Landas

JOURNAL OF LOYOLA SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
Vol. 29, No. 1 (2015)
ISSN 0116-4856

Dissentire cum Ecclesia:
Healthy and Unhealthy Dissent in the Context of Catholic Education
LEO-MARTIN ANGELO R. OCAMPO

The Order of Love in Saint Augustine of Hippo and Saint Thomas Aquinas
ROSA MARIA ALONSO I TERME

Christology in the Service of Faith
JOAQUIN C. YAP, JR., S.W.

Mary in Pope Francis' Gospel of Mercy and Joy
NORLAN H. JULIA, S.J.

Music for the Solemnities and Feasts of the Lord in Ordinary Time
TIMOTEO J. M. OFRASIO, S.J.

Exploring the Principles of Biblical Hermeneutics in Two Biblically-Based Homilies
MICHAEL DEMETRIUS H. ASIS

Landas



Landas

EDITOR
Felipe Fruto Ll. Ramirez, S.J., S.T.D.

EDITORIAL BOARD
Arnel dC. Aquino, S.J., S.T.D.
Enrico C. Eusebio, Jr., S.J., J.C.D.
Manuel V. Francisco, S.J., S.T.D.
Peter O. Pojol, S.J., S.T.D.
Joaquin C. Yap, Jr., S.W., D.Phil.

MANAGING EDITOR
Susan Isorena-Arcega

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Josemaria Roberto V. Reyes



Landas (The Way), Journal of the Loyola School of Theology, is published twice a year by the Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University, Loyola Heights, Quezon City. The Landas postal address is: Loyola School of Theology, P.O. Box 240, U.P., 1144 Quezon City, Philippines. Editorial matters are the responsibility of Felipe Fruto Ll. Ramirez, S.J. (fllramirez@gmail.com). Circulation and business matters should be addressed to Susan Isorena-Arcega (siouxstar@gmail.com). Domestic subscription rates: PhP 450 local institutional/individual subscription (one year); PhP 275 local single copy. Elsewhere: US$ 45 foreign institutional/individual subscription (one year); US$ 27.50 foreign single copy.

The Journal is not responsible for statements and opinions expressed in signed articles and reviews. Such statements and opinions are the author's own, and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editors.

© 2015 by the Loyola School of Theology.
All rights reserved. ISSN 0116-4856

Contents

Landas
Vol. 29, No. 1 (2015)

1 Dissentire cum Ecclesia:
Healthy and Unhealthy Dissent in the Context of Catholic Education
Leo-Martin Angelo R. Ocampo

51 *The Order of Love in Saint Augustine of Hippo and Saint Thomas Aquinas*
Rosa Maria Alonso i Terme

87 *Christology in the Service of Faith*
Joaquin C. Yap, Jr., S.W.

105 *Mary in Pope Francis' Gospel of Mercy and Joy*
Norlan H. Julia, S.J.

125 *Music for the Solemnities and Feasts of the Lord in Ordinary Time*
Timoteo J. M. Ofrasio, S.J.

143 *Exploring the Principles of Biblical Hermeneutics in Two Biblically-Based Homilies*
Michael Demetrius H. Asis

EDITOR'S PREFACE

On a number of occasions Pope Francis encouraged dialogue and *parrhesia*—bold and open discussion—as a way of arriving at the truth. In his recent visit to the United States of America, he told the bishops:

> The path ahead, then, is dialogue among yourselves, dialogue in your presbyterates, dialogue with lay persons, dialogue with families, dialogue with society. I cannot ever tire of encouraging you to dialogue fearlessly. The richer the heritage which you are called to share with *parrhesia*, the more eloquent should be the humility with which you should offer it. Do not be afraid to set out on that "exodus" which is necessary for all authentic dialogue. Otherwise, we fail to understand the thinking of others, or to realize deep down that the brother or sister we wish to reach and redeem, with the power and the closeness of love, counts more than their positions, distant as they may be from what we hold as true and certain.[1]

It is essential for the Church to listen and engage in dialogue with people in various fields in order to discern God's will and respond to new questions and challenges arising from the present-day situation. In the modern world where knowledge has become so vast yet so fragmented, no one sector of society, not even the Church, can claim monopoly of wisdom and insight. This is

---

[1]Pope Francis, "Pope to U.S. bishops: be shepherds in unity and dialogue," http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/09/23/pope_to_us_bishops_be_shepherds_in_unity_and_dialogue/1174163 (accessed October 23, 2015).

true even of theology which must take into account the fresh data coming from historical studies, sociology, anthropology, psychology, medicine, technology, climatology, etc. to be able to make sense of God's Word to contemporary society. The Church can learn from people in the academe, where theology can be enriched by knowledge acquired from various other disciplines.

When asked to explain how he understood the Ignatian principle *sentire cum ecclesia* (thinking with the Church), Pope Francis said: "We should not even think ... that 'thinking with the church' means only thinking with the hierarchy of the church."[2] It means also taking account of the *sensus fidelium*, what the Spirit-led ecclesial community believes in. While respecting the legitimate authority of bishops and pastors to teach the faith, mature Christians are not passive followers of everything taught "from above" but are themselves genuine discerners of God's will, particularly on personal issues they face in their own lives. It may be that the Spirit of God is blowing "from below."

This issue of *Landas* offers a variety of essays by responsible theologians and professors who write with candor and conviction on topics in their own respective fields of expertise.

Leo-Martin Angelo R. Ocampo ("*Dissentire cum Ecclesia*: Healthy and Unhealthy Dissent in the Context of Catholic Education") examines the issue of how the Church should deal with dissenting views of theologians and professors in the university. While recognizing that an unhealthy dissent can be employed to weaken the faith of Christians and subvert the authority of the Church, the theologians' exploration of alternative ways of understanding Christ's teaching is essential for the development of doctrine in the Church and its appropriation to various pastoral contexts. St. Thomas Aquinas describes the Church magisterium

[2]Antonio Spadaro, S.J., "A Big Heart Open to God: The Exclusive Interview with Pope Francis," *America*, 30 September 2013, 22.

as a collaboration between theologians who hold the *cathedra magistralis* and the bishops who exercise the *cathedra pastoralis*.

Rosa Maria Alonso i Terme ("The Order of Love in Saint Augustine of Hippo and Saint Thomas Aquinas") compares the treatment of the order of charity towards people in the writings of the two great doctors of the Church. She notes their similarities as well as differences in dealing with the question. Their divergent viewpoints can be attributed to the two theologians' contrasting family environment and personality, historical and geographical contexts, and intellectual education and philosophical outlook.

Joaquin C. Yap, Jr., S.W., ("Christology in the Service of Faith") notes that the various quests for the "historical Jesus" have often been plagued by an *a priori* principle derived from the Enlightenment: a rejection of the supernatural and a deistic understanding of God. But historical criticism without such a philosophical presupposition can illumine the world in which Jesus lived and, more importantly, help the believer to encounter, know, and adore the Jesus of the Gospels. Yap writes:

> If it is hard enough to know a human person, how much harder it must be to know a divine person, one who lived on earth 2,000 years ago, whose extant "biographical" material are just as old and do not add up to form a complete biography in the modern sense of the word. This is precisely where the "tools" come in ... which equip the theologian *working as a believer and never simply as a "scientist"* to formulate "speech about Christ" (Christology) that is responsible, defensible, and ... accountable. Benedict XVI took pains to delineate his own hermeneutical method in producing, not a Christology as he himself says, but something closer to Aquinas' achievement: a theological reflection on the mysteries of Christ. Such an enterprise can be done with scholarly integrity only with the help of historical-critical tools, but must always transcend the inherent limitations of these tools. It can only be done with a faith-hermeneutic .... (103–104)

Norlan H. Julia, S.J., ("Mary in Pope Francis' Gospel of Mercy and Joy") examines the role of Mary in Pope Francis' personal

life and mission. As a background to understand the Pope's Mariology, the writer discusses first how the Pope sees himself before God, how he understands the mission of the Church, and how his *teología del pueblo* sets the poor at the heart of the People of God. Mary is foremost a mother of the sons and daughters of the Church, a kindhearted refuge of sinners and compassionate helper of the afflicted. Julia writes:

> For Pope Francis, Mary is Jesus' gift to the Church, a gift given to the Church by Christ as he was about to die on the Cross. Mary is the expression of Christ's love for His Church whom he did not want to journey without a mother, hence the final word of Christ to his mother, "Woman, behold your Son" (Jn. 19:26–27). (117)

She is also the Star of Evangelization, a model of discipleship for all Christians to emulate.

Timoteo J. M. Ofrasio, S.J., ("Music for the Solemnities and Feasts of the Lord in Ordinary Time") discusses the history, the theology, and the Mass prayers of the Solemnities of the Holy Trinity, the Body and Blood of Christ, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, and the Solemnity of Jesus Christ King of the Universe, in order to draw out the theological themes that should ideally permeate the liturgical songs for these feasts. In line with the principle of *lex orandi, lex credendi*, the writer stresses the importance of expressing and celebrating the respective theological contents of these feasts in the liturgical songs. In addition, the writer discusses some of the essential characteristics of liturgical music and the role music plays in instilling the true spirit of the liturgy. Lastly, he offers some critique on the choice of musical accompaniment in vogue today.

Michael Demetrius H. Asis ("Exploring the Principles of Biblical Hermeneutics in Two Biblically-Based Homilies") investigates the complexity of biblical interpretation. The historical-critical approach to interpretation cannot surely be neglected because of the historical character of biblical revelation.

Yet, must one determine only the original meaning of the biblical text and the literary genre employed to express its meaning? Studying the sermons of St. Augustine and Rev. David Q. Liptak, the writer comes to the following conclusions: 1) "First, it is clear that both homilies presuppose that the biblical text as a whole presents itself as testimony of religious witness and not simply as a historical document to be subjected to thorough critical scrutiny." 2) "Second, both homilies display an explicit affinity to a rhetorical sense of Scripture." 3) "Third, given the more rhetorical style of both homilies, meaning is uncovered in the very performance of the text to uncover the 'world in front of it'" (cf. 154–155). In other words, biblical interpretation must have an existential referent and must be capable of construing a world that is feasible only if contextualized and reappropriated.

Felipe Fruto Ll. Ramirez, S.J.

Landas 29:1 (2015) 1–49

DISSENTIRE CUM ECCLESIA

Healthy and Unhealthy Dissent in the Context of Catholic Education

Leo-Martin Angelo R. Ocampo

In his article "The Juridic Protection of the Church Teaching against Contraception,"[1] Jaime Blanco Achacoso, a canon lawyer, responded to an email from a certain reader concerning a column by Atty. Jose C. Sison in the *Philippine Star*. In the said column, a certain Jose Teodoro Sagalo alerted the columnist to a "grave error that the Loyola School of Theology has posted in the Ateneo website endorsed earlier by Bienvenido Nebres, S.J., Ateneo President, for reaction, and now endorsed by Roberto Rivera, S.J., of the John Carroll Institute."[2] The matter in question here is the "Talking Points for Dialogue on the Reproductive Health Bill"[3] document prepared by moral theologian

[1]Jaime Blanco Achacoso, "The Juridic Protection of the Church Teaching against Contraception (Part III)," *CBCP Monitor* 15:2 (January 17–30, 2011), B2. The article appears at the end of a three-part series: Part I in *CBCP Monitor* 14:24 (November 22–December 5, 2010), B3; Part II in *CBCP Monitor* 15:1 (January 3-16, 2011), B2.

[2]Jose C. Sison, "Nagging Questions," *Philippine Star* (November 8, 2010): 5. Available at http://www.philstar.com/opinion/627751/nagging-questions.

[3]Eric O. Genilo, John J. Carroll, & Joaquin Bernas, "Talking Points for Dialogue on the Reproductive Health Bill," http://www.jjcicsi.org.ph/?page_id=339 (accessed June 24, 2014).

Eric O. Genilo, S.J., sociologist John J. Caroll, S.J., and constitutional lawyer Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J. Reacting to what he or she found to be "the presence of offensive proposals" in the said document, the unnamed reader posed the following questions:

> Can these theologians, teaching in a Catholic university, where young minds are supposedly being formed in the Catholic faith, maintain such doctrinally questionable positions with impunity? Can't the Law of the Church even protect the youngest of its own faithful against doctrinal error? Or put another way, if the bishops are so concerned about the environmental degradation brought about by irresponsible mining, shouldn't they be more concerned about the doctrinal confusion brought about by irresponsible theologizing in Catholic universities? After all, environmental degradation is not as serious as the erosion of the Catholic faith, which is at bottom the reason for the increasing acceptance of the RH Bill among the Catholic faithful—including government policy-makers.[4]

Responding to this query, Achacoso discusses the "juridic regulation of the relationship between Magisterium and theologian," applying it to the relationship between the CBCP and the local bishops with theology professors in Catholic educational institutions in the Philippines. By insinuating that dissent is "the beginning of the road to perdition," Fr. Achacoso propounds that the local bishops enforce the juridical provisions in canon law to regulate academic activity, especially of dissenting clerics and theologians, to make professors "toe the line." In this case, when canon law seems to be wielded to constrict theological activity, it behooves us as theologians and teachers to seek an enlightened understanding of the issue.

This article attempts to offer a response to the concerns raised by Achacoso particularly with regard to the issue of dissent. Although the article itself may be dated, the issue of dissent is not. In fact, with the recent election of Pope Francis, it has taken on a markedly different "color" and, with the advent of social media, a much wider arena. Whereas previously dissent from pronouncements of the Pope and the

[4]Achacoso, "The Juridic Protection of the Church Teaching against Contraception (Part III)," B7.

bishops was commonly associated with the more "liberal" theologians in the academic setting, it is now from the "conservative" side that differing opinions are also heard, particularly in the new forum of social networking sites. This only shows that dissent continues to be a very important concern for theologians today, calling for our understanding not only on the juridic but also on the theological level, and not only for ourselves but for the rest of the faithful. For this, the case of the Jesuits who authored the "Talking Points on the Reproductive Health Bill" may still provide a concrete and specific example that can aid our analysis.

The Church and Academic Freedom

Achacoso began by discussing the ecclesiastical "mandate" required of professors of theological disciplines in Catholic universities and other institutions of higher learning. He goes on to elaborate that this formal ecclesiastical mandate, in the form of a *canonical mission* or at least a *nihil obstat* for teaching theology,

> … is neither an authorization to teach nor a canonical mission, but is only a certification that the professor is not teaching anything objectionable in matters concerning faith or morals and is doing so in communion with the Church. Thus, the mandate cannot be used to teach apart from the Church and much less against the Church; there is no room for active dissent in Catholic theology. In fact, it can be withdrawn—and I dare say should be withdrawn—when there is an absence of communion between the theologian and the Church (c.253 §3).[5]

While Achacoso's definition of the mandate and description of what it means seem acceptable enough, his sweeping assertion that "there is no room for active dissent[6] in Catholic theology" raises a

[5]Achacoso, "The Juridic Protection of the Church Teaching against Contraception (Part III)."

[6]In the absence of an explicit definition from Achacoso of what he means by "active dissent," we assume that here he distinguishes it from a situation

serious concern in connection with the protection of academic freedom which is provided for in article XIV, section 5, paragraph 2 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution as well as in article 2, section 8 of the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers and which guarantees freedom to teach according to one's scholarship in all universities and institutions of higher learning in the land. At the same time, the problem with his statement goes well beyond a conflict between his interpretation of ecclesiastical discipline and the laws of the State.

A more important and fundamental concern for theologians, beyond the legal aspects of dissent, is whether the nature of faith does itself preclude, and absolutely so, the expression of dissent against the official teaching of the Catholic Church. Is dissent truly the "road to perdition" not only for theologians but even for their students? Are all expressions of dissent, therefore, even in a setting such as the academe, the same as teaching something "objectionable"? Does public dissent always and necessarily sever a theologian from communion with the Church, as Achacoso states?

To gain perspective, we begin by recalling that in many ways the Catholic Church itself is the historical forerunner if not the original champion of "academic freedom." Avery Cardinal Dulles noted that the "Catholic Church has always had a deep respect for learning and intelligence. It has conferred on outstanding theologians the titles of father or doctor of the Church."[7] The role of these fathers and doctors who were pioneering in their vision, often way ahead of their contemporaries and attracting opposition from them, forms the foundation of the great intellectual tradition which has continued in the Catholic Church. At least in the Western Hemisphere, it was the

---

where one who holds an opinion different from what is proposed by Church authority does not speak, write, or act upon this opinion. In this case, the very *act* of writing and publishing the "Talking Points" effectively qualifies it under his category of "active dissent" and also even under the more broadly used term of "public dissent."

[7]Avery Cardinal Dulles, *The Reshaping of Catholicism* (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1988), 98.

Catholic Church that continued to sustain the pursuit of knowledge, especially through the so-called Dark Ages, and in many places paved the way for the establishment of our modern universities. Many important advances not only in theology but also in the various sciences owe greatly to the Church's fostering of academic activity.

The official magisterium also owes much to the academic activity of theologians. The Angelic Doctor, who in his time was considered a dissenter himself, distinguishes between two *magisteria* in the Church: the *magisterium cathedrae pastoralis* or the teaching authority of the bishops as pastors and the *magisterium cathedrae magistralis* or the teaching authority of the theologians.[8] Before the formal organization as such of the Roman Curia, it was the practice of the popes and bishops to have recourse to distinguished theological faculties or "schools" as well as individual theological consultants in the exercise of their own teaching office rather than resolving theological or moral issues by themselves. This was especially so in the period when they were usually chosen from the nobility and did not necessarily have formal academic training. In this way, the bishops acknowledged that erudition and expertise in theology was not always their personal, and certainly not their exclusive, charism. Together, these two *magisteria* collaborated and contributed to the development of Church teaching.

As such, the relationship between the official Magisterium and the magisterium of the theologians has not always been an antagonistic one. It was not until the time of the Inquisition that the relationship between these two complementary *magisteria* would become really tense and, at times, even tragic and violent.

> Since the 19th century, an entirely new type of theological model was developed alongside the older working model of the theologians as critical partners of the bishops. Malevolently, one could describe this model as follows: the theologians are servile, party ideologues, or, more correctly formulated, they are the perfect parrots of the magisterium.

[8]Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Quodlibetales* III, 9 ad 3. Cf. also his *Commentary on the Sentences* Book IV, D. 19, q. 2, a. 2, q[a] 2, ad 4.

> Under Popes Pius IX, X, XI, and XII a sort of totalitarian claim to the magisterium obtained.[9]

The concept of *magisterium* itself would then become more and more identified with, and for some, eventually limited to, only the teaching authority of the bishops and the Pope.

Hence, theological faculties and theologians would sometimes find themselves pitted against the bishops in cases of public dissent with official teaching. With the consultation process preceding the publication of official teaching now significantly reduced, more room was created for dissent after instead of before the publication of official teaching. The hierarchy, on the other hand, would go on to set canonical provisions to limit the academic activity of dissenting theologians, including the withdrawal of the teaching mandate which Achacoso proposes should be used by the CBCP to censure the three Jesuits.

Achacoso appears to believe that the expression of dissent manifests a failure on the part of theologians to take their mandate seriously, as well as the accompanying Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity required of them when they receive it. He wrote:

> … I wonder how I keep on getting reports of heterodox teachings being foisted on the young and innocent by professors teaching either theology or matters related to faith and morals in Catholic institutions. Could it be that such professors are not making either the *professio fidei* or the *iusiurandum fidelitatis*?[10]

Extending these to similar juridical measures in canon law such as the requiring of the *nihil obstat* and *imprimatur* for doctrinal and moral publications, he calls for a more aggressive enforcement of these canonical measures "to make these persons and institutions toe the line."

---

[9]Edward Schillebeeckx, "The Magisterium and Ideology," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 19 (Spring 1982): 16.

[10]Achacoso, "The Juridic Protection of the Church Teaching against Contraception (Part III)."

Does the expression of dissent, however, necessarily violate this *Professio Fidei* and *Iusiurandum Fidelitatis*?[11] Does dissenting always signify transgressing the boundaries of orthodoxy? Here we shall continue our discussion with an examination of the *Professio Fidei* and *Iusiurandum Fidelitatis* in order to understand what is expected of theology professors and what room there is, if there is at all, for dissent.

The Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity for Teachers of Theology

Canon 833 prescribes that specified persons on specified situations personally make a Profession of Faith according to the formula determined by the Apostolic See. Among the categories of people obliged to make this public act at the beginning of their term of office are "professors of theology and philosophy in seminaries" (§ 6) as well as "those who in any universities teach subjects which deal with faith and morals" (§ 7). Excluded from this obligation, however, are non-Catholics (c. 11) because they do not hold the same faith, even though they may also teach these subjects in universities.[12] Those who are bound are to make it "in the presence of the rector if he is a priest, or of the local Ordinary, or the delegates of either" (§ 7). As a statement of legal obligation, the Canon has to be fulfilled by those called upon unless it is genuinely impossible to do so.

---

[11]The "Oath of Fidelity" of which he speaks here is the present version of what was formerly known as the "Oath Against Modernism" prescribed by Pope Saint Pius X in 1910, to be made together with the Profession of Faith. The Oath of Fidelity itself is not required in the 1917 Code or in the New Code, except for priests promoted to the episcopate (c. 380), because of its temporary and transitory nature affirmed by the Holy Office in 1918 (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 10 [1918]: 136). However, it was made obligatory for all persons listed under Canon 833 by a recent instruction from the CDF (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 81 [1989]: 104–106).

[12]James A. Coriden et al., eds., *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 586.

The present formula consists of an audible proclamation, using the first person singular, of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan symbol followed by these propositions:

> With firm faith, I also believe everything contained in the Word of God, whether written or handed down in Tradition, which the Church, either by a solemn judgment or by the ordinary and universal Magisterium, sets forth to be believed as divinely revealed.
>
> I also firmly accept and hold each and everything definitively proposed by the Church regarding teaching on faith and morals.
>
> Moreover, I adhere with religious submission of will and intellect to the teachings which either the Roman pontiff or the College of Bishops enunciate when they exercise their authentic Magisterium, even if they do not intend to proclaim these teachings by a definitive act.

According to the 1989 Instruction by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), this is immediately followed by the Oath of Fidelity which has been appended in full to this article to facilitate reference.

Coriden comments on the meaning and significance of this Profession of Faith:

> The public manifestations of personal belief, of which this canon speaks, are acts of prayerful worship arising from the gift and virtue of faith, but they are here made juridical requirements on the occasion of the assumption of certain offices or functions related to the Church's teaching mission. The outward expression of faith in the form of a recital of a creed gives witness to the community of the authentic belief of a person who is to perform the teaching role.[13]

Regarding the Oath of Fidelity, Quade explains: "In its very title, as well as twice within its text, it is clearly established that the oath is intended for those who claim to speak *in the church's name,* and under the *church's mandate*."[14]

---

[13]Coriden et al., *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, 585.

[14]Quentin L. Quade, "A University Perspective on the 'Oath of Fidelity'," *America* (April 15, 1989): 348 (italics in original).

The Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity therefore possess not only a liturgical character but also a juridic valor, publicly vesting the persons who make it with an official role as teachers in the Church. This role gives them the right to teach Catholic doctrine and binds them with a duty to observe what they declare. We may even go on to say that because this category of persons specified by the law are expected to make the Profession and Oath, they are also expected to adhere to what they stipulate, regardless of whether they actually and formally make it or not.

Canon 2403 of the Old Code threatened the loss of income and office for those who neglect to make the Profession of Faith. Although the New Code no longer specifies any sanction for failure to comply with this obligation, the responsibility to make it and keep it, according to Jose A. Fuentes, is essentially a moral one in that "it is necessary to remember that the faithful must profess the faith if, by failure to do so, an implicit denial or abandonment of the faith, an insult to God or scandal could be assumed."[15] According to him,

> [the] fundamental juridical effect of the obligation to profess the faith in certain circumstances is that the *munus docendi* of the Church attains particular public importance so that only those among the faithful who declare that they are currently living, and will continue to live, under the bonds of communion and submission to authority will attain certain positions and duties.[16]

This provision safeguards the mutual duties and rights of both the faithful and the magisterium in relation to the faith, including the right of the magisterium "to teach authoritatively and demand responsibilities and public commitments from the faithful at certain times" and the right of the faithful "to receive the word, the right to the apostolate [of the word], the right to research the word, etc."[17] It

---

[15]Jose A. Fuentes, "Tit. V. The Profession of Faith," in Angel Marzoa et al., eds., *Exegetical Commentary on the Code of Canon Law* Vol. 3/1 (Montreal: Wilson & Lafleur, 2004), 334.

[16]Fuentes, "Tit. V. The Profession of Faith," 335.

[17]Fuentes, "Profession of Faith," 334–336.

originates from the Roman custom of requiring soldiers and public officials to profess loyalty to the Emperor before assuming public office. After the Council of Trent, it was used "as an instrument of the counter-Reformation in an effort to safeguard and build up the Catholic faith."[18]

Quade comments that it seems to be "an entirely appropriate and understandable discipline when one understands the Roman Catholic Church as it presents itself: an authoritative teaching body, protecting and promulgating truths entrusted to the church by God."[19] Hence, the *ratio legis* of this particular Canon, in relation to its original *finis*, is not simply to establish orthodoxy and enforce submission to religious authorities but, more precisely, to celebrate ecclesial communion, to highlight the importance of the responsibility that the person assumes to exercise a teaching function in the Church, and to define what is expected of the person in the exercise of that teaching role.

Scriptural and Conciliar Foundations

In the New Testament, communion with the Church was considered of utmost importance for those who teach the faith. Jesus himself speaks of false prophets who will come as wolves in sheep's clothing and gives a criterion for distinguishing them "by their fruits" (Mt. 7:15–20). In the Lukan parallel of this text, the "fruits" are identified precisely as the words that come from their hearts through their mouths (Lk. 6:39–45). Hence, there is a real need to profess one's allegiance to the true faith in words.

However, a single act of Profession of Faith is not enough but must translate to consistent orthodoxy. In his instructions to Timothy, Paul tells the bishop to "charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine which promote speculations rather than the divine training that is in faith" (1 Tim. 1:3–6). Nevertheless, this does not preclude

[18]Coriden et al., *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, 585.

[19]Quade, "A University Perspective on the 'Oath of Fidelity'," 348.

theological inquiry, for the Apostle himself acknowledges that "our knowledge is imperfect and so our prophecy is imperfect. For now we see as in a mirror dimly … now I know in part; then I shall understand fully …" (1 Cor. 13:9–12). Faith then, at least in this life, necessarily remains *fides quaerens intellectum* in its conscious effort to adhere to what has been revealed in Jesus Christ and handed on in the Church, not however as ferment but as a dynamic reality, not as absolute certainty but as mystery.

Meanwhile, the Second Vatican Council describes the work of holding to, practicing, and professing the deposit of faith as "a remarkable common effort" (DV 10) of the bishops and the faithful. It also states that the development of Tradition happens with the help of the Holy Spirit, both "through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts through the intimate understanding of spiritual things they experience *and* through the preaching of those who have received through episcopal succession the sure charism of truth" (DV 8).[20] In the mind of the Council, the relationship between the Magisterium and the rest of the faithful, which of course includes theologians, should not be one of suspicion but of cooperation, not one of opposition but of complementarity.

In line with this, the Profession of Faith must be understood not simply as an assimilation of a static body of doctrine and blind submission to the magisterium of the bishops as the official teachers but as a statement of belonging to a living community that struggles together, aided by the grace of the Holy Spirit, to understand what it believes and to grow and deepen in this belief as it continues to confront and wrestle with the questions and challenges of changing times. Thus, the Church has rightly removed all sanctions in the New Code connected to the Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity and has thus relegated it to the sphere of conscience of those who are called upon to make and observe it, as Fuentes suggests. Failure to make the Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity does not necessarily entail a violation of it, at least in principle. It is even rightly pointed

[20]Italics added.

out that in efforts to comply with this Canon, it must be taken as an "ecclesiological imperative,"[21] consonant with our vision of what it means to be a believing Church and the role that those who are called to teach have in this community, and not merely as a juridical obligation that needs to be satisfied.

Categories of Church Teaching and the Corresponding Assent of Faith

Canon 749 § 3 unequivocally states that "no doctrine is understood to be infallibly defined unless this is manifestly demonstrated." "Manifestly demonstrated" here means that a particular doctrine constitutive of the deposit of faith must be explicitly proposed or clearly shown as infallible before demanding unquestioning assent. The context of this Canon is the reality that there are gradations in Church teaching and corresponding levels in the kind of assent expected of all the faithful, including teachers of theology. The Profession of Faith itself and the accompanying Doctrinal Commentary from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith reflect and express these clarifying and helpful distinctions in the nature of particular teachings as well as the corresponding response that is expected of the faithful.

The first proposition of the Profession of Faith corresponds to dogma. These are revealed truths which are inviolable and not open to dissent. Dogmas are defined either through the extraordinary magisterium by way of a solemn definition by an ecumenical Council or by the Pope acting as the head of the episcopal college when he explicitly teaches a certain doctrine *ex cathedra*, or through the universal ordinary magisterium where bishops across time and space consistently hold and teach the same doctrine. We apply the category of formal heresy to deviations from this limited body of doctrines to which the first proposition corresponds such that "whoever obstinately places

[21]Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland, *The Canon Law: Letter and Spirit* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995), 454.

them in doubt or denies them falls under the censure of heresy, as indicated by the respective canons of the Codes [sic] of Canon Law."[22]

However, because the first category consists of doctrines regarding which there is universal consensus or which have been definitively determined by the Church in an explicit manner, these matters are not only not open to dissent. Dissent does not normally revolve around these matters. There is practically no disagreement nowadays within the Catholic Church about such matters as the divinity of Christ or even the Immaculate Conception of Mary. The danger and potential conflict lies in regarding as dogma matters which do not qualify under this category and consequently applying the category of formal heresy, which is a very strong and serious accusation.

While the Church, from the time of the Christological Councils all the way to the Second Vatican Council, has deemed it fit and necessary to make solemn and dogmatic pronouncements, the non-adherence to which led to excommunication (*anathema sit*) because of heresy, not all Church pronouncements are dogmatic in nature. In matters that remain controversial at present, such as the teaching on contraception in particular, no solemn and dogmatic pronouncement has yet been made. Also, what is held about these matters by the universal ordinary magisterium as expressed in the consensus, synchronic and diachronic, of the entire episcopal college has yet to be determined.

Meanwhile, the second proposition pertains to "all those teachings belonging to the dogmatic or moral area, which are necessary for faithfully keeping and expounding the deposit of faith, even if they have not been proposed by the Magisterium of the Church as formally revealed." These are "definitive" doctrines so intimately connected with dogma and morals that they are "necessary" to uphold the core of our belief even if they do not belong to the core itself. A clear example would be the belief in the inspired nature of the Scriptures

[22]Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Concluding Formula of the Profession of Faith* (June 29 1998), 5, http:// www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_1998_professio-fidei_en.html (accessed June 24, 2014).

without which all our belief based on them falls apart. As such, they are also considered infallible and demand a full assent of faith. Those who dissent from these teachings "would be in a position of rejecting a truth of Catholic doctrine and would therefore no longer be in full communion with the Catholic Church."[23]

This second category of doctrine, however, is even less defined than the first and more porous because it is not always clear whether a particular doctrine is "required for the keeping and expounding of the deposit of faith." Francis Sullivan, S.J., notes that

> while it is official Catholic doctrine (though not a dogma of faith) that the Church's charism of infallibility extends to such a "secondary object" there is no official statement specifying in detail what is included in it nor is there unanimity among Catholic theologians about the exact contents or limits of the object.[24]

Also, the way in which the expected response to this body of doctrines is stated—"to embrace and hold firmly" (*firmiter amplector ac retineo*)—is as vague as it is poetic. Orsy notes that

> [t]here are new elements here not found in this form in earlier professions of faith or in any of the documents of the Second Vatican Council or in the canons of the new Code. The text speaks of doctrines *definitively proposed* by the Church, doctrines that ought to be *embraced and held*. This leads to some weighty theological questions.[25]

For instance, he asks, "what is the theological significance of *embracing and holding* a doctrine? Is it the same as the making of an act of faith?

---

[23]Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Concluding Formula of the Profession of Faith*, 6.

[24]Francis A. Sullivan, "Some Observations on the New Formula for the Profession of Faith," *Gregorianum* 70:3 (1989): 552. Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University.

[25]Ladislas Orsy, "Profession of Faith and the Oath of Fidelity," *America* (April 15, 1989): 345–346.

If so, we should say credo, 'I believe,' and should not use any other ambivalent term."[26]

Although the CDF identifies two criteria by which to establish if a doctrine belongs to this category, namely, "historical relationship" and "logical connection," theologians still vary in determining whether a particular doctrine such as the teaching on contraception belongs to it. Some adapt a liberal application that more readily admits doctrines within its scope. Conversely, others adopt a stricter one, following the spirit of Canon 749 § 3 and do not admit a doctrine within it unless it can be clearly established otherwise. Once again, the danger lies in readily classifying certain teachings under this category, effectively qualifying them as infallible, and once again adopting a polemical if not inimical stance against those who hold contrary beliefs.

Finally, the third proposition, according to the CDF, refers to "all those teachings—on faith and morals—presented as true or at least as sure, even if they have not been defined with a solemn judgment or proposed as definitive by the ordinary and universal Magisterium." The CDF goes on to declare that "a proposition contrary to these doctrines can be qualified as erroneous or, in the case of teachings of the prudential order, as rash or dangerous and therefore, '*tuto doceri non potest*.'"[27]

Thus, if such an explicit and absolute prohibition—*tuto docere non potest*, "absolutely cannot teach"—applies to the lowest category, any obedient Catholic theologian "absolutely cannot teach" anything that contradicts a doctrine falling within any of all these three categories. Still, it remains to be asked whether such ideas may still be expressed in the classroom or university podium without making the subject schismatic or adamant in error. After all, there is a fine line that divides

[26]Orsy, "Profession of Faith and the Oath of Fidelity," 345–346 (italics in original).

[27]Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Concluding Formula of the Profession of Faith*, 10.

teaching something as true and sure and merely proposing questions and alternative positions within the context of academic discourse.

Moreover, the important operative phrase "religioso voluntatis et intellectus obsequio adhaerere" in the third proposition is rather open to varying interpretation. Sullivan observes that this crucial Latin term "obsequium" has been variably translated in English and equivalently in other languages as either "submission" or "respect." Both words have in fact been used in authorized English translations of the Code as Orsy observed: "respect" for the one published for the United States and "submission" for the other authorized English translation. Sullivan therefore suggests that "one should at least not give too strong a meaning to 'submission' or too weak a meaning to 'respect'," [28] that is, not to undermine or overemphasize the authority of the official teaching.

Therefore, while we are called to respect or submit to whatever the Church proposes to us "as true or at least sure," including judgments of a prudential nature, we need not be absolute and unquestioning about all teachings, as if they all bear the same theological weight. For instance, while it is clear that openness to procreation is intrinsic to the marital act based on the doctrine on the two ends of marriage, the question of using certain birth control methods in particular situations can be much more complex. What do we say for instance to a wife with seven malnourished children and an unemployed husband who adamantly refuses to cooperate in natural family planning because of a prevailing macho culture? It needs to be asked anew, even demands to be asked anew because of the uniqueness and increasing complexity of human realities, if we are to be truly faithful to the upholding of the dignity of human life. In the same way, we cannot be minimalist or relativist in regarding the official magisterium of the Church as only a voice among and equal to other voices that we must consider. To this effect, Orsy insightfully points out the deeper meaning of *obsequium*:

[28]Sullivan, "Some Observations on the New Formula for the Profession of Faith," 557.

> The root meaning of the word does not refer to any specific action but to an attitude, as any good Latin dictionary attests. It points to an attitude of readiness to follow some promptings of another, to a disposition of loyalty. Such an attitude can, of course, at some proper times lead to the specific act of the full acceptance of a point of doctrine proclaimed by the magisterium, but it can also imply a respectful listening, coupled if necessary with critical reflections.[29]

In another place, he explains:

> The external manifestation of a disposition can take many forms, depending on the person to whom *obsequium* must be rendered, or on the point of doctrine that is proposed as entitled to *obsequium.* Accordingly, the duty to offer *obsequium* may bind to respect, or to submission—or to any other attitude between the two.[30]

In any case, both submission and respect can manifest *obsequium.*

Even the Oath of Fidelity, it can be argued, does not employ absolute language and appears to allow some room for dissent, but only after establishing a fundamental loyalty to the Church: "In fulfilling the charge entrusted to me in the name of the Church, I shall hold fast to the deposit of faith in its entirety; I shall faithfully hand it on and explain it, and I shall *avoid* any teachings contrary to it."[31] Avoiding is not necessarily equivalent to evading but can also point more to a disposition of caution rather than complete non-engagement. After all, the very process of handing down the faith today and explaining it may itself necessitate such an engagement.

A very recent example of the fruitfulness of such critical engagement is the International Theological Commission's document entitled "The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die Without Being Baptized," approved by Pope Benedict XVI for publication on January 19, 2007. The said document concerns the teaching on the Limbo of

---

[29]Orsy, "Profession of Faith and the Oath of Fidelity," 346.

[30]Ladislas Orsy, *The Church: Learning and Teaching* (Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1987), 89.

[31]Italics added.

the Unbaptized, which, originating from Saint Augustine, was held by the Church in connection with the teaching on the necessity of baptism and incorporation in the Church in order to be saved. In this document, the CDF applied the word "theory" to the doctrine of Limbo, implying that the said concept, as in other disciplines, may have been operational at a certain point as a solution to a certain question but is at the same time provisional and open to the possibility of emendation or even rejection in the future.

In fact, the phrase "development of doctrine" appears many times in the document which traces the historical development of the said theory. In the end, it makes its conclusion, effectively cancelling a doctrine which has been taken for granted by many and sometimes even regarded as part of Tradition: "We believe that, in the development of doctrine, the solution in terms of Limbo can be surpassed in view of a greater theological hope …."[32] Such a humbling but enlightening clarification on the part of the Church could not have been reached without adopting a spirit of openness to questioning certain doctrines which the Church teaches and viewing them with a healthy attitude of self-criticism which does not deny the possibility of refining or even correcting our long-held belief in the light of new data or with the progress of reflection.

If one is to be overstated in assessing the importance of particular doctrines, sometimes regarding everything as dogma without being conscious of these gradations of Church teaching and being overly rigid in giving assent to them, the tendency is to exclude all possibility of dissent, especially the public expression of such dissent, and even more so the expression of dissent in a context of teaching. If one is more sober, however, in the treatment of Church doctrine, without underemphasizing or overemphasizing its authority and valor, and certainly not undermining it especially in the case of dogma, one can become more open to the development of doctrine.

---

[32]International Theological Commission, *The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die Without Being Baptized* (January 19, 2007), 95, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_ doc_20070419_unbaptised-infants_en.html (accessed August 21, 2014).

The Role of Dissent in the Life of the Church

Edward Schillebeeckx regards dissent as normal in the organic life of the Church.

> A certain tension between the magisterium and the rest of the Catholic community, and especially between the magisterium and Catholic theologians, belongs to the normal life of the Church. Throughout the history of Catholic experience, the theologians' function has been one of scientific and confessional criticism in dealing with the specific forms in which the Magisterium articulates the Christian faith.[33]

The International Theological Commission categorically affirms this reality and even suggests that such tension may even be a permanent feature of the life of the pilgrim Church:

> The exercise of their tasks by the magisterium and theologians often gives rise to a certain tension. But this is not surprising, nor should one expect that such tension will ever be fully resolved here on earth. On the contrary, wherever there is genuine life, tension also exists. Such tension need not be interpreted as hostility or real opposition, but can be seen as a vital force and an incentive to a common carrying out of the respective tasks by way of dialogue.[34]

Even sociologists have observed several stages which are common to the life of human organizations, namely, forming, storming, norming, and performing. As seen in the history of the Church, storming in the early stages was crucial in the formation of its identity and the articulation of its core values and beliefs. However, as this model is really a cycle or a spiral rather than a merely linear representation, even after reaching the stages of norming and performing, storming can still occur when new questions arise or new problems surface that need to be addressed. Such later storming is also essential if stagnation and even paralysis is to be avoided in the life of an organization.

---

[33]Schillebeeckx, "The Magisterium and Ideology," 5.

[34]International Theological Commission, *Theses on the Relationship between the Ecclesiastical Magisterium and Theology* (June 6) (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1976), 9.

Schillebeeckx observes that the present situation of the Church is complicated by some emerging factors, including a growing mistrust of the teachings of the magisterium on the part of many believers today "and in particular between the magisterium and critically minded Catholics."[35] Thus, there is an undeniable storming that has already been going on in the Church today. Gone are the times when the laity blindly acquiesced to the teaching of the clergy or, to use the rather curt secular slogan, simply "prayed, paid, and obeyed." Thus pressured, the hierarchy has at times adopted a defensive stance towards dissent to which theologians have also reacted defensively, with antagonism from both sides hindering genuine and sober dialogue. In such cases, reason is forsaken and the relationship turns into rivalry based on power or persuasion.

> This goal of the dialogue, the service of the truth is often endangered. … the dialogue between the magisterium and theologians is especially violated if the level of argument and discussion is prematurely abandoned and means of coercion, threat and sanction are immediately brought to bear; the same thing holds when the discussion between the theologians and the magisterium is carried out by means of publicity, whether within or outside the Church, which is not sufficiently expert in the matter.[36]

However, while dissent may at times represent a real threat that can lead to heresy or schism, it can also be a moment of opportunity for the Church, a gift from God who leads us to deeper knowledge of the truth and to renewal as many difficult but shining moments in the history of the Church attests. Healthy storming eventually leads to better norming and performing. Indeed, we can acknowledge the place of dissent not only on practical but also on theological grounds. Apparent dissent can actually be an authentic movement of the Holy Spirit.

> The doctrine that the Holy Spirit inspires ever-renewed interpretations of the faith logically implies that at any specific point in the ongoing

[35]Schillebeeckx, "The Magisterium and Ideology," 5–6.

[36]International Theological Commission, *Theses on the Relationship between the Ecclesiastical Magisterium and Theology,* 11.

> developmental process, conscientious dissenters may be ahead of the current teaching authority because of their deeper interpretation on some disputed matter. An individual's dissenting conscience currently unsynchronized with Rome may be erroneous, or it may be correctly responding to what the Holy Spirit intends for the future of the Church.[37]

Indeed, the history of the Church bears witness to such a long line of loyal and faithful dissenters, including those of recent memory such as Yves Congar, O.P. and John Courtney Murray, S.J. Both were held in suspicion initially but proved instrumental in the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. "Cutting off internal dissent severs the church's self-correcting source of reform and renewal. We also appear absurdly hypocritical in preaching freedom of conscience to the world when we do not live by those same standards within our own community."[38]

Because of liberalism and the free and rapid diffusion of ideas today especially through social media, dissent is already present everywhere even if professors inhibit themselves from participating in it. Gone are the times when books and ideas perceived to be inimical or at least dangerous can be censured and forbidden and the young people can be prevented from being exposed to them. In fact, the refusal to engage dissenting opinions expressed even in informal venues and tackle them in our formal academic theological discussions only seems to contribute to the growing climate of mistrust already pointed out by Schillebeeckx. It is not so much a question of going with the popular flow as engaging the people today and the questions that they are already discussing, with or without our involvement. The very openness to this dialogue can only contribute positively to the threatened credibility as well as to the questioned relevance not only of the magisterium but even also of theology professors.

---

[37]Sidney Callahan, "Conscience Reconsidered," *America* (November 1, 1986): 251.

[38]Callahan, "Conscience Reconsidered," 252.

Healthy and Unhealthy Dissent

As Novak has stated, dissent is normal, helpful, and even necessary not only in the academic setting but for the very life of the Church. "Bold and original investigations, even when admixed with error, uncover new ways of thinking and new angles for casting light upon the revelation of God entrusted to the Church."[39] However, care must be taken that dissent be not perverted and used to attack the Church and the faith.

Avery Dulles imparts a number of helpful criteria for discerning movements of true reform from false reform—in effect, constructive dissent from destructive dissent.

> False reforms, I conclude, are those that fail to respect the imperatives of the gospel and the divinely given traditions and structures of the Church, or which impair ecclesial communion and tend rather towards schism. Would-be reformers often proclaim themselves to be prophets but show their true colors by their lack of humility, their impatience, and their disregard for Sacred Scriptures and tradition.[40]

In contrast to this, we may consider the heroic attitude and example of once perceived dissenters from Origen and Aquinas to Congar and Courtney Murray who were unfailing in their love and loyalty for the Church and hierarchy, even in the face of trial. These saintly theologians proved themselves mature and keenly aware that the development of doctrine is a process that takes time and is better helped by patience rather than force. However, because not all dissenters have always been mature or patient, the term "dissent" itself has become burdened with negative connotations, as Orsy laments. Thus, he proposes a new way of looking at and naming differences in theological views.

> In this process, the voice of a theologian who remains in communion but proposes an answer different from the one given by those in

---

[39]Michael Novak, "Dissent in the Church," in William May, ed., *Vatican Authority and American Catholic Dissent* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 74.

[40]Avery Cardinal Dulles, "True and False Reform," *First Things* (August–September 2003): 17.

> authority may not be an act of dissent at all; rather, it may be a needed contribution to the development of doctrine, coming from someone who is assenting to every part of the revealed truth but is in the process of searching for the whole truth.[41]

While the use of the word dissent, loaded as it is, may have become unavoidable, there is, this writer proposes, a clarifying difference between dissenting from the official teaching of the Church and discrediting the Church, which sometimes but not always go together. The verb "dissent" comes from the Latin "sentire" which means "to think," and which is often translated more closely today as "to sense." No one in his right mind today would forbid thinking and sensing. The Church itself has consistently rejected fideism or irrational and unthinking faith, just as it has condemned rationalism or unbelieving and Pelagianist reason. Thus, and rightly so, every theologian and indeed every believer is entitled and must even be encouraged to think and to sense for himself, even if his or her thinking and sensing may sometimes be different from the mainstream thinking and sensing of the Church.

Cardinal Dulles reminds us that "in some cases, no doubt, the vast majority of Christians will recognize where the truth lies, but in other cases, the authentic teaching may be held only by a faithful minority."[42] Once again, one need only look at the long history of the Church, beginning with Christ himself all the way to the present time, to find suspected dissenters who were suspected by their contemporaries but discovered at the end of the day to be the true bearers of the truth.

There is a genuine value that we need to recognize in dissent as an inextricable and perhaps even essential part of the process of doctrinal reception. Thus, the word dissent must not be given an absolutely negative meaning, or at least a more descriptive and relatively neutral term such as disagreement or difference must be preferred instead. "Catholic doctrine is enriched by the process of

---

[41]Orsy, *The Church: Learning and Teaching*, 98.

[42]Avery Cardinal Dulles, "Sensus Fidelium," *America* (November 1, 1986): 242.

reception and by what communication experts designate as 'feedback'. Even the difficulties experienced in the process of reception may be instructive; they sometimes help the teachers speak more accurately and convincingly."[43] In the same way that negative feedback can be constructive, responsible dissent can lead to the development and fine-tuning of doctrine that ultimately serves to benefit rather than harm the authority of the Church. Even for dissent itself, the same feedback mechanism operative in the academe in the form of peer review and criticism can serve as an important refining, correcting, and filtering mechanism for arriving at the truth.

There is at the same time a certain kind of dissent that is not helpful because in principle and in effect it discredits the Church. The verb discredit is a negation of the Latin word "credere" which means "to give assent to" or "to have faith in." Taking this into account with the more fundamental understanding of revelation and faith which informs us that what we are called to give our assent to and to have faith in does not only consist of propositions and doctrines but is ultimately a person: God in Christ who continues to be present and active in the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit, the most dangerous form of discrediting would be to discredit not doctrines but God himself and the Church itself. On one hand, it may be possible not to assent to certain propositions and doctrines without failing to assent to and maintain faith in the Church and in Christ. On the other hand, attacking all forms of dissent and free theological activity, especially under the guise of defending and protecting the Church, may signify a deep mistrust, a real discrediting of the competence and vigilance of the Holy Spirit himself who is at work in the Church guiding her towards the fullness of truth.

Discrediting the Church can sever us from her communion with Christ the Head. If we are to dissent, then, we must be careful and honest to discern whether that dissent is in the context of a sincerely searching faith, a faith that is always humbly trusting while at the same time intelligently asking, a really honest *fides quarens intellectum*. A

[43]Dulles, "Sensus Fidelium," 263.

completely different matter would be the explicit and final rejection of Church teaching in favor of one's own views contrary to it. May rightly asserts that

> nothing in the documents of Vatican II supports the kind of dissent … that is, the right of theologians to declare the authoritative, yet non-infallibly proposed teachings of the Church erroneous and to instruct the faithful that they are at liberty to set these magisterial teachings aside and substitute for them the opinions of theologians.[44]

Thus, while theologians have the right "to raise questions and to raise alternatives that may be in contradiction to them," one may only offer these humbly as "hypotheses," subject to the validation and criticism of peers in the field, the reception of the rest of the Church, and the judgment of the official magisterium. "One's own opinions are surely not infallible, and Catholics ought never to prefer the opinions of theologians, however learned, to the authoritative teachings of those who have been invested with the authority to teach in Christ's name."[45] Thus, dissent rightly occurs in a humble and docile attitude of questioning, seeking for answers from the Church itself rather than attacking it. Nonetheless, such seeking can only thrive in a climate of mutual trust, which unfortunately is not always present.

A case of such lack of trust appears to be embodied in the CDF Instruction *Donum Veritatis* "On the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian."[46] The said document expresses a very negative view of "the problem of dissent" which it practically equates to "attitudes of general opposition to Church teaching which even come to expression in organized groups" (32). It follows Paul VI's "diagnosis" of what it apparently presents as a malady, attributing dissent to certain

---

[44]William E. May, "Catholic Moral Teaching and the Limits of Dissent," in William May, ed., *Vatican Authority and American Catholic Dissent* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 99.

[45]May, "Catholic Moral Teaching and the Limits of Dissent," 99.

[46]Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Veritatis* (May 24, 1990), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19900524_theologian-vocation_en.html (accessed June 24, 2014).

causes to which it applies loaded terminologies like the "ideology of philosophical liberalism" and appeal to public opinion as well as "theological positivism" and "theological pluralism" which have been negativized in other official documents. In effect, it sets up dissent as a "parallel magisterium" in opposition to the "Magisterium" of the hierarchy and goes on with a blanket assertion that "the freedom of the act of faith cannot justify a right to dissent" (36).

While it is true that such cases of rebellious and ultimately destructive dissent have existed and continue to exist, what the document appears to forget is the role that healthy dissent has played in the life of the Church coming from individuals motivated by a sincere love and concern for the Church rather than mere ideology. Not all dissent is unjustified, ill motivated, and destructive. The entire achievement of Catholic intellectual clashes, beginning with the so-called Christological controversies all the way to the Catholic Reformation and the Second Vatican Council, attests to this. The Church undoubtedly owes to the work of such "dissenters" whose penetrating vision and groundbreaking insight, coupled with humility and true fidelity, paved the way for the development of doctrine. To give such a blanket condemnation of dissent can alienate many believers of good will and contradict the image of the Church as a "mystery of communion" (39) which the document itself was trying to present.

Dissent in the Context of Catholic Education

After looking at what dissent is, its positive role in the life of the Church, and its necessary limitations, we focus once again on its application in the specific context of Catholic education for professors of theology, once again using the Canon on the *Professio Fidei* and *Iusiurandum Fidelitatis* as our point of reference. Although we have earlier declared that healthy dissent can be a positive element in the life of the Church, its practice in the context of Catholic education raises another concern.

While theologians, as academics, can always express dissent in papers or in debates, for instance, it is a different matter when they do

so as teachers, especially in Catholic institutions. The authority inherent in their office can create confusion in the minds of their students if what they say does not agree with official teaching because of the unstated expectation on the part of the students to receive Catholic doctrine. This is especially so since not all students are always able to make distinctions and nuances in what their professors say. Here, the commentary offered by some canonists regarding the Canon in question may prove very helpful.

Both Orsy and Quentin argue for a stricter, more limited application only to those who officially speak in the Church's name and with the Church's mandate: "There is solid evidence that the obligation exists for those, *and those only*, who either are appointed to hold an ecclesiastical office, or are at least mandated to function 'in the name of the Church.'"[47] There is a very important point that these canonists are raising. First, it clarifies the fact that not all theology professors, strictly speaking, are teaching "in the name of the Church," even when they do so in a "Catholic" school.[48]

This is not a legal loophole that gives license to those who are not covered by the Canon to act and speak as they please. Rather, the wider implication of their comment is that it is possible to consider theology professors in non-pontifical institutions as well as those in pontifical institutions as professionals and practitioners of an academic discipline of theology, and to take their teaching and research publication as the proper exercise of such and not as official Church teaching. With their activity thus understood, direct conflict can be avoided, for as long

[47]Orsy, "Profession of Faith and the Oath of Fidelity," 346. Italics added.

[48]In the Philippine setting, not all theology professors possess a canonical mandate. Also, with the exception of the Royal and Pontifical University of Santo Tomas which is "Catholic" *de iure*, having been established as such through a title conferred on it by the Roman Pontiff, and of the Loyola School of Theology which is a Pontifical Faculty with authority to confer ecclesiastical degrees, all other "Catholic" universities and educational institutions in the country are only so *de facto* and are not, strictly speaking, officially and legally connected to the Catholic Church in an academic capacity.

as there is no attempt on the part of these professors to present their views or the views of other theologians as the official teaching.

It is important to establish this kind of distinction for all stakeholders, above all for the students themselves. Without making such an explicit clarification, we run the risk of students confusing what a professor says as the official Catholic teaching. On the part of the Church hierarchy themselves, this distinction may also prove helpful, if not liberating. Schillebeeckx for instance sees the conflict beginning with "the idea that theologians teach 'in the name of the Holy See'"[49] prevalent among Vatican officials who thus feel pressed to enforce uniformity and consistency in their teaching.

Conversely, if this distinction between personal conviction and official teaching is clearly established from the outset, many present difficulties can be avoided, even for those who possess the mandate and teach in institutions which are juridically Catholic. Theology professors may now be able to propose answers to theological or moral questions without presenting these as the official Catholic teaching, just like their colleagues in other academic fields who propose new problems or even theories or hypotheses in their own fields. As Quade envisions, "the environment of free inquiry, obviously, can result in a scholar questioning one or other church teaching. Precisely, because these people do not speak for the church, or in its name, or under its mandate, there is no essential incongruity if this happens."[50]

If dissent is normal in the organic life of the Church, it is even more so in the academic setting. Thus, we may even go on to say that even professors with the ecclesiastical mandate may tackle dissenting opinions in class as long as they make an explicit distinction to avoid conflating these with their handing on of the official teaching as mandated, and so long as they do it in clear service and loyalty to, and not in contempt of, the Church. Nonetheless, this distinction of what is official teaching and what is not is simply prudential or cautionary,

[49]Schillebeeckx, "The Magisterium and Ideology," 16.

[50]Quade, "A University Perspective on the 'Oath of Fidelity'," 348.

a pastoral convention to avoid the scandal of misleading the weak. Healthy and responsible dissent, as we have seen, is part and parcel of the organic ministry of doing and teaching theology.

To tackle and engage dissent remains a daunting and demanding task, calling for constant updating with regard to the issues and questions being raised, and requiring a basic if not high level of mastery of the matters in question in order to participate meaningfully in the debate. At the same time, to bury our heads in the sand, to effectively turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to this discussion would be a terrible failure in the discharge not only of our academic but more so our prophetic role.

In the case of the three Jesuits who authored the "Talking Points on the RH Bill," for example, we do not find a case of actual classroom teaching. What we have are academic professionals presenting springboards for rational dialogue primarily addressed to legislators and other stakeholders in the issue rather than to students. The confusion on the part of Achacoso and his reader appears to spring from the fact that the said document was hosted by the University website, but this was done only as a practical means of dissemination. As such, they equated it immediately to dissent, calling for sanctions to be imposed. Nevertheless, it is neither an accurate barometer of how the doctrines on the sanctity of life and the use of contraceptive methods are taught to the students in the University nor was it proffered as the official stand of the Ateneo on the issue of the RH Bill. What it does instead is to raise salient pointers around which conversations on the issue could intelligently revolve. When inspected closely enough, one finds that the document nowhere disagrees with official Catholic teaching, whether categorically or implicitly, but actually ushers in important insights of the Catholic tradition to bear on the dialogue on this important issue.

As theology professors, we cannot simply disengage from these issues and concerns that our students encounter and raise, or brush them aside during instruction, in the insistence on sticking to official teaching and avoiding all semblance of dissent. Our social obligation as academics, especially in the university setting, likewise calls for active

engagement and involvement in issues and questions affecting society at large, such as the issue on the RH Bill. The engagement of dissent in this case would then be not a disloyalty but a responsibility.

Dissent and the Responsibility to Raise Young People in the Faith

Now we take a closer look at the concern we raised which has not often been treated or adequately emphasized in the discussions of the issue of dissent in the academic setting. This is the implicit expectation of the parents and other stakeholders in sending the students to "Catholic" educational institutions for them to receive a Catholic education. Such is implicit in the concern raised by the reader of Achacoso about these centers of education "where young minds are supposedly being formed in the Catholic faith." Although a university or school may not be Catholic *de iure* or a professor may not have an ecclesiastical mandate and thus in the strict juridical sense do not teach "in the name of the Church," the fact that they are teaching in institutions perceived and even presenting themselves as Catholic gives rise to this expectation. This kind of expectation is legitimate, at least theologically if not juridically.

By virtue of their baptism, all Catholic teachers have the *munus*, the duty to discharge, according to their state in life, the prophetic mission of Christ in which they share and participate, regardless of whether they have the official mandate or not, and regardless of whether they teach in *de iure* Catholic institutions. Schillebeeckx aptly states that: "'Theologians are not theologians on the basis of a *missio canonica*, but on the basis of their baptism; they are theologians as members of a believing and thinking 'people of God.'"[51] This baptismal *munus* and *missio* is more fundamental than the canonical mandate and mission.

> Even when it is not exercised in virtue of an explicit "canonical mission", theology can only be done in a living communion with the faith of the Church. For this reason, all the baptized, insofar as they both really

[51]Schillebeeckx, "The Magisterium and Ideology," 16.

> live the life of the Church and enjoy scientific competence, can carry out the task of the theologian, a task which derives its own force from the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church ….[52]

As such, the fundamental posture of the theologian then has to be one of faith and loyalty to the Church and never one of dissent. If healthy dissent is done, it is always done as a faithful son or daughter of the Church, and not as its antagonist.

Also, as educators and not just as scholars, theologians have the moral duty to first provide what is basic and essential to form the students in the faith. Here it clearly becomes important, pedagogically speaking, to give priority to a solid catechesis in the official teaching of the Church before introducing other perspectives and to consider the level of preparedness of the students to be introduced to questions and concepts that may lead to more confusion than clarity. Nowadays, it is undeniable that, because of their dwindling participation in the life of the Church and lack of adequate exposure to catechesis, especially for those who do not come from Catholic basic education institutions, many students in our Catholic universities are still at the level of what is called "evangelization", and at the entry level lack the catechetical preparation necessary for them to engage in complex theological discussions.

This coincides with what Orsy points out in his important discussion of "dissent in the existential order." Expressing dissent is not only an intellectual matter involving questions and ideas on the part of scholars but can truly affect the community, even the very souls of believers for whom we are accountable. In many cases, he says, "more is at stake than a propositional dissent; prudence requires a judgment that takes into account the existential situation of the community."[53]

Nevertheless, this high risk should not be an excuse for the ready refusal to tackle different opinions to which the same students are

---

[52]International Theological Commission, *Theses on the Relationship between the Ecclesiastical Magisterium and Theology*, 7.

[53]Orsy, *The Church: Learning and Teaching,* 105.

already exposed and for insisting on being limited only to official Church teaching in the curriculum. Rather, the existing situation should serve as a challenge for us to take our duty to impart a solid formation in the faith even more seriously, which then prepares the students to engage intelligently in the ongoing debates inside and outside our classrooms. In our actual experience, the ill-equipped students are often the ones bringing up the issues and questions in class. To simply dismiss them or even discourage them from doing so would be a failure on our part to discharge our pastoral responsibility towards these least, if not lost, of our flock.

Towards a Praxis of Tackling Dissent in the Academic Setting

A good way now to begin addressing the "how" of dissent in the classroom setting is by taking into account what Avery Cardinal Dulles says regarding the different levels of doctrine which we have pointed out in an earlier section of this article, and how they are to be presented depending on the kind of audience in question:

> It is often said, with good reason, that the faithful are entitled to have official Catholic doctrine presented to them in a fair and favorable light. But such presentations can be made at various levels. In catechetical instruction the teacher is expected to present the doctrine of the church rather than the opinion of private theologians. But the case is not so simple in higher education. University students, especially at the graduate level, have the right to know the difference between reformable and irreformable teaching.[54]

Teaching these distinctions between levels of Christian doctrine has become very important today especially with the rapid diffusion through mass and social media of various forms of Church teaching. Many today, especially the young, react eagerly to formal and informal broadcasts of papal encyclicals, exhortations, and homilies as well as interviews and statements, even tweets and status updates from

[54]Dulles, *The Reshaping of Catholicism*, 108.

the official Twitter and Facebook accounts of the Holy See and even other bishops. These reactions, whether positive or negative, are to be welcomed, at the very least, as signs of interest on the part of young people in the view of the Church and her authorities regarding important and relevant issues. All this is a heartening sign that we are still able to reach out to our flock to engage them in meaningful discussion. As such, they must be addressed especially by those endowed with both the competence and opportunity to directly and personally provide guidance to them, such as theology professors.

At the same time, we need to be alert to the very dangerous tendency today among "a segment of the Catholic population that tends to flatten out important distinctions regarding the authoritative character of these ecclesial pronouncements …. Every Catholic has the right to know what doctrinal weight the Church is proposing in a particular teaching."[55] In view of this, the ruling out of all forms of dissent to every form of pronouncement coming from the hierarchy, especially in the academic setting where freedom of inquiry is presumed, implicitly fosters and contributes to a harmful tendency of absolutism and fundamentalism. Conversely, a sound education in healthy and intelligent dissent and dialogue, and even more importantly, a living witness on the part of professors in this regard, would be helpful.

Nonetheless, the classroom is not the exclusive venue and may not always be the best place for dissenting opinions, especially the more complex and technical ones which may be more suited and appropriate for journals, debates, or other academic fora. The professor's chair must not be used irresponsibly to air novel and groundbreaking ideas without considering the good of one's audience. Even in other disciplines, a good amount of caution and prudence is employed before publishing untested theories or including them in the curriculum. A useful rule of thumb here is for educators to address the issues that the students themselves raise, rather than to address the issues that only professors and scholars are concerned about.

---

[55]Richard R. Gaillardetz, *Teaching with Authority: A Theology of the Magisterium in the Church* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press/Michael Glazier, 1997), 124.

In the field of research and publication, however, a wider horizon of freedom could be envisioned. It is here where theologians can bring forth questions and ideas for discussion and debate not only for their peers in the academe but for the Church and the hierarchy as well, without jeopardizing the students and their faith. However, it is also here that the possibility of conflict and even of error emerges, but even these are not realities that are undesirable or impossible to surmount. This dialogue necessarily entails not only a good measure of time but also a high level of risk.

Michael Novak describes the important role of dissent in the life of a community which for him may necessarily include a more than slight margin of error committed in good faith. However, instead of being discouraged, he presses on further by calling not only for "elbow room" for dissent but also for error itself on the part of theologians as necessary for academic pursuit:

> Theologians need room to err. That is why we do not base our lives upon the teachings of theologians. Their errors, despite themselves, can nonetheless be fruitful for the body of the Christian people. The chances they take, the specific neuroses to which intellectuals are prey, and the odd angles of vision they assume, often serve the Lord's ironic purposes. We theologians do our best in the hope that even our errors will serve to shed reflected light upon the truths to which we struggle to be faithful. In this sense, a pluralism of theologies and of philosophies is vitally necessary to the Church. (…) On the other hand, not everything … is to be mistaken for a full report on authentic Catholic faith. Discernment is indispensable.[56]

This "room for error" requires not only an adequate amount of liberty to be conceded by the ecclesiastical authority, but also the humble acknowledgment of natural limitation and even the admission of actual error when committed and recognized by the theologians.

> The Catholic community, like every other living community, most urgently needs dissenters. It especially needs dissenters whose dissents are only provisional. It needs dissenters who try to be as honest, as clear, and as broad of view as a person can, recognizing the while that it is

[56]Novak, "Dissent in the Church," 75.

> the *unequal* office of the college of bishops, and the still more *unequal* office of the bishop of Rome, to render practical judgment upon any dissenter's efforts. We also serve who only err.[57]

In cases of apparent deadlock, dialogue emerges once again as the means of preserving ecclesial communion without sacrificing the freedom of intellectual pursuit. As Joseph Komonchak proposes,

> there appears to be no way through this difficulty but dialogue and dialectic, a conversation in which people take one another, and one another's arguments, seriously, begin with what they hold in common, work back from there to what divides them, attempt to identify the basis for their differences, and seek to resolve them by reference to the common faith and by the exercise of an intelligence and reason both subject to the gospel.[58]

Such a model seems to be very much in keeping with the apostolic witness as exemplified in the First Council of Jerusalem, where consensus on disputed matters was eventually reached not by the easy way of authority imposing itself or dissenting elements usurping the pressure of politics, economy, or popular opinion but through open and discerning dialogue.

Indeed, the Second Vatican Council itself encouraged theologians to have an attitude of search: "to seek continually for more suitable ways of communicating doctrine to the men of their times" (GS 62). Part of this seeking is asking good questions and even trying to find the answers without the pretense of self-confirmation that we have arrived at the truth ahead of everyone else. Rather, the quest is always done within the community of the Church and under the guidance of her pastors.

Likewise essential if not indispensable to this search is a reasonable measure of audacity and confidence, coupled with prudence and humility. This sound disposition comes from a deep faith and trust in

---

[57]Novak, "Dissent in the Church," 86. Italics in original.

[58]Joseph Komonchak, "Authority and Magisterium," in William May, ed., *Vatican Authority and American Catholic Dissent* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 112.

the gracious assistance of the Holy Spirit in our quest for the truth as well as in the believing-searching community itself which accompanies us in our quest and never leaves us alone when we err. It also comes from a realistically relativizing view of our human competence and efforts, for all of us are always poor in the face of the truth and so need to learn always from one another.

Elizabeth Johnson views the healthy expression of dissent even as an integral part of the responsibility of theologians and their service to the Church, describing it in terms that are analogous to a movement of conscience: "If a declared teaching or practice continuously jars our mind as missing the mark … it is our responsibility to explore and express the reasons why. This resistance is not to be equated with disloyalty or rebellion, let alone lack of faith, but with a form of loyalty and service."[59] Thus it appears that freedom to dissent is not exclusively a matter of academic freedom but also of religious freedom and even freedom of conscience.

The Case of the Three Jesuits

Coming back now to the case of the three Jesuits after a lengthy discussion of the issue of dissent, we now hope to apply to this specific example the different perspectives we have gathered so far. We begin by affirming the validity and seriousness of the concern raised by Achacoso and his reader about the correct transmission of the Catholic faith, especially to our young people. As we have seen, this fundamental baptismal duty of theologians with the office of teaching is attested to by both Scripture and Church teaching.

However, although it may arise from a valid and serious concern, the insinuation that the three Jesuits in question are not making, and even more seriously not observing, the *Profession of Faith* and *Oath of Fidelity* is imprecise, to say the least. Thus, even more irresponsible is the very serious suggestion that these professors, and even Loyola School of Theology itself, be then deprived of teaching mandate.

---

[59]Elizabeth Johnson, "Responses to Rome," *Commonweal* (January 26, 1996): 11.

First, among the Jesuits in question, only Genilo teaches a subject dealing with faith and morals in Loyola School of Theology, a pontifical institution. As such, the other two, who are connected elsewhere in Ateneo de Manila University, are not actually bound by this Canon requiring the *Profession of Faith* and *Oath of Fidelity* which is "taxative, and should not be expanded or extended to others by analogy."[60]

Furthermore, the title itself which they chose to give to their document, "Talking Points," is a very precise if not astute indication of what they were actually trying to perform. "Talking Points," in legal jargon, is a set of pointers for discussing the merits and demerits of a case. This choice of word is wise and appropriate since the primary audience identified for the said document is the legislators in order to help them make an informed decision on the issue of the RH Bill. Thus, although a theologian was involved and the influence of Church teaching was evidently brought to bear on the discussion, there is no pretense in proposing a theological opinion, and even less of presenting the contents of the document as official Church teaching, even if all three were priests.

Here we do not have a case of classroom teaching with "heterodox teachings being foisted on the young and innocent by professors teaching either theology or matters related to faith and morals in Catholic institutions." We have instead an example of theology becoming involved together with other disciplines in an effort from one "Catholic" university to help address a current and relevant social concern, namely, the RH Bill, discussion of which has been ongoing at that time, with or without intervention from these academics. It is thus also a fine example of making a clear and clarifying distinction between what is official Church teaching and what is not.

Second, as we have demonstrated, the *ratio legis* of this Canon is not to enforce blind submission to the magisterium but to celebrate through a liturgical and juridical act the participation of the person who is making it in the teaching office of the Church. Precisely the ones bound by law to make the *Profession of Faith* and *Oath of Fidelity*

[60]Coriden et al., *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary,* 585.

are the "*docendi*" or teachers. As such, they are not mere parrots but true conveyors and interpreters of Church teachings to various audiences and contexts. The fact that they are given to participate in the teaching office of the Church already attests to their competence and suitability to which the act of making the *Profession of Faith* gives formal affirmation.

Part of the effective discharge of the teaching mandate is to address concerns and issues our students are facing, which necessitates that we tackle dissenting views to which they are already exposed and immersed even outside of the academic setting. Part of the duty of professors is their social obligation to contribute their learning in matters concerning the wider community. Genilo, the lone theologian here, is to be praised rather than excoriated for participating in the said discussion and making use of his competence and training as a moral theologian, affirmed by the Church in allowing him to teach in an Ecclesiastical Faculty of Theology, to help shed light on the issue.

Moreover, even if the "Talking Points" were used in actual classroom discussion, for instance in courses on moral theology and bioethics in Loyola School of Theology, no direct violation of the teaching mandate is committed, especially if the distinction, already clear in its very title, from official Church teaching is explicitly and clearly made. Genilo in that case would have been presenting the fruit of his study and reflection together with other professors on an issue, not in conflict but in line with his fulfillment of his responsibility.

Thirdly and most importantly, Achacoso's understanding of dissent as equivalent to heterodoxy or even heresy and thus not only a violation of the *Profession of Faith* and *Oath of Fidelity* but an offense against the Faith and the Church itself is also untenable. One should not be quick to state that the *Professio Fidei* or *Iusiurandum Fidelitatis* has been violated or heresy has been committed except in clear cases of departure from divinely revealed dogmatic doctrine, which is not true in all cases of dissent. While it is true that dissent from dogmatic and moral teachings essentially related to the deposit of faith may imply that a person has fallen from the communion of faith, the difficulty

in determining which teachings may be indisputably qualified as such allows ample room for charitable prudence before negative judgment. Again, as the law of the Church itself wisely directs us, we need to observe the basic principle of adopting a strict rather than a liberal interpretation in the case of canons such as this (c. 36).

Achacoso seems to put two important values in apparent conflict here: loyalty to the Church and to her magisterium on the one hand and the academic freedom of theologians on the other. The contradiction can only be apparent because in the majority of cases where dissent is done in good faith and with a spirit of unquestionable love and fidelity to the Church, the faith being defended and being served is the same Catholic faith, which has consistently understood itself to be *fides quarens intellectum*.

Achacoso's blanket assertion that "there is no room for active dissent in Catholic theology" cannot be seriously held without injury to the rich theological tradition that has itself produced the inestimable body of doctrine we cherish today. Holding on to such an assertation would be especially ironic within a Church which traces its very origins to the historical person of Jesus Christ, whose death was due in large part to the ire he incurred from the religious authorities of his time because of his teachings which dissented from and threatened the establishment. Within the spectrum that spans the untenable extremes of uncritical submission and indifferent respect, there may be a legitimate space for differing without disregarding Church authority, dissenting from some church doctrines without discrediting the Church itself, as something that purifies and enriches rather than corrupts or diminishes our faith. Moreover, not only a policy of tolerance but also a principle of mutual cooperation is to be truly desired, trusting in the Holy Spirit who guides not only the hierarchy but the entire Church.

As the International Theological Commission points out, "If the charism of infallibility is promised to 'the whole body of the faithful,' … then it should be put into practice in a co-responsible, co-operative, and collegial association of the members of the magisterium and of

individual theologians."[61] The "deep fear of allowing conscientious dissent seems rooted in an excessive distrust of human reason, as well as lack of faith in the power of the Holy Spirit to bring consensus among prayerful Christians of good will."[62] Trust in the Spirit leads us to trust His work in one another.

Conclusion: *Dissentire cum Ecclesia*

Viewed from a wider perspective, all this has to go beyond the mere point of exonerating the three Jesuits or even establishing the productivity and importance of healthy dissent for theology. It has to do with the new vision of being Church concretized in a more trusting and therefore more collaborative approach to the Faith.[63] In this, the present Roman Pontiff himself seems to set the direction.

From the onset, Pope Francis has visibly departed from many customs in terms of ceremonial and protocol, and has also expressed some openness in the discussion of highly controversial issues such as the status of divorced persons in the Church, sometimes arousing agreement but also provoking disagreement both from within and outside the Church. At the same time, he has also been observed to be firm on certain points of doctrine such as the ordination of women. When asked to comment on Saint Ignatius of Loyola's famous phrase, "sentire cum ecclesia," the Jesuit Pope said:

---

[61]International Theological Commission, *Theses on the Relationship between the Ecclesiastical Magisterium and Theology*, 4.

[62]Callahan, "Conscience Reconsidered," 253.

[63]Nowadays, more and more bishops open their ears to experts, both clerical and lay, and not only from other fields but also within theology itself, to guide their teaching. This is especially so since, after Vatican II, a good number of theological faculties have opened their doors not only to priests and seminarians but also to religious sisters and even some lay faithful who have also become well-educated and competent in this field, which had at one point become the exclusive domain of the hierarchy.

> The Church is the people of God on the journey through history, with joys and sorrows. Thinking with the church, therefore is my way of being part of this people. And all the faithful, considered as a whole, are infallible in matters of belief, and the people display this *infallibilitas in credendo*, this infallibility in believing, through a supernatural sense of the faith of all the people walking together.[64]

Pope Francis here uses the very beautiful image of the Church as people of God, so dear to the Second Vatican Council, the dynamic image of a people in pilgrimage towards God who is Truth himself, a thinking Church in which every single member is part of the thinking. "We should not even think, therefore, that 'thinking with the church,' means only thinking with the hierarchy of the church."[65] At the same time, the Pope is careful to distinguish between the infallibility of all the faithful and a false sense of infallibility based simply on majority which he calls "populism."

Corresponding to this, the Pontiff's image of theology is also dynamic and collaborative: an active and communal investigation into mystery. In his personal view of theology, Pope Francis appears to be balanced in giving emphasis on both humility and rational inquiry, freedom and fidelity to the hierarchical magisterium:

> Theology thus demands the humility to be "touched" by God, admitting its own limitations before the mystery, while striving to investigate, with the discipline proper to reason, the inexhaustible riches of this mystery. … because it draws its life from faith, theology cannot consider the magisterium of the Pope and the bishops in communion with him as something extrinsic, a limitation of its freedom, but rather as one of its internal, constitutive dimensions, for the magisterium ensures our contact with the primordial source and thus provides the certainty of attaining to the word of Christ in all its integrity.[66]

---

[64]Antonio Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God: The Exclusive Interview with Pope Francis," *America* (September 30, 2013): 22.

[65]Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God: The Exclusive Interview with Pope Francis," 22.

[66]Francis, *Lumen Fidei* 36.

Accordingly, he also stresses the richness of charisms bestowed on all the members of the Church at the service of the Word of God and ecclesial communion:

> The Holy Spirit also enriches the entire evangelizing Church with different charisms. These gifts are meant to renew and build up the Church. They are not an inheritance, safely secured and entrusted to a small group for safekeeping; rather they are gifts of the Spirit integrated into the body of the Church, drawn to the center which is Christ and then channeled into an evangelizing impulse.[67]

This trust in the intelligent people of God walking in pilgrimage to the truth is evident in the way the Pope carries out his own teaching office as the successor of Peter. With regard to the practical stance of the Pope himself when engaging in theological discussions, a woman theologian comments:

> Through never straying from the tradition, he has a way of framing discussion of these topics to demonstrate his benevolent and respectful attitude. He treads carefully and thoughtfully in raising concerns, never assuming that he knows all the answers but signaling the need for greater understanding of the *sensus fidelium*. He told members of the International Theological Commission on Dec. 6 that the Church has a "duty to pay attention to what the Spirit tells the church through authentic manifestations of the sense of the faithful." But even as he voiced this attitude, he made clear that this sense "must not be confused with the sociological reality of majority opinion."[68]

This ecclesiology of involvement, confident in the charisms of the Spirit which are not exclusive to the bishops but imparted to everyone in the Church, is seen in the way the Pope shares the intelligence of the Church not only with other bishops but also with the lay faithful. For instance, he fosters the original cooperation of the magisterium and theologians by quoting not only Scriptural and Patristic texts along with conciliar and papal statements, as has been the practice of his predecessors, but also private theologians in his most recent

---

[67]Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 130.

[68]Katarina Schuth, "Open to All: The Emerging Ecclesiology of Pope Francis," *America* (March 17, 2014): 14.

apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*. At the same time, he did not shun the necessary enforcement of ecclesiastical discipline in doctrinal matters on Greg Reynolds of the Archdiocese of Melbourne who was excommunicated after a thorough process which was initiated during the term of his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI. This leaves many guessing, afraid or hopeful, about what reforms Pope Francis may or may not achieve in the Church with this disposition. Seen from another perspective, this may show the delicate balance he is trying to find.

Such a delicate balance, which is difficult to achieve without discernment and patient dialogue, was the struggle of the last Synod, which strove to tackle complex moral issues on Marriage and Family Life, the subject of so much dissent and disagreement even within the hierarchy. Indeed, the great intensity of the discussions and debates in the Synod Hall was no secret even to those outside it so that the Holy Father, in his final Message, spoke of "fatigue" and "tensions," "desolations" and "temptations," "hostile inflexibility" but also being "do-gooders," "neglecting the *depositum fidei*" but also of "neglecting reality."

Indeed, it would have been so much easier to simply insist on existing doctrine and neglect reality or, as may be more fashionable, to go along with popular demand and neglect the deposit of faith. Nonetheless, at the heart of all this struggle, Pope Francis offered a very positive and encouraging appraisal of what may seem to be the complicated and convoluted outcome when dissent and discussion is allowed about controversial issues in the Church.

> Personally I would be very worried and saddened if it were not for these temptations and these animated discussions; this movement of the spirits, as St. Ignatius called it (*Spiritual Exercises*, 6), if all were in a state of agreement, or silent in a false and quietist peace. Instead, I have seen and I have heard—with joy and appreciation—speeches and interventions full of faith, of pastoral and doctrinal zeal, of wisdom, of frankness and of courage: and of *parresia*. And I have felt that what was set before our eyes was the good of the Church, of families, and the "supreme law," the "good of souls" (cf. Can. 1752). And this always … without ever putting into question the fundamental truths of the Sacrament of marriage: the indissolubility, the unity, the faithfulness,

> the fruitfulness, that openness to life (cf. Can. 1055, 1056; and *Gaudium et Spes*, 48).[69]

This *parresia*—this freedom in speech coming from a deep confidence in the Father's guidance through the Holy Spirit but also from conscientious study of the Word of God and deep involvement in human realities—is the word used many times in the New Testament to characterize the teaching manner of Christ and also of the apostles, who were all persecuted for dissenting from the official teachings of their religion. Is this not also what we desire for our theology professors and also for all believers who are all called to share in the teaching office of Christ? Being intolerant of all manner of dissent rather than welcoming intelligent and humble dialogue on matters of faith and morals may liken us not to Christ but to those who were his persecutors in the Gospel. On the other hand, as Pope Francis himself said, healthy dialogue which allows freedom and welcomes legitimate differences will help the Church continue to grow as it seeks to unravel the richness of the Word of God:

> The Church is herself a missionary disciple; she needs to grow in her interpretation of the revealed word and in her understanding of truth. It is the task of exegetes and theologians to help "the judgment of the Church to mature." (…) Within the Church countless issues are being studied and reflected upon with great freedom. Differing currents of thought in philosophy, theology and pastoral practice, if open to being reconciled by the Spirit in respect and love, can enable the Church to grow, since all of them help to express more clearly the immense riches of God's word. For those who long for a monolithic body of doctrine guarded by all and leaving no room for nuance, this might appear as undesirable and leading to confusion. But in fact such variety serves to bring out and develop different facets of the inexhaustible riches of the Gospel.[70]

---

[69]Francis, *Speech at the Conclusion of the Third General Assembly of the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops* (October 2014). A copy is available at https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/october/documents/papa-francesco_20141018_conclusione-sinodo-dei-vescovi.html.

[70]Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 40.

In the end, teaching an important doctrine as definitively true is a dangerous but sometimes necessary act which must neither be shunned nor exercised light-handedly. *Tuto doceri non potest* may then apply not only to the rebellious and divisive holding and wielding of contrary opinions in contempt of the official doctrine of the Church but also to the uncharitable and alienating holding and wielding of the official doctrine of the Church against believers who may at times express contrary opinions in sincere faith and good conscience. "Erosion of the Catholic faith" may indeed be a very serious threat to the Church. But if Christ and Paul were right in what they taught, even more alarming would be the erosion of Christian charity.

Appendix:[71] OATH OF FIDELITY ON ASSUMING AN OFFICE TO BE EXERCISED IN THE NAME OF THE CHURCH

(*Formula to be used by the Christian faithful mentioned in Canon 833, nn. 5–8*)

I, N., in assuming the office of _____, promise that in my words and in my actions I shall always preserve communion with the Catholic Church.

With great care and fidelity I shall carry out the duties incumbent on me toward the Church, both universal and particular, in which, according to the provisions of the law, I have been called to exercise my service.

In fulfilling the charge entrusted to me in the name of the Church, I shall hold fast to the deposit of faith in its entirety; I shall faithfully hand it on and explain it, and I shall avoid any teachings contrary to it.

I shall follow and foster the common discipline of the entire Church and I shall maintain the observance of all ecclesiastical laws, especially those contained in the Code of Canon Law.

---

[71] Available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19880701_professio-fidei_en.html.

With Christian obedience I shall follow what the Bishops, as authentic doctors and teachers of the faith, declare, or what they, as those who govern the Church, establish.

I shall also faithfully assist the diocesan Bishops, so that the apostolic activity, exercised in the name and by mandate of the Church, may be carried out in communion with the Church.

So help me God, and God's Holy Gospels on which I place my hand.

(*Variations in the fourth and fifth paragraphs of the formulary, for use by those members of the Christian faithful indicated in can. 833, n. 8*).

I shall foster the common discipline of the entire Church and I shall insist on the observance of all ecclesiastical laws, especially those contained in the Code of Canon Law.

With Christian obedience I shall follow what the Bishops, as authentic doctors and teachers of the faith, declare, or what they, as those who govern the Church, establish. I shall also — with due regard for the character and purpose of my institute — faithfully assist the diocesan Bishops, so that the apostolic activity, exercised in the name and by mandate of the Church, may be carried out in communion with the Church.

Works Cited

Achacoso, Jaime Blanco. "The Juridic Protection of the Church Teaching against Contraception (Part 1)." *CBCP Monitor* 14:24 (November 22–December 5, 2010): B3. Manila: Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines.

———. "The Juridic Protection of the Church Teaching against Contraception (Part II)." *CBCP Monitor* 15:1 (January 3–16, 2011): B2. Manila: Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines.

———. "The Juridic Protection of the Church Teaching against Contraception (Part III)." *CBCP Monitor* 15:2 (January 17–30, 2011): B2, B7. Manila: Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines.

Acta Apostolic Sedis 10 (1918). Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Acta Apostolic Sedis 81 (1989). Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Aquinas, Thomas. *Commentary on the Sentences*. Partial translation available at http://dhspriory.org/thomas/Sentences.htm.

———. *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*. Partial translation available at http://dhspriory.org/thomas/english/QDquodlib.htm.

Callahan, Sidney. "Conscience Reconsidered." *America* (November 1, 1986): 251–253.

Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland. *The Canon Law: Letter and Spirit*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995.

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Doctrinal Commentary on the Concluding Formula of the* Professio fidei (June 29, 1998), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_1998_professio-fidei_en.html (accessed June 24, 2014).

———. Formula for the Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity. Available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19880701_professio-fidei_en.html.

———. *Donum Veritatis* (May 24, 1990), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19900524_theologian-vocation_en.html (accessed June 24, 2014).

Coriden, James A., Thomas J. Green, & Donald Heintschel, eds. *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*. New York: Paulist Press, 1985.

Dulles, Cardinal Avery. "Sensus Fidelium." *America* (November 1, 1986): 240–252.

———. *The Reshaping of Catholicism*. San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988.

———. "True and False Reform." *First Things* (August–September 2003): 14–19.

(Pope) Francis. *Evangelii Gaudium* (Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World). Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013.

———. *Lumen Fidei* (Encyclical Letter on Faith). Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013.

———. *Speech at the Conclusion of the Third General Assembly of the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops*. October 2014. Available at https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/october/documents/papa-francesco_20141018_conclusione-sinodo-dei-vescovi.html.

Fuentes, Jose A. "Tit. V. The Profession of Faith" (c. 833). In *Exegetical Commentary on the Code of Canon Law* Vol. 3/1, eds. Angel Marzoa, Jorge Miras, & Rafael Rodriguez-Ocaña, 334–342. Montreal: Wilson & Lafleur, 2004.

Gaillardetz, Richard R. *Teaching with Authority: A Theology of the Magisterium in the Church*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press/Michael Glazier, 1997.

Genilo, Eric O., John J. Carroll, & Joaquin Bernas. "Talking Points for Dialogue on the Reproductive Health Bill." http://www.jjcicsi.org.ph/?page_id=339 (accessed June 24, 2014).

International Theological Commission. *The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die Without Being Baptized* (January 19, 2007), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_ doc_20070419_un- baptised-infants_en.html (accessed August 21, 2014).

———. *Theses on the Relationship between the Ecclesiastical Magisterium and Theology* (June 6). Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1976.

Johnson, Elizabeth. "Responses to Rome." *Commonweal* (January 26, 1996): 11–12.

Komonchak, Joseph. "Authority and Magisterium." In *Vatican Authority and American Catholic Dissent*, ed. William May, 103–114. New York: Crossroad, 1987.

May, William E. "Catholic Moral Teaching and the Limits of Dissent." In *Vatican Authority and American Catholic Dissent*, ed. William May, 87–102. New York: Crossroad, 1987.

Novak, Michael. "Dissent in the Church." In *Vatican Authority and American Catholic Dissent*, ed. William May, 74–86. New York: Crossroad, 1987.

Orsy, Ladislas. "Profession of Faith and the Oath of Fidelity." *America* (April 15, 1989): 345–358.

———. *The Church: Learning and Teaching.* Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1987.

Quade, Quentin L. "A University Perspective on the 'Oath of Fidelity'." *America Magazine* (April 15 1989): 347–348.

Schillebeeckx, Edward. "The Magisterium and Ideology." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 19 (Spring 1982): 5–17.

Schuth, Katarina. "Open to All: The Emerging Ecclesiology of Pope Francis." *America* (March 17, 2014): 13–16.

Sison, Jose C. "Nagging Questions." *Philippine Star* (November 8, 2010): 5. Available at http://www.philstar.com/opinion/627751/nagging-questions.

Spadaro, Antonio. "A Big Heart Open to God: The Exclusive Interview with Pope Francis." *America* (September 30, 2013): 15–38.

Sullivan, Francis A. "Some Observations on the New Formula for the Profession of Faith." *Gregorianum* 70:3 (1989): 549-558. Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University.

Landas 29:1 (2015) 51–85

THE ORDER OF LOVE IN SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO AND SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Rosa Maria Alonso i Terme

This article will compare the treatment of the order of charity to neighbor in Saint Augustine of Hippo and Saint Thomas Aquinas. In particular, it will relate the similarities and the differences in their treatment of the subject, and will attempt to explain their differences in terms of their family environment and life experience, geographical and historical context, intellectual education and philosophical affiliation, and personality.

The Order of Charity to Neighbor

Saint Augustine deals with the order of charity to neighbor in a great variety of his works. The most important references can be found in *De Doctrina Christiana*, his sermons, the *City of God*, his commentaries on the Psalms and *De Trinitate*. Saint Augustine puts forth three main criteria according to which the order of charity needs to be exercised: a) family, b) need and c) chance. The first criterion is common with Saint Thomas while the second and the third are largely not. He does not provide a detailed and systematic treatment of each criterion.

Saint Thomas addresses the order of charity to neighbor especially in the *Summa Theologiae* IIa, IIae, q. 26, in *De Caritate*[1] and in his commentary on the Sentences. His criteria are: a) family, b) virtue, c) closeness to first principle and d) utility to the common good. Unlike Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas provides a detailed and systematic ordering of charity. This includes a ranking of preference for charity within the family, with, for instance, the love of parents taking precedence over the love of one's children[2] and the love of one's father taking precedence over the love of one's mother, other things like their holiness and goodness being equal. According to Saint Thomas, we are also to love more those who are "better" and closer to God—as he argues that God Himself does—as well as those who are more useful to the common good, particularly as regards matters of action (as opposed to in meeting needs).

Family

The different treatment of family in Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas can be explained by their drawing on different parts of the Bible. The more generic, non-rule-bound treatment of Saint Augustine is consistent with the gist and flavor of the Bible as a whole and the Gospels in particular, where there is no strict ordering of charity across family members. The ordering of charity across family members espoused by Saint Thomas, on the other hand, seems to follow more

[1]Because *De Caritate* is thought to have been written late in Saint Thomas' life (circa 1269–1272), toward the end of his writing the *Summa*, it will be assumed that the principles included in both works are complementary.

[2]As regards the provision of necessities, however, Saint Thomas does indicate that one is bound more to the child than to the parent based on 2 Cor. 12:14: "Children ought not to save for their parents but parents for their children." Cf. also Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, II.II, q. 26, a. 9 (hereafter cited as ST). The edition used in this article is the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas, 2nd rev. ed., trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (1920), made available at http://newadvent.org/summa/ by Kevin Knight (2008) (accessed August 3, 2015).

closely the wisdom literature and, in particular, the Book of Sirach, especially as it refers to the preference of parents over children and fathers over mothers.[3]

In their actual lives, it seems that Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas may have exercised charity to family in a somewhat different manner. Both saints were very close to their families and exercised charity—monetary and otherwise—on their behalf throughout their lives. However, it seems that Saint Thomas was more exclusively linked to his family in his exercise of charity[4] while Saint Augustine—largely due to his public position as a bishop—exercised charity with a great variety of people and favored the poor.[5] On the other hand, and probably due to his lifestyle as a scholastic friar, the only mention of financial aid provision by Saint Thomas in Torrell is as follows: "'Thomas knew how to find ecclesiastical funds, with the permission of Clement IV, in order to come to his family's aid.'"[6]

---

[3]The section of chapter 3 devoted to "duties to parents" seems to favor fathers over mothers, e.g., "My son, take care of your father when he is old; grieve him not as long as he lives" (Sir. 3:12). Similarly, the exclusion of a section on duties towards children can possibly be interpreted as favoring parents over children.

[4]*De Caritate* IX. Taken from Thomas Aquinas, *On Charity* [*De Caritate*], trans. Lottie H. Kendzierski (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1960), as found at http://dhspriory.org/thomas/QDdeVirtutibus2.htm (accessed August 3, 2015). Hereafter cited as DC.

[5]"Augustine would attempt to canalize this tradition of lavish giving, in favour of alms to the Christian poor; and he would himself show *humanitas*, an open-handed courtesy, by giving a banquet to the poor on the anniversary of his ordination, and in entertaining his many visitors … compared with traditional occasions for showing generosity, alms-giving seemed too indiscriminate [to the well-heeled in his society]" (Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, new ed. [Berkeley, LA: University of California Press, 2000], 193).

[6]Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas Vol. 1: The Person and His Work*, rev. ed. & trans. Robert Royal (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 12.

Need and Chance in Saint Augustine

The principle of need is fundamental in Saint Augustine. As he states in *De Doctrina Christiana*:

> If you came across two people of whom neither was *more obviously in need*, or more closely related to you than the other, there is nothing more just that you could do than to toss for it, to decide which of them should be given what could not be given to both.[7]

Namely, in addition to family, the other main criterion to use in allocating charity is need as we are presumed to be bound to offer help to the person who is "more obviously in need." Charity based on need is a fundamental biblical principle, present from the hospitality of Abraham to the admonitions of the prophets, the mass feedings of Jesus and the lives of the primitive Christian communities who had "no one needy amongst them."[8] Saint Augustine's is a natural application of this principle. It will also provide a neat link to his view of the multiplication of relationships of love as the basis of the good society and the city of God.

The criterion of need in the distribution of charity is to be used not just for monetary or physical assistance but also for moral support. In DDC, Saint Augustine states:

> … we are given to understand that anyone is our neighbor to whom the duty of compassion is to be extended *when needed*. From which it now follows that anyone by whom such kindness in turn should be shown to us is also our neighbor. But anybody can see that no exception is made of any to whom the duty of compassion can be denied, when

[7]Augustine of Hippo, *De Doctrina Christiana*, in *Teaching Christianity*, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1996), 1.28.29 (italics added). Hereafter referred to as DDC, with citations referring to book, chapter and paragraph numbers of *De Doctrina Christiana* itself.

[8]The possible references to the need principle in the Bible are almost endless, including also the obligation to leave the sides of the fields un-harvested for the poor, the forgiveness of debt at the jubilee, the prohibition of taking basic collateral from the poor and the obligation to pay a worker's wages before sunset.

> the command is extended even to enemies, with the Lord also telling us: "Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you (Mt. 5:44)."[9]

Not only are we summoned to extend help "when needed," but we are also encouraged to focus our moral assistance and loving friendship on those human beings who need it most. Indeed, "charity, like a nurse caring for her children, gives the weak preference over the strong, not that they are more worthy of love, but more needy of help."[10] Love, in God, ought to be distributed equally and charitable assistance—whether financial or moral—according to need.

Finally, Saint Augustine includes chance as his third principle for the ordering of charity to neighbor:

> … as you are unable to take care of all your fellow men, *treat it as the luck of the draw* when time and circumstance brings some into closer contact with you than others.[11]

The principle of chance is also a natural distillation of the actual practice of charity to neighbor at the individual level which we find practiced in the Bible. Whereas there are a number of rules for the practice of charity at the societal level (such as tithing or the equitable distribution of the land of Israel among the tribes), giving at the individual level follows the "luck of the draw" of Saint Augustine. The Jewish patriarchs as well as Jesus and his apostles do charity to the needy they happen to encounter. It is the only way to not "close your hand to the poor" (Deut. 15:7)[12] and to apply the injunction "delay not

---

[9]DDC 1.30.31 (italics added).

[10]Augustine of Hippo, "Letter of Saint Augustine to Marcellinus," in *Fathers of the Church: Saint Augustine Letters* Vol. 3, trans. Wilfrid Parsons (Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 57.

[11]DDC 1.28.29 (italics added).

[12]The injunction in the Book of Deuteronomy refers to "one of your kinsmen in any community" who is "in need" (cf. Deut. 15:7). Saint Augustine interprets your brother or kinsman to be any human being and stresses that we are to love all human beings equally as they are all made in God's image, and that we love Christ in them regardless of kinship or virtue. In DDC, interpreting

to give to the needy; a beggar in distress do not reject" (Sir. 4:3–4). It is also a practical principle as an individual would be hard-pressed to run either a fully "needs-based" or fully "virtue-based" system of charitable allocations.

Virtue, First Principle and Utility to the Common Good in Saint Thomas

After family, the other central principle for ordering charity in the system of Saint Thomas is virtue understood as the virtue of the one receiving charity. Saint Thomas bases this principle on the fact that a) charity is an actualization of love, b) love needs to be ordered as God Himself does and c) God loves those who are more virtuous more than those who are less so. It is also related to Saint Thomas' understanding of friendship, which is deeply influenced by Aristotle and, arguably, the wisdom literature.

In the *Nichomachean Ethics*, the basis of friendship is love-worthiness, the highest form of which is virtue, with lower forms being based on "pleasure or utility." The "perfect friendship" only occurs between the virtuous: "good men will be friends for their own sake, i.e., in virtue of their goodness."[13] These friends (the virtuous) ideally live together and have everything in common—the ultimate form of charity. These principles are mirrored in Saint Thomas' view that "it is necessary that what is more similar to the one loving be loved more."[14]

Saint Thomas' principle of virtue also mirrors closely the Book of Sirach where the preferences in love and friendship for the virtuous are many. Perhaps most prominently, the book states God's lesser love for sinners—"The Most High Himself hates sinners and upon the wicked

---

Rom. 13:9, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" he states: "every single human being is to be counted as a neighbor, because wrong is not to be done to anybody" (DDC 1.32).

[13]Jonathan Barnes, ed., *Complete Works of Aristotle* Vol. 2: The Revised Oxford Translation (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1829.

[14]*De Caritate* IX, ad. 5.

He takes vengeance" (Sir. 12: 7)—and seems to espouse the need to emulate God's preference as it encourages virtuous humans to "have just men for your table companions" (Sir. 9:10). Overall, the book contains an idea of friendship favoring the virtuous and shunning the sinful (especially Chapters 11–13) which is very akin to that portrayed in the *Nichomachean Ethics*.

Similarly, both in the *Summa*[15] and in *De Caritate*, Saint Thomas argues that, since the ultimate good to be loved in charity is God, people who are "more one with God ought to be loved more out of charity."[16] As expressed in the *Summa*, "[o]ur neighbors are not all equally related to God; some are nearer to Him, by reason of their greater goodness, and those we ought, out of charity, to love more than those who are not so near to Him."[17] It would also seem that, for Saint Thomas, the criterion of virtue trumps that of need as the virtuous should not be denied their desert on account of the needy: "we are not giving to a person that love which we ought to give if we love more one whom we ought to love less. For, it can happen that *in the moment of necessity* we give more to the latter, to the neglect of the former whom we ought to love more."[18]

The Aristotelian idea of first principle is also used by Saint Thomas as a guide to dispensing charity. Perhaps the most obvious example of the use of this criterion is in his ranking the due charity to father above that of mother because of his physical understanding of fathers as "active" first principles in procreation as opposed to the "passivity" of mothers.[19] He also argues that those who are more useful to the common good are to be favored in our love, including even above

[15]ST II.II, q. 26.

[16]DC IX, ad. 5.

[17]ST II.II, q. 26, a. 6, ad. 2.

[18]DC IX, ad. 11 (italics added).

[19]ST II.II, q. 26, a. 10, co.

our family members, albeit not in the "provision of necessaries" but in "matters of action"[20]:

> … he ought to show more of the effects of love towards his parents than toward someone who is not a member of his family; except if by chance, when the common good which each one ought also to desire for himself would depend on the good of someone who is not a member of one's family, as when one would expose himself to the danger of death in order to save the general of the army in war time, or to save the leader of a state insofar as the welfare of the entire community depends on these men.[21]

The Multiplication of Loving Friendships as the Foundation of a Global Society in Saint Augustine

In Saint Augustine, love, as God's most essential feature, should be the guiding principle of humanity. His section in DDC devoted to "love of God and neighbor is the sum of what scripture teaches" opens with the quote "the fulfillment and the end of the law and of all the divine scripture is love" (Rom. 13:8 and 1 Tim 1:5).[22] According to Saint Augustine, we are to love all human beings equally in the sense of "benevolence," namely that we are to desire that they grow closer to God, including our enemies.

Because friendship is rooted in Christian love, it cannot, unlike in the classical world, be limited to a small circle of like individuals. Saint Augustine does recognize that "it must include all those to whom love and affection are due, although it goes out more readily to some, more slowly to others, but it reaches even our enemies for whom we are commanded to pray."[23] In Hanna Arendt's words, this is a self-denying

[20]ST II.II, q. 26, a. 8, ad 1.

[21]DC IX, ad. 15.

[22]DDC 1.35.39.

[23]*The Fathers of the Church: Saint Augustine Letters*, Vol. 2 (83-130), trans. Wilfrid Parsons (The Catholic University of America, 1953), 386.

(rather than utilitarian) friendship in which the basic equality of the friend is in his or her being conceived simply as God's creature:

> In this way the neighbor loses the meaning of his concrete worldly existence, for example, as a friend or enemy. For the lover who loves as God loves, the neighbor ceases to be anything but a creature of God. The lover meets a man defined by God's love simply as God's creation. All meet in this love, denying themselves and their mutual ties.[24]

Saint Augustine sees the multiplication of loving relationships as the foundation and the engine for the construction of the city of God. For him, these relationships should flourish among all human beings of any condition or character. This is because of a number of reasons. First, because we are unable to properly assess a person's virtue, we should not avoid people of apparently lesser virtue and remember that they are likely to have some hidden qualities that we personally lack.[25] Second, because human beings have great hidden potential, by refusing our love and friendship to those who appear (or may be) less virtuous, we are not only harming them but are also depriving ourselves of a great potential good. Thus, by refusing our love and friendship to those

---

[24]Arendt also states that "In this meeting all people have an equal, though very minor, relevance to their own being. … Love of neighbor leaves the lover himself in absolute isolation and the world remains a desert for man's isolated existence" (Hannah Arendt, Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott, & Judith Chelius Stark, *Love and Saint Augustine* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996], 94). I would disagree with this assessment. On the contrary, and with Saint Augustine, I see this egalitarian universal friendship in Christ as the ultimate uniting force of humankind. It is not impersonal but, on the contrary, profoundly personal, albeit with differing degrees of intensity depending on the degree of actual closeness that each friendship is able to attain. It reverses a pre-existing alienation rather than creating it.

[25]It is particularly important not to equate the city of God with those inside the Church and the earthly city with those outside it as the two cities are mixed together and will be so until the end of times: "many who seem outside are really inside and many who seem inside are really outside" (*Commentary/Exposition on Psalm* 106.14; a translation is available at http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1801.htm).

who appear (or may be) less virtuous, we are not only harming them but are also depriving ourselves of a great potential good.

Third, Saint Augustine's thought is based on a profound egalitarianism. As regards friendship and charity, this egalitarianism is based on a Biblical view of humanity as a single family with a common descent from Adam. It is also founded on the belief that, in most cases, friendship has the potential of bringing out qualities that are not evident, eventually revealing a basic equality among human beings. And fourth, because Saint Augustine's view of friendship is, as Arendt phrases it, a "self-denying love [that] means loving by renouncing oneself; and this in turn means to love all people so completely without distinctions …."[26] With such a perspective, love can be had with everyone, not just with the "like-minded."

The multiplication of relationships, however, increases suffering due to longing as well as the risk of loss and betrayal. Saint Augustine recognizes that the more numerous the relationships and the more widely scattered they are across the world, the greater are our fears that any ill may befall our friends. The greater the number of friends—and the more diverse these friends are—the greater the danger that "they may fail us in faithfulness, turn to hate us and work us harm."[27] However, this is a risk that we must take while we also remember that the greater the number of our friends, the greater our joy will be.[28]

---

[26]Arendt, et al., *Love and Saint Augustine*, 95.

[27]Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God*, trans. Gerald G. Walsh, et al., intro. Étienne Gilson (New York: Doubleday, Image Books, 1958), 447 [*City of God* Book 19, Chapter 8]. Hereafter referred to as CG.

[28]Even for Saint Augustine, however, the only real, full-fledged friendship is the one cemented on a common love of God: "But he was not then my friend, nor, indeed, afterwards, as true friendship is; for true it is not but in such as You bind together, cleaving unto You by that love which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us" (Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* IV.4.7, in Philip Schaff, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 1., trans. J. G. Pilkington [Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing

The ideal for Saint Augustine is to have a society in which all human beings are bound in friendly relationships of love. This web of relationships would restore the loss of unity of fallen humanity; in Saint Augustine's words, "he who loves his brother endures all things for the sake of unity."[29] Devoting oneself to building such webs will entail foregoing the joy of more intimate friendships for the sake of building as wide as possible a net of service-oriented friendships, including with weaker and needier brothers and sisters. As argued in CG, these relationships can and should be developed inside as well as outside formal institutions.[30]

The multiplication of loving relationships would thus form the basis of individual holiness as well as social harmony. Saint Augustine believed that the path to holiness was through unity with God, which could only be achieved through unity with one's fellow human beings. The Fall created division and alienation from ourselves, from each other and from God. The multiplication of relationships of love is the path to the restoration of that lost loving unity. That perfect unity and love can no longer be attained in this world, but approximating it to the extent possible depends solely on love through grace.

The multiplication of loving relationships would bind the individual (micro) to the societal (meso) and upwards to universal (macro) human interaction, ultimately reaching out to the divine (supernal). In Saint Augustine, societal interaction will approximate the city of God to the extent that individuals are able to build loving relationships. This, however, is not innate or necessary. We are fallen humanity torn in diverging directions and we will only be able to build the city of God

---

Co., 1887], rev. & ed. Kevin Knight (2009) for New Advent, made available at http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/110104.htm).

[29]Saint Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 112-124 (Tractates on the First Epistle of John), trans. John W. Rettig (The Catholic University of America Press: 1995), 138.

[30]Cf. CG Book XIX, especially Chapters 7, 8 and 13.

partially. The earthly city will always exist and encompass those unable to build loving relationships. It all then begins with the individual:

> We must be friends with ourselves and with our families before we can have any hope of being friends with fellow human beings. When there is peace at the center (in the individual human), there are ripples of love that flow out in ever widening circles embracing more and more in the bond of friendship.[31]

And it is this construction of ever-widening circles of love that helps us reach unity with God Himself: "[t]he peace-makers of this world will finally enjoy the perfect peace of union with God. Then there will no longer be alienation. There will be only love."[32] Saint Augustine's theology is thus rooted simultaneously in psychology, sociology and, to a lesser extent, politics, linking together all levels of human interaction. It is not "institutions" or "rules" that truly bind humanity; rather, it is an ever-widening multiplication of individual relationships of love grounded in and striving to reach God. Unlike formal institutions which, like the Roman Empire, come and go, these relationships are the eternal good reaching out to unity with the eternal God.

This concept of friendship seems modeled on the actual relationships reflected in the Bible and especially in the primitive Christian communities both within themselves as well as in the linkages that they established with each other and the world around them. They were diverse, dynamic and apostolic ever-widening networks of loving friendship expanding across the world.[33]

---

[31]Donald X. Burt, *Friendship and Society: An Introduction to Augustine's Practical Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 8. Cf. CG XIX.16.

[32]Burt, *Friendship and Society: An Introduction to Augustine's Practical Philosophy*, 8.

[33]Saint Augustine also builds on the concept of friendship found in the classical world, in particular Cicero's *De Amicitia*, but he thoroughly transforms it by imbuing it with Christian equality and universality.

Friendship and Love in Saint Thomas: Knowledge, Affinity and Society

The concept of friendship in Saint Thomas is highly reminiscent of the classical ideal of friendship, in particular that of Aristotle's. It is friendship among the like-minded and focused on a small circle of friends. It is also a friendship that is firmly based on knowledge.[34] This close relationship of knowledge and love is also at the core of the Bible at the most intimate level possible—that between lover and beloved. The Hebrew word "da'at" means both to know as well as to love (e.g., *Vayeda adam od et ishto*: "And Adam knew his wife again" [Gen. 4:25]). It is such an intimate connection that it even entails that "the lover is transformed into the inner identity of the beloved."[35] In Father Kauth's paraphrase of Saint Thomas: "love is first ontological congruity in the good, consequent on the apprehensive power's discovery."[36]

Such an intimate connection as exists within couples or among close friends cannot possibly be had with many. It is based on close

---

[34]In Saint Augustine, knowledge also plays a role as we cannot love what we do not know (Augustine of Hippo, *De Trinitate* X.1, in Philip Schaff, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 3, trans. Arthur West Haddan (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), rev. & ed. Kevin Knight (2009) for New Advent, made available at http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/130110.htm [accessed Aug. 6, 2015]). However, what we love is the good which we get to know in the other and this good (or some of it) is present in all human beings since, as we are created in God's image, "there can be no evil where there is no good" (Augustine of Hippo, *The Handbook on Faith, Hope and Love [The Enchiridion]* XIII, taken from http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1302.htm [accessed Aug. 3, 2015]).

[35]Thomas Aquinas, *On Love and Charity: Readings from the Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, trans. Peter Kwasniewski, Thomas Bolin & Joseph Bolin (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 125.

[36]"Complacentia is the word which best describes the subjective effect as a kind of pleasing affinity which is discharged by the proportion of subject and object" (Matthew Kauth, *Charity as Divine and Human Friendship: A Metaphysical and Scriptural Explanation According to the Thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas* (Romae: Saint Benedict Press, 2014).

affinity and affection: "This affective affinity causes the lover to seek deeper union with the beloved and to act for the beloved's good as if it were his own good."[37] Because this unity is affective and based on commonality, it is exclusive as it "draws the mind from other things."[38] It is therefore distinct from Saint Augustine's ever-widening circles of love among diverse individuals. Arguably, of the dictum in Sirach 6:6 to "[l]et your acquaintances be many but one in a thousand your confidant," Saint Augustine emphasized the first part while Saint Thomas the second.

Saint Thomas argues openly that he disagrees with Saint Augustine's view that one should love all equally. He objects that it is an "unreasonable position" that is neither possible nor desirable.[39] It is not possible because one will always have a greater affinity or intensity of feeling towards some people rather than others: "It is also clear that, according to natural love, our relatives are more loved in affection; according to a social love, those who are closely united to us are loved more …."[40] In Saint Thomas' view, one also loves more those who are more similar to us.[41] It is not desirable to love all equally because God Himself loves the more virtuous more than the less virtuous.

For Saint Thomas, limiting friendship to a close circle does not endanger the building of a God-oriented society. To the contrary, it can be argued that his more optimistic view of human nature almost assumes that this society already exists. The view of the social nature of human beings in Saint Thomas seems grounded in Sirach's principle

---

[37]Michael S. Sherwin, *By Knowledge & By Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 77.

[38]ST I.II, q. 28, a. 3, co.

[39]DC IX, co.

[40]DC IX, co.

[41]DC IX, ad. 5.

that "every living thing loves its own kind, every man a man like himself. Every being is drawn to its own kind; with its own kind every man associates" (Sir. 13:14–15). Moreover, according to Saint Thomas' *Weltanschauung*, which has strong Aristotelian echoes, "each creature has more of an inclination to the universal good than to its own species."[42]

The ultimate inclination toward the universal good is perfectly compatible with the individual inclination towards self-conservation. This is so because a) "the love of charity is a certain inclination infused in rational nature for the purpose of tending toward God"[43] and b) "… the more perfect something is in its power, and the higher it is in the scale of goodness, the more does it have an appetite for a broader common good, and the more does it seek and become involved in the doing of good for beings far removed from itself."[44] Along the lines of Aristotle's naturalist politics, therefore, it is as if an "invisible hand" was ordering the instincts of individuals towards the common good and, through it, to God. Therefore, in the Holy Roman Empire of Saint Thomas' time, as in the Aristotelian city-state, harmony emerges "naturally" without depending on the voluntarist interpersonal

[42]Thomas M. Osborne, *Love of Self and Love of God in Thirteenth-Century Ethics* (Notre Dame, IND: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 103. In this, Saint Thomas argues against the 13th century *natura curva* doctrine, attributed to Saint Bernard, that nature desires primarily its own good. That view, he argues, erroneously views creatures as isolated individuals rather than as part of a species and the universe as a whole. In the *Secundum Librum* of the *Summa*, Saint Thomas uses his understanding of Aristotelian teleology to reinterpret *natura curva* to mean that nature has an inclination not only for its own perfection, but even more for the perfection of the whole. Cf. ST 1, q. 60, a. 5, ad. 3. Namely, if individuals acted for their short-sighted own benefit while ignoring the whole, they would not truly be seeking their own good as they would be ignoring universal interconnectedness.

[43]DC IX, co.

[44]Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* 3:24:8, trans. Vernon J. Bourke, available at http://dhspriory.org/thomas/ContraGentiles3a.htm#24 (accessed Dec. 23, 2015).

friendship networks advocated by Saint Augustine. It is seen as enacted by the monarchy or the aristocracy in power.[45]

Even Saint Thomas acknowledges that not all will work together for the formation of such a society. On the contrary, three conditions are needed: a) divine help, b) self-help and c) cooperation with fellow men.[46] Not all cooperation will be equally profound: "… in this we see a gradation, for some cooperate only in a general way, while others who are more closely united cooperate in a special way. Not all are able to cooperate in a special way."[47] Cooperation thus takes place in a world in which individual and social interest are assumed to be compatible and eventually reflected in the pursuit of the common good by those in positions of authority in formal institutions.

Potential Influences on the Different Views of the Order of Charity in Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas

Family Environment and Life Experience

Although both Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas were men of the Mediterranean, they came from different geographical and family environments and had rather different life experiences. Saint Augustine was a North African, a Mediterranean through-and-through. He was born of a wayward pagan father and a devout Christian mother (Saint Monica). His father was a lower-middle ranking bureaucrat of the Roman Empire in Thagaste (Tunisia), but he also lived in Carthage

[45]Saint Thomas "usually recommends a mixed government, where the king collaborates with an aristocracy chosen by the whole people; here [in *De Regno ad Regem Cypri*] he recommends an absolute monarchy. We perhaps must see the reason for this in that he knew the special situation in Cyprus during the time he was writing" (Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas Vol. 1: The Person and His Work*, 170).

[46]DC, IX, co.

[47]DC IX, co.

and Milan. He was born into a family in which not all members were well-educated, and grew up comfortable with, and learning from, all of them. He became a man of varied worlds.

It is likely that his family experience had a profound influence on his views on love and friendship. After all, he was the product of the union of a pagan father who had led a rather unfaithful and in many ways non-exemplary life and a woman saint. This family experience—together with his life as a bishop—must have convinced him that, "like the old 'people of Israel,' the congregation was a mixed body."[48] His father, despite all his faults, was not an entirely bad man and was capable of final conversion. This conversion—as well as his own—was catalyzed by the use that the Lord made of Saint Monica with her holy patience, her wisdom and her love. His own young adulthood was also steeped in sin and error, yet nevertheless, he was able to become the man he grew up to be.

This life experience must have imprinted in him the importance of recognizing the good and the bad inside everyone, the importance of the association, friendship and love between the more and the less virtuous, and the vast horizon of hope through the infinite possibilities of grace: "For you do not love in him what he is but what you wish him to be."[49] Moreover, his life experience brought him into contact with needy people of varied religions and combinations of vice and virtue. In the process, he became deeply convinced that people of apparently less virtue possess many virtues which those who appear as outwardly pious often lack, and that, if one gives them a chance, a basic equality emerges.

This formative experience was compounded by his years in the Manichean movement and was later reflected in his pastoral work as

[48]Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 246.

[49]St. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 112–124, 240. "He loves this equality in the other whether or not the beloved understands it. In self-denying love I deny the other person as well as myself, but I do not forget him. … I deny the other person so as to break through to his real being, just as in searching for myself I deny myself" (Arendt, et al., *Love and Saint Augustine*, 96).

a Christian bishop. In the Manichean community, he was exposed to the contributions of its less formally educated members, who were particularly austere as well as the most effective missionaries: "These men, 'unpolished and primitive', were the most dedicated of all; and, not surprisingly in such a movement, they were particularly admired by sophisticated intellectuals."[50]

Subsequently, in the monastery at Hippo, Saint Augustine created an environment in which "uneducated men were the equals of the sophisticated."[51] Moreover, as a bishop, he was drawn into tending to the needs of a flock of necessarily varying degrees of education and virtue. This was an important pastoral experience that also shaped his life view as one in which both need and chance rather than hard-and-fast rules necessarily play a crucial role in the distribution of charity:

> … his position as bishop of fourth century Africa was very different from the ecclesiastical magnates of medieval times, with their precise jurisdictions. In intervening to protect members of his flock, he was acting as any Late Roman patron might be expected to act …. [52]

It would be difficult indeed to imagine how someone with the life experience of Saint Augustine could have embraced a different position regarding friendship and love. He was the result of the good that can come from the associations between the "virtuous" and "the less virtuous," and so was his father. He must have been keenly aware of how "bottled up" the potential of Saint Monica would have been had she associated only with the "virtuous." He experienced the actual impossibility to assess other people's virtue. He was a prime witness of the vast potential of humanity and the immense good that comes from association among the diverse. He was also marked by the practical impossibility of the loving heart to ignore need, regardless of virtue, in charity. It seems only natural that he saw ever-multiplying relationships of love across humanity, in all

[50]Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 45.

[51]Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 264.

[52]Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 189.

the frailty and all the complexity of its fallen nature, driven by need and the seeming chance of God's providence, as the foundation for building the city of God.

Saint Thomas, on the other hand, came from a noble Italian family of Northern European origin. His relatives were a closely-knit family of well-educated, well-off and devout Catholics. It does not seem that he had much contact with people who were either entirely non-educated or "non-virtuous." On the contrary, he was the product of a pious, educated and loving family. It was this background that helped him become the saint and the genius he was to be. It is also possible that the near-death experience of seeing his little sister struck down by lightning at a young age as she was sleeping next to him impressed upon him the frailty of our life and the need to remain virtuous at all times lest we inadvertently die in sin.

From the time he entered the Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino as a boy, and aside from stays with his family, he spent the rest of his days in religious community. This experience, which sheltered him from the vice of the world, allowed him to lead a life of holiness from beginning to end. After the (possibly legendary) incident with the tempting prostitute, it is said he never witnessed carnal temptation again. His friends and personal associations were his family and the members of his religious communities. Therefore, he must not have been directly exposed to many situations of material need or experienced the redeeming power of loving relationships among those "unequal" in virtue.

At the same time, he had extensive experience with inequality in the distribution of intellectual gifts and with the need for intellectual charity. Although this was not part of his theology, it was a central part of his life experience and he was enormously giving in reacting to it. In fact, Saint Thomas does not include need and chance among his criteria in the order of charity, but he did practice it in his intellectual charity. He was generous to the extreme in the way in which he responded to any query posed to him, even if imposing on him and taxing his time, distracting him from his main treatises on systematic theology.

This is why he wrote so many responses to queries on such a great diversity of topics.[53]

In addition to this refusal to turn down intellectual charity requests thrown at him by the "luck of the draw," he also used the criterion of "need" for the good of the Church, devoting much greater time to the tasks that were more important. Similarly, although he does not include "chance" as a criterion for charity, he does admit that "among the fellow-men, he ought to give mutual help to those who are *more closely united to him* or who are more closely related to him."[54] And those who "are more closely united to him," though partly by affinity, can also be interpreted to be so partly by chance.

Saint Thomas was thus arguably compelled by need and chance in the choice of his intellectual output—the greatest work of charity of his life. Every task he undertook, whether in studying or in producing, was driven by what was needed to support the mystical body of Christ. He devoted himself to his students and his teaching tasks wholeheartedly, whether it was with the "Dominican intellectual elite" at Paris or with the *fratres communes* at Orvieto. In fact, he dedicated the greatest work of his life to the less knowledgeable students. As he states in the *Summa*: "the teacher of Catholic truth should not only teach the most advanced but also instruct the beginners … our intention is therefore to explain what concerns the Christian religion according to the mode that is necessary for the formation of beginners."[55] It is quite possible that, had he "by chance" only taught advanced students in

[53]Torrell calls him "a theologian much in demand" and notes: "we immediately get the impression of intense literary activity. … quite often these are works *of circumstance*, undertakings meant to respond to a question that is more or less official, or from a friend. Such requests are a flattering echo of confidence in his competence" (Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas Vol. 1: The Person and His Work*, 122 [italics added]). They are also a reflection of his deep intellectual charity and refusal to deny this charity even when drawn to him by "chance" and arguably, to a good extent, regardless of "virtue."

[54]DC IX, co. (italics added).

[55]Torrell, 145, citing the introduction to Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*.

Paris, he may not have realized the need for such a "manual." He was also driven to write a "beginners' work" by the need he observed due to the fact that existing manuals like Raymond of Penyafort's *Summa de Casibus* were excessively repetitive and did not sufficiently ground moral theology in systematic theology. On the other hand, his life did not bring him into contact with varying degrees of virtue in situations in which he had to exercise the order of charity. Had he experienced such circumstances, he may have reacted as he did in the distribution of his intellectual charity—allowing need and chance to also play a role in practice if not in theory.

Family and life experience are thus likely to have deeply influenced the order of charity in Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas in both theory and practice. Saint Augustine lived surrounded by many people of dubious virtue and "utility to the common good" while Saint Thomas lived surrounded by the "virtuous and socially useful." Moreover, Saint Augustine could, for much of his life, have considered himself as forming part of the first group while Saint Thomas was, throughout his life, part of the second. Therefore, in Saint Augustine, a life experience of the centrality of need and chance in effecting conversion may have shaped his order of charity. In the case of Saint Thomas, although the principles of virtue, friendship among equals and utility to the common good are strong in his moral theology, they are arguably less so in practice. When the "luck of the draw" put before him the need for (intellectual) charity, he responded to it with the same passionate dedication that Saint Augustine articulated in his writings.[56]

Geography and History

Both Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas were men of the Roman Catholic tradition of the Mediterranean world. Nevertheless, they lived in very different regions, time periods and cultures. Saint Augustine

[56]Nevertheless, Saint Thomas would probably have viewed his exercise of intellectual charity as being drawn not as much by "random" individual need as by a desire to serve the "common good."

was a North African from a rural area, a backwater of the late Roman Empire. He lived during the last years and after the fall of the Empire. His world was one in which paganism and heresy—from Manicheism to Donatism and Pelagianism—were thriving and Christianity was not yet well-established. The Roman, and more broadly the classical, intellectual traditions were still a living reality. Its proponents were presenting Christianity as an upstart and dangerous cult with a highly questionable philosophical foundation. The institutions of the Roman world were crumbling and the Church was struggling while remaining resilient. Society consisted of small communities— arguably Popperian closed societies based on family, kinship and patronage—where people sought refuge from a crumbling world. Formal political institutions and impersonal rules could not be taken for granted while the Church, community and friendship offered a potentially safe haven from the vagaries of the outside world.

The attacks of the pagan world on the Christian community continued, both intellectually as well as, on occasion, physically. The world of higher learning was still largely dominated by pagan philosophy, particularly in North Africa. Christians and their supposed weak citizenship were being blamed for the collapse of the Roman Empire. It was against this background that Saint Augustine's social, political and theological thinking developed. In the world he experienced, the idealized city-state of Plato and Aristotle as well as the sturdy Holy Roman Empire of Saint Thomas' 13th century would have appeared as a mirage—if the Roman Empire had crumbled, any earthly city could. No rules were solid. No human institutions were infallible. Moreover, Saint Augustine had witnessed the deterioration of the Roman Empire to an extent of corruption and injustice that it could no longer qualify as a "society." Only a city of God, built on the values of Christ, through the ever-widening circles of love initiated by Christ and his disciples and continued by the Christian communities and the Church as a whole, could ever approximate the peace and unity which the human heart seeks.

Saint Thomas, on the other hand, was born in Southern Italy, a hub of the Holy Roman Empire of the 13th century. In his family

and despite their struggles, the Pope and the Emperor were relatively solid twin pillars of life. Uncertainties regarded how to rein so much institutional power and how to make both instances compatible. It was a world of firmly-established rules and well-developed "open" Popperian institutions. Christianity was well established economically, politically, socially and religiously, and paganism had long ago receded into history. The world of great European universities of which Saint Thomas was a part was thriving and dominated by the Church. It was a time in which Europe felt secure enough in its Christianity to look back to its classical roots with confidence. It had been long enough after the demise of the Greco-Roman world that it even looked back to this distant past with longing. The *corpus classicus* was being rescued from the oblivion of the Dark Ages and the ancient Greeks were being translated into Latin as the Western Empire had long lost its knowledge of Greek.

Saint Thomas, therefore, could believe in an orderly world of rules for the allocation of charity in a way that would have been difficult, if not impossible, for Saint Augustine to conceive. He could also leave the building of the foundation for a stable society to the role of formal institutions. Saint Augustine, on the contrary, would be led by his historical experience to be more of a believer in informal social relationships as the basis of society and the "luck of the draw" as guiding opportunities for charity as human beings waded through an uncertain life. Saint Thomas, steeped as he was in Aristotle's teleology and the solid institutions of the 13th century, would be more inclined towards the utility of the common good as the most rational guide to charity aside from family ties, first principles and virtue.

Finally, Saint Augustine seemed to rely on need and chance and Saint Thomas on the utility of the common good. Arguably, however, they used twin principles of "need" adapted to their historical time—Saint Augustine's being more Platonic, intention-based, personal and fluid, and Saint Thomas' being more Aristotelian, finality-oriented and institutionalized as the "common good."

Intellectual Education and Philosophical Affiliation

Saint Augustine's education was not particularly deeply rooted in the classics, especially the Greek. He was mainly educated in Latin literature (particularly Virgil, Cicero, Sallust and Terence) without a deep grounding in philosophy, history, or science.[57] Unlike Saint Thomas, Saint Augustine would not have been considered an expert philosopher in "an era oppressed by reverence for the 'expert' [and where] everything outside the *corpus classicus* was considered non-scientific."[58]/[59]

Moreover, Saint Augustine was not by disposition a "*type croyant*,"[60] but rather a natural, even systematic, questioner. He pursued truth wherever he could find it. This he had in common with Saint Thomas. In addition, however, Saint Augustine had an anti-hierarchical and arguably even antinomian personality which was not at home within any single school of thought and did not have particular reverence for any single thinker. In this, he followed those intellectuals that Brown calls the "Latin amateurs" who "never committed themselves entirely to the ideas they handled. They felt, however obscurely, that there was more to life than metaphysical systems …."[61] At the same time, he was following in the footsteps of one of his greatest intellectual influences, Cicero, who had "urged Augustine to seek Wisdom: 'I should not chase after this or that philosophical sect, but should love Wisdom, of whatever kind it should be …."[62] In not espousing

[57]Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 24.

[58]Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 41.

[59]Brown argues for "Augustine's religious 'emancipation' … from his elders and betters in the university of Carthage, from the pretentious professors, whom he secretly despised" (*Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 38).

[60]Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 105 (italics in original).

[61]Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 85.

[62]Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 30. In this, Brown sees Saint Augustine like a Latin *rhetor*, "caught between Christianity and paganism … glad, as

any specific school of thought and questioning not only conclusions but assumptions as well, he was arguably also following the ultimate questioning philosopher in perpetual search of the truth—Plato.

Saint Augustine's focus on the "ideal" society and on normative principles is also Platonic. The city of God is the ultimate Christian "Platonic" or ideal society as is the principle that the earthly society is to attempt to "participate" in it so as to resemble it to the extent possible. The idea of a "society of friends" or "the state as a large family" based on love as the ideal one is also both Platonic and Biblical.[63] Similarly, Saint Augustine's belief that justice consists in the right ordering of things both within souls and within societies also finds its roots in Plato. Saint Augustine's non-inclusion of the principle of virtue as criteria in his order of charity can also be seen as a combination of Socratic philosophical agnosticism about the limits of human knowledge with the oft-repeated Biblical injunction not to judge other human beings' virtue, as the Lord is the only judge.

At the same time, however, Saint Augustine firmly broke ranks with Plato's elitism in the radical essential egalitarianism which shines through in his writings, but which in turn does not negate the need for simply functional subordination in a well-ordered society. This view of the human being and the world explains the absence of the

---

Augustine had once been glad, to have Cicero to shelter behind, against the cold winds of philosophical dogmatism and clerical orthodoxy" (Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 94). I would argue Saint Augustine never fully lost the desire for intellectual and spiritual freedom, aspiring only to fully expound Christianity (as distinct from "clerical orthodoxy").

[63]Aristotle criticized this Platonic ideal:

> As to organizing the political community, Aristotle explains that the end of political communities differs from the end of other kinds of associations, such as the family, of which the political community is an outgrowth. … Criticizing Plato, as well as the innovative suggestions of many other theorists, for wanting to turn the state into a large family, Aristotle contends there are no important discoveries to be made in the realm of political organization. (Richard Popkin, *The Columbia History of Western Philosophy* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2013], 69)

principle of virtue in his order of charity. Finally, the Platonic idea that the natural world reflects a predetermined intelligible order and that the best possible world imitates the ultimate good is "Christianized" in Saint Augustine's view of the exchange of love in human society as imitating the exchange of love between the three persons of the Holy Trinity.

This education—and lack of it—jointly with his disposition freed his outstanding intellect, his ebullient imagination and his restless heart from any single framework aside from that provided by the Bible, and yielded some of the most brilliant and profound writing of Christianity and the history of humankind. That is why the worldview of Saint Augustine does not fit into any philosophical stream except, if such is not an oxymoron, that of the Bible.

To the extent that Saint Augustine had a "philosophical home," that would have been Neo-Platonism and the Christian Neo-Platonists of the Milan of his time.[64] In particular, the influence of Plotinus and Porphyry, whom Augustine always calls "*doctissimus*" and "the most notable pagan philosopher," can be perceived throughout his writings. As Brown explains, however, they had been thoroughly "absorbed," "digested" and "transformed."[65]

One of the ideas of the Neo-Platonist philosophical universe that most profoundly influenced him was the conception of evil as "a turning away into separateness: its very existence assumed the existence of an order, which was flouted while remaining no less real and meaningful."[66] This idea of evil as separation from a natural order that is good provided a philosophical construct for a view that was

[64]Arguably, he mainly retained, from Manicheism, a "counter-reaction." Namely, it is possible that his emphasis on the limitations of rationality as a guide to true knowledge and the passionate defense of the body as opposed to the strong Gnostic dualism between body and soul may be reactions to his Manichean past.

[65]Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 83 and 86.

[66]Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 91.

deeply Biblical. Indeed, Saint Augustine saw the essence of the fall of humanity as loss of unity and alienation within the individual, across individuals and from God. This can be traced from original sin to the episode of the Tower of Babel and the scattering and division it produced and which continue to this day. Repairing this alienated world of the earthly city through the recreation of unity using ever-widening circles of loving friendships is at the core of the Augustinian order of charity and the key to building the city of God. Aside from family and need, no specific man-made order is necessary in carrying out this task; rather, only a loving response to the "chance" encounter with the other is needed.

Another influence from Plotinus consisted in turning inward, into the human soul, the great struggle which Late Antiquity—whether pagan or Christian—thought existed between good and evil.[67] In fact, the Augustinian centrality of this Plotinus-influenced (yet profoundly Biblical) view that the global struggle between good and evil takes place inside each human being would have made a virtue-based idea of the order of charity difficult to sustain. Instead, it fits perfectly with Saint Augustine's view of the Church—and, arguably, the individual—as a *corpus permixtum* in a never-ending struggle for improvement through non-virtue-based and deeply evangelical circles of love.

The theme of love is at the center of both the Bible and Plato. Saint Augustine's diverse societies also parallel both Christian communities as well as the participants in Plato's dialogues, each contributing their unique bit to the pursuit of the truth and the good. Like in Plato's Symposium, even the rowdy guests intruding drunk at the last moment in the banquet end up not only being won over by the philosophers, but prove to have "a philosopher" inside them. Plato's influence may also have helped Saint Augustine conceptualize the Bible's relationships as the foundation for building the city of God.

---

[67]Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 240–241. Of course, the engine driving the "latent principle within the inner world" that drives the ascent of the soul is different in each case. For Plotinus, it is "the divine within the soul itself"; for Saint Augustine, it is Christ (Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 241).

Saint Thomas, on the other hand, was fundamentally a Christian Aristotelian in whose writings the influence of "the Philosopher" is most pervasive.[68] Five key Aristotelian ideas seem to have been infused into the ordering of charity in Saint Thomas: teleology, virtue, first principle, utility and the common good. Aristotle shares Plato's idea of both the reality of the existence and the desirability of order in nature and society. At the same time, he has a more pronounced teleological view of the human act and human interaction than Plato. In fact, finality is so important in Aristotle that, in his philosophical system, "randomness … is the miscarriage of natural teleology."[69] In such a system, the end is what matters most and randomness is abhorred.

This priming of the end in Aristotle's ethics can also help explain the difference between Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas in the ordering of charity. While for Saint Augustine need as a guiding principle of charity is viewed as applying to the individual for his own sake, in Saint Thomas it becomes transformed into the utility of the individual for the common good. Thus, Saint Thomas argues that it is more desirable for us to show charity in our actions to the individuals who have the greatest potential to bring about good to the community as a whole (such as the general of an army or the leader of a society).

Relatedly, Saint Thomas' inclusion of the principle of virtue as a critical guiding criterion for the exercise of charity also seems profoundly Aristotelian. In Aristotle's concept of justice, everyone receives "their due." In fact, his distributive justice consists in allotting goods in a manner proportional to each person's virtue. The same

[68]This did not prevent him from disagreeing with Aristotle wherever he saw a contradiction with the Bible, such as in the philosopher's belief in the eternity of the world. Moreover, Saint Thomas also had areas of Platonic and neo-Platonic influence, particularly as regards the doctrine of ideas and the conception of the Creation as following prototypes living within the divine Logos (Josef Pieper, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas* [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991], 43–44) and the idea of participation, e.g., "the intellectual light itself which is in us, is nothing else than a participated likeness of the uncreated light" (ST I, q. 84, a. 5, co).

[69]Popkin, *The Columbia History of Western Philosophy*, 59.

applies to charity. In ST II, II, q. 26, a. 9, Saint Thomas answers that "the better a thing is and the more like to God, the more is it to be loved." This idea is consistent with Aristotle's idea of perfect friendship as one among the virtuous as well as with his overall view of the need for equality, or at least equality of exchange, among individuals in relationships of friendship. Virtue as a guiding principle for the exercise of charity in Saint Thomas thus seems modeled indeed on this Aristotelian vision.

The naturalistic search for the first principle in action and the attribution of ethical primacy to that principle is also an important determinant in Saint Thomas' order of charity. Most prominently, the primacy of father over mother in the order of charity in ST II-II, q. 26, a. 10 is explained in that "the father is principle in a more excellent way than the mother, because he is the active principle, while the mother is a passive and material principle. Consequently, strictly speaking, the father is to be loved more."[70]

Utility is another fundamental principle of the Aristotelian system. Friendship among individuals is based on utility, with lower levels of it being pleasant and profitable and the higher level being that of virtue. Concord among states is similarly based on utility; it is essentially a relationship of cooperation based on self-interest. Some of this Aristotelian view of utility can be found in Saint Thomas' view of friendship and in his ordering of charity, especially as it relates to the common good.

The fact that friendship is only with a few and of the virtuous with the virtuous seems influenced by a utilitarian conception of relationships. Of course, in Saint Thomas the ultimate end is to grow closer to God in knowledge and love. It would seem that this Christian objective combined with an Aristotelian utilitarian conception of friendship resulted in Saint Thomas' understanding of friendship. It is also a combination of the Christian (including Augustinian) desire for

[70]ST II-II, q. 26, a. 10, co. Saint Thomas also quotes St. Jerome who, writing on Ezekiel 44:25, mentions fathers before mothers as support for this order (cf. ST II-II, q. 26, a. 10, s. c.).

promoting the common good with Aristotelian utilitarianism that helps explain Saint Thomas' setting the utility of a person to the common good as trumping other principles of charity in action. In Saint Thomas, like in Aristotle and unlike in Saint Augustine, friendship is not the basis of the well-functioning state; rather, institutions and individuals assumed to act for the common good are.[71]

In Aristotle, the ultimate good of the state resides not in the system of government it adopts but in the government's ability to act for the interests of its subjects rather than its own interest. This idea of the common good is essential in Saint Thomas, including in his idea of the order of charity. The ability of the state to act for the common good, according to Aristotle, depends mainly on the education of all its citizens. The centrality of education is a principle which does not explicitly feature in Saint Thomas' ideal order of charity. However, as described above, a focus on promoting a thorough education going well beyond the elites is certainly a principle which Saint Thomas applied throughout his life in his writing, his disputing and his teaching as well as through his role in Dominican General Chapter Meetings.[72] In Orvieto, he was to devote himself "to regular teaching of those who … had not been able to study in the *studia generalia* or even the *provincialia*—which was the case for nine out of ten friars"—and, as

[71]"For Aristotle, perfect friendship is of no service to the state because it is not a political means to an end, as it tended to be for Plato" (Popkin, *The Columbia History of Western Philosophy*, 69).

[72]I am not aware of the specific role Saint Thomas played at the 1259 Dominican Chapter in Valenciennes. However, we do know that he was one of the five masters who formed part of the commission established to promote studies.

> The commission sketched out a series of recommendations that were inserted into the chapter's acts. All these acts asserted the priority of study over other tasks …. As to the young, superiors should select those most adept at study to be sent to a *studium generale*; the older brothers should be reminded that even the priors are supposed to follow courses …. If a province is too poor in personnel to provide a lecturer in each priory … they should instead be sent wherever they can to be formed. (Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas Vol. 1: The Person and His Work*, 97).

mentioned above, the *Summa* was dedicated to beginners such as his former students.[73]

Finally, there is a further influence in the order of love as viewed by Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas that is rooted in their respective Platonic versus Aristotelian perspectives. Saint Augustine drew his theology and political theory from a psychological-sociological view of the world with a strong normative and metaphysical bent and certain skepticism about method. Saint Thomas, on the other hand, drew his theology from a positivist and strongly worldly naturalist philosophy aiming at approximating science.[74] The Augustinian focus on need, chance and "a society of friends" fits neatly within the former. The Thomist emphasis on a set of fully specified criteria based on virtue, first principle and utility to the common good fits well within the latter.

Personality

All of the above-discussed factors are certainly enough to explain the differences in the order of charity in Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas. And yet, I would argue that their vastly different personalities also shed light on their personal perspectives on the subject. Below are some thoughts on these differences and how they may have affected each saint.

Saint Augustine was a handsome, charming man with an ardent personality, passionate, sensual and gregarious. He was also a man with what has been diversely called a gift of "instant and moving sympathy"[75] for others and a "gift for universal sympathy."[76] Arguably,

---

[73]Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas Vol. 1: The Person and His Work*, 118–119.

[74]"[T]heology and philosophy here encountered one another—philosophy in the sense that Thomas defined it … as a mode of seeing things as they are *in themselves* …" (Pieper, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas*, 47 [italics in original]).

[75]J. O'Meara, *The Young Augustine: An Introduction to the* Confessions *of St. Augustine* (London & NY: Longman, 1980), 87.

[76]Abbé Bardy, *The Christian Latin Literature of the First Six Centuries*, trans. Mother Marie Reginald (Rockville, Maryland: Wildside Press, 2010), 134.

"the dominant characteristic of Saint Augustine's genius and the true secret to his action must be sought in his heart which animated the highest speculations of a profound mind with a most intense passion."[77] This expansive personality and his gift and need for friendship and sociability help explain how he could conceive of an ideal world based on ever-widening circles of love. Moreover, his long struggle with his sensuality and lust could be seen as having been tamed, sublimated and transformed into non-concupiscent loving social expansiveness.

As discussed, Saint Augustine's life-long experience of friendships with people of broadly diverse educational and social backgrounds as well as his own and his father's conversions must have fostered this personal penchant for understanding all and befriending all. But his personality must have helped as well. Someone with a natural gift and inclination for sociability can easily establish a personal connection with a great variety of peoples whereas shyer personalities tend to feel more comfortable with the like-minded. In addition, Saint Augustine's idea of friendship is based on trust and entails serious risk. And Saint Augustine was certainly a risk-taker. His restless heart and adventuresome personality must not only have not recoiled at the risk entailed by his propounded ever-widening circles of love, but almost relished it or, at least, did not shun it.[78]

The intensely personal tone revealed in most of Saint Augustine's writings reflects someone comfortable with having his personality shining through his work. He did not see subjectivity as an evil, but rather as unavoidable and even as essentially good, as it is this subjectivity that allows him to connect with the other and inject the

[77]See Eugène Portalié, "Teaching of St. Augustine of Hippo," *The Catholic Encyclopedia* Vol. 2 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907), as made available at the New Advent website (http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02091a.htm).

[78]The one aspect in which he abhorred risk, given his own personal experience, was theological error. This, jointly with the historical time he lived in, which was marked by the Donatist and later Pelagian controversies, helps explain his harsh stance toward heresy.

emotion that helps the preacher put a message through into the heart of the listener. In fact, and despite his protestations to the contrary, Saint Augustine is essentially the ideal preacher he portrays in *De Doctrina Christiana*. In that work as in his sermons and most notably in the *Confessions*, he uses the personal tone, makes the personal connections and uses the emotions that he knows will help him in swaying his listeners. Someone with such a preaching *persona* would also be more inclined by personality and function to prime the establishment of personal relationships in building society as well as to leave judgment, including on the order of charity, to an individual's necessarily subjective assessment of the order of charity, which is to be engaged in through "chance."

Finally, Saint Augustine's independent personality, with its anti-hierarchical, anti-establishment bent, could have influenced his preference for a fluid order where an individual can exercise his own judgment on the order of charity based on the broad principles of family, need and chance. It may also have made him skeptical of a purely "top-down" assessment of the common good and of the desirability of dispensing charity with preference to individuals who are expected, by their position, to contribute to it. Even his own personal experience, as someone who would have been judged for much of his life to be "less virtuous or socially useful to the common good," could have left a legacy of personal empathy with those in need, regardless of their perceived virtue or "social utility."

Saint Thomas was a man of the mind: contemplative, self-restrained, with a preference for either deep conversation or solitude. Within his family and with his small circles of confreres and friends, he was profoundly appreciated and admired for his dedication, wisdom and his virtue. He was hard-working and methodical, with a clearly set routine to his days. He abhorred travel. In many ways, he embodied the Aristotelian mean, neither given to unbridled sensuality nor to ascetical excesses.[79] As regards his writing style, Josef Pieper points out:

[79]"Sensuality is good (so much so that Thomas calls 'unsensuality' not merely a defect, but a *vitium*, a moral deficiency); anger is good; sexuality is good"

> Thomas does not have that [Saint Augustine's] brilliance of style, that verbal grace, that musk; neither does he have that personal tone. … at bottom Thomas wishes to communicate something else entirely, and that alone; he wishes to make plain, not his own inner state, but his insight into a given subject.[80]

It seems logical that such a more purely reason- and method-driven personality, jointly with a focus on teaching rather than preaching, favored objectivity over subjectivity and was more drawn to formal institutions and well-established rules and less comfortable using "chance" as a criterion for ordering charity. Instead, Saint Thomas would be more drawn to as fully specified a set of criteria as possible.[81]

Contrary to Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas, having been surrounded his whole life with relative "virtue," may have been more personally inclined to prime it. Even his family's antics in trying to prevent him from entering the Dominican order, or their preference for the money and power that Saint Thomas' remaining in Monte Cassino may have brought them, were likely so common at the time as not to be considered "non-virtuous." Regardless, a family with the standing of Saint Thomas' would have been considered as highly useful to the common good. This experience may also have affected his priority for the "socially useful" in his ordering of charity.

Like Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas was an independent thinker and a systematic questioner in search of the truth. Contrary to Saint Augustine, however, he had a much deeper reverence for the knowledge of the leading philosophers of the time, regardless of religion. He respectfully quotes and uses Aristotle, Avicenna, Averroes, Dionysius and Maimonides, among others. He was a University Master, a part of

---

(Pieper, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas*, 122).

[80]Pieper, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas*, 109.

[81]Pieper stresses: "An outstanding trait of Saint Thomas' style is, it seems to me, its sobriety. … I mean the firm rejection and avoidance of everything that might conceal, obscure, or distort reality. I mean extreme receptivity to reality, unencumbered by any sort of subjectivity …" (Pieper, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas*, 115).

the "society of the elect" of the time by birth, and by education and by expertise one of the most respected philosophers of his time. As a 13th century Dominican Master, he could be seen as having lived in a Christian version of the small societies of "virtuous philosopher friends" espoused by Aristotle.

Therefore, given Saint Thomas' personality and experience, the idea that the common good would be delivered by a world of ever-widening circles of love among the diverse, infusing and surpassing formal institutions, must have been difficult to conceive. On the contrary, the striving of those in positions of authority to ascertain and enact the common good must have seemed feasible while favoring them as well as the virtuous in the order of charity must have appeared as desirable.

Conclusion

Both Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas include family as a criterion for the distribution of charity. The remaining criteria they use, however, differ. Saint Augustine relies on need and chance. Saint Thomas primes virtue, first principles and utility to the achievement of the common good. Their varying family and life experiences, geographical and historical contexts, intellectual education and philosophical affiliation and their personalities help explain these differences. At the same time, in the practice of their lives, the gap was arguably narrower than in their writings.

Landas 29:1 (2015) 87–104

CHRISTOLOGY IN THE SERVICE OF FAITH

Joaquin C. Yap, Jr., S.W.

The Ubiquity of Christology

"Christology" is everywhere. Whether in popular art, in media, in serious theological textbooks, or in ordinary life, one encounters an interpretation, a "take," a "speech concerning Christ" (which is what "Christology" means in its most basic sense). Anne Rice of vampire-novel fame, for example, has authored two surprisingly respectful, well-researched, and elegantly crafted books on Jesus: *Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt* (2005) and *Christ the Lord: The Road to Cana* (2008); a third, *Christ the Lord: The Kingdom of Heaven*, is reportedly in progress. As for popular films, Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) remains unforgettable, while *Son of God* was released in 2014.

During my academic sabbatical in the winter of 2013–2014, I visited Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford. Surely, if "Christology" is ubiquitous in today's culture, it should surprise no one that a church would publicize its own Christological understanding. Thus inside the cathedral I encountered colorful posters ostensibly serving a catechetical purpose. One such poster was headlined "Jesus the Christ." It read: "Christians also call him 'Christ', which means the same as 'Messiah' or 'one who is anointed by God', because they believe he is a human being whose life uniquely manifests the life, love, and being of God." The text continued:

> Although many followed him, others, including other religious leaders, saw him as a threat to their power and influence. He was put to death by crucifixion by the Roman Governor of Palestine, Pontius Pilate.
>
> After his death his closest followers experienced his continuing presence with them, convincing them that he was alive and empowering them to take his message out to the whole world.

These examples illustrate how easily and frequently one is confronted with a "Christological" statement in one form or another. We watch a "Jesus film" and, whether or not we realize it, are actually viewing someone else's "take" on Jesus—a cinematographic interpretation. One reads the poster inside Oxford's Cathedral and is treated to another "take" on Christ—unfortunately a reductionist one. Innumerable books have been written about Jesus. "The reason is obvious," says Gerhard Lohfink; it is because "we can never finish with him, and every age must encounter him anew."[1] Lohfink says that while some of these books on Jesus are very good, others are "very bad" and the reason is that "they are far from understanding that the real 'historical Jesus' cannot be grasped independently of faith in him."[2]

Not only is Christology in great abundance and found everywhere, it is also offered with often astonishing variety. There are many kinds of Christologies. In no other theological field has there been so much written, and no wonder—whether one considers Jesus dispassionately from a "scientific" or historical perspective or as a believer and follower, whether writing a scripture commentary or a spiritual meditation, there is surely no vaster and more bewildering array of books than those that concern "the figure of Jesus in the New Testament … the Jesus of the Gospels … the real, 'historical' Jesus."[3]

---

[1]Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth: What He Wanted, Who He Was* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012), xi.

[2]Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth*, xi.

[3]Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger), *Jesus of Nazareth, Vol. 1: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (New York, etc.: Doubleday, 2007), xxi–xxii.

Widely disparate interpretations of the "Jesus of the Gospels" abound. Filipino SVD theologian Benigno Beltran observes that there

> are countless images of the Christ: the images of Jesus in the New Testament, those elaborated by the ecumenical councils of the Church, the Christ venerated in popular devotion, the Christ portrayed by theologians, the Christ depicted by artists, the Christ of the enthusiasts and the fundamentalists, the Christ of the revolutionaries, and many more.[4]

There are Christologies written from various perspectives and contexts: liberationist, feminist, bourgeois, political, ecological, and so forth. Teilhard de Chardin's "cosmic Christ" continues to appeal to certain readers. "At present," Gerhard Lohfink observes, "he must above all stand for the legitimation of universal tolerance, which is no longer interested in truth and therefore threatens to slide off into arbitrariness."[5] All such attempts to interpret the mystery of Jesus Christ arise from the sociological or theological fashion current at the time that makes the interpretation noteworthy, popular, even plausible.

But beyond mere trendiness, a few ways of doing Christology have stood the test of time. Classical Christology—that which was for the most part practiced by the Fathers and Doctors of the Church—has been called a "Christology from above." Also called a "descending Christology," its starting point is the Triune God, and the eternal Son's "descent" as it were into our history and our world. A good scriptural verse to describe this approach is John 1:14: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." This approach is often a "high" Christology due to its robust account of Christ's divinity, although with a "high Christology" there is no assurance that equal weight will be given to Christ's full humanity. St. Clement of Alexandria, for example, of that catechetical "school" in Upper Egypt which championed this approach—with its starting point in the Logos who became incarnate in Jesus Christ—thought that Jesus simply went through the motions of

---

[4]Benigno P. Beltran, *The Christology of the Inarticulate: An Inquiry into the Filipino Understanding of Jesus the Christ* (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1987), 3.

[5]Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 16.

eating and drinking since he had no real need for physical nourishment (*Stromateis* 6.9).[6] Another famous Alexandrian, St. Athanasius, argued in his *De Incarnatione*: "How could He fall sick, Who had healed others? Or how could that body weaken and fail by means of which others are made strong?" (§ 21). Thus is the danger of a "high Christology" slipping inadvertently into almost docetic affirmations.[7]

Doing "Christology from above" is a perfectly legitimate approach and has been done with masterful and edifying result by St. Thomas Aquinas, Karl Barth, and Karl Rahner, among others. This approach, although having a "high" regard for Christ's full divinity, must of necessity "descend" and give a full account of his humanity in the Incarnation. Only then can it do full justice to Chalcedon's teaching of two *complete* natures in one person (who is himself divine). James Martin wrote:

> If we lose sight of either perspective, we risk turning Jesus into either God pretending to be a man, or a man pretending to be God. To fully meet Jesus Christ, the believer needs both to understand the Jesus of history, the man who walked the earth, and to encounter the Christ of faith, the one who rose from the dead.[8]

O'Collins expresses the dilemma this way:

> The figure in the manger may cry like any baby. He may grow up seemingly just another boy playing on the streets of Nazareth. He may preach in the style of a wandering rabbi. The Roman forces of occupation can put him to death by that hideous combination of impalement and display which they called crucifixion. But all the same we know he is really God and this injects an element of make-believe

---

[6]Cited by Gerald O'Collins, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 18.

[7]Beltran notes the Filipino believer's propensity to regard Jesus as mainly or almost entirely divine. He writes: "In the face of the survey findings about strong docetic tendencies in the people's understanding of Christ, Christology in the Philippines must clarify the implications of Jesus' having taken the fullness of our *karupukan* [frailty, weakness] except sin" (cf. *Christology of the Inarticulate*, 231).

[8]James Martin, "That He May Be One," *America* (February 17, 2014): 12.

> into the whole life-story from Bethlehem on. He looks like a man, speaks like a man, suffers and dies like a man. But underneath he is divine, and this makes his genuine humanity suspect. Is he no more than God in disguise?[9]

Thomas Rausch argues that this mentality is fairly common among our contemporaries. "They find it hard to believe that he had to face real temptations, that he had to struggle to integrate his sexuality, discern God's will for himself, and discover his own vocation."[10] This is because they are accustomed to think of Jesus primarily from the standpoint of his divinity. The result is a kind of "practical Monophysitism" in which they might not necessarily avow belief in Christ having only one nature, that is, simply divine, but in their relationship with him that is what it amounts to.[11]

Thus, the classical approach is today increasingly overshadowed by one that emphasizes Christ's humanity. It is argued that modern people have a greater difficulty accepting that Jesus was fully human.[12] Christology "from above" has been steadily replaced by that which begins from the other pole, "from below" (which might also be called an "ascending Christology"). As these labels suggest, the starting point is the human story of Jesus of Nazareth: his life, ministry, teachings, his last days, and his death. Christologies "from below" are concerned with examining Jesus in the midst of his people; "context" is important, as well as the historical background of Israel in the Old Testament. If a Christology "from above" gives priority to John's gospel, with its "high" Christological presentation of Jesus, then a Christology "from below" privileges the synoptic gospels. This stems

---

[9]Gerald O'Collins, *What Are They Saying About Jesus?* (New York/Ramsey: Paulist, 1983), 6.

[10]Thomas P. Rausch, *Who is Jesus? An Introduction to Christology* (Collegeville: Liturgical/Michael Glazier, 2003), 5.

[11]Rausch, *Who is Jesus?*, 5.

[12]Albeit James Martin, a keen observer of the contemporary scene, would argue that if Jesus' humanity is a problem for people today, "his divinity is even more so" (cf. his *Jesus: A Pilgrimage* [New York: HarperCollins, 2014], 462).

from the reasonable assumption that the synoptic gospels, being older in composition than the gospel of John, are less "touched up" by the evangelist's interpretation.

The crucial thing to note is that there is no ideal or perfect approach. "The approach from below is not without its limitations. […] The danger is particularly great that the ideal humanity [which one purports to see in Jesus] would be determined by philosophical prejudices."[13] A Christology "from below" must face squarely the challenge of showing how such a very human life (Jesus of Nazareth) could in fact *be* the eternal Son of God. Attention to the full humanity of Jesus must be counterweighted by a necessary affirmation of his full divinity. Chalcedon may not be bypassed. Contemporary theologians who write a Christology "from below" sometimes end up with a "low Christology." So, in fact, Gerald O'Collins insists that all these Christological approaches must complement each other: "In Christology we need both approaches, 'from above' and 'from below', just as the whole Church has been enduringly enriched by the schools of both Alexandria and Antioch."[14]

Ultimately, too, all of these "labels" are unhelpful. The descriptions "from above" or "from below" simply tell us the *starting point* of the Christological investigation. The labels do not tell us whether the Christology will actually "ascend" or "descend"; they do not indicate how successfully the investigation will go on in affirming, without ambiguity and without reserve, the full doctrine of Chalcedon.[15]

---

[13]Beltran, *Christology of the Inarticulate*, 215. In his endnotes, Beltran refers the reader to the International Theological Commission's *Select Questions in Christology*.

[14]O'Collins, *Christology*, 17.

[15]These labels also become judgmental evaluations, one theologian who favors one approach insinuating that the other approach is woefully deficient and not to be trusted. Thus Pope Benedict XVI, after writing the first volume of his *Jesus of Nazareth*, reports receiving this feedback: "A Catholic theologian has labeled my book, together with Romano Guardini's masterpiece, *The Lord*, as an example of 'Christology from above', not without issuing a warning about the dangers inherent in such an approach. The truth is that I have not attempted

What About *Filipino* Christology?

Beltran must surely be commended for his exploratory book, *The Christology of the Inarticulate: An Inquiry into the Filipino Understanding of Jesus the Christ*. Although dated by now (it was published almost 30 years ago), Beltran's study still holds much validity today and his use of sociological survey tools grounds his assertions.

Should Filipino Christology be descending or ascending? The increasing influence of the *Iglesia ni Kristo* and of other sects such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and the Jehovah's Witnesses makes a strong case for an approach "from above," if only to affirm from the outset Jesus' full divinity. Beltran himself favors starting with Jesus' humanity given the Filipino's tendency to embrace a docetic view of Christ.

> The weightier argument, however, against the use of the descending approach is that it begins with the idea of God and his relation to the world and then fits into it the teaching of Scripture. The classical point of departure presupposed a metaphysics and a systematic idea of God, the kind that Greek philosophy provided Christian theologians in the West. There is no such articulated philosophy in the Philippines.[16]

The great merit of Beltran's book is its piquant and earnest quest to do a quite different sort of "Christology from below," that is, from the vantage point of poor, simple, "almost illiterate" Filipino believers who scavenge for retrievable refuse amidst Manila's then-largest garbage dump.

> What happens when Filipino believers, with their quasi-animist, spiritualist worldview, are compelled to articulate their faith using concepts and categories from Western philosophy? […] The Church's teaching concerning the person and work of Jesus has been articulated in the clear, precise categories of dogmatic propositions and embodied

---

to write a Christology" (*Jesus of Nazareth, Vol. 2: Holy Week from the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, trans. Philip J. Whitmore [San Francisco: Ignatius, 2011], xv–xvi).

[16]Beltran, *Christology of the Inarticulate*, 216.

> in the Creeds. Catechetical instruction in the past were [*sic*] based on dogmatic pronouncements and credal propositions articulated within the horizon of Greek metaphysics. The main problem confronted [by Beltran in his book] is how Christological concepts and categories can be understood within Filipino patterns of thought and expressed in the various Filipino languages.[17]

Christology at the Mercy of the "Scholars"

Besides the question of Christological approach and starting point, there is the matter of whether one writes primarily as a "scientist" and "objective scholar" or as a believer seeking understanding (thus *fides quaerens intellectum*); whether one strives for timeless, ahistorical, metacultural affirmations or sees the Christological enterprise precisely as bridging the universality of faith in Jesus and the particularity of a local history and culture. Moreover, simple believers are often at the mercy of (almost entirely Western) theologians, scholars, and sometimes merely popular authors who write from their highly personal stance.Perhaps at this point it might be useful to give a brief overview of the modern trends in Christological research, often under the heading of various "quests" for the "historical Jesus."

Historians generally agree that the first modern "quest" was launched with the posthumous publication of Hermann Samuel Reimarus' "Fragments" in the late 18th century. It was a thoroughly skeptical and liberal piece of theological writing. Reimarus "declared that if we were to ask serious historical questions about Jesus, we would discover that Christianity was based on a mistake"; worse, "the whole thing was a tissue of lies."[18] Overall, the First Quest (which covered the rest of the 18th century through to the beginning of the 20th century) was a liberal quest, ruled by Enlightenment philosophical presuppositions. Most of its practitioners were hostile to orthodox

[17]Beltran, *Christology of the Inarticulate*, viii–ix.

[18]N. T. Wright, *Who Was Jesus?* (London: SPCK, 1992), 2.

Christian teaching and their work was often not as objective as they claimed. "Their attempt to read the Gospels through the lenses of the Enlightenment resulted in a reconstructed Jesus fashioned in their own image."[19] However, it would be unjust to write off the entirety of the First Quest. It was in this period that standard biblical constructs which we today take for granted took shape: the priority of Mark, the "Q" source, the distinction between the "Jesus of history" and the "Christ of faith," and so forth.

Somewhere between the First Quest and the Second Quest, and eluding both categories, we have the figures of Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Barth. Though working from vastly different theological perspectives, they commonly held to a discontinuity between the historical Jesus of the gospels and the Christ of faith. Bultmann especially maintained that knowledge of the historical Jesus was not really attainable and, in any case, was not really important.[20]

> It was as believer and theologian that Bultmann showed himself a radical reductionist, claiming that we neither can nor should found our Christian faith and theology on any supposedly "objective" basis in history—apart from one objectively historical event, the crucifixion. We need do no more than affirm the *dass* ["that-ness"], the mere fact that Jesus existed and was crucified, without enquiring about the *was* ["what"], what Jesus was in his own history.[21]

It was a former student of Bultmann, Ernst Käsemann, who challenged the view of his famous mentor. "Does the New Testament kerygma (proclamation) count the historical Jesus among the criteria of its own validity?" he asked. "We have to answer this question roundly in the affirmative."[22] Many scholars resonated with his intuition that

---

[19]Rausch, *Who is Jesus?*, 11.

[20]Rausch, *Who is Jesus?*, 14. "Beyond doubt, Bultmann proved himself to be the arch-minimalizer of the relevance of Jesus' human history for Christian faith" (Gerald O'Collins, *Interpreting Jesus* [London & New York: Mowbray, 1983], 37).

[21]O'Collins, *Christology*, 6.

[22]Ernst Käsemann, "Blind Alleys in the 'Jesus of History' Controversy," in *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 48, cited by

there must be a critical and radical continuity between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, without which the proclamation of the Good News would itself become meaningless and defenseless. Thus was the Second Quest launched in the mid-twentieth century. On the plus side, their practitioners were no longer over-burdened by the Enlightenment's rationalist principles and secular mindset. Rausch sums up their other achievements:

> Their efforts to interpret Jesus through the medium of his preaching meant taking much more seriously the Palestinian Jewish background of Jesus, and by implication, the Jewish religious tradition which shaped his own religious identity and imagination. They have refined the tools for the historical-critical study of texts and their research has expanded immeasurably our knowledge of the way the New Testament traditions developed. They also took seriously the meaning of the preaching of Jesus for his own time.[23]

On the debit side, they could not completely shake off some liberal presuppositions. "They too easily dismissed the miraculous as mythological, and had difficulty with the eschatological and the prophetic. In this sense, the New [Second] Quest was still very much a product of modernity."[24]

In the early part of the 1980s, some scholars began to speak of a "Third Quest" for the historical Jesus. If its predecessor relied upon and honed literary disciplines such as form criticism, redaction criticism, and tradition criticism, this Third Quest added to these tools the use of

---

Rausch, *Who Is Jesus?*, 14. Käsemann

> argued strongly that the "Christ" who is worshipped by the church must be firmly attached to the real Jesus who lived in Palestine in the first century, and who died on a cross. Without that attachment, the word "Jesus" becomes a mere cipher. We can pull and push it this way or that without any control. "Jesus" can be invoked to support all kinds of programmes. To prevent this, we need serious Jesus-research. (Wright, *Who Was Jesus?*, 8)

[23]Rausch, *Who is Jesus?*, 20.

[24]Rausch, *Who Is Jesus?*, 15.

properly historical methods and the social sciences.[25] Thus in the last 30 years we have learned a great deal more about the life of Jesus, the world he lived in, his preaching, imagination, purpose, and mission. There has been considerable interest in his "very words" (*ipsissima verba*). The latter has been taken somewhat to extremes by the Jesus Seminar, a group started in 1985 and composed of theologians and others. Their much-publicized method of voting on the authenticity of Jesus' words by means of colored beads (red to indicate the high likelihood that Jesus spoke the very words, pink to indicate good probability, grey to deny the *ipsissima verba* but affirming that they contain Jesus' ideas, and black to judge that neither the words nor the ideas ever came from him) has been derided. Lohfink, for example, writes: "Such drawing of boundaries [of authenticity], which is carried out among biblical scholars with an immense expenditure of intelligence and acuity, have a little whiff of silliness."[26]

There is much more at stake than "a little whiff of silliness." Take, for example, the group's attitude towards the resurrection of Christ, in the words of the Jesus Seminar's founder, Robert Funk. He had presented the proposition "The resurrection was an event in the life of Jesus" to his colleagues in the Seminar. In *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium* (San Francisco: Harper, 1996), Funk reports:

> My proposition was received with hilarity by several Fellows. One suggested that it was an oxymoron …. Others alleged that the formulation was meaningless, since we all assume, they said, that Jesus' life ended with his crucifixion and death. I was surprised by this response. I shouldn't have been. After all, John Dominic Crossan has confessed, "I do not think that anyone, anywhere, at any time brings dead people back to life." That's fairly blunt. But it squares with what we really know, as distinguished from what many want to believe. Sheehan is even blunter: "Jesus, regardless of where his corpse ended up, is dead and remains dead."[27]

---

[25]Rausch, *Who Is Jesus?*, 15.

[26]Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 23.

[27]Cited by Carl E. Braaten, "The Resurrection Debate Revisited," *Pro Ecclesia* 8:2 (Spring 1999): 147–158, in 147.

It seems to me that the participants of the Jesus Seminar have carried "objective" scholarly research to an arrogant extreme. Their irreverence in the face of what is supremely holy might be egregious. But one can cite many more examples of contemporary theologians who, writing from a predominantly historical-critical and supposedly "scientific" perspective, have jettisoned most of the traditional ways of understanding the God-man, Jesus of Nazareth. For Bultmann, the resurrection was "not an event of past history with a self-evident meaning" but rather "a mythical event pure and simple."[28] Wolfhart Pannenberg affirms the incarnation but denies the virginal conception of Jesus. John Hick, in *The Metaphor of God Incarnate* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993; 2nd ed. London: SCM Press, 2005), attributes belief in Jesus' divinity to an apotheosis promoted by the early Christians which reached its climax at the Council of Nicaea. "Incarnation" for Hick has occurred and is still occurring in many different ways and degrees, in many different persons. Thus Jesus differs from us not in kind but only in degree (e.g., of holiness and closeness to God). Sallie McFague calls Jesus "a parable of God" who, as "the key exemplar," demonstrated a new relationship with God. It is "illegitimate" to identify him with God, she writes; an incarnational understanding of Jesus would be a form of idolatry, namely, "Jesusolatry."[29]

These are examples of scholarly "reconstructions" of the historical Jesus which, as one theologian after another presented his or her own "version" of Christ, "became more and more incompatible with one another" and, as a result, the figure of Jesus "became increasingly obscured and blurred."[30]

---

[28]Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in Hans-Werner Bartsch, ed., *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, Vol. 1 (London: SPCK, 1964), cited by Rausch, *Who is Jesus?*, 118.

[29]Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 18, 44–54, 111, cited by Gerald O'Collins & Daniel Kendall, *The Bible for Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 170, n. 2.

[30]Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth* Vol. 1, xii.

> All these attempts have produced a common result: the impression that we have very little certain knowledge of Jesus and that only at a later stage did faith in his divinity shape the image we have of him. This impression has by now penetrated deeply into the minds of the Christian people at large. This is a dramatic situation for faith, because its point of reference is being placed in doubt: Intimate friendship with Jesus, on which everything depends, is in danger of clutching at thin air.[31]

Christology in the Service of Faith

When one surveys these "quests" for the "Jesus of history," one cannot help but notice how often the venture has been dogged by persistent philosophical presuppositions inherited from the Enlightenment: a deistic understanding of God, the rejection of miracles, history as a closed system into which the supernatural must not be allowed to intrude, etc. But historical criticism need not be hostile to Christian faith. If it recognizes its inherent limits, then it can accomplish its necessary and fundamental task of opening up new and better ways of understanding the Jesus of the gospels. It can be faith's ally, not its adversary.

Many practitioners of the various "quests" who aimed for scientific objectivity ended up with a "prejudice against prejudice," to borrow O'Collins' helpful phrase.[32] They have reversed St. Augustine's axiom, "believe in order to understand" (*crede ut intelligas*), and made it read, "if you believe (with the preunderstanding of a Christian), then you will not (really) understand." We must challenge this methodology of utmost "scientific objectivity" in the study of Jesus Christ. In the pure or natural sciences, we can concede that the object being studied permits of a method that is completely objective and dispassionate. However, even in this case, the data that is gathered still needs to be interpreted, as there can be no "pure facts" which are *in themselves*

[31]Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth* Vol. 1, xii.

[32]O'Collins, *Christology*, 215.

meaningful; they only become meaningful *when interpreted*. To compound the problem, this purely objective method may not be used without any modification whatsoever for the "social sciences." Here one deals with human persons who cannot be "scientifically studied" without consideration of relationality, intersubjectivity, freedom, and the like. Human beings are not mere "problems"; they are "mysteries." How much more when one "studies" God and deals with the phenomenon of Jesus Christ? O'Collins puts it neatly: "If we cannot imagine and describe what it would be like to be God, we cannot imagine and describe what it would be like to be God and man."[33]

> When studying the earthly Jesus, some scholars still limit themselves to applying typically "scientific" methods modelled on the modern natural sciences or at least on their understanding of them. They take up particular gospel sayings or events and analyse them in an "objective" fashion, wrenching them apart from the living world of Jesus and his followers and reducing them to their smallest elements. They isolate and take apart these sayings and events, as if such separation and reduction were *the* way to know and understand Jesus. All of this insinuates an attempt to dominate him as if he were simply a problem "back there". They forget that really knowing another person in depth always demands our participation in and relationship to another personal mystery.[34]

It follows that theologians who take seriously their craft as being both scientific and historical must, at the same time, remind themselves that there are definite limits to that method of inquiry. They need to be braced with a necessary and healthy "prejudice against prejudice against prejudice," so to speak. "But when biblical critics measure Jesus only by their own prior understanding, deciding ahead of time what is 'historically possible' and what is 'historically impossible,' they exceed their own limitations."[35] More bluntly, Lohfink describes all scholarly interpretations which "tone down" the biblical texts—"because we moderns, in our skeptical resignation, no longer

[33]O'Collins, *Christology*, 234.

[34]O'Collins, *Christology*, 49–50.

[35]Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth*, xi.

consider it possible for communities to take the gospel seriously"—as a "miserable hermeneutic."[36]

In the second volume of what became his *Jesus of Nazareth* trilogy, Pope Benedict XVI wrote: "It strikes me as both presumptuous and naïve to seek to shed light on Jesus' consciousness and to try to explain it in terms of what he could or could not have thought, given our knowledge of the period and its theological outlook."[37] We could expand his comment about theological presumption and naiveté to describe all attempts to "grasp" Jesus Christ as if he were an object that can be handled, weighed, measured, and analyzed.

Perhaps it is not even necessary to call such scholars' honesty or competence into question. We can simply remind ourselves that any writer is a product of his or her particular history and worldview; one looks at the world and studies texts with eyeglasses tinted by personal and historical circumstances. O'Collins recalls an apt observation of Albert Schweitzer; this great figure of the First Quest wrote in *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*: "it was not only each epoch that found its reflection in Jesus; each individual created Him in accordance with his own character."[38] Eisegesis is just as easy to fall into, and just as unacceptable, in systematic theology as it is in biblical interpretation.

---

[36]Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community: The Social Dimension of Christian Faith*, trans. John P. Galvin (London: SPCK, 1985), 162 (italicized in original).

[37]Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth* Vol. 2, 136–137.

[38]Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 2nd ed. (London: A. & C. Black, 1936), 4, cited by O'Collins, *Christology*, 221. Even Thomas Aquinas could have looked upon Jesus with "Dominican-tinted glasses"; for Aquinas, "Christ handed on the fruits of his contemplation ('contemplata tradere': [*Summa theologiae*] 40. 1 *ad* 2; 40. 3 *ad* 3), by acting as a preacher of 'the Word of God' (40. 3 *resp.*; 41. 3 *ad* 1) and combining the contemplative and active life (40. 1 *ad* 2 and 3)" (O'Collins, *Christology*, 205). And perhaps

> Küng presses anachronistic language into service and finishes up with a Jesus whose conflicts with Jewish leaders—dare one say it?—prefigure the author's battles with Church authorities. *On Being a Christian* repeatedly speaks of the "Jewish hierarchy" whose zeal for

The rationalism of the Enlightenment embraced a deistic outlook which ruled out God's intervention in the world—if there even was a God. If a scholar denies *a priori* the miraculous, then of course Jesus is only human and all the supernaturalist claims of Christians regarding him are later accretions and exaggerations. But if instead the scholar "posits that the biblical God exists, acts in the world, and does so through human beings … then [he or she] can at least accept Jesus' claim *as a claim* and not attempt to use historical criticism to weaken it or eliminate it entirely."[39] C. S. Lewis wrote that the "central miracle asserted by Christians is the Incarnation. […] Every other miracle prepares for this, or exhibits this, or results from this."[40] It is easy to follow the logic: If a theologian chucks the traditional understanding of the Incarnation (i.e., that God the Son assumed a human nature and was born a human being while remaining God), then all that is supernatural and miraculous in the gospels, including the Resurrection, becomes suspect. The stories are "demythologized" or explained away. But, accept that God the Son truly became a human being—and why can't God do that?—and all other doubts about the miraculous fade away.

What we need today is a new alliance between historical criticism and (what Benedict XVI calls) a faith-hermeneutic. A "properly developed faith-hermeneutic is appropriate to the text and can be combined with a historical hermeneutic, aware of its limits, so as to form a methodological whole."[41] Let us be very clear, the pope emeritus writes: the historical-critical method "is and remains an indispensable dimension of exegetical work. For it is of the very essence of biblical

---

the "prevailing dogmas" and "infallible propositions" brings Jesus down. (O'Collins, *What Are They Saying?*, 25)

[39]Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 346.

[40]C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (Glasgow: Collins/Fount Paperbacks, 1984), 112.

[41]Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth* Vol. 2, xv.

faith to be about real historical events.'"[42] Not only does responsible historical research illuminate the world in which Jesus lived, even more importantly "it works out the relationships among the sources of the gospels, illuminates the various layers of tradition, and thus sharpens our perception of what the evangelists wanted to say about Jesus in their 'final text.'"[43] This tells us that form criticism, redaction criticism, and all the other criticisms, when carried out with the right spirit—that is to say, with a non-hostile attitude of *rapprochement*—can truly aid the believer and the Church as a whole to understand, encounter, and adore the Jesus of the gospels.[44] Is it too much to propose its role today as that used to describe classical philosophy's role vis-à-vis theology: as handmaid to theology?

To sum up: If it is hard enough to know a human person, how much harder it must be to know a divine person, one who lived on earth 2,000 years ago, whose extant "biographical" material are just as old and do not add up to form a complete biography in the modern sense of the word. This is precisely where the "tools" come in: handy, serviceable ones which equip the theologian *working as a believer and never simply as a "scientist"* to formulate "speech about Christ" (Christology) that is

[42]Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth* Vol. 1, xv. "Historical criticism inquires persistently about what happened, and thus it demonstrates that Christianity is about real history and not about myths or ideologies" (Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth*, xi).

[43]Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth*, xi.

[44]C. S. Lewis wrote humorously, ironically, and perhaps sardonically about the "unhistorical 'historical Jesus'" reconstructions of the historians in *The Screwtape Letters*. In Letter XXIII, Screwtape the senior devil writes:

> Our third aim is, by these constructions, to destroy the devotional life. For the real presence of the Enemy, otherwise experienced by men in prayer and sacrament, we substitute a merely probable, remote, shadowy, and uncouth figure, one who spoke a strange language and died a long time ago. Such an object cannot in fact be worshipped. (cf. C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* [London: Geoffrey Bles/Centenary, 1943], 118)

responsible, defensible, and, to use Walter Kasper's term, accountable.[45] Benedict XVI took pains to delineate his own hermeneutical method in producing, not a Christology as he himself says, but something closer to Aquinas' achievement: a theological reflection on the mysteries of Christ. Such an enterprise can be done with scholarly integrity only with the help of historical-critical tools, but must always transcend the inherent limitations of these tools. It can only be done with a faith-hermeneutic, a canonical hermeneutic,[46] a Christological hermeneutic.[47]

[45]Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 3.

[46]"'Canonical exegesis'—reading the individual texts of the Bible in the context of the whole—is an essential dimension of exegesis. It does not contradict historical-critical interpretation, but carries it forward in an organic way toward becoming theology in the proper sense" (Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth* Vol. 1, xix).

[47]"This Christological hermeneutic, which sees Jesus Christ as the key to the whole and learns from him how to understand the Bible as a unity, presupposes a prior act of faith. It cannot be the conclusion of a purely historical method. But this act of faith is based upon reason—historical reason—and so makes it possible to see the internal unity of Scripture" (Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth* Vol. 1, xix).

Landas 29:1 (2015) 105–123

MARY IN POPE FRANCIS' GOSPEL OF MERCY AND JOY

Norlan H. Julia, S.J.

One of the first few books that came out soon after the election of Pope Francis was a biography authored by Paul Vallely. It bears the curious title *Pope Francis: Untying the Knots*.[1] Upon reading the book's preface, one realizes that the phrase "untying the knots" refers to the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title "Mary, Untier of Knots." One immediately gets a sense that the Blessed Mother plays a significant role in the life and ministry of Pope Francis. Vallely tells of how then Jorge Bergoglio, who stayed in Germany for a few months to work on a doctoral project which he was not able to pursue, returned to Argentina with a postcard bearing the image of Mary, Untier of Knots.[2] Vallely then uses the metaphor of untying knots to illustrate how Bergoglio tried to confront the knots in his life and how

[1]Paul Vallely, *Pope Francis: Untying the Knots* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

[2]For a brief history of the painting of *Mary*, *Untier of Knots*, see Vallely, *Pope Francis*, 58–59. See also https://www.osv.com/OSVNewsweekly/ByIssue/Article/Tabld/735/ ArtMID/13636/ArticleID/6201/Mary-Undoer-of-Knots-Old-devotion-revivedpopularity.aspx#sthash.ChLQCXxw.dpuf (accessed March 5, 2015).

he embarked on a journey of untying them, a process which brought him to the papal loggia on that night of March 13, 2013.[3]

Pope Francis' devotion to the Blessed Mother was manifested right on Day 1 of his papacy. On that first morning as Pope, he visited the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, one of the oldest basilicas in Rome. He would frequent this basilica dedicated to Our Lady especially on the eve of and upon his return from his overseas trips. Is it simply a matter of following the papal tradition of visiting Santa Maria Maggiore and invoking the intercession and protection of Our Lady that he drops by the basilica? Or does it spring from an intimate relationship with Our Lady and a deep understanding of her role in the life of the Church and in his ministry as bishop of Rome and pastor of the universal Church? Who is Mary for Pope Francis? This is the question which this essay seeks to answer. It springs from the conviction that Pope Francis' acts of reverence towards the Blessed Mother in his many visits to Santa Maria Maggiore and to Marian shrines during his overseas trips are no mere pious shows of devotion. Instead, these are the expressions of a deeply held interior knowledge of the role of Mary in his life as a person, a Jesuit who has had to untie many knots in his life, a bishop-cardinal whose ministry was shaped in the slums of Buenos Aires, and a pastor whose vision of the Church is a poor Church, a missionary Church, a Church of mercy that proclaims the joyful Good News of God's mercy and compassion.

Interpreting Pope Francis' mind on Mary could prove to be a difficult task since he is not a systematic theologian who has written a significant body of literature which one could consult for this purpose. Keith Lemna and David Delaney propose three starting points towards understanding the mind of Pope Francis: the Argentinian liberation theology particularly expressed in the theology of the people (*teologia del pueblo*), the 2007 Aparecida Document which was produced by a committee chaired by him, and the writings of Luigi Giovanni Giussani, the founder of the ecclesial movement *Communion and Liberation*.[4]

---

[3]Vallely, *Pope Francis*, xi–xii, 58–59.

[4]Keith Lemna & David Delaney, "Three Pathways into the Theological Mind of Pope Francis," *Nova et Vetera* 12:1 (2014): 25–56.

However, the fact that Pope Francis sees himself primarily as a pastor who seeks to evoke in his flock the zeal and enthusiasm for mission means that he has to communicate in plain and simple language, one that is not given to theological sophistry, but without being in any way simplistic. Hence, in order to understand the Mariology of Pope Francis, one simply has to grasp his view of himself before God, of who Jorge Bergoglio is, and then his understanding of the Church, its nature and mission in today's world, and finally, of popular religiosity, which is the expression of the faith of poor people. These are the necessary backgrounds against which Pope Francis' understanding of Mary should be placed. Otherwise, one could fall precisely into the dangers and errors against which Vatican II warns the faithful: that Marian devotion degenerates into sterile or transitory affection, or to a certain vain credulity. Instead, the Council asserts that true devotion "proceeds from true faith, by which we are led to know the excellence of the Mother of God, and we are moved to a filial love toward our mother and to the imitation of her virtues."[5]

Pope Francis: Who He Is, Who the Church Is

A Sinner Standing Before a Merciful God

"I am a sinner. This is the most accurate definition. It is not a figure of speech, a literary genre. I am a sinner." In August 2013, Pope Francis granted the request for an interview by his fellow Jesuit Antonio Spadaro, who came on behalf of *La Civiltà Cattolica*, *America*, and several other major Jesuit journals around the world. Spadaro was not sure whether he could ask the question. But he did. "Who is Jorge Mario Bergoglio?" And to this question came the answer: "I am a sinner … I am a sinner whom the Lord has looked upon." Hence, his episcopal motto: *Miserando atque Eligendo*. Francis went on to explain that this motto came from the homilies of Venerable Bede whose reflection on the Call of Matthew (Mt. 9:9–13) touched him deeply: "Jesus saw a

[5]*Lumen Gentium* 67. See Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-conciliar Documents* Vol. 1 (New York: Costello, 1974), 422.

publican, and since he looked at him with feelings of love and chose him, he said to him, 'Follow me.'"[6] He then refers to Caravaggio's painting, *The Call of Matthew*, which he visits and contemplates every time he is in Rome because it has made a deep and lasting impression on him and has helped him articulate his self-understanding: "I am a sinner, but I trust in the infinite mercy and patience of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I accept in a spirit of penance."[7]

Pope Francis' self-accusation is not a generalized acceptance of the existential fallibility of the human being. Instead, it is rooted in his concrete experiences of mistakes committed in the course of his life especially in performing the daily tasks of his office. These are, for Paul Vallely, the knots which Francis would have to undo in the years following the completion of his years of service as superior of the Jesuits in Argentina. In the interview with Spadaro, he admits thus:

> In my experience as superior in the Society, to be honest, I have not always behaved in that way—that is, I did not always do the necessary consultation. And this was not a good thing. My style of government as a Jesuit at the beginning had many faults. That was a difficult time for the Society: an entire generation of Jesuits had disappeared. Because of this I found myself Provincial when I was still very young. I was only 36 years old. That was crazy. I had to deal with difficult situations, and I made my decisions abruptly and by myself …. My authoritarian and quick manner of making decisions led me to have serious problems and to be accused of being ultraconservative.[8]

In Pope Francis, this deep and realistic sense of his being a sinner is matched by an even deeper sense of God's mercy and compassion on him as a sinner. This is who God is for him: a God of mercy. In

---

[6]See https://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/library_article/252/Matthew_the_Tax_Collector_Venerable_Bede.html/ (accessed March 5, 2015).

[7]Antonio Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God" (interview with Pope Francis), *America* (Sept. 30, 2013): http://www.americamagazine.org/pope-interview (accessed March 3, 2015).

[8]Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God." On Bergoglio's years as Provincial during Argentina's tumultuous years, see Vallely, *Pope Francis*, 39–58.

his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis invites the faithful to approach this God of mercy:

> God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy. Christ, who told us to forgive one another "seventy times seven" (Mt. 18:22) has given us his example: he has forgiven us seventy times seven. Time and time again he bears us on his shoulders. No one can strip us of the dignity bestowed upon us by this boundless and unfailing love. With a tenderness which never disappoints, but is always capable of restoring our joy, he makes it possible for us to lift up our heads and to start anew.[9]

Pope Francis insists, however, that God's mercy is not an abstract concept or an otherworldly reality. It is as concrete as to have a face, a body, in Jesus Christ who is God's mercy in person. He reiterates the point made by his predecessor, Benedict XVI, that Jesus Christ is what Christianity is all about. "Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction."[10] Pope Francis points to Thomas, Peter, and the two disciples at Emmaus who were privileged to have a singular experience of the mercy of God in Jesus. These disciples, although beset by doubts and despair at the seeming hopelessness of their predicament, were strengthened unto a new certitude and a new hope at the embrace of mercy which the Risen Christ has extended to them. Jesus did not abandon them. Instead, he patiently restored them back to faith and confidence in him. Pope Francis urges Christians to remember that "God always waits for us, even when we have left him behind. He is never far from us, and if we return to him, he is ready to embrace us."[11]

---

[9]*Evangelii Gaudium* 3 (http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html#_ftn3 [accessed March 3, 2015]).

[10]Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* 1 (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 98 [2006]: 217).

[11]Pope Francis, *The Church of Mercy*, ed. Giuliano Vigini (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2014), 1–3.

A Merciful Church on Mission to the Poor

Just as Francis knows a God of mercy, so too does he profess and dream of a Church of mercy. For him, the primary mission of the Church is to show mercy. He believes that the Church as a faith community "has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruit of its own experience of the power of the Father's infinite mercy."[12] Mercy is at the center of the Church's nature and mission. When Francis asserts that the Church's missionary mandate impels it to "go forth" constantly, to take the first step always, and to bear fruit and rejoice abundantly, he sees these movements always in relation to mercy. The Church goes forth to the peripheries to show mercy; the Church takes the first step to show mercy especially to sinners; the Church bears fruit and rejoices in every sinner it has welcomed back to the fold. Hence, Francis reminds priests "that the confessional must not be a torture chamber but rather an encounter with the Lord's mercy which spurs us on to do our best."[13] Priests, he says, should remember that "the Good Shepherd enters through the door, and the doors of mercy are the wounds of the Lord: if you do not enter into your ministry through the Lord's wounds, you will not be good shepherds."[14] This conviction regarding the centrality of mercy in the mission of the Church is behind Pope Francis' decision to declare a Jubilee Year of Mercy which begins on December 8, 2015 and culminates on November 20, 2016.

Mission and mercy are inseparable in the mind and ministry of Pope Francis. Lemna and Delaney hold that the Church's missionary mandate is the foremost concern of the Pope.

> Pope Francis is moved in his thinking by the desire to kindle the fire of new evangelization and that all of the pathways into his thought

[12] *Evangelii Gaudium* 24.

[13] *Evangelii Gaudium* 44.

[14] From Pope Francis' Homily at the Presbyteral Ordinations (May 24, 2014), http://w2.vatican.va/content/ francesco/en/homilies/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140511_omelia-ordinazioni-presbiterali.pdf (accessed March 4, 2015).

> that we will have explored coalesce around his desire for the Church to become more fully missionary, and his recognition that mission should proceed by awakening the religious heart of man with the attraction of the Cross of Christ humbly made present to the world through the personal witness of the Church.[15]

For Pope Francis, the Church's mission of mercy flows from her own experience of the mercy of God who goes out of His way in search of the lost. Jesus Christ hanging on the cross is God's proof of God's merciful love for sinners. As St. Paul tells the Romans, "God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). The Church witnesses to God's merciful love for her by being merciful herself.

In emphasizing the Church's mission of mercy, Pope Francis likens the Church to a "mother with an open heart." In *Evangelii Gaudium*, he repeatedly describes the Church as the Father's house, the doors of which are wide open. This is a clear echo of Aparecida's declaration:

> We are called to be a Church with open arms, who knows how to welcome and value each one of her members. Therefore, we encourage the efforts made in the parishes to become "home and school of communion," animating and forming small communities and basic church communities, as well as in the lay associations, ecclesial movements and new communities.[16]

The Church must be ready to welcome her prodigal sons and daughters who, moved by the Spirit, wish to return to her embrace. As a mother, the Church is not only ready to welcome her children—she is also ever ready to feed them with the sacraments, especially the Eucharist which, for Pope Francis, "is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful

---

[15]Lemna & Delaney, "Three Pathways," 28.

[16]*Evangelii Gaudium* 46–47. See "Message of the 5th General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Carribean," *Concluding Document of the General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Carribean* (Aparecida, Brazil: CELAM, 2007), 16 (http://www.aecrc.org/documents/Aparecida-Concluding%20Document.pdf [accessed March 17, 2015], hereafter cited as *Aparecida Document*, the more popular name of the document).

medicine and nourishment for the weak."[17] As a mother, the Church has special care and concern for the least in society, for the poor who are the privileged recipients of the Gospel.[18] Francis holds that "there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor."[19] Speaking before representatives of popular movements around the world, he reminded them "that love for the poor is at the centre of the Gospel."[20] On his apostolic visit to the Philippines, he underlined this point by saying: "Our treatment of the poor is the criterion on which each of us will be judged" (cf. Mt. 25:40, 45).[21]

A Poor Church is a Church of the Poor

Placing the poor at the center of the Gospel and of the Church's evangelizing mission, Pope Francis expresses his desire to see "a Church which is poor and for the poor."[22] A Church which is poor lives according to the values of the beatitudes, placing its full trust in divine providence as poor people do. Furthermore, it means living as the poor do, in simplicity and poverty. Pope Francis reminded the Filipino priests and religious that "only by becoming poor ourselves, by stripping away our complacency, will we be able to identify with

[17]*Evangelii Gaudium* 47.

[18]Benedict XVI, Address to the Brazilian Bishops in the Cathedral of São Paulo, Brazil (May 11, 2007), 3 (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 99 [2007]: 428).

[19]*Evangelii Gaudium* 48.

[20]Pope Francis' Speech during the World Meeting of Popular Movements (October 28, 2014), http://w2. vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/october/documents/papafrancesco_20141028_incontro-mondiale-movimenti-popolari.html (accessed March 4, 2014).

[21]From Pope Francis' Prepared Speech (but undelivered due to unexpected circumstances) in Tacloban Cathedral, Philippines, http://www.rappler.com/specials/pope-francis-ph/81142-full-text-pope-francis-undelivered-speech-palo-cathedral (accessed March 4, 2015).

[22]*Evangelii Gaudium* 198.

the least of our brothers and sisters."[23] For him, a materialistic lifestyle hampers the credibility of the evangelizer's witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ who became poor for our sake. Instead, a Church which lives simply is one where the poor will feel at home. It is a Church which recognizes the poor's capacity to be active and effective evangelizers instead of making them passive recipients of the Church's evangelizing mission. For Pope Francis,

> the new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the centre of the Church's pilgrim way. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.[24]

Pope Francis' emphasis on the intrinsic relationship between the poor and the mission of the Church is rooted in the *teologia del pueblo* which shapes the mind of the Pope. Lemna and Delaney note that the Argentinian liberation theology expressed in the *teologia del pueblo* integrates preferential option for the poor with the greater tradition of the Church. "Argentinian liberation theology sees the poor within the heart of the People of God, in the light of an ecclesiology of communion where all have a share in the Church."[25] Situated at the heart of the Church's identity and mission, "the poor question the core of the Church's action, ministry, and attitudes. Everything having to do with Christ has to do with the poor, and everything connected to the poor cries out to Jesus Christ: 'whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me' (Mt. 25:40)."[26]

---

[23]From Pope Francis' Homily at Manila Cathedral (January 16, 2015), http://www.rappler.com/specials/pope-francis-ph/81004-full-text-pope-francis-homily-manila-cathedral (accessed March 4, 2015).

[24]*Evangelii Gaudium* 198.

[25]Lemna & Delaney, "Three Pathways," 33.

[26]*Aparecida Document* 393, p. 124.

The Church's special love for the poor consists not only in responding to their material needs but, more importantly, to their spiritual needs as well. For Pope Francis, "the worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care …. Our preferential option for the poor must mainly translate into a privileged and preferential religious care."[27] He calls attention to the poor's special openness to the faith and their need for God and for the sacraments in which they experience God's friendship, blessing, and guidance. In the sacraments and other sacramentals, the poor celebrate their faith and draw strength in their pilgrimage of faith. For this reason, Pope Francis recognizes the evangelizing power of popular piety. He echoes Paul VI who recognized in popular piety "a thirst for God which only the poor and simple can know"[28] and the Aparecida Document which looks on popular piety as "a spirituality incarnated in the culture of the lowly."[29] For him, pastors must approach these popular expressions of the faith of the simple people with the heart's gaze of the Good Shepherd which seeks to love rather than to judge. "Only from the affective connaturality born of love can we appreciate the theological life present in the piety of Christian peoples, especially among their poor."[30] Pope Francis' conviction as regards popular piety and the poor is rooted in his pastoral experience among the simple people of Argentina. Francisco de Roux, Colombia's Jesuit provincial, says of him: "He is a man of popular piety. He captures the experience of God in the simplicity of popular practices, processions, shrines, the Christmas novena, the family saying the rosary. To him, the strength of Catholicism is in the way simple people live their faith."[31]

---

[27]*Evangelii Gaudium* 200.

[28]*Evangelii Gaudium* 123. Cf. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 48 (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 68 [1976]: 38).

[29]*Evangelii Gaudium* 124. Cf. *Aparecida Document* 263, p. 89.

[30]*Evangelii Gaudium* 125.

[31]Vallely, *Pope Francis*, 35.

Pope Francis: Who Mary Is

Having discussed succinctly Pope Francis' understanding of himself as a sinner who has been chosen by God out of his great mercy, and his view of the Church as a Church of mercy tasked with a mission of mercy directed especially towards the poor in the peripheries, we are now ready to attempt an answer to the question, "Who is Mary for Pope Francis?" As we have said, God's passionate concern for sinners like Pope Francis and the similar vocation of the Church to care for the poor serve as the framework against which the Pope's view of Mary may be understood. We made specific mention of popular piety as an expression of the poor's faith not only because Pope Francis sees it as a powerful tool for evangelization but because for him, it is a mirror through which one sees into the searching soul of the poor, a door through which they reach out to this God of mercy and compassion. It is also through popular piety that Pope Francis' Mary is best located, known, and understood.

Mary, Mother to Her Sons and Daughters

For Pope Francis, Mary is a mother more than anything else. Mary's words to St. Juan Diego at Tepeyac Hill speak to him powerfully: "Let your heart not be troubled …. Am I not here, who am your Mother?" She is a mother to her children who have recourse to her in all their needs, sufferings, pains, and afflictions. In San José del Talar in Agronomía, a middle class suburb of Argentina where the image of Mary, Untier of Knots, is venerated, hundreds of people come on pilgrimage. Fr. Ricardo Aloe who is in charge of the shrine holds the conviction that Mary listens to the pleas of her children. "They all feel they are listened to and understood by the Virgin. As Mother, she is very attentive to our problems. The knots are metaphors of the difficulties we have. She appeals to God to help us with them."[32]

Just as God is a merciful and compassionate Father, so too is Mary, as the Mother of God, a merciful and compassionate mother.

[32]Vallely, *Pope Francis*, xii.

She is there, ready to come to the aid of her children. Addressed as "Mother" by her children, she is present with them in their most difficult and painful moments. Pope Francis empathically made this point in Tacloban, Philippines, when he preached to the survivors of super typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan). He spoke thus:

> We are like a little child in the moments when we have so much pain and no longer understand anything. All we can do is grab hold of her hand firmly and say "Mommy"—like a child does when it is afraid. It is perhaps the only words we can say in difficult times—"Mommy" …. Let us look to our Mother and, like a little child, let us hold onto her mantle and with a true heart say—"Mother" …. Know that the tenderness of Mary never lets you down. And holding onto her mantle and with the power that comes from Jesus' love on the cross, let us move forward and walk together as brothers and sisters in the Lord.[33]

For Pope Francis, Mary's motherhood towards her children shines forth from the foot of the Cross. As Vatican II says, Mary "persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross, where she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, enduring with her only begotten Son the intensity of his suffering, (and) associated herself with his sacrifice in her mother's heart."[34] Just as Jesus is the brother to all who are suffering and in pain, so is Mary the mother to all of them.

> She is the woman whose heart was pierced by a sword and who understands all our pain. As mother of all, she is a sign of hope for peoples suffering the birth pangs of justice …. As a true mother, she walks at our side, she shares our struggles and she constantly surrounds us with God's love.[35]

As a mother who extends a helping hand and a loving embrace to her suffering children, Mary also gathers them together. Like any other mother, it is her special joy to see her children gathered and

---

[33]From Pope Francis' Homily at the Mass in Tacloban (January 17, 2015), http://www.rappler.com/specials/pope-francis-ph/81106-full-text-pope-francis-homily-tacloban (accessed March 5, 2015).

[34]*Lumen Gentium* 58.

[35]*Evangelii Gaudium* 286.

united around her. For Pope Francis, this is the meaning and function of the Marian shrines. Her many titles, oftentimes related to specific shrines, are expressions of how she "shares the history of each people which has received the Gospel and she becomes a part of their historic identity."[36] Examples of these are the titles/shrines of Aparecida and Guadalupe in Latin America, Lourdes and Knock in Europe, EDSA and Madhu in Asia, and Ngomé and Kibeho in Africa. In these and other shrines all over the world, "Mary brings together her children who with great effort come as pilgrims to see her and to be seen by her. Here they find strength from God to bear the weariness and the suffering in their lives."[37] In Guadalupe, for example, the image of Mary became a point of unity which attracts people especially the poor to her. In Guadalupe, Mary took upon herself the cultural and religious symbolism of the indigenous peoples. In her message, she proclaimed her Son and she gave him to all these new peoples who were wounded by their mixed origin.[38]

Mary and the Church's Mission of Mercy

For Pope Francis, Mary is Jesus' gift to the Church, a gift given to the Church by Christ as he was about to die on the Cross. Mary is the expression of Christ's love for His Church whom he did not want to journey without a mother, hence the final word of Christ to his mother, "Woman, behold your Son" (Jn. 19:26–27). Pope Francis points out that this handing over of the gift of Mary happened at the moment "when Jesus endured in his own flesh the dramatic encounter of the sin of the world and God's mercy."[39] Hence, mercy is at the beginning

[36]*Evangelii Gaudium* 286.

[37]*Evangelii Gaudium* 286.

[38]From the Address of Pope Francis during the Meeting with the Bishops of Brazil (July 28, 2013), http://w2. vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130727_gmg-episcopato-brasile.html (accessed March 5, 2015).

[39]*Evangelii Gaudium* 285.

of the relationship between Mary and the Church. In the middle of this relationship stands Jesus himself, the face of the merciful and compassionate God. Pope Francis affirms the Church's understanding of the relationship between Christ, Mary, the Church, and the faithful: that each in his or her own way brings forth Christ.

> What is said in a universal sense of the virgin mother, the Church, is understood in an individual sense of the Virgin Mary …. In a way, every Christian is also believed to be a bride of God's word, a mother of Christ, his daughter and sister, at once virginal and fruitful …. Christ dwelt for nine months in the tabernacle of Mary's womb. He dwells until the end of the ages in the tabernacle of the Church's faith. He will dwell forever in the knowledge and love of each faithful soul.[40]

Christ's presence in every person which is no less real than his presence in Mary's womb and in the sacred species reserved in the tabernacles is the basis for the Church's ministry of mercy especially to the poor and the outcast, the sinner and the spurned. It is this profound awareness of Christ's presence in them that calls for the Marian "style" in the Church's work of evangelization which is founded on the firm belief "in the revolutionary nature of love and tenderness." Pope Francis holds that in Mary,

> we see that humility and tenderness are not virtues of the weak but of the strong who need not treat others poorly in order to feel important themselves. Contemplating Mary, we realize that she who praised God for "bringing down the mighty from their thrones" and "sending the rich away empty" (Lk. 1:52–53) is also the one who brings a homely warmth to our pursuit of justice.[41]

For him, when the Church is able to bring together harmoniously justice and tenderness, and contemplation and concern for others, then will the Church be a home for, and a mother to, multitudes of

---

[40] *Evangelii Gaudium* 285. Cf. Isaac of Stella, *Sermo* 51: PL 194, 1863, 1865.

[41] *Evangelii Gaudium* 288. The *Aparecida Document* affirms thus: "As in the human family, the Church-family is generated around a Mother, who confers 'soul' and tenderness on shared family life. Mary, Mother of the Church, and model and paradigm of humanity, is shaper of communion" (no. 268).

peoples. Hence, Mary models for the Church the quality of fruitful motherhood which the latter should aspire for.

Reflecting on the meaning of the circumstances surrounding the finding of the image of the Virgin of Aparecida, Pope Francis reminds the bishops of Brazil that "God's message was one of restoring what was broken, reuniting what had been divided. Walls, chasms, differences which still exist today are destined to disappear. The Church cannot neglect this lesson: she is called to be a means of reconciliation."[42] Here the Pope was referring to how the body of the statue appeared first, then the head. The head was then joined to the body in order to form the image. For him, the union of the head and the body signifies the restoration or the reunification of what was formerly broken. For example, Brazil had been divided by the shameful wall of slavery during the time of colonization. Our Lady of Aparecida, who appears with a black face, was first separated, and then united in the hands of the fishermen, symbolizes the unity of the one country.[43] The Church, then, like the Virgin Mary, must be a symbol of unity for divided, dispersed, and disoriented peoples.

In emphasizing the need for contemplation to balance the mission of extending mercy, Pope Francis points to the source of the vibrancy and zeal of the Church's mission: the divine allure born of the encounter with the Mystery. Again he draws some lessons from the fishermen of Aparecida who welcomed the image of the Virgin Mary. For him, their contemplative stance by which they made room for God's Mystery is the ideal missionary disposition because God's way is through beauty, through attraction. "He awakens in us a desire to keep him and his life in our homes, in our hearts. He reawakens in us a desire to call our neighbours in order to make known his beauty. Mission is born precisely from this divine allure, by this amazement born of encounter."[44] This encounter with the Mystery, in turn,

[42]Address of Pope Francis during the Meeting with the Bishops of Brazil.

[43]Address of Pope Francis during the Meeting with the Bishops of Brazil.

[44]Address of Pope Francis during the Meeting with the Bishops of Brazil.

convinces the missionary that mission must be done in utter simplicity. Here Pope Francis refers to the language used in the proclamation of the Good News, in relaying the message of the Mystery to others. He is of the opinion that for many times we could not draw people to God because they could not understand what we were saying to them. This happens, Pope Francis says, because we have forgotten the language of simplicity. We have imported an intellectualism alien to people we are trying to communicate with. "Without the grammar of simplicity, the Church loses the very conditions which make it possible 'to fish' for God in the deep waters of his Mystery."[45]

Mary, Model Disciple and Missionary

Mary is proclaimed "blessed" in the Scriptures, particularly in Luke's Gospel. Her cousin Elizabeth, upon seeing her, exclaims: "Blessed are you among women!" (Lk. 1:42); "Blessed is she who believed" (Lk. 1:45). Mary herself proclaims: "All generations will call me blessed!" (Lk. 1:48). In all these texts, Mary's blessedness is linked to her faith. "She is the perfect icon of faith," Pope Francis says.[46] That Mary is the perfect disciple or the perfect model of discipleship is not a new insight or teaching. The Scriptures have established this point quite clearly. As the Daughter of Zion, Mary symbolized the fulfillment of Israel's long history of faith which includes the many faithful women of the Old Testament. "In the fullness of time, God's word was spoken to Mary and she received that word into her heart, her entire being, so that in her womb it could take flesh and be born as light for humanity."[47] The early theologians of the Church have also affirmed Mary's faith. For instance, her title as Mary, Untier of Knots, is based on the insight of St. Ireneaus of Lyon (2nd century AD) on the

[45]Address of Pope Francis during the Meeting with the Bishops of Brazil.

[46]Pope Francis, *Lumen Fidei* no. 58 (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013), 89. Cf. *Aparecida Document* 266, p. 90.

[47]*Lumen Fidei* 58. Cf. John Paul II, who expounds on the Scripture texts which show Mary's faith in his encyclical, *Redemptoris Mater* 19–21 (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 79 [1987]: 383–389).

contrast between Eve and Mary. "And thus also it was that the knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve has bound fast through unbelief, this did the Virgin Mary set free through faith."[48] In *Lumen Gentium,* Vatican II highlights Mary's free and active cooperation in the work of salvation through faith and obedience. She is in no way a passive recipient or instrument in God's salvific plan.[49]

What does Pope Francis add to the Church's reflection on Mary's faith? Or perhaps, what aspect of her faith does he wish to emphasize? Reading *Lumen Fidei* and *Evangelii Gaudium* together, it would seem that the intimate link between faith and joy is what Pope Francis wants to underline. He cites St. Justin Martyr who says that Mary, upon receiving the angel's message, conceived "faith and joy." Pope Francis points out that the experience of Mary's faith bearing fruit in Jesus shows that "when our own spiritual lives bear fruit, we become filled with joy, which is the clearest sign of faith's grandeur."[50] Hence, his prayer to Mary includes the petition, "Sow in our faith the joy of the Risen One."[51] Pope Francis sees Mary letting herself be guided by the Holy Spirit in her journey of faith towards service and fruitfulness. Mary's journey of faith begins with the joy of receiving the Good News from the angel, continues to the sharing of that joy with her cousin Elizabeth, then to the birth of Jesus and his childhood in Nazareth. However, interspersed with that joy is the prophecy of Simeon which Pope Francis likens to the "veil" which hides the Mystery of the Divine in Jesus, the mystery with which Mary would live intimately.[52] It is the

---

[48]Ireneaus of Lyon, *Against Heresies*, III, 22, 4, in Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. 1: The Apostolic Fathers—Justin Martyr—Irenaeus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdman, 1969), 455.

[49]*Lumen Gentium* 56.

[50]*Lumen Fidei* 58. Cf. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, Chapter 100, in Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. 1: The Apostolic Fathers—Justin Martyr—Irenaeus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdman, 1969), 249.

[51]*Lumen Fidei* 60.

[52]*Evangelii Gaudium* 287.

mystery which will be fully manifested in the Resurrection, the final meeting point of Mary's faith and joy.

For this reason, Mary is the Star of Evangelization—in Mary, the Church sees the perfect combination of faith and joy: the fruitfulness of faith leads to joy; the joy of faith leads to even more fruitfulness. Pope Francis wishes the Church to recover and deepen her enthusiasm in announcing the joy of the Gospel. He echoes Paul VI's challenge to the Church to get hold of that "delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, even when it is in tears that we must sow." He wants the Gospel to be preached to people and be received by them "not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervour, who have first received the joy of Christ."[53] To whom else should the Church turn if not to Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who first received the joy of the Good News of the incarnation of the Son of God? From whom else should the Church learn how to become joyful evangelizers if not from Mary who was also the first to share the joy of the Good News when she ran in haste to her cousin Elizabeth? From whom else should the Church draw inspiration and courage if not from Mary who, because of her persevering faith, became the first to enjoy fully the fruits of the Good News in her being taken up to heaven body and soul?

Hence, Pope Francis points to Mary, "the woman of faith, who lives and advances in faith," and whose "exceptional pilgrimage of faith represents a constant point of reference for the Church."[54] With the Holy Spirit, she is always present in the midst of the Church just as she was with the disciples in the Upper Room as they prayed and waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14). Thus, "she is the Mother of the Church which evangelizes, and without her we could never truly understand the spirit of the new evangelization."[55] She, the perfect disciple, is also the great missionary who continues the

[53]*Evangelii Gaudium* 10. Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 80.

[54]*Evangelii Gaudium* 287. Cf. *Lumen Gentium* 58, *Redemptoris Mater* 6.

[55]*Evangelii Gaudium* 284.

work of her Son and who forms missionaries like herself. For Pope Francis, the shrines of Mary scattered throughout the world are not only venues where Mary shows herself as a woman of communion, a mother who gathers her children. These are also testaments to her continuing journey with God's missionary people. The Guadalupe event, for example, is a Pentecost event which opened for the American people the gifts of the Spirit. It was there that Mary brought forth the Gospel for the Americas just as she bore the Savior for the world. Since then, she has become one with the people. "We joyfully note that she has become part of the journey of each of our peoples, deeply entering into the fabric of their history and taking on the noblest and most significant features of the people in them …. She belongs to them and they experience her as mother and sister."[56]

For Pope Francis, then, Mary sums up in herself what the Church is called to be as a missionary of the Church , a Church of mercy and joy, a Church whose arms are open to, and whose heart beats for love of, the poor. To her, Pope Francis leads the Church in prayer:

> Star of the new evangelization,
> help us to bear radiant witness to communion,
> service, ardent and generous faith,
> justice and love of the poor,
> that the joy of the Gospel
> may reach to the ends of the earth,
> illuminating even the fringes of our world.
> Mother of the living Gospel,
> wellspring of happiness for God's little ones,
> pray for us. Amen. Alleluia![57]

[56] *Aparecida Document* 269, p. 91.

[57] *Evangelii Gaudium* 288.

Landas 29:1 (2015) 125–142

MUSIC FOR THE SOLEMNITIES AND FEASTS OF THE LORD IN ORDINARY TIME[1]

Timoteo J. M. Ofrasio, S.J.

I must confess that it took me much time to write this article because of the practical difficulty involved in it. The content of the topic seemed so obvious that I doubted if I could say much, let alone add, more to it. But on second thought, I could deal with it not so much from the viewpoint of music—since I am not a musician—but from the liturgical viewpoint; hence the theological content of the solemnities and feasts of the Lord in Ordinary Time, and the music we employ to celebrate them.

First, I propose to discuss five solemnities and feasts of the Lord in Ordinary Time as to their respective history and the hymns or songs that celebrate them.

Next, in line with the principle of *lex orandi, lex credendi*, I will briefly discuss their theological content and why we celebrate them.

Then, I propose to briefly examine the elements of liturgical music and the role of music in bringing out the authentic spirit of the liturgy.

The final part will be an *apologia* for the correct and proper accompaniment for liturgical celebrations.

---

[1]From a talk delivered at the National Meeting of Diocesan Directors of Liturgy (NMDDL) in Baguio City, September 2009.

Solemnities and Feasts of the Lord in Ordinary Time

Some feasts of the Lord have no fixed date. Due to their nature and for reason of origin, they are not directly connected to the "strong" seasons of the Liturgical Year. Hence, they are celebrated during "Ordinary Time".

Solemnity of the Holy Trinity (Sunday after Pentecost)

The origins of the celebration of Trinity Sunday go all the way back to the Arian heresy in the fourth century, when Arius denied the divinity of Christ by denying that there are three Persons in God. To stress the doctrine of the Trinity, the Fathers of the Church composed prayers and hymns that were recited on Sundays as part of the Divine Office, the official prayer of the Church. Eventually, a special version of this office began to be celebrated on the Sunday after Pentecost, and the Church in Pre-Reformation England, at the request of St. Thomas à Becket (1118–1170), was granted permission to celebrate Trinity Sunday.[2]

The devotion to the Holy Trinity, understood as a "theological concept" pondered upon by theologians, is not very ancient. It dates back to the 10th century, although Patristic theology did not bypass the doctrine of the Trinity, viewing it rather as part of the economy of salvation and as a dynamic reality in action in liturgical celebrations according to the classic theme of praying "To the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit."

During the Carolingian epoch, devotion to the Holy Trinity developed privately and was liturgically celebrated beginning in the 10th century, but not without opposition. Rome was the last to adopt the celebration which was extended to the whole Church by Pope John XXII in 1331.

---

[2]John A. Hardon, "Trinity Sunday," *Modern Catholic Dictionary* (InterMirifica: 1999), available at http://www.therealpresence.org/cgi-bin/getdefinition.pl.

This feast is not celebrated in the Eastern Church.

The scriptural readings of the 3-year cycle lectionary call attention to faith in the reality of a living God who continually communicates with human persons.

The Mass prayers of this solemnity, while relatively ancient, do not adequately express its sublime reality. However, the preface, which is much older than the solemnity itself, is the result of the theological literature that emerged from the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople:

> For with Your Only-Begotten Son and the Holy Spirit, You are one God, one Lord: not in the unity of a single person, but in a Trinity of one substance. For what You have revealed to us of Your glory, we believe equally of Your Son and of the Holy Spirit, so that, in the confessing of the true and eternal Godhead, You might be adored in what is proper to each Person, their unity in substance, and their equality in majesty.[3]

One immediately notices in this text a language of theological exactitude and precision to express a dogmatic truth, which proclaims the salvific dynamism of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity as found in Scriptures and in the liturgy.

From the liturgical viewpoint, the synthesis of the authentic meaning of this feast which faithfully echoes the biblical readings can be found in the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*:

> It pleased God, in His goodness and wisdom, to reveal Himself and to make known the mystery of His will (cf. Eph 1, 9). His will was that men should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature (cf. Eph 2, 18; 2 Pt 1, 4). By this revelation, then, the invisible God (cf. Col 1, 15; 1 Tim 1, 17), from the fullness of His love, addresses men as

[3]The Roman Missal renewed by decree of the most holy Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, promulgated by the authority of Pope Paul VI, and revised at the direction of Pope John Paul II. English translation according to the Third Typical Edition. For Use in the Dioceses of the Philippines (Manila: 2012), 450. Hereafter referred to as RM.

> His friends (cf. Ex. 33, 11; Jn 15; 14–15), and moves among them (cf. Bar 3, 38), in order to invite and receive them into His own company.[4]

Hence the Church, in the beautiful expression of St. Cyprian, is seen as "a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."[5]

Hymns to the Blessed Trinity

Many Catholic hymns might be called "hymns to the Trinity" in that they have a doxology, or invocation of the three Persons of the Trinity, as a final verse. This final verse completes the theme of the hymn, but the prayer to the Trinity is too often omitted when only the first two verses of a hymn are sung. Some hymns, however, are expressly addressed to the Trinity, including the following:

- All Hail, Adored Trinity
- God Father, Praise and Glory
- Come, Thou Almighty King
- Holy God, We Praise Thy Name (*Te Deum*)
- Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty
- O God, Almighty Father

Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ (Thursday / Sunday after Trinity Sunday)

This feast is a product of the Eucharistic devotion of the medieval West. It is celebrated to affirm the Real Presence of the Lord in the Eucharist, and was established as "Corpus Domini" or "Corpus Christi" to combat the errors of Berengarius of Tours. It was extended to the universal Church by Pope Urban IV in 1264. The apologetic content for the establishment of the feast also constitutes the limits of its contents, i.e., the emphasis on the Real Presence almost makes it independent from the totality of the Eucharistic mystery.

---

[4] *Dei Verbum* 2.

[5] *Lumen Gentium* 4.

The liturgical reform of Vatican II gives a more complete name for the solemnity: *Corpus et Sanguis Domini*. The enrichment of biblical readings and the addition of a second Preface take into account aspects of the Eucharistic mystery. It is good to note, however, that the first and older Preface, which is derived from the *Sacramentarium Bergomense*,[6] expresses a more genuine Eucharistic spirituality, even before the polemics against the errors of Berengarius and the Protestant heresy. In that older Preface, the Pasch or Easter is seen as the Eucharistic day *par excellence*.

The Mass prayers from the Roman Missal of Paul VI are attributed to the Angelic Doctor, Saint Thomas Aquinas: the admirable Sacrament of the Eucharist is the memorial of the Pasch, and in this memorial, unity and peace are mystically signified. In the Eucharistic banquet, we are offered a taste of the eschatological banquet.

The real and substantial Presence of Christ in the Eucharist that is celebrated by this feast should rightly be seen as coming from the celebration of Holy Mass with a view to its prolongation, without however losing its essential connection with the Paschal Sacrifice.

The Eucharistic procession that follows or precedes the celebration of Mass dates back to the 13th century. Hence, Eucharistic worship outside of Mass is given solemn expression. In fact, although the Eucharist was instituted as our food, we should not take lightly our duty to adore it.

Eucharistic Hymns

Hymns with Eucharistic themes are most suitable for this solemnity. Eucharistic hymns include some of the most beloved and well known, such as the following:

- *Adoremus in Æternum*
- *Adoro Te Devote* (Godhead Here In Hiding)
- *Ave Verum Corpus*
- *O Sacrum Convivium*

---

[6]A. Paredi, ed., *Sacramentarium Bergomense* (Bergamo: 1962).

- *O Salutaris Hostia / Tantum Ergo*
- *Panis Angelicus*
- *Pange Lingua Gloriosi* (Sing, My Tongue the Savior's Glory)
- *Gloria a Jesús* (33rd International Eucharistic Congress, Manila, 1937)
- *Anima Christi* (Soul of Christ)
- *Isang Pagkain, Isang Katawan, Isang Bayan* (1987 National Eucharistic Congress)
- *Isang Bansa* (1987 National Eucharistic Congress)
- *Pilipinas, Makinang na Perlas* (1956 National Eucharistic Congress)

Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Friday after *Corpus Christi*)

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus goes back at least to the 11th century, but through the 16th century it remained a private devotion, often tied to devotion to the Five Wounds of Christ. The first feast of the Sacred Heart was celebrated on August 31, 1670 in Rennes, France, through the efforts of Father (later Saint) Jean Eudes (1602–1680). From Rennes, the devotion spread, but it took the visions of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647–1690) for the devotion to become universal.[7]

The vision of St. Margaret Mary, which took place on June 16, 1675, during the octave of the Feast of *Corpus Christi*, is the source of the modern Feast of the Sacred Heart. In that vision, Christ asked St. Margaret Mary to request that the Feast of the Sacred Heart be celebrated on the Friday after the octave (or eighth day) of the Feast of *Corpus Christi*, in reparation for the ingratitude of men for the sacrifice that Christ had made for them. The Sacred Heart of Jesus represents not simply His physical heart but His love for all mankind.

---

[7]Richard Heilman, "Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus," *Roman Catholic Man*, available at http://www.romancatholicman.com/solemnity-of-the-sacred-heart-of-jesus/.

The devotion became quite popular after St. Margaret Mary's death in 1690, but, because the Church initially had doubts about the validity of St. Margaret Mary's visions, it was not until 1765 that the feast was celebrated officially in France. Almost 100 years later, in 1856, Pope Pius IX, at the request of the French bishops, extended the feast to the universal Church. It is celebrated on the day requested by our Lord—the Friday after the octave of *Corpus Christi*, or 19 days after Pentecost Sunday. In 1928, Pope Pius XI raised the feast to the rank of first class and gave it a new content.

The multiplicity of liturgical formularies for this feast illustrates the doctrinal fluctuations that accompanied its celebration, making it difficult to define and justify from the liturgical point of view.

The Roman Missal of Paul VI underscores not only the act of reparation to the Heart of Jesus, but also the joy of celebrating in this feast the great works of His love for us. From the proclamation of the love of God in His complete manifestation in Christ, the Church is motivated in her thanksgiving to the Father; thus,

> For raised high on the Cross, he gave Himself up for us with a wonderful love, and poured out blood and water from His pierced side, the wellspring of the Church's Sacraments, so that, won over to the open heart of the Saviour, all might draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.[8]

Hymns to the Sacred Heart

- *Corazón Santo*
- *No Mas Amor que el Tuyo*
- Love Divine All Loves Excelling
- O Sacred Heart, O Love Divine
- To Jesus' Heart All Burning
- There's a Wideness in God's Mercy
- Heart of Jesus, Meek and Mild
- *Mahal na Puso*
- *Nang Buo Kong Buhay*

[8]RM, 456.

Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord (August 6th)

The feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord celebrates the revelation of Christ's divine glory on Mount Tabor in Galilee (Mt. 17:1–6; Mk. 9:1–8; Lk. 9:28–36).[9] After revealing to His disciples that He would be put to death in Jerusalem (Mt. 16:21), Christ, along with the disciples Peter, James, and John, went up the mountain. There, St. Matthew writes, "He was transfigured before them. And His face shone as the sun, and His garments became white as snow."

The brilliance was not something added to Christ but the manifestation of His true divine nature. For Peter, James, and John, it was also a glimpse of the glories of heaven and of the resurrected body promised to all believers. As Christ was transfigured, two others appeared with Him: Moses, representing the Old Testament Law, and Elijah, representing the prophets. Thus Christ, who stood between the two and spoke with them, appeared to the disciples as the fulfillment of both the Law and the prophets. And they heard the Father's voice affirming that "This is my beloved Son" (Mt. 17:5), the same affirmation heard during Christ's baptism at the Jordan (Mt. 3:17).

Despite the importance of this event, the Feast of the Transfiguration was not among the earliest of the Christian feasts. It was celebrated in Asia Minor beginning in the fourth or fifth century and spread throughout the Christian East in the centuries that followed. It was not commonly celebrated in the West until the tenth century. To celebrate the great Christian victory at the Siege of Belgrade in 1456, during which the Muslim Turks were routed and the Islamic advance into Europe was halted, Pope Callixtus III elevated the Transfiguration to a feast of the universal Church and established August 6 as the date of its celebration.

[9]Scott P. Richert, "The Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ," available at http://catholicism.about.com/od/holydaysandholidays/p/Transfiguration.htm.

Doubts have arisen as to whether this feast is a duplication of the Second Sunday of Lent, where the gospel of the Transfiguration is read. To this doubt, the response is in the negative. During Lent, we do not celebrate the feast proper of the Transfiguration.

The Roman Missal of Paul VI enriches the feast with its own Preface, with an embolism derived from a sermon of Pope St. Leo the Great which summarizes the content of the mystery; thus,

> For He revealed His glory in the presence of chosen witnesses, and filled with greatest splendor that bodily form which he shares with all humanity, that the scandal of the Cross might be removed from the hearts of His disciples, and that He might show how in the Body of the whole Church is to be fulfilled what so wonderfully shone forth first in its Head.[10]

Hymns for the Transfiguration

- Holy Art Thou
- O Raise Your Eyes on High and See
- O Wondrous Sight, O Vision Fair
- 'Tis Good, Lord, To Be Here

Solemnity of Jesus Christ King of the Universe (Last Sunday of Ordinary Time)

This feast was established by Pope Pius XI with his encyclical *Quas primas* of December 11, 1925. In the pope's intention, as well as the mentality of that time, the festivity was invested with a social character.

The ideological movement of Christ's Kingship was addressed in the papal encyclical which has been called "possibly one of the most misunderstood and ignored encyclicals of all time." The encyclical quotes with approval Cyril of Alexandria, noting that Jesus' Kingship is not obtained by violence: "'Christ,' he says, 'has dominion over all

[10]RM, 716.

creatures, a dominion not seized by violence nor usurped, but His by essence and by nature.""[11]

Until Vatican II's liturgical reform, the feast was observed on the last Sunday of October. The reform relocated it to the last Sunday of Ordinary Time. In this way, the feast obtained a different slant, emphasizing the eschatological dimension of the Kingdom of God in its final consummation. Hence, Christ appears as the center and Lord of history, the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the beginning and the end (Rev. 22: 12–13).

The Mass prayers of this solemnity are to be understood in light of the biblical readings provided for this feast. The prayers affirm that the Father renews all things in Jesus Christ His Son, King of the universe, so that every creature, freed from the slavery of sin, may serve and praise Him. Christ, in offering His life as the spotless Victim of peace on the altar of the Cross, accomplished the redemption of the human race. As King, He claims dominion over all creation that He may present to the Father an eternal and universal Kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, peace, and love.

Hymns to Christ the King

- *Christus Vincit*
- All Glory, Praise and Honor
- Come, Thou Almighty King
- Crown Him with Many Crowns
- Hail Redeemer, King Divine
- To Jesus Christ Our Sov'reign King
- *O Cristong Haring Marangal*

Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi

In liturgical theology, we have the principle *lex orandi, lex credendi*—the law of prayer is the law of belief; plainly speaking, we worship

[11]Pius XI, Encyclical on the Feast of Christ the King *Quas Primas* (December 11, 1925), 13.

as we believe. Based on this principle, our liturgical hymns for the solemnities and feasts of the Lord should ideally reflect and express what we believe, namely:

Blessed Trinity. Liturgical hymns for this feast should convey the proclamation of our faith in the mystery of God One and Triune: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—three Persons equal in majesty, undivided in splendor, yet one Lord, one God, ever to be adored in His everlasting glory.

Corpus et Sanguis Christi. Eucharistic hymns are probably the most numerous in our repertoire of liturgical music, ranging from acclamation to full-length hymns expressing adoration of the admirable Sacrament of the Eucharist, the memorial of the Pasch. Hymns for this feast should also remind us that in this memorial, unity and peace are mystically signified, that in the Eucharistic banquet we are offered a taste of the eschatological banquet.

Sacred Heart of Jesus. Next to Eucharistic hymns, hymns to the Sacred Heart also abound. These are hymns proclaiming God's infinite love for humanity symbolized by the wounded side of the Crucified Lord from which flowed blood and water, symbols of the sacrament of salvation in the Church and the act of reparation to the Heart of Jesus. Sacred Heart hymns are also a joyful celebration in this feast of the great works of Jesus' love for us.

Transfiguration of the Lord. Hymns for this feast should be expressions of our celebration of Christ's revelation of His glory to strengthen His disciples—and us, His followers—for the scandal of the cross. Just as His glory shone from a body like our own, so also the Church, which is the body of Christ, would one day share in His glory.

Christ the King. There are quite a number of hymns celebrating Jesus Christ as King. These hymns are meant to be an affirmation and a proclamation that the Father renews all things in Jesus Christ His Son, King of the universe, so that every creature, freed from the slavery of sin, may serve and praise Him. Christ, in offering His life as the spotless Victim of peace on the altar of the Cross, accomplished the redemption of the human race. As King, He claims dominion

over all creation that He may present to the Father an eternal and universal Kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, peace, and love.

Some Observations

After this brief survey of the solemnities and feasts of the Lord in Ordinary Time, a notable difficulty can be seen, i.e., the dearth or lack of modern compositions celebrating the mysteries of the Lord in the vernacular, either in English or in Philippine languages (by this last is meant both Tagalog and Cebuano Visayan). There are certainly hymns available, as the brief survey above indicates, but they are classical hymns, mostly composed before the liturgical reform of Vatican II, and which many, if not most, Filipino Catholics are not familiar with.

As we noted a while ago, we have in liturgical theology the principle *lex orandi, lex credendi*—we worship as we believe. The same principle applies to sacred music and liturgical hymns in general as well. Vatican II documents state that all music texts in the sacred liturgy should be from scriptural or "traditional" sources.

Based on this principle, we find that the style of much church music today is secular, banal, low-level pop music with little grandeur about it. The nature of the music is secular. That is, it is associated with non-sacred activities, feelings, and responses.[12]

The lyrics, too, are often essentially secular, banal, and trite, despite the occasional appearance of "God". The structure and style of the music is a concern in itself, but this technical matter is outside the scope of this article.

Part of active participation in the Liturgy, Fr. Paul Scalia says, is the dialogue between God and His people gathered to worship Him.

> Given the lyrics of much contemporary liturgical music, however, we must ask what has become of this dialogue and our ability to enter it.

[12]Lucy Carroll, "A Choir Director's Lament on Lyrics for Liturgy," *Adoremus Bulletin* Vol. XII No. 3 Online Edition (May 2006).

> Many contemporary hymns, or liturgical songs, that we employ at Mass make us sing only about ourselves and to ourselves, even going so far as to usurp God's part. Such lyrics fail to convey the true meaning of the Mass as a dialogue between God and His people, Christ and the Church. The offending lyrics come in two varieties: in the first, we sing to one another and about one another—a kind of shallow "introspection"—that makes one feel "good and warm inside" but hardly says anything about the mystery we celebrate or the faith that we profess; and in the second, we sing God's parts.[13]

Elements that Constitute Liturgical Music

Although this article deals principally with music for the solemnities and feasts of the Lord, I beg your indulgence in a digression I will make to emphasize a point about our contemporary liturgical music throughout the Liturgical Year.

Article no. 9 of *Musicam sacram*, the Instruction on Music in the Liturgy, says that music should correspond to the authentic spirit of the liturgy. It says,

> In selecting the kind of music to be used, whether it be for the choir or for the people, the capacities of those who are to sing the music must be taken into account. No kind of sacred music is prohibited from liturgical actions by the Church as long as it corresponds to the spirit of the liturgical celebration itself and the nature of its individual parts, and does not hinder the active participation of the people.[14]

From this, it is clear that music is totally subordinate to the nature and purpose of liturgical celebrations.

It is commonly observed nowadays that choirs, specifically choir directors, select music for the liturgy independently of the priest, or at least of the liturgy coordinator. This is blatantly wrong. Choir directors

---

[13]Paul Scalia, "Ritus Narcissus," *Adoremus Bulletin* Vol. V No. 1 Online Edition (March 1999).

[14]Instruction on Music in the Liturgy *Musicam Sacram* 9. Hereafter referred to as MS.

and musicians ought to work hand in hand with the priest and/or the liturgy coordinator in order to ensure that music in and of the liturgy echoes the nature and purpose of the liturgical celebration. Liturgical music cannot be prepared independently of the liturgical celebration.

The Authentic Spirit of the Liturgy

Music must respect the nature of the liturgy as an act of divine worship by the gathered assembly. We should therefore consider the propriety of employing certain types of music during worship, e.g., music too strongly associated with disco or rap or reggae in melody and lyrics, or pop music in which the lyrics have been changed to fit a religious context. However, we must admit that what is considered proper or appropriate is relative to the culture and religious upbringing of people. The ideal is still music specifically composed for use in the celebration of the liturgy.

The ecclesial dimension is basic to the authentic spirit of the liturgy. The worshipping community is the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic" Church gathered together in prayer. There is always something official about liturgical worship. Not only the readings, prayers, and homily, but also the hymns and songs are a solemn proclamation of faith—the principle of *lex orandi, lex credendi* applies to liturgical music. That is why music should not only be beautiful; it should also be rich in the doctrine of the faith. Think, for example, of the Eucharistic hymns written by St. Thomas Aquinas, like *Adoro Te, Devote,* translated into English as "Godhead Here in Hiding."

Strictly speaking, the lyrics of liturgical music need the approval of the conference of bishops.[15] Each diocese, therefore, needs to have a Commission on Sacred Music to monitor the liturgical songs being sung in parishes, and to scrutinize and approve new compositions before allowing them to be used in liturgical celebrations. Not every new composition is good for liturgical use.

[15]MS 68–69; cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC) 44.

Central to the authentic spirit of the liturgy is the mystery of Christ. Music should, explicitly or implicitly, directly or indirectly, refer to the Paschal Mystery or to that aspect of Christ's mystery being recalled.

Correct and Proper Accompaniment

Another digression I wish to indulge in is about the current fad in many, if not most, churches of using the electronic keyboard for choir accompaniment and congregational singing. It is undoubtedly the most convenient and readily available musical instrument at our disposal, and affordable for our limited budget. It is, however, quite noticeable nowadays to hear the "piano mode" utilized in liturgical music accompaniment of choirs during Masses. Piano music is good, and there is beautiful music for piano composed by the masters, like Chopin and Beethoven. But hardly is it fit for liturgical or church use. The piano mode of the electronic keyboard gives one the impression of being in a piano bar or a school program rather than in the church for a sublime celebration like the Holy Mass. It just does not contribute to the solemnity and grandeur of Holy Mass, yet this seems to be the preferred accompaniment of many choirs today. This is probably due to the unconscious influence exerted by recorded CDs of religious music for meditation available in the market. Meditation music is of an entirely different genre from liturgical music.

Organ music is the preferred church music accompaniment, whether for Gregorian chant or contemporary liturgical music.[16] This does not rule out the possibility and viability of using other musical instruments, but organ music, especially pipe organ music (which, by the way, is also one of the modes available in the electronic keyboard), is preferred above all others. Due to its ability to simultaneously provide a musical foundation below the vocal register, support in the vocal register, and increased brightness above the vocal register, the organ is ideally suited to accompany human voices, whether a congregation, a choir, a cantor, or a soloist.

[16]MS 62.

It can be argued that the musical style of post-conciliar Catholic music varies greatly. Much of it is composed so that choir and congregation can be accompanied by organ, piano, or guitar. Though it is often said that "this music is generally written for chorus with piano, guitar and/or percussion accompaniment, as opposed to the more traditional pipe organ," it should be noted that much contemporary liturgical music, including "One Bread, One Body" (Foley) and "Community Mass" (Proulx), were arranged and composed to be accompanied by pipe organ. Contemporary Catholic liturgical music never excludes the use of the organ, and in fact often uses the instrument to its full potential.

Some musicians, however, would say, "But it is difficult for the choir and the people to sing accompanied by the organ," or "I am not used to playing the organ mode; I find it hard to get into the rhythm," or "I do not like the sound of the organ; it reminds me of a horror movie."

To the first and second objections, I counter that with training and, more importantly, with practice, it is not so difficult to sing with organ accompaniment. It has been done before, and it can still be done now. It is only a matter of getting used to it. To the third objection, about being reminded of a horror movie, it shows the objector's limited artistic taste or, plainly, the lack of it.

I have the sneaking suspicion that some church musicians prefer the piano mode to the organ mode because the piano mode allows them to do some "virtuoso" playing within the accompaniment—something that they cannot do with the organ mode. "Virtuoso" playing is not allowed in liturgical celebration as it is not only distracting but, more importantly, it focuses on and highlights the virtuosity or the musical ability of the accompanist. The same can also be said of electronic enhancements in a one-man band musical instrument; they may give a "high" to the accompanist and the focus is on him or her, rather than on the more important worship aspect of the liturgy. If a song cannot stand on its own merit without the enhancements (*palabok*, as we say in Tagalog), its artistic value is questionable.

Conclusion

Apart from the hymns to the Blessed Trinity which can be sung as entrance and recessional hymns, and hymns for *Corpus Christi* which may be sung for Communion at any season, hymns and music for the solemnities and feasts of the Lord may also be considered seasonal in that they are only sung when the relevant feast is celebrated.

That said, musicians will perhaps say, "Well, I spend my time and talent for the benefit of the Church, in the service of God. I really have no time to pay attention to what liturgists say about liturgical music. People should be grateful that I'm doing anything at all." They have a point, but the faithful too have a point—their Mass songs should sound a bit more like Church and less like concert or, worse, sitcom theme songs.

These well-meaning musicians, however, are not curious about the reform of the liturgy and they have no sacred music workshops that they can attend, unlike in other countries conscious of the need to improve liturgical music and hymnology. In general, they do not read the documents, are not interested to learn about the intrinsic qualities of the Roman Rite, own no CDs of genuinely sacred music, and never think to investigate their responsibilities to the liturgy.

How did they enter on this path from which they refuse to escape? Perhaps ten or fifteen years ago, they happened to listen to a particularly touching or inspiring recording of religious music by a local or foreign group and grabbed a few of their CDs which they brought home to foist on unwilling congregations. Maybe there was a pastor who backed them. They were never able to conjure up that spiritual high they felt when they first listened to the group, but they did finally get their way. And there is where it stayed—no progress, no movement, no action at all.

> What is especially depressing is that the music they grabbed, like so much of the fare over the last 30–40 years, implies a certain peppy sensibility with it that requires a hopped enthusiasm ("This is new! This

> is fun! This is exciting!") to make it sound right. It works, sometimes, but only for a while.[17]

Hopefully, there will be changes. There is no question where the musical history of the Catholic Church is currently headed, and no question about what it is leaving behind, *Deo Gratias*. The trajectory is unmistakable, undeniable. Let us therefore be patient. Pray. Work. And pray some more. The time will come, and that time is not as far off as many think. The tedium will slip away and our parishes will again be filled with the music that will inspire the faithful, give true glory to God, and elicit awe even in the most secular ear.

> In the meantime, we must avoid casting aspersions on those who are doing their best to provide music for Mass. In some ways, they are victims of a time and victims of a movement that has long outlived its usefulness. They devote countless hours to serving. What they need is guidance, direction, training, and inspiration. I believe that most will embrace the challenge once it is presented to them.[18]

Cultures change in mysterious and unpredictable ways. The line might be crooked and the timing might not always be to our liking but the direction of change and the goal of the reform are highly centered and focused. The long period of suffering will not last forever.

---

[17]Jeffrey Tucker, "The State of Catholic Music in the US," *Mary's Anawim*, https://marysanawim.wordpress.com/2009/07/02/the-state-of-catholic-music-in-the-u-s-2/.

[18]Tucker, "The State of Catholic Music in the US."

Landas 29:1 (2015) 143–157

EXPLORING THE PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS IN TWO BIBLICALLY-BASED HOMILIES

Michael Demetrius H. Asis

The primary concern of this article is an issue of a hermeneutical nature: What is the appropriate way of interpreting Scripture? How do we approach and construe it? Do we "dismiss certain rigorous [moral] demands with the magic phrase of 'time conditioned'"?[1] But is it not that historically conditioned assertions of faith are precisely the concern of the whole historical-critical enterprise? Is it not the case that the historical-critical method is precisely concerned with the original historical circumstances surrounding the initial articulation of any theological statement?

Eminent New Testament scholar John P. Meier makes a cogent point when he criticizes the modern preoccupation with "instant relevance" which does not have the willingness to undergo the often tedious and complex process of methodical biblical research. "To think that we can bypass [Matthew]," Meier argues, "to get directly to the 'authentic message' of Jesus betrays a poor understanding of both historical revelation and historical research."[2] As such, he

[1]John P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church and Morality in the First Gospel* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 2.

[2]Meier, *The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church and Morality in the First Gospel*, 8.

displays a confidence in the ability of exegetical studies to recover the original authorial intent in its original historical context. After all, a new world can unfold in front of the text only when there is an old one behind it.

Can we, however, really recapture the original situation in which, for instance, Matthew—and all the other Gospel evangelists—spoke to their church? Is this tenable in the first place? Is biblical hermeneutics, then, a matter of engaging the mind of the author or the text? Does biblical interpretation not call for an existential referent and a way for construing a world that is possible only if so appropriated existentially?

Development of Biblical Interpretation in the Church

To respond to the challenges of modernity, with its emphasis on empirical verification, and the celebration of autonomous reason "freed from the constraints of biblical supernaturalism, theological dogma, and Church authority,"[3] the Church employed the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation. Pius XII's encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943), considered the *magna carta* of Catholic biblical scholarship, instructed Catholic scholars to use the historical-critical method in their study of the biblical texts, raising fears among Catholic conservative biblical scholars that this might lead to a rationalism harmful to the faith.[4]

Two other Roman documents followed—one from the Pontifical Biblical Commission established by Leo XIII in 1902, and the other from the Second Vatican Council. The *Instruction on the Historical Truth of the Gospels* (1964) acknowledged the three-stage development of the gospel tradition, and the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*

[3]Thomas P. Rausch, *Who is Jesus? An Introduction to Christology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003; reprint, Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2004), 25.

[4]Rausch, *Who is Jesus? An Introduction to Christology*, 25.

(*Dei Verbum*) of 1965 insisted that those interpreting the Bible must determine not only the original meaning intended by the authors but also the literary forms they used to express that meaning.[5]

In 1993, the Pontifical Biblical Commission issued the document *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, reaffirming the value of the historical-critical method and evaluating several contemporary hermeneutical principles. Particularly critical of the fundamentalist tendency to confuse the words of the gospel writers with the words and deeds of the historical Jesus, and its failure to acknowledge the historical character of biblical revelation, this document addresses the precise nature of Catholic biblical interpretation as one that takes place within the living tradition of the Church. Hence, the Bible is not a mere historical document to be subjected to an exclusively academic, scientific study, but must be received as God's Word interpreted within the life of the Church.[6]

The development of the Church's biblical hermeneutics appears to be a direct response to the development in the history of interpretation itself. I summarize Paulian-Timotei Petric's[7] account of this development here, which gives a clear sketch of this history.

This "interpretive" history significant for our purposes effectively began with the post-Enlightenment era. Francis Bacon, René Descartes, and Isaac Newton all believed that the human mind can have access to the truth. However, this capacity to know the truth, particularly the mind of the author in a text, was questioned by the literary critics who argued that it is impossible to recover the original intent of the author in a text given the distance between the author's original context and the context of the present reader. To avoid the extreme of handing

---

[5]Rausch, *Who is Jesus? An Introduction to Christology*, 26.

[6]Rausch, *Who is Jesus? An Introduction to Christology*, 27.

[7]Paulian-Timotei Petric, "The Reader(s) and the Bibles(s) 'Reader Versus Community' in Reader-Response Criticism and Bible Interpretation," *Sacra Scripta* 10:1 (2012): 54–68.

over to the reader the exclusive role of interpretation, then, the literary critics made the text itself the absolute source of truth and meaning.

The succeeding structuralist criticism proceeded with the agenda of the so-called new or literary criticism, "refusing to accept that the author's intention has anything to do with the meaning of the text."[8] The structuralists then went further by claiming that beyond the text's verbal form, the real bearer of meaning is the text's literary form—the cultural and literary codes, linguistic and cultural conventions embedded in the text itself.[9] However, without an author determining and controlling the interpretations, "multiple meanings" that contradict the very idea of the "meaning of the text" would result.

To reconcile the concern for authorial intent and the new emphasis on the autonomy of the text, E. D. Hirsch in his *Validity of Interpretation*[10] distinguished between "meaning" (the author's intention) and "significance" (the text's impact on the readers), giving way to the last critical component in the history of interpretation: the reader.

The reader—long overlooked in the hermeneutical process—is now at its center. This reader-response interpretive principle takes away the meaning of the text from the author and its context, and asserts that the meaning of the text lies in the experiences of the readers as they encounter it. In its most radical form, "the reader is the absolute and unique source of meaning, creating it in the act of reading."[11] There is, then, no objective text. "Insofar as every reader brings an

[8]Petric, "The Reader(s) and the Bibles(s) 'Reader Versus Community' in Reader-Response Criticism and Bible Interpretation," 57.

[9]Petric, "The Reader(s) and the Bibles(s) 'Reader Versus Community' in Reader-Response Criticism and Bible Interpretation," 57.

[10]E. D. Hirsch, *Validity of Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 1, cited by Petric, "The Reader(s) and the Bibles(s) 'Reader Versus Community' in Reader-Response Criticism and Bible Interpretation," 58.

[11]Petric, "The Reader(s) and the Bibles(s) 'Reader Versus Community' in Reader-Response Criticism and Bible Interpretation," 60.

interpretive framework to the text, to that extent every reader generates a new meaning and thus creates a new text."[12]

Without the author, then, is there a Bible as God's Word? If the temporal gulf between author and reader rejects the possibility of some meaning communicated from one to the other, then how much more the ontological gap between God (as author) and the human being (as reader), making the reader see nothing else in the text except his or her own mind.[13] But if biblical interpretation must always take place within the Church's living tradition of faith, what is the community's role in that interpretation?

At the heart of contemporary biblical interpretation for preaching is the interplay between understanding and explanation. Raymond Bailey explains:

> Preachers must strive to determine the meanings of texts, consider the implications for a particular people in a particular culture at a particular time, and then communicate their findings to those people.[14]

According to contemporary hermeneutics, however, a text is not a depository but a mediation of meaning. The task, then, of biblical interpretation for purposes of preaching is one of "mediating God's Word to a particular community through which a preacher illumines the meaning of sacred scripture."[15] Like any other reader of any text, the preacher precisely as "mediator" of God's Word does not so much

---

[12]M. Silva, "Contemporary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation," in W. C. Kaiser, Jr. & M. Silva, eds., *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics—The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 243, cited by Petric, "The Reader(s) and the Bibles(s) 'Reader Versus Community' in Reader-Response Criticism and Bible Interpretation," 61.

[13]Petric, "The Reader(s) and the Bibles(s) 'Reader Versus Community' in Reader-Response Criticism and Bible Interpretation," 61.

[14]Raymond Bailey, *Hermeneutics for Preaching: Approaches to Contemporary Interpretations of Scripture* (Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1992), 8.

[15]Mario Francisco, lecture notes (Quezon City: Loyola School of Theology, May 23, 1996).

as stand before his congregation to simply determine the fixed meaning of a particular biblical text as to communicate what that text actually says to men and women as they go about the concrete task of making sense of their present lives. Thus, while uncovering the meaning of a biblical text in its own historical setting remains to be paradigmatic in contemporary biblical interpretation, this does not mean that the meaning of a significant text is fully exhausted in the author's intended meaning for his original audience within a particular historical milieu.[16] Nevertheless, it is important to underline the essential role of historical exegesis and the exegete who goes about this task. Like the professional rendition of any form of music that affords the ordinary listener an opportunity to appreciate the same, a technical understanding of the text gives the reader access to a world of meaning—whether that world is that which is behind or in front of the text—as well as the capacity to make that "ancient world" bear upon the world of the present. For, as in music, unless someone performs the score, the ordinary person loses an opportunity to appreciate and encounter that world.

One may say that the present role of the preacher becomes central more than ever to the ongoing life of the faith community. For, in some real sense, given the insights of contemporary hermeneutics and biblical/theological research, the contemporary preacher should take cognizance of and participate in the collaborative efforts taking place between and among exegetes, theologians, and pastors.[17] "The preaching hermeneut seeks to interpret and understand Scripture in order to explain the meaning of texts to and for others."[18] Sandra Schneiders argues:

---

[16]Sandra M. Schneiders, "From Exegesis to Hermeneutics: The Problem of the Contemporary Meaning of Scripture," *Horizons* 8/1 (1981): 23, 31–32. Schneiders cites the "polyvalent and analogous" nature of language as that which indicates the polysemic nature of a text. See her "Faith, Hermeneutics, and the Literal Sense of Scripture," *Theological Studies* 39 (1978): 731.

[17]See Schneiders, "From Exegesis to Hermeneutics," 38–39.

[18]Bailey, *Hermeneutics for Preaching*, 10.

> … pastors must learn to contribute to this collaborative project their own experience and concerns. They must learn to formulate the speculative [theological] questions from a pastoral perspective and surface the practical implications of academic proposals ….[19]

It is in light of these progressive concepts of contemporary philosophical and biblical hermeneutics that the homilies of Augustine and Liptak will be examined.

St. Augustine's Sermon 53 on the Beatitudes[20]

Augustine belongs to the tradition of allegorical exegesis[21] that swept into the West between the fourth and fifth centuries.[22] Characteristic of this type of exegesis is to portray the Old Testament as prefigurative of the New Testament. This is epitomized in this Augustinian principle: "The New Testament lies in the Old; the Old Testament is enlightened through the New."[23] For example, this homily of Augustine on the Beatitudes cites several Old Testament passages to ground certain points he raises regarding certain beatitudes.[24]

---

[19]Schneiders, "From Exegesis to Hermeneutics," 39.

[20]Augustine of Hippo, *Commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount with Seventeen Related Sermons*, The Fathers of the Church Vol. 11, trans. Denis J. Kavanagh (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1951).

[21]Allegorical exegesis seeks a meaning that transcends the literal sense (traditionally understood as that which the author intended to convey to his original audience) in a particular text in Scripture. "The allegorist assumes that everything stands for something else." See Bailey, *Hermeneutics for Preaching*, 15.

[22]Raymond E. Brown & Sandra Schneiders, "Hermeneutics," in Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, & Roland E. Murphy, eds., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 2nd ed. (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1993), 71:38, 1154.

[23]Augustine of Hippo, *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum* 2.73, cited by Brown & Schneiders ("Hermeneutics," 71:38, 1154) from J. Migne, *Patrologia latina.*

[24]See, for example, Eccl. 1:14 which contradicts the first beatitude on poverty of spirit in Mt. 5:3. See also Wis. 1:1 which Augustine cites to support Mt. 5:8 (on purity of heart).

Augustine's discovery of the allegorical method—largely in reaction to the Manichaeans' thoroughly literal interpretation of the Old Testament—explains his tendency towards a symbolic interpretation of Scripture.[25] Augustine, for instance, cites the "mountain" in Mt. 5:1 as symbolic of the higher precepts of justice given by God to the new chosen people through His Son.[26] Augustine, however, departs from the simple allegorism of Origen who is acknowledged to be the master of allegory during the Patristic period.[27] While affirming Origen's exegetical process of allegorizing—since God intended that access to the deep meaning in Scripture should be deliberate and is, thereby, an inherently difficult task—Augustine insists on consulting the rule of faith in the face of ambiguous passages. This is especially true when one distinguishes between literal and figurative statements in Scripture.[28]

Having become a modified allegorist, Augustine increasingly interpreted more Scriptural passages literally.[29] It is probably more accurate to say, however, that Augustine assumed a more common sense understanding of Scripture. Regarding this very important point, Augustine himself, at some period in his sermon, says: "All the other sayings are plain and clearly understood in themselves; there is no need to discuss them once they are mentioned."[30] Augustine, for

[25]See Augustine, *Commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, 4–6. Cf. Robert Grant & David Tracy, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 78.

[26]Augustine, *Commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, 20–21. See also his Sermon 53, no. 1 (Augustine, *Commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, 212). Augustine's commentary on the Beatitudes (Mt. 5:1–12) provides the groundwork for his Sermon 53.

[27]See Augustine, *Commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, 79. Cf. Bailey, *Hermeneutics for Preaching*, 15. Cf. also Brown & Schneiders, "Hermeneutics," 71:35–36, 1154.

[28]Bailey, *Hermeneutics for Preaching*, 16. Cf. Grant & Tracy, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, 79.

[29]Bailey, *Hermeneutics for Preaching*, 16.

[30]Augustine, Sermon 53, no. 8.

example, refers to "they that mourn" (Mt. 5:4) simply as those who grieve "over the loss of things that are highly prized."[31] Augustine, however, is quick to add that

> those who have been converted to God are losing the things which in this world they used to embrace as precious things, for they find no delight in the things which they used to enjoy. They are torn with grief until a love for eternal things is begotten in them.[32]

Here Augustine clearly gives a spiritual meaning[33] to a passage that can be otherwise understood using a common sense understanding.

This common sense understanding of Scripture precisely exposes Augustine's affinity to the rhetorical sense of Scripture. Such a common sense understanding betrays a meaning that is already incarnate in the lives of the listeners, a meaning that is arrived at by way of a shared horizon and tradition embedded not only in the life of the community concerned, but also in the life of those who came before it and in the life of those who will come after. This is the reason why Augustine explains that the words of the Lord were not only directed to his "assembled audience" but "also to those who were not present and to those of later ages."[34] Hence, judging from this, Augustine acknowledges the horizon of the text, including its original historical situation, and, more importantly, the horizon of his listeners.

---

[31]Augustine, *Commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, 22.

[32]Augustine, *Commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, 22. In the sermon, Augustine points out that in the face of human tragedy, as in the death of a loved one, earthly consolation will never be sufficient. True consolation will only come in the hereafter. Cf. his Sermon 53, no. 3.

[33]A spiritual meaning of passages that prove to be difficult to interpret is of particular significance to Augustine. Having been profoundly convinced by the Ambrosian principle "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6), Augustine would declare that even passages that when literally read seemed to teach falsehood now could be understood spiritually. See Augustine's *Confessions* 6.4.6.

[34]Augustine, *Commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, 25.

While interpreting Scripture without the benefit of the historical methods, patristic and medieval exegesis especially in the Augustinian tradition was already relatively sensitive to the very issues raised by contemporary philosophical and biblical hermeneutics.[35] Augustine, having seen the possible levels of meaning contained in the biblical text, was able in his own time to engage the questions of Scripture in a way that threw light upon the concerns of his own world.

David Q. Liptak's Biblical-Catechetical Homily on the Beatitudes and Moral Living[36]

Liptak's catechetical homily on the Beatitudes is a short and very general exposition on the Beatitudes compared to Augustine's homily which attends to details in treating each and every beatitude. Nevertheless, Liptak's homily likewise engages the questions arising from the biblical text to make them bear upon the issues of the day. For example, he mentions a group of celebrated men and women in history who had lived the spirit of the Beatitudes—from Francis of Assisi to Elizabeth Seton, from Boniface to the Mohawk Indian Kateri Tekakwitha. The Beatitudes, therefore, is no set of unreachable moral imperatives but can be lived by the most ordinary of human beings.[37]

By the very catechetical nature and intent of his homily, Liptak obviously appeals to an authoritative interpretation of the biblical text. Moreover, like Augustine, Liptak's treatment of the Beatitudes begins with certain allegorical presuppositions such as when he points out that the Lord's ascent on the mountain is highly reminiscent of Moses receiving the Law on Sinai. Jesus, therefore, inaugurates the

[35]See Schneiders, "From Exegesis to Hermeneutics," 37.

[36]David Q. Liptak, *Biblical-Catechetical Homilies for Sundays and Holy Days* (New York: Alba House, 1980).

[37]Liptak, *Biblical-Catechetical Homilies*, 79.

New Law, and with it, a new age, a New Testament—on a mountain that is symbolic of God's-presence-in-authority.[38]

Liptak likewise provides a rather general historical underpinning for the Beatitudes, especially the first one which constitutes the heart of this pericope. He altogether refrains, however, from giving a thorough historico-critical analysis throughout the entire biblical text. Apparently Liptak simply wants to give a historical and theological grounding of the beatitude in the Old Testament.[39] This he demonstrates by citing the original Hebrew phase for "God's Poor"—*Anawim Yahweh*—and describing how God progressively and consistently "manifested his preference for the oppressed and the downtrodden." Liptak also mentions (almost by way of footnote) the Greek equivalent of the word "conversion"—*metanoia*—which is characteristic of "God's Poor," that is, of their total dependence on divine providence.[40] Here Liptak clearly differs from the method of Augustine which hardly provides any amount of historical contextualizing to the Beatitudes and is content with simply citing Old Testament texts to support certain insights being expressed.

Nevertheless, Liptak, like Augustine, is clearly sensitive to the spiritual and theological implications of the text. This is adequately expressed when Liptak identifies the deeper dimensions of the symbolism of the "mountain." Not unrelated to Augustine's concept of the "higher precepts of justice," Liptak argues that the Beatitudes far exceed even "the most lofty principles and values conceived of by the most brilliant of mortal men."[41] And as the Lord inaugurates the New Testament on a mount, he would later on seal it on another, the

---

[38]Liptak, *Biblical-Catechetical Homilies*, 78.

[39]In doing so, however, Liptak seems to walk in the same direction as the more historical methods of biblical interpretation, and that is, to imply that what the text meant then in its original historical context is what it necessarily and actually means today. See Liptak, *Biblical-Catechetical Homilies*, 79.

[40]Liptak, *Biblical-Catechetical Homilies*, 79.

[41]Liptak, *Biblical-Catechetical Homilies*, 78.

mount of Calvary. Moreover, God's blessings, Liptak says, are especially directed to those who hunger and thirst for His righteousness in total self-abandonment to the divine will.[42] The theological presuppositions and propositions are clear enough.

Conclusion

Given these brief observations on the respective presuppositions, style, and basic orientation of each homily, the following conclusions can be made:

First, it is clear that both homilies presuppose that the biblical text as a whole presents itself as testimony of religious witness and not simply as a historical document to be subjected to thorough critical scrutiny.[43] While Augustine's historical contextualization of the Beatitudes is conspicuously lacking, if not altogether absent,[44] Liptak attempts to provide some measure of sensitivity to the historical context of the Beatitudes, albeit in very general terms.

Second, both homilies display an explicit affinity to a rhetorical sense of Scripture. The two homilists draw the meaning out of

[42]Liptak, *Biblical-Catechetical Homilies*, 78–79.

[43]This is consistent with the standards set forth by *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943) for modern Catholic exegesis, that is, "to discover and explain not only the literal meaning of the words, i.e., that which the sacred writers intended and expressed, but also their spiritual significance …" (cited in Josef Neuner & Jacques Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, 6th rev. ed. [New York: Alba House, 1996], 107).

[44]Grant notes, however, that Augustine himself believed that the exegete must determine the authorial intention of a particular biblical text and not present his personal ideas. Furthermore, rigorous philological training is necessary in scriptural interpretation and the exegete should distinguish between "literal and figurative statements." See Grant & Tracy, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, 79. For obvious reasons, however, medieval exegesis did not have the same scientific capacity as modern exegesis to reconstruct the original meaning of the scriptural text. See Schneiders, "From Exegesis to Hermeneutics," 37.

the biblical text while being conscious of two elements, namely, 1) where their listeners are coming from and 2) the horizon of the text. Although the latter is seemingly more highlighted in Liptak's homily than in Augustine's, the thrust of the two homilies is not so much to explain the text in the historico-critical and structural sense as it is to understand it for the benefit of both preacher and audience.

Third, given the more rhetorical style of both homilies, meaning is uncovered in the very performance of the text to uncover the "world in front of it." While both essentially seek to understand the text within the wider context of previous traditional interpretations set forth by magisterial authority, the homilies attempt to articulate certain theological presuppositions and implications.

One presupposition involves a theological approach to Scripture that looks not behind, in, or in front of the text but above it. This approach downplays "anthropological insights and skills."[45] Meaning, therefore, "imposes itself on the listener" from above as it were, that is, from the revelatory act of God as this is articulated in the text. Hence, revelation transcends the words of the Bible and the limits of human understanding. The saving meaning-event of divine revelation, then, is more than linguistic and can never be totally encased in language. However, this does not mean that God's Word is encountered apart from the character of Scripture as inspired human witness through which His Word is revealed to faith and encountered continually as saving event in ways that are always new. The Protestant theologian Karl Barth is a chief proponent of this position.[46]

The other presupposition speaks of a more theological approach to biblical hermeneutics. Schneiders, for instance, affirms the insight

---

[45]The works of John Dominic Crossan, for instance, use cultural anthropology instead of the religious context of his community to reconstruct the world of Jesus. This tends to overlook the impact the Hebrew Scriptures had on Jewish religious consciousness. See, for example, Crossan's *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994) and *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991).

[46]Bailey, *Hermeneutics for Preaching*, 193–196.

of theological exegesis that Scripture as human witness is time-bound but that the theological approach to Scripture may well provide the "common ground between the historical period in which the text was composed and the contemporary period in which it is being interpreted."[47] Thus, when one reads Augustine's homily more in light of the theological statements that he seems to make, it would appear that he is coming from a perspective that is consistent with the insights above. Notwithstanding the "analogous jump" that Liptak apparently makes from the text's ancient meaning to the present one, his optic is also more consistent with the theological approach to Scripture. This is in view of inspiring, and hopefully effecting, some existential change in their respective audiences. Indeed, Scripture is not merely a testimony of events past but a means of witnessing to the saving self-disclosing act of God in the present and in the future.

Reconstruction or Mediation?

Is the Bible a "static, essentially unchanging reality, by divine decree and guidance immune to process?"[48] Is the meaning of its many truths rigidly fixed, accessible only by way of faithful historical reconstruction? When we speak of sacred tradition and sacred Scripture as one sacred deposit of the word of God,[49] for instance, do we more or less see tradition simply as a "container" of divine revelation, and the Church as mere custodian of sorts, mainly safeguarding the word of God from interpretative adulterations?

Human understanding, it is said, is not so much a matter of reconstruction as it is a process of mediation.[50] To understand the

[47]Schneiders, "Faith, Hermeneutics, and the Literal Sense of Scripture," 724–725.

[48]See Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism* (Oak Grove: Winston Press, 1981), 609.

[49] Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* 10, in Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: America Press, 1966), 117.

[50]Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer & Donald G. Marshall (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1989), 290.

Bible in its many textual forms, then, means not to view it in some "purely objective," detached fashion but to experience it precisely as an ongoing, living, dynamic event. This means that we should do well not to overcome the temporal gulf that separates past (in its original, historical context) from present, but to see both as essentially constituting a single process. That distance is precisely the ground that makes any kind of understanding possible at all. Ecclesiologist Joseph Komonchak writes:

> There are, it is true, objective representations of what the gospel is in the bible, the tradition, the liturgy, customs, and institutions of Christianity; and the possibility for unity amid all the diversity of the churches rests on a common acknowledgment of their authority. But the unity of the Church is realized effectively only when these objective representations of the gospel are personally appropriated by concrete groups of men and women as they go about the always concrete task of making sense of their lives. The gospel is not a principle of the Church in the abstract, but only as interpreted and appropriated in concrete and existential problematics ….[51]

The discovery of meaning, however, is "never finished; it is in fact an infinite process."[52] The world is always mediated by meaning. To discover the divine presence in the Bible is to always see it in new ways, to experience it in new forms, disclosing and rediscovering ever new meanings within the ground of the Church's own ongoing and living tradition.

---

[51]See Joseph A. Komonchak, "The Church is a Communion," *Liturgy* 3 (1983): 7–11.

[52]Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 298.

CONTRIBUTORS

Rosa Maria Alonso i Terme is currently Visiting Professor at the University of the Philippines School of Economics. She obtained her PhD in International Relations from the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University. She was previously a Senior Economist and Senior Public Sector Specialist at the World Bank and an Economist at the International Monetary Fund. She holds a Licenciatura in Law and in English Philology from the University of Barcelona. She also took Masters level courses in the United States on the Synoptic Gospels, Catholic Social Doctrine, Patristic Preaching and the Priesthood, and the Life and Works of Saint Thomas Aquinas. Her various fields of interest include poverty, income inequality, governance, and Catholic Social Teaching. Her paper was written for the course on Patristic Preaching and the Priesthood, which she took at the Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C.

Michael Demetrius H. Asis is Professor of Theology at, and current Chair of, the Ateneo de Manila Theology Department where he has been teaching since 1987. He holds a doctorate in Theology from the Loyola School of Theology. His teaching duties at the Ateneo and his involvement with teacher formation have taken him to many schools and institutions nationwide, where he lectures on sexuality, marriage and marital spirituality, liturgy, religious education, and, since his triple heart bypass in 2004 and kidney transplant in 2005, on the ethical issues of organ donation. He has written for several scholarly publications and co-authored with Maribel Dionisio the book *I've Been Dating … Now What?* (Anvil, 2006). His second book, *I Am Because We Are: Reflections on Love, Relationships and Life* (ADMU Press, 2010), was a finalist in the 2010 Catholic Mass Media Awards (CMMA) Cardinal Sin Book Awards, spirituality category. His third book, *Reimagining the Sacred: A Fresh Approach to Prayer, Liturgy and the Sacraments* (Claretian Publications, 2012), was likewise a finalist in the 2013 CMMA Cardinal Sin Book Awards, liturgy category.

Norlan H. Julia, S.J., obtained his Bachelor's degree in Sacred Theology from Loyola School of Theology, Quezon City, Philippines, and Masters in Theological Studies from Ateneo de Manila University. After ordination to the presbyterate in 2005, he was theology professor and formator at St. John Vianney Theological Seminary in Cagayan de Oro City. From 2009–2013, he took up doctoral studies in Heythrop College, London. After earning his doctorate and completing his Jesuit formation in 2014, he has been reassigned to St. John Vianney Theological Seminary where he is currently teaching fundamental and systematic theology.

Leo-Martin Angelo R. Ocampo completed his Master of Arts degree, Major in Theological Studies in Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University, in 2015. He graduated from the same university in 2007 with a Bachelor of Arts degree, Major in Philosophy (Pre-Divinity Track) while undergoing formation in San José Major Seminary. He had previously taught Christian Life Education at Xavier School in San Juan and worked in Mindanao with youth volunteers, indigenous peoples, and municipal leaders as Program Coordinator of the Companions of Assisi for Peace Volunteer Program and Program Assistant of the Public Private Partnership for Peace, Justice and Development Program of Assisi Development Foundation. At present, he teaches Theology, Philosophy, and Sociology at the Pontifical and Royal University of Santo Tomas.

Timoteo J. M. Ofrasio, S.J., earned his licentiate and doctorate from the Pontifical Liturgical Institute of St. Anselm in Rome, Italy in 1990 and spent fourteen years in Cagayán de Oro City as diocesan seminary formator and professor in St. John Vianney Theological Seminary. Six of those years he served as Rector of the seminary. He was also Regional Secretary for East Asia and the Pacific at the Jesuit General Headquarters in Rome, parish priest at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Camarín, Caloocan City, Diocese of Novaliches, and at present teaches Liturgy and Sacraments at Loyola School of Theology. His published works include "The Baptistery and the Baptismal Font: Symbolism and Pastoral Relevance" (*Landas* 6:1 [1992]) and

"On the Reformed Mass of Vatican II and Benedict XVI's Letter *Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum* (*Landas* 23:1 [2009]).

Joaquin C. Yap, Jr., S.W., is a professor of dogmatic and systematic theology in Loyola School of Theology. His doctoral research work was on Louis Bouyer's ecclesiology. He has published in *Landas, Homiletic and Pastoral Review, Communio: Revue Catholique Internationale*, and *Quadernidel Centro Studi Asiatico.* Besides the academe, he is active in lay movements and communities. He is a consecrated lay brother belonging to The Servants of the Word.