joseph. On May 21, 1864, Damien was ordained a priest in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Peace and was soon

sent to Puna on the Big Island of the archipelago where he served in two vast parishes for nine years.

In May of 1873, Bishop Louis Desiré Maigret, SS.CC. convened a meeting with several Sacred Hearts Fathers and raised the issue of a residential priest for the lepers residing in Molokai, the segregated colony that King Kamehameha V had established in 1865. Damien was among the four candidates who immediately volunteered (the bishop initially planned to have them serve voluntarily on a rotation basis); 33 years of age at the time, he saw this as a *kairos* moment.

On May 10, 1873, Bishop Maigret accompanied Fr. Damien to Molokai.[13] Both pastors tried to offer comfort to about 50 poor lepers who were being exiled to the island onboard their ship, the *Kilauea*. Upon their arrival, the bishop introduced Fr. Damien by telling the leper community that they would now have a resident priest, "one who will be a father to you, and who loves you so much that he does not hesitate to become one with you, to live and die with you."[14] The bishop's words were prophetic, and they also captured Damien's core motivation—he was first and foremost a priest, one dedicated to pastoral charity; from his priestly and fatherly identity flowed his heroic virtue and tireless service. Damien's religious superior had concurred in the assignment, having written to him: "You may stay in Molokai as long as your devotion dictates." These were words which Damien took to heart, frequently recalled, and brought to his prayer and meditation.[15]

Though the Religious of the Sacred Hearts had built a small chapel in Molokai and dedicated it to St. Philomena, there was no house for a priest. Damien thus spent the first months of his stay living under the branches of a *pandanus* tree (its roots also served as shelter for rodents,

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[13]May 10 was eventually chosen as the feast day of St. Damien in the Church calendar.

[14]"Catholic Dictionary—Damien Father (Apostle of Lepers)," Section 4, http://dictionary.editme.com/Damien (accessed December 30, 2015).

[15]"Catholic Dictionary," Section 4.

roaches, centipedes, ants, and other vermin). The harsh realities of Molokai quickly became apparent—there was chaos in the settlement, with no organization of the community, minimal health and social services, no communal order, and nothing to promote a dignified human life, even if the conditions were rough. The anguished cry of the lepers that greeted Damien was the axiom *Aole kanawai ma keia wahi* ("in this place there is no law").[16] He thus set about trying to bring order and organization to the situation; where no law existed, he sought to bring the transforming law of love.

Damien began his mission by visiting his flock. He ministered to the sick, bringing them the sacraments of confession and anointing as well as Holy Communion. His efforts, however, did not stop at the spiritual needs of the lepers; he understood that he was called to bring genuine hope to the people. He set about washing the lepers' bodies, bandaging their wounds, and even cleaning and tidying their little huts and surroundings. He did all he could to make the lepers as comfortable as possible.

To instill a sense of personal worth, Damien gave attention to improving the cemetery, seeking to demonstrate human dignity both in life and in death. He fenced it to prevent pigs, dogs, and other scavengers from entering and eating the shallowly buried corpses. He made coffins and dug graves. He organized the lepers into the Christian Burial Association which helped to provide for decent burials of the deceased.

Damien described this aspect of his mission in a letter to his brother Pamphile on January 31, 1880: "Since I have been here I have buried from one hundred and ninety to two hundred every year, and still the number of living lepers is always over seven hundred."[17] Damien called the cemetery the "Garden of the Dead" and noted:

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[16]B. J. O'Leary, "Molokai: A Centenary of Joseph Damien de Veuster, the Leper Priest," *Sisters Today* 61:2 (October 1989): 96.

[17]*Life and Letters*, 118.

> My greatest pleasure is to go there to say my beads, and meditate on that unending happiness which so many of them are already enjoying.… I confess to you, my dear brother, the cemetery and the hospital, where the dying lie, are my best meditation books, as well for the benefit of my own soul.…[18]

It took years of hard work and dogged determination to provide for the numerous needs of his flock. He solicited clothes and other necessities for distribution. Two homes, one for boys and one for girls, were built with the help of generous benefactors. He established an abundant and clean water supply early on with some government assistance. He taught the people how to farm, raise animals, and even play musical instruments. A band and a choir were organized. One witness reported that he saw two people playing an organ at the same time, managing ten fingers between them. Hundreds of simple houses and even a road were built. An addition was made to enlarge the small chapel. Under his direction, lepers blasted the coral rocks of the Kalaupapa shoreline to open a decent docking facility. Damien, who was a skillful carpenter, good mason, and an experienced farmer, was not daunted by any development project.

Such ambitious efforts—both spiritual and material—demanded heroic dedication which was not "natural" or "automatic." Damien himself wrote:

> Many a time in fulfilling my priestly duties at the lepers' homes, I have been obliged, not only to close my nostrils, but to remain outside to breathe fresh air. To counteract the bad smell, I got myself accustomed to the use of tobacco. The smell of the pipe preserved me somewhat from carrying in my clothes the obnoxious odor of our lepers.[19]

Damien sought assistance (often with great audacity) from a variety of sources: generous benefactors, his own religious community, government authorities, the Hawaii Board of Health, and the diocesan bishop. His fame grew among most Hawaiians; indeed,

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[18] *Life and Letters*, 118.

[19] "St. Damien of Molokai," http://www.ewtn.com/saintsHoly/saints/D/stdamienofmolokai.asp (accessed August 1, 2018).

Princess Lili'uokalani, sister of the then-reigning monarch, King David Kalakaua, visited the settlement on September 15, 1881, eight years after Damien's arrival in Molokai. She was so moved that she wept openly, was unable to deliver her planned address, and subsequently had her brother confer on Damien the award of the Royal Order of the Knight Commander of the Royal Order of Kalakaua in recognition of his efforts "in alleviating the distresses and mitigating the sorrows of the unfortunate."[20]

Additional pivotal events during the final years of Damien's life can be mentioned briefly (some of these will be described in greater detail in the sections that follow). In December of 1884, Damien suspected that he had contracted leprosy when he soaked his feet in hot water and realized that he did not feel it; a doctor confirmed the diagnosis several days later. On July 19, 1886, Fr. Damien welcomed Joseph Dutton to Molokai; he stayed for 45 years without leaving the colony. On November 14, 1888, Mother Marianne Cope (canonized in 2012) settled at Kalaupapa to care for the lepers; she died in Molokai on August 9, 1918. Two other persons came to the leper settlement in 1888: Fr. Louis Conrardy, a diocesan priest from Oregon, and James Sinnett, a nurse from Chicago.

On March 19, 1889, the Feast of St. Joseph, Damien fell ill and became bed-ridden; it was Sinnett who nursed him during the final phases of his illness and closed his eyes in death. On April 2, 1889, Damien received the last rites but lingered for 13 more days. On April 15, 1889, the Monday of Holy Week, Fr. Damien died at the age of 49. He was buried, according to his own request, under the same *pandanus* tree where he had spent his first night on Molokai sixteen years earlier.

Some of Damien's final words are recorded in an April 17, 1889 letter written by Fr. Wendelin: "How happy I am to have given all.… Now I die poor, having nothing of my own." "Death is not far off … the good God is calling me to celebrate Easter with Himself."

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[20]M. R. Bunson and M. E. Bunson, *Saint Damien of Molokai: Apostle of the Exiled* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2009), 18.

"How sweet it is to die a child of the Sacred Heart." Fr. Wendelin also describes the death and burial of Damien in the same letter; he notes: "the grave is sealed up.… Therein rest the remains of the good Father Damien, whom the world calls, and calls rightly, the 'hero of charity.'"[21]

## Family: Roots of Faith and Vocation

In an article written on the occasion of Damien's death centenary, R. Obbels noted the impact that Damien's family had on his person:

> Damien derived his faith from his family, from the society of his time, and from the religious family to which he belonged. In the 19th century, faith in the family was marked by fidelity to the doctrine of the Church; it was not biblical and it nourished itself with devotions and practices. At the same time, it was simple and of the type that moves mountains. His religious faith was the basis of Damien's religious vocation; it was also, as he himself affirmed, the reason he chose to aid the lepers.[22]

Pope John Paul II, during the beatification homily on June 4, 1995, spoke of Damien's family and how Damien's faith was imbibed "with his mother's milk in his family in Flanders."[23] The pope had also noted the influence of the love and faith of Damien's family while giving his arrival speech at the airport the day before: "He inherited the qualities of his family and his people, from whom physical distance never separated him spiritually."[24]

Damien wrote many very personal letters to his parents and family expressing his love and affection—and his deep faith. He often signed them "Your devoted son," "Your obedient son," "Your affectionate

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[21]*Life and Letters*, 146-150.

[22]Obbels, "Damien de Veuster," 5.

[23]John Paul II, "Father Damien's Life Shows that Holiness is not Perfection according to Human Criteria," *L'Osservatore Romano* (English) 28:23 (June 7, 1995): 2.

[24]John Paul II, "May Father Damien Strengthen Your Faith," *L'Osservatore Romano* (English) 28:24 (June 14, 1995): 5.

son," or, later on, "Your devoted son, Father Damien, Missionary Priest." Damien's most important letters to his family are contained in a small, inspiring book which was edited with introductions and a narrative by his own brother, Fr. Pamphile. *Life and Letters of Father Damien: The Apostle of the Lepers* was published—most remarkably in 1889, the very year of Damien's death—in English by the Catholic Truth Society of London.[25] One finds a clear engraving of Fr. Damien, based on the photograph he had taken in Paris prior to his departure for mission, opposite the title page. He is posed in his religious habit and is displaying the crucifix, much in the same manner as St. Francis Xavier, his missionary model, is traditionally portrayed. The photograph manifests an earnestness which speaks of his profound mission commitment.

An early undated letter addressed to "My dear Parents," sent from Braine-le-Comte where Damien did his college studies, notes: "I do not know how I can ever prove as I ought my gratitude for all the benefits you have conferred on me from my earliest years."[26] It was at this time that he (then 18 years old) attended a mission preached by the Redemptorist Fathers, an experience that struck him deeply; he sensed that God was calling him to religious life. That same Christmas (1858), Damien wrote to his parents:

> I cannot hesitate to write to you on this grand Christmas Day, for this great feast has brought me the certainty that God has called me to quit the world and embrace the religious state. Therefore, my dear parents, I ask again for your consent; for without it I cannot venture to enter on this career.… Do not think that in choosing the religious state I am guided only by my own will; I assure you that I do but follow the will of Divine Providence.… You know, my dear parents, that each individual is bound to conform himself to the designs of God in choosing a state of life, … do not, therefore, distress yourselves at God's designs for me.[27]

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[25] *Life and Letters;* see note 1.

[26] *Life and Letters*, 25.

[27] *Life and Letters*, 27.

During his novitiate in Paris, Damien wrote once again to his parents (January 16, 1861) to express

> [my] feelings of filial love which urge me to write and express to you my affection. Alas! The immense distance between us does not allow me to throw myself into your arms, and to prove to you the feelings of love and gratitude with which my heart is so full.… I feel sure, my dear parents, that God will bestow on you the plenteous graces and the blessings unnumbered that I shall ask for you every day.[28]

Upon learning, on Easter Sunday of 1861, of a death in the family, he wrote the following: "You understand yourselves, my dear parents, better than I can express to you, the sorrow and regret with which I learnt [about] the death of my grandmother"; containing his emotions, Damien later reflected, "All that God does is right."[29]

On the eve of his mission departure (October 30, 1863), Damien wrote from the port of Bremerhaven:

> We are now, my dear parents, on the eve of leaving not only our fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, not only our second family, our brethren of Louvain and Paris, but also the fair continent of Europe.… The sacrifice is great indeed for one who tenderly loves his parents, his family, his brethren, and the land of his birth. But the voice that has called upon us to make a generous sacrifice of all is the voice of God Himself.… So, my dear parents, do not trouble yourselves in the least about us. We are in the hands of God.

Accepting that this mission departure was for life, he also said: "Good-bye, dearest parents, henceforth we shall not have the happiness of seeing one another, but we shall always be united by that tender love which we bear to one another."[30]

Writing from his mission in Hawaii in March 1865, Damien asked his beloved parents to remember that

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[28] *Life and Letters*, 33.

[29] *Life and Letters*, 35.

[30] *Life and Letters*, 47-49.

> in the midst of the great Pacific, on an island about one hundred and fifty leagues in circumference, you have a son who loves you, a missionary who passes his time seeking the lost sheep of our adorable Savior. I have plenty of cares and troubles here, my dear parents. Still I am very happy.… Pray for the poor missioners, my dear parents, for we have many difficulties here.[31]

After moving to Molokai, Damien continued, though less frequently, to write to his family in Belgium from whom he had received so much loving affection and encouragement in his faith and missionary vocation. On the feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1874, Damien penned this letter to his mother, brothers, and sisters: "As I told you last year, I am living here in a village consisting entirely of lepers. Though this disease is contagious, I am still enjoying perfect health, and am very happy in the midst of these unfortunate people."[32]

In one of his letters (March 15, 1876), Damien expresses his displeasure at becoming known for his work among the lepers: "I was a little annoyed at seeing my last letter printed in the *Annales*. Once for all, let me tell you I do not like that done. I want to be unknown to the world, and now I find, in consequence of the few letters I have written, that I am being talked about on all sides, even in America."[33] Yet, in the same letter, Damien affectionately inquires about the health of his mother, expresses his satisfaction concerning the arrangements made about the family farm before his father's death, and condoles with Gérard over the death of his wife Dorothea.

Damien continued writing periodically to his family, especially to his brother Pamphile. The letters express his affection for his family, especially his aging mother; they offer encouragement to all the family to remain faithful Christians; they express his joy in serving the lepers; they assure the family of constant prayers and beg for their prayers on

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[31] *Life and Letters*, 67-68.

[32] *Life and Letters*, 99.

[33] *Life and Letters*, 110.

his behalf. Indeed, the letters constantly express a deep family solidarity rooted in Christian faith and service.

In Damien's last letter, dated February 19, 1889 and sent to his brother Pamphile, one reads:

> Considering the nature of the disease from which, by the will of God I am suffering, I abstain from writing.… Still I am quite happy and contented, and though seriously ill, all I desire is the accomplishment of the holy will of God.… I am still able, but not without some difficulty, to stand every day at the altar, where I do not forget any of you. Do you, in return, pray and get prayers for me, who am being greatly drawn towards the grave. May God strengthen me, and give me the grace of perseverance and of a happy death.[34]

Damien's life is a testimony to faith—nurtured in childhood, matured in adulthood, and committed to an entire life of service.

## Context of Damien's Missionary Service

To come to know and appreciate Damien and his commitment to mission, one needs to understand the realities he encountered. When Damien arrived in Hawaii early in 1864, the scourge of leprosy was already being felt. It was growing into an epidemic of vast proportions, with the first authenticated case having been documented in 1840.[35] Leprosy was one of those diseases, along with smallpox, cholera, influenza, and whooping cough (*pertussus*), that entered Hawaii with the arrival of foreigners; within thirty years, these maladies had spread widely and affected many defenseless Hawaiians who lacked any natural resistance to them.

Gomes describes the tragic effects and their proportions which these "new" diseases had upon the native people: "Most modern authorities have estimated the Hawaiian population in 1778 to be between 250,000 and 300,000. By 1896 only around 31,000

[34]*Life and Letters*, 145-146.

[35]"St. Damien of Molokai."

remained."[36] In short, 90% of the population had died within a century of the arrival of Captain James Cook in 1778 because they had no immunity to European diseases.

It was 1850 when the government established the first Board of Health and 1865 when Hawaiian King Kamehameha V issued a decree instructing those afflicted with leprosy to present themselves to it. In 1868, the government established a leper settlement on the island of Molokai. Those deemed incurable, including children and infants, were removed from their communities and sent to Molokai permanently; others were treated in hospitals and released.

The area of the leper colony on Molokai did not cover the whole of the island; it was a small finger of land on the northern peninsula which measured ten square miles and jutted out into the Pacific Ocean. The colony was often called Kalaupapa after the landing place; its largest village was Kalawao. It was a well-chosen spot for segregation and isolation, the only then-known means of controlling the spread of the disease. The area was surrounded by ocean on three sides and separated from the rest of the island on the land side by a towering, two-thousand-foot *pali* (cliff).[37] In short, the colony was a natural prison that precluded any escape.

Damien already encountered cases of leprosy during the nine years (1864–1873) in which he served in parishes in Puna on the Big Island. He wrote in a letter to his parents (October 12, 1869) that the "native population is continually decreasing"[38] and noted to his sister Pauline (July 14, 1872) that death "carries off in these islands more in a year than are brought into life: so the native population is continually

[36]H. Gomes, ed., *Damien: Servant of God, Servant of Humanity* (Honolulu, HI: Hawaii Province of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, 2002), 8.

[37]de Volder, *The Spirit of Father Damien*, 33.

[38]*Life and Letters*, 73.

decreasing."[39] Witnessing the ravages caused by the disease, Damien observes in another undated 1872 letter to his parents:

> Leprosy is beginning to be very prevalent here. There are many men covered with it. It does not cause death at once, but it is very rarely cured. The disease is very dangerous, because it is highly contagious. The population of our islands consists of some sixty-two thousand at present. It was larger formerly.[40]

Damien arrived in the leper colony in May of 1873. After some months of living in Molokai, he wrote a letter (November 25, 1873) to his brother Pamphile in which he described the situation:

> God has deigned to choose your unworthy brother to assist the poor people attacked by that terrible malady, so often mentioned in the Gospel, leprosy.… Shut up in a corner of the island of Molokai, between inaccessible cliffs and the sea, these unfortunate creatures are condemned to perpetual exile. Out of two thousand in all, who have been sent here, some eight hundred are still living.… A priest who should be placed here must consider himself shut up with the lepers for the rest of his life.[41]

In the same letter, Damien recalls a unique practice which formed part of the profession ceremony of the Sacred Hearts congregation: "So, remembering that on the day of my profession I had already put myself under the funeral pall, I offered myself to his lordship [the bishop] to meet, if he thought it well, this second death."[42]

Ministering to the lepers demanded great sacrifice:

> I still feel some repugnance when I have to hear the confessions of those near their end, whose wounds are full of maggots. Often, also, I [scarcely] know how to administer Extreme Unction, when both hands and feet are nothing [but] raw wounds.… I make myself a leper with

[39] *Life and Letters*, 77.

[40] *Life and Letters*, 79.

[41] *Life and Letters*, 91.

[42] *Life and Letters*, 91-92.

> the lepers, to gain all to Jesus Christ. That is why in preaching, I say, *We lepers*, not, *My brethren*, as in Europe.[43]

Parenthetically, one notes that Damien began addressing the people as "We lepers" within months of his arrival; some writers have erroneously asserted that he initiated the use of the phrase "We lepers" only after he himself had contracted the disease.[44]

Joan Guntzelman sensitively captures the harsh realities of the situation, even though the Hawaiian King and Board of Health had wished for a peaceful settlement in Molokai:

> Leprosy threatened to destroy the Hawaiian population, in spirit as well as in body.… Victims were often judged, avoided and seen as somehow deserving their affliction.… [Lepers were overcome by] grief, depression, despair, isolation, physical pain and suffering, feelings of abandonment and hopelessness.… When Damien arrived he found a sinkhole of suffering. Lawlessness, promiscuity, poverty, pain and misery prevailed.[45]

## Making God's Love Visible

Damien chose to look at the situation on Molokai with the loving eyes of the compassionate Jesus. He genuinely tried to lift the people up; they were human beings who needed love and affection. He realized that he most probably could not cure them; he could, however, bring comfort, understanding, sympathy, and human warmth.

The example of Jesus was certainly uppermost in his mind. As the Gospel of Mark notes: "A leper came to him and pleaded on his knees: 'If you want to,' he said, 'you can cure me.' Feeling sorry for him, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him" (Mk 1:40–41). Damien took

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[43]*Life and Letters*, 93-94.

[44]A. Scurani, "Padre Damiano, Lebbroso per Cristo," *La Civiltà Cattolica* 140:3 (III:1989): 233-235.

[45]J. Guntzelman, *A Retreat with Mother Teresa and Damien of Molokai: Caring for Those Who Suffer* (Cincinnati, OH: Saint Anthony Messenger Press, 1999), 26-27.

Jesus's words literally—he engaged in direct ministry, constantly in close contact with the lepers. He knew Jesus's words well: "Whatsoever you have done to the least of my brethren, you have done unto me" (Mt 25:40). Damien's faith concretely manifested itself in deeds of service; he "touched" people on many levels—spiritual, physical, emotional, and social as well as psychological and communitarian.

Damien obviously did not draw a line between the spiritual and physical needs of his people. He believed what James had written in his letter:

> If one of the brothers or one of the sisters is in need of clothes and has not enough food to live on, and one of you says to them, "I wish you well; keep yourself warm and eat plenty," without giving them these bare necessities of life, then what good is that? Faith is like that; if good works do not go with it, it is quite dead. (Jam 2:15–16)

For Damien, the missionary is a person who lives *incarnate faith and love.* In a multiplicity of ways, he strove to make God's compassionate love a living reality in the lives of the lepers of Molokai.

Writing on the centenary of Damien's death, a fellow Sacred Hearts missionary describes how Damien went about making God's love visible:

> Damien served as did the *missionaries of his time*. He organized a parish, started several associations, presided at the Eucharist, heard confessions, visited the sick at home.… What we call today the work of development was also an integral part of his missionary apostolate.… For him there was *no distinction* between material and spiritual well-being; he promoted them both.… Even though the expression "basic community" was not used then, and even though there was no theology expressly to support such a movement, Damien was guided by his faith and his love to bring the lepers into a true communion, and to lead them to a full liberation.[46]

> Since just about *everything was lacking* in the leper colony, Damien set about remedying that situation. He built houses, brought in a water supply, improved the port, enlarged the hospital, built a church

[46]Obbels, "Damien de Veuster," 5.

> and an orphanage, made coffins, encouraged gardening, opened a store where the sick could get supplies [for] free … and he financed everything himself.[47]

Damien was not a medical doctor yet he did all in his power to improve the medical care given to the lepers. His assistance, however, went much deeper: he was concerned about the lepers as human persons. He gave the tenderness and affection of a friend to those separated from their families and loved ones. He promoted a sense of community, encouraging the lepers to care for one another. He tried to instill a sense of human dignity and respect. He promoted hope and joy by encouraging games, singing, and other community activities. He brought his profound faith convictions to everything he said and did. He sought to maintain a cheerful disposition; indeed, his obvious desire to serve the people's needs made a deep impression on the lepers. Very importantly, he did not surrender to destructive self-pity or allow his flock to sink into despair. Obbels concludes: "This is why Damien's example can help us to keep development aid from falling into the temptation of becoming exaggerated pragmatism; his example can inspire those who want to help others and keep them, in so doing, from forgetting the human person."[48]

## Transforming Power of Grace

Damien undoubtedly had a very strong personality; he was self-willed, enterprising, indefatigable, and creative yet practical. He could prove to be very assertive; some would say even stubborn or bullheaded. J. de Volder bluntly notes:

> That certainly is how he was when it came to defending the cause of his people, to organizing the life in the community entrusted to him, to following his own vocation. Without that character trait, he probably would not have achieved much in the challenging setting of Molokai. Damien's perseverance, however, cannot be disconnected from a

[47]Obbels, "Damien de Veuster," 5.

[48]Obbels, "Damien de Veuster," 5.

> profound fidelity to his evangelical vocation: to give himself fully to the least of Jesus' brothers, the diseased outcasts with whom he shared his life and for whom he was prepared to give his life.[49]

There were times when Damien had less-than-smooth relationships with his superiors and confreres as well as with officials from the government or the Board of Health. He received various reprimands from the latter, especially when he left the Molokai settlement to visit Catholics in other areas. He harried and badgered government authorities when he felt that they could be doing more to help improve the lot of the lepers. His religious superiors were sometimes critical of him for taking on too many responsibilities or seemingly giving the Sacred Hearts congregation a bad name in public. Petty jealousies arose now and then whenever Damien received much attention for his work or when he received substantial financial gifts. Indeed, it is a truism to assert that most missionaries (both past and present) are dedicated, independent, and determined individuals. Yet while such personality traits can, without a doubt, be interpreted as constituting weaknesses, they can also be, at the same time, placed generously at the service of apostolic initiatives and effective evangelization. Missionaries are, in fact, very ordinary persons; their accomplishments are testimonies to the transforming power of God's love and grace shining through weak vessels of clay.

Charles Paolino notes that Damien was criticized at times "for being demanding and headstrong, particularly when he was soliciting for his lepers"; he was at heart, however, "a missionary unafraid to live and die with his people."[50] John Farrow, who authored a widely read biography of Damien in 1937, offers this insight into the saint:

> This harsher side of him was revealed only to ordinary men, for his ill-temper never touched the lepers. To them he always remained the same, a kind father, sometimes stern perhaps, but always just and understanding and ready to help. No matter how violent his rages or

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[49]de Volder, *The Spirit of Father Damien*, 85.

[50]C. Paolino, "A Missionary Unafraid to Live and Die with His People," *L'Osservatore Romano* (English) 42:41 (October 14, 2009): 8.

> how wrong his quarrels, it must be remembered that they were never motivated by selfishness. Whatever he did, he did for his lepers. Their life was his life; he had made it so since he first put foot on the island.[51]

Another honest and fair evaluation of Damien's traits can be drawn from Joseph Dutton, an American Civil War veteran who joined Damien in 1886 and remained at the colony for more than forty years. He speaks of Damien as

> vehement and excitable in regard to matters that did not seem to him right, and [he] sometimes said and did things that he afterwards regretted. I am safe in saying that, in all the differences, he had a true desire to do right, to bring about what he thought was best. No doubt he erred sometimes in judgment, as all of us do. These things make his relations with the Government officials more readily understood. With some they were better than with others; with all better at some times than at other times.… I believe that his efforts for the people here for material improvement have been beneficial to the place. In spiritual matters he did great good.[52]

The qualities of Damien's person are also manifested in another area which today would be termed "missionary adaptation." When Damien set out for mission, his perceptions of the people he was going to serve were probably ill-informed and thus quite negative. In the last letter he wrote in Europe (October 30, 1863) before leaving on the ship from Bremerhaven, Damien told his parents that he would be "[crossing] an ocean whose billows often threaten to engulf us, for the purpose of living among men who are uncivilized, and according to some accounts, more like brutes than human beings."[53] He mentioned to his father in his October 12, 1869 letter that the local people use neither spoons nor forks to eat and that they "eat with their fingers," that they do not use tables and chairs and that they simply "sit on the

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[51]J. Farrow, *Damien the Leper* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1937), 155.

[52]C. J. Dutton, *The Samaritans of Molokai: The Lives of Father Damien and Brother Dutton among the Lepers* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1932), 67-68.

[53]*Life and Letters*, 47.

ground." He also noted that while they are better dressed on Sundays, "on week-days they go half-naked."[54]

To his credit and as a sign of missionary sensitivity, Damien's ideas and attitudes were modified to reflect a much more positive view of the Hawaiian people. Writing to his parents in March of 1865, after only one year in mission, Damien penned these words:

> Sometimes I shall have to go by boat. The poor islanders rejoice when they see Kamiano [the Hawaiian pronunciation of Damien's name] coming, and I, for my part, love them very much and would willingly give my life for them, like our Divine Lord. So I do not spare myself, when it is a question of going to visit the sick.[55]

He wrote to his sister Pauline: "Well, I certainly love my savages, who will soon be more civilized than Europeans."[56]

If one were to write a composite overview of Damien's attitudes toward the people he served, one could express it, using the words of H. Gomes, as such:

> Damien believed that the Hawaiians were basically good. He set aside his fear of contagion. He touched those afflicted with leprosy, he embraced them, he dined with them, he cleaned and bandaged their wounds and sores. He put his thumb on their forehead when he anointed them with the holy oil. All these actions involved touch.[57]

And, since touch is a powerful means of communication, the Hawaiians instinctively felt Damien's love and concern.

> Damien was not blind to the vices of the people he served. Many Hawaiians, by their irregular and permissive sexual habits, greatly contributed to the spread of leprosy. But, Damien knew that this was not the only way the disease was communicated [although such was a common medical opinion at the time]. Above all, he rejected the

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[54]*Life and Letters*, 73.

[55]*Life and Letters*, 68.

[56]*Life and Letters*, 76.

[57]Gomes, *Damien: Servant of God*, 17-18.

> insufferable notion that God had laid this disease as a curse upon these people.… Damien hated leprosy. He did not see it as a tool of a vengeful God.[58]

Over the course of his fourteen years of service on Molokai, Damien's priestly heart readily practiced pastoral charity; he identified closely with his flock. As he wrote in an 1885 letter:

> During the week I visit my numerous sick, and busy myself with my orphans, who are all lepers. It is more or less repulsive to be always surrounded by these unfortunate children, but I find consolation in it: for being now a bit of a doctor, like my patron Saint Damian, I try, with the help of God, to alleviate their bodily pains, and so bring them on in the way of salvation.[59]

In his daily routine, Damien endeavored to walk on a selfless path to sanctity.

It is appropriate at this juncture to mention briefly an incident that attracted worldwide attention. A month after Damien's death on April 15, 1889, a Presbyterian missionary in Honolulu by the name of Charles M. Hyde wrote a private letter that was published without his permission. Hyde said of Damien: "The simple truth is, he was a coarse, dirty man, headstrong and bigoted.… He was not a pure man in his relations with women, and the leprosy of which he died should be attributed to his vices and carelessness."[60] The letter received rather wide circulation in Protestant publications.

Damien's friends were shocked and disturbed; a response was needed, and indeed one came. Hyde's letter provoked a vigorous rebuttal, albeit from an unexpected source. Robert Louis Stevenson, himself a Presbyterian and the author of *Treasure Island* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, was in Honolulu when news of Damien's death reached him. Stevenson had become fascinated with stories about Damien's work during his travels in the Pacific, though he had

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[58]Gomes, *Damien: Servant of God*, 18.

[59]*Life and Letters*, 135.

[60]de Volder, *The Spirit of Father Damien*, 159.

never met Damien personally. Thus, even though he was susceptible to disease himself, Stevenson went at his own expense to Molokai and stayed there for eight days in May of 1889, asking many people about the priest's character and ministry. All witnesses, whether friends or adversaries of Damien, agreed that he had scrupulously kept his religious vow of chastity.[61]

Stevenson thus penned a 32-page open letter to refute Hyde's accusations one by one. To Hyde's charge that Damien "was coarse," Stevenson said: "It is very possible"; then he reminded Hyde that Peter the apostle was also a "coarse, headstrong fisherman." Hyde wrote: "Damien was dirty"; Stevenson said: "He was. Think of the poor lepers annoyed with this dirty comrade!" When Hyde asserted that Damien "was headstrong," Stevenson replied: "I believe you are right again; and I thank God for his strong head and heart." Regarding the transformations that Damien wrought in Molokai, Stevenson wrote: "If ever any man brought reforms, and died to bring them, it was he."[62]

Stevenson went on at great length, noting that Damien was most loving and generous, spoke with candor, and possessed a fundamental good humor. He admittedly shared the vicissitudes of all human beings, yet, in spite of his weaknesses and limitations, Stevenson believed that he was a saint and hero indeed, and foresaw that "a hundred years after the death of Damien" there would be "the process of canonization" and that Damien would be declared a saint.[63]

Stevenson, who always stood by the content of his response, died four years later. On October 11, 2009, Damien was canonized by Benedict XVI during the "Year of the Priest" which Benedict himself proclaimed and celebrated. One marvels at the transforming power of

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[61]de Volder, *The Spirit of Father Damien*, 159-160.

[62]J. Beevers, *A Man for Now: The Life of Damien de Veuster, Friend of Lepers* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1973), 183-185. The Stevenson letter is readily available online; see http://www.fullbooks.com/Father-Damien.

[63]Beevers, *A Man for Now*, 174.

God's grace at work in the lives of humble persons like the missionary priest of Molokai.

## Collaboration in Missionary Service

Desiring that his beloved lepers receive the care and attention they deserve as human beings, Damien sought assistance for his apostolic activities, and indeed a variety of volunteers and benefactors began to emerge. R. Bauman notes a remarkable fact: "Through the decades more than 1,100 people came to Molokai to work with the lepers. Only one of them contracted leprosy—Father Damien."[64]

In addition to the ever-mounting workload which motivated his desire for workers in the vineyard, Damien strongly sought priestly companionship. The Sacred Hearts congregation sent some priests periodically over the years to work with Damien, yet they stayed for relatively short periods of time for a variety of reasons. Many factors entered into the situation—one may recall, for example, that two Sacred Hearts Fathers had contracted leprosy while laboring in other parts of the Hawaiian Islands.[65] The superiors also had to be sensitive to government policy on the segregation of lepers when considering assignments.

Damien thus sorely missed the availability of a priest to whom he could confess and receive absolution from. Indeed, a moving incident took place during one of the periods when the government policy of isolation was strictly being enforced. When Damien's bishop came to visit him by ship, the ship's captain forbade the bishop, under government orders, to disembark on Molokai. Damien was adamant:

> In order to see the bishop, Damien sailed out to the boat. The captain refused Damien's request to board. The priest pleaded in vain with

[64]R. Bauman, "Brother Joseph: Servant to the Lepers," *Liguorian* 98:8 (October 2009): 23.

[65]"Blessed Father Damien," http://www.ewtn.com/library/MARY/DAMIEN (accessed January 18, 2015), 11.

> the captain, saying that he wanted to confess his sins. "Bishop," the priest called to the boat, "will you hear my confession from here?" The bishop consented, and Damien[,] in an exercise of humility that touched all who witnessed it, confessed his sins aloud to the bishop.[66]

Some additional personnel did arrive but they came quite late. Four unique and special persons, whose inspiring life narratives will be presented briefly here, came to Molokai from diverse and remarkable backgrounds, all arriving after Damien himself had contracted leprosy. Their names and date of arrival in Molokai are: Brother Joseph (Ira) Dutton (July 19, 1886), diocesan priest Louis Conrardy (May 17, 1888), Brother James Sinnett (September 1888), and Sister Marianne Cope (November 14, 1888). Damien died knowing that his commitment to serving the lepers would continue in good hands through these missionary collaborators.[67]

The first and most prominent of these four apostles to come to the Hawaiian Islands was Sister "Mother" Marianne Cope. Arriving in Honolulu on November 8, 1883, she and six of her fellow sisters began work in the hospital in Kakaako near Honolulu, where 200 leprosy patients were being served. The details of the arrival of the Sisters of Saint Francis from Syracuse, New York form a beautiful story of faith and commitment.

It was early in June of 1883 when a letter written by Fr. Léonor Fouesnel, superior of the Sacred Hearts community, arrived on the desk of the superior of the Sisters of Saint Francis. Desperate for assistance (negative responses had been received from some fifty other congregations), the letter read:

> I have passed twenty-nine years of my life as a missionary in the Sandwich Islands. At present I am in America. My bishop … requested by the King of the Archipelago and his government, sent me to this country to look for sisters who would take charge of our hospitals, and

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[66]"Blessed Father Damien," 12.

[67]R. Stewart, *Leper Priest of Moloka'i: The Father Damien Story* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 337-350.

> even of our schools.… The King, remark it, and his counselors are Protestants.… Have pity, Reverend Mother, on our poor sick, help us.[68]

Mother Marianne responded immediately after receiving the letter, signaling her genuine interest. After further communications and clarifications, she gave her definitive response:

> I am hungry for the work and I wish with all my heart to be one of the chosen ones, whose privilege it will be to sacrifice themselves for the salvation of the souls of the poor Islanders.… I am not afraid of any disease; hence it would be my greatest delight even to minister to the abandoned lepers.… Waking and sleeping, I am on the Islands. Do not laugh at me for being so wholly absorbed in the one wish, one thought, to be a worker in that large field.[69]

When the Franciscan Sisters arrived in Hawaii in 1883, two of their first visitors were King Kalakaua and Queen Kapiolani. The emotionally overwhelmed queen, speaking in Hawaiian, said to them: "I love you! You have left your home and country to come to these faraway islands to care for my poor afflicted children. I shall never forget you. You are my sisters, and I shall always love you."[70]

By 1888, twelve additional sisters had arrived to continue the medical and educational apostolates. It was only then that Mother Marianne went to Molokai along with Srs. Vincentia McCormick and Leopoldina Burns, arriving there on November 14, 1888. They would live in the new village of Kalaupapa where there was a house for unprotected girls and women.[71] Damien's prayer was finally answered; he was at peace. They assisted Damien during the last weeks of his life, and assured him that they would also look after his home for boys in Kalawao.

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[68]V. Parachin, "Trouble in Paradise: The Story of Mother Marianne Cope," *Liguorian* 96:3 (March 2008): 28-29.

[69]Parachin, "Trouble in Paradise," 30.

[70]Parachin, "Trouble in Paradise," 30.

[71]M. Shelgren, "Mother Marianne: Angel of Mercy in Hawaii," *Sisters Today* 63:1 (January 1991): 15.

Mother Marianne and her sisters engaged in caring for the lepers with unflagging optimism, unconditional love, self-sacrificing dedication, and profound faith. The community continues to serve in Molokai up to this day and none of the sisters have ever contracted leprosy. Mother Marianne, who often reminded them that the "charity of the good knows no creed, and is confined to no one place,"[72] thought at first that her assignment in Hawaii might be for one year only. She never returned to her home in New York—she died in Hawaii on August 9, 1918 at the age of 80 and was canonized on October 21, 2012 by Benedict XVI. *Pilgrimage and Exile: Mother Marianne of Molokai,* co-authored by M. Hanley and O. Bushnell, is considered to be the definite biography of this holy servant of God.[73]

Several lines of the homily at her beatification in 2005 capture her deep spirituality, committed faith, and profound witness:

> The life of Blessed Marianne Cope is a wonderful work of divine grace. She demonstrated the beauty of a life of a true Franciscan.… For 35 years she lived, to the full, the command to love God and neighbor. She willingly worked with Blessed Damien de Veuster, who was at the end of his extraordinary apostolate. Blessed Marianne loved those suffering from leprosy more than she loved her very self.[74]

A second and well-known collaborator of Fr. Damien was Ira Barnes Dutton, whom Damien called "Brother Joseph." His life-story is genuinely remarkable. Born in the state of Vermont, he grew up in Wisconsin, U.S.A. and served in the Union Army during the American Civil War (1861–1865). He continued working for the military afterwards, married and divorced within one year, and turned to excessive drinking for over a decade. He then experienced a radical conversion, became a Catholic on his fortieth birthday, and later on

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[72]Parachin, "Trouble in Paradise," 31.

[73]M. Hanley and O. Bushnell, *Pilgrimage and Exile: Mother Marianne of Molokai* (Honolulu, HI: Mutual Publishing, 2009).

[74]J. Saraiva-Martins, "They Served the Neediest, Led by the Spirit," *L'Osservatore Romano* (English) 38:20 (May 18, 2005): 9.

entered the Trappist monastery at Gethsemane, Kentucky where he stayed for nearly two years.

Still searching for God's will in his life, Dutton was in New Orleans when he picked up a discarded magazine that contained an article about Fr. Damien. He then realized that he had probably discovered his life's work, and so he inquired about Damien and how to get to Hawaii. As R. Bauman notes: "Dutton didn't contact Father Damien before he set out to Molokai, and thus stepped off the ship at the Molokai dock unannounced in 1886. He introduced himself as 'Brother Joseph' to Damien, his few assistants, and the lepers."[75] Would he stay a few weeks or months and then flee to more comfortable surroundings?

> Brother Joseph never left. He did
>
> > whatever needed to be done, from bathing lepers and treating their diseased bodies to building houses and digging graves. He became not only Father Damien's helper but also his caregiver. He nursed Damien through the last stages of his illness.… Brother Joseph labored on after Father Damien's death. He took over much of the administration of the colony.[76]

During his 44 years on Molokai, "Brother Joseph never doubted that God wanted him to work with the lepers. He believed that God had put that magazine in his path as he traipsed through New Orleans in 1886—and he thanked God often for doing so."[77] Dutton never contracted leprosy and died on March 26, 1931 at nearly 88 years old.

Bro. Joseph had one last wish: to be buried at the feet of Fr. Damien. There his body still lies in Molokai near the Church of St. Philomena and Damien's grave (though now only Damien's right hand remains buried there; his body is interred in Louvain, Belgium). *The Samaritans of Molokai*, an authoritative biography of Dutton (and Damien) written by Charles Dutton, was published in 1932, one year after Bro. Joseph's

[75]Bauman, "Brother Joseph," 21.

[76]Bauman, "Brother Joseph," 22.

[77]Bauman, "Brother Joseph," 23.

death. The last sentence of the book reads thus: "Let us remember Joseph Dutton by the name that he called himself—Brother to Everybody."[78] Plans are underway for his beatification.

Two other key figures that intersected with Damien in the last period of his life were Fr. Lambert Conrardy and Bro. James Sinnett. Conrardy was a Belgian diocesan priest who worked as a missionary among the Native American people in Oregon in North America. Coming to Molokai eleven months before Damien's death, he provided the spiritual and social companionship that Damien craved.

Fr. Lambert stayed on in Molokai for six years after Damien's death. He then left to study medicine and ultimately qualified as a doctor. In 1908, he went to work in a leper hospital in Canton, China where he died in 1914 of pneumonia, not leprosy, at the age of 73. Following the desire he had often expressed during his lifetime, Fr. Conrardy was buried between two lepers.[79]

Bro. James Sinnett, an Irish nurse hired by the Hawaiian Board of Health, arrived in Molokai one year before Damien's death. He became totally devoted to Damien, nursed him during the final phases of his illness, and closed his eyes in death.

Bro. James could not bear to stay in Molokai after Damien died. Nothing was heard of him thereafter.[80]

Damien's co-workers and collaborators helped to achieve his heartfelt goal: compassionate service for the lepers. Missioners constantly try to realize some kind of "multiplier effect": more apostles translates into more service provided for a greater number of needy persons. The self-sacrificing dedication of the band of apostles on Molokai has also fostered a kind of contagious sanctity—the holiness of one person undeniably attracts and motivates the greatness and

[78]Dutton, *The Samaritans of Molokai*, 278.

[79]G. MacNiven-Johnston, *Father Damien: Apostle to the Lepers* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1999), 44.

[80]Gomes, *Damien: Servant of God*, 21.

generosity of others. Molokai has already produced two saints: Damien and Mother Marianne (and possibly Joseph Dutton in the future). Molokai has inspired numerous vocations in the Church, like that of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta who heard the call in 1946 to serve the neediest in the world; she was present at the 1995 beatification of Damien. As J. de Volder notes: "It is probably due to the tireless advocacy of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who has meanwhile been beatified herself, that Damien's canonization happened at all."[81] Mother Teresa was canonized by Pope Francis on September 4, 2016.

## Solidarity in the Paschal Mystery

Christian faith, at heart, is a paschal faith; Christian life can be described succinctly as "living into the Paschal Mystery." The salvific mystery of the dying and rising of Jesus Christ is much deeper than a dogmatic teaching or a rational formulation of a truth of the faith. The Christian's experience centers on a living encounter with the Lord—in his life, ministry, passion, death, and glorification.

The cross of Jesus is the paramount Christian symbol because it reminds Christians of the centrality of the Paschal Mystery in their faith lives. Concomitantly, all Church missionary activity focuses on the paschal nature of life, of faith, and of salvation. Christian mission is always cruciform, always signed by the cross. *Crux probat omnia.*

St. Paul spoke of his missionary consciousness in writing to the Corinthian community: "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2). He proclaimed a crucified Christ, seemingly nonsense to Jews and Gentiles alike (cf. 1 Cor 1: 22–25). The synoptic gospels affirm that the cross is the only path whereby one follows Jesus (Mt 10:38; 16:24; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23; 14:27). The cross is central to Jesus's act of *kenosis* (Phil 2:5–11).

The cross indeed is not an accidental of Christian faith and mission. Christians believe that God embraces the suffering of the world in

[81]de Volder, *The Spirit of Father Damien*, xv.

the suffering Jesus for the sake of humanity. God in Christ saves us *in* and *through* suffering, not necessarily *from* it. In a word, Christians are called to live into the mystery of the cross.

These foregoing paragraphs on the paschal nature of Christian life and mission provide important foundations for interpreting Damien's own life and mission. He was called to share deeply—even in his own body—in the Paschal Mystery of Christ.

G. MacNiven-Johnson briefly describes Damien's physical living into the Paschal Mystery during his last days:

> The disease now made rapid progress. Marks and sores appeared on his face; one of his arms swelled beyond recognition and was so heavy it had to be carried in a sling. His nose collapsed which made wearing his glasses difficult, he had acute diarrhea and felt desperately tired. He had difficulty walking. But worst of all, his larynx was affected. He could not breathe if he lay down, so sleep became almost impossible. He would wake up coughing. Melancholia is a common symptom of leprosy, and Damien became profoundly depressed. He believed he had failed in the mission God had entrusted to him and that he was not worthy of heaven. Night after night he would walk through the cemetery, praying the rosary, praying for the souls of the dead and asking them to pray for him. He started to go blind, but he struggled to continue saying the Divine Office. He had bouts of fever.…[82]

In his last letter to his brother Pamphile (February 19, 1889), Damien noted: "I am still able, but not without some difficulty, to stand every day at the altar, where I do not forget any of you."[83] He continued in his determined commitment: "I would not be cured, if the price of my cure was that I must leave the island and give up my work."[84]

Damien's living of the Paschal Mystery was manifested in many diverse ways throughout his sixteen years in Molokai. He was the

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[82]MacNiven-Johnston, *Father Damien*, 47.

[83]*Life and Letters*, 146.

[84]*Life and Letters*, 134; see also D. Murphy, "Contagious Spirit," *U.S. Catholic* 74:12 (December 2009): 47.

third Sacred Hearts missionary to contract leprosy. He had to follow severe restrictions if he visited the mission headquarters in Honolulu. If he stayed in the mission central house, he was relegated to one room which he was not to leave until his departure. Advised by his superiors that it was better for him to stay at the Franciscan Sisters' leper hospital, he was told not to celebrate Mass even while he was there. The other priests would not use the same vestments or drink from the same chalice; the sisters were not to receive communion from his hands. Indeed, one can readily understand the concerns of Damien's superiors regarding contagion, yet Damien also felt them as a form of rejection. He spoke of this distancing from his own brothers as "the greatest suffering he had ever endured in his life."[85] Four years before his death, Damien wrote in 1885 to his Superior General in Rome concerning his own leprosy diagnosis, making reference to the Hawaiian monarch's earlier recognition in 1881: "I have been decorated by the Royal Cross of Kalakaua and now the heavier and less honorable cross of leprosy. Our Lord has willed that I be stigmatized with it.… I will keep on working.…"[86]

Damien also experienced prejudice and envy, at times from members of his own religious congregation but most frequently from various Protestant missionaries and people of other faiths who resented that a Catholic priest was in the limelight because of his work in the leper settlement. Others were jealous of the monetary contributions that were sent to him to help with various needs in the leper community.

Concerning the daily trials that Damien faced, R. Obbels has noted: "For sixteen years Damien lived among 500 to 1,000 deformed lepers who awaited only one thing: their own death. Just about every other day one of them died."[87] Damien also longed for his beloved family back in Belgium; he was particularly concerned about his aging mother who

[85]"Catholic Dictionary," Section 10.

[86]"Catholic Dictionary," Section 10.

[87]Obbels, "Damien de Veuster," 5.

died at 83 years of age on April 5, 1886.[88] He experienced depression, melancholy, feelings of unworthiness, and even religious scruples toward the last days of his life, what he himself called "black thoughts." Damien was tested indeed as he experienced the "dark night" of the soul, the seeming absence, distance, or hiddenness of God.[89]

Damien's living into the Paschal Mystery of the suffering-dying-rising Christ had another important dimension—he linked his own daily trials and the sufferings of his beloved lepers with his deep love for and dependence upon Christ's presence in the Eucharist. John Paul II noted this aspect of Damien's life when he addressed the religious women and men after the beatification ceremony on June 4, 1995:

> Where did Damien's clarity and happiness in often difficult situations come from? He drew his strength from the spirituality of his congregation: *the contemplation of the Eucharist*, the mystery of love in which Christ truly communicates with the one who receives him and whom he invites to total dedication. "I find my consolation in my one companion who never abandons me," he used to say when speaking of the real presence of Christ in the tabernacle.[90]

When he addressed the Belgian bishops on the same date, John Paul II emphasized in similar fashion that "Damien attached such importance to the Eucharist."[91]

In a letter to his brother (December 8, 1881), Damien wrote:

> For six months there was an absolute prohibition of communication between the islands; and as I happened at the time to be the only priest on this island, you can understand the inconvenience this isolation caused me. But I have always our Lord in the Tabernacle. In fact, without the Blessed Sacrament a position like mine would not

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[88]"Catholic Dictionary," Section 11.

[89]Guntzelman, *A Retreat*, 88-95.

[90]John Paul II, "Discover the Heart of God in Prayer," 7.

[91]John Paul II, "Moral Doctrine is Essential to Gospel," *L'Osservatore Romano* (English) 28:24 (June 14, 1995): 6.

> be tolerable. But having our Lord with me, I am always gay, and work cheerfully for the relief of the unfortunate lepers.[92]

Damien promoted the same devotion to Christ's presence in the Eucharist among his people. His brother Pamphile narrates a moving scene:

> There was nothing in which the lepers took more pleasure than in the procession of the Blessed Sacrament. Of all the beautiful and touching sights in Molokai this held the foremost place. "I myself," says Father Damien, writing to his brother, "strong, healthy, and vigorous, bearing in my hands the Blessed Sacrament, was followed and preceded by one long line of lepers, some deprived of hands, others of feet, crawling along on their knees as well as they could, joining in the great act of adoration."[93]

Damien's living into the Paschal Mystery, which was linked to his deep love of Christ in the Eucharist, flows directly from the charism of the religious institute that he entered in 1859. The official canonical name, though a bit long, is very specific: Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and of Perpetual Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. As the title indicates,

> the primary purpose of the congregation is to "practice and propagate devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary" and to carry on daily adoration. Each member makes a half hour adoration each day. Father Damien remained faithful to this practice, even during his busiest days at Molokai.[94]

John Paul II, while speaking to the religious women and men in Belgium during Damien's beatification on June 4, 1995, had a special word for the members of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts: "The Mystery of the Eucharist and the love of the Sacred Hearts must remain the pillars and foundation of the Congregation's spirituality."[95]

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[92]*Life and Letters*, 124.

[93]*Life and Letters*, 130.

[94]Gomes, *Damien: Servant of God*, 7.

[95]John Paul II, "Discover the Heart of God in Prayer," 7.

Damien had taken the charism and core spirituality of his congregation and internalized it. He had the heart of a truly "paschal-eucharistic" priest and missioner!

## The Missionary is the Saint

John Paul II, the pope who beatified Damien on June 4, 1995, asserted in his mission encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (RM) that "the true missionary is the saint" (RM 90). For the pope, "a missionary is really such only if he commits himself to the way of holiness.… The Church's missionary spirituality is a journey toward holiness" (RM 90). Again, "missionaries should reflect on the duty of holiness required of them by the gift of their vocation.… The missionary must be a 'contemplative in action'.… The missionary is a person of the Beatitudes.… The characteristic of every authentic missionary life is the inner joy that comes from faith" (RM 91). Many evident parallels exist between the life of St. Damien and these words of John Paul II.

One also recalls that Pope Paul VI devoted an entire chapter in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN) to "The Spirit of Evangelization." The pope asserted that "our evangelizing zeal must spring from true holiness of life.… The world calls for and expects from us simplicity of life, the spirit of prayer, charity towards all, especially towards the lowly and the poor, obedience and humility, detachment and self-sacrifice" (EN 76). "The work of evangelization presupposes in the evangelizer an ever increasing love for those whom he is evangelizing" (EN 79). Once again, the life of Damien clearly exemplifies these essential spiritual qualities of the authentic missionary.

An examination of several addresses John Paul II gave during his June 3-4, 1995 pilgrimage to Belgium for the beatification of Damien repeatedly reveals a central theme: Damien's genuine holiness of life. "The apostle of charity, who gave himself up for his sick brothers and sisters, was also a man of intense spiritual life.… Damien's zeal for God went hand in hand with his *love for others*."[96] Indeed, Damien's "humble

[96]John Paul II, "Moral Doctrine is Essential to Gospel," 6.

holiness was resplendent in his own times.… [He] had a special love for the most deprived of his brothers and sisters."[97]

John Paul II asserted:

> Today, through me, *the Church acknowledges and confirms the value of Father Damien's example along the path of holiness.… She joyfully contemplates what God can achieve through human weakness*, for "it is he who gives us holiness, and it is man who receives it".… Father Damien displayed a particular form of holiness in his ministry; *he was at once a priest, religious and missionary.* With these three qualities, *he revealed the face of Christ.… Holiness is not perfection according to human criteria;* it is not reserved for a small number of exceptional persons.… This celebration is also an appeal to deepen our spiritual life, whether we are sick or healthy, regardless of our social status.[98]

One also finds a special emphasis on the dimension of charity toward the needy within John Paul II's addresses on Damien's holiness:

> *Service to the poor and the sick* is of course in the world's eyes the most outstanding aspect of Damien's tireless witness to charity, to the point of his physical identification with lepers and the final offering of his life. Is it necessary to stress that love of the poor, those wounded and defenseless people, is just as vital a need today?… We all know that charity covers an ever broader area. It includes many ways of serving one's neighbor.…

The pope recalled that "aid to the most underprivileged peoples is part of a true witness to Gospel charity."[99] "Whether in his parish ministry or his works of charity, he [Damien] found a place for everyone."[100] Damien's loving compassion knew no bounds!

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[97]John Paul II, "Continue to Develop the Gifts You Have Received," *L'Osservatore Romano* (English) 28:24 (June 14, 1995): 6.

[98]John Paul II, "Father Damien's Life Shows," 2.

[99]John Paul II, "Moral Doctrine is Essential to Gospel," 6.

[100]"A Catholic Missionary First and Foremost," *L'Osservatore Romano* (English) 28:23 (June 7, 1995): 1.

Damien's self-sacrificing love for and service of the needy in imitation of the love of the Sacred Hearts unquestionably make up the center of his mission spirituality. He followed the Gospel literally, which asserts that one "can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13). Damien could own the words of St. Paul: "To the weak I have become weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the Gospel, so that I may share in its blessings" (1 Cor 9:22–23). Within months of his arrival in Molokai, Damien wrote (November 25, 1873) to his brother: "As for me, I make myself a leper with the lepers, to gain all to Jesus Christ."[101] To paraphrase the words of John Paul II, Damien was "at once a priest, religious, and missionary"—aflame with the love of Christ!

Various authors have sought to identify the core of Damien's spirituality. He "was indeed all things to all men and women. Primarily he was a priest."[102] "[He] was before all else a Catholic missionary."[103] "Damien de Veuster practiced heroic virtue in the service of the exiled lepers, but he did so because first and foremost he had given his life to Christ as a priest."[104] For the occasion of Damien's canonization, the Superior Generals of the Sacred Hearts Congregation and the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts published a joint letter in which they asserted that "Damien is a universal brother, model of humanity, apostle of the lepers, hero of charity, inspiration for every human being who feels called to serve the marginalized and forgotten, pride of the Belgian and Hawaiian peoples, glory of the entire Church."[105] At the heart of all these accolades one finds verified a simple verse of scripture: *Caritas Christi urget nos*—"The love of Christ compels us" (2 Cor 5:14).

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[101] *Life and Letters*, 93.

[102] O'Leary, "Molokai," 98.

[103] "A Catholic Missionary," 1.

[104] M. Bunson, "The Lepers' Priest," *The Priest* 65:10 (October 2009): 21.

[105] "Father Damien, Apostle of the Lepers to be Canonized 11 October," https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/14944 (accessed July 21, 2018).

Self-sacrificing Christian charity, loving others with no thought of oneself and for no motive other than Christ's love, genuine altruistic and compassionate love and service—all these would be valid attempts to describe the heart of a *martyr of charity*. Damien died as a martyr of charity not by the force of someone else's decision or action but by his own choice. Such martyrdom comes through one's daily living out of one's deeply held faith convictions. A martyr is killed for his beliefs; a martyr of charity freely lays down his life for his faith.

In his July 11, 2017 apostolic letter on the "Offer of Life," *Majorem Hac Dilectionem*, Pope Francis formally recognized that "the *offer of life* is a new cause for the beatification and canonization procedure." Some required criteria are "a free and voluntary offer of life and heroic acceptance *propter caritatem* of a certain and untimely death" as well as "a nexus between the offer of life and premature death." The pope thus accepts those who "have voluntarily and freely offered their life for others and preserved with this determination unto death" as worthy candidates for canonization.[106] St. Damien would, without a doubt, adequately meet the criteria established by Pope Francis!

In his famous letter defending Damien's character and virtue (discussed earlier), Robert Louis Stevenson actually speaks about Damien's free gift of self which made him a martyr of charity. He recalled how Damien had voluntarily gone to Molokai and stayed at the settlement. An introduction to his letter notes: "Of the sixteen years Damien spent on Molokai, he was away from the settlement for less than six months and that includes the visit he made to the Catholics in the rest of the island when he was the only priest on Molokai."[107] Stevenson's poetic description of Damien's "self-martyrdom" affirms

[106]Francis, *Majorem Hac Dilectionem*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap_20170711_maiorem-hac-dilectionem.html (accessed August 8, 2018).

[107]Beevers, *A Man for Now*, 173.

that Damien, in going freely to the leper colony, shut "with his own hand the doors of his own sepulcher."[108]

John Paul II wrote that Damien was truly a "singular witness of charity" in the manner of his service, and that he should thus be remembered as a "model of charity" who motivates Christians to be in human solidarity through "charity towards the lowly."[109] During Damien's canonization ceremony in 2009, Benedict XVI said that his "missionary activity, which gave him such joy, reached its peak in charity.… He invites us to open our eyes to the forms of leprosy that disfigure the humanity of our brethren and still today call for the charity of our presence as servants."[110] Indeed, the letter that Fr. Wendelin wrote from Molokai two days after Damien's death (April 17, 1889) has proven to be eminently accurate: "The grave is sealed up.… Therein rest the remains of the good Father Damien, whom the world calls, and calls rightly, the 'hero of charity.'"[111]

An additional insight into Damien's love and charity can be gained through a brief examination of the compassionate ministry of Jesus, the missionary of the Father who, moved by genuine love (Jn 3:16), sent his Son Jesus into the world. Jesus manifests God's compassion for humanity, even to the point of his own vulnerability. Jesus is Emmanuel, God in profound solidarity and communion with humanity, particularly with the suffering, oppressed, and marginalized.

The Gospels often portray Jesus as "moved with compassion" for the needy: for the leper (Mk 1:41), the crowd who are like sheep without a shepherd (Mk 6:34, Mt 9:36), the hungry crowd of five thousand (Mt 14:13–21), and the two blind men of Jericho (Mt 20:29–34). Diverse people approached Jesus, asking him to show them mercy or pity: the Canaanite woman whose daughter is possessed (Mt 15:22), the father

[108]Beevers, *A Man for Now*, 180.

[109]John Paul II, "Holy Father's Letter," 2.

[110]Benedict XVI, "Heroes in Holiness Go Against the Tide," 5.

[111]*Life and Letters*, 150.

of an epileptic (Mt 17:15), the widow of Naim whose only son has died (Lk 7:12), the Roman official whose daughter has died (Mt 9:18), the centurion with a sick servant (Lk 7:2), and the ten lepers (Lk 17:12).

Jesus constantly showed his compassion in words and deeds: in his profound sympathy with Martha and Mary at Lazarus's death (Jn 11:17–44), parables of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29–37) and the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11–32), recognition of the faith of the four men transporting the paralytic (Mk 2:1–12), and teaching on the last judgment where he notes: "As long as you did it to one of these least brethren…" (Mt 25:40, 45). Jesus was known to be in solidarity with the needy: he welcomed sinners and ate with them (Lk 15:1–2), went to Zaccheus's house (Lk 19:1–10), and showed compassion for the adulterous woman (Jn 8:1–11).

Upon examining Jesus's compassionate ministry which Damien so closely imitated (one of his favorite spiritual books was *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis), one observes three key characteristics that emerge: 1) a deep awareness of and sympathy with the sufferings of others; 2) from this depth awareness of the other's pain, a personal commitment and effective action to do something about it; and 3) a desire to deepen people's faith in God in the process. Profoundly modeled on the ministry of Jesus, Damien practiced what can be called "active compassion," a self-sacrificing charity that promotes human relief and restoration and thereby leads to an encounter with God. As a "martyr of charity," St. Damien's missionary "compassionate faith-in-action" was his selfless pathway to profound sanctity.

## Concluding Reflection

Any attempt to capture the depths of Damien's person, his profound spirituality and holiness, priestly and religious commitment, missionary life and vocation, genuine love of God and service of neighbor, example and witness of the Christian life, and powerful impact on the people of his time as well as on the contemporary world would most probably appear to be an inadequate and superficial summary. A conclusion will thus be offered in the form of two prayers—one is drawn from the

beatification homily of John Paul II on Pentecost Sunday, June 4, 1995[112] and the other is the official prayer to St. Damien of Molokai that is used in the Diocese of Honolulu, Hawaii.[113]

> Blessed Damien, you let yourself be led by the Spirit as a son obedient to the Father's will. In your life and your missionary work, you show forth Christ's tenderness and mercy for every man, revealing the beauty of his inner self, which *no illness, no deformity, no weakness can totally disfigure.* By your actions and your preaching, you remind us that Jesus took on himself the poverty and suffering of mankind, and that he has revealed its mysterious value. Intercede with Christ, physician of soul and body, for our sick brothers and sisters, so that in their anguish and pain they may never feel abandoned, but that, in union with the risen Christ and with his Church, they may discover that the Holy Spirit comes to visit them and they may receive the comfort promised to the afflicted.

> Saint Damien, brother on the journey,
> happy and generous missionary,
> who loved the Gospel more than your own life,
> who for love of Jesus left your family,
> your homeland, your security and your dreams.
> Teach us to give our lives with joy like yours,
> to be in solidarity with the outcasts of our world,
> to celebrate and contemplate the Eucharist
> as the source of our own commitment.
> Help us to love to the very end
> and, in the strength of the Spirit,
> to persevere in compassion
> for the poor and forgotten
> so that we might be good disciples
> of Jesus and Mary. Amen.

[112]John Paul II, "Father Damien's Life Shows," 2.

[113]"Saint Damien Prayer," https://catholichawaii.org/catholic-essentials/saints-traveling-relics/history-of-hawaiis-saints/saint-damien/ (accessed July 25, 2018).

Landas 32:1 (2018) 43–64

# SOLIDARITY AS *PAGDADAMAYAN* IN THE FILIPINO VERSION OF *LAUDATO SI'*

## An Experiment in Inculturated Translation

*Leo-Martin Angelo R. Ocampo*

One of the challenges encountered in the process of coming up with a Filipino translation of the encyclical *Laudato Si'* was the absence of already circulated translations of many key theological concepts. Yet instead of opting for mere transliteration, the principle of dynamic equivalence was adopted at least for the principal terms—all in the search for inculturated translations that can hopefully contribute to the development of our local theological vocabulary. This article as such aims at an exposition of the translation of "solidarity" as *pagdadamayan*.[1] It will look first at the development of the concept of solidarity in the context of Catholic Social Teaching, followed by an exploration of the meaning of *pagdadamayan* in Filipino culture. It will then highlight key intersections and points of convergence between the two concepts in order to demonstrate their dynamic equivalence.

[1]The use of the word *pagdadamayan* to express the term "solidarity" is one of the translations that were briefly explained in the introduction to the Filipino version of *Laudato Si'*. See Francisco, *Laudato Si' [Liham Ensiklikal ukol sa Pangangalaga sa Tahanan Nating Lahat]*, trans. L. R. Ocampo (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2015), xvi–xvii.

## The Christian Understanding of Solidarity

The New Oxford American Dictionary dates the word "solidarity" to the middle of the 19th century and defines it as the "unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest; mutual support within a group."[2] Two important aspects of the word are highlighted in this definition: solidarity as having the same sentiment or commitment as others do, and solidarity as a shared sense of interconnectedness and interdependence. We may say, therefore, that people are solidary with each other whenever they partake of the same passion or advocacy such as a lively interest in golf or keen involvement in promoting the welfare of the urban poor. They are, at the same time, also solidary whenever they recognize, cherish, and live out bonds of mutual relationship and fellowship amongst themselves.

Fausto Gomez, on the other hand, traces the etymology of solidarity to the Latin word *solidare*, which means "*to unite and reunite solidly*,"[3] and proceeds to define it as "the *unity of all human beings and their obligation to cooperate with one another in the building of a human world*."[4] According to him, solidarity highlights the social and relational aspect of being human and has its roots in our common human "origin, nature and destiny"[5] as persons created in the image of the Trinitarian communion.

Understood thus in a philosophical and theological sense, solidarity is at the same time both the natural *and* supernatural bond that links all human beings to one another. It makes all of us not only equals in

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[2]*New Oxford American Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2005).

[3]F. Gomez, *Solidarity: The Heart of Christian Praxis* (Manila: UST Social Research Center, 1984), 9 (emphasis in the original). See also F. Gomez, *The Praxis of Justice and Solidarity* (Manila: UST Social Research Center, 1988), 176.

[4]Gomez, *Solidarity: The Heart of Christian Praxis*, 9 (emphasis in the original).

[5]Gomez, *Solidarity: The Heart of Christian Praxis*, 10.

dignity but brothers and sisters in one family of God. Going beyond the secular definition, the theological sense of solidarity points not merely to a superficial union but to an ontological one as well; not only to a shared sentiment or commitment but to a shared humanity; not just to mutual support but to a true participation in the divine communion.

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), solidarity is at once a *law* (CCC 361) that guarantees fraternal human interaction, a *principle* (CCC 1939) that comes as "a direct demand of human and Christian brotherhood," a *duty* (CCC 2439) of the rich to share with the poor, and a *virtue* (CCC 1942, 1948, 2407) that is expressed in the sharing not only of material goods but of spiritual ones as well.[6]

Understood according to the classic Thomistic definition of virtue, solidarity is a *habitus* or stable disposition of the soul which then shapes not only the actions of a person but also the person herself. This notion of solidarity as virtue is the most important according to Bilgrien since virtues by nature lead to genuine transformation—on both the personal and societal levels—more than laws, duties, or principles do. In her own words, "solidarity [as a virtue] can guide us from 'structures of sin' to 'structures of virtue.'"[7] The one who cultivates solidarity becomes a person who is solidary with others and who transforms society with solidarity.

## Solidarity in Catholic Social Teaching

While the term "solidarity" first appeared in Pope Pius XII's 1939 encyclical *Summi Pontificatus*, the word made its debut in Catholic Social Teaching (CST) documents in 1961 with St. John XXIII's encyclical *Mater et Magistra*. There it is used in four parallel senses, namely:

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[6]See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Makati City: Word & Life Publications/ CBCP/ECCCE, 1994), nos. 361, 1939, 1942, 1948, 2407, and 2439.

[7]M. V. Bilgrien, *Solidarity: A Principle, An Attitude, A Duty? Or the Virtue for an Interdependent World?* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999), 227.

solidarity between workers and their employers, [8] solidarity among workers,[9] solidarity among people of the same nation,[10] and solidarity of the human race as a whole.[11] This first appearance in the body of CST thus presented solidarity as a sense of unity and connectedness found at various levels of society and as a commitment among people to work for the common good. It is a unity that transcends all personal differences and cuts across artificial societal boundaries. More than just commitment to a common objective or collaboration towards a shared goal, it entails the recognition of a common human origin, nature, and destiny in God.

The word solidarity will gradually gain prominence in the body of CST and become one of the important themes to be highlighted in Vatican II, especially in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, where it appears eight times.[12] Worthy of note is the Council's exposition of solidarity as part of the divine economy, as rooted in the person and teaching of Christ himself, and as eagerly anticipating its eschatological fulfillment when humankind truly becomes one beloved family of God.[13]

Solidarity, according to the Council, is part of the divine economy in that the Creator willed for us to live not in isolation but in community. The election of God and our vocation to covenant with Him as His people always possess both personal and communitarian dimensions.

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[8]See John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra* (May 15, 1961), 23. Available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html (accessed May 2, 2017).

[9]John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, 136.

[10]John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, 190.

[11]John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, 155 and 157.

[12]Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes* (December 7, 1965), 3, 4, 32, 38, 48, 57, 75, 85. Available at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_ council/documents/vat-ii_const_196512 07_gaudium-et-spes_en.html (accessed May 2, 2017).

[13]Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, 32.

Vatican II likewise traced solidarity to the person and teaching of Jesus Christ who, by his Incarnation, has willed to enter into human fellowship and make himself solidary with the human race in order to draw it into his fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit. In this way, he founded the Church that shines forth as the Family of God and His Body, with its members rendering mutual service to one another according to their distinct charisms.

Lastly, the Council laid down the eschatological horizon of solidarity as a seminal anticipation of the celestial fellowship, an anticipation which we must continue to increase in the here and now until it is perfected in our communion with the Trinity and all the elect in Paradise. As Gomez beautifully puts it, "from the *already* of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to the *not yet* of the perfect Kingdom of justice and solidarity, the individual Christian and the Christian community journey *now* through steps of love and solidarity."[14]

Thus, while solidarity itself is a relatively new word coined only in the mid-19th century, it is an essential dimension and not just a peripheral aspect of Christian doctrine, praxis, and spirituality. Solidarity has always been there from eternity in the *koinonia* of the Trinity into which we are invited to enter; indeed, Gomez goes as far as to call it "the heart of Christian praxis."[15]

Jesus himself by his Incarnation is our exemplar of solidarity with all of humanity, yet this solidarity is oriented in a very special way toward the praxis of charity and identification with the poor who are rejected and marginalized. It was with them that Christ identified himself in a particular way, not contenting himself in taking the form merely of a human person but that of a slave (Phil. 2:7). It is a specific orientation of solidarity toward the poor that has important implications for our own praxis of solidarity. As Reiser expressed it:

[14]Gomez, *The Praxis of Justice and Solidarity*, 195.

[15]Gomez, *The Praxis of Justice and Solidarity*, 174. See also Gomez, *Solidarity: The Heart of Christian Praxis*, 6.

> Divine solidarity *with human nature* may be both consoling and uplifting, and it may indeed lead us to seek moral and spiritual perfection: God becomes human so that human beings might become God, that is, sharers in the divine nature. But when divine solidarity is specified in terms of solidarity *with the poor, the excluded, the crucified ones of this world*, then the mystery before us is truly wondrous and intensely challenging. Wondrous because God has joined the history of suffering so intimately; challenging because we now have to make some important choices and engage in careful, maybe even painful discernment.[16]

For Reiser, Jesus Christ is not just the quintessential human person but the "quintessential throwaway."[17] To be solidary with Christ, then, is to be solidary with those whom the world considers to be throwaways, those "rejected by the builders" who then become in Christ the cornerstone of God's new people. Hence, while it is not unnatural to want to identify ourselves with desirable people, those whom the world seeks, praises, and extols, it is with the people whom the world casts out to the peripheries that we as Christians should expressly endeavor to be solidary with after the manner of Christ himself.

Solidarity will also be highlighted in the teaching of St. John Paul II, the Pope from Poland where a popular movement called Solidarity (*Solidarność*) became instrumental in overthrowing the Communist regime in Eastern Europe. In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, for instance, he identified solidarity as one of the essential components of the path to conversion.[18] According to him, solidarity helps us to see the "other" as "neighbor" in a world marked by selfishness and individualism that hinder peace and integral development.[19] This nexus between solidarity and integral development that John Paul II underlines brings to the fore once again the notion of society as an interconnected reality

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[16]W. Reiser, *Jesus in Solidarity with His People: A Theologian Looks at Mark* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 7.

[17]Reiser, *Jesus in Solidarity with His People*, 118.

[18]John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (December 30, 1987), 38. Available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html (accessed May 2, 2014).

[19]John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 39.

where authentic development means developing every aspect without neglecting any other. The pope also emphasized how solidarity is truly rooted in the vision of human beings that reflect the Trinitarian communion of love, an idea affirmed earlier on by the Second Vatican Council.[20] Lastly, he stressed the dynamic character of solidarity which is not just a *feeling* of compassion for or distress at the misery of others but also a "firm and persevering *determination* to commit oneself to the common good."[21]

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis described solidarity as a word that is "a little worn and at times poorly understood,"[22] often reduced as it were to a few random and scattered acts of kindness. He proposed three ways of understanding solidarity, or what he called "convictions and habits of solidarity,"[23] in the same exhortation. First, he referred to solidarity as "a new *mindset* which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few."[24] It is seen here as a kind of disposition or orientation that seeks and prioritizes the common good instead of giving in to the prevailing culture of individualism, materialism, and consumerism.

Second, he described solidarity as "a spontaneous *reaction* by those who recognize that the social function of property and the universal destination of goods are realities which come before private property."[25] In this way, solidarity is understood as the response of sharing the goods that we have with those whose needs are greater than our own (social function of private property). This response is evoked in us by

[20]John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 40.

[21]John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38 (emphasis added).

[22]Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (November 24, 2013), 188. Available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html (accessed May 2, 2017).

[23]Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 189.

[24]Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 188 (emphasis added).

[25]Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 189 (emphasis added).

our recognition of the fact that whatever we possess belongs, first and foremost, to all people and not just to ourselves (universal destination of earthly goods).

Third, he referred to solidarity as "the *decision* to restore to the poor what belongs to them."[26] This is in line with the previous point which comes from the profound realization that all that I have belongs not only to "me" but also to "us." Even my life does not belong to me alone, for, as St. Paul said, "none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself" (Rom. 14:7).

Likewise significant is Francis's identification of solidarity together with faith as the defining characteristics of an evangelized culture.[27] This sense of an "us" emerges again later in the document when the pope defines solidarity "in its deepest and most challenging sense" as a "way of making history in a life setting where conflicts, tensions and oppositions can achieve a diversified and life-giving unity."[28] What ultimately prevails despite, beyond, and in the midst of all differences, distinctions, and divisions is a deeper and stronger sense of being one with one another.

The word solidarity also appears fourteen times in *Laudato Si'*, the most recent document on CST. While its other uses in the encyclical are rather consistent with earlier precedents in the CST corpus, solidarity is also described as a "spirituality of *global* solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity."[29] This particular understanding, which speaks not only of *human* but also of *global* solidarity in par. 240, is the broadest definition of solidarity by far in that it encompasses not just all of humanity but all of creation as well. This of course is explicitly

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[26]Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 189 (emphasis added).

[27]Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 68.

[28]Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 228.

[29]Francis, *Laudato Si'*, (May 24, 2015), 240 (emphasis added). Available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html (accessed May 2, 2017). See especially paragraphs 16, 70, 91, 92, 117, 120, 142, and 240.

linked to and grounded in one of the most important points repeatedly emphasized by Francis in this document—the fact that "everything in the world is connected."[30]

Solidarity is always identified as well in different lists as one of the central principles or pillars of Catholic Social Teaching.[31] In the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, "solidarity" occurs 157 times and is regarded as one of the four key principles of CST.[32] Such is the importance attached to solidarity that it is considered to be one of the three dimensions of our response to the Kingdom of God in the *Catechism for Filipino Catholics*[33] as well as one of the building blocks of a truly Christian community.[34]

## *Pagdadamayan* in Filipino Culture and Practice

The earliest historical accounts are quite ambivalent about the charitable practices of the early Filipinos. Reporting about the latter

[30]See Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 16, 42, 70, 91, 111, 117, 138, 220, and 240.

[31]See, for example, the list of CST principles drawn by the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines where solidarity appears first, along with human dignity, as the basis of integral development (Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines: 20 Jan–17 Feb 1991* [Manila: Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, 1992], 291; see also numbers 293–296). See also the list of W. Byron in "Ten Building Blocks of Catholic Social Teaching," in P. T. Giordano, ed., *Readings for Theology 141: A Theology of the Catholic Social Vision* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Office of Research and Publication, 2007).

[32]See Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (April 2, 2004), 160. Available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical _councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html (accessed May 2, 2017).

[33]Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (Manila: ECCCE/Word & Life Publications, 1997), no. 746.

[34]Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, *Catechism for Filipino Catholics*, no. 792.

in 1667, for instance, a Jesuit missionary named Francisco Combés wrote that they "do not know what charity is. Consequently, whatever benefits they confer are all placed on account as debts, which their tyranny estimates wholly to their own satisfaction."[35] He narrates, for example, that help is not given gratuitously when an orphan is adopted, for the orphan then becomes a slave of the one who gave help. What is rendered is not really an act of kindness but a loan, an *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) that needs to be repaid, and at times not only with service but with a life of servitude. As Combés said, "kindness is shown at the cost of liberty."[36]

This negative impression is shared by the Augustinian friar Gaspar de San Agustin who observed in 1720 that Filipinos "act tyranically one toward another … that, if the Spaniards had not come to these islands, the Indians [Spanish *indios* in reference to the indigenous population] would have been destroyed; for, like fish, the greater would have swallowed the lesser, in accordance with the tyranny which they exercised in their paganism."[37] We witness this kind of tyranny even today in the "padrino" system that is rampant in Philippine politics, where political favors and various forms of material assistance are dispensed in exchange for blind loyalty and allegiance.

Conversely, a fellow Jesuit and contemporary of Combés named Francisco Colin saw symbiosis instead of usury in the *utang na loob* practice of Filipinos:

> There was another kind of service which was not of a truth servitude, although it appeared to be such. It was generally seen among certain persons called *cabalangay*. Whenever such persons wanted any small trifle, they begged the head chief of their barangay for it, and he gave

[35]F. Combés, "The Natives of the Southern Islands" (Madrid, 1667), in E. Blair & J. A. Robertson, eds., *The Philippine Islands: 1493–1803* Vol. 40 (Cleveland, OH: The A. H. Clark Company, 1906), 147.

[36]Combés, "The Natives of the Southern Islands," 147.

[37]G. de San Agustin, "Letter on the Filipinos" (Manila, 8 June 1720), in E. Blair & J. A. Robertson, eds., *The Philippine Islands: 1493–1803* Vol. 40 (Cleveland, OH: The A. H. Clark Company, 1906), 225.

> it to them. In return, whenever he summoned them, they were obliged to go to him to work in his fields or to row in his boats. Whenever a feast or banquet was given, they all came together and helped furnish the tuba, wine, or quilan, such being their method of service.[38]

For Colin, the system of *utang na loob* consisted of a network of gratitude rather than of control. There was a mutualistic relationship within the barangay between the chief (*pinuno*) and his subjects (*nasasakupan*) who were not considered aliens but as part of his extended family inasmuch as they constituted his in-group (*sakop*). The word *pinuno*, in fact, likewise carries a related socio-linguistic nuance with its image of a tree that shelters and nourishes those that come under it. This kind of *sakop* relationship, therefore, was not a form of usury forcibly exacted by the benefactor on the basis of benefits bestowed but a free act of gratitude elicited from benefactees for favors received. As Andres and Ilada-Andres explain:

> The sakop prevails over the individual. It demands from the individual a continuing act of reciprocal action with the fellow members. The Filipino as an individual finds fulfillment in sakop-fulfillment.[39]

This positive evaluation of the Filipino practice of mutual assistance espoused by Colin is shared by the Franciscan Juan Francisco de San Antonio, who noted that there "they lived governed by their own chiefs; not with a hard and fast rule, but *all in friendly relations*. By virtue of this friendship they were obliged to aid their chief, both in his wars and in the cultivation of his fields; and *all to aid one another mutually*."[40] Here we see that this interdependence was not limited to the relationship between superiors and subordinates or between those

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[38]F. Colin, "Native Races and Their Customs" (Madrid, 1663), in E. Blair & J. A. Robertson, eds., *The Philippine Islands: 1493–1803* Vol. 40 (Cleveland, OH: The A. H. Clark Company, 1906), 96.

[39]T. D. Andres & P. C. B. Ilada-Andres, *Understanding the Filipino* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 2008), 59.

[40]J. F. de San Antonio, "The Native Peoples and Their Customs" (Manila, 1738–44), in E. Blair & J. A. Robertson, eds., *The Philippine Islands: 1493–1803* Vol. 40 (Cleveland, OH: The A. H. Clark Company, 1906), 348 (emphasis added).

who were materially secure and materially impoverished; it extended to all in the community who had a sense of responsibility for one another and thus provided reciprocal assistance in times of need.

This mutual assistance is called "damay" in Tagalog, defined as "1: tulong, saklolo o pakikiisa sa hirap, dalamhati, o anumang hindi mabuting kalagayan; 2: pagsangkot or pagkakasangkot sa isang pangyayari; 3: pakikibahagi sa gawain."[41] Such a threefold definition brings three important nuances to the surface: *damay* as the concrete assistance that is given, *damay* as a sense of personal involvement in an event, and *damay* as active participation.

Jose Abueva identifies *pagdadamayan* as a distinctive Filipino trait seen especially in the practice of giving *abuloy* or alms in times of bereavement.[42] Many Filipino neighborhoods especially in the rural areas continue this tradition of contributing materially for a person's wake and burial even up to now. Such concrete material assistance becomes the embodiment of the inner sentiment that is usually called *pakikiramay*, a word that is also derived from *pagdamay*. As people go to the wake or burial of the deceased, they say "Nakikiramay po kami" to the bereaved and show this *pakikiramay* by offering alms.

Patricia Licuanan connects this *pakikiramay* with *pakikipagkapwa-tao* and identifies it with the characteristically Filipino traits of availability, magnanimity, and neighborliness:

> *Pakikipagkapwa-tao* is manifested in a basic sense of justice and fairness, and in concern for others. It is demonstrated in the Filipino's ability to empathize with others, in helpfulness and generosity in times of need (*pakikiramay*), in the practice of bayanihan or mutual assistance, and in the famous Filipino hospitality.[43]

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[41]See V. S. Almario, ed., *UP Diksiyonaryong Filipino*, *binagong edisyon* (Quezon City: UP Sentro ng Wikang Filipino, 2009).

[42]J. V. Abueva, *The Making of the Filipino Nation and Republic* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1998), 631.

[43]P. Licuanan, "A Moral Recovery Program: Building a People—Building a Nation," in M. B. Dy, ed., *Values in Philippine Culture and Education* (Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994), 36.

Contributions of various kinds, whether in the form of money or service, are also made for occasions that entail huge expenses other than funerals and burials, such as weddings and other milestones. Although not compulsory, this practice is seen not only as a kind of cultural tradition but also as a means of assisting one's neighbors as they are wont to do in turn when the time comes. In this way, the otherwise burdensome expenses and onerous work needed for these big occasions are significantly lightened, and one gains a concrete sense that one is not alone but part of a real and living community. Not only is the sorrow or joy shared but the expenses and work are as well.

Moving on to the second level of the definition, *pagdadamayan* goes beyond providing external assistance and also represents the interior sense of involvement that it wells up from. Visitacion de la Torre, for one, states that *pagdadamayan* goes beyond mere *pakikisama* in that it entails "a certain level of commitment" to commiserate with and be of assistance to the other in times of need, be it emotional or financial.[44] One helps the neighbor not as an outsider but as one who truly commiserates or "suffers with" them. Alejo concurs by saying that *pagdamay* necessitates going out of oneself in order to enter into the experience of others.[45] This demands a sense of empathy and inter-belonging that makes the suffering of the other one's own.

Leoncini, meanwhile, identified *pagdamay* as the "encompassing value" concretized by the practice of *pakikisama* or maintaining smooth interpersonal relations.[46] As an "encompassing value," it is the underlying motive that governs social interactions; otherwise, *pakikisama* would be merely external or superficial conformity bereft of a deeper basis.

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[44]V. de la Torre, *Cultural Icons of the Philippines* (Makati City: Tower Book House, 2002), 120.

[45]A. E. Alejo, *Tao Po! Tuloy!: Isang Landas ng Pag-Unawa sa Loob ng Tao* (Quezon City: Office of Research and Publications, Ateneo de Manila University, 1990), 93.

[46]D. L. P. Leoncini, "A Conceptual Analysis of *Pakikisama*," in R. M. Gripaldo, ed., *Filipino Cultural Traits: Claro R. Ceniza Lectures* (Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2005), 175.

This sense of involvement and interrelatedness is rooted in the sense of belonging and connection that is very strong in the Filipino. As one of our local proverbs says, "Ang sakit ng kalingkingan, damdam ng buong katawan [The pain of the pinky is felt by the whole body]."[47] With this "corporate" sense of being interconnected and interrelated as members of one and the same body, one cannot turn a blind eye or a deaf ear to the sufferings of others which are always at the same time one's own suffering. This even goes so far as to imply a sense of communal ownership and sharing of private goods.

Andres and Ilada-Andres observe, for instance, that "[in] a community where there are Filipinos and there exists a sakop feeling, private property is the community's property." When some community members refuse to share what they have, this constitutes not only a failure in generosity but also a transgression of the norms of neighborliness. A family that owns the lone television set in the vicinity, for example, is expected to share it with their neighbors, otherwise they would violate "the moral imperative of the sakop."[48]

*Pagdadamayan* as such is the sharing not only of material goods or mutual service but also of life, with the sharing of material goods being merely the external expression of this inner sharing of life. It is a genuine and felt sense of interconnectedness and not just material interdependence such as in the transactional sense of *quid pro quo*. As Alejo said, "may kapwa sa loob ng tao" (there is a neighbor within every human person)[49] who forms an integral and essential part of one's humanity that can never be extricated. This worldview is likewise reflected in our native socio-linguistics where the other is never really an other, an *iba*, but always a fellow, a *kapwa* or *ka-puwang* with whom I partake of the same space (*puwang*), the same world, and the same existence.

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[47]Alejo, *Tao Po! Tuloy!*, 91.

[48]Andres & Ilada-Andres, *Understanding the Filipino*, 59.

[49]Alejo, *Tao Po! Tuloy!*, 91.

This sense of belonging to a wider community goes beyond the narrow notions of family that sometimes constitute, under the purview of social ethics, a moral liability for the Filipino. In 1999, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines observed that our family ties are very strong to the point that Filipinos are able to do anything for their family regardless of whether it is right or wrong. They also noted that these strong family ties sometimes turn into a sense of blind allegiance that leads to ironies and injustices in the economic, political, and cultural spheres. The *New National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines 2007* observed, in a similar vein, that "Filipinos are indeed social-minded, but their social-mindedness is very often limited to the family or small group. This is one reason why corruption is so rampant, since the public good is equated with the good of one's family."[50] The Filipino attitude of *pagkakanya-kanya* thus becomes a source of social apathy and fragmentation as well as an obstacle to national unity. The Philippine bishops have pointed out that Filipinos need to transcend this narrow sense of family and transform it into a wider sense of belonging to the wider family of God which includes the poor and sinners.[51]

It is in this light that Manuel Dy calls for an ethics of solidarity as imperative for the Philippines today: "For a nation of 7,100 or more islands, divided into so many regions, each at home in its own language, and with factions of different if not conflicting ideologies, the value of solidarity may be our primary road to survival as a nation."[52] Unless we can also shift to an authentically communitarian mindset, there is not much to be hoped for, even with the proposal for us to

[50]Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, *New National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines 2007* (Manila: Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, 2007), no. 70.

[51]Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, *Landas ng Pagpapakabanal* (Manila: Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, 1999), 73–74.

[52]M. B. Dy, "Outline of a Project of Filipino Ethics," in M. B. Dy, ed., *Values in Philippine Culture and Education* (Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994), 21.

transition to a federal form of government that is being advanced today. Every Filipino needs to imbibe *pagdadamayan* and express it as active participation in the life and affairs of society instead of remaining comfortable in the narrow confines of one's personal and familial interests.

## Solidarity as *Pagdadamayan*

The *New Vicassan's English-Pilipino Dictionary* translates solidarity as "lubós na pagkakaisá; matibay na kaisahán (pagkakaisá)";[53] Leo English translates it in similar fashion as "pagkakaisá, kaisahán."[54] These are valid translations that follow the etymology of solidarity that we have seen in Gomez. As a theologian, however, I would like to propose the word *pagdadamayan* as a dynamic equivalent of the concept of solidarity that is expounded in the context of CST. Let us now highlight some key intersections and points of convergence between *pagdadamayan* and solidarity from our exposition above.

***Pagdadamayan* and solidarity both express a "corporate" vision of human society.** Together they point to an inclusive understanding of society as a unified body, with a particular emphasis on the inclusion of the poor and marginalized. For *pagdadamayan*, this is expressed beautifully in the adage, "Ang sakit ng kalingkingan, damdam ng buong katawan [the pain of the pinky is felt by the whole body]."[55] All the members of society are interconnected and so the pain of one is the pain of all. One also notes, moreover, that the pinky is traditionally regarded as the weakest of the five fingers. Emphasis is placed therefore on the weakest and most vulnerable sectors of society.

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[53]See V. C. Santos & L. E. Santos, *New Vicassan's English-Pilipino Dictionary* (Pasig City: Anvil Publishing, 1995).

[54]See L. J. English, *English-Tagalog Dictionary* (Mandaluyong City: Cacho Hermanos, Inc., 1977).

[55]Alejo, *Tao Po! Tuloy!*, 91.

We encounter the same "corporate image" in the Christian imagination, especially with the Pauline Body of Christ analogy as applied to the Church: "If one member of Christ's body suffers, all suffer. If one member is honored, all rejoice" (cf. 1 Cor. 12: 12–26). This understanding of society has been highlighted in the body of CST from the very beginning with the use of the word solidarity first in *Mater et Magistra* and especially in John Paul II's *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* where it was linked with the concept of integral development. Its scope has most recently been widened even more by Francis in paragraph 240 of *Laudato Si'*, where it is taken to include not only all of humanity but also all of creation in light of the encyclical's emphasis on the interconnectedness of everything.

**Both *pagdadamayan* and solidarity go beyond superficial unity and cooperation and into a deeper sense of connection and relatedness.** The concept of solidarity in the Christian notion is rooted in our common human "origin, nature and destiny"[56] in the Trinitarian God. As the Second Vatican Council taught, solidarity is part of the economy of salvation, rooted in Christ, and prefigures in eschatological anticipation the communion of the elect with God. It is more than just "the heart of Christian praxis";[57] rather, it is the living out of our being and essence as human beings created in the image of God who in his deepest essence is communion and solidarity. This leads to the recognition of the "other" as "neighbor" with whom I share a common humanity created in the image of God.

In a similar vein, the Filipino culture of mutual assistance must not be understood as a form of tyranny or slavery as in the case of Combés and de San Agustin and neither as a "debt of gratitude" in the simplistic sense of *quid pro quo*. As Colin and de San Antonio saw it, this reciprocity is rooted in the mutual recognition of each other as friends and members of the same barangay who are called to aid each other with mutual concern. We also take into account the important point of

[56]Gomez, *Solidarity: The Heart of Christian Praxis*, 10.

[57]Gomez, *The Praxis of Justice and Solidarity*, 174. See also Gomez, *Solidarity: The Heart of Christian Praxis*, 6.

Andres and Ilada-Andres who said that the Filipino finds fulfillment in *sakop*-fulfillment.[58] Instead of being enslaved by networks of social interdependence, the Filipino finds herself fulfilled by finding herself in relation with her fellow Filipinos.

**Both *pagdadamayan* and solidarity are multi-dimensional realities entailing a sense of involvement that issues in action and participation.** As we have seen, Francis understood solidarity as a mindset, reaction, and decision.[59] The CCC, meanwhile, presents mindset as a law, principle, duty, and virtue.[60] These constitute the different dimensions or ways of understanding solidarity, and always underlined is the practical and decisive aspect of solidarity which flows from a genuine involvement in human affairs, especially the plight of the poor.

In *Misericordia et Misera*, his apostolic letter at the conclusion of the Jubilee of Mercy, Francis lamented how the "culture of extreme individualism" has taken away the sense of solidarity and concern for others.[61] He pointed at the same time to solidarity as "the utmost response of mercy" in the face of ongoing attacks against the dignity of human persons.[62] This needful response, the Pope added, should not only be scattered or sporadic; it must also be stable and purposive in order to transform persons and cultures.

*Pagdamay* in its Filipino context, meanwhile, is understood primarily to be the concrete assistance that expresses the interior disposition of concern and sympathy. The *nakikiramay* shows her *pagdamay* not only by

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[58]Andres & Ilada-Andres, *Understanding the Filipino*, 59.

[59]Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 188–189.

[60]*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 361, 1939, 1942, 1948, 2407, and 2439.

[61]Francis, *Misericordia et Misera* (November 20, 2016), 18. Available at https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap_20161120_misericordia-et-misera.html (accessed May 2, 2017).

[62]Francis, *Misericordia et Misera*, 19.

her presence or words but also by offering material help or service. In this sense, *pagdamay* is a true virtue which makes itself known in deeds.

This concrete assistance imparts to its recipient a lived sense that one does not have to undergo a given experience or bear a burden alone, especially in a moment of trial or difficulty, that the community is always there not only to share the expenses and work but also to partake of one's joy and pain. In the wider social context, *pagdamay* takes the form of a communitarian mindset and of active participation in the life of the community, something sorely needed as an antidote to the Filipino tendency to remain confined to one's familial interests.

## Conclusion

Important things are gained in translating solidarity as *pagdadamayan* instead of literally as *pagkakaisa*, namely: 1) the "corporate" vision of human society, 2) an interior sense of connection and interrelatedness that goes beyond its external manifestation in unity and cooperation (*pagkakaisa*), and 3) an understanding of solidarity as a sense of involvement that issues into action and participation.

May this experiment in inculturated translation be a humble contribution to the development of our local theological vocabulary. May it lead to a new appreciation of the concept of solidarity that is very much needed in our society today, a concept which may seem foreign at first but one that is actually very close to the Filipino mind and heart.

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# A TEST CASE FOR RECENT REFLECTIONS ON INSPIRATION

## How Can Psalm 137 Be Inspired?

*Francis D. Alvarez, S.J.*

Catholic scholars studying the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, customarily referred to as *Dei Verbum* (DV), comment that the document asserts the facticity of inspiration but does not explain how it works.[1] No particular theory of inspiration is canonized in DV, and the question regarding the *how* of inspiration remains open.[2] In 2010, forty-five years after the Second Vatican Council issued DV, Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical *Verbum Domini* (VD) called for a "deeper study of the process of inspiration" for "a greater understanding of the truth contained in the sacred books … in order better to respond to the need to interpret the sacred texts in accordance with their nature" and to "bear fruit both for biblical science and for the spiritual life of the faithful."[3] This is what the Pontifical Biblical Commission (PBC) sought to do in *The Inspiration and Truth of Sacred Scripture: The Word that Comes from God*

[1]See, for example, R. D. Witherup, *The Word of God at Vatican II: Exploring* Dei Verbum (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), 27.

[2]See J. R. Donahue, "Scripture: A Roman Catholic Perspective," *Review & Expositor* 79 (1982): 237.

[3]Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2010), 19.

*and Speaks of God for the Salvation of the World* (ITSS) which was published in 2014. The PBC admits at the conclusion of this document, however, that it has not come up with "a definitive and exhaustive examination of the difficult problems found in the Scriptures" and ends with its own call for further reflection on the mystery of inspiration.[4] This article, therefore, is an attempt to add to this conversation by looking at the apparent difficulties in ascribing inspiration to the Psalms. The discussion will focus on what appears to be a particularly difficult Psalm to consider as being inspired: Psalm 137.

## Difficulties with Regard to Inspiration, the Psalms, and Psalm 137

Raymond Collins locates the core of DV's teaching on inspiration in chapter 3, paragraph 11:[5]

> Those divinely revealed realities which are contained and presented in Sacred Scripture have been committed to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. For holy mother Church, relying on the belief of the Apostles (see Jn. 20:31; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19–20, 3:15–16), holds that the books of both the Old and New Testaments in their entirety, with all their parts, are sacred and canonical because written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church herself. In composing the sacred books, God chose men and while employed by Him they made use of their powers and abilities, so that with Him acting in them and through them, they, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which He wanted.
>
> Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that

[4]Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Inspiration and Truth of Sacred Scripture: The Word that Comes from God and Speaks of God for the Salvation of the World* Kindle ed., trans. T. Esposito & S. Gregg (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), locations 3090–3093.

[5]R. F. Collins, "Inspiration," in R. E. Brown, J. A. Fitzmyer, & R. E. Murphy, eds., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1990), 1024.

> the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation. Therefore "all Scripture is divinely inspired and has its use for teaching the truth and refuting error, for reformation of manners and discipline in right living, so that the man who belongs to God may be efficient and equipped for good work of every kind" (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

In the first part of the quote above, DV makes it clear that the books considered as Sacred Scripture have "God as their author" and that "God chose men" and acted *in* them and *through* them yet still "made use of their powers and abilities" so that they were also "true authors." As Matthew Ramage writes,

> these human authors were not puppets in God's hands, but neither were they self-sufficient in the process of composing scripture. It was a work which entailed the full use of the faculties and gifts of scripture's human authors, put to use in order that God's own ineffable words might be put into human words which his people could understand.[6]

This dynamic is taken up again in DV 13 using an analogy with the Incarnation:

> For the words of God, expressed in human language, have been made like human discourse, just as the word of the eternal Father, when He took to Himself the flesh of human weakness, was in every way made like men.

The characteristically Catholic "both-and" rather than "either/or" type of thinking coupled with the Christological analogy above gives us confidence to say that Sacred Scripture is not word that is half-God and half-man but word that is *fully* divine and *fully* human. This discounts certain possibilities, even though DV does not canonize any theory of inspiration. We cannot, for instance, hold a dictation theory of inspiration (i.e., that human authors were like secretaries taking down whatever God said) because this makes the human authors passive instruments; inspiration in this way would not be fully human. We cannot hold a negative assistance theory (i.e., that

[6]M. J. Ramage, *Dark Passages of the Bible: Engaging Scripture with Benedict XVI & Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 56.

God only intervened when the human authors were about to make mistakes) because this limits God's participation; such a manner of inspiration would not be fully divine. Indeed, we cannot hold a theory of subsequent approbation (i.e., that God, while not actively composing Sacred Scripture, allowed into the canon only those books that mirrored his will) for the same reason.

Sacred Scripture, the word of God, as fully divine and fully human in a way that is similar to Jesus Christ, the Word of God, who is fully divine and fully human may be conceptually neat yet it does become messy especially with the Psalms. Scripture is supposed to be, as a traditional formulation puts it, "the words of God in the words of men," yet the dynamic seems to tip heavily on the side of the human in the case of the Psalms. There are only five Psalms where God speaks (Pss. 50, 75, 81, 87, and 95); most of the Psalter are words directed to God. How, then, can God be the author of the Psalms? A common solution to this problem proclaims that God gives us the words with which to address God. Yet while it is easy to see this in hymns of praise and thanksgiving, what kind of God would want to be worshipped with the last verse of Ps. 137: "Happy shall they be who take your little ones and dash them against the rock"?

DV 12 reminds us:

> To search out the intention of the sacred writers, attention should be given, among other things, to "literary forms." For truth is set forth and expressed differently in texts which are variously historical, prophetic, poetic, or of other forms of discourse. The interpreter must investigate what meaning the sacred writer intended to express and actually expressed in particular circumstances by using contemporary literary forms in accordance with the situation of his own time and culture. For the correct understanding of what the sacred author wanted to assert, due attention must be paid to the customary and characteristic styles of feeling, speaking and narrating which prevailed at the time of the sacred writer, and to the patterns men normally employed at that period in their everyday dealings with one another.

DV as such, along with the subsequent PBC document entitled "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church" (IBC)—which, like DV, built upon Pope Pius XII's *Divino Afflante Spiritu*—emphasizes the

importance of historical criticism, rhetorical criticism, form criticism, source criticism, redaction criticism, and other modern methods of analysis. Can we explain, then, the harshness of the ideas and words of Ps. 137 as being part of its poetry and the horror in its images as hyperbole? And yet, does not this recourse address only the human side of the dynamic of inspiration? How can God be the author of Ps. 137?

Collins points out that the "author" formula does not necessarily ascribe literary authorship to God. *Auctor* in Latin has a wider range of meaning than the English *author;* it has been used especially in ecclesial tradition to mean producer, source, or originator.[7] But how can God be the producer, source, or origin of the sadness, anger, and desire for revenge in Ps. 137?

In the second part of the quote above, DV clarifies that inspiration, as Ronald Witherup comments, is "not a blanket approval of literal *inerrancy*" but an acknowledgment of "the lack of errors regarding the essentials for salvation."[8] Inspiration is not about historical or scientific truths; inspiration is about salvific truth. But what is salvific in Ps. 137? Benedict XVI sees in it a "heartfelt invocation to the Lord" that also expresses "the sentiments of hope and expectation of salvation."[9] The Psalmist, after all, is still able to turn to the Lord even in sorrow and rage. There is also trust in the Lord as the Psalmist does not take matters into her own hands, although she leaves vengeance to another: "Happy shall *they* be who take your little ones and dash them against the rock!" Thus, while there is definitely something salvific here, why is it allowed to exist alongside a cry for revenge? Many scholars reading the Hebrew text of Ps. 137 understand—from the use of the perfect tense in the first verses as well as from the repeated use of the adverb "there"—that the Psalmist is already separated in time and

[7]Collins, "Inspiration," 1027–1028.

[8]Witherup, *The Word of God at Vatican II*, 36.

[9]Benedict XVI, "General Audience" (November 30, 2005). Available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2005/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20051130.html (accessed December 11, 2015).

space from the exilic conditions in Babylon. Verses 1–4 are in the past; in verse 5, the Psalmist addresses Jerusalem directly as already being present there.[10]

Why is the Psalmist allowed to hold on to anger instead of moving on? What is salvific about letting fury ferment? And what can be salvific in desiring the death not just of babies but of a whole future generation of people?

How can God be the author of Ps. 137? What can be salvific in it? To gain a better perspective, we set these questions aside for the moment and turn to the insights of Ormond Rush and the PBC's latest document on inspiration.

## Ormond Rush and Inspiration

Inspiration in Ormond Rush's view is best understood in terms of the Holy Spirit working through what the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church or *Lumen Gentium* (LG) has called a *sensus fidei*—"a supernatural discernment in matters of faith" (LG 12) or a sense of the faith. The *sensus fidei* for Rush is a "Spirit-given capacity" that enables the faithful to "synthesize their faith with all they know and experience" within the struggles of daily life. It is the "imaginative capacity" with which the faithful "'make sense of' their lives [and of] the God reaching out to them" in a "relatively adequate way (at least adequate in terms of salvation)" within their daily reception of God's self-communication.[11]

Rush nuances his treatment of the *sensus fidei* by making a distinction between the sense of the faith of a bigger body of the faithful or of a community (which he calls the *sensus fidei fidelium* or *sensus fidelium* for short) and the sense of the faith of an individual believer within that

[10]L. C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, rev. ed., Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 21 (Dallas, TX: Word Incorporated, 2002), 304.

[11]O. Rush, *The Eyes of Faith: The Sense of the Faithful and the Church's Reception of Revelation* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 66.

community (which he calls the *sensus fidei fidelis* or, more briefly, *sensus fidei*).[12] There is no real separation between the two senses, however; instead, there is a dynamic interplay of giving and receiving, as will be seen below.

With the terms clarified, we can now dive deeper into Rush's proposal: "The continuous interpretative and evaluative activity of the *sensus fidei / fidelium* throughout the production, canonical selection, and ongoing reception / traditioning of the set canonical text constitutes its inspiration by the Holy Spirit."[13]

Rush expands this concise summary of his proposal by pointing out that an adequate theology of inspiration needs to give attention to three dimensions of Sacred Scripture:

1) the historical process of its production and canonization,
2) its ecclesial function as a fixed authoritative text, and
3) its reception in history.[14]

He sees the Holy Spirit as active through the *sensus fidei* of individuals and the *sensus fidelium* of communities in each of these three dimensions. This occurs in the following ways:

1) as a generator of the reception and traditioning process that produces the writings and the canon,

2) as a "quality" of the canonical texts as agreed upon *through* a *consensus fidelium* and functioning *as* a *consensus fidelium*—a normative ecclesial collection of diverse "senses of the faith," and

3) as a generator of the ongoing reception of canonical Scripture into the future.[15]

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[12]Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 66.

[13]Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 153.

[14]Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 156.

[15]Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 156.

## 1) Inspiration of the Production

Applying the thought of Rush,[16] how can we trace the formation of the texts we now consider as inspired? An individual whose *sensus fidei* has been formed by the *sensus fidelium* of the community receives God's revelation in daily life, puts into expression (either orally or in writing) how she is making sense of God's self-communication, and gives it to the community whose *sensus fidelium* can learn from it and whose *sensus fidelium* can at the same time correct or modify it. Here the community is a gathering of people that works through the actions of unique individuals and not a monolith that acts like a solid block. Indeed, it is easier on the one hand to track the movements of one person versus those of a community of individuals; you only have to follow one person. On the other hand, however, individual writers disappear in the production of Scripture, yet the texts we have received through history can give us a glimpse of the community and what they discerned and valued as authentic reflections of their faith.

How do we know if a community approved of a particular text? It would have been disseminated, and if individuals found value in it, they would have asked to hear or read it again (most probably in liturgy and worship) and copied it for others to profit from. It was passed on in short, and in this passing on modifications and corrections were made not only in the text itself but also in the *sensus fidei* of individuals and the *sensus fidelium* of the community. A tradition was formed that also formed in turn those who took part in it until, finally, the communally-approved texts were gathered into a canon.

These two previous paragraphs describe what Rush means by the "reception and traditioning" that produces the writings and the canon. This happens not in a clearly defined sequence of events but in a complex process working through the *sensus fidei* and the *sensus fidelium*, with the Holy Spirit enabling both senses the whole time.

The interplay of *sensus fidei* and *sensus fidelium* can also be read as Rush giving a nod to the more social and communal theories of

[16]See chapters 5 and 6 of Rush, *The Eyes of Faith* (116–172).

inspiration.[17] What I wish to highlight in Rush's proposal, however, is the element of process. The texts we have in Sacred Scripture are products of a process yet they do not always reflect finished and polished resolutions; indeed, they should be seen more as "snapshots" of moments along the way. Some are like candid pictures; others are like posed portraits. Yet while these "snapshots" have already gone through Spirit-guided "brightness, contrast, color, and white balance correction"—collectively known in digital imagery as "processing"—to make the image they contain clearer or closer to the reality they wish to portray, they are still "snapshots" that are part of a bigger picture. Indeed, while there are "snapshots" or texts that we privilege more than others (a "canon within a canon," as these have been called), no individual text or book presents the story of God's revelation and our response in faith in their entirety.

## 2) Inspiration of the Text

The process does not end with the production of the texts and their collection into the canon. The same Spirit that has worked, through the give-and-take of the *sensus fidei* of individuals and the *sensus fidelium* of communities, in the processing of different *biblia* (or books), including their being assembled into our Bible today, also works in and through these now-canonized texts in a unique way that brings in a whole different aspect to their inspiration. "That uniqueness relates not only to the intrinsic worth of each work but also to their intrinsic worth as a collection."[18] The individual texts, which, as discussed before, are products of the *sensus fidei* of persons and the *sensus fidelium* of their communities, must now be brought into a dialogue with the *sensus fidei* of other persons and the *sensus fidelium* of other communities in the other texts of the canon. The different texts in the Bible must now

[17]Rush does cite what other scholars consider to be the seminal works on the social model of inspiration: K. Rahner's *Inspiration in the Bible* (London: Burns and Oates, 1964); J. L. McKenzie's "The Social Character of Inspiration," *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 24 (1962): 115–124; and B. Vawter's *Biblical Inspiration* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972).

[18]Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 159.

mutually norm one another in the same way that the *sensus fidelium* of a community and the *sensus fidei* of persons mutually corrected each other in any given text. "In this way, the Bible, as a whole, is self-correcting."[19] Indeed, the aspect of inspiration that Rush brings out here is how an individual work in the Bible must always be considered as being part of a whole. This becomes part of the process of inspiration, and the faithful reading the Bible today are invited to take part in it.

## 3) Inspiration of the Reception

The process does not end with the dialogue between texts; the faithful reader is asked to let the Bible dialogue with history, with the events of daily life. We must also try to see how the Bible has been received in the past and how it is being received in the present, and, in so doing, catch a glimpse of how it can be received in the future. From a dialogue between texts, we now enter a dialogue between texts and life and between how texts have been received. Why? Rush writes:

> The history of reception of the Bible over two millennia has inspired a rich tapestry of spiritualities, theologies, saints, religious orders, reform movements, works of art, writings, traditions, identities, and styles of Christianity. [And again, these are products of the *sensus fidei* of persons and the *sensus fidelium* of communities.] The history of theology and the history of doctrine could be narrated in terms of a history of diverse receptions of the Bible. Each reception brings to the fore elements that others may leave in the background; each reception, in its particular selection, is a distinctive configuration of the Christian tradition. No one reception exhausts the full meaning of what was originally given and originally received in revelation.…[20]

Any particular reception, therefore, does not "exhaust the full meaning" of revelation in the same way that an individual text in the Bible is just a "snapshot" in the process and does not tell the whole story. Rush extends the process of inspiration to include the reader and his or her reception. Yet in the same way that not every text written

[19]Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 159.

[20]Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 159.

about faith is considered to be inspired, not every reception can be considered to be inspired as well.

How can we talk of an inspired reader and an inspired reception? Such inspiration—similar to the inspiration of the production of the texts—can be determined only retrospectively. Here is where Rush brings in the concept of approbative reception.[21] It is similar to the approbation in the early stages of the canonization process, when the *sensus fidei* of individuals is normed by the *sensus fidelium* of the community.

DV 12 asserts that "Holy Scripture must be read and interpreted in the sacred spirit in which it was written." How can we know, though, if a reading or reception is in the same spirit of the text? DV 12 gives us three criteria:

1) The reader or interpreter of Scripture must keep in mind "the content and unity of the whole of Scripture."

2) "The living tradition of the whole Church" down through the centuries and the diverse ways in which Scripture has been received in diverse contexts must be taken into account.

3) Finally, the interpreter must attend to the whole of the Church's teachings which have been officially formulated in the light of past readings of Scripture—the *analogia fidei*, as expressed by DV 12.

Who carries out the application of these three criteria? Rush turns to DV 8 and points out the three voices that we need: the people's contemporary experience of salvation, theological scholarship, and the guidance of the magisterium.[22]

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[21]Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 165.

[22]O. Rush, "*Dei Verbum* Forty Years On: Revelation, Inspiration, and the Spirit," *The Australasian Catholic Record* 83 (2006): 410–411.

In these three criteria to be applied and three voices to be heard, it is easy to see not only the central role of the *sensus fidei* of individuals in dynamic interplay with the *sensus fidelium* of communities but also the Holy Spirit, of course, who enables these two senses.

Looking at inspiration through the lens of the sense of the faith, we are able to see how Sacred Scripture can be both fully divine and fully human. As defined above, the sense of the faith of individuals and communities is a "Spirit-given capacity" which enables the faithful to "synthesize their faith with all they know and experience." Although we still have to enact the potential and do the synthesizing ourselves, it is a capacity given by God and given not just once, for it is "aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth" (LG 12). The sense of the faith of individuals and communities, moreover, is "constantly being 'attuned' and 'calibrated' by the Holy Spirit, so that the [C]hurch may more acutely recognize in the signs of the times the new things God is doing."[23] This, needless to say, requires the continuous cooperation of the faithful.

## The PBC and Inspiration

What the PBC highlights in its recent document on inspiration that is most useful in our discussion is the aspect of relationship. The process of inspiration that we have discussed above does not unfold impersonally but in a relationship. As the ITSS states, "In our enquiry on the indications of the divine provenance of the various writings [which is another way of talking about inspiration], we established as fundamental the living relationship with God."[24] The Bible manifests this relationship in a myriad of ways; the PBC sees it specifically in the Psalms like so: "The suppliant listens to the voice of God, heard

[23]Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 294.

[24]Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Inspiration and Truth of Sacred Scripture*, Kindle loc. 1204–1205.

above all in the great events of creation and of the saving history of Israel, but also in some particular personal experiences."[25]

After recognizing the importance of process and relationship in inspiration, we are now ready to apply the insights of Rush and the PBC to the Psalms in general and Ps. 137 in particular.

## The Psalms as a Product of the Sense of the Faith

Hans-Joachim Kraus speculates that the origin of the Psalms stands between the extremes of the Psalter being an exclusively cultic and priestly book on the one hand and a collection of private poems on the other.[26] Many of the Psalms would have been the works of individual priests and temple singers who drew on their *sensus fidei* while being normed by the *sensus fidelium* of their guilds. They would have derived much of their content from the reports of individuals in distress, those who have recovered from threatening experiences, and those who wanted to express their thanksgiving and praise, although the priests would have couched these reports in "conventionalized formulations."[27] Behind these conventions of expression would have been how the community synthesized and made meaning out of these experiences, a synthesis that was also influenced over time by the experiences of many individuals. The products of these exchanges would have been sung in the temple and later on in the diaspora, thereby expressing the *sensus fidelium* of communities and forming the *sensus fidei* of individuals. Here we see once again the dynamic interplay between the sense of the faith of individuals and that of the community, all of which are enabled by the Holy Spirit.

One may raise the objection that if the Holy Spirit was sent only after Jesus Christ's resurrection, how could the Spirit have acted in the

[25]Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Inspiration and Truth of Sacred Scripture*, Kindle loc. 1177–1178.

[26]H.-J. Kraus, *Psalms 1–59: A Commentary*, trans. H. C. Oswald (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1988), 66.

[27]Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 66.

sense of the faith of the people? We can respond to this with DV 11 and its attestation that both the Old and New Testaments "in their entirety, with all their parts, are sacred and canonical because [they were] written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.…" 2 Timothy 3:16–17, moreover, holds that "all scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work"; many exegetes read "scripture" in this quote as pertaining to a set of texts comparable to what we now call the Old Testament, the scripture which the New Testament writers would have known. Yet the Old Testament had already attested to the action of the Spirit even before the time of the New Testament and DV: we read in Gen. 1:2 of how the Spirit of God hovered over the waters during creation; Ezra in Nehemiah 9:20 talks about how the ancestors of the Israelites were instructed by the Spirit; and, as one final instance in a list of many other possible examples, Ps. 139:7 professes (or maybe complains of) the constant presence of the Spirit of God: "Where can I go from your spirit?" Indeed, while this reading of the aforementioned verses is already influenced by Trinitarian belief, Trinitarian theology also allows us to say that God the Father never acted without God the Son and God the Spirit. The Spirit certainly must have been active then during Old Testament times.[28]

## How Can God be the Author of Ps. 137?

We can say that God is the author of Ps. 137 because God is the origin of the world in which Ps. 137 happened and the source of the life that experienced the trauma related in its verses. Can we find a better answer than this, though?

[28]An intriguing question is, "How is the activity of the Spirit before Pentecost different from after Pentecost? How can we express that something entirely new happened at Pentecost while still honoring and valuing what happened before it?" This, however, is already beyond the scope of this article.

The Latin *auctor* does not only mean literary author, origin, or source; grammarians have traced its connection to *augere*—to increase, to augment, to strengthen, and to grow. In fact, all of the etymological dictionaries of the English language in the twentieth century agree that both "author" and "authority" come from *augere*.[29] Author-ity, therefore, is not just about a Creator causing the beginning nor a general commanding soldiers. Author-ity or author-ship should also call to mind the image of a gardener helping her plants to grow.

2 Tim. 3:16–17 tells us that Scripture is for "teaching" and "training." As a teacher or trainer, you have to meet your student where he or she is. This is part of how to relate with someone—one must enter the other's process. It is how growth begins. As such, we can say that God is the author of Ps. 137 because God relates with the pray-er where she is and helps her to grow. It is in Ps. 137 that we have a snapshot of the "raw edges in our lives that do not easily submit to the religious convictions we possess on good days."[30] But if this is where our sense of the faith is, the Holy Spirit still comes to be with us and show care for us there.

## How is Ps. 137 Salvific?

That which is salvific in Ps. 137's cry for vengeance is the assurance that we have a God who allows us to be sad, angry, and weak in God's presence. God gives us a community in which we can vent all our negative feelings. As Walter Brueggemann wisely writes, "There is a way beyond the psalms of vengeance, but it is a way through them and

[29]S. Donovan, D. Fjellestad, & R. Lundén, "Introduction: Author, Authorship, Authority, and Other Matters," in S. Donovan, D. Fjellestad, & R. Lundén, eds., *Authority Matters: Rethinking the Theory and Practice of Authorship*, DQR Studies in Literature Vol. 43 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), 2.

[30]W. Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 85.

not around them."[31] God knows that we need to go through certain stages; God is patient with us.

What is also salvific in Ps. 137 is how it must be read with other parts of the Bible. The Psalms that sandwich it draw us out and help us grow: Ps. 136 seeks to prepare us for the trauma in Ps. 137 by reminding us that God's "steadfast love endures forever" no matter what happens; Ps. 138 ends by giving us a model of trust: "Though I walk in the midst of trouble … the Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; Your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever!"

The point of going through the sadness and anger in Ps. 137 is to go beyond them, even if this might take longer than we expect. Yet an inspired reception, an inspired "going through," must also be held in tension with loving one's enemies and blessing persecutors (Matthew 5:44; Romans 12:14) as well as with other texts in the same Old Testament that speak about treating our enemies kindly (Exodus 23:4–5; Leviticus 19:17–18; Proverbs 24:17 and 25:21). If being in a relationship means entering the other's process, we must also try to enter God's process as God enters ours and see where God desires us to go. And, perhaps when we have finally gone beyond the trauma of Ps. 137, we can still go back and pray it again and again to see how we have grown, how God supported our growth, and how to better connect with others who might still be stuck in Ps. 137's throes.

DV 13 can serve as a summary of our whole discussion:

> In Sacred Scripture, therefore, while the truth and holiness of God always remains intact, the marvelous "condescension" of eternal wisdom is clearly shown, "that we may learn the gentle kindness of God, which words cannot express, and how far He has gone in adapting His language with thoughtful concern for our weak human nature."

We can say that the insights of Rush and the PBC on the importance of process and relationship are in one sense already in DV. What "new" thing did Rush and the PBC add, then? They were

[31]W. Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms: Engaging Scripture and the Life of the Spirit*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2007), 80.

able to highlight and develop what DV contained. The movement here is similar to what happens when we interpret Scripture—any "new" thing that we discover we find already embedded in the text, yet it cannot really be seen until a certain time and without the focus given to it by our experiences and present context as well as the support of previous interpretations.

DV 13 takes on St. John Chrysostom's expression "marvelous condescension." In our context today, it may be better to see this as accompaniment. Our God enters into a relationship with us, meets us where we are, leads us through a process using our sense of the faith, and helps us to grow. How can we not be inspired by this?

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# THE ETERNAL BODY OF MAN IS THE IMAGINATION

## Imagining the Book of Revelation through the Eyes of William Blake

*Markus E. Locker*

Given what is arguably an absence of manifest persecution[1] that usually gives rise to apocalyptic prophecies, the question remains as to what inspired John of Patmos to communicate the "Revelation of Jesus Christ"[2] to seven prominent churches in Asia Minor by means of a book which, for the most part, contains mystifying visions permeated by symbolic imagery and dense figurative language.[3]

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[1]This position is best explained as follows: "It is less clear whether … [Revelation's] references to persecution refer to the [present] or to the author's expectation for the future.… While no official persecution of Christians was put in motion by Domitian, it is likely that sporadic opposition to Christians took various forms in Roman Asia…" (see "The Book of Revelation," in D. N. Freedman, ed., *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000], 1126). Along these lines, W. Howard-Brook writes: "Rather, the evidence of both historical documents and the text of Revelation itself suggests that it was seduction by the Roman Empire from within a context of relative comfort, rather than a terrifying persecution, that more accurately describes the situation of the original audience of the book of Revelation" (W. Howard-Brook & A. Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999], xxi–xxii).

[2]This article uses "Revelation," "the Book of Revelation," and "Apocalypse" interchangeably.

[3]One can ask in similar fashion why the Early Church agreed to retain this book in its canon. See especially W. C. Weinrich, "Introduction to the Revelation

Commentators concur that the Book of Revelation is situated in the context of reaction toward heresies that had entered some prominent Christian churches of Asia Minor,[4] yet they continue to disagree on the particular significance of John's visions.[5] Thus, while the epistolary part of the book (chapters 2 and 3) addresses erroneous beliefs, heretical factions, and unacceptable ritual practices found within the communities, this article assumes that the seven letters of the Apocalypse are not only concerned with "what" these heretical doctrines were and how they impacted the early Christian life but also offer a possible insight into "why" certain religious viewpoints that allowed for a compromise with Satan, the Antichrist,[6] could enter Christianity shortly after its inception. In so doing, the letters deal implicitly with the question of how Satan, manifested by the Roman imperial cult, could lose his terrifying and appalling appearance for second generation Christians. The visions of the book (chapters 1 and 4 to 22:5) are consequently believed to be part of the answer. On the whole, the visions of the Book of Revelation seek to restore a divine perspective of history which Christians in the Roman Empire seem to have lost by offering an insight into reality from a lost spiritual vantage point (cf. Rev. 1:10–11; 4:1)—that is, the imagination of faith or, in the

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to John," in W. C. Weinrich, ed., *Revelation* (Madison, WI: InterVarsity Press, 2005), xvii–xx.

[4]The teachings of Jezebel, Balaam, and the Nicolatians all point to ideologies that advocate a compromise with idolatry practiced within the imperial cult. An interesting view is provided by W. M. Mackay, who sees the names Balaam, Jezebel, and Nicolas as standing for the disvalues of worldliness, false doctrine, and ritualism, respectively (W. M. Mackay, "Another Look at the Nicolaitans," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 45:2 [April–June 1973]: 111–115; see p. 115).

[5]The main approaches in interpreting Revelation are: 1) futurist, 2) historicist, 3) preterist, 4) paschal liturgical, and 5) esoteric. See J. J. Pilch, *What Are They Saying About the Book of Revelation?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

[6]While the term "antichrist" occurs only in the First and Second Letter of John, Revelation's images of the beast are "anti-images" of Christ, the Lamb. See M. E. Locker, "The Lamb of Revelation: In the Light of Peircian Semiotics," *Landas* 16:1 (2002): 65–81.

words of William Blake, the Holy Ghost who grounds and sustains the Christian view of the world. E. R. Wolfson stresses this point further:

> The world of the imaginal is an intermediary realm wherein the imaginative forms (or archetypal images) symbolize the intelligible in terms of the sensory. The primary function of the imagination is hermeneutical: rather than recalling past sense data or combining these data in some innovative and, technically speaking, unexperienced way, the imagination produces symbols of the spiritual entities that act as interpretative filtering screens through which these entities appear in human consciousness. In that respect one can speak of the "symbolizing power of imagination".… Imagination is the faculty through which one opens the boundaries of the phenomenological horizon by producing symbols that express the inexpressible in such ways that there is perfect agreement between the symbol and what is symbolized.[7]

It can be argued that some Christians, in subscribing to reasons that would allow the churches to join certain expressions of imperial worship, effectively obscured the imagination of faith and ultimately lost their newly found freedom in Christ (cf. Rev. 13:17; Gal. 5:1). E. J. Furlong elucidates this phenomenon: "Imagination is freedom, rather than a transcendental category! … [T]o act 'with imagination' is to act with freedom, with spontaneity: it is to break away from the trammels of the orthodox, of the accepted; it is to be original, constructive."[8] The other five churches by contrast, with the exception of Smyrna and Philadelphia, seem to have lost their imagination of faith that inspired and sustained their distinct way of life (Rev. 2:1–13, 19; 3:1, 8) and accepted a standpoint (cf. Rev. 3:15) that allowed for "immorality and [the eating of] food sacrificed to idols" (Rev. 2:14, 21–22).[9]

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[7]E. R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 62.

[8]E. J. Furlong, *Imagination* (London: Routledge, 1961), 25.

[9]I agree here with Osborne who argues that immorality (*porneusai*, to commit adultery [in Rev. 2:14, 21]) refers to immoral practices while the noun *porneia* in Rev. 2:32 might speak figuratively of idolatry. See G. R. Osborne, *Revelation*,

Reinvigorating the visionary capacity of Christianity through God's revelation, John—returning into the Spirit once again (Rev. 1:10)—does not only challenge the mistaken social, economic, and political goals of first century believers (Rev. 3:17; 18:11–13) but also offers the enduring truth of the Gospel in a familiar but perhaps forgotten way[10] (cf. Rev. 22: 18–19), that is, by means of visions and symbols. As R. G. Collingwood explains, art "is not different to truth; it is essentially the pursuit of truth."[11] The art of Revelation, expressed in its visions, reveals and expresses the truth of the Christian faith that cannot be compromised.

This article does not suggest that Revelation is an explicit apologia for the romantic imagination vis-à-vis scientific rationalism, arguably a concept of modernity that could not have been in the mind of the biblical author.[12] The visionary imagination inherent in John's apocalyptic prophecy[13] is, rather, the timeless human mode and means of challenging the mockery of false religion that is disguised as reason.[14]

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Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 157.

[10]See the standard work on Revelation's use of the Old Testament in G. K. Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

[11]R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), 288.

[12]K. Raine, *Golgonooza, City of Imagination: Last Studies in William Blake* (New York: Lindisfarne Press, 1991), 9–29.

[13]While this article does not engage deliberately in a discussion on the genre of Revelation, it agrees by and large with Mazzaferri that "John dips his hands freely into classical apocalyptic, the synoptic tradition, pagan mythology, and even [several] astral symbols. But he bathes himself in one corpus alone, classical OT prophecy" (F. D. Mazzaferri, *The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-Critical Perspective* [New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1989], 378).

[14]I am grateful to Christopher Rowland for helping me to make this necessary clarification.

## The Christian Imagination

The question concerning the Christian imagination inevitably leads to the English visionary, poet, and engraver William Blake (1747–1827) whose work is greatly inspired by his imaginative and unrestricted interpretation of the Christian Bible.[15] Christopher Rowland explains Blake's fundamental line of argument regarding imagination as follows: "Allowing reason to triumph over imagination denies a wisdom 'Permanent in the Imagination,' through which one could open Eternal Worlds."[16] Applied to the circumstances of the Book of Revelation, this suggests that a certain type of reasoning, advocated arguably by the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:6, 15)—so-called "apostles" (Rev. 2:2), the representatives of Satan (Rev. 2:9, 24), and those who hold the teachings of Balaam (Rev. 2:14) and the woman Jezebel (Rev. 2:20), clouded the imagination of Christianity that would have allowed believers to see a divinely illuminated world and, as a consequence, that Satan was behind the religious institutions and practices of the Roman Empire.[17] In his critique of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Blake contends that institutionalized religion relegates its revolutionary energy to the realm of the diabolic

[15]"For Blake, then, the Bible, despite being the Moral Law, is 'a Poem of probable impossibilities, fabricated … by Inspiration … Poetry & that poetry inspired' … it is the great code or instructive paradigm of art which enables him to synthesise his political and theological outlook into a single, coherent, creative Vision" (M. Farrell, "William Blake and the Bible: Reading and Writing the Law," *Postgraduate English: A Journal and Forum for Postgraduates in English* 13 [2006]: 25).

[16]C. Rowland, "Christology, Controversy and Apocalypse: New Testament Exegesis in the Light of the Work of William Blake," in D. G. Horrell & C. M. Tuckett, eds., *Christology, Controversy and Community: New Testament Essays in Honour of David R. Catchpole*, STNT Vol. XCIX (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 355–378; see pp. 369–370.

[17]For Revelation's Roman background, see J. N. Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse*, JSNT Sup. Ser. 132 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996). See also R. Bauckham, "The Economic Critique of Rome in Revelation 18," in R. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (London: T&T Clark, 1993), 338–382.

and becomes a history of the restraint of desire (*Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 5).[18] It may have been the emergent institutionalization of Christianity, therefore—couched in possible compromises with the various institutionalized forms and expressions of the imperial cult and the synagogue of Satan[19]—that allowed justifying a form of life which would have been shunned by an unadulterated faith sustained by the imagination.[20]

Pertaining to the nature of the imagination, Blake's enigmatic scribbles that envelop his engraving *Laocoön* (hereafter referred to as Laoc.) contain the following lines:

> The Eternal Body of Man is the Imagination, that is, God himself,
> the Divine Body, Jesus: we are his Members.
> It manifests itself in his Works of Art. (In Eternity All is Vision).
>
> Prayer is the Study of Art
> Praise is the Practise of Art
> Fasting &c. all relate to Art
> The outward Ceremony is Antichrist (Laoc. K 776).

Blake maintains that, "like the logos, art may be present in objects but must itself be distinguished from them" like how "God himself, the Divine Body, Jesus," is distinguished from outward ceremony and inanimate objects. These might have the form of God yet merely

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[18]M. L. Johnson, "*Milton* and Its Contexts," in M. Eaves, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to William Blake* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 234. Samples of Blake's works that are referred to in this article may be found at *The William Blake Archive* (http://www.blakearchive.org/).

[19]P. B. Duff argues that John's appellation "synagogue of Satan" refers to Jews from local synagogues. Those synagogues, I believe, have reached a compromise with the Roman Empire that is incompatible with radical Christianity. See P. B. Duff, "'The Synagogue of Satan': Crisis Mongering and the Apocalypse of John," in D. L. Barr, ed., *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 147–168; see p. 147.

[20]See A. Cheung, *Idol Food in Corinth: Jewish Background and Pauline Legacy*, JSNT Supp. Ser. 176 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 189–200.

embody the Antichrist[21]—personified, for example, in the beast in Rev. 13:14—who stands in opposition to the Gospel of Christ.[22] "He [the Antichrist] is Science: The works of Jesus and his followers were destroyed by the Seven Angels of the Seven Churches in Asia; Antichrist Science" (Laoc. K 777). The gift of the Holy Ghost—and indeed the Holy Ghost itself, conversely, is the imagination.[23]

Blake, however, does not separate the spirit from the human person. Unfortunately, the imagination is a neglected and denounced part of the intellect. Hume argues in contrast that "nothing is more dangerous to reason than the flights of the imagination, and nothing has been the occasion of more mistakes among philosophers."[24] Blake, on the other hand, maintains "that Poetic Genius is the true Man, and that the body or outward form of Man is derived from the Poetic Genius" (*All Religions are One*, principle I); "Man's perceptions are not bound by organs of perception. He perceives more than sense (tho' ever so acute) can discover" (*There is No Natural Religion*, b, I). He concludes:

> The desire of Man being Infinite, the possession is Infinite & himself Infinite.
>
> Application. He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God. He who sees the Ratio only sees himself only.
>
> Conclusion. If it were not for the Poetic or Prophetic character the Philosophic & Experimental would soon be at the ratio of all things, & stand still unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again.

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[21]D. E. James, "Blake's Laocoön: A Degree Zero of Literary Production," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 98:2 (1983): 226–236; see pp. 233–234.

[22]See "Antichrist," in S. F. Damon, *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*, rev. ed. (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1988), 25.

[23]See "Imagination," in Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, 195.

[24]D. Hume, *The Philosophical Works of David Hume* Vol. I (Edinburgh: Adam Black and William Tait, 1826), 338.

> Therefore God becomes as we are, that we may be as he is. (*There is No Natural Religion*)

Blake states empathically that "all that we see is vision, permanent in the Imagination" (Laoc. K 776). Imagination is the "real & eternal World of which this Vegetable Universe is but a faint shadow, & in which we all shall live in our Eternal or Imaginative Bodies when these Vegetable Mortal Bodies are no more" (*Jerusalem* 77). It surpasses the boundaries of this world and spreads into eternity. Indeed, Blake's imaginative mind wholly comprehends the ultimate unity of the imagination, divine vision, and the Holy Spirit in the creative act of the poet.

> The true power of the poet is the Imagination, the Divine Vision. "Nature has no Outline, but Imagination has. Nature has no Tune, but Imagination has. Nature has no Supernatural & dissolves: Imagination is Eternity." (*The Ghost of Abel* 1:3)

> In the creative act, it is the completest liberty of the spirit. "Imagination is surrounded by the daughters of Inspiration, who in the aggregate are call'd Jerusalem." (*A Vision of the Last Judgment*, K 604)

For Blake, the Antichrist Science comes to life in the manifestations of Satan masquerading as deity. Only the true imagination, i.e., the spirit of God, can unmask this outward ceremony and grant an eternal vision of God. The imagination is thus found in the creative act of the Christian vision in which the Holy Spirit reveals truth beyond truths. This revelation, Thomas Altizer concludes, is characterized by "a process of subversion and negation of Christian moral, ecclesial, and theological traditions, which are recognized precisely as inversions of Jesus, and therefore as instances of the forms of evil that God-in-Christ overcomes through Incarnation, reversing the Fall."[25]

[25]T. J. J. Altizer, "The Revolutionary Vision of William Blake," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 37:1 (2009): 33–38.

## Revelation's Letters: Imagination Lost

The Book of Revelation opens with the following verse: "The revelation from/of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants what soon must take place; and he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John" (Rev. 1:1). God's revelation (*apokalypsis*) is embodied in and through Jesus Christ, who in turn provides this revelation in the form of visions (*deiknumi* in the sense of "to cause to be seen"; cf. *horaō* in Rev. 1:2 and Jn. 2:18) for his servants.[26] Revelation—the Divine Body of Christ in Blake's visualization—is thus made known to John, God's servant, through an angel of Christ (cf. Rev. 22:16). The angels of the Apocalypse mediate and interpret visions[27] and act as agents for implementing divine judgment.[28] They share in the worship of the heavens around the throne of God (Rev. 5:11; 7:11) and never cease to chant: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come" (Rev. 4:8–11). They sing a new song praising the worthiness of the Lamb to open the scroll and its seals (Rev. 5:9–10), proclaiming with loud voices that "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15) and crying out "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power to our God" (Rev. 19:1).[29] Christ's Revelation is a living work of art, fully embedded in heavenly song and praise.[30]

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[26]This follows Giesen's suggestion that "servants" refers not to a select group of prophets but to the seven Christian communities of Asia Minor (H. Giesen, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, RNT [Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1997], 99).

[27]Rev. 1:1; 10:1–10; 14:6–11; 17:1, 7–18.

[28]Rev. 7:1–3; 8:2–3; 9:1, 13; 11:15; 12:7–12; 14:15–20; 15:1, 6–7; 18:1–2; 19:17–18; 20:1–3.

[29]S. S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 29.

[30]"The fundamental attitude of praise is, on the one hand, rooted in the conviction that the beginning of the hoped-for salvation is already present. On the other hand, it is rooted in the certainty that God's words are true (Rev. 19:10), and that he remains faithful and true to himself" (M. Hasitschka, "Singing of

The angelic imagination of Christ's revelation to John shows that it comes to pass in a genuinely heavenly manner. Revelation contrasts what Blake calls an "outward ceremony" that is bound to worldly objects (like persuasive logic) with a "practice of art" that exceeds the bounds of conventional reason and wisdom. This, Blake would argue, results in the verbal presence of Christ (Rev. 2:1).[31] The angelic voice communicates God's voice embodied in Christ[32] in the creative act of the spirit (Rev. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3)[33] that shows to God's servants, i.e., believers who are open to the prophetic gift of the spirit (cf. Rev. 22:9), "what must take place" (Rev. 1:1; 4:1; 22:6).[34]

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Redemption in the Midst of Tribulation," in M. E. Locker, ed., *Led by the Spirit* [Quezon City: Loyola School of Theology, 2002], 138–140).

[31]"Blake's idea of verbal presence, the only real existence of the past, he no doubt took from his reading of the Bible. Blake interprets Jesus's second coming as His continual presence in the presence of the Book itself. Blake has nothing good to say about the historical or so-called past Jesus, who is the supreme form of Antichrist. He is 'outward ceremony,' meaningless ritualized behavior that mindlessly copies or points out and backward to an historically lost and forgotten or only vaguely remembered event. The opposite of this would be a shaped imaginative form, living in the immediate present, like the Bible and what it contains" (H. Adams, "Blake and the Philosophy of Literary Symbolism," *New Literary History* 5:1 [Autumn, 1973]: 135–146; see p. 140).

[32]"[The chain of communication in v. 1] … probably explains why in some sayings later in the book it is difficult to discern whether the speaker is God, Christ, or an angel, since the message actually derives from all three" (G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, TNGTC [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999], 183).

[33]R. Jeske shows that the expression "in the Spirit" signifies a relational symbol which, *inter alia*, denotes the churches' reception of Christ's revelation rather than John's state of ecstasy. See R. L. Jeske, "Spirit and Community in the Johannine Apocalypse," *New Testament Studies* 31:3 (1985): 452–466; see p. 463.

[34]Concerning the pragmatic connotation of this phrase, see M. E. Locker & C. Sedmak, "The Language-Game of Revelation: Interpreting the Book of Revelation through Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Language," *Philosophy and Theology* 13:2 (2001): 241–262; see p. 253. Locker and Sedmak argue for the

Blake's aesthetics offer another inspiring insight here. Influenced by the German mystic Jacob Böhme and the English theologian William Law, Blake holds that Man's imaginative powers are diminished and his artistic faculties blunted through the "Fall" into matter, which is symbolized in the distinction of sexes.[35] "Adam is only The Natural Man & Not the Soul or Imagination" (Laoc. K 776). Blake, as Désirée Hirst explains, believes that

> to regain his former integrity, his original androgynous condition and the freedom of his native spiritual estate, Man has to practise the forgiveness of sins in imitation of Christ and destroy the Satan within himself. He repairs the divisions of his own nature through the use of the creative imagination, the faculty least spoilt by the Fall.[36]

The angelic mediation of God's revelation speaks directly (Rev. 1:10) to the spiritual body of Man and his imagination as it is redeemed in due course by Christ and freed from sin (Rev. 1:5; 5:9). As a vessel of this angelic mediation of Christ's revelation, John of Patmos becomes a supreme artist who discloses what a true Christian is according to Blake:

> A Poet, a Painter, a Musician, an Architect: the Man or Woman who is not one of these is not a Christian. (Laoc. K 76)

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grammatical similarity between and family resemblance of "what must be done" and "what must take place" in Revelation.

[35]W. Law writes:

> [The human person] was created an Angel, both as to body and spirit, and this Angel stood in an outward body, of the nature of the outward world, and therefore by the nature of his state he had his trial, or power of choosing whether he would live as an Angel, using only his outward body as a means of opening the wonders of the outward world to the glory of his creator, or whether he would turn his desire to the opening of the bestial life of the outward worldling.… (W. Law, "The Spirit of Prayer," in W. Law, *The Pocket William Law* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950], 116, cited in D. Hirst, "On the Aesthetics of Prophetic Art," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 4:3 [1964]: 248–252)

[36]Hirst, "On the Aesthetics of Prophetic Art," 251.

Hirst gets to the heart of Blake's Christian aesthetics: "'The theologian may be the theoretician of the sacred. But is not the artist a practitioner in this medium?'"[37] It is only in true art that "all Things are comprehended in their Eternal Forms in the Divine Body of the Saviour, the true Vine of Eternity, the Human Imagination" (*A Vision of the Last Judgment* 605–606).

After John conveys grace and peace from Christ to the seven churches (Rev. 1:4), he immediately calls all Christians to give glory and dominion to Christ for ever and ever (Rev. 1:6). He elucidates that it is Christ who "loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father" (Rev. 1:5–6). Accepted in faith, Christ's redemptive deed will allow Christians here and now to foretaste the kingdom of God (cf. Jn. 3:3–5) and have a glimpse of the heavenly reign of God.[38] Those who have rejected Christ, however, will see him only on the day of his final coming (Rev. 1:7). The gift of the imagination, necessary for seeing and hearing what Christ says (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 20, 22; 13:9 in connection with Mk. 4:1–9 par.), is not available to those without faith.[39]

John by and large finds a church in tribulation[40] (Rev. 1:9) in which the gift of the imagination is about to be, or has already been, lost.

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[37]Hirst, "On the Aesthetics of Prophetic Art," 25.

[38]Giesen, *Die Offenbarung*, 79.

[39]"[The] parables are mysteries … and hidden realities … not because they refer to a hitherto concealed reality, or because already forty years after the death of Jesus their original setting was forgotten, but because their understanding necessitates that the hearer has already become a disciple of the kingdom of God. Only then can one see (*idou*) and understand … what remains unseen to those outside" (M. E. Locker, *The New World of Jesus' Parables* [Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008], 17–18).

[40]Consequently, this notion of "tribulation" could allude to Emanuel Swedenborg's reading of affliction in Rev. 1:9: "'In affliction, and in the kingdom, and the patient expectation of Jesus Christ' signifies who in the church are infested by evils and falsities, but these are to be removed by the Lord, when he comes" (see E. Swedenborg, *Apocalypse Revealed: Wherein are Disclosed the Arcana*

Accosted by the anti-Christian and thoroughly evil ideology of the Roman imperial cult, the imagination of Christianity—the eternal body of the Church—was about to perish. Blake is very well aware of this problem:

> The Nature of Visionary Fancy, or Imagination, is very little Known, & the Eternal nature & permanence of its ever Existent Images is consider'd as less permanent than the things of Vegetative & Generative Nature; yet the Oak dies as well as the Lettuce, but its Eternal Image & Individuality never dies, but renews by its seed; just … so the Imaginative Image returns … by the seed of Contemplative Thought; the Writings of the Prophets illustrate these conceptions of the Visionary Fancy by their various sublime & Divine Images as seen in the Worlds of Vision. (*A Vision of the Last Judgment* 68–69)

Christ sees that the church of Ephesus, for example, has abandoned its first love and fallen from this condition:

> But I have this against you; that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. (Rev. 2:4–5)

What follows from "love" in v. 5 indicates that *agapē* in the first of the letters to the seven churches might simply signify neither brotherly love,[41] works of love,[42] nor zeal for doctrinal truth;[43] rather, as G. K. Beale argues, it gives testimony to the presence of Christ in the world (cf. Eph. 3:19; Eph. Ignatius 1:1).[44] Love of God and not of the world (cf. 1 Jn. 2:15) is the *topos* of the imagination of faith that the Church deserted in favor of an outlook that appears to tolerate the absence

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*There Foretold which have Hitherto Remained Concealed* Vol. 1, trans. J. Whitehead [West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2009], 26).

[41]See, among many others, C. J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, TBRS (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 41.

[42]Giesen, *Die Offenbarung*, 57.

[43]Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 61.

[44]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 230.

of good works, thereby making it evil. The loss of the first love, then, arguably resulted in the cessation of the Gospel's promulgation. The Ephesian community has fallen from heaven (cf. Isa. 14:12), the divine vantage point,[45] a place where it was a witnessing lampstand (Rev. 2:5; cf. Zech. 4:1–6).[46] Leaving one's first love is thereby indicative of the suppression of the spiritual gifts that are necessary for the community's authentic witness of Christ (cf. Eph. 5:18–19). This loss of the Christian vision is unacceptable for John; for him, it is tantamount to condemnation and the deprivation of salvation. Loss of the imagination is loss of humanity, a deficiency that has practical consequences: the works that the Church did at first are also lost; they, too, must be resumed.

A similar observation can be made regarding the church of Laodicea's failure to realize that their apparent riches are fool's gold. The church's lukewarmness (Rev. 3:16) brought about by the loss of grace is the condition that causes the imagination of faith to fail.[47] The true nature of worldly and spiritual things thus remains hidden from the community. The remedy for this deficiency as such is "gold refined by fire … white garments … salve to anoint your eyes" (Rev. 3:18). Witnessing, suffering, righteous deeds (Rev. 19:8), and spiritual remedy

[45]In his classic work on the letters of Revelation, W. M. Ramsay writes: "The Church was enthusiastic; but it has been cooling. It has fallen from its high plane of conduct and spirit" (W. M. Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia and Their Place in the Plan of the Apocalypse*, rev. ed. [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994], 25). A similar view is held by R. L. Thomas who argues that the Ephesian Church, having lost its first love, is "devoid of spiritual life" (R. L. Thomas, *Revelation 1–7: An Exegetical Commentary* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1992], 142).

[46]In Zech. 4:1–6, the lampstands generally represent the power of the spirit. Cf. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 231.

[47]Oecumenius, in his *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, writes: "He [John] calls that person lukewarm who in baptism received the communion of the Holy Spirit but has quenched that grace through sloth and attention to temporal matters" (T. C. Oden, ed., *Greek Commentaries on Revelation*, Ancient Christian Texts, trans. W. C. Weinrich [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011], 19).

will cure the shameful state of the Church and provide the Laodicean Christians with true riches[48] which will allow them once again to hear what the Spirit says (Rev. 3:22).

Taking a cue from the state of the Ephesian and Laodicean churches, one can surmise that Christianity in Asia Minor as a whole[49] had partially lost the gift of the imagination and succumbed to the idols of the Antichrist who speaks to every tribe, people, tongue, and nation and seduces them into worshipping him (Rev. 13:5–9). There is still, however, a vestige of the imaginative power of the Church—in Ephesus, for instance, the Church abhors the works of the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:6).[50] There is still hope. The Church must listen both to what the Spirit says to all churches and what John prophesies (Rev. 10:11).[51] If it does, then Christ will grant the Church to eat from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God (Rev. 2:8).[52] If the Church regains its power of the imagination, it can once again partake in the salvation offered by Christ, i.e., the new creation.

It is noteworthy that John does not see a "temple in the city" (Rev. 21:22) whose "gates shall never be shut by day" (Rev. 21:25) in his final vision of the New Jerusalem. Apart from its eschatological significance, this unusual feature of the New Jerusalem[53]—in contrast

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[48]For the meaning of the remedial gifts, see Thomas, *Revelation 1–7*, 313–314 and D. E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, WBC Vol. 52 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1997), 259–260.

[49]Cf. the concluding verse of all seven letters: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

[50]Concerning the Nicolaitan heresy, see Giesen, *Die Offenbarung*, 100–104.

[51]I have argued elsewhere that Revelation does not—indeed cannot—foretell the future (Locker & Sedmak, "The Language-Game of Revelation," 254).

[52]The prize for all victorious churches is taken from the imagery of the New Jerusalem, Rev 21.

[53]Kraft, for example, believes that John must have committed a logical error in connecting the closing of the gates to the daytime (H. Kraft, *Die Offenbarung*

with the oppressive system of the imperial cult (cf. Rev. 13:17)—might also serve as a subtle warning against any future institutionalization of the faith patterned after worldly or political forms of religion. Christ alone embodies the spiritual temple of God;[54] participation in any other temple worship results in the loss of the imagination, thereby justifying the logic of compromise with the imperial cult.

## The Book of Revelation's Sublimity and Beauty: Imagination Found Again

The Book of Revelation continues to stimulate the imagination of Christians by leading them concurrently to experiences of the "sublime" and of "beauty." Being in the Spirit, the seer "hears a loud voice like a trumpet" behind him (Rev. 1:10). This imagery recalls Ex. 20:18, depicting the frightening presence of God whose voice is feared and would cause death. Moses, however, assures his people: "Do not fear; for God has come to prove you and that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin" (Ex. 20:19). Likewise, John's fear of seeing "one like a son of man" (Rev. 1:17) is abated by a vision of utmost beauty: "a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. And he who sat on the throne appeared like jasper and carnelian, and round the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald" (Rev. 4:2b–3). The throne is surrounded by twenty-four elders also sitting on thrones and four living creatures who give praise incessantly to God.

John's visionary experience can be likened to what Immanuel Kant diagnoses as "mathematical sublimity," that is, the experience of cognitive exhaustion.[55] Sublimity relates to a passage toward an "ideal,"

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*des Johannes*, HZNT 16a [Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1974]).

[54]P. Lee, *The New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation: A Study of Revelation 21–22 in the Light of its Background in Jewish Tradition* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 282.

[55]L. Poland, "The Idea of the Holy and the History of the Sublime," *The Journal of Religion* 72:2 (April 1992): 175–197.

whether to God or the supersensible, "by means of what the eighteenth century called 'enthusiasm.'"[56] Enthusiasm, Lynn Poland explains, "has no clear locus or cause … it arouses the soul."[57] The sublime evokes ambivalent feelings of terror and delight in the beholder; it arises out of the failure of the beautiful. In terms of Revelation, it is the Spirit that resurrects and purifies the imagination through visions of extreme beauty and terror.[58] This spiritual stance illumines the divine sphere and unmasks evil masquerading as beauty (cf. Rev. 17:6). Kant thus alerts us that "while the beautiful object symbolically presents a 'final' correspondence between the ideal and the real, the sublime instead provokes an experience of the immeasurable gulf between them."[59]

Revelation speaks of this hiatus in terms of a war in heaven (Rev. 12:7–8) that, though won by Michael and his angels, continues on earth.[60] Two terrifying beasts threaten those Christians who are not yet defiled by evil (Rev. 13), yet believers are saved by joining in the singing of a "new song" before the throne of God (Rev. 14:3) and in the proclamation of an eternal gospel (Rev. 14:6). Plagues are thereupon cast upon the world (Rev. 15–16), and judgment is rendered upon the "great harlot." Here the ambivalence of sublimity becomes supremely visible: a woman arrayed in regal purple and scarlet and adorned with gold, jewels, and pearls is found sitting on an abominable beast full

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[56]S. K. Saxena, "Hegel on the Sublime," *Religious Studies* 10:2 (June 1974): 153–172.

[57]Saxena, "Hegel on the Sublime," 177.

[58]A similar vision of the imagination, "cultivated" and "'purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic'—through 'familiarity' … with the 'finest specimens of poetry and philosophy,'" i.e., the sublime, is entertained by Percy Bysshe Shelley. See C. Duffy, *Shelley and the Revolutionary Sublime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 76–77.

[59]Saxena, "Hegel on the Sublime," 178.

[60]See A. Y. Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1976); A. K. W. Siew, *The War Between the Two Beasts and the Two Witnesses: A Chiastic Reading of Revelation 11:1–14:5* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 124–130.

of blasphemous names (Rev. 17:3), "holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication" (Rev. 17:4) and with a name of mystery (*noma mustērion*) written upon her forehead (Rev. 17:5).[61] John is "amazed" with "great amazement" ('*kai ethaumata idōn autēn thauma mega*' Rev. 17:6) in beholding the woman, but the angel who showed the beast and the woman to John questions his astonishment. While mortals without faith will indeed marvel when looking at the beast, it is but an ungodly earthly reality in disguise (Rev. 17:9–18), that only mimics divinity (Rev. 13:11–15). Revelation's gift of the imagination grants the "wisdom" that is needed to see through the disguise of evil (Rev. 7:9; 13:18). Indeed, the true mystery of God (Rev. 10:7) is the mystery of Christ in the Church (cf. Rev. 1:20).

After witnessing a final conflict and judgment (Rev. 19:11–20:15), John receives a profound vision of beauty—God dwells among humankind in a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1–9). The seer is shown a New Jerusalem of utmost exquisiteness coming down from heaven (Rev. 21:10), a city that has the "glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal" (Rev. 21:11). It has perfect proportions (Rev. 21:16–17) and is built with the most precious materials (Rev. 21:18–21). Thus, while the sublime is purposivelessness, beauty according to Kant has purposiveness.[62] Unlike the encounter with the sublime that "does violence to our imagination," the beautiful is "pre-adaptable to our judgment, and thus constitutes in itself an object of satisfaction."[63] The city offers limitless access to God (Rev. 21:22); the Glory of God is its light, and its spirit is Christ, the Lamb (Rev. 21:23).

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[61]See L. R. Huber, *Thinking and Seeing with Women in Revelation* (London: T&T Clark, 2013), 56–88.

[62]R. Gilmore, "Philosophical Beauty: The Sublime in the Beautiful in Kant's Third *Critique* and Aristotle's *Poetics*," *Aesthetics and Philosophy of Arts*. Available at https://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Aest/AestGilm.htm.

[63]T. Cohen, "Why Beauty is a Symbol of Morality," in T. Cohen & P. Guyer, eds., *Essays in Kant's Aesthetics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 221–236.

The experiences of sublimity and beauty have profound pragmatic dimensions. The horrific visions of judgment and evil call Christians to distance themselves from the lures of the beast that enslaves all (Rev. 13:16–17) and traffics in human souls (Rev. 18:13). True believers are called to "come out" of Babylon, the great whore, lest they partake in her sins and share in her plagues (Rev. 18:4). Love of God leaves only hate for Satan and his works (Rev. 2:6).

The sublime, on the other hand, conjoins the ideal and the real not simply as a possibility in the future but as an opportunity in the present. Revelation's presentation of what "must take place" (Rev. 1:1; 4:1; 21:4) in visions of beauty and sublimity is a call for Christians to join and collaborate in the inbreaking "dwelling of God among men" (Rev. 21:3) that will find its fulfilment at the end of time. Revelation's New Jerusalem is, on account of its unlimited beauty, a universal vision (cf. Rev. 21:24) of an ideal "form of life,"[64] one that calls Christians into the "habit"[65] of "keeping the words of this book" (Rev. 1:3; 3:3; 22:9) and the commandments of God (Rev. 12:17; 14:12).[66]

## Conclusion

An "aesthetics of the Apocalypse," anchored in Blake's understanding of the role of the imagination and of its loss through

[64]Wittgenstein's notion of language-game explains the connection between a particular form of language and a thereupon resulting form of life. Cf. M. E. Locker, "Jesus' Language-Games: The Significance of the Notion of Language-Game for a Reformulation of 'New Testament Biblical Theology,'" *The Heythrop Journal* 50:3 (2009): 392–401.

[65]C. S. Peirce explains: "A Symbol incorporates a habit, and is indispensable to the application of any *intellectual* habit, *at least*" (C. S. Peirce, "Prolegomena to an Apology for Pragmaticism" [CP 4.531 1906], in C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* Vol. 4 [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933], 414). See M. E. Locker, "Revelation's New Jerusalem: A Sign-Model of Christian Identity," *Semiotics* (2003): 234–242.

[66]Locker, "Revelation's New Jerusalem," 234–242.

an emerging institutionalization of faith, provides some insight into possible reasons as to why the New Testament comes to a close with the intensely imaginative "Revelation of God." The truth that is revealed through Christ's Incarnation, passion, death, and Resurrection, narrated and proclaimed in the Gospels and Acts and illuminated in the correspondences of the apostles with the Christian churches through visions of the sublime, utmost beauty, and unfathomable terror, is returned into the "Imagination, the Eternal Body," of the believer. There alone will faith become wisdom for embodying and living the Gospel of Christ in the world. Rowland puts it succinctly as follows:

> It is when [Revelation's] visionary experience informs a sense of the incompatibility of human action and divine justice that the prophet speaks, when, as Blake put it, one sees through the eye and not with it, and ordinary things become transformed in the divine light, whether of salvation or judgment. Blake is a compelling example of the prophetic vocation ready to bear witness to the Beast and Babylon in his midst.[67]

Such witnessing, even to martyrdom, will allow the imagination of faith to afford Christians a foretaste of paradise and life in eternity by closing the imaginative circle that begins with the story of creation and ends with God's new handiwork.[68] This heavenly vista grounds and issues acts of love and charity, and assures salvation that alone belongs to God (Rev. 7:10; 12:10; 19:1).

This article as such will remain largely theoretical in the end unless it is read side-by-side with Blake's awe-inspiring watercolors and illustrations.[69] Only then does the main argument of this essay

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[67]C. Rowland, "William Blake and Ezekiel's *Merkabah*," in P. M. Joyce & A. Mein, eds., *After Ezekiel: Essays on the Reception of a Difficult Prophet* (New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 245.

[68]Lee, *The New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation*, 295.

[69]"The Ancient of Days" (1794); "The Four and Twenty Elders Casting their Crowns before the Divine Throne," "The Resurrection," "The Angel of the Revelation" (ca. 1803); "The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed with the Sun" (1805); "Death on a Pale Horse," "Christian Beaten Down by Apollyon," "The Number of the Beast is 666," "The Great Red Dragon

become clear—to borrow Marshall MacLuhan's famous aphorism, "Revelation's medium is its message."[70]

and the Beast from the Sea," "The River of Life" (ca. 1805); "The Vision of the Last Judgement," "The Casting of the Rebel Angels into Hell" (1808); "The Whore of Babylon" (1809).

[70]A phrase originally coined by M. MacLuhan in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), 7.

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**Gil Ambrona, Antonio. *Ignacio de Loyola y las mujeres: benefactoras, Jesuitas y fundadoras* [Ignatius of Loyola and the Women: Benefactresses, Female "Jesuits", and Foundresses]. Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2017. 424 pp. ISBN: 978-84-376-3665-8**

*Reviewed by Manuel Ruiz Jurado, S.J.*

On the occasion of Ignatius of Loyola's fourth death centenary in 1956, Hugo Rahner published a carefully researched academic book about the saint's letters to the women whom he knew all throughout his life. When I recently came to know about Gil Ambrona's book, then, I had hoped to find more information about this aspect of the personality of Ignatius and the milieu which the saint moved in as he exercised his apostolic zeal. The title and the cover seemed to augur either another version of Rahner's work or something similar but with more historical research about Ignatius and the women who collaborated with him, protected and helped him in his studies and work, and dealt closely with him. My disappointment, however, has been enormous. In presenting his work, the author says that he wants to do away with the "aura of predestination to holiness with which [Ignatius's] Jesuit biographers have dressed him up"; instead, he subjects to doubt or suspicion the entire historicity of those very same sources on which he must base his research if he is going to say anything truthful about the story of someone who is so seriously studied and so well grounded in history as Ignatius of Loyola.

None of Íñigo's biographers ever "predestined" him to become a saint; rather, they found him already a saint who had been previously canonized. The process of investigation that led up to the canonization

was based mostly on the oath of "de visu" witnesses. The really true biographers had thus taken into account Ignatius's autobiography which he dictated, after having refused for a long time to do so, while he was still living, yet even then he limited himself to the wishes of those who begged him for it with the end in view of knowing "how the Lord had been leading him from the beginning of his conversion" until the foundation of the Society. These biographers also based their research on his other writings and on so many other contemporary sources.

Ambrona, however, does not consider the *Autobiography* of Ignatius of Loyola to be an authentic "memoir" or "testament"; for him it is only a biography of the saint that was written by González de Cámara. He intends to foster doubts and suspicions about what scholarly researchers have been saying until now based on their serious investigations and verifications of accounts that concern the sanctity of Ignatius. It seems that the only history he regards as trustworthy—published in *Manresa* 86 (1914), pages 309–312—is one that received well-grounded criticism and negative appraisal for a book review.

Ambrona, whose studies have been directed toward investigating the situation of women in the 16th and 17th centuries, focuses in this book on those women who wrote letters to St. Ignatius of Loyola. When the author ventures into the field of Christian spirituality like in this case, he gives the impression that the most important and prevalent concern in the Spanish milieu of that time was the movement toward the interiority of the soul peculiar to Erasmism and illuminism—the heritage of the New Christians (converts from Judaism and Islam) and the Illuminati—as though there never existed before, during, and after them genuine Spanish currents of the intense interior life, of a healthy, ecclesial, and authentic holiness proper to Christian spirituality. Every movement toward interiorizing Christian life was for the author a proof of Erasmism or illuminism that derived from a Jewish background. It was as though the strong influences of Sts. Ambrose, Augustine, John Chrysostom, Jerome, Cassian, Bernard, Francis, Dominic, etc. did not already exist at that time; as though Sts. Thomas of Villanova, John of Ávila, Peter of Alcántara, Francis Xavier, John of God, Teresa, John of the Cross, etc. had not been living in that century. It also seems

that the author does not know the distinction between the doctrines of the Illuminati and the ecclesial sense of orthodoxy, and this despite the fact that the Inquisition had already made such a distinction on many previous occasions.

The author also does not seem to understand what radical Christian conversion is. It does not seem to him—and he does not take it into account—that a drastic and profound change can happen to a person. He does not recognize the action of the Holy Spirit in a person's life, and he considers Ignatius to be the disciple of a lady who is one of the Illuminati and is therefore an illuminatus himself, as if contact with any persons who at any time might have been illuminati or may have had any Jewish background would automatically make an individual one of them.

Indeed, Ambrona even dares to propose the influence of sexual motives or craving for money in the very persons who, by their vows, simple lives, and sacrifices, have shown disinterest in such worldly concerns. What motivated them was the "pure love of Jesus Christ and zeal for the glory of the one who created us." The author does not acknowledge spiritual motive nor does he seem to understand what it is.

All that we have said about the characteristics of this book and its author are obvious to readers even without much stirring up. What turns out to be surprising and strange is that the last two chapters seem as if they were written by another person with a different mentality, one who is much more objective, better informed about history, and without so many prejudices or assumptions. Nevertheless, hints of the fanciful prejudices of the first part still show up from time to time, indicating that the author has not changed. These are the chapters in which he deals with the women who took their Jesuit vows or, rather, the women who pretended to have taken vows but were never admitted into the Society. The author does not understand why St. Ignatius always refused to have a female branch. He does not understand the true nature of the Society of Jesus and the real spiritual motives for its decisions. To his credit, however, he is authentic whenever he acknowledges the attraction that the spiritual life of the Society has had among women and the transcendent influence of Ignatian

spirituality on so many female religious congregations in modern times. According to a survey we made, there are more than 300 female religious congregations that follow Ignatian spirituality. This certainly must be due to the influence of the *Spiritual Exercises* more than to the allure of the Jesuit Constitutions.

The author's toil in search of data (which was quite limited to his distorted point of view) on so many persons, their ancestors and relatives, and the general circumstances still yielded many truthful facts and historical details that some ignore. It is sad, however, that these appear to be enveloped in prejudices, fantasies, and suspicions that are so alien and opposed to the mentality of the main subject they refer to. The author seems to be remarkably ignorant of the abundant sources that are available for studying the life and works of Ignatius, e.g., the Constitutions of the Society, the Spiritual Diary written by the saint, the vows, the teaching of the Church, etc.

To highlight one concrete example, Ambrona interprets some of the expressions that are attributed to Íñigo, such as "by the love of God he was imprisoned," among others, as "heretical" or typical of the "Illuminati." These must be understood according to the mind of Ignatius who was never found by his judges to be heterodox or one of the Illuminati despite all the trials and proceedings to which he was subjected, such as the one he suffered in Rome in which he was declared innocent in the presence of those who witnessed against him and being interrogated by judges in so many persecutions in Spain, Paris, and Venice.

The author even makes chronological mistakes at times, e.g., St. Peter Faber underwent the *Exercises* under the direction of Ignatius in 1534, not 1543 (p. 152); the *Exercises* that Fr. Dalmases prepared was published in 1987, not 1985, etc. There are also some important omissions, e.g., Pedroche's opposition and objections to the *Exercises* are mentioned but there is no word of the very well-founded replies that he received from Fr. Jerónimo Nadal (p. 146), nor is it stated that Pope Paul III, in the brief "Pastoralis officii," had already recommended the practice of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius to all Christians as early as 1548. The terrible accusations of Matías de la Posta are referred to

yet nothing is said about how and why they were rejected and how the accuser was condemned (pp. 259–261). The letter of Lady Coutinho is brought up but there is no mention of how many opinions were opposed to her views about Simon Rodrigues (pp. 325–328). It is true that the Jews of Avignon wanted to make Nadal, a Christian doctor, into a rabbi but nothing is said of the latter's angry response to such an audacious proposition (p. 395).

This book and the articles quoted and listed in the Bibliography are of diverse values and tendencies. Yet they also seem to be antiquated.

I am grateful to Gil Ambrona for showing interest in this aspect of the life of Ignatius of Loyola, a saint who is so well known and admired today in the four corners of the world. I lament though that he has not been able to find the great attraction to and incentive for Christian life which so many women and men throughout history have discovered in Ignatius and who have decided to follow in his spiritual path.

If anyone reading this book seeks to know St. Ignatius of Loyola better, she or he will not be able to do so here. What is presented is one of the Illuminati, a disciple of one lady who was one of the Illuminati(!) herself, their sympathizer, and a holder of unorthodox trends. Not even Ignatius would recognize himself in such a portrait—it is so contrary to what he really was and what he aspired to be. Neither the women nor the men who followed him and carried forward his ideal would recognize, in Gil Ambrona's depiction of Ignatius, a holy person who was radically evangelic, filled with love for Jesus Christ and His Bride the Church, fond of all the ceremonies and devotions approved by the Church, and a defender of the sound and safe teaching.

Manuel Ruiz Jurado, S.J.
Sevilla, Spain

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**Jurado, Manuel Ruiz. *Tratado de la oración mental Cristiana, ¿Métodos Cristianos de oración?* [Treatise of Christian Mental Prayer: Christian Methods of Prayer?]. Bilbao: Ediciones Mensajero, 2016. 168 pp. ISBN: 978-84-271-3911-4**

*Reviewed by Antonio Maldonado Correa, S.J.*

This book is the fruit of Ruiz Jurado's deep knowledge of and familiarity with the theory and practice of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola and the classic works of the great Masters of the Spanish *Siglo de Oro*. The author has devoted many years both in the study of these two fields and in having directed the month-long Ignatian retreat.

The *Spiritual Exercises* employs Christian mental prayer using the particular methods proposed by St. Ignatius which are presented in Jurado's book. The author explains mental prayer with great clarity, utmost accuracy, and in a very positive way. He does not dwell too much on pointing out its limitations and hazards as doing so might weaken the practice of traditional Christian prayer methods and result in their being replaced with alternatives that are more or less alien to Christian tradition.

In discussing the different aspects of spiritual direction, including dealing with the difficulties that persons today might encounter while being guided in their spiritual life, this work follows a very rich tradition within Ignatian Spirituality and connects to the famous prologue to

the classic work of Fr. Luis de la Puente (1554–1624),[1] *Meditaciones de los misterios de nuestra santa fe* [Meditations of the Mysteries of Our Holy Faith], and to the treatise of Fr. René de Maumigny (1837–1918),[2] *Pratique de l'oraison mentale* [Practice of Mental Prayer].

The work will certainly give many persons a renewed taste for mental prayer, particularly for the Christian methods that Ignatius proposes in the *Spiritual Exercises*. It would be useful, therefore, to offer here some excerpts from the author's Foreword and Introduction:

> A new book on prayer? There are already so many! But I do hope that this one will have a special place among many books on prayer today. Many books have been published which offer points to dwell on during prayer time or themes which may be used by anyone, according to their personal taste, as a basis upon which to spend the time of prayer or spiritual reading. There are also books that have been written to accompany the meditations of those doing the *Spiritual Exercises*—books containing reflections accommodated more or less to the Ignatian schema in the *Exercises* and to the purpose of the spiritual experience intended in them.
>
> This book intends not to offer matters for prayer but to help individuals learn what Christian prayer really is and how to practice it. It has a pedagogical intention that is based on the foundation of study and experience. Of the many books on spirituality that I have written, the one which has attracted a lot of interest has been the one titled *Spiritual Discernment: Theology, History, Practice* (Madrid: BAC, 2002). I think the reason why the book fostered great interest is that not only does it prove useful for the those who want to learn something about the subject of spiritual discernment, it also helps quite a lot those who would have to teach it.

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[1]He was born in Valladolid, Spain in 1554 and died there in 1624. Clement XIII declared his virtues to be heroic in 1759. His *Meditations* along with the prologue continue to be published even until today. The "Prologue" mentioned here, moreover, was made recommended reading for all Salesians by the first General Chapter of their Congregation.

[2]This work was republished in Paris in 1905 and had already reached 11 editions by 1916.

I do not intend to offer a copious treatise about everything that can be said about prayer but rather a succinct, pedagogic, and practical guide for those who wish to learn what Christian prayer is, how to practice it, its different stages, the conditions that are demanded by it, what facilitates its normal practice, what is currently useful to know when getting acquainted with the diverse methods that may be proposed, and how to face the difficulties that the life of prayer usually entails.

What is prayer, really? … What we call prayer *stricto sensu* is "conscious communication with God in a reverent attitude of the mind." I think that this is what is intended when we pray even if our ways of praying are quite diverse and the idea of God may be confused and erroneous at times.…

Divine revelation shows us that it was God himself who took the initiative to have a dialogue with us. He created us with the capacity for establishing relationship with Him. It was His love that brought us into existence. It was He who created us in his image and likeness (Gen. 1:26). Our similarity with God implies that we have the capacity to understand and to love. God predestined us "before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love" (Eph. 1:4). And love means an interchange between the lover and the beloved. God, moreover, gave us the gift of sharing in his divine nature, creating us in grace which makes us holy and inviting us to be his friends.

And, when we betray God with sin, thereby going against our own dignity … [He] continues to call us and look for us (cf. Gen. 3:9). As befits a Father, God keeps on calling us: "Where are you? … Why have you done so?" His infinite and merciful love opens for us a new path of dialogue: the path of penance and reconciliation—the fruit of the redemption in Christ (John 3:16). We are offered the possibility of regeneration as adopted children in Christ, the eternal Son of the Father made man and in whom we will find redemption for our sin … (cf. Eph. 1:5–8).

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**Jurado, Manuel Ruiz. *A la luz del carisma Ignaciano: estudios sobre san Ignacio de Loyola y la Compañía de Jesús* [In Light of the Ignatian Charism: Studies on Saint Ignatius of Loyola and the Society of Jesus]. Bilbao: Mensajero / Santander: Sal terrae, 2015. 328 pp. ISBN: 978-84-293-2497-6**

*Reviewed by Antonio Maldonado Correa, S.J.*

In this book, Fr. Ruiz Jurado, S.J. compiles several of his best essays that have been published previously in various journals or monographs. Many of them have not been easily accessible to readers; some are seeing the light in Spanish for the first time. In them, the author does not deal too much in theoretical and dry knowledge of Ignatian themes, yet his writings are permeated with everything that Ignatius meant and wanted to convey to peoples of both his age and all others: the great enthusiasm and burning love for Jesus Christ, the Church, and the Society of Jesus, a love that keeps his companions faithful to their mission for the greater glory of God and best help of souls.

As a long-time researcher at the Historical Institute of the Society of Jesus and professor at the Gregorian University in Rome, Fr. Jurado is widely acknowledged as a renowned scholar in the field of Ignatian Spirituality. Some of his published works, such as *El discernimiento espiritual: teología, historia, práctica* (Madrid: Biblioteca de autores cristianos, 1994), *San Francisco de Borja: diario espiritual (1564–1570)* (Bilbao: Mensajero, 1997), *Orígenes del noviciado en la Compañía de Jesús* (Rome: Institutum Historicum, 1980), *For the Greater Glory of God: A Spiritual Retreat with St. Ignatius* (Ijamsville, MD: Word Among Us Press, 2002), and *El peregrino de la voluntad de Dios: biografía espiritual de*

*San Ignacio de Loyola* (Madrid: Biblioteca de autores cristianos, 2005), are but a few of his abundant and outstanding contributions. Through his teaching and written works, Fr. Jurado has always known how to convey the best essence of and basic ideas contained in the life and writings of St. Ignatius of Loyola, author of the *Spiritual Exercises* and founder of the Society of Jesus.

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**Manuel Ruiz Jurado, S.J.,** has dedicated most of his life in the Society of Jesus to the study and publication of Ignatian sources as well as critical editions and studies on the Ignatian charism. He has been a member of the Historical Institute of the Society of Jesus in Rome and is now, after thirty years of uninterrupted teaching, Professor Emeritus

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