Landas

JOURNAL OF LOYOLA SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Vol. 24, No. 1 (2010)
ISSN: 0116-4856

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PAUL G. CROWLEY, S.J.

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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 Jose Mario C. Francisco, S.J. (jmfrancisco@lst.edu). Circulation and business matters should be addressed to Susan Isorena-Arcega (siouxstar@gmail.com). Domestic subscription rates: one year, 300.00 PhP; single copy, 200.00 PhP. Elsewhere: one year US$ 30.00; single copy US$ 20.00.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

In the past four years, LST has organized annual international conferences on some aspect of doing and teaching theology in East Asian contexts. The first four essays in this issue were given at two of these conferences which drew faculty from various theological centers in the region. The essays of Paul Crowley, S.J., then chair of the Religious Studies Department at Santa Clara University, and Clemens Sedmak, F.D. Maurice Professor of Social Ethics at King's College, were read in earlier versions at the conference on systematic-historical theology, while those of Rekha Chennattu, R.A., faculty at Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pontifical Institute of Philosophy and Religion (Pune, India) and Gina Hens-Piazza, faculty at the Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University, at the conference on biblical theology.

Crowley's essay raises methodological questions for any theology that dialogues with its context; for instance, what form the fundamental question about God takes in that context. Sedmak, who has previously lectured in the Philippines, talks about resilience as an Asian characteristic and therefore as a theme in its theology. Chennattu, another frequent lecturer in theological and religious institutes in Manila, gives an overview of the ways in which biblical studies have been done from an Indian perspective. Hens-Piazza, whose course on the prophets includes working with basic communities in Guatemala, writes about biblical narratives from the perspective of its marginalized characters—an approach that speaks to contexts where exclusion is endemic.

With the exception of James Kroeger, M.M.'s essay on what the documents of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) state about pastoral care for migrants, the rest of the issue focuses on social and theological reflection on various aspects of the Philippine contemporary context. Antonio Moreno, S.J.'s essay on the involvement of the Catholic Church in electoral politics is an expanded version of his presentation at the "Seminar on the Church in Politics" organized by the Political Science Department, Ateneo de Manila University. My short piece on "Facilitating Conditions of Church Power" (*Documentation*) was also presented at the same seminar. Jojo Fung, S.J. and James McTavish, F.M.V.D., though originally from Malaysia and Scotland, respectively, have been in the Philippines as students and now as lecturers at various theological and religious institutes. Their essays offer theological and moral insights on corruption and prostitution, two important social issues in contemporary Philippine society.

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THE REDISCOVERY OF GOD AND THE RECOVERY OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Questions for East Asian Contexts

Paul G. Crowley, S.J.

The topic of our conference is "systematic theology" in an East Asian context, and this very topic moves us to a fundamental question. In the face of multiple and complex contextual challenges that so much Asian theology has already addressed, as well as important and ground-breaking documents by the South Asian Bishops Conference in recent years, why turn to systematic theology again? What do we expect systematic theology as such to say to, much less *do* about the challenges arising from this East Asian context—or any other context, for that matter? After all, systematic theology concerns God, and more precisely the ways in which we can understand how God is revealed and encountered. It takes us into Christology and pneumatology, into anthropology and grace, and into ecclesiology and eschatology. Why specify systematic theology, as opposed to fundamental theology, biblical theology, moral theology, or ethics? Why, indeed, not turn to economics, agronomics, political economy, sociobiology, environmental biology, and other regional sciences? Are we asking too much of systematic theology in expecting it to be responsive to a vast East Asian context that involves so many parts, so many challenges? Do we risk reducing theology to a rhetorical construct if it only serves to justify a particular program of pastoral action? The topic forces us to look at the nature of systematic theology

itself, for it is something other than an adaptation of non-theological projects, or the construction of a quasi-theological scaffolding from various elements of faith and the human sciences in order to build a pastoral program.

But no theology, systematic or otherwise, can proceed without due attention to context, or interaction with it. Why is this important? It is important because theological studies, especially at the pre-ordination level where people are preparing for lives of service to the People of God, can seem abstracted from the contexts of human existence in which the life of the Church takes shape and in which faith is lived. In many cases it seems that the call of the Second Vatican Council in *Optatam totius* to a new form of theological education, one that includes asking fundamental questions arising from the human condition, involving therefore a vibrant relationship between theology and philosophy, has not always been heeded.[1] Instead we still find curricula that are designed along rather predictable lines and with topics that often stand alone, like silos, having little relation to one another, and very little, it often seems, to pastoral and human realities. The *cursus theologicus* can therefore seem ahistorical, strikingly removed from the pastoral contexts of particular times and places. But these pastoral contexts are also culturally defined, and so courses of theology can also seem *a-cultural,* curiously blind to the need for an inculturation of faith if it is to take root in the face of so many dynamic forces ever threatening it. Further, these curricula can often be too formally removed from concern for knowing about the religions other than Christianity that might inhabit the worlds and contexts within which people are living their Christian faith.

Those who live in East Asian contexts—and I stress the plural here, for there are many East Asian contexts, and this includes Oceania—can better describe this need for an historically-aware, inculturated, and

[1]See "Optatam Totius," nos. 13–21, in A. Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* I 1988, rev. ed. (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1987), 717–723.

inter-religiously sensitive theology than I can. Of course, there is so much that has already been accomplished in this area. Many Asian theologies have successfully addressed East Asian contexts already. If East Asia could be stretched to Sri Lanka, the pioneering work of Aloysius Pieris in *An Asian Theology of Liberation* beautifully blends concern for the poor with the opportunities offered in a religiously pluralistic environment, differentiating an Asian theology of liberation from the originating models from Latin America.[2] Of course, Jacques Dupuis left us a great corpus of work in comparative theology, although it was rooted in the Indian context, which is not that of East Asia.[3] But it serves as a model, however controversial it may have been in certain quarters, of responsible scholarship of the sort that should still be undertaken, not only in Hindu, but also in Buddhist and Muslim contexts. In his *Christianity with an Asian Face,* the Vietnamese-American theologian Peter Phan surveys the development of an inculturated theology and ecclesiology in several East Asian contexts, with a view toward how these are becoming further inculturated in the United States—a reminder of the global reach of East Asia and Oceania.[4] Phan takes into account multiple elements of East Asian contexts for theology today: immigration both within and beyond Asian countries, the role of philosophy in Asian cultures, models for understanding God and Jesus in particular, Asian understandings of *ecclesia,* inculturated catechesis, and bi-culturalism, versions of which can occur not only in countries of immigration, but in home countries as well in the face of a global marketplace and popular pan-culture.[5]

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[2] *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988).

[3] See especially *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions* (Maryknoll: New York: Orbis Books, 1989) and *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997).

[4] *Christianity with an Asian Face: Asian American Theology in the Making* (Maryknoll: New York: Orbis Books, 2003).

[5] There are also, of course, several Asian theological journals, including the *East Asian Theologial Review, Philippiniana Sacra,* and *World Mission* magazine, as well as

We all know some of the daunting problems that face us as Church—problems that describe the larger historical moment and cultural contexts for the doing of theology. Bishop Francisco Claver has further refined the question of context. In a recent talk given at Berkeley, he focused on the Philippine situation. Social analysis of Filipino reality reveals massive problems related to hunger, ignorance, sickness, and homelessness, pervasive and deep poverty, institutionalized social injustice, political powerlessness and rising oppression of the poor, and disregard for and deprivation of human dignity.[6] In the spirit of *Gaudium et Spes*, there have been many pastoral and ecclesiastical responses to these challenges in the Philippines, notably through the work of the base ecclesial communities (BECs)—a strategy that has proved effective in other parts of the world as well, particularly in Latin America. In addition to these challenges listed by Bishop Claver, I would mention the fact that Christianity, and certainly Catholicism, is a minority religion in East Asia (with major exceptions, of course), and that even where it is culturally important, as in the Philippines, we are looking at an environment of considerable religious pluralism as well as syncretism.[7] It would seem that no theology could adequately address the socio-economic and cultural challenges for faith that could not also engage in a meaningful engagement with these other religious traditions, precisely as they are being lived in East Asia. We also need to be mindful of the interrelated realities of globalization

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Asian publishers, many of them here in metro Manila. See James H. Kroeger, M.M., "Asian Resources for Developing Asian Theologies," Local Ecclesiologies in Dialogue Conference, Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University. http://www.jstb.edu/events/ecclesiologies.html (accessed July 1, 2009).

[6]Francisco Claver, "Strategies and Modalities of the Social Justice Engagement in the Philippine Church," Local Ecclesiologies in Dialogue Conference, Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University (May 29, 2009), 1–2. http://www.jstb.edu/events/ecclesiologies.html (accessed July 1, 2009).

[7]For a discussion of syncretism useful for systematic theology, see Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 144–158.

and migration, and of the fact that climate change interlinks East Asia with the rest of the world in new ways. The context, therefore, is extremely complex.

But, perhaps the question really is this: Not how theology can address context, but how context can address theology—how context can shape new theologies that are relevant to pastoral action. I would like to explore with you, therefore, the state of systematic theology and why it must interact with context. I will develop my thoughts in three parts.

First, we are living in a world of the rediscovery of God, of new modes of encounter with God. This has a bearing on how we will find any connection between theology and context. While this is a huge issue in the Northern Hemisphere, globalization makes it an issue for all of us. For God is also being rediscovered in East Asia.

Second, systematic theology needs to be renewed and rejuvenated as the reasoned response to the discovery of God. How, in an East Asian context, might this happen? How might East Asian contexts help bring this about?

Third, this discovery of God and the renewal of theology can result in pastoral strategies that are rooted in the radical vision of Christianity. Here I will take my cues from a non-Asian, Johannes Metz, one of the last of that generation of "greats" who lived and worked in the mid-twentieth century.

After these considerations, I will then pose some questions to help you to consider the function of systematic theology in an East Asian context.

The Rediscovery of God

God is being rediscovered. It might seem odd to say this, given that faith is so palpable among many people, not least among the impoverished. We all know stories of the indomitable faith of the very poor, or of those who are most oppressed by unjust social structures.

Jon Sobrino, writing from a context not dissimilar to some parts of the Philippines, notes that God becomes a problem in the face of catastrophic suffering, such as that brought about by a recent earthquake:

> … [Sometimes] … God is not part of the solution, but of the problem. The earthquake forces many believers today, like Job throughout history, to contemplate a questionable mystery (one that does not dazzle with its brilliance but casts a shadow with its terrible darkness) that becomes an enigma: the ineffable God becomes a "mute" God, like a sphinx.[8]

Yet it is in the catastrophes of history, including hunger, disease and poverty, that Christian faith is forced to grapple with God, and in some way, to discover God anew. This general idea is echoed, I think, in Clemens Sedmak's project of "Transformational Theology," which starts with the "raw revelation" of God that is not addressed by "protected" notions of revelation. For the divine freedom, "expressed in the works of the Holy Spirit who is sovereign in the where and when of revealing God's presence in the world … is incompatible with predicting and calculating the effects of divine causality in the world."[9] The where and when of God's revelation is explored on a case by case basis. Just as Sobrino asks where God is within the earthquake, Sedmak explores the scandal of world hunger as a *locus theologicus*.

The God who is being rediscovered and reflected in these theologies is not the God of the powers of "colonial religion" or of dogmatic theology. This is the God who yearns to be with God's people, to dwell with them in the deserts of their existence, and to deliver them from suffering. This is a God who suffers with, a God of what Johannes Metz calls *com-passion*—a notion to which I will return later. It is precisely this God of *com-passion* who is being rediscovered,

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[8]Jon Sobrino, *Where is God? Earthquake, Terrorism, Barbarity and Hope* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 25.

[9]Clemens Sedmak, "The Disruptive Power of World Hunger," *Transformation Theology: Church in the World,* eds. Oliver Davies, Paul D. Janz, and Clemens Sedmak (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 116.

not only by those who are suffering here in the Philippines and in other parts of East Asia and Oceania, but on a more global scale.

But there is more to the story. Even in the secularized West, there is a renewed fascination with God, a desire for a God of compassion, stemming perhaps from a drought begun in the Enlightenment that has run its course. God has, in a sense, returned to the forefront of human consciousness in ways that were not so evident forty or fifty years ago, at the height of post-war secularism. After a long dark night, God has reappeared, not in new-age religions, but in the rediscovery of the God who is revealed in the course of human events. Certainly the years following the 9/11 attacks document an increased interest in religion, in a rediscovery of the divine. Simultaneously, the rants of those atheists who express disdain for religion are evidence of this return, for as Karl Rahner pointed out, even the denial of God involves some implicit acknowledgement of the philosophical problem of God as ultimate horizon of our knowing. Philosopher-theologians such as John Caputo and Jean-Luc Marion have described the return of a sense of religion, of the numinous, of that which is given as gift—as lying at the heart of the secular life in the West.[10] In Europe and the United States, people are speaking of the emergence of a "post-secular" era.

This has global implications, for secularism is a Western export. In *God is Back: How the Global Revival of Faith is Changing the World,* John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge document how homegrown religions, not only Christianity and Islam, are growing in all parts of the world, including China.[11] Reza Aslan summarizes how this relates to the demise of secularism:

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[10]For a comprehensive overview of the rediscovery of "god" in postmodern philosophy, see Hent de Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). See also the work of Jean Luc Marion. A good starting point is *The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner, et. al. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

[11]John Micklethwait and Adrian Woolridge, *God is Back: How the Global Revival of Faith is Changing the World* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009).

> Despite all the confident predictions one hears about the death of God, the truth is that religion is a stronger, more global force today than it has been in generations. At the dawn of the twentieth century, one half of the world's population identified itself as Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, or Hindu. One hundred years of social progress, technological innovation, and scientific advancement, and that number now stands at nearly two thirds … If secularism arose in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in response to the erosion of religious certainties, perhaps the rise of religious identities can be blamed on the growing disillusionment with secularism.[12]

Of course, some forms of this rediscovery of God are problematic, or certainly difficult to track, and much of it is mixed not only with cultural but also explicitly political agendae. Phillip Jenkins limns the future development of a global Christianity, where all these religious forces are unleashed in ways that make our current concerns seem quaintly controllable, especially with the emergence of sects and new forms of fundamentalism within all the religions. In specific reference to Asia and the convergence of so many religious forces here, he sketches a grim picture for the future, at least if we are to follow a pessimistic scenario where religions represent political and cultural ideologies:

> Even without the religious factor, this part of the Pacific Rim is going to be one of the major areas of strategic conflict over the next twenty or thirty years. As the People's Republic of China grows militarily, it will project its power in the China Sea, the vast maritime region bounded by Taiwan, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Vietnam. … Religiously-based instability vastly aggravates the potential for great power conflict, especially when (as in Indonesia or Malaysia) anti-Christian violence is directed against ethnic Chinese.[13]

Not everyone agrees with this grim scenario, and Jenkins himself calls it a fantasy, a thought experiment. But there is no question that

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[12]Reza Aslan, *How to Win a Cosmic War: God, Globalization and the End of the War on Terror* (New York: Random House, 2009), 10.

[13]Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 222.

various forms of religious revival, and what I am calling a rediscovery of God, for good or for ill, are underway.

The question for systematic theology, however, is this: Who is this God who is communicating to us in and through the renewed religious energy that we have described here? Who is this God that fascinates and perdures? What can be said about this God that will have any relevance to the East Asian contexts within which he is being rediscovered? Taking this into Bishop Claver's description of the East Asian context, a common denominator, it seems, is that the God who is being rediscovered is a God who suffers with his groaning people, who draws people into creative networks to help one another, who is enlisted by people in ideological wars, and who is the hope of the suffering and oppressed. This is a "portable" God, a God who respects no boundaries or borders, and who is found communicating in every dimension of the complex context that is East Asia, and not only within Catholicism or Christianity. This is a God who is being rediscovered within the living contexts of the people.

The Recovery of Systematic Theology

If this much can be said of God in an East Asian context (and probably very many others), then what about systematic theology? What about the theology that people study in theology schools for the purpose of serving the Gospel in contexts where God is being rediscovered?

This leads us to a consideration of what theology is. For before we arrive at theological genres, constructions, foci, or programs of praxis, we would do well to recall that theology begins in a human knowing of God—not a speculative knowing, but an existential knowing of the God who discloses himself to us, of the God whom human beings discover and, in different times, places and manners, rediscover. Theology begins and is rooted in this human knowing of God.

This is, of course, an ancient tradition, but it is one that we find clearly expressed by Thomas Aquinas in the first question of the *Summa theologiae*, where he inquires into the nature of *sacra doctrina*. As the late

scholar of Aquinas, Walter Principe, pointed out, it is important to note that Thomas does not ask whether *theology* is a science, but rather whether sacred doctrine is. And by sacred doctrine he means first of all knowledge of the whole of faith as lived, both in speculation and in practical action. This knowledge is a response to something received. *Sacra doctrina* is therefore a science, a *scientia* or knowing, to the degree that it accepts as its starting point principles that have been disclosed by God, not necessarily self-evident to reason, but nevertheless valid on the basis of experience (e.g., earthquake, hunger, plague, war). Theology, in turn, is an understanding of that knowing of God, a knowing that is "subalternated" to the knowing that is given the blessed and which belongs to God. Principe adds:

> The religious value of this view of sacred doctrine, even in its scientific mode or aspect, is that sacred doctrine, as a science subalternated to the science had by God and the blessed, must always be dominated by and remain in contact with the mystery of God, with the Word of God; it must proceed from a living faith in order precisely to be a science.[14]

And further:

> Sacred doctrine considers everything it touches upon—man, sacraments, Christ, angels, sacred history—in relation to God, who is therefore the SUBJECT of all theology in all its branches.[15]

Finally, sacred doctrine is a wisdom (*sapientia*) of a twofold kind: that gained through study of the Bible and of the venerable words of other theologians, and that gained through "suffering divine things," i.e., through growth in virtue as the Holy Spirit works within our human experience, in the economy of salvation.[16] In asking whether *sacra doctrina* is a science, then, Thomas is asking how we can transform the content of the divine self-communication into an organized

[14]Walter Principe, *Introduction to Patristic and Medieval Theology*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1987), 274.

[15]Principe, *Introduction to Patristic and Medieval Theology*, 275. Emphasis original.

[16]Principe, *Introduction to Patristic and Medieval Theology*, 275.

science of the speculative order without losing the historical texture and meaning of the economy of salvation. In other words, how can systematic theology prove relevant to the life of human beings who are the subjects of God's saving work in history?

And so, theology is a systematic way of understanding the saving self-communication of God, and the human knowing (*scientia*) of this communication. Both the divine self-communication and the human knowing of it take place in and through human experience. The systematic dimension of theology refers to the means by which this understanding is accomplished, the system that is employed to gain effective understanding, and this has classically been the function of philosophy in Christian theology. There must be some means by which the human mind can begin to approach the knowledge of things that pertain to God and to know them indirectly. Only with this understanding, which is dependent upon analogy, can we then speculate about how faith, as a knowing of the God who is communicating to us, can enter into the drama of the human condition and affect it, responding to the contexts within which human beings live their lives and gain earthly wisdom.[17]

One of the things that I wish to assert here is that systematic theology must have as its central question how and what God is communicating to us of Godself in the contexts within which we live and find ourselves. In contemporary terms, theology must first engage the rediscovery of God. Only then can a systematic theology proceed to a methodologically informed understanding of Christian faith, or of the construction or a project or the conception of a praxis. Too much that bears the name "theology" today does not first attend to this primary matter. It attends first and sometimes exclusively to context, and so it risks becoming irrelevant to the very human experience to which it

[17]In so describing systematic theology, I am of course selecting from among many typologies for theology that have variously been set forth. A helpful start for thinking about this can be found in Hans Frei, *Types of Christian Theology* (New Haven: Yale, 1992), esp. Chapter 4, 28–55.

strives to respond. For that human experience centrally includes the experience of God—an experience that cannot be taken for granted and must be the primary question with which we begin a theology that is contextually engaged. I am not arguing here for a Platonic top-down understanding of systematic theology. For the experience of God cannot be severed from context. But neither can a legitimate and necessary concern for context, and how faith can respond to it, occlude the very matter that faith is about. That is the central concern of a systematic theology.

And in an East Asian context, as we have noted, we need to ask how and what God is communicating to us in the specific modalities of human suffering that mark this part of the planet. The result might be differently inflected than the result coming from another context. In the Philippines, at least, I would begin with Bishop Claver's broad categories of social analysis in order to establish that context, but then bring these into conversation with the broader religious and cultural realities that are found here.

Methodologically, this involves attending first to the ways that the wisdom of *sacra doctrina* is being discovered. This entails all the disciplines of theology, including and especially a rediscovery of the Word of God, with all of its liberating power, but also the practical wisdom that is gained through human experience, from fiesta and joy, to mourning and contemplation.

What is especially crucial to remember here is that theology in context is not an end in itself—a point made by Joerg Rieger—especially if we take into account the scope of human suffering in that context. In *God and the Excluded: Visions and Blindspots in Contemporary Theology,* Rieger cautions:

> Questions raised by human suffering and by the exploitation of all of creation can, in the long run, not be shut out where Christians reflect on the teachings of the Church and on God's relationship with humanity and creation. The crisis of theology is not primarily an intellectual crisis,

> as many theologians still think, but the fact that we have separated ourselves from most of humanity. [18]

If theology is not to be separated from humanity, and if it is to bring to light the mystery of God in context, then what kind of theology are we looking for?

A Theological Horizon Rooted in the Gospel

It might seem odd to turn to a German theologian to address the situation of systematic theology in East Asia, but I think that Johannes Metz offers a starting point that is not Euro-centric, even though he was theologically formed by Karl Rahner, and his fundamental question, 'Whither God after Auschwitz?' comes from a European context, but one of some universal significance. Still, Metz himself transcends the limitations of his own cultural horizons in search of a new horizon for systematic theology that is responsive to human suffering and the pluralism of human existence, including religious pluralism. His "political theology" is universalist in its intentionality.

The starting point for Metz is to question the starting point of the standard Christian narrative, which is usually cast as our engulfment in the sin of Adam, the original sin, and to ask how God justifies us in the face of our guilt. This is the classic Augustinian construction of the problem, the one that has dominated Christian theology and, arguably, missiology and pastoral practice. But this model leads to an absolutism of sin as the great barrier, or scandal, to human flourishing and union with God. Suffering is explained as a consequence of human sinfulness. But God cannot be questioned, because God has merely permitted the possibility of sin, not caused it. Human beings are responsible for the suffering in which they find themselves.

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[18] Joerg Rieger, *God and the Excluded: Visions and Blindspots in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 4.

Metz, however, questions the adequacy of this narrative.

> … [I]n Augustine "salvation" now becomes thought of exclusively in terms of "redemption," as redemption from sin and guilt. What has been lost from view is all the suffering and histories of suffering which in our everyday experience simply cannot be traced back to sin or to a history of guilt, and which nonetheless make up the largest part of this world's suffering that cries out to the heavens.[19]

He does not deny the power of sin, and repeatedly claims that we must never let go of the dangerous memory of where it has led, not only in the story of Jesus, but in human history as well. But, he suggests, a biblical messianism yields a very different narrative. This is a narrative that does not begin in Genesis 2, but rather in Exodus 2, at the burning bush. And here we have the self-disclosure of a God who is reactive and responsive to human suffering, who does not want us to suffer. The focus of soteriology shifts from sin to human suffering, from redemption as atonement for human sin and guilt, to redemption as God's saving action in history, as liberation and freedom. And the question of theodicy shifts from putting God on trial through the protest of philosophical questioning, to the prayer of Jesus, stemming from Jesus' God-mysticism, that the world be renewed in the image of the Kingdom.

But this does not preclude questioning God, wondering why God has made things so. Metz is calling here not for an abstracted philosophical theodicy, but for a questioning that stems from suffering itself:

> Not vaguely undirected questions, but surely passionate and focused questioning belongs to that mysticism in which we have to form ourselves in order to find true consolation. And this above all if we do not forget that biblical-Christian mysticism is not really a mysticism of closed eyes, but an open-eyed mysticism that obligates us to perceive more acutely the suffering of others.[20]

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[19]Johannes Metz, "Theology as Theodicy?" in *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity*, trans. J. Matthew Ashley (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 61–62.

[20]Metz, "Theology as Theodicy?", 69.

Suffering thus emerges as the horizon of encounter with God, the integrating focus of a systematic theology. The Logos enters into the world of suffering, in a mode of com-passion, a "suffering with." The Logos, becoming suffering human flesh, thus presents a "transcultural criterion" for approaching the human knowledge of God. And in its "dangerous memory," the Church understands itself in terms of discipleship of Jesus, whose gaze always turned first toward those who suffered. The compassion of God, revealed in the compassion of Jesus in the gospels, becomes the template for Christian discipleship, of a Christian way of being present in the world, and a way of the Church being present in the world. And this means that the God who is self-disclosing and who is being rediscovered, is a God not only of charity, but also of justice. To take on the compassion of that God is to take on a vision of *caritas et justitia* that will lead to a vision of coequality of all human beings, and of integrity and responsibility. It will also lead to a solicitude for the suffering of those who are of different religions or politics, and even to a compassion for our enemies. It will lead to transcending the narrative of sin and blame and to reconciliation of all parts into a living whole. And this is the work of love.

Systematic theology, then, will attend to the nexus between God's communication to us and the contexts within which that communication is taking place. One cannot be fully appreciated apart from the other. For, as Karl Rahner taught, theology and anthropology are closely linked and correlated with each other. To ask after God is to ask after the human, and to ask after the human is to ask after God. More specifically, to ask why there is so much suffering, we are asking not only a question of theodicy, but to borrow from Sobrino, anthropodicy as well. And this leads to a different agenda for God, as co-sufferer, as well as for human beings, who are called to compassion. The specific revelation of this God in Jesus Christ thus becomes central. The *lucha* between good and evil is not a cosmic war, a Manichaean standoff, but, as in the person and practice of Jesus, the original healing and renewal of the human, and of creation, as the Gospel is lived. A systematic theology thus understood becomes ethics and then becomes eschatology in a final vision of harmony, what John calls love.

Questions of Context

How to take the next step, to transpose this understanding of systematic theology into the particularities of the East Asian context, is not something that I can prescribe here. But we can consider some questions that might serve as starting points toward further reflection.

First, how can systematic theology, as it is taught in the theology schools, prepare pastoral people for discerning God's self-disclosure within East Asian cultures? What is happening in your particular cultural contexts that commands your attention and asks after God? For example, what do patterns of immigration, from the rural countrysides into the cities, reveal to us about how God may be at work in human lives? How does the changing role of women in Asian societies force us to ask what God may be communicating to us as God's desire for humanity? How do pastors live in this world, not simply as counter-signs, but as disciples, with compassion and a well-ordered love for the world?

Second, how can systematic theology proceed methodologically so that it attends to human suffering in a central and organizing way? How would an attention to God's response to human suffering as the central narrative of Christian faith shape our understanding of God, of Christ, of Trinity? How would it affect our understanding of human beings and the roles of sin and grace in their lives? How would it change, if at all, our ecclesiology, and how we organize church in relation to society? How would it affect the relations between Christian people and other religions?

Third, how can systematic theology enfold the good of interreligious understanding, either through formal comparative study or through dialogue and conjoined efforts for justice, so that appreciation of religious pluralism and difference is a central constitutive dimension of theological understanding? As disciples, can we move beyond tribal loyalties, on the one hand, and mere toleration, on the other, toward a questioning after how God may be speaking to us through the religious others?

Fourth, how can systematic theology be in itself ethical—not in the limited sense of a theological ethics or a moral theology, but as a theology for ethics, so that it intrinsically concerns right action? Another way of looking at this: How can systematic theology move beyond the silos of Revelation, sin, Christ, Trinity, grace, Church, sacraments, morals and eschatology, where ethics is a topic, toward a theology that is always concerned with the ethical, even in its most speculative moments? We would thus have a Christian ethics that derives not from a Christianization of a philosophical ethics, but from the heart of the Gospel. And what accents would this take on in an Asian context?

Finally, how can systematic theology, as a response to the divine self-disclosure, as sacred doctrine, lead to the practices of love and justice? If God is being rediscovered today, especially in the crucibles of human suffering, can systematic theology be recovered, in Asia, as a pathway to Christian praxis? For if theology has God as its subject matter, and if God is love, then should theology not be centrally concerned with where this love will lead human beings, i.e., toward a more just world?

In one sense these last five questions could be directed to people in the United States, in Latin America, Africa, Europe, or the sub-Continent. Such is the case in a globalized world. But it so happens that we ask them here in East Asia. I would like to leave you with the thought that it could well be that the recovery of systematic theology of which I speak could become the gift of the Churches of East Asia to the rest of the Church. It is possible that it could be happening here already, precisely in a part of the world where, with few exceptions, Christianity is not presumed as normative or culturally central, where other forms of wisdom are to be found in great abundance, where human suffering abounds as a visible and not hidden part of human life, and where God may well be appearing in ways heretofore unimagined and where the thirst for God is real. The future of systematic theology in East Asia is therefore a sign of hope for the world Church.

Landas 24:1 (2010) 19–30

SPIRITUAL RESILIENCE

A Contextual Theology for Asia

Clemens Sedmak

Asian Gifts

A gift is—like a charism—always also a source of commitments. The Asian Church has many gifts to give—and, accordingly, many commitments to honour. I will focus on two such gifts mentioned by the postsynodal exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* proclaimed by Pope John Paul II:

(i) The Saviour was born in Asia.[1]

(ii) Asian traditions have developed a rich spiritual and religious life.[2]

Asia is, so to speak, the first born of the children of the continents, born into the good news, and full of spiritual values that can teach so much to ideologies of materialism. A contextual theology for Asia for the 21st century will have to consider the gifts the Asian Church can bring to the World Church; any gift is always embedded in a framework

[1] *Ecclesia in Asia* 5, hereafter referred to as EA.

[2] EA 4, 6.

of interactions and mutual obligations and expectations (an insight from Marcel Mauss' famous work *Le don*[3]). A contextual theology for Asia can fruitfully work with these two fundamental gifts—the gift of welcoming the Saviour and the gift of immaterial values.

The Nature of Contextual Theologies

Contextual theologies are based on identity issues. They respect the local identity of human beings who are, at the same time, part of a bigger context that is identity giving. Basically, this means that contextual theologies require a sense of "Self" both on a local and on a translocal level. The theological work of a contextual theologian is "identity labour," which is the effort of working with local sources of human identity against the background of more universal sources of identity. Human identity is shaped by "commitments"—commitments that people enter and commitments that people experience. These commitments offered by identity-giving groups have a cognitive, an affective, and a conative dimension—they are accompanied by beliefs and convictions, by emotions and feelings, and by a moment of striving and moving, a sense of direction and development. Contextual theologies honour the local construction of identities—they touch upon a sense of "Self" (self-esteem, self-appreciation, self-knowledge, self-understanding) and thus contribute to local identity labour (the labour necessary to cultivate, maintain, stabilize and defend local identities).

In order to develop a contextual theology of Asia I will briefly mention the idea of contextual theology. What theologians have come to realize especially in the decades since the opening of the Second Vatican Council is the large extent to which theology has been shaped by the times and the cultures in which it has been articulated. Theology was formerly understood as the reflection in faith of two theological "sources" or "*loci theologici*": Scripture and Tradition. Today, theology also considers *present human experience* as a theological source or "*locus theologicus*." And the present human experience is always a local one.

[3]Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, trans. W. D. Halls (New York: WW Norton, 1990).

This is why we can define "contextual theology" as a way of doing theology that takes into account two things:

(i) It takes into account the *experience of the past*, that is, the experience of our ancestors in the faith recorded in Scripture and the doctrinal tradition both as a source and as a parameter of our Christian life and Christian theologizing.

(ii) It takes into account the *experience of the present*, or in other words, the (specifically) local *context* in which Christians of a concrete time and place find themselves. This context might be a particular experience that a person or group of persons is having at the present time (e.g., a village in Indonesia struggling to recover from a natural disaster), the culture—that network of meanings, values and behaviors which gives shape to a people's world—in which an individual or a community lives, or the social location (e.g., a poor Black community in Jamaica) out of which an individual or a community theologizes, or the world changed by the forces of globalization, migration or secularization that pushes Christians to reevaluate their faith.

What is new, therefore, about contextual theology is that theology is conceived as a dialogue—or as American theologian David Tracy would put it, a *mutually critical* dialogue between the experiences of the past and the experience of the present. Both kinds of experiences are normative, and theology is done by allowing our experience today to be measured, judged, interpreted and critiqued by the wisdom found in the classical sources, the "classics" of the Christian tradition, and by allowing those "classics" to be measured, judged, interpreted and critiqued by the happenstances in our lives, by our cultural values, by our struggles and by the epochal changes that are shaping our world.[4]

[4]David Tracy, *The Analagical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (NY: Crossroads, 1981).

A contextual theology for Asia will enter into this mutually critical dialogue in three steps:

(i) by trying to understand the dialogue partner, i.e., the translocal sources of Christian faith;

(ii) by identifying the local sources of human identity;

(iii) by mutually challenging and shaping the translocal through the local and the local through the translocal.

Doing Contextual Theology for Asia

I would like to develop the two main points concerning the unique contribution of the Asian context to the world community—the fact that the Saviour entered the world through Asia and that Asia can rely on a vast treasure of immaterial values.

The Saviour entered the world through Asia

A contextual theology for Asia will work with the blessing and burden of "the primacy of the welcome." Asia welcomed Jesus, the Christ, first, and he spent his whole life in Asia. This is truly an identity-giving statement which says something about the value of *hospitality* in the Asian context. Asia has provided the human context for the incarnation. A contextual theology for Asia then will have to develop a special "ethics of memory," not forgetting the Asian roots of Christianity. An ethics of memory is a code of remembering—what must be remembered, what must not be forgotten.

A contextual theology for Asia could see itself invited to consider the story of Esau (Gen. 27–33) in the light of the "primacy of the welcome." Asia welcomed the Savour first, but then it seems that the gospel has been translated into theology based on European philosophical backgrounds. And now Asia that provided the earthly home for the Saviour needs to reappropriate the good news. Esau lost the blessing as the first born because he did not recognize its value (Gen. 25:31ff) and Jacob was blessed as the first born (Gen. 27:23–30).

There are moments of greed and power in this story, moments only too well known in the framework of contextual theologies. There arose a need for reconciliation and dialogue—and this reconciliation (Gen. 33:4) was only possible because of Jacob's wrestling with an angel (Gen. 32:21–33). Jacob was the one who did not honour the local context by buying the rights of the first born from his brother who (in his way by selling his identity) did not honour his local roots. Jacob was afraid of his brother. And it was in this situation of fear and alienation and a recognition for reconciliation that Jacob wrestled with the angel. The situation of this fight is rich—it could be used as a special way of looking at a contextual theology for Asia, a theology that recognizes the need to enter a dialogue between the local and the translocal. It is this fight that prepared the reconciliation between Jacob and Esau: Jacob was transformed by the fight and Jacob recognized the identity of his brother (Gen. 33:3).

Let us read this fight as an introduction into "doing contextual theology" as a mutually transformative dialogue between the local and the translocal. Looking at this fight we should note the following points that are relevant for contextual theologies:

a) Jacob wrestles alone. Contextual theologies have to fight their own fights and not "by substitution."

b) Jacob wrestles throughout night to the dawn. Remember the night is an image of the transformation and disruption in mystical theology. A "night of wrestling" resembles the experience of exile, the experience of estrangement, of an intermediate stage between a "no longer" (the old orientation being suspended) and a "not yet" (the new orientation not yet having gained a foothold). Contextual theologies are transformative and also open to transformation. As liminal experiences, they balance their fragile equilibrium between the local and the translocal, an equilibrium that needs to be constantly renegotiated.

c) Jacob's left hip is injured and he limps after the fight. The mutually critical and transformative dialogue between the local and the translocal exposes one's vulnerability and wounds. A wounded person can become a wounded healer. Contextual theologies are, in this sense, not "triumphant" and "powerful," they are "wounded theologies," wounded by this sense of broken identities that are constantly being transformed.

d) Jacob holds tightly on to his opponent until he can wrest something from him. Contextual theologies must be stubborn in holding on to the dialogue even in times of difficulty. They are about focus and pertinacity, about endurance and a clear insight into the issues at stake, both local and translocal. As the document *Ecclesia in Asia* had put it: "Attention to local needs is legitimate and indispensable, but communion requires that the particular Churches remain open to one another and collaborate with one another, so that in their diversity they may preserve and clearly manifest the bond of communion with the universal Church."[5]

e) Jacob forces his opponent to bless him ("bene-dicere") and thus the opponent ceases to be an opponent and is transformed into friendship and hospitality. This seems to be a crucial point for contextual theologies, especially in the context of "lost firstbornship." There is a need to overcome opposition, enmity and even a sense of competition.

f) After the wrestling match Jacob gets a new name from his opponent turned friend. Theologizing changes us. Do not allow yourself to remain unchanged by important theological issues you wrestle with. Theologizing is self-mutation, working hard on oneself.

[5]EA 26.

Jacob is given a new name and identity by his opponent who has power over him. There is this sense of humility attached to contextual theologies—humility understood as "having the feet on the 'humus', the ground." Now it is only natural that we do not want to give power over us to the translocal context (or to the local context, depending on the perspective)—but this is the message.

g) Jacob does not find out the name of his adversary who remains an enigma. This is sometimes taken to mean God or the angel. A curious asymmetry—Jacob receives a new name but does not get to know the name of the adversary turned ally. This can mean that no local context can be fully understood ("individuum est ineffabile!"), and it can also mean "The gospel can never be fully understood on a local level." There is a moment of openness and ineffability, a moment of mystery which seems to be of special importance for contextual theologies. In contextual theologies, there is a need to recognise openness and non-closure.

The story of Esau seems to be pertinent for the Asian context. Jacob was transformed by the fight and Jacob recognized the identity of his brother—this is what contexual theology is about: transformation and recognition of identity. A contexual theology for Asia will have to enter a mutually critical dialogue, a "fight" in order to seek reconciliation after having lost the "primacy of the first welcome." This wrestling would mean to look for possible ways of communicating Jesus to the Asian world, as Teacher of Wisdom, Healer, Liberator, Spiritual Guide, the Enlightened One, the Compassionate Friend of the Poor, the Good Samaritan, the Good Shepherd, the Obedient One.[6] The great question now facing the Church in Asia is *how* to share with our Asian brothers and sisters what we treasure as the gift containing all gifts,

[6]EA 20.

namely, the Good News of Jesus Christ[7]—and this sharing involves a moment of wrestling as described.

Asia can rely on a vast treasure of immaterial values

A second key element of a contextual theology for Asia is the fact that Asia has so much to offer in terms of a rich spiritual tradition, a treasure of immaterial values. An important contribution to the construction of "Self" in the Western world brought about by Christianity was the discovery of "interiority" as a major source of identity. Now, the interesting point is that Asia can provide sources of understanding interiority independent from Graeco-Roman philosophies. The Asian spiritual traditions—with their insights into silence, into inwardness, into meditation, into moulding the soul, into a "sacramental world view" where the visible is a symbol for something invisible—have so much to offer to make sense of human interiority. A contextual theology for Asia can contribute to "an inner reading of the world," to an immaterial interpretation of the material and hence can deepen the sense of human interiority. On the other hand, the Christian idea of interiority can find a well prepared soil in Asia.

I have mentioned Margalit's idea of identity-giving groups. A contextual theology for Asia will have to honour the Asian profile of such identity-giving groups. It will also have to protect that. This is not a given. Maybe we have entered a third stage in the construction of contextual theologies. In a first stage, the beginnings of an understanding of a truly global Church, people recognized the importance of the local context as an element in the construction of theologies. In the second stage, the heights of postcolonial discourse and its hermeneutics of suspicion, people tended to develop (maybe in the enthusiasm of discovering the possibilities of local theologies) a sense of the primacy of the local context over the translocal challenges.

[7]EA 19.

In the third stage, in an age of globalization, people need to be reminded of the wealth and value of their local traditions and identity sources. A contextual theology for Asia must recognize the importance of non-American, non-European, truly Asian sources of identity. Contextual theologies can only develop against the background of "self-confidence," "self-knowledge," "self-appreciation," and "self-esteem." And this concept of Self is nourished by an understanding of commitments and a specific set of "beings" and "doings"—nourished also by the above mentioned ethics of memory.

Spiritual Resilience

A contextual theology for Asia could be characterized by the challenge to maintain spiritual resilience. In times of global materialism, in times of a danger to underestimate the local context, in times of spiritual forgetfulness and religious illiteracy, I would encourage thinking about spiritual resilience as a special responsibility for a contextual theology for Asia, honouring the rich spiritual resources that can be found in the Asian traditions.

The capacity to deal with strokes of fate in times of crisis is called "resilience." In light of the situation of contextual theologies as "wrestling," of the threatening of local identities through forces of globalization, the art of showing resilience to the materialism of the times seems especially important. Asian spiritual treasures can serve as basis for spiritual resilience.

To use a well-known example: resilience is necessary in times of change, such as the Babylonian exile of the people of Israel. Chapter 29, verses 4–23 of the Book of Jeremiah ("Letter to the Exiles") asks the exiles to build houses and to live in them, to cultivate gardens and to eat the fruit these bring forth (v. 5). They are requested to make the best of the situation they find themselves in, not to look at their exile as a transitional state but as a place to live in, where they will find new roots and provide for a future home. Growth and development should therefore be possible and are certainly desirable even in a state of crisis and transition. Only then are the people promised hope and

salvation, a change and return. The ability to perceive a situation not as a provisional one, which one should escape, but as a condition which might become permanent and enable one to grow, is closely connected with the ability to recover.

Contemporary studies on resilience mention three main factors that enhance robustness after the experience of loss and deprivation and are key to the construction of spiritually resilient contextual theologies in Asia:

(i) internal factors of resilience: factors that are known to enhance resilience include, for instance, an attitude towards life that minimises the "fear of change," that helps individuals to look after themselves and to plan their lives aiming towards the future.

(ii) external factors strengthening resilience that are dependent on social structures and exterior circumstance: nobody is likely to deny that a functioning system of social security and a functioning health system strengthen resilience; it also seems obvious that a company is capable of developing a culture that is beneficial for resilience. The importance of these factors for contextual theologies must not be underestimated. Human development has to be seen as a moral and social question[8] and at the same time the immaterial commitments can be tested by their "cash value" for the poorest of the poor, by a preferential love of the poor.[9] Spiritual resilience is strengthened if there was really the realization of an option for the poor. Social resilience is dependent on institutions (these may foster an atmosphere of creativity and pluralism and strengthen the ability to cooperate);

[8]EA 32.

[9]EA 34.

> it has to be translated into political structures (these may encourage individual initiative and provide social systems that minimise risks) and fostered in a culture (by educating humans for "agency").

Unlike external factors strengthening resilience, internal factors are dependent on the individuals themselves. These factors include the above mentioned sense of control and self-control, a sense of direction and aim. Internal factors concern spiritual attitudes, mental capacities and preconditions. I would therefore like to propose the term "spiritual resilience" to refer to robustness that is dependent on the inner attitudes, the non-material sources of identity of people. Spiritual resilience therefore relates to factors within humans themselves and depends on attitudes, convictions, an individual's views and styles of cognition. These factors are also important in the outline of the resilient personality. A resilient person is characterized by a number of specific character traits, including creativity, the capacity for suffering, self-knowledge, self-confidence, the capacity to learn, the ability to make friends and the ability to find his way in life. These traits are also constitutive for the capacity to do contextual theology. Spiritual resilience leads to a richer interior life, an interior life that is capable of suggesting alternatives to the status quo, and can therefore be shown to strengthen resilience. Resilience can be strengthened by building up a rich internal life and thus "inner riches," which allow for a certain independence from the external world. A rich internal life is thus created that enables humans to cope with difficult situations, as many intellectuals have noticed in difficult circumstances.

Spiritual resilience aims at increasing our inner strength. This means strengthening those inner resources that are largely independent of external circumstances, as Viktor Frankl has pointed out in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, a key text for the study of resilience.[10] This is where I see a major contribution of Asian contextual theologies—paying attention to the factors that strengthen spiritual resilience. The

[10]Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 2006).

growth and formation of the soul is a question of controlling it. It is important to possess regularity and a sense of moderation, a sense of strictness with oneself and the willingness to make sacrifices in order to become less dependent on external circumstances. The growth of the soul will then lead to the strength of the soul.

By strengthening the sense of the spiritual, contextual theologies from Asia can be both authentic and relevant—they can contribute to the signs of the times, and they can offer remedies for the crisis that we face. And by being authentic and relevant, contextual theologies live up to the ethical standards of our time and avoid a trap into which contextual theologies sometimes fall—the trap of not being understood beyond the local context. The mutually critical dialogue exemplified in Jacob's wrestling ensures the standards of relevance and comprehensibility. Contextual theologies are ultimately not about power, but about trust. In the words of *Ecclesia in Asia*: "The words of Jesus reassure the Church in Asia: 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom' (Lk. 12:32). Those who believe in Christ are still a small minority in this vast and most populous continent. Yet far from being a timid minority, they are lively in faith, [and] full of the hope and vitality which only love can bring."[11]

[11]EA 50.

Landas 24:1 (2010) 31–47

SUPPORTING CAST OR SUPPORTING CASTE

Reading on Behalf of the Multitude*

Gina Hens-Piazza

I want to begin this presentation with an admission, an admission of my hesitation. I realize the dangers and the potential criticism I risk when as a North American (Western) scholar I presume to speak at a conference on Asian Contextual Biblical Studies. I know so little about your context and the multiple contexts that make up the Asian culture. I could blame Father Mario Francisco for inviting me. But I wanted to come. I wanted to begin to get to know you, to learn, to listen and to better understand a very important cultural reality of our world, namely Asia. So I speak here today—as one coming to your country (to the Philippines for the first time) to set forth a proposal—a proposal that grows out of what I do know about this part of the world. Asia is perhaps the most significant culture and continent today for many reasons. But in particular Asia deserves prolonged attention for the simple fact that over 4 billion people, that is, more than 60% of the world's population resides here. And it is about this multitude, whose names I will never know and whose faces I may never see, that I am most interested.

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*This article is a revised version of the keynote address given at the International Conference on "Doing and Teaching Biblical Studies in East Asian Contexts" organized by Loyola School of Theology (LST) and the Catholic Biblical Association of the Philippines (CBAP) at Ateneo de Manila University Campus, July 15–17, 2010.

So let us begin. The impact of cultural/contextual studies on Biblical Studies is no secret. Over the past 20 years, contextual biblical interpretation has become prominent in the parlance of Biblical Studies. While historical criticism, source criticism, textual redaction, and tradition criticism still occupy a place in exegesis, the impact of the reader's culture/context on interpretation holds center stage these days. This turn away from the background of the text and author and toward the reader had its birth in literary studies.

Fifty years ago, the rise of the role of the reader in interpretation rapidly granted license to various groups of readers—Feminists, Latin American readers, African interpreters, and Asian exegetes. Within each of these groups, subgroups developed claiming even greater specificity regarding cultural space and context while generating a variety of interpretative outcomes. Further, "the context" of contextual studies was not only defined by ethnic, national or gender location. One's philosophical, political, economic and social situation in life added further contours to what was admissible as context from which to interpret the text. Consequently, post colonial readings, base Christian communities' interpretations, readings from oppressed places, Marxist interpretations, *mujerista* assessments, subaltern readings, etc. all contributed to expanding the possibilities of what contextual Biblical Studies could accommodate. Stephens Bevans, author of a most important work on six different approaches to contextual studies, was once asked what was the best model for doing contextual theology.[1] Without hesitation, Bevans replied, "it all depends on context."

Still, even under the aegis or spell of contextual biblical interpretation, biblical interpretation is focused upon the exegesis of the text. Biblical hermeneutics has taught us that interpretation involves not just the reader and not just the text—biblical interpretation is the product of a dialogue. It involves the fusion of these two horizons.

[1]Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997).

Hence, exegesis needs to be focused both on the text and on the reader and the reader's context.

There is a dialectic implicit here especially for contextual biblical studies. On the one hand, how we understand and assert our context and culture has a great deal to do with how we read and interpret the text. On the other hand, how we read and interpret the text has a great deal to do with how we understand and interpret the culture and context—both our own surroundings and that of others. Linda Hutchinson in her now well known book, *A Poetics of Postmodernism,*[2] asserts that how we read and understand important cultural texts has a great deal to do with how we read and understand our own cultural context.

So today I am going to turn contextual biblical studies on its head—I am going to begin with the text rather than the reader and explore what happens when we read the text in such a way that it helps us better interpret and understand a broader swathe of context/culture. In particular, I want to read the text in a way that pays attention to the unattended but all important multitudes, many of whom make up your Asian context.

In contextual biblical studies, the primacy of inculturated hermeneutics, that is, the primacy of reading and interpreting the biblical texts, is not located among the biblical scholars or in the academy. Rather, it resides among scholars working within communities of ordinary people. Justin Ukpong notes that for inculturated hermeneutics, "it is the ordinary people that are accorded the epistemological privilege."[3] Ordinary people are those who constitute the multitudes in our world. Their counterparts in the biblical texts are all those unnamed characters who make up the story

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[2]Linda Hutchinson*, A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory*, *Fiction* (New York: Routledge Press, 1988), 160.

[3]Justin Ukpong, "Inculturation Hermeneutics: An African Approach to Biblical Interpretation," in *The Bible in a World Context,* eds. Walter Dietrich and Ulrich Luz (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishers Company, 2002).

world but are never deemed the protagonist or main characters. If ordinary people are afforded the epistemological privilege in contextual interpretation, what would be the yield if the ordinary people of the biblical text were the focus of our work? Would how and who we read and focus upon in the text influence how and who we read and focus upon in our world?

Many years ago Eric Auerback, in comparing Homeric characters with biblical characters, recognized that what is in the background, left obscured and unexpressed, is loaded with a multiplicity of meaning and fertile ground for interpretation.[4] More recently, Seymour Chatman also called character an occasion that provides for an "amplitude of associations" and allows space for consideration of even the most minor of players.[5] What might be the yield if we train our attention on these very minor characters in the biblical narrative? What if we allow for their "multiplicity of meanings" or for the "amplitude of associations" that they might conjure?

Who are these biblical characters? Where do these members of the multitude reside in the narrative? Fleetingly, they are referred to as "the laborers," "the servants," "the crowd," "the people," "the enemy," "the assembly." Embedded in stories that are never theirs, they are the multitudes that fill in the background of the story. They create a human context for the plot, but they are the nameless ones whom we often read past. These multitudes are the supporting cast on whose shoulders the story depends, but whose name and story we never know.

Who are these biblical characters, members of a supporting cast? Fleetingly referenced, they are "the maidens dancing in Shiloh" who are kidnapped and taken for the Benjaminites as wives (Judg 21:15–24). They are the remaining "inhabitants of Gath, Gaza and

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[4]Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 23.

[5]Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 115.

Ashod" after Joshua's bloody campaign against the Anakim (Josh 11:21–23). Among their quiet ranks list "the prostitute of Gaza" visited by Samson in his exploits of the Philistines (Judg 16:1–3), "a man of Baal-Shalisshah" who provided a loaf of bread for Elisha's miracle (II Kgs 4:42–44), "the captain" who fell before Elijah to save his army of 50 (II Kgs 1:13–16), the "four lepers" who discovered the deserted camp of the Arameans (II Kgs 7:3–11), the "woman nurse" guardian who protects Jehoash as a child (II Kgs 11:1–3), or "the servant girl" who informs Naaman's wife how her husband can be cured (II Kgs 5:2–3). Embedded in the text, they constitute the scaffolding of the story-world. Though they provide the infrastructure upon which to build the narrative, their involvement often means effacement. Full development of the protagonist is contingent upon the utilization and delimitation of these background figures.

One of the most effective ways to ensure their delimited status is to refuse them a name. In *Theory of Literature*, Rene Wellek and Austin Warren contend that naming is the simplest form of characterization. "Each appellation is a kind of vivifying, animizing individuating" of a character.[6] William Gass reinforces this observation with his definition. A character is first and foremost "the noise of their name and all the sounds and rhythms that proceed from them."[7] Even Roland Barthes speaks about name as the start of character.[8] Thus denying a name to a character qualifies as one of the foremost strategies for denying them any recognition in the narrative.

Most of these minor characters in biblical narrative are not named. They are hardly visible, and often not even heard. If they speak, they are silenced after the sentence or two they have been assigned. Often they are expelled from the story line as soon as their function has

[6]Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (London: Cape Publishers, 1966), 226.

[7]William Gass, *Fiction and Figures of Life* (Jaffrey: David R. Godine, 1978), 49.

[8]Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 92.

been completed. Nameless, silenced, expelled, they are the subaltern of the literary world. Hence, their actual role unfolds a lot like those functionaries in Marx's system of utilitarianism. They provide a service but the work they do covers over their exploitation in this labor system, in this case, the narrative caste system. They are defined in light of their function—servant, guardian, prostitute, survivor, soldier. References to their person are expeditiously converted into abstractions of utility. This function effectively effaces any manifestation of human qualities. With sleight of hand, such narrative utilitarianism accomplishes a conceptual theft. The actual expropriation of center stage and character importance of the many is overshadowed and sacrificed for the sake of the few. Hence, these less than minor characters become the proletariat of the narrative world. They are the serfs of the narrative system, at the service of a story line that is never theirs.[9]

In popular literature, they might be the street vendor who sells flowers to the hero protagonist. Or they could be drawn as an unnamed housekeeper who, for purposes of suspense, unknowingly pauses to check her watch outside the hotel room where the murder is under way. In the biblical tradition, these obscured personalities are also present though often in the shadows or as mere suggestions in the story line. They are the occupants of the less desirable towns of Galilee that Solomon hands over to Hiram in exchange for gold and bronze to finish his extravagant temple and palace projects (I Kgs 9:10–11). They are workers who weave clothing for Asherah that Josiah fires in an account about his effort to centralize cult, allegiance, and tribute in Jerusalem (II Kg 23:7). They are the friends of Jephthah's daughter, fleetingly referenced in the text, accompanying her to the hills to mourn her unfulfilled life, and presumably left with the grief and horror of their friend's death (Judg 11:39). They are the unnamed children about to be sold into debt slavery whose mother, a widow, insists that the prophet protagonist Elisha assist her (II Kg 4:1–7). They are the peasants

[9]See Alex Wolloch's discussion on a labor theory of character in *The One and the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 26–30.

referenced by Amos whose subsistence farming is taxed beyond what it can endure during the reign of Jeroboam II (Amos 5:1).

As the literary gear they drive the narrative forward. Given this status as mere functionaries, is it legitimate to amplify this cast of characters beyond the literary task they perform in the narrative? Such expositions could appear as a violation of the text's hierarchy of values. Indeed, the label "minor" is already a value assessment, suggesting their delimited role while at the same time distracting the reader from the important part they might play. But still we might object. Are we not disrupting the author's initial vision by training our attention upon these lesser characters?

Attention to minor characters need not be an affront to how the biblical texts have been composed. Nor does such an inquiry urge that authors might have composed their works differently. Instead, investigating minor characters recognizes the essential openness of a literary text. It invites us to entertain the possibility that narrative tells more than one story at the same time. Our reading practices determine what stories we tune in to. Thus, the decision and the responsibility for listening to the other accounts (i.e., the stories of servants, survivors, war hostages, residents of towns bartered for gold and timber, etc.) resides with readers. Do we read past these characters and support the caste system of the narrative, or do we entertain the other stories which the supporting cast might have to tell?

Authors cannot possibly give emphasis to all characters. But how the narrative unfolds certainly calls attention to the process of emphasis and strategy. Thus, narratives themselves offer clues suggesting how a shift in emphasis might yield other possible stories and how other full lives might be foregrounded. Though both history and the Bible are written by the winners, there are other accounts in these texts that bear witness to the stories of individuals making up the multitudes. If we train our attention upon these members of the supporting cast, we may discover new heroes, new examples of virtue and new stories of inspiration that will enable us to see and honor their counterpart in our own context.

An Example

II Kings 5 recounts Naaman's cure by Elisha the prophet. Though joined with previous accounts by the continuation of Elisha's role as healer, this tale distinguishes itself in two discernable ways. First, the plot is composed with noteworthy complexity and drama. Second, the three featured characters—Naaman, Elisha, and Gehazi—are fashioned with particular depth and detail. Hence, the vividness with which they are portrayed not only makes their character front and center in the narrative; it also tends to downplay or even obscure any other characters present in the tale.

The thick dramatic plot enshrining these characters develops across three acts (vv. 1–14, 15–19, 20–27). Each act is a self-contained story focusing on two of these main players. Each act narrates the conditions out of which the subsequent act develops. Thus, the three parts are thematically and sequentially interwoven into a unified and riveting drama.

Act one (vv. 1–14) introduces Naaman, a Syrian general in a most extended way. He serves as a military officer of Aram, one of Israel's archenemies. In addition, he enjoys not only the favor of Aram's king; he is also regarded by Israel's God who has granted him victory over Israel itself (v. 1). But all this greatness is qualified by an addendum to this notoriety. Naaman is afflicted with leprosy which immediately occasions the focus upon the figure of Elisha. While never appearing on the set in this first act, Elisha brings about a cure for the Syrian general. Moreover, the prophet's program sets the stage for Naaman's spiritual healing that will be taken up in the second act.

In part two of the drama (vv. 15–19), Naaman, who has been physically healed of his leprosy, undergoes a spiritual metamorphosis. Standing before the prophet Elisha, Naaman not only confesses his faith in Israel's God; he also acknowledges that this God is the only God in all the world (v. 15). Remarkably, a biblical proclamation of monotheism, the heart of Israelite faith, falls from the lips of a foreigner. During the encounter, Elisha refuses Naaman's offer of gifts as compensation for the cure and catechesis. Finally, as Naaman

heads back home, these gifts brought as payment for the prophet's services occasion Gehazi's greed and fraudulent behavior in the third and final act.

In the concluding scene (vv. 20–27), Gehazi second guesses Elisha's decision to refuse payment from Naaman. He schemes a deceptive ploy to gain those gifts. First, he exploits Naaman and then tries to cover his tracks by lying to Elisha. In the end Elisha, who condemns Gehazi's actions and sentences him for his deeds, confronts him. As punishment, Gehazi becomes afflicted with leprosy. Hence, the conclusion of the third act returns thematically to the opening of the first act. The exploitative Gehazi is in the end afflicted with the same condition from which Naaman is initially cleansed.

Commentaries seize upon this reversal as the heart of this story's lesson.[10] The conversion and profession of faith by Naaman stands against any notions of exclusivity on the part of Israel's God. Like the books of Ruth and Jonah, the story of Naaman tells of a foreigner's witness to the one true God.[11] Naaman's gratitude for his cure from leprosy forms a sharp contrast to Gehazi's greed which results in his affliction. In the end, Naaman the Aramean outsider is delivered, and Gehazi the Israelite insider is afflicted.

Other studies focus upon the character of Elisha and Naaman, exploring the lessons that they prompt.[12] Here connections are readily made between this miracle story and Jesus' healing of a leper. In

[10]Terence Fretheim, *First and Second Kings* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 154–55; Paul R. House, *The New American Commentary VIII: 1 & 2 Kings* (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 274; and Robert L. Cohn, *2 Kings,* Berit Olam Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 42.

[11]Richard Nelson, *First and Second Kings: Interpretation* (Knoxville, KY: John Knox Press, 1987), 183.

[12]T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings Word Book Commentary* (Waco, TX: Word Publishers, 1985), 58–62.

addition, Elisha's strategy for healing this man receives praise. Despite Naaman's expectations of fanfare appropriate to a healing, Elisha does not do anything for him. Initially, Elisha does not even give him an audience. Instead, the prophet requires this military general to do something for himself that will not only result in a cure of his body but also begin to address the malady of his arrogance and the narrowness of his nationalism. Finally, Elisha's refusal of gifts from Naaman also receives attention indicating the prophet's awareness that healing comes from God. Again and again, the lessons and interpretive insights derived from this story stem from the interactions of these three characters.

From the standpoint of narrative development, two other characters also often enter the discussion. The two kings not only play a role in the development of plot but also add to the story's tension. While both are unnamed, they have been identified in earlier stories so we know who they are. The feared Ben hadad of Aram must first grant permission to Naaman to head to Israel for a cure. When he does, he personally sends a letter to Israel's ruler making the request. Riddled with paranoia in response to the overture, Israel's king during this time period is none other than Jehoram. Consistent with his other appearances on the biblical scene, Jehoram exudes pessimism, often blaming God for his problems (II Kgs 3:10; 6:27). In this story, his response momentarily risks derailing the plan that might yield a cure for Naaman. Tearing his garments upon reading the letter, the king interprets the request as an excuse for another conflict with Aram. But Elisha comes to the rescue. When the prophet orders the king to send Naaman to him, spineless Jehoram does so. Even though this king does not like Elisha (6:31), he is evidently willing to have the prophet solve his problems for him once again.

While these kings of Israel and Aram might be registered among the "supporting cast," other characters also number there but in greater obscurity. In the opening of the story, a servant girl informs Naaman's wife about the prospects of a healing in Israel for the military general (vv. 2–3). Midway through Naaman's pursuit of that healing, his own servants rescue what might have been a disastrous about-face on the

part of the indignant Naaman (v. 13). At the end of the story, two of Naaman's servants are used by Gehazi to carry gifts that he has extracted from a now converted Naaman through a deceptive scheme (v. 23). Interjected at these strategic points throughout the narrative, these other players appear as scaffolding devices for the construction of the story. Their collective designation servant/servants further effaces any particularity or interest that their presence might generate. They are servants in the content of the story and they serve as literary props as the story unfolds. In the Naaman story, they appear and disappear as nameless functionaries. Grounded primarily in a labor theory of character, commentaries treat them as subsidiary or ignore them altogether. But can a character enter a narrative and not disrupt the distribution of attention? Even if their story is not being featured in the account, do they not have a story to tell?

Abandoning the directions of the narrator, let us examine the story of the servant girl here more closely. As noted, the introjection of her presence begins and ends at the opening of the Naaman story. Her appearance is brief, a mere two verses. Consistent with the identification as "servant" in her master's house, she is the direct object in the sentence when she is introduced in the tale (v. 2), yet a great deal can be inferred about her. She is more than just a servant girl. We hear that she is young and an Israelite. She is a captive of war, presumably the war where Naaman as head of Aram's forces was victorious over Israel. This is the war where Yahweh granted Aram victory over the Israelites (v. 1). However, unbeknownst to Naaman, the outcome of a battle that occasioned this servant girl's presence in Naaman's life will qualify the victory as more than just a "military" feat. Her presence will also grant Naaman victory over his leprosy.[13]

[13]Gerhard von Rad hinted at her importance as well as the other servants when he observed that the great one will be helped by the lowly ones in the story ("Naaman: A Critical Retelling," in *God at Work in Israel*, trans. J. H. Mark [Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1980], 48).

We can surmise that as a prisoner of war, she works against her own wishes for this military general's wife in his house. Denied freedom, she has likely been taken as war booty from her own country, but that she had been assigned duty in the home of Aram's military chief suggests something about her noteworthiness. Despite the brief description accorded her, much is implied about her character. Though young and a foreigner, she does not lack initiative. Despite her insignificance, she recites the first direct speech of the story. As soon as the problem of Naaman's leprosy is introduced in the story, she addresses it. She informs his wife of the prospects for a cure in Israel. More specifically, this young captive indicates that if Naaman presents himself before the prophet, he will be healed. Hence, the nameless servant mediates what will happen to her lord, Naaman.

That Israel and Aram are archenemies could make her suggestion precarious if not suspect. Encouraging Naaman to seek a remedy in Israel could be dangerous to this powerful military general. Yet the progression of the story implies that there was something very credible about both her proposal and her, for Naaman quickly acts upon it. The word of the servant girl determines where Naaman will go and what he will do. The initiative of this young prisoner of war sets in motion not only what will happen to him but what will unfold in this story.

Who is this servant child? Can we prod the narrative for her "implied story"? Perhaps what emerges first is the great faith she presumably had in both the prophet and in the LORD. For her to assure a cure for Naaman from the prophet in enemy country certainly incurred risks. Indeed, there would be consequences for the servant girl if Naaman had not been healed. Moreover, leprosy was often viewed as punishment in the divine system of rewards and retribution. Because of his leprosy, Naaman the great general might have been scorned in Israel. Yet that a military general so great as Naaman believed the testimony of a young captive of war suggests something about her immense trustworthiness. His swift action indicates that there was something about her which granted her master enough confidence to act on such a precarious proposal from an Israelite war captive. Even before we have done our homework in response to some of the issues

raised by her implied story, the young servant girl's character begins to emerge. In the midst of an account riveted upon the great army general Naaman, the hostile and powerful kings of Aram and Israel, and the miracle working prophet Elisha, this servant girl begins to emerge as one of the most interesting and compelling figures of all.

As we read with admiration of the initiative expended by this young servant girl, we entertain the faith her character implies. At the same time, we are instructed on how her courageous overture extends the theme of inclusivity beyond what most interpretations assign this passage. Here the lesson to include others exceeds ethnic or national boundaries that Naaman's character urges; it now requires attention to those rendered low by social categories or even age, i.e., this nameless servant girl. By her audacious action, this servant child exposes these social divisions as mere facades and thus dismantles them.

In fact, the servant girl's action ultimately dismantles Naaman's artificial importance, yielding a new status for the great general, just like herself. Many observe that when Naaman is cured, the description "his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy" suggests the reversal of his encumbered state. But when this great military officer's leprosy is cured, the description of his cured flesh as like that of "a young boy" (*qaton naar*) reveals more. The parallel with the description of the servant girl as "young girl" (*qatonah naarah*) courts a new kinship between the character of Naaman and the servant girl.[14] In his healed state he becomes more like the servant girl. Hence, in his healed state he moves toward conversion and faith in God. The little child who has great faith foreshadows the great officer who is now on the road to faith.

In the second act, this kinship is further confirmed. In her status as "servant," she sets in motion that which not only renders Naaman's leprosy cured but also heals his inflated sense of self-importance. Recall

[14]Noticed also by Terence Fretheim, *Deuteronomistic History* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1983), 150; Robert L. Cohn, "Form and Perspective in 2 Kings V," *VT* 31 (1983): 177; and Rick Dale Moore, *God Saves: Lessons from the Elisha Stories*, JSOT Supp. 95 (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1980), 73.

his indignant attitude when Elisha does not grant him an audience for the healing. That he was to wash in the dirty waters of the Jordan not once but seven times almost ended the story early. If not for the wisdom of his own servants who cajoled him with a reminder of his greatness, Naaman might have returned home still diseased. When he finally stands before the prophet and confesses his faith in God, Naaman now refers to himself as "servant." He is a servant before the prophet and before the LORD. Hence, the action of the "little child" servant that eventually transformed Naaman's flesh like that of "a little child" also nudged to him to acknowledge his status as "servant" when he confesses his faith.

The great chasm of difference separating a "major" character and this nameless member of the supporting cast reveals their kinship. Both are "servants," yet the parallels in language ("small child" and "servant") that suggest an alliance between these two characters does not obscure the difference that distinguishes them. While Naaman undergoes conversion in a foreign land, he asks Elisha's permission to compromise his faith when he returns home (v. 18). Though the servant girl lives in a foreign land, her words and action manifest no compromise in her faith. Hence, she becomes the benchmark in faith for Naaman and all his greatness.

In a study of characters resident here, we could focus upon the healing and personal transformation of Naaman, or we could set our attention upon the great power of the prophet Elisha to accomplish a physical healing that leads to a spiritual conversion as disclosed in this tale. We could even be enamored with Gehazi who in the second half of the story, because of his own ambitions and greed, ends up with the very condition—leprosy—of which Naaman was cured. We could train our attention on the little servant girl at the beginning of the tale and realize that only at her initiative did the story unfold, and as we proceed in studying her, we may even conclude that of all the courage and personal strength expended in this story, hers perhaps might have been the greatest. Such a discovery emancipates the reader from the narrative system of caste. It nudges us toward engendering alternative reading practices, the kind that result in a more equitable

assessment of the characters there present. This in turn cultivates a new sensitivity toward our own context and a more equitable assessment of all those residing there.

It is important that we take seriously the outcome of our reading practices. Years ago, Michel de Certeau, in his essay "Reading as Poaching," disclosed that what we read and write as well as how we read and write construct "the real" in our lives.[15] As happens in texts so also happens in life. Both share the same power and the same limitation, namely language. I recall again here Linda Hutchinson's insightful observation in her work *A Poetics of Postmodernism.* How we read important cultural texts, and especially ones as influential as the Bible, stands in close relation to how we read the cultural texts of our own world.[16] The namelessness that enshrines some characters, the opportunity for speech denied to others, the delegation of some women and men as expendable, and the lack of social standing for such characters as virgin daughters are all subtle but nevertheless real examples of degradation and even violence in these tales. Failing to cultivate a sensitivity to these individuals in the story, we risk failing to cultivate a sensitivity to such persons in our own lives. Moreover, we also gamble with our ability to recognize some of the unsung heroes among the multitudes, to take note of the uncelebrated examples of self giving individuals of our world, or see the subtle but nevertheless real occasions of abuse or valor that are often right before our eyes.

This relationship between reading texts (in this instance, the Biblical texts) and reading and interpreting texts of culture is at the heart of what I am up to in this essay. The title, "Supporting Cast or Supporting Caste," summons readers to a self-examination of the consequences of our reading practices. Does the way we read sequester some characters in our interpretation who might challenge our partisan

[15]Michel de Certeau, 'Reading As Poaching," in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Randall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 165–176.

[16] Hutchinson*, A Poetics of Postmodernism*, 160.

way of proceeding? Does how we read corroborate a narrator's version of an individual whose prejudices and shortsightedness we share? Do our reading practices reinforce a fictitious sense of self in relation to what, in our own hierarchical system and in our world, are deemed the minor characters making up the multitude? Our sense of self is mediated by others, and those "others" are made up not only of persons in life and on the page who we are quick to identify with or who seem most like us; some of the most compelling insights about ourselves and what is possible for our lives will be prompted by those least like ourselves and perhaps among that supporting cast we might be trained to turn away from or encouraged to ignore. Whether in life or in literature, reading only the central figures, those spot-lighted by the narrator, or those crafted as the tragic or comic protagonists, breeds a false understanding of ourselves. Self-understanding demands an enormous range of characters to learn from and identify with, and not only among those in our context but also those in texts. Only then can we begin to achieve an honest assessment of our strengths and vulnerabilities, our virtues and vices, our potentials and limitations.

How we grapple with "minor characters," whether in the biblical text or as these designations ricochet across to the cultural texts of our world, saddles the reader with further responsibility. In the reading process, new lives previously deemed as "the other" assume center stage, commanding attention and understanding. In texts and in life, the existence of these sidelined individuals is brought into focus and foregrounded. In its new bold relief, it beckons recognition at our initiative.

Hence, this overture attempts to promote a reading practice that grows out of a literary theory where categories of major and minor characters are abandoned. It seeks a solid artistic motive for all characters and their exposition in analysis. It aims for a more democratized assessment of the text where all characters deserve notice and a hearing. But the motive animating such interest eclipses mere literary intrigue. It presumes the relationship between the critical eye trained to survey important cultural texts as the Bible and that same critical eye's attention to the presence and import of (as it turns out) these not so minor characters in our own context and in our world.

How we read this biblical text matters. Grappling with the broadest range of characters grants us urgently needed insights into the many and different "others" who make up our world. It redefines who among us are assigned to categories of privilege and importance in our private and communal schemes of reality. It urges our attention upon the plight of the masses that are often rendered voiceless and seen as only minor characters on the stage of our world. And it may shine light upon members of the nameless multitudes as the real heroes from whom we have much to learn. Finally, attending to the supporting cast of the text and of our world may give us pause before those whose importance may be key to forging more equitable relations among peoples. At this difficult juncture in the life of our world's ever-shrinking global village, the value of such knowledge and understanding needs little explanation.

Landas 24:1 (2010) 49–66

READING THE BIBLE IN THE INDIAN/ASIAN CONTEXT

Rekha M. Chennattu, R.A.

This article begins with preliminary observations on biblical hermeneutics in general, followed by an assessment of the Indian biblical hermeneutics in particular. The article proposes *rootedness in and fidelity to* the biblical text as well as *sensitivity to and relevance for* the Asian contexts and world-views as hermeneutical keys for an Asian reading of the Bible.[1]

Preliminary Observations

As Lucien Legrand observes in his review of the book *Waters of Fire*, "Christian theology itself is the outcome of an encounter between the

[1]This article is a revised version of the keynote address given at the International Conference on "Doing and Teaching Biblical Studies in East Asian Contexts" organized by Loyola School of Theology (LST) and the Catholic Biblical Association of the Philippines (CBAP) at Ateneo de Manila University Campus, July 15–17, 2010. It was first published in the Felicitation Volume on the occasion of the 25th year of service of the Office of Theological Concerns (OTC) in collaboration with the Federation of the Asian Bishops Conference (Vimal Tirimanna, ed., *Reaping a Harvest from the Asian Soil: Twenty Five Years of the OTC/FABC* [Bangalore: ATC, 2011]).

message, culled in the thought patterns of the Semitic world, and the thinking of Greece, of Rome, of successive ages, and now of the age of modern science, sociology, psychology and already of the computer era."[2] Going back to the New Testament times, let us take the example of Saint Paul who was trained to interpret the Torah and belonged to the group that was responsible for the ongoing interpretation of the Torah and its faithful transmission (1 Cor. 15:3). Paul was convinced that "the word of God is not chained/imprisoned" (*ho logos tou theou ou dedetai* [2 Tim. 2:9]) by time and space or by any culture, language, or people, and can be experienced and interpreted in a variety of ways. This is what Paul was doing after his encounter with the Lord on the road to Damascus—reinterpreting the Torah in the light of the Christ event (Gal. 3; Rom. 4) and interpreting the Christ event in the light of the Torah as well as the new pastoral concerns of the growing church in the Gentile world (Gal. 3; 1 Cor. 15; see also Acts 17). Paul was therefore a key figure in extending membership of the church to non-Jews, in defining Christian identity through his law-free gospel and in developing an inculturated Christian theology.[3]

Similarly, the four evangelists interpreted the Christ-event differently. Although we have only one historical Jesus, we have four gospels giving us four different faces of Jesus. Each evangelist interpreted the story of Jesus in response to the needs of their respective communities. For example, by presenting Jesus as the *logos*, the fourth evangelist uses a concept that is familiar to the Jewish, Samaritan and Greek Christians, and reinterprets the meaning and significance of the Christ-event for the Johannine community.[4] The mystery of the

[2]Lucien Legrand, "Book Reviews," *Indian Theological Studies* XIX/2 (1982): 172.

[3]Rekha M. Chennattu, "Challenges of St Paul to the Mission of the Church in Asia-Pacific," *East Asian Pastoral Review* (2009): 46–58.

[4]Rekha M. Chennattu, "The Word Became Flesh (John 1:1–18): A Cross-cultural/religious Expression of the Divine," in *Cross-cultural Encounter: Experience and Expression of the Divine*, eds. Mohan Doss and Andreas Vonach (Innsbruck: Innsbruck University Press, 2009), 43–51.

Incarnation transcends the boundaries of Hellenistic philosophical thought and Jewish religious traditions and becomes a cross-cultural and inter-religious expression of the Divine. Therefore, Saint Paul and the four evangelists seem to be good biblical models for reading the Bible in the Asian context. On the one hand, they remained faithful to the experience of the Christ-event, and on the other they made it meaningful to the new members who embraced the WORD by being sensitive to their cultures and religious traditions. I think we are called to do the same thing.

There is a growing awareness among biblical scholars today that the biblical texts are not unbiased, that biblical interpretations are not neutral, and exegetes are not without their presuppositions. We no longer regard the historical critical method as an objective, neutral and scientific approach to the Bible which can provide correct and meaningful interpretation of the text. This is so because in biblical interpretation, we are dealing with words/expressions—the articulations of human experiences which are conditioned by history, cultures and traditions. So one cannot talk about an Asian chemistry, but can talk about an Asian exegesis.[5]

Asia is blessed with a great diversity of religions, languages and cultures. Almost all great religions originated in Asia and lived side by side peacefully for many years. Among other things, most of the Asian countries also suffer from massive poverty and gender discrimination. In an Asian Biblical Hermeneutics, one reads the Bible with an Asian pre-understanding, shaped by Asian realities and spiritualities as well as Asian exegetical traditions. In other words, an Asian reading should either use Asian methods of interpretation or be guided by the concerns of Asian cultures or provoked by questions emerging from the contemporary socio-political realities of Asian society.

[5]George Soares-Prabhu, "Interpreting the Bible in India Today," *The Way Supplement* 72 (1991): 70–71.

Indian Readings of the Bible

It seems appropriate now to focus on one of the Asian contexts, namely the Indian tradition. The quest for an Indian biblical exegesis is not a recent phenomenon. Many attempts have been made to revive the ancient Indian hermeneutics of "story telling" and to work out a methodology for an Indian biblical hermeneutics. Indian traditional methods were mostly synchronic. As Lucien Legrand puts it, "India has rich traditions of exegesis which have never fallen victim to the lures of diachronic interpretation."[6] The Indian tradition seems to be closer to the Semitic tradition on this point. For example, the Aramaic versions of the Old Testament (*Targums* or *Targumim*) are not literal translations of the Hebrew Bible, but colourful retellings of the old biblical stories for a new life context in the history of Israel. Similarly, for ages Indian *gurus* (religious teachers) have been using hermeneutics as a means of retelling the sacred stories for new generations.[7]

Some fifteen years ago, the late George Soares-Prabhu (an Indian biblical scholar) identified four ways (a list that is indicative or illustrative rather than exhaustive) of reading the Bible from an Indian perspective which are very significant for our discussion. Soares-Prabhu wrote:[8]

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[6]Lucien Legrand, "New Horizons in Biblical Exegesis," *Indian Theological Studies* 21 (1984): 205.

[7]The works of the great missionaries like Robert de Nobili (1577–1656) and Constant Joseph Beschi (1680–1746) show that they have followed the Indian tradition of "story telling" and "retelling of old stories" for a new audience living in a different context. Following the example of two of the Hindu Sanskrit epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, Beschi wrote an Indian Christian epic, a poetical work on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, called *Thembāvani* (*The Unfading Garland*) in which St. Joseph is portrayed as the hero.

[8]George Soares-Prabhu, "Editorial," *Jeevadhara* xxv/146 (1995): 104.

An Indian reading of the Bible might mean any one of the following:

1. Reading the biblical text using traditional Indian methods of interpretation (like *dhvani*).
2. Reading the Bible in the light of specifically Indian concerns (like poverty or caste).
3. Reading the Bible with an Indian mind, that is, with the sensibilities of the great or little traditions of India (like the *vedantic* reading of John or a tribal reading of the Exodus).
4. Reading a biblical text along with a parallel text from an Indian Scripture—not to compare their respective religious world-views, but to gain new insights into the biblical text from its similarity to or difference from its inter-text.

I shall briefly deal with the three methods which are more common: 1) The use of the Indian traditional methods; 2) The *dhvani* interpretation; 3) Readings based on Indian realities and concerns.[9]

The Use of the Indian Traditional Methods

This reading goes back to the Vedic or Upaniṣadic experience of God and tries to understand the biblical symbols and narratives from the framework of the Indian religious mind. In this process, biblical symbols are placed on a par with Indian ones or replaced by Indian symbols from the Sanskrit literary tradition. Examples include the works of Krishna Mohan Banerjee, who found similarities between Vedic texts and biblical narratives and claimed Indian Christians as the spiritual heirs of Aryan Hindus[10]; Swami Abhishiktananda,

[9]For reading a biblical text along with a parallel text from an Indian Scripture, I suggest the article of Soares-Prabhu on "Two Mission Commands" which interprets Matthew 28:16–20 (the mission command in Matthew) in the light of a Buddhist text (*Biblical Interpretation* 2 [1994]: 264–82).

[10]Krishna Mohan Banerjee, *The Relation between Christianity and Hinduism* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1892). As Kaj Baago puts it, Banerjee "tries to prove two propositions: (i) that the Christian doctrine about salvation

who presented the Gospel of John as a Christian Upaniṣad[11]; T. M. Manikkam, who studied both the literary evolution of the *Dharmaśāstra*[12] and the Pentateuch and compared the teachings of Manu with the laws of Moses from philosophical, social and religious perspectives[13]; Bede Griffiths, who interpreted the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in the light of the *advaitic* (non-dualistic) experience of *Saccidānanda*[14];

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finds a remarkable counterpart in the Vedic principles of primitive Hinduism in relation to the destruction of sin and redemption of the sinner by the sacrifice of Prajapathi, the Lord and Saviour of Creation. (ii) That this Prajapathi is Jesus Christ" (*Library of Indian Christian Theology: A Bibliography* [Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1969], 9).

[11]Swami Abhishiktananda, *Hindu-Christian Meeting Point: Within the Cave of the Heart* (Bombay/Bangalore: IIC/CISRS, 1969). See also his *Saccidananda: A Christian Approach to Advaitic Experience* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1974).

[12]*Dharmaśāstra* is the name for a traditional (ancient) Hindu text or book that contains laws or codes (corresponding to the Catholic Canon Law). There are several such *Dharmaśastra* books; the most important are the codes of Manu and Yajnyavalkya.

[13]T. M. Manikkam, *Dharma According to Manu and Moses* (Bangalore: Dharmaram, 1977). Manikkam also presents the thematical scheme of the laws of *Dharma* in Manusmrti and that of *Sedāqā* in the Pentateuch; see pages 328–40.

[14]See Bede Griffiths, *Return to the Centre* (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1978); *The Marriage of East and West* (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1983). *Saccidananda* is one of the later definitions or descriptions of Brahman (or the Supreme Being) in the *Upanishads*: *Saccidanandam Brahma*. Brahman is Being, Consciousness, Bliss. These characteristics or qualities are identical with Brahman, who is one Person. However, Brahmabandhav Upadhyay, in his hymn *Vande Sac-cit-anandam* which appeared in the monthly journal *Sophia* in October 1898, established a correspondence between *Saccidananda* and the Christian Trinity (which is three Persons): *Sat* refers to the First Person (Father), who is Being, since the First Person is the "Creator"; *Cit* refers to the Second Person, the Logos, the Word, the Son; *Ananda* refers to the Third Person, the Holy Spirit. Cited in George Gispert-Sauch, "The Sanskrit Hymns of Brahmabandhav Upadhyay," *Religion and Society* 19:4 (1972): 60–77, especially 65–77. For a scholarly explanation of the hymn, see also Julius Lipner and George Gispert-Sauch, eds., *The Writings of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay* I (Bangalore: The United Theological College, 1991), 125–45; Julius J. Lipner, *Brahmabandhab Upadhyay: The Life and Thought of a Revolutionary* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 199–204.

Vandana Mataji, who studied the Johannine symbol of *logos* in the light of the Upaniṣadic concept of *aum* and the symbol of water in the light of Hindu scriptures and traditions[15]; and Corona Mary, who used the Tamil Śaiva-Siddhānta tradition to interpret biblical texts.[16] Such readings require an in-depth knowledge of both Hindu and Christian Scriptures to do justice to both traditions.

The Dhvani Method of Interpretation

The *dhvani* theory goes back to the 9th century linguistic studies in India and was first proposed by Anandavardhana of Kashmir in his work, *Dhvanyāloka*.[17] Anandavardhana argues that beyond the primary meaning (*abhidhā*) and the secondary meaning (*lakṣanā*) of a word, there is something real and beautiful which he calls "*dhvani*," the suggested or evoked meaning. Anandavardhana further explains the *dhvani* theory through similes and metaphors; he compares *dhvani* with the charm in a young woman. This charm is not identified with any individual part of the body or with the ornaments she wears, but it stands out. Similarly, the suggested meaning or *dhvani* shines above the individual words and their meaning. The suggested or evoked meaning creates an ambience of pleasant surprise among the readers or hearers.[18] In the words of A. Amaladass, "*dhvani* is something like an echo or resonance creating newer and newer echoes (*anuranana*). The popular etymology of the word

[15]Vandana Mataji, "The 'Johannine-Upanishadic' Experience: An Indian Meditation on John's Prologue," *Indian Theological Studies* 16 (1979): 153–68; see also her *Waters of Fire* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1981).

[16]See Corona Mary, "Divinization through Grace: Understanding a Johannine Theme in the Light of Śaiva-Siddhanta," *Jeevadhara* 25 (1995): 161–72.

[17]Anandavardhana, *Dhvanyāloka*, trans. K. Krishnamurthy (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1974).

[18]Anandavardhana, *Dhvanyāloka,* 6.18–19; cited by A. Amaladass, "'Dhvani' Theory in Sanskrit Poetics," *Biblebhashyam* 5/4 (1979): 262–75. See also his book, *Philosophical Implications of Dhvani: Experience of Symbol Language in Indian Aesthetics* (Vienna: Gerald & Co, 1984), 79–80.

dhyanyate brings out this aspect, 'that by which the real meaning (of the poem) resounds'."[19] Unlike the primary and secondary meanings, *dhvani* thus provides new meanings to new readers. Amaladass further explains the role of *dhvani* with the traditional, stock example of *Gangāyām ghosah* (literally "the village on the Ganga" [Ganges river]) which suggests or evokes an ambience of serenity, peace and holiness associated with the sacred river.[20] George Soares-Prabhu regards *dhvani* as a metaphor because *dhvani,* like a metaphor, "does not communicate a lesson, but evokes a limit experience—an experience of the transcendent which is so utterly beyond conceptualization."[21] The Indian *dhvani* reading comes very close to the semiotic analysis of the West.[22] The *dhvani* method pays special attention to the evocative process at work through various factors like structure, style, diction, intonation or gestures.

Readings Based on Indian Realities and Concerns

The contextualized readings display a special sensitivity to the Indian social realities like mass poverty, social discrimination and

[19]Amaladass, "'Dhvani' Theory in Sanskrit Poetics," 262. See also Francis X. D'Sa, "*Dhvani* as a Method of Interpretation," *Biblebhashyam* 5/4 (1979): 276–94.

[20]Amaladass, "'Dhvani' Theory in Sanskrit Poetics," 263.

[21]George Soares-Prabhu, "And There was a Great Calm: A Dhvani Reading of the Stilling of the Storm (Mark 4:35–41)," *Biblebhashyam* 5/4 (1979): 301.

[22]For a discussion of semiotic analysis and *dhvani*, see Joseph Pathrapankal, "The Way to the Kingdom of God: A Semiotic Reading of a Markan Pericope (Mark 10:2–16)," *Jeevadhara* 25 (1995): 120–22. Among scholars who tried to interpret the Bible using the *dhvani* method include George Soares-Prabhu, Matthew Vellanickal, Anand Amaladoss and R. J. Raja. See George Soares-Prabhu, "And There was a Great Calm: A Dhvani Reading of the Stilling of the Storm (Mark 4:35–41)," 295–308; Matthew Vellanickal, "Drink from the Source of the Living Water," *Biblebhashyam* 5/4 (1979): 309–18; Anand Amaladoss, "Dhvani Method of Interpretation and Biblical Hermeneutics," *Indian Theological Studies* 31 (1994): 199–217; R. J. Raja, "Seeking God, Sought by God: A Dhvani-Reading of the Episode of Zacchaeus (Lk 19:10)," *Jeevadhara* 25 (1995): 139–48.

political corruption. Among these readings, two perspectives stand out: (1) Social and political perspectives (e.g., *dalit* readings from the point of view of the socially marginalized outcasts or *dalits* [literally, "oppressed"] and tribal readings from the point of view of the Indian tribal communities); (2) Feminist readings from the point of view of the experience of women in India who are victims of a double discrimination in society.

Social and Political Readings

The biblical stories were looked at from social and political perspectives. Following the principle of equality and justice, biblical texts have been interpreted from the perspective of the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized. The late George Soares-Prabhu, Samuel Rayan and the late Sebastian Kappen were pioneers in this field in India.[23] Indian social readings emphasized both personal conversion and structural change to bring about a just society that makes God's reign visible here on earth. A *dalit* reading is an Indian offshoot of the social reading as it interpreted the Bible in the light of the experience of the *dalits* (one of the most discriminated against

[23]George Soares-Prabhu, "'Good News to the Poor'; The Social Implications of the Message of Jesus," *Biblebhashyam* 4 (1978): 193–212; "Jesus and Social Justice," in *Jesus for Our Times: Towards a Spirituality of Social Action* (Manila: FABC Office of Human Development, 1986) 34–52; "Class in the Bible: The Biblical Poor a Social Class?" in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 147–71; Samuel Rayan, "Jesus and the Poor in the Fourth Gospel," *Biblebhashyam* 4 (1978): 213–28; "Jesus and the Struggles of the Masses in India," *Third Millennium* 11 (1999): 18–31; Sebastian Kappen, *Jesus and Freedom* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1977); *Jesus and Society: Selected Writings of Sebastian Kappen S.J.* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2002). See also L. Legrand, "'There is neither Slave nor Free, neither Male nor Female': St Paul and Social Emancipation," *Indian Theological Studies* 18 (1980): 135–63. See also Simon Samuel, "The *Kairos* of the *Galilaioi*: An Indian Liberationist Reading of John 1–7," *Jeevadhara* 25 (1995): 149–60. More than a decade ago, I did a political reading of the good shepherd metaphor in John's Gospel when India celebrated the 50th anniversary of her independence from British rule. See Rekha M. Chennattu, "The Good Shepherd (Jn 10): A Political Perspective," *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies* 1:1 (1998): 93–105.

groups which are said to be outcastes, i.e., considered lower than the lowest caste).[24] It developed a spirituality of confrontation against the enslaving social structures that perpetuate unjust and unequal relationships in society. Biblical texts are also interpreted from a tribal perspective. In an interpretation of Exodus 1–15, for example, Peter Haokip tried to show parallels between the exodus story of Israel and that of the tribal people of North East India.[25]

Indian Feminist Readings

Although many attempts have been made to develop an Indian feminist theology,[26] we have not done much in articulating a biblical hermeneutics from an Indian woman's perspective. Pauline Chakkalakal is one of the pioneers who contributed to this area by reading the biblical texts with special sensitivity to the patriarchal bias in the Bible.[27]

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[24]See for example, A Maria Arul Raja, "The Authority of Jesus: A Dalit Reading of Mark 11:27–33," *Jeevadhara* 25 (1995): 123–38. For *dalit* theology in general, see for example Peter Arockiadoss, *Equal and Free*, ed. Michael Amaladoss (Dindigul, India: Vaigarai Publications, 2010).

[25]Peter Haokip, "A Tribal Reading of Exodus 1–15," *Jeevadhara* XL/236 (2010): 89–108. For tribal theologies, see also the *Journal of Tribal Studies*; James Massey and Shimreingam Shimray, eds., *Dalit-Tribal Theological Interface: Current Trends in Subaltern Theologies* (Jorhat: TSC/WSC and Delhi: CDS, 2007).

[26]For example, see Pearl Drego, "The Place and Role of Women in Church and Society in the Light of Vatican II," in *Quest for an Indian Church: An Exploration of the Possibilities Opened up by Vatican II*, eds. Kurien Kunnumpuram and Lorenzo Fernando (Anand, India: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1993), 181–212; Shalini Mulackal, "Political Economy of Participation: Women in the Life and Mission of the Church," in *Ecclesia of Women in Asia: Gathering the Voices of the Silenced*, eds. E. Monteiro and A. Gutzler (Delhi: ISPCK, 2005), 184–94. See also R. S. Shrivastava, "Women Empowerment: Some Critical Issues," in *Modernity, Feminism and Women Empowerment*, eds. A. Avasthi and A. K. Srivastava (Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2001), 171–81; Mary C. Grey, *A Cry for Dignity: Religion, Violence and the Struggle of Dalit Women in India* (London: Equinox Publishing, 2010).

[27]See Pauline Chakkalakal, *Discipleship: A Space for Women's Leadership* (Mumbai: Pauline Publications, 2004). Rekha Chennattu, "Women in the Mission of the

What is the unique and distinct way in which Indian women respond to the present situation of cultural alienation, religious deprivation and male domination? The following observation seems timely and relevant. The conventions such as "being submissive" or "to cultivate a capacity to endure suffering and humiliation" still reflect in many ways what Indian women were taught (and still believe) as the most natural, normal and noble way of behaving in society. What seems appropriate in handling these issues is the strategy of constructive dialogues in view of challenging and changing the gender stereotypes in the Church and society, of being sensitive to the echoes of the deepest aspirations of Indian women. Theological illiteracy is indeed one of the reasons for the subordination of women in the Church. Adequate biblical and theological formation will empower women to play their rightful role in the Church.

Jesus' vision of God's reign (Luke 4:16–21), Paul's dreams of an egalitarian society (Gal. 3:28) and the significant roles played by biblical women have been a source of inspiration for Indian women. Courageous biblical women (e.g., the midwives in the story of the Exodus, the mother of Moses, Miriam, Deborah, Judith, Ruth, Esther, etc. in the OT, Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary and Martha, Mary Magdalene, as well as the four women mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew in the NT) not only reflect the socio-cultural reality of the biblical world but also foreshadow the ideals, aspirations and struggles of contemporary Indian women.[28] Sandra

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Church: An Interpretation of John 4," *Vidyajyoti: Journal of Theological Reflection* 65 (2001): 760–73, or "Les Femmes dans la Mission de la Église: Interpretation de Jean 4," *Bulletin de Litterature Ecclesiastique* CVIII/3 (2007): 381–96; "Asian Feminist Christology," in *Asian Faces of Christ: OTC Theological Colloquium*, ed. Vimal Tirimanna (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2005), 183–202. See also the whole issue of the journal, *Jesus and Women, Jeevdhara* XL/237 (2010): 175–252.

[28]See Rekha Chennattu, "Biblical Women as Agents of Justice and Peace," in *Word of God: Source of Justice and Peace*, ed. A Peter Abir (Tindivanam, India: CBF, 2008), 124–58; Evelyn Monteiro, "Re-imaging Woman and Reshaping Her Destiny: An Indian Feminist Reading of the Bent Body," in *Body and Sexuality: Theological-Pastoral*

M. Schneiders discusses a three-fold mission of the Feminist biblical hermeneutics which is very relevant: it has the mission of liberating 1) all oppressed in general and 2) the Church from a gender biased world-view which alienates women from decision-making bodies as well as 3) the text from its own participation in the discrimination against women.[29] An integrated approach that focuses on a liberating God-experience leading to the empowerment of women (at the personal level) and social transformation will be the hallmark of Indian feminist readings of the biblical narratives.

Towards an Asian Biblical Hermeneutics

We begin with a discussion of the Hindu world-view (one of the Asian religious traditions) which will hopefully help identify the hermeneutical key for an interpretation of the Bible in Asia today.

Asian/Hindu World-view

The focus here is the impact of Asian/Hindu (major or *brahmanic* tradition) understandings of God's word and the Asian/Hindu world-view on the Christian appropriation of God's word and reading of the Bible. Lipner makes a helpful distinction between Hinduism and "Hinduness"—while Hinduism stands for "a family of religious traditions," Hinduness refers to the distinctive characteristics of the family of Hinduism, viz., "a particular orientation in the world, a specific way of being, a distinctive *mentalité*."[30]

Perspectives of Women in Asia, eds. Agnes M. Brazal and Andrea Lizares Si (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2007), 139–50.

[29]Sandra M. Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999), 126–34; Sandra M. Schneiders, "Feminist Ideology Criticism and Biblical Hermeneutics," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 19 (1989): 3–10.

[30]Lipner, "Ancient Banyan: An Inquiry into the Meaning of 'Hinduness'," *Religious Studies* (1996): 112.

The Hindu mind generally believes that God upholds the values that sustain and preserve the universe and is at work in human history. In the words of Vensus A. George, "the concept of the *avatāra* of Lord Viṣṇu in Vaiṣṇavism and the concept of *śakti* of the Lord Śiva in Śaivism point to the immanent aspect of the supreme God as active in the world respectively."[31] It seems that the fundamental unity pervading the Hindu traditions consists in a world-view that propagates the sacredness of the universe. Some Hindu schools like Śrī Vaiṣṇavism or Viśiṣṭādvaita (or Ramanuja and others of this school) regard the whole universe as the body of God. Vensus A. George refers to this unity as a "spiritual perspective with which the whole universe is viewed and understood" in Hinduism.[32]

The Asian tradition seems to consider that, more than the accumulation of information and speculation on dogmas of faith, the purpose of the study of the Scriptures is enlightenment or liberation (*mokṣa*). In the words of Sister Vandana, "reflection and commentaries on the Scriptures—*bhashya*—are the normal mode used in India for a growth in the spiritual life, for that is the goal of all theologizing —coming closer to God till we are one with him."[33] The knowledge sought after in the Scriptures, especially in the Upaniṣads, "is not that of ritual techniques or even of ritual-based homologies, but a graspable, revelatory and experiential knowledge of the self as one with the ultimate reality. In the early Upaniṣads this experience is formulated as the realization of 'ultimate connection,' the oneness of *Ātman-brahman*, a connection knowable only in the context of communication from *Guru* to disciple."[34] The exegetes are called to experience the divine

[31]Vensus A. George, *Paths to the Divine: Ancient and Indian*, Indian Philosophical Studies XII (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2008), 294.

[32]George, *Paths to the Divine*, 295.

[33]Vandana, *Waters of Fire*, xvii.

[34]Alf Hiltebeitel, "Hinduism," in *World Religions: Selections from the Sixteen-Volume Macmillan Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 488.

presence and then to clarify the vision of the divine word (*vāk*) which had been experienced by the ancient authors.[35] In Hindu exegesis, reason and revelation are regarded as complementary. Reason alone is empty and powerless when it comes to revealing and possessing the knowledge of the divine, but reason is necessary to remove doubts and obstructions.

The Hindu *mentalité* (to use an expression from Lipner) encourages open-ended inclusion and healthy relativism. It usually prefers a "*both-and*" to an "*either-or*" approach to reality and doctrines. Hindu traditions maintain an overall integrity and interrelatedness.[36] Asia's relativistic and inclusive world-view is expressed in the logical axiom of *sive-sive* "be it this way, be it that" or in other words "this as well as that," which coordinates rather than dissects. Julius Lipner shows that the analogy of a magnificent banyan tree explains well the polycentrism as well as the organic oneness of the diverse religious traditions grouped together under the umbrella of Hinduism.[37] The Hindu mind is characterized by an integrated diversity that upholds both unity and pluralism.

Hermeneutical Keys for an Indian/Asian Reading

As one of the Asian traditions suggests, the purpose or goal of interpreting God's Word is not mere knowledge but rather enlightenment or transformation because our interpretation strives to lead "the reader to a depth-meaning which is experienceable but

[35]Harold Coward, *Sacred Word and Sacred Text: Scripture in World Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), 122–28.

[36]Tinu Ruparell, "Hinduism," in *Encountering Religion* 2nd ed., eds. Ian S. Markham and Tinu Ruparell (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 167.

[37]Julius Lipner, "On Hinduism and Hinduisms: The Way of the Banyan," in *The Hindu World*, eds. Sushil Mitta and Gene Thursby (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 9–34, esp. 24–25. See also Rekha M. Chennattu, "*Verbum Dei* nel Contesto dell'Induismo," Paper presented at the Settimana Conclusiva dell' Anno Centenario del Pontifical Biblical Institute on May 5, 2010 (Rome, Italy).

not expressible."[38] To achieve this, when the exegetes deal with the Gospels, the interpreter needs to take into consideration *the world behind the text* (Christian communities responsible for the Gospels), *the world of the text* (the plot in the Gospels) and *the world in front of the text* (the contemporary Asian context).[39] The interpretation needs to be rooted in the biblical traditions as well as be relevant to the Asian contexts. *Rootedness in and fidelity to* the biblical text (the *centripetal* aspect of Asian reading) as well as *sensitivity to and relevance for* the Asian contexts and world-views (the *centrifugal* aspect of Asian reading) should function as hermeneutical keys for an Asian reading of the Bible.

Rootedness and Fidelity

In order to make an Asian interpretation of the text a Christian reading (which is different from a Hindu or Buddhist reading, for example), the interpretation should be faithful to the religious experience that is being communicated to the reader. The reader meaning (what is understood by the reader) should be in continuity with the author meaning (what is meant by the author). This process demands rootedness in the biblical tradition and fidelity to the text under consideration. Mastery of the biblical languages such as Hebrew, Greek, Syrian and Latin is crucial for an informed reading of biblical texts. Considering the richness and diversity of biblical texts, exegetes need to use a variety of complementary methods. Integration of various diachronic as well as synchronic methods becomes imperative.

An Asian reading should use different scientific methods to ensure the fidelity to the text. Textual criticism helps one to deal with issues

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[38]D' Sa, "*Dhvani* as a Method of Interpretation," 279.

[39]See Sandra M. Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* 2nd ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999). See also Rekha M. Chennattu, "The *Svadharma* of Jesus: An Indian Reading of John 5:1–18," in *Seeking New Horizons: Festschrift in Honour of M. Amaladoss, S.J.*, ed. Leonard Fernando (Delhi: Vidyajyoti Education and Welfare Society & Indian Society for Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 2002), 317–35.

concerning the variant readings of the passage under consideration. Grammatical criticism responds to the questions pertaining to the biblical languages in general and the syntax of the sentences in particular. Literary criticism deals with style, character, compositional technique and the rhetorical patters of the given text. The literary context or the location of the passage and its function within the larger literary units are important for the interpreter to be in continuity with the author meaning. Rhetorical analysis explores how biblical texts employ literary devices to persuade their readers. The Bible contains a rich diversity of literary genres and forms such as hymns, parables, allegories, prophetic speeches, pronouncement stories, miracle stories, diatribes, type scenes and metaphors, to mention a few. Questions concerning the literary forms and genres constitute the field of form criticism. Redaction criticism seeks to understand the changes the text might have undergone in the editorial process and focuses on the final form of the text under consideration.[40] Moreover, biblical exegetes need to revive the ancient Asian hermeneutics of "story telling" by exploring narrative criticism and reader-response criticisms.[41] The exegetes need to learn to ask right questions and learn to answer them in a coherent and meaningful way.

Sensitivity and Relevance

In order to make an Asian reading more meaningful and relevant for our times, the interpretation should be shaped by Asian social

[40]See Peter S. Williamson, *Catholic Principles for Interpreting Scripture: A Study of the Pontifical Biblical Commission's The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, Subsidia Biblica 22 (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2008). For these criticisms in detail, see Wilhelm Egger, *How to Read the New Testament: An Introduction to Linguistic and Historical-Critical Methodology*, ed. Hendrikus Boers (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996). See also Horacio Simian-Yofre, ed., *Metodologia dell' Antico Testamento* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna, 1995).

[41]Jean Louis Ska, "*Our Fathers Have Told Us*": *Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives*, Subsidia Biblica 13 (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1990); Mark Allen Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism? A New Approach to the Bible* (London: SPCK, 1993).

realities as well as the Asian world-view and spiritual quest. Asian biblical hermeneutics should therefore take care of the relevance of the interpretation for the Asian readers.[42] An integration of a variety of readings such as tribal, dalit, feminist, political, cultural and social perspectives will bring out the richness of biblical texts for Asia.[43] A dialogue between the biblical world and Asian socio-political realities and religious traditions becomes imperative in the process. It challenges the interpreter to be deeply rooted in and sensitive to the Asian realities and worldviews in order to make the interpretation relevant and meaningful.

Asian sensitivity demands an inclusive approach which upholds the dignity and right of women and a social sensitivity that takes care of the poor and less privileged sections of society as well as the sustainability of the universe. The interaction with the Word of God brings about both personal conversion (*metanoia*) and social commitment to build up a more just and humane society. As George Soares-Prabhu puts it, "'Liberation' for the Asian psyche is not only liberation from poverty, but equally the liberation which leads to that 'poverty' which is freedom from illusion, attachment and greed."[44] It implies an integration of biblical exegesis, theology and spirituality. The primary purpose of biblical hermeneutics for Asians should be an encounter with God which results in personal *metanoia,* brings about social transformation

[42]See Soares-Prabhu, "Interpreting the Bible in India Today," 77–79; R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *Interpreting the Bible in the Third World* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006).

[43]See for example R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism: Contesting the Interpretations* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

[44]George Soares-Prabhu, "Inculturation—Liberation—Dialogue: Challenges to Christian Theology in Asia Today," in *Biblical Themes for a Contextual Theology Today: Collected Writings of George M. Soares-Prabhu, S.J.* I, ed. Isaac Padinjarekuttu (Pune, India: Jnanadeepa Vidyapeeth, 1999), 56. See also Samuel Rayan, "Asia and Justice," in *Liberation in Asia: Theological Perspectives*, eds. S. Arokiasamy and G. Gispert-Sauch (Anand, India: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1987), 3–16; Kurien Kunnumpuram, *Towards a New Humanity* (Mumbai: St Paul's, 2005), 131–57.

and protects the cosmos for future generations. This personal experience of God in the process of exegesis empowers the interpreters to share in the life of God, leading them to become instruments of God's reconciling or redemptive work (2 Cor. 5:18–21).

Conclusion

The real challenge is to get all the three horizons—the biblical traditions, ancient Asian traditions and the contemporary secular contexts—to interact with one another and enter into a process of dialogical engagement.[45] An Asian reading of the Bible is therefore characterized by both *centripetal* (maintaining rootedness and continuity) and *centrifugal* (encouraging sensitivity and diversity) aspects of hermeneutics. On the one hand, the interpreter needs both the historical and the literary critical methods in order to be rooted in the biblical text and to be faithful to the religious experience transmitted to us by the early Christian community. On the other hand, the interpreter needs to be familiar with ancient Asian traditions and be sensitive to the realities of the contemporary Asian society in order to make his/her interpretation relevant to the modern readers of Asia.

[45]See for example the editorial and articles in Rekha M. Chennattu, ed., *Towards an Indian Biblical Hermeneutics*, *Jeevadhara* XL/237 (2010): 87–168.

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THE CHURCH IN ASIA AND PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS

James H. Kroeger, M.M.

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) has been the most influential body in the Asian Church since the Second Vatican Council. It has strengthened the bonds of communication among Catholic communities and their bishops and has contributed to the development of a shared vision of the Church and her evangelizing mission in Asia. The FABC asserts that the pathway for the Church in Asia to truly discover its own identity is to continually engage in a three-fold dialogue: with Asian peoples (especially the poor) (integral development), Asian cultures (inculturation), and Asian religions (interfaith dialogue). This programmatic vision of a "triple dialogue" has constructively guided the FABC for nearly four decades. In a word, one can validly assert that the FABC is truly "Asia's Continuing Vatican II."

An FABC Introduction

Before addressing the links between the FABC and migration, the specific topic of this presentation, a brief background contextualization on the FABC appears necessary. The FABC is

a transnational episcopal structure that brings together eighteen bishops' conferences from the following countries as full members: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Laos-Cambodia, Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei, Myanmar (Burma), Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam. FABC has ten associate members drawn from the ecclesiastical jurisdictions of East Timor, Hong Kong, Kyrgyzstan, Macau, Mongolia, Nepal, Siberia, Tadjikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Thus, in total, twenty-eight countries are represented in the FABC, which grew out of the historic gathering of 180 Asian Catholic Bishops with Pope Paul VI during his 1970 Asian visit; it was on November 16, 1972 that Paul VI officially approved the FABC Statutes.

These FABC statutes have gone through several revisions since their initial approval; the current statutes, modified in 1995, have been approved by the Holy See. FABC describes its principal functions in seven points: 1) To study ways and means of promoting the apostolate, especially in the light of Vatican II and post-conciliar documents, and according to the needs of Asia; 2) To work for and to intensify the dynamic presence of the Church in the total development of the peoples of Asia; 3) To help in the study of problems of common interest to the Church in Asia, and to investigate possibilities of solutions and coordinated actions; 4) To promote inter-communication and cooperation among local Churches and bishops of Asia; 5) To render service to episcopal conferences of Asia in order to help them to meet better the needs of the People of God; 6) To foster a more ordered development of organizations and movements in the Church at the international level; 7) To foster ecumenical and interreligious communication and collaboration. Several of these goals converge in the service that the FABC seeks to render to millions of migrants in Asia.

Aside from a modest central structure, there are nine FABC offices which carry out many concrete initiatives and projects. The offices, purposely scattered among various Asian nations, are focused on evangelization, social communication, laity and family, human development, education and faith formation, ecumenical and interreligious affairs, theological concerns, clergy, and consecrated life.

Each of these offices sponsors a wide variety of activities that promote the growth of the Asian local Churches.

The supreme body of the FABC is the Plenary Assembly, which convenes approximately every four years. The themes, places, and dates of the ten plenary assemblies include the following: **I**. "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia" (Taipei, Taiwan: 1974); **II**. "Prayer—the Life of the Church in Asia" (Calcutta, India: 1978); **III**. "The Church—Community of Faith in Asia" (Bangkok, Thailand: 1982); **IV**. "The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World of Asia" (Tokyo, Japan: 1986); **V**. "Journeying Together toward the Third Millennium" (Bandung, Indonesia: 1990); **VI**. "Christian Discipleship in Asia Today: Service to Life" (Manila, Philippines: 1995); **VII**. "A Renewed Church in Asia: A Mission of Love and Service" (Samphran, Thailand: 2000); **VIII**. "The Asian Family toward a Culture of Integral Life" (Daejeon, Korea: 2004); **IX**. "Living the Eucharist in Asia" (Manila, Philippines: 2009); and **X**. "FABC at Forty: Responding to the Challenges of Asia" (Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam: 2012).

The Seventh FABC Plenary Assembly in the year 2000 provided an insightful synthesis of the thirty years of the FABC; it noted that FABC's evolutionary history could be seen as "a concerted series of movements toward a renewed Church." FABC VII identified eight key movements: 1) A movement towards a "Church of the Poor and a Church of the Young," 2) A movement toward a "truly local Church … incarnate in a people, a Church indigenous and inculturated," 3) A movement toward "deep interiority," toward "a deeply praying community," 4) A movement toward "an authentic community of faith … a community of communities," 5) A movement toward "active integral evangelization," 6) A movement toward "empowerment of men and women," 7) A movement toward "generating and serving life," and 8) A movement toward "the triple dialogue with other faiths, with the poor and with the cultures" of Asia (see FAPA III: 3–4). Taken as a whole, these few introductory paragraphs present the FABC vision of a renewed Church in Asia. It is this community of faith that has also addressed the issue of migration, seeking to give a vital, pastoral contribution.

The basic documents of the plenary assemblies and the initiatives of the FABC offices are available in the four volumes of *For All the Peoples of Asia* (FAPA) (Manila: Claretian Publications). The *FABC Papers*, continuously published since 1976, are available in print form and on the FABC homepage as well as on the UCANews website at its *FABC Papers* link (see numbers 100 and 125 for comprehensive indexes). The four FAPA volumes and the individually numbered *FABC Papers* are indispensable resources for FABC material. To date (2008), twenty-six doctoral dissertations have been completed on various FABC themes (see Kroeger, *Theology from the Heart of Asia: I–II*).

FABC Initiatives on Migration

As noted in the functions and movements listed above, the FABC as a collegial body seeks to promote evangelization and the apostolate, to address problems of common interest to the Church in Asia, and to investigate possible solutions and coordinated action. In light of these specific goals and with an office dedicated to human development, the challenges of migration fall naturally within FABC concerns. In addition, there are over fifty million migrant workers in Asia (*Asian Migration Atlas 2010*), not to mention other forms of migration; undoubtedly, this is a key pastoral challenge for the local Churches of the FABC region. The involvement of the FABC with the reality of migration in Asia will now be presented in three segments: a) a Chronological Overview of specific endeavors and initiatives; b) an Integrated Vision of FABC Service for migrants; and, c) some Insights and Learnings from the FABC role in this ministry. One begins with the history of FABC migration initiatives.

Brief History

In elaborating the role of the FABC vis-à-vis migration, one must recall that as a newly formed ecclesial body in Asia in the early 1970s, the FABC needed adequate time to find its proper role and function within the local Churches of Asia. However, from its inception, the

FABC has had a clear focus on serving the social needs of Asia's burgeoning masses. In the 1970 meeting with Pope Paul VI in Manila (the impetus for initiating the FABC), the Asian bishops declared that they wished to form "a true community of peoples … with the deepest sense of solidarity." They desired to "more truly be at the service of our peoples," to show "more compassion and solicitude for the poor," and to place themselves "at the side of the multitudes in our continent" (FAPA I, 4–5). Specifically, migration was assigned to the Office of Human Development (OHD), created in 1973 and tasked to guide the Asian Church's social involvement.

The First Plenary Assembly in 1974 affirmed the continuing FABC commitment to a "dialogue of life" with the people; "in so many countries of Asia, [this] means dialogue with the poor … [who live] under social, economic and political structures which have injustice built into them." The FABC committed itself to serve people's "real needs and aspirations" and to work for "the change and transformation of unjust social structures" (FAPA I, 15). This same social commitment is found in the Second Plenary Assembly in 1978; the FABC stated: "Since millions in Asia are poor, the Church in Asia must be the Church of the poor. One element in holiness, here, is the practice of justice. Evangelization and development are not opposed. In Asia today they are integral parts of preaching the Gospel" (FAPA I, 23). In a word, when the migration issue surfaced more predominantly in the 1980s, the FABC was prepared due to its early social orientation and commitment to serve Asia's needy peoples.

In the message of the 1979 International Congress on Mission held in Manila, one finds mention of "the desperate plight and terrible suffering of hundreds of thousands of refugees (forced migrants) from different countries, but especially those from Indochina, now in camps or on the high seas or seeking to cross frontiers" (FAPA I, 132). This statement predominantly reflects the reality of the "boat people" after the 1975 fall of Vietnam. Similarly, the participants of the Third FABC Plenary Assembly in 1982 noted that they were "deeply concerned about the refugee problem of South East Asia" (FAPA I, 62).

The 1982 Bishops' Institute for Missionary Apostolate held in Taiwan, in its "Syllabus of Mission Concerns" which mentions "emigrant workers," states: "Pastoral care for the great number of Asians who have emigrated from their homelands for economic reasons demands the serious missionary concern of the Churches" (FAPA I, 108). The Fourth FABC Plenary Assembly in 1986 speaks of "the Church's preferential option for the poor" and specifically mentions "domestic workers in countries other than their own, who are exploited as cheap labor" and also "migrants from villages to cities and other countries" (FAPA I, 188–189).

Another Bishops' Institute for Missionary Apostolate, held in Korea in 1988, speaks of migrants in the context of their missionary potential: "Use the mobility and migration of the faithful as an opportunity to spread the Gospel of Christ. We should inspire, educate, and organize our migrants to be witnesses of Christ wherever they may go" (FAPA I, 294). The FABC Office of Human Development organized the Asian Institute for Social Action (AISA) to facilitate Church solidarity with different sectors of the poor. Migrants and their concerns were the focus of AISA programs in Macao in 1989, in Yokohama in 1990, and in Taipei in 1991.

The year 1992 witnessed three Asia-wide Church events concerned with migration. In April, the FABC Theological Advisory Commission (TAC) completed its massive work on the document, "Asian Theological Perspectives on Church and Politics." In analyzing threats to social life, the TAC discussed the separation of children and parents, "who for economic reasons are forced to become migrant workers" (TAC, 2.3). The Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People organized in June the First Consultative Meeting for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees in Asia; a book of the same title was published by this Vatican office. In November, the FABC Office of Evangelization sponsored the Asian Congress on Evangelization with over 2,000 participants. Bishop G. Reyes spoke on the topic of

"Evangelization and Migration" and a topical workshop was devoted to this specific question.[1]

Readers should note that the FABC material presented thus far, though expressive of a deep, ongoing pastoral concern, does not address migration in a comprehensive manner. The first relatively integral treatment of the question came in September 1993 when the FABC Office of Human Development sponsored in Hong Kong the symposium: "Journeying Together in Faith with the Filipino Migrant Workers in Asia" (FAPA II, 47–56). The final statement provides a synopsis of the reality in Asia, the implications for the Church, and the important roles of both the "receiving" and "sending" Churches. The document links care for migrants with the FABC vision of "a new way of being Church" and notes: "This for us means pastoral care of migrants and to be co-workers with them, in order to bring more humanizing dimensions to every facet of life today…. This calls for prophetic discipleship and integral evangelization in the context of Asia today" (FAPA II, 56).

FABC celebrated its silver jubilee in 1995. A triple event unfolded in Manila: a FABC plenary assembly to commemorate the twenty-five years of the organization (1970–1995), the World Youth Day in Manila, and the second pastoral visit of John Paul II to the Philippines. The migration question also received due prominence. In preparation for the Sixth FABC Plenary Assembly, G. Battistella prepared an elaborate overview with significant background material on the situation of migrant workers in Asia; this pivotal document was published as *FABC Papers 73* (see bibliography). Another pre-assembly paper on ecumenism written by T. Michel expressed concern for migrants (*FABC Papers 92s,* 4). During FABC VI itself, Indian theologian S. Arokiasamy in his plenary session paper spoke extensively of migrants (*FABC Papers 70,* 8–13, 28, 34). The final document of FABC VI, "Christian Discipleship in Asia Today: Service to Life," addresses migrants in

[1]See C. Almario, *Evangelization in Asia* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1993), 119–125, 184.

several places (FAPA II, 11–12; *FABC Papers 74,* 47 and 79). In short, the Sixth FABC Plenary Assembly gave a very high profile treatment to the migration question.

In November 1995, the FABC Office of Laity organized a Bishops' Institute on Lay Apostolate (BILA) with the title "Role of Women in Church and Society toward 2000" (FAPA II, 91–96). Aside from addressing several themes, such as trafficking in women, the final statement noted: "Women are also driven to leave their homes and migrate to urban areas or overseas to take jobs under exploitative working conditions" (FAPA II, 93). The following year (1996) the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Itinerant People organized a Second Consultation which focused on the family, undocumented migrants and refugees.

The FABC Office of Human Development, under the dynamic direction of Anthony Rogers, sponsored in 1997 the "Colloquium on Church in Asia in the Twenty-first Century" and published the extensive proceedings in a book edited by A. Rogers with the same title (see bibliography). It includes a presentation on "The Church in Asia and the Challenge of Migration" (343–348), a workshop report (371–374), and some proposals on migration (427–428); see also FAPA III, 40–41. The Asian Synod held in Rome in 1998 took up migration issues; they appear in the 1999 document *Ecclesia in Asia* numbers 7b, 7c, 22b, and 34c (see Kroeger-Phan in bibliography).

As the new millennium dawned in 2000, Church personnel from across Asia gathered together at the Seventh FABC Plenary Assembly in Thailand. Once again, as in FABC VI in Manila (1995), migration was allotted significant attention. To highlight the Asian Church's service to migrants and refugees, J. Latoza prepared a significant and comprehensive study paper (*FABC Papers 92f;* see bibliography). The migrant theme also emerges in the paper of T. Michel on ecumenism (*FABC Papers 92s,* 4). The Final Statement of FABC VII highlights "Sea-based and Land-based Migrants and Refugees" as one of the five special areas of FABC pastoral emphasis (*FABC Papers 93,* 11–12; FAPA III, 11). A particularly insightful series of ten recommendations that emerged from the workshop on migrants and refugees is available

(*FABC Papers 95,* 32–33); these will be presented later as a serviceable synthesis of the role of the FABC in migration.

A significant initiative was undertaken by the FABC Office of Human Development in July 2002. Held in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia, the Fifth FIESA (Faith Encounters in Social Action) focused on "Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees: A New Way of Being Church" (FAPA IV, 89–133; see bibliography under A. Rogers). This extensive document, specifically its comprehensiveness on undocumented migrants, could be read as a kind of FABC *vademecum* for migrant ministry in Asia. Once again, it reflects the serious dedication that the FABC has given to people on the move and in transition.

The Seventh FABC Plenary Assembly, hosted by the Korean Church in 2004, focused on "The Asian Family towards a Culture of Integral Life" (FAPA IV, 1–74; *FABC Papers 111*). Two sections of the document focus on migration: "The Phenomenon of Asian Migration" (FAPA IV, 6–7) and "Priorities and Plans" (FAPA IV, 49–51).

The FABC continued its efforts for migrants in 2006 with three events. In January, the FABC Office of Human Development facilitated the six-day "Asian Consultation on Harmony through Reconciliation" (FIESA VII) to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*). Edited by A. Rogers and published as a book with the same title (see bibliography), this consultation addressed a wide variety of topics. Two presentations focused on migration matters: "A Ministry for the Empowerment of Migrant Women" (251–261) and "Pastoral Care of Migrants" (263–266). In September, the FABC Office of Human Development sponsored the Bishops' Institute for Christian Advocacy (BICA I) in Kuala Lumpur with the topic "Solidarity with Migrants and Refugees" (FAPA IV, 145–146).

In October of 2006, the FABC Office of Evangelization and the Episcopal Conference of Thailand co-sponsored the First Asian Mission Congress (AMC). As the largest event ever undertaken by the FABC, the mission congress gave due prominence to migrants in Asia. Maruja Asis, a migration expert from Manila, addressed the

large international assembly, speaking on "Migrants and the Search for Home." The final AMC statement, "Telling the Story of Jesus in Asia," recalls the importance of the migrants' story and experience (FAPA IV, 274).

"The Migrant Family in Asia: Reaching Out and Touching Them" was the theme for the Second Bishops' Institute for Christian Advocacy (BICA II) held in Sabah, Malaysia from December 4–8, 2007. Facilitated by the FABC Office of Human Development, the participants discussed the immediate needs and concerns of migrants in their countries with their counterpart Church and NGO organizations. The proceedings were published as a book in 2008; it was edited by A. Rogers and bears the same title as BICA II (see bibliography).

The Ninth FABC Plenary Assembly in August 2009, focusing on the theme "Living the Eucharist in Asia," mentions migrants several times in the context of the Eucharist. FABC Secretary General, Archbishop Orlando B. Quevedo, OMI, included the concerns of migrants in his lengthy report to the Plenary Assembly. The final document emphasizes the need to build an inclusive community to celebrate the Eucharist; the assembly is to become a "Family in God" which will be a "Countersign to Divisions." Thus, it is imperative to include people from all strata of society; the Church needs to make a conscious effort to overcome "the rejection of 'outsiders' like migrant workers, refugees and displaced peoples." Indeed, "living the Eucharist involves the call to live a gathering and welcoming rather than a scattering community" (*FABC Papers 129*, 7–8).

Vision of Migrant Service

The foregoing narrative of FABC involvement in the promotion of the cause of migrants and refugees may appear as a rather laborious chronicle of events, dates, themes, and references. Yet, it manifests the Asian Church's commitment on a continental level. Forging a synthesis of the abundant material may be nigh impossible. However, the thematic workshop recommendations of the Seventh FABC Plenary Assembly in 2000 can provide an overview of the tasks facing

the local Churches in Asia. They are presented for their reflective and evocative qualities—as the FABC continues to shape its vision of a new way of being Church in Asia (*FABC Papers 95,* 32–33).

The Church in the FABC region of Asia must respond to these ten areas of concern for an adequate pastoral-missionary response to Asia's millions of migrants:

1. *Structure:* Set up an office for migrants on land and at sea, refugees and itinerant peoples within FABC to serve the program planning, implementation and networking needs of the national bishops' conferences in their responses to the migration and refugee issues/concerns, in cooperation with the religious congregations and lay organizations with a charism for migrants and refugees.

2. *Integration:* Evolve integrative schemes to respond to the need for: a) comprehensive pastoral and social care work programs; b) community dynamics that facilitate and promote the participation and "belonging" of the migrant/refugee, as well as the nurturing welcome of the host/refugee community; c) family dynamics that bridge the international gaps and socio-cultural differences between migrant worker parents and their children, and their respective psycho-social needs.

3. *Formation:* Provide formative input to: a) migrant workers on land and at sea, refugees and IDPs to being faithful to the Gospel, and to witnessing this in their lives, as well as living out the nurturing values of primacy of the family, joyful and compassionate relationship with God and neighbor; b) Church workers to effectively provide culturally and gender sensitive pastoral and social care for migrants and refugees and IDPs.

4. *Conscientization:* Sensitize migrant workers, employers, sending and receiving governments, recruiters,

and local Christian communities to respond to the dehumanization of migrant workers. For refugees, this will address states and communities of origin and refuge, UN agencies, international and local NGOs on the multiple disadvantages of refugees in terms of ethnicity, religion and political rights.

5. *Reintegration:* Develop and promote reintegration schemes between and among Churches of origin and destination to enable migrant workers and their families to manage the economic benefits from overseas migrant work experience, and discourage the making of overseas labor migration as a family strategy for survival. For refugees and IDPs, this involves repatriation/reintegration/resettlement schemes between and among Churches of origin and refuge to enable returnees to rebuild their lives in peace and security.

6. *Networking:* Establish linkages between and among Churches of origin and destination, as well as with other Christian Churches and religious traditions for program planning and implementation.

7. *Advocacy:* Pursue policy advocacy with sending and receiving governments, UN agencies, the international and local NGOs, other Christian Churches and religious traditions for the rights of migrant workers (land and sea-based), refugees and IDPs, regardless of their legal status.

8. *Education:* Provide sensitizing education to children of migrants through existing educational institutions, as well as informal education groups.

9. *Staffing:* Appoint qualified Church workers who, as much as possible, are of the same nationality as, or are familiar with the language and culture of, the migrant workers on land and at sea, refugees and IDPs.

10. *Affirmation:* Recognize and support efforts of Church workers in providing pastoral and social care to migrant workers, refugees and IDPs. These pastoral and social initiatives range from sacramental care to medical services, legal aid, policy and human rights advocacy and counseling.

FABC Insights and Learnings

Reviewing the involvement of the FABC over the past several decades (see earlier historical section), one remarkably observes that from the mid-1980s until the present, there have been consistent, almost yearly, activities for the promotion of migrants. There were a variety of initiatives in several years. The FABC Office of Human Development, established in 1973, has done an admirable job in attending to migrants and refugees; recall that migration is only one of the many areas that this FABC Office coordinates.

This writer has come upon some critique that the FABC has done little to promote the migration ministry in Asia. At times this judgment is based on inadequate and partial information—thus, the decision to provide here the lengthy historical chronicle. In addition, particularly in recent FABC Plenary Assemblies (the highest authority in the FABC), the migration questions have received a very prominent profile. Recall in particular that in the 1995 and 2000 Plenary Assemblies, where lengthy position papers were prepared, migration discussion groups were integral to the assembly process, and the relevant concerns were expressed in the final document.

Appreciating the efforts of the FABC for migration demands that one must understand the nature of the FABC. In fulfilling its pastoral-missionary role, the FABC seeks to motivate the member local Churches to implement the vision of a renewed Church in Asia. In a word, the FABC is not primarily an implementing structure; that belongs directly to the local Churches, national bishops' conferences, individual dioceses, religious congregations with particular charisms, and all committed Christians. Among the various bishops' conferences

that have responsibly taken their role in migrant ministry, one can mention Taiwan, Korea, Philippines, Japan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore. Admittedly, more could obviously be done.

A perusal of the FABC initiatives will reveal that a comprehensive theology of migration has not yet emerged on the Asian level (whereas this theological growth has occurred with the theology of Local Church and the practice of Interfaith Dialogue). FABC initiatives and experience could provide substantial building-blocks for such a migration theology to emerge.

There have been repeated calls for the FABC to establish a separate office for migrants, yet this has not happened. This author, a serious student of the FABC and its vision, believes that the FABC actually functions better because it only has established nine specific offices, each with a broad apostolic coverage. Relative simplicity of administrative structure has avoided the growth of a burdensome bureaucracy. In addition, it is helpful to know that other important segments of the Church in Asia have asked for—and been refused—a separate full FABC office (e.g., the indigenous, workers, liturgy, inculturation). There is much FABC wisdom here.

These foregoing evaluative comments seek only to promote the continued growth of the FABC and its service to all the peoples of Asia so that the FABC may show "more compassion and solicitude for the poor"—including the migrants. With renewed vigor, the FABC seeks to stand in solidarity "at the side of the multitudes" in the Asian continent (FAPA I, 5). Everyone remains open to new Spirit-inspired initiatives within the FABC; everyone certainly must be deeply grateful for the nearly four decades of FABC loving witness and service in Asia.

Pope Benedict XVI noted at the Angelus during the World Day of Migrants and Refugees in 2006: "Migration is a very widespread phenomenon in today's world; it is a 'sign of the times'." While many difficulties and challenges remain, the Church—including the FABC—"asks her faithful to welcome the positive aspects that this sign of the times bears within it, overcoming every kind of discrimination,

injustice and contempt of the human person, for every man and woman is the image of God" (see www.vatican.va).

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Landas 24:1 (2010) 85–104

A CORRUPTION-RIDDEN WORLD

Think Global, Respond Local, as a Filipino Church

Jojo M. Fung, S.J.

In a world where it has plagued all levels of local and global society, corruption has become an accursed malaise and a systemic evil as it constitutes an affront to the dignity of humankind and the glory of God's creation. The menace of corruption is a malaise deeply rooted in human hearts and mindsets. At the same time, corruption is a systemic evil due to its virulent effects on global public well-being. Corruption debilitates public confidence in the government and public institutions and incapacitates the competitiveness in the private sector with the prevalence of unfair awarding of contracts and mounting deficiency in the quality of basic public services. Corruption is covertly and overtly globalized by international institutions, including the multinational companies whose dealings are willy-nilly condoned and supported by their national governments.

Grappling with the complexity of corruption as a global menace offers the local Churches a perspective on how the local campaigns always have a ripple effect on reversing corruption worldwide. What can be done locally will eventually contribute towards the ultimate reduction of corruption. To begin unraveling this global menace, a scrutiny of the nexus between corruption and international bribery will be looked at in the first section. At the same time, corruption as both a major cause and as a result of poverty around the world will be discussed in the second

section. The decline in democratic accountability, as the third section demonstrates, has contributed to public outcry against corruption, impunity and economic instability in the form of mass protests such as the Arab uprising and the nascent US Occupy Movement. The description of the global nature of corruption provides the "stuff" for a theological reflection on corruption based on the teachings of the Church. Lastly, the final section will showcase and explain the role of the Church in curbing corruption in the Philippines.

Globalization of Corruption and International Bribery

Corruption is a global malaise because it is a menace to both public and private sectors in the developed nations of the global North and the developing nations of the global South alike (although it has been globalized from North toward the South). Corruption is spawned by multinationals supported by Western governments and their international agencies. Donor governments and multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) are propagating "good governance" but have failed to effectively tackle corruption in terms of bribe-giving officials, wealthy multinationals, and funding agencies located in the industrialized North.

In the last decade, international bribery has increased exponentially with economic globalization. These bribes are conservatively estimated to run up to US$80 billion a year—roughly the amount that the United Nations (UN) believes is needed to eradicate global poverty.[1] Using money remitted to a Swiss bank account for Saudi agents, three UK companies—GEC, Marconi and VSEL—paid bribes to secure contracts to supply weapons systems to Saudi Arabia. The bribes ranged from three to 10 per cent on orders worth hundreds of

[1]For more information, see www.oecd.org/daf/nocorruption/faq.htm (accessed Jan. 12, 2012).

millions of pounds.[2] The giant multinational GEC even agreed on a further similar commission for arms transactions with Poland in 1998. Globally, an average "1/3 of firms frequently bribe, though the share varies substantially across countries. For example, the share of bribing firms is much smaller in Nordic countries than in Greece or Italy."[3]

> Foreign bribery has significant adverse effects on public well-being around the world. It distorts the fair awarding of contracts, reduces the quality of basic public services, limits opportunities to develop a competitive private sector and undermines trust in public institutions. Engaging in bribery also creates instability for companies themselves and presents ever-growing reputational and financial risks. This is particularly relevant in light of recent anti-bribery reforms in a number of key countries around the world, such as in China and the United Kingdom.[4]

When foreign corruption is exported to the South, multinational corporations undermine smaller domestic businesses, circumvent local democratic processes and legislation, interfere with decision-making that supports development which benefit the few rather than the populace, and exacerbate inequality and poverty. Corruption benefits the multinationals rather than the country, damages the environment, and contributes to local conflicts through arms sales.

> At a deeper level are the policies that form the backbone to globalization. These policies are often prescribed by international institutions such as the World Bank and IMF. For years, they have received sharp criticism for exacerbating poverty through policies such as Structural Adjustment, rapid deregulation and opening barriers to trade before

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[2]*The Guardian* (March 5, 1999), cited in Susan Hawley, "Exporting Corruption: Privatization, Multinationals and Bribery," www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/resource/exporting-corruption-O (accessed Jan. 12, 2012).

[3]Daniel Kaufmann, "Does Bribing 'Pay' for Corporations?" www.brookings.edu/opinions/2010/0510_corporate_bribery_kaufmann.aspx (accessed Jan. 12, 2012).

[4]The TI Bribe Payers Index evaluates the supply side of corruption—the likelihood of firms from the world's industrialized countries to bribe abroad (www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/bpi [accessed Jan. 13, 2012]).

> poorer countries are economic[ally] ready to do so. This has also created situations ripe for corruption.[5]

Global financial institutions like the World Bank and IMF are faulted for the very policies they advocate—the lowering of controls on trade, the foreign removal of the entry barriers to private industry, privatizing state firms, accelerating public sector reform in areas such as customs, tax administration and civil service—because these policies have exacerbated rather than curbed corruption. Such exacerbation is occasioned by an underestimation of costs, "especially the political costs of the process itself and the impediments it has posed to further reforms."[6]

> Under the World Bank and IMF, structural adjustment calls for reform of civil services which primarily means "downsizing" that demoralizes and undervalues civil servants instead of promoting civil services that are efficient, accountable, adequately paid and well-motivated. Rapid economic liberalization and transition to a market economy paves the way for corruption because "this reduces the incentives for probity on the part of officials and politicians, and creates a widespread social alienation from the political process."[7] Decentralization, without adequate preparation of local bureaucracies for local government and the necessary transfer of financial resources[,] only opens up venues for misgovernance and increased corruption.[8]

What becomes evident is that without a workable framework that includes the legislation of state enterprise law, national governments often fail to promote regulatory laws and arrange transparent and open bidding processes or promote regulatory laws. Apprehensive of the future and confident of escaping punishment, managers

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[5]For details, see Anup Shah's article, "Corruption," www.globalissue.org/article/590/corruption (accessed Jan. 12, 2012).

[6]Hawley, "Exporting Corruption: Privatization, Multinationals and Bribery."

[7]For more detail, see B. Harriss-White and G. White, "Corruption, Liberalization and Democracy," *IDS Bulletin* 27 (1996), 2.

[8]For further detail, see T. Crampton, "Official warns Asia to fight corruption," *International Herald Tribune* 12–13 (February 2000), 13.

and employees commonly strip the assets of the enterprises being privatized. Interested parties engage in insider trading and political manipulation of the process for their own profit. Many state enterprises have insufficient time to "become economically viable before being sold off, leading to frequent sales of industries at below market value despite heavy government spending on recapitalization."[9] Even with sufficient time, misgovernance due to lack of transparency and strong regulatory institutions leads to costly and bad privatizations, thus increasing the scope for corruption.[10]

Global governance exercised by agencies like the European Union (EU), G20, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and UN, along with international organizations and Western governments, have stepped up measures to combat corruption, enforcing convention and legislating regulatory laws to rein in bribe givers as much as bribe takers. In 1978, the US promulgated the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) which made bribing a foreign public official a criminal offence.[11] In 1997 the OECD enacted an international Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions which was finally ratified in 1999.[12] The Convention requires each signatory member

[9]Hawley, "Exporting Corruption: Privatization, Multinationals and Bribery."

[10]For more detail, see K. Malhotra, "Public Good vs. Investor Interest in Private Infrastructure Development: Whose Interests Should Regulators Protect and How?", presented at the seminar "Private Interest vs. Public Good: Governance Dimensions of Regulatory Frameworks for Private Sector Infrastructure Development," Asian Development Bank and the OECD (Switzerland, April 28, 1998).

[11]For details, see www.justice.gov/criminal/fraud/fcpa/ (accessed Jan. 12, 2012); Hawley, "Exporting Corruption: Privatization, Multinationals and Bribery."

[12]See C. G. Tether, "Bribery debate is for us, too," *Financial Times* (May 21, 1976). The Convention was signed by 29 OECD countries plus Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile and Slovakia. The OECD comprises 29 of the world's richest countries, including European countries, the US, Japan, Australia, New

country to enact national legislation that makes bribing foreign public officials a criminal offence.[13] The UN Convention against Corruption requires that member states cover both preventive measures and the criminalization of a wide range of corrupt acts, including the bribery of foreign officials. The Council of Europe's Criminal Law Convention on Corruption features comprehensive anti-bribery provisions, including a prohibition of private-to-private bribery.

Likewise, the World Bank has stepped up anti-corruption campaigns since 1999 by helping to design and support national anti-corruption strategies. In addition, the Bank emphasizes "anti-corruption in the design of economic reforms, and press[es] for strengthened governance and public sector management," and encourages support for anti-corruption agencies.[14] An annual budget of US$3 million is allocated for anti-corruption measures, including support for anti-corruption agencies. Some $5 billion of its $29 billion annual lending goes for "governance" which calls for "civil service reform, budget management, tax administration, legal reform, judicial reform and institution-building."[15] In 1997, the IMF took "a more proactive approach" in trying to "eliminate opportunity for rent seeking, corruption and fraudulent activity."[16] The IMF also demands

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Zealand, Finland, Mexico, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Korea. Based in Paris with an annual budget of $200 million, the OECD calls itself a "club of like-minded countries" which believe in market economics and pluralistic democracy. It provides a forum for discussion on economic and social policy issues for governments, as well as producing research, policy papers, and international treaties and agreements (www.oecd.org/about/general [accessed Jan. 12, 2012]).

[13]See detail of the text at www.oecd.org/document/20/0,3343,en_2649_34859_2017813_1_1_1_1,00.html (accessed Jan. 12, 2012).

[14]Hawley, "Exporting Corruption: Privatization, Multinationals and Bribery."

[15]Hawley, "Exporting Corruption: Privatization, Multinationals and Bribery."

[16]Hawley, "Exporting Corruption: Privatization, Multinationals and Bribery."

that "borrowing governments draw up anti-corruption action plans and strategies" and "good governance" is to be a feature of the IMF's new Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (which is to replace the much-criticized Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility).[17]

Enhanced enforcement of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) and the OECD's Convention "would collectively raise the costs of bribery for all multinationals" on the one hand, but on the other, when multinationals band together in their anti-corruption, they will make international bribery history in years to come. Over and above legal initiatives, there can be successful complementary measures such as "increasing the reputational cost of bribery by investigating and prominently featuring cases of corporate corruption" in the media, as the recent public disclosure of IKEA in Russia has effectively indicated.[18] Noteworthy are efforts by multilateral development banks (the MDBs, namely the World Bank, the African, Asian and Inter-American Development Banks, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development [EBRD]) to cross-debar firms found to have engaged in bribery or corruption on MDB-funded projects.[19]

Corruption Exacerbates Poverty

The globalization of corruption highlights one deplorable salient feature: corruption exacerbates the plight of the marginalized because corruption hurts the poor first and foremost, whether in the donor countries or in developing and aid-receiving countries. From the financial scam at Wall Street to the scandal in Britain of Westminster council leader Dame Shirley Porter selling public housing for votes (at a loss of £27 million to the council) to the pilfered aid resources

[17]Hawley, "Exporting Corruption: Privatization, Multinationals and Bribery."

[18]Kaufmann, "Does Bribing 'Pay' for Corporations?"

[19]Kaufmann, "Does Bribing 'Pay' for Corporations?"

in India, the poor get approximately 15 per cent of the total budget of most financial aids.

> It is they who get squeezed out of decision-making and pushed to the political margins in situations where money buys influence. It is they who lose out when money that could have been spent on improving services or basic living standards is diverted to big expensive projects with lucrative "commission" potential. It is they who end up themselves having to pay bribes for basic services or who lose out because they can't afford to. As British Member of Parliament Hugh Bayley noted in a speech to the House of Commons:
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> "The cost of bribes falls primarily on the poor. When a corrupt contractor from this or some other rich country pays a 15 per cent bribe, he adds that to the price of his contract. His power station or irrigation scheme will cost more, and the little people—those who buy the electricity or the water to irrigate their crops—will pay the price of that bribe. Bribery is a direct transfer of money from the poor to the rich".[20]

There is no denial that bribes hike up the prices of projects and mega-projects such as dams. When these projects are financed by international funding agencies, a country's external debt begins to add up and ordinary people "end up paying this back through cuts in spending on health, education and public services. Often they also have to pay by shouldering the long-term burdens of projects that do not benefit them and which they never requested."[21] Such is the case with the construction of the nuclear plant in the Philippines that incurs payment of US$170,000 per day in interest on the part of the current government having to service the loans. Such money "should have gone to basic services like schools and hospitals for the poor."[22]

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[20]Kindly refer to the House of Commons, Hansard Debates Column 274 (February 25, 1998), cited in Hawley, "Exporting Corruption: Privatization, Multinationals and Bribery."

[21]Hawley, "Exporting Corruption: Privatization, Multinationals and Bribery."

[22]Hawley, "Exporting Corruption: Privatization, Multinationals and Bribery." The Philippines' Treasurer Leonar Briones recently commented: "it is a terrible burden which never fails to elicit feelings of rage, anger and frustration in me.

In the final analysis, corruption affects most the poorest in both the rich and poor nations, and undermines the integral and sustainable development of society, including democracy and the environment. Good governance will ensure that loans negotiated for the development of social services are used to empower the poor to invest in their future as they avail of cutting-edge technologies, high-yield seeds, better soil management, and proper row planting.

Corruption Spawning a Global Protest Movement

The menace of globalized corruption and secretive governance is not unrelated to the Wall Street-induced global financial crisis. Compounded by other related issues, misgovernance has spawned a global unrest that imploded in a movement for change, from the mass protests in Tunisia and Cairo's Tahrir Square, *indignados*'s protests in Spain and the uprisings in Libya, Yemen and Syria, to the protests engulfing Wall Street and cities across America. These mass protests sent shockwaves around the world in 2011 because they are public outcries against corruption, impunity and economic instability, inequality, corporate greed, lack of jobs and equal access to benefits.

> The 2011 Corruption Perceptions Index shows that public frustration is well founded. No region or country in the world is immune to the damages of corruption[:] the vast majority of the 183 countries and territories assessed score below five on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (very clean.) New Zealand, Denmark and Finland top the list, while North Korea and Somalia are at the bottom.[23]

We're talking of money that should have gone to basic services like schools and hospitals" (A. Easton, "Philippines to scrap nuclear albatross," *The Guardian* [September 7, 1999], 15). See "Westinghouse Electric—Peace in our time between Westinghouse and Manila," *Power in Asia* (October 30, 1995).

[23]The 2011 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) depended on assessments and opinion surveys conducted by independent and reputable institutions. These surveys and assessments included questions related to the bribery of public officials, kickbacks in public procurement, embezzlement of public funds,

There are also protests in developed countries. The ordinary citizens of the North Atlantic are the worst hit and they took to the streets, inspired by the Arab spring.[24] Though diverse in backgrounds, their messages are similar: more transparency and accountability are needed from our leaders because "the 'system' has failed, and [because of] the conviction that even in a democracy, the electoral process will not set things right—at least not without strong pressure from the street."[25]

> "This year we have seen corruption on protestors' banners be they rich or poor. Whether in a Europe hit by debt crisis or an Arab world starting a new political era, leaders must heed the demands for better government," said Huguette Labelle, Chair of Transparency International.

There is a common theme, expressed by the nascent Occupy Movement, which evolved and

> rebounded in multiple forms, reclaiming foreclosed homes, occupying banks, shutting down ports, interrupting university trustee meetings and political speeches at the Iowa Caucuses, and forcing people on the streets, in Congressional corridors and at city halls to address how the one percent's wealth and power has created a stranglehold on the 99 percent.[26]

There is no denial that global protest movement demands that public sector governance puts the interests of its citizens first since it is a responsibility that transcends borders. Governments must act for

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and the effectiveness of public sector anti-corruption efforts. Perceptions are used because corruption is to a great extent a latent activity hard to measure. Over time, perceptions have proved to be a reliable estimate of corruption. See Transparency International, "Demand for Better Government must be Heeded," www.cpi.transparency.org/cpi2011/results/ (accessed Jan. 12, 2012).

[24]See Anup Shah's article, "Trade, Economy and Related Issues," www.globalissues.org/issue/1/trade-economy-related-issues (accessed Jan. 12, 2012).

[25]See Joseph E. Stiglitz's article, "The Globalization of Protest," www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/stiglitz144/English (accessed Jan. 13, 2012).

[26]See Judith Scherr's article, "A Movement Evolves to Occupy the Future," www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=106394 or www.globalissues.org/news/2012/01/09/12388 (accessed Jan. 12, 2012).

the common good and "citizens need to continue demanding better performance from their leaders."[27]

Toward a Theological Reflection on Corruption

This "thick description" of corruption serves as the context for a discerning theological reflection in the light of the social teachings of the Church that condemn corruption as a "structure of sin" and call for accountability, transparency, the common good, a "new humanism," and the building of an inclusive and humane society for future generations.

Corruption is an evil which has a multidimensional reality. At the personal level, corruption infects the heart of the greedy with an insatiable need to gratify the egotistic self incrementally. In its interpersonal and communal dimensions, corruption becomes an evil that exercises a seductive and addictive power over the morally weak. It is a structural evil that wrecks the system of governance, undermines the common good as the greedy pilfer the financial allocation for the marginalized, debilitates the latter's human spirit, and oftentimes crushes their hope for a more sustainable and dignified way of earning a living. The evil of corruption operates so insidiously that it taints and tarnishes every system of corrupt governance. In this sense, corruption is a systemic evil that infects the major institutions and processes of the state in which most people have no alternatives for dealing with the corrupt situation. Such a systemic evil *participates in* and becomes *reinforced by* the mystery of evil. This mystery of evil, which is independent of the contribution of human choices, "retains its identity as an ontological evil or mystery."[28]

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[27]For more information, see www.cpi.transparency.org/cpi2011/results/ (accessed Jan. 12, 2012).

[28]See Judith A. Merkle, "Sin," in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought*, eds. Judith A. Dwyer and Elizabeth L. Montgomery (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 885.

Corruption constitutes an affront against the gratuitous God who freely offers all a good life that promotes human flourishing for all citizens, especially the suffering poor and powerless. This affront involves the greedy making inward decisions—that is, acting with certain knowledge and freedom, succumbing to the addiction of corruption, and thus sinning against others and God. In this way, the corrupt "miss the mark" (*het', hatta't* in Hebrew)[29] in their covenantal fidelity to God (Exod. 19:4–5) through the concomitant failure to morally sustain and promote right relationships with others (Isa. 58:6–7) in the world and with God.[30] When the sins of corruption become structuralized in the "institutionalized sets of interdependent human relationships that influence social behavior and regulate the life-chances of people at a given time and place" as noted by John XXIII and Vatican II (*Mater et magistra* 59–67; *Gaudium et spes* [GS] 25),[31] there exist "structures of sins" that provide the greedy with further inducements to sins of corruption.[32]

Although the corrosive power of the structures of sins impacts human existence embedded in a corruption-ridden world, all is not lost because grace abounds in any situation of sin. Though tainted by sin, human nature is also graced by God's indwelling presence. With strenuous efforts assisted by grace (GS 22), believers will be able to promote the principle of the common good. However, the concrete realization of the principle of the common good requires the correlational promotion of particular virtues. It means that the individual persons in the community will have to "en-flesh" virtues in their dispositions and attitudes; and in their interpersonal and

[29]Merkle, "Sin," 883.

[30]Merkle, "Sin," 885.

[31]Merkle, "Sin," 886. Also see M. O' Keefe, *What Are they Saying About Social Sin?* (New York: Paulist, 1990).

[32]See no. 193 in *Compendium of Catholic Social Doctrine of the Church* (Strathfield: St. Paul's Publications, 2004), 99.

communal relations, live out the interrelated virtues of governance, transparency, and accountability in an effort to imbibe the overarching moral virtue of integrity in a given society and populace.[33] Only the embodiment of the three "propping" virtues of the one predominant virtue of integrity ensures the realization of the principle of the common good in the world at large.

The virtue of *good governance* alerts elected officials and corporate leaders about the related attitudes and dispositions of six principles: (i) participation that encourages free and fair election, including the freedom of association, (ii) effectiveness and efficiency that calls on officials to utilize resources in the best way possible, (iii) responsiveness which requires serving the stakeholders in reasonable time frames, (iv) consensus-building of diverse interests, (v) equity and inclusiveness that ensure inclusion, particularly of minorities, and (vi) mandating the Rule of Law that enforces the legal frameworks of equality and justice for all.[34]

Complementary to good governance is the virtue of accountability that disposes elected officials and corporate leaders to be answerable to those affected by decisions, especially in the use of public monies. A case in point is Archbishop Franklin from Luanda who called on the foreign oil companies to make public what they pay Angola's government in fees and taxes:

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[33]Christopher P. Vogt argues for "far more balance between the use of principles and virtues as two complementary approaches to Catholic social thought … toward the concrete realization of the vision set forth in Catholic social teaching" in a manner that virtues "would force us to think carefully about what a disposition toward solidarity and the common good would look like in individual persons." See his article, "Fostering a Catholic Commitment to the Common Good: An Approach Rooted in Virtue Ethics," *Theological Studies* 69 (2007), 394–417.

[34]See *Study Guide Series on Peace and Conflict*, "Governance, Corruption, and Conflict," United States Institute of Peace, www.scribd.com/doc/38920029/Governance-Corruption-Conflict-Study-Guide (accessed Jan. 12, 2012).

> "This would be good for the country, good for the people, because this money doesn't belong to the government or to a particular political party, but to all the people of Angola … the people shouldn't be living in misery when the government is taking in so much money."[35]

Indeed the virtue of accountability informs believers that to be answerable to the citizens derives from a faith that remains loyal to God through the love of the lowly neighbor (1 John 4:20–21).

The virtue of transparency calls for a disposition on the part of elected officials and corporate leaders to guarantee the right of the citizens' access to information about the proposed and expended budgets of the governing authorities, including a public disclosure of the acquired assets of elected officials. Transparency is the virtue that encourages elected officials and corporate leaders to exercise an openness that guarantees free and independent media and the judiciary so that these institutions can conduct public scrutiny of the activities of all those in governance. It is in this light that the US Conference of bishops, in their 2011 statement, undergird the need for transparency as the Conference calls on individuals and corporations involved in the extractive industries to "adopt transparency in operations and financial accountability" to ensure that the legitimate enterprise of extracting resources "does not contribute directly or indirectly to corruption, conflict and repression."[36]

The embodiment of the threefold virtues of good governance, accountability and transparency and the ensuing conscientious practice of such virtues make the principle virtue of integrity credible in the sight of all citizens. Integrity is a primary virtue that reflects a right

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[35]Archbishop Damião Franklin, in "Angolan archbishop calls for increased transparency of government," Catholic News Service/U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (June 8, 2002); also quoted in a position paper entitled "Transparency: A Christian Concern: Catholic Social Teaching and the Case of Transparent and Accountable Practices in Extractive Industries," CIDSE, Pax Christi International and Caritas Europe (September 20, 2003), 12.

[36]"A Call to Solidarity with Africa," U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference (November 14, 2001).

relationship with God and with others, so much so that the interests of others are always prioritized above one's selfish interests. Faith in, and fidelity to, God dispose elected officials who have integrity to live a life vis-à-vis the governed in a manner where people come first before profit, where their aggregate needs come before one's selfish gain, and above all, where creation is seen as God's gift and not as any earthly Caesar's possession.

This theological reflection on the "enfleshment" of the virtues prepares the ground for the gradual flourishing of "a new humanism" envisaged by Benedict which embraces the needs of future generations.[37] This horizon is necessary for translating the social ethics of the Catholic social teachings into "*enfleshable*" particular virtues. In this way, the ethics of the common good becomes a realizable vision which the Church shares with the world so that responsible citizens transform the world into a more corruption-free community.

At the same time, it is important that this process of "theologizing" motivates the Church in the Philippines to respond more effectively to this malaise of systematic corruption that plagues Filipino society.

Proposed Ecclesial Strategic Responses

Corruption continues to plague societies everywhere, the Philippines no less, a nation whose ranking, according to Transparency International, is sandwiched between Thailand (3–4) and Indonesia (2), repeatedly getting a rating between 2.4 and 3.[38] The Philippines is considered to have historically high levels of political and bureaucratic corruption due

[37]The address of Pope Benedict posted on January 13, 2012, entitled "Young People Key to Overcoming the Global Crisis," is available on Vatican Radio, www.oecumene.radiovaticana.org/EN1/index.asp and www.catholic.org/international/international_story.php?id=44392&wf=rsscol (accessed Jan. 13, 2012).

[38]See Mark Jorgensen Farrales, "Bureaucratic Corruption in Southeast Asia: A Comparative Analysis of the ASEAN 5," www.papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1740009 (accessed Feb. 14, 2012), 3.

to political interference in the appointment of bureaucrats, relatively low wages, weak direct monitoring of civil service, a weak judiciary, and a slack police force.[39] Corruption is so deep-seated that it is "one of the causes of abject poverty" in the Philippines.[40]

Given such deep-seated corruption, the Church in the Philippines needs to engage in multilevel actions to reduce the level of corruption; these actions include civil collaboration, cultural transformation, ecclesial empowerment of the base and finally, the promotion of a transformational spirituality of the greater good.

Civil Collaboration. The Filipino Church is a national institution that will do well to press for reform entailing (i) a conscientious implementation of a stringent merit-based and non-politicized recruitment system to guarantee competency and independence of civil bureaucrats; (ii) higher wages and a clear and transparent promotion system which can discourage officials from engaging in corrupt behavior; (iii) a strong, unified and ever-present anti-corruption monitoring agency which will raise the likelihood that corrupt officials will be caught, charged and dismissed.[41] Such collaboration widens

[39]Farrales, "Bureaucratic Corruption in Southeast Asia: A Comparative Analysis of the ASEAN 5," 21, 24. Kunio Yoshihara hastens to add that the Philippine judiciary and police are "corrupt to the core." For more details, see his book, *The Nation and Economic Growth: The Philippines and Thailand* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[40]Francisco F. Claver, *The Making of a Local Church* (Manila: Claretian Publications and Jesuit Communications, 2009), 96.

[41]In the Philippines, despite the constitutionally mandated existence of the Ombudsman's Office, each succeeding president often sets up a different and separate anti-corruption agency such as the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) and the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PCAG), which are ineffective due to the lack of a unified enforcement strategy.

"the avenue of participation" for creating a less corruption-ridden state and society.[42]

At the same time, the Church needs to lend its moral authority to the Ombudsman Office which has the popular support of the Philippines' vibrant and active civil society through its Corruption Prevention Units/CPU program. Once accredited as CPU, these units "act as 'watchdogs' or extra 'fire alarms' to help the Ombudsman detect malfeasance in the public sector."[43] With 361 accredited CPUs nationwide, an increase from 175 at the end of 1998, the Filipino Church and the Ombudsman Office need to work collaboratively to bring about corruption reform by pressing the government for more transparency and accountability.[44]

Cultural Transformation. The Church needs to culturally transform the strong familism of Filipino society, that strong family-centeredness which militates against "a stronger sense of the common good."[45] In no way does this suggest that familism has fostered self-centered Filipinos; "it's rather that the moral universe of their loyalty does not readily expand to the national community and their sense of solidarity

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[42]Aloysius Lopez Cartagenas, "The Diakonia of an Ecclesia to the Res Publica: Prospects of the Philippine Church in Transforming the Filipino Polity for the Common Good," *Landas* 23 (2009), 107.

[43]Farrales, "Bureaucratic Corruption in Southeast Asia: A Comparative Analysis of the ASEAN 5," 2.

[44]Farrales, "Bureaucratic Corruption in Southeast Asia: A Comparative Analysis of the ASEAN 5," 2. Among the CPUs are the Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government (CCAGG), Procurement Watch, Inc. (PWI), the Fellowship of Christians in Government (FOCIG), and the Transparency and Accountability Network (TAN). Also see Eduardo T. Gonzalez and Magdalena L. Mendoza, "Anticorruption Initiatives in the Philippines: Breakthroughs, Limits, and Challenges," in Vinay Bhargava and Emil Bolongaita, eds., *Challenging Corruption in Asia: Case Studies and a Framework for Action* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2004), 109.

[45]Claver, *The Making of a Local Church,* 59.

is difficult to apply to fellow citizens when mediated by policies, structures and institutions."[46] So it is incumbent upon the Filipino Church to begin educating the families in civic consciousness so that there are "families that are as socially conscious as they are family centered."[47] Second, the Church needs to challenge the "*laissez-faire* attitude of most Filipinos who regard corrupt practices" as standard operating procedure that legitimizes the corrupt officials' enrichment of themselves as "their reward for winning an election or appointive job."[48] The Church needs to support the anti-corruption movement known as "Ehem" in order to bring about attitudinal change from deeming corruption as "the spoils of privilege" to condemning it as stealing of public monies for self-gain.[49]

Ecclesial Empowerment of the Base. In the spirit of the *aggiornamento* of Vatican II, the anti-corruption campaign has to be part of the renewal that will substantially take place at the base where "our people are getting more conscious of the work the Spirit is doing among them, with them, in their base communities."[50] In base communities where the people imbibe and exercise participative discernment, learning and doing discernment on the nexus between their own faith and corruption, the Spirit guides the base communities to arrive at a consensus to stand up against corrupt practices. In this participative discernment, the communities posture that "we do what we can where we are with little we have and in solidarity with other little people like

[46]Cartagenas, "The Diakonia of an Ecclesia to the Res Publica," 101.

[47]Claver, *The Making of a Local Church,* 59.

[48]Claver, *The Making of a Local Church,* 56.

[49]Claver, *The Making of a Local Church,* 63. "Ehem" is a project initiated by Jesuit priest Fr. Albert Alejo to educate people on what they can do to lessen corruption in public life in Philippine society.

[50]Claver, *The Making of a Local Church,* 187.

us"[51] in order to weaken the fringes of the web-like cancer and thus weaken the center of corruption. At the same time, the participative discernment opens the communities to the power of the Spirit that allows the values of the reign of God to transform the cultural values of acceptance and tolerance of corruption to the point of "abhorrence of it as a sin and a crime" and thus promote the common good.[52]

Transformational Spirituality of the Greater Good. Through leadership modular sessions, regular retreats and weekend seminars, the Church is in a position to communicate a spirituality that opens the hearts of participants to the transforming intimacy of the triune God. The everyday and oftentimes profound experience of the intensity of God's intimate love for creation and particular individuals overflows the individual heart and gradually weans the heart of its insatiable needs for material gains. Once weaned of its addiction, the heart finds that perennial love of the triune God who is in everything and is everything (Col. 3:11) that the heart needs. Once transformed by God's intimate love, the heart is able to prioritize God and the aggregate needs of the community first because the common good represents the greater good. The life of Zacchaeus (Lk. 19: 1–10) amplifies this spirituality. As a tax collector, Zacchaeus' heart is addicted to possessions (Lk. 18:24–27). Once transformed, his heart is weaned from addiction and overflows with generosity (Lk. 19:8). The gospel has demonstrated that a heart converted and ruled by God will become the seat whereby particular individuals are influenced to adopt the right disposition and attitude that ensure the practice of the three supporting virtues of good governance, accountability and transparency in the one dominant

[51]Claver, *The Making of a Local Church,* 167.

[52]Claver, *The Making of a Local Church,* 167. Bishop Claver remarked that the base communities "are creating and living a spirituality of communion: discerning, acting in solidarity, inculturated—an authentic indigenous spirituality that results from the continuous efforts they make at harmonizing their cultural values with those of the reign of God" to the point that "they will bring about the changes Vatican II hopes for the Church Universal—in God's own time" (168).

virtue of integrity. This transformational spirituality of the greater good which grounds virtue ethics will have a ripple-effect in a corruption-ridden society. Only such grounding in virtues provides social ethics the concrete realization of the principle or value of the common good in society that reverses the virulent tide of corruption.

Conclusion

The prevalence of corruption in the public and corporate sectors warrants that the Church lend its voice and moral authority to anti-corruption campaigns so that the respective government is obliged to improve its governance, budget transparency, and accountability to the people. Only greater transparency ensures greater democratic accountability, better policy choices and effective service delivery. In this way, the common good of society is consistently promoted so that the poor do not have to bear the brunt of a corruption-ridden nation. The well-being of the public and private sectors encourages the integral development of the human ecology which in turn ensures harmony with environmental ecology. The Church exerts its moral influence to ensure an increasingly corruption-free society through civil collaboration with anti-corruption agencies and movements, through sustained involvement in the process of cultural transformation of the populace, and especially through the ecclesial empowerment of base communities in doing participative discernment for collective actions. The transformational spirituality of the greater good is a process of ensuring the "enfleshment" of particular virtues of good governance, transparency and accountability; this process bolsters the primary virtue of integrity that ensures gradual human flourishing in a less corrupt world. These multileveled pastoral strategies enable the Church to be a more effective pastoral agent in the shaping of a burgeoning open society governed by open institutions and national government.

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DANCING WITH THE PHILIPPINE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The Rise and Fall of the Church's Electoral Engagement

Antonio F. Moreno, S.J.

Since 1986, the Philippine Catholic bishops collectively issued a total of 11 pastoral statements regarding elections. This makes elections a top priority concern among the leaders of the Church, along with peace (15 statements) and human life & population (10 statements). While several writers recognize the contributions of the Philippine Church in electoral politics, some question the impact of its interventions.[1] This article is an attempt to review critically the involvement of the Philippine Catholic Church in electoral politics spanning the four presidencies of Corazon Aquino, Fidel Ramos,

[1]"Faith and Fire: The PPCRV Way: A Post Election Report of the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP)," (PPCRV: July 25, 1992); "Report of the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) to the Commission on Elections and to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines on the conduct of the May 11, 1998 National and Local Elections" (PPCRV: 1998); Antonio F. Moreno, *Church, State, and Civil Society in Postauthoritarian Philippines: Narratives of Engaged Citizenship* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2006), 84–98; Frederic Charles Schaffer, *The Hidden Costs of Clean Election Reform* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2009), 125–149; Frederic Charles Schaffer, "How Effective is Voter Education," in *Elections for Sale: The Causes and Consequences of Vote Buying*, ed. Frederic Charles Schaffer (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2007), 161–79.

Joseph Estrada, and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. It also seeks to identify the Church's strengths and limitations, issues and opportunities. Finally, this study hopes to gather insights and lessons for future church engagement in the electoral arena.

When I refer to the Roman Catholic Church or simply "the Church" in this study, I do not simply mean the leadership provided by its ordained ministers (e.g., bishops, priests and deacons), although they have inevitably exercised tremendous influence over the community of faith. The Church here supposes the interaction between its ordained ministers and lay people who, by virtue of their baptism, become direct members of the Christian community. I will examine the pronouncements of the Church leaders as well as the interventions and programs of the Church-based electoral movements, and evaluate their desired outcomes. I will also look into how the electoral system and the Church's electoral engagements have been received by society at large.

The Philippine Church in Post-authoritarian Context

As in many cases of churches in most post-authoritarian states in Latin America and post-communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the Philippine Church undoubtedly enjoyed a high trust margin.[2] All the ratings of institutions like the judiciary, Congress, business, military, and the media came below that of the Church.[3] Despite this high level of confidence given to the Church, its involvement in politics was received ambivalently by public opinion. While 40% of the survey respondents were against the Church's involvement

[2]United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2002: Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 69.

[3]Mahar Mangahas, "Who's Afraid of the Catholic Church?" *Social Weather Bulletin* 91:4 (February 1991), 1–2.

"in the struggle of the oppressed," the other half were equally for it.[4] With President Marcos gone, the Church struggled as it inserted itself in a democratizing polity and highly pluralistic society with new complexities emerging. The shift from persistent protest to participation required new creative ways of engagement on the part of the Church.

Elections in the 1990s

One can easily discern the shift of the Church's electoral engagement from the national and local elections of 1992 and 1998 to the elections of 2004 and 2010. The elections in the 1990s were part of the democratic transition period, during which typically the democratic institutions (e.g., electoral institution) were at their lowest ebb. In the electoral system, there were very high incidents of violence and massive election-related anomalies, although the reported incidents of violence started to decline considerably. John Linantud[5] reports that thanks to the depoliticization of the military, violence-related electoral issues likewise went down.[6] In the 1986 snap presidential polls, the martial law government used the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), a politicized institution, as a state apparatus to rig the electoral outcomes. During this period, the Church's involvement in electoral reform was at its peak. Aside from the pronouncements of Church leaders, the birth of Church-based electoral movements increased the bar of Church involvement, even if its impact was uneven.

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[4]Mangahas, "Who's Afraid of the Catholic Church?" 3.

[5]John L. Linantud, "Whither Guns, Goons, and Gold? The Decline of Factional Election Violence in the Philippines," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 20:3 (1998): 298–318.

[6]A. B. Villanueva, "Parties and Elections in Philippine Politics," *Contemporary South Asia* 18:2 (1996): 175–92; Patrick Patino and Tintin S. Roperez, *2010 National and Local Elections: Breakthrough* (Quezon City: All Ways, 2010).

The 1992 Elections

Although the Church has been involved in electoral politics since the 1950s, it was only in the 1984 polls that the Church became systematically a critical force in electoral reform.[7] In the run up to the 1986 presidential snap polls, various Church leaders became involved in NAMFREL (National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections), a crucial electoral watchdog which formed the core of the People Power in February 1986.

The creation of the Pastoral Parish Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) and the Voters' Organization, Training and Education toward Clear, Authentic, Responsible Elections (VOTE-CARE) in 1991 signaled a critical moment in Church involvement in electoral reform. For the first time in Philippine Church history, these electoral movements were Church-based. They became the Church's frontline actors in strengthening the electoral institution which was often plagued with "guns, goons and gold." These electoral movements established partnerships with different civil society actors who were outside the loop of the Church. They collaborated with the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP), NAMFREL, and other non-religious groups. They were aided by small Church-based groups such as the *Simbahang Lingkod ng Bayan* (SLB), Seminarians' National Network for Free Elections (SEM-NET) and the Catholic Radio Broadcasters. SLB provided political education, logistics support and volunteers; SEM-NET, a network of seminarians, lent warm bodies; and the Catholic Radio Broadcasters had at least 40 diocesan radio stations throughout the country.[8] The Philippine bishops, whether as individuals or as a collective, supported PPCRV and VOTE-CARE. The Commission on Elections (COMELEC) accredited both PPCRV and VOTE-CARE,

[7]Eva-Lotta E. Hedman, "Whose Business is It Anyway? Free and Fair Elections in the Philippines," *Public Policy* 2:3 (1998): 145–70.

[8]Francisco F. Claver, "Church: Non-Partisan but Active," *Intersect* 6:6 (1992): 8–9.

a telling sign of the government's official recognition of these groups as partners of the state in strengthening the electoral system.

PPCRV was initiated by the Archdiocese of Manila. It enjoyed the full backing of Jaime Cardinal Sin. It became a national electoral movement led by Henrietta de Villa, then chairperson of the Council of the Laity of the Philippines (CLP). PPCRV conducted political education, recruited and trained volunteers who, on election day, poll watched, assisted voters, guarded the ballot boxes, monitored the electoral exercise and helped NAMFREL's operation quick count (OQC). Considering the slow pace of canvassing and counting of votes in those days, NAMFREL's OQC was innovative.

PPCRV recruited 346,688 volunteers in the 1992 elections. The volunteers (including those from VOTE-CARE) guarded ballots and reduced electoral cheating. PPCRV got a 69% level of awareness in September 1992 and a net satisfaction margin (% satisfied minus % dissatisfied) of +45.[9]

VOTE-CARE was backed by the National Secretariat for Social Action, Justice and Peace (NASSA), the social arm of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). VOTE-CARE handled political education and provided materials for information campaigns. VOTE-CARE and PPCRV were lay-led and principally organized by lay people with support from the leadership of the Church hierarchy. Nonetheless, conflicts and tensions between the two Church-based electoral movements persisted through the decades despite attempts to harmonize their operations and iron out their differences.

The 1992 presidential polls were the first free presidential elections after the Marcos period. It was a crucial democratic transition. The CBCP issued four pastoral statements pertaining to the 1992 elections to stress the significance of strengthening democracy. While the Church was not much organized as an electoral movement in the

[9]"Social Weather Report Survey: Performance Rating of Institutions," Social Weather Stations Data Base (unpublished, n.d.).

1987 elections, it was systematically involved in the 1992 elections. Although the CBCP did not endorse any candidate, Cardinal Sin was perceived to have made a "whispering campaign" for Ramon Mitra. Public perception of partisan inclinations of some Church leaders cast some doubts about the impartiality of PPCRV and other Church-based electoral groups. In the end, Fidel Ramos, a martial law enforcer and a Protestant, who did not augur well for some Church leaders, won the elections by 23.58% of votes cast in a six-way contest.

The 1998 Elections

The 1998 elections was another critical moment in the life of Philippine society and the history of the Philippine Church. The CBCP issued a lengthy document entitled "Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Politics." The Church leaders were apprehensive that popular action movie star Joseph "Erap" Estrada would win the elections. Short of mentioning his name, many pastoral statements of individual bishops and the CBCP campaigned negatively against Estrada based on his known lifestyle and personal life.[10] In their homilies at Mass, priests exhorted the people to vote for morally upright candidates.

PPCRV assisted in purging the voters' registration list, campaigned for political education, recruited volunteers, conducted poll watching activities and largely repeated their programs and activities as in the 1992 elections. PPCRV continued to assist NAMFREL's OQC. The volunteers were extra vigilant of *dagdag-bawas* (vote-padding and vote-shaving) which characterized the elections in the 1990s. PPCRV also partnered with the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) for legal electoral issues. VOTE-CARE had financial resources and better educational materials for political education. PPCRV covered 72% of the 79 local churches. VOTE-CARE supported 42 out of 79 (i.e., 53%) social action centers of the (arch)dioceses.

[10]Belinda A Aquino, "Filipino elections and 'illiberal' democracy," *Public Policy* 2(3), (1998): 8.

As in the 1992 elections, the volunteers risked their lives during the poll watching, monitoring and guarding of the ballot boxes. Once again, there were some tensions between PPCRV and VOTE-CARE due to turf battles, personality conflicts and misunderstandings between the two Church-based electoral movements.[11] Despite these internal dynamics, PPCRV got a relatively high trust rating of +49 while less known and organized VOTE-CARE received a +26 trust margin.[12] This shows that there was some public recognition of the positive contributions of both electoral movements.

Estrada won nearly 40% of votes cast coming largely from the poor (*masa*)—despite the negative campaign launched by the Church through the pastoral statements and voters' education of PPCRV and VOTE-CARE. Political education disdained elective public officials on the basis of their popularity and not on the programs and principles they championed. Yet, many celebrities and popular personalities got elected to office. Evidently, political education did not make any substantial impact on voters' electoral outcomes. It would appear that electoral education was received negatively and critically by the urban poor.[13] Further, the Church's influence through its pronouncements and statements also hardly made any change in behavioral preferences of the voting public. Still, the presence of PPCRV and VOTE-CARE volunteers, many of whom served as NAMFREL volunteers during the operation quick count, was a positive factor in poll watching and monitoring on election day. In many cases, electoral anomalies were prevented or reduced under the watchful eyes of these volunteers. For one, they accompanied ballot boxes which were being transported to the municipal centers for canvassing.

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[11]Moreno, *Church, State, and Civil Society in Postauthoritarian Philippines*, 94–96.

[12]"Social Weather Report Survey: Performance Rating of Institutions."

[13]Schaffer, *The Hidden Costs of Clean Election Reform;* Schaffer, "How Effective is Voter Education."

It can be argued that in the 1992 and 1998 presidential polls, the CBCP, PPCRV, VOTE-CARE and Church leaders experienced a high point in Church involvement in electoral politics. Due to weak democratic institutions and a frail electoral system, these electoral groups attracted the people (not only Catholics) to a sense of citizenship. There was something to be done to restore public confidence in elections. PPCRV and VOTE-CARE, along with NAMFREL and other electoral groups, provided the vehicle for electoral reform, although their impacts were uneven. Political education was limited, but the actual monitoring and vigilance on election day itself and beyond contributed positively to the conduct of the polls. The government support and backing from the leadership of the Church hierarchy made a lot of difference in the work of the electoral movements.

Elections in the 2000s

PPCRV and VOTE-CARE in the elections of the 2000s were not as systematically and deeply involved as in the 1990s. The education of voters in the 2004 elections was not as extensive as in the past. The electoral preparations for voter education and recruitment of volunteers were delayed. Many volunteers became inactive. Others supported political candidates or parties. The leaders of the movements became politically partisan, although this already happened in the 1990s.

Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was thrust into office in 2001 through People Power II during the Senate trial of President Estrada. His leadership was undermined due to perceived massive corruption that eroded his political capital. President Macapagal-Arroyo assured the public that she would not run for public office, despite encouragements from US President George Bush, Cardinal Sin and other Southeast Asian leaders. She earned support and praise from Church and civil society organizations, and from political groups connected to the administration as well as the opposition. However, she later changed her mind and thus caused political divisions to re-emerge.

The 2004 Elections

The May 2004 elections were contested closely between President Macapagal-Arroyo and Fernando Poe Jr., although it was a five-way fight. PPCRV and VOTE-CARE did not do much in the presidential polls. Certainly this was the weakest Church involvement since the 1984 polls. The education of the voting public was left to the initiative of each local Church. PPCRV was reactivated late. There was no systematic political education, no poll watching, no linkage with NAMFREL and other electoral groups. The CBCP issued two statements: one on 26 January 2004 and the other on 21 April 2004, but the bishops said nothing new which their previous statements had not mentioned. With COMELEC, PPCRV tried to organize a political debate among the presidential candidates but Poe refused to participate. Arroyo made it a condition that Poe should be in the debate for her to participate.

These signs of the Church's declining appetite for involvement in elections may be an indication of electoral reform fatigue or perhaps a growing dissatisfaction with the electoral process as the main vehicle for social transformation. Or it could have been a knee-jerk reaction to the decreasing incidents of electoral violence, fraud and growing efficiency of the electoral process.

Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales issued a pastoral letter in his Easter 2004 message rejecting "popularity" and "winnability" as criteria for choosing candidates.[14] This was in reference to Poe and other like-minded candidates who clearly had popularity.

Arroyo won over Poe by a small margin of 3% (40% vs 37%) or roughly a million votes.[15] Poe's camp accused the administration

[14]Jose Aravilla and Ann Montemar-Oriondo, "Sin Steps Down, Rosales Succeeds." http://www.newsflash.org/2003/05/h1/h1019384.htm (accessed April 16, 2004).

[15]Moreno, *Church, State, and Civil Society in Postauthoritarian Philippines*, 270.

of cheating. Poe filed a case challenging the electoral results, but he succumbed to a fatal stroke on 14 December 2004. A legitimation crisis loomed when on 27 June 2005, after persistent pressure, President Arroyo admitted to making a phone call to a COMELEC commissioner during the election period in May 2004 allegedly to rig the elections. Her action was prohibited in electoral regulations. The resulting electoral crisis, known as the "Hello Garci" scandal (in reference to Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano) hounded the presidency of Arroyo and raised questions about the legitimacy of her authority. The CBCP, short of calling for her resignation, pressed for accountability and "the search for truth," and challenged the government not to brush aside the legitimacy issue.[16]

The 2010 Elections

The Church-based electoral movements' involvement in the May 2010 elections was similarly much reduced as in the 2004 polls, unlike their participation in the elections of the 1990s. This was the first time in history that the Philippine polls were using the Automated Election System (AES). The AES virtually eliminated the operation quick count of NAMFREL since counting on precinct and municipal levels could be done within hours after the closure of casting of votes, if not within a day or so. Cheating was minimized, snatching of ballot boxes was no longer relevant, although vote buying still continued. The CBCP issued two statements: on 24 January 2010 and on 04 May 2010.[17] Much of Church involvement in varying degrees came from the local Churches, although for the most part, preparations for such involvement were delayed. Owing to the resurgence of hope for a new type of leadership in the face of the people's dissatisfaction with the Arroyo administration

[16]Angel N. Lagdameo, "Renewing our Public Life through Moral Values" (January 29, 2006).

[17]Nereo P. Odchimar, "A Call for Vigilance and Involvement" (January 24, 2010); Nereo P. Odchimar, "Statement on the Coming National and Local Elections: Transforming Election through a Solidarity of Consciences" (May 4, 2010).

which was saddled with charges of corruption, there was a renewed sense of engagement on the part of the electoral groups.

PPCRV remained active and continued to enjoy accreditation from the COMELEC. VOTE-CARE no longer saw action in the 2010 elections. NAMFREL was not accredited by COMELEC in the 2010 elections. Since NAMFREL's OQC was made redundant by COMELEC's AES, NAMFREL volunteers resorted to election monitoring and documentation during the 2010 elections. PPCRV conducted limited and much delayed political education.

Initially, Senator Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III was a hesitant presidential candidate. When support for him poured out in the wake of the death of his mother, former President Corazon Aquino, it was an indication of popular clamor for new politics. Using anti-corruption as an electoral issue, Senator Aquino won by collecting 15.2 million votes or 42.08% of total votes cast. Joseph Estrada came second with 9.4 million votes or 26.25% of overall number of votes. After being convicted and imprisoned for plunder and getting released from prison, Estrada surprisingly came first in Mindanao.

In the May 2010 elections, the AFP struck partnerships with local civil society electoral groups through operation Honest, Orderly Peaceful Elections (HOPE). Such partnerships would have been unthinkable in the elections of 1992 and 1998. Although election irregularities (e.g., vote buying, cheating) were still happening, these were reduced considerably because counting was automated and therefore there was less time to cheat. There were glitches with the Precinct Count Optical Scan (PCOS) machines and electronic transmission of data, but on the whole the first automated elections were a success.[18]

[18]Steven Rood, "Citizens and poll workers declare first automated elections in Philippines a success, but flaws remain," http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2010/08/04citizens-and-poll-workers-declare-first-automated-elections-in-philippines-a-success-but-flaws-remain/ (accessed August 4, 2010).

Growing Confidence in the Electoral System

The data below show declining incidents of electoral violence over the years as established by the Philippine National Police (PNP).[19]

Table 1: Incidents of electoral violence in 1998, 2001, 2004 and 2007

Year	Incidents	Fatalities	Wounded
1998	267	67	167
2001	269	111	293
2004	249	189	279
2007*	229	69	116

*Source: PNP Task Force HOPE in Patiño and Roperez 2010, 4

The figures above indicate a decreasing pattern of electoral violence over the years. Pre-election-related incidents of violence in the May 2010 polls were 41 counts with 94 fatalities and 43 wounded.[20] During the election day itself, there were only 56 incidents with 36 fatalities and 54 wounded.[21] The massacre in Maguindanao province which claimed the lives of 57 journalists, media staff, lawyers and others was possibly the worst electoral violence in the history of the Philippines. It drew public attention and condemnation.

Social Weather Stations (SWS) data below support the observation that the last two elections saw a decline of electoral violence in the 2007 and 2010 polls. This can be gleaned from the way COMELEC handled the peace and order situation.

[19]Rood, "Citizens and poll workers declare first automated elections in Philippines a success, but flaws remain," 4.

[20]Rood, "Citizens and poll workers declare first automated elections in Philippines a success, but flaws remain," 19.

[21]Rood, "Citizens and poll workers declare first automated elections in Philippines a success, but flaws remain," 20.

Table 2: Voters' satisfaction with COMELEC on peace and order

Year	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied	Net Satisfaction*
2007	60%	14%	25%	+35
2010	74	11	14	+60

Source: SWS Media Release 2010, 4
*Note: Net satisfaction is % satisfied minus % dissatisfied.

The net satisfaction of +35 in 2007 went up to +60 in 2010. In the 2007 elections, 60% of the respondents were satisfied whereas in 2010, 74% were satisfied. The shift was a positive increase of 14%. Comparing the 2004, 2007 and 2010 presidential elections, there is a general indication of a sharp increase of satisfaction level as far as the general conduct of the polls is concerned.

Table 3: Voters' satisfaction with the general conduct of the May 2004, 2007 and 2010 elections

Responses	2004	2007	2010
Satisfied	53%	51%	75%
Undecided	11	15	8
Dissatisfied	35	32	15
Net Satisfaction*	+18	+19	+60

Source: Adapted from SWS Media Release 2010, 4

The net satisfaction shows an increase from +18 (2004), +19 (2007) to +60% (2010).

While it is true that PPCRV was engaged in poll watching, it was the electronic and quick counting which reduced much of the electoral irregularities. PPCRV also assisted voters in polling places, but its operation was lesser than in the elections of the 1990s where there were higher incidents of cheating.

Table 4: Voters' Satisfaction with PPCRV in the honest reporting of the vote count of the 2007 and 2010 elections

Year	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied	Net
2007	64	19	14	+50
2010	75	13	9	+66

Source: SWS Media Release 2010, 9

The net satisfaction with regard to PPCRV's handling of vote count report increased from +50 (2007) to +66 (2010). A big factor of this is the automated system in vote counting. It reduced counting time and lessened electoral counting irregularities, although some PCOS machines had problems.

Looking at voters' satisfaction with the COMELEC in the elections of 2007 and 2010, there is an increasing public confidence in the way it handled the two elections. On the matter of information given to voters about registration and voting, COMELEC got a net satisfaction of +33 in 2007 and it increased to +56 in 2010. On the system of voter registration, it received +29 (2007) and +53 (2010). On the consolidation of vote counts at the city/municipal and provincial levels, it was given +19 (2007) and +52 (2010). On the counting of votes at the precinct level, it garnered +26 (2007) and +51 (2010).[22] These positive figures show growing levels of trust with regard to the image of COMELEC.

Concluding Observations

The Church involvement in the elections in the 2000s can be classified as relatively low compared to its participation in the 1990s. A possible reason for this—apart from electoral reform fatigue, realization of the limits of electoral reform campaigns (e.g., weakness of

[22]SWS Media Release, "Second Quarter 2010 Social Weather Survey: 75% of Filipinos satisfied with the conduct of the May 2010 elections" (July 28, 2010), 4.

political education), and switching of volunteers to partisan politics—is the improvement of the electoral system. During the period between the 1990s and the 2000s, electoral violence incidents declined, cheating was reduced, and although electoral anomalies continued, the level of satisfaction of the voting public went up. Arguably there is a growing restoration of public trust in the electoral institution. The 2010 elections have in all probability been the most trustworthy of all in post-authoritarian Philippines.

It is no accident that the Church (hierarchical leadership and electoral movements) had the least involvement in the elections in the 2000s. If the electoral institution gets more strengthened, if its system becomes more efficient, and election-related incidents of violence get reduced significantly, then, in all likelihood, the Church-based electoral movements will have less and less role to play in future elections. Perhaps it is about time to reinvent the roles of these electoral movements. The electoral landscape in the 1990s has shifted in the 2000s. While there are still constant problems, the new electoral landscape, with its new electoral system and maturing institutions and citizenry, is gradually reshaping the lines of electoral engagements. Church-based electoral movements can take the opportunities offered by this changing landscape to reinvent themselves or fade into redundancy.

In this study of Church involvement in electoral politics, I did not look into local cases or into the case of the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) where church engagement is much reduced. It would be worthy to study these cases because the knowledge they have to offer could enrich, nuance or challenge the observations I have made.

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PROSTITUTION IN THE PHILIPPINES

A Time for Change

James McTavish, F.M.V.D.

A Jesuit priest was asked to write the foreword of a book that deals with prostitution and human trafficking in the Philippines. He wrote the following:

> A foreigner came to our country. Then, as so many foreigners cheerfully do, he published his first deep impressions. The last sentence of his article was sad. He said: "The tragedy of the Philippines is this: in one of the world's loveliest countries, some of the world's most beautiful girls are being sold for money to some of the world's ugliest men."[1]

The priest, Fr. James Reuter, S.J., then made the point that when the trees are threatened people voice their indignation, when the fishing stocks are in danger then people protest, when land is sold unjustly then there is a surge of resentment but "when our beautiful girls are sold for money, the great rank and file of our people do not move."[2]

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[1]James B. Reuter, "Foreword," in Mary Soledad L. Perpiñan, *From Darkness to Light—Success Stories of Survivors of Incest, Rape and the Sex Trade* (TW-MAE-W, Quezon City: 2008).

[2]Reuter, "Foreword," xii.

It is as if the reality of prostitution has been around for so long that nothing can be done. But the girls and children are worth much more than the fish, the trees and the land. Let us not presume that nothing can be done! At one time slavery was considered "normal" and inevitable even though it was unpleasant, yet it is now considered to be an injustice against human rights. Perhaps one day we will look back on prostitution in the same way.[3]

What is Prostitution?[4]

Some definitions and descriptions such as "entertainment," "sex work," "hostessing," "world's oldest profession" and "guest relations officer" are not helpful as they make prostitution invisible, legitimate, or trivial. Prostitution is actually the sale of persons, most often women and children, for profit and sexual gratification of another.[5] Prostitution is in fact a violation and exploitation of basic human rights and human dignity. It takes advantage of vulnerable populations particularly women, children, and the poor. Prostitution is not merely a single act where a person is bought for sex but is actually a system, and in it the so-called three "B's" are involved: the Business, the Buyer and the Bought—a) the business, wherein the stakeholders are the pimps and sex establishment owners, b) the buyer, who is a customer

[3]Melissa Farley, *Prostitution, Trafficking and Traumatic Stress* (Binghamton: Haworth Press, 2003), xix.

[4]I am grateful to Jonathon Nambu, Director of the Samaritana Transformation Ministries, for the information supplied in this paragraph (see www.samaritana.org).

[5]In the Philippine Anti-Prostitution Bill of 2009, it is defined as "any act, transaction, scheme or design involving the use of a person whether woman, man or child, for sexual gratification, exploitation or pleasure of another in exchange for cash, profit or other consideration, or any act that promotes or facilitates the accomplishment of the said act, transaction, scheme or design."

with "buying power" and is typically a male, and c) the bought—the person (woman, man or child) whose body serves as the capital as well as the commodity.

More than ever before, prostitution has become institutionalized, organized, and globalized (i.e., through trafficking and the internet). If we look at the streets around us we see the explosion in budget hotels which are so clean but not so good, the all pervasive sight of girly bars and the numerous high class clubs and establishments that seem to cater for so many well-to-do clientele. Different forms of prostitution thus exist: street prostitution, bars, brothels, *akyat-barko*, "massage parlors," escort services, sex tourism, cybersex, local & international sex trafficking. Prostitution in the Philippines has become a de facto legal industry.

How Many are Involved in Prostitution?

Even back in the summer of 1982, Manila was depressingly tagged as the biggest brothel in Asia. There were 50,000 registered hospitality girls in the tourist entertainment industry in the early 70's, and in 1987 there were 300,000 bar girls, not to mention the unlicensed ones who were estimated to number about ¼ of the national figure then.[6] In 1998 it was estimated that there were at least 400,000 to 500,000 prostituted persons in the Philippines with 75,000 of these being children.[7] In

[6]See Tezza Parwel, "The Victimless Crime," *National Midweek* II, 27 (June 27, 1987): 1216. With gratitude to Jonathon Nambu for this data provided in his research paper "On Mirroring Jesus Christ to a Prostitute," Asian Theological Seminary, 1990–1991.

[7]See "The Philippines—Trafficking," www.catwinternational.org/factbook/philippines.php (accessed August 15, 2012). Prostituted persons are mainly adult women, but there are also male, transvestite and child prostitutes, both girls and boys. UNICEF cites the number of children involved in prostitution in the Philippines as being anywhere from 60,000 to 600,000 (www.unicef.org/philippines/support/sup_12.html (accessed August 15, 2012).

her "Anti-Prostitution Act" (Senate Bill No. 2341), Senator Pia S. Cayetano cites the number of women being exploited in prostitution in the Philippines now ballooning to 800,000.[8]

What Drives a Person into Prostitution?

In one survey of those engaged in prostitution along Quezon Avenue in Quezon City, the main reasons given by the respondents for being involved were:[9]

1. Poverty
2. Under-employment or lack of employment opportunities
3. Physical or sexual abuse
4. Drug dependence and other vices
5. Lack of education
6. Peer influence

Other factors cited by NGOs involved in anti-prostitution work include a) coming from dysfunctional homes, b) deception by recruiters, c) pornography, d) tourism that capitalizes on Filipino women and e) a general apathy of the society and Church towards this reality.[10] It is important to be aware of these so-called "push-pull" factors. People

[8]See Senator Pia S. Cayetano, "Anti-Prostitution Act," Senate Bill No. 2341, www.senate.gov.ph/lisdata/100208564!.pdf, (accessed August 15, 2012).

[9]See "Prostitution along Quezon Avenue and Sagip Kababaihan—A Case Study," www.samaritana.org/sites/default/files/2011ORC/philippines-trafficking-prostitution/Prostitution_ Along_Quezon_Ave_and_Sagip_ Kababaihan.pdf (accessed August 15, 2012).

[10]Jonathon Nambu, Presentation to Exodus Novitiate formation group (Jan 9, 2012).

who work in ministries seeking to rescue and rehabilitate prostituted women will tell you that they have never met a woman who wanted to be a prostitute; instead, they will recount countless stories of young women coming from poor backgrounds who often have a long history of prior physical and sexual abuse.[11] Many young women are deceived by recruiters to leave the province, where work opportunities may be few and far between, and come to the big city with the promise of decent work. Upon arriving there, the vulnerable person is often tricked or even coerced into working in the sex industry.

Short Shelf Life of Women Involved in Prostitution

In a study of prostitution along Quezon Avenue, 243 prostituted women (PW) were interviewed.[12] Of the 243 PW, 45% were aged between 18–22 years old, 30% between 23–27 years old and 11% between 28–32 years old. The relatively young age of the prostituted women reflects what is called "the short shelf life" of a woman forced into prostitution—the life is so inhuman and degrading that before long untold physical and psychological harm is incurred. As Melissa Farley clearly documents, prostitution is bad for the body and bad for the heart.[13] She states that "throughout history, regardless of its legal

[11]When a girl has been a victim of sexual abuse, which can often be in the form of incest, deep wounds are created in her psyche. This often leads to a reduced sense of self-worth and a low self-esteem. She becomes an easy prey to recruiters and may offer less resistance to a life in prostitution because her integrity has already been forcefully violated.

[12]This study also interviewed 46 pimps and 25 homosexual persons involved in prostitution.

[13]Melissa Farley, "'Bad for the Body, Bad for the Heart': Prostitution Harms Women Even if Legalized or Decriminalized," *Violence Against Women* 10:10 (October 2004): 1087–1125.

status, prostitution has had a devastating impact on women's health."[14] This can be seen in the many physical and psychological consequences of this destructive lifestyle. Some findings include:[15]

- Sexual violence and physical assault are the norm for women in all types of prostitution
- Health problems include exhaustion, frequent viral illness, STDs, vaginal infections, back aches, sleeplessness, depression, headaches, stomach aches, and eating disorders
- Post traumatic stress disorder is a consequence of prostitution as are mood disorders such as dissociation and depression
- Prostituted women are at a higher risk of being murdered

Rights of Persons Exploited in Prostitution[16]

The fundamental rights of persons exploited in prostitution should not be forgotten and need to be upheld. These include:

- The right to be treated as human beings
- The right to dignity and security
- The right against any form of discrimination
- The right to be protected by the law

[14]Farley, "Bad for the Body, Bad for the Heart," 1097.

[15]Farley, "Bad for the Body, Bad for the Heart," 1097.

[16]Supplied by the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women—Asia Pacific group and slightly modified.

- The right to be protected from abuse and exploitation
- The right to seek redress for violations of their rights and to have their complaints appropriately addressed
- The right to fair and human treatment
- The right to sensitive and appropriate legal, health and other social services
- The right to organize themselves as survivors and fight for their legitimate concerns

Addressing the Demand

One way to reduce the impact of prostitution would be to criminalize the demand side, thus making the buying or attempted buying of sex illegal. The one who should be prosecuted is the buying customer, or the pimp or establishment owner, not the women exploited in prostitution. If a brothel is raided, often the women involved are arrested and taken to prison. The male customers are not detained and are usually let off scot free. The sex institution and its owner are not penalized but instead are allowed to carry on business as usual. Reports of human rights abuses exist whereby arrested prostituted women are not treated fairly or are made to offer sexual favors to Law Enforcement Officers before being released from custody.[17]

Some NGO's are campaigning to criminalize the demand side, making the procurement of prostitution illegal similar to legislation in Sweden where the paying or offering to pay for sexual services is a criminal offence:

> In Sweden the spotlight now shines very clearly on all purchasers of commercial sex, and their role in supporting the sex "trade." This new approach has sparked a public debate that has caused communities

[17]"Prostitution along Quezon Avenue and Sagip Kababaihan—A Case Study."

> to think afresh about whether the purchase of sex on their streets and in their neighbourhoods is acceptable. Since the new policy was introduced the numbers of women involved in street-based prostitution has significantly decreased. Although some may have moved to work indoors, the policy is claimed as a success based in no small part on the extensive level of support available to those women who wish to leave the streets.[18]

Janice Raymond, in a thought provoking analysis, gives ten reasons for *not* legalizing prostitution.[19] Some reasons for not making it legal are that legalization of prostitution is a gift to pimps, traffickers and the sex industry. Legalization also promotes sex trafficking, expands the sex industry and increases child prostitution.

Money is the Root of all Evil

Big money is involved and this is another reason why the prostitution industry thrives.[20] The prostitution business worldwide is linked to the market in human trafficking which ensures that the demand for various shapes and sizes of women's bodies is met. Trafficking is now estimated to be a $57 billion global industry. In addition, prostitution is not only linked to trafficking but also to internet pornography. According to a social worker involved in helping rehabilitate prostituted women, "internet pornography is the theory; prostitution is the practice."

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[18]See Home Office Report, United Kingdom Government, "Paying the Price: A Consultation Paper on Prostitution," Sec. 9.2–9.3.

[19]Janice G. Raymond, "Ten Reasons for *Not* Legalizing Prostitution and a Legal Response to the Demand for Prostitution," www.prostitutionresearch.com/laws/000022.html (accessed August 15, 2012).

[20]The flesh trade in Thailand has been estimated to generate between US$18–21.6 billion a year or over half of the entire 1995 budget of that country. See Coalition Against Trafficking in Women—Asia Pacific, "Sex: From Intimacy to 'Sexual Labor' or is it a Human Right to Prostitute?" http://action.web.ca/home/catw/readingroom.shtml?x=16287 (accessed August 15, 2012).

This chilling remark opens our eyes to the devastating effects of internet pornography which is flooding our society.[21] When men view pornography their sexual desires are often fanned into a raging flame. What they have just viewed is very often outside the bounds of decency and their wives would in no way consent to the re-enactment of such immoral scenes which typically involve male domination or sexual violence towards the female. Seeing as his wife or girlfriend would never consent, the man feels he has a right to buy such perverted gratification through the use of a woman in prostitution.

Hidden in Plain Sight

We have made prostitution "hidden in plain sight."[22] It is everywhere but we try to ignore it. The US Ambassador Harry Thomas drew attention to the problem when he commented that 40 percent of male tourists come to the Philippines for sex. Many senators were livid and asked him to produce evidence to support his claim.[23] The senators were obviously desperate to protect the good name and reputation of their country. It would be just and fitting if they had the same zeal to protect the good name and dignity of many women who are involved in the sex trade here in the Philippines. Moreover, neither should it be

[21]See Ann Marie Bruchalski and James McTavish, "Internet Pornography—The New Pandemic," *Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinas* LXXXVII:887 (November–December 2011): 605–620. Also John J. Carroll, "Cesspools in the Living Room," *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (August 29, 2011).

[22]This phrase comes from Judith Herman, a long term campaigner against prostitution.

[23]See Cathy Yamsuan and Maila Ager, "Say sorry or pack up, US envoy told over sex remark," *Philippine Daily Inquirer Online* (September 29, 2011).

naively thought that only foreign males go to Filipina prostitutes. In fact, Filipino males are the main users of Filipinas in prostitution.[24]

Church Teaching Regarding Prostitution

Various Church documents address the issue of prostitution. In the Second Vatican Council, prostitution and the selling of women and children are seen as crimes against human life. "Whatever is opposed to life itself, such as … prostitution, the selling of women and children … are infamies indeed. They poison human society, and they do more harm to those who practise them than to those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonour to the Creator."[25]

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states in number 2355:

> Prostitution does injury to the dignity of the person who engages in it, reducing the person to an instrument of sexual pleasure. The one who pays sins gravely against himself: he violates the chastity to which his Baptism pledged him and defiles his body, the temple of the Holy Spirit. Prostitution is a social scourge. It usually involves women, but also men, children and adolescents (the latter two cases involve the added sin of scandal). While it is always gravely sinful to engage in prostitution, the imputability of the offense can be attenuated by destitution, blackmail or social pressure.[26]

The whole of the catechesis of Pope John Paul II's landmark study of the "Theology of the Body" gives us a renewed and redeemed vision of the meaning of the body and the true purpose of human

[24]Sol. F. Juvida, "Scourge of Child Prostitution," Women's Education, Development, Productivity and Research Organisation (InterPress Service, October 12, 1997).

[25]*Gaudium et spes* 27.

[26]Catechism of the Catholic Church 2355.

sexuality.[27] By referring to the words of Christ, the Pope delves into the deeper meaning of the state of man and woman in Genesis. The man of innocence who becomes the man of concupiscence is thus invited by Christ to become a redeemed man. Even when Christ tells us that whoever looks at a woman to desire her has already committed adultery (see Matthew 5:27–28), the Pope sees here not an accusation but a calling,[28] a calling to rediscover that gaze of Genesis when man looked at woman and proclaimed her as "flesh of my flesh and bone of my bones" (see Genesis 2:23). This new vision is only possible with new eyes and only in Christ can we put on this new redeemed man.

Pope Benedict XVI makes reference to the dignity and beauty of human sexuality in *Deus Caritas Est,* his first encyclical:

> Eros, reduced to pure "sex," has become a commodity, a mere "thing" to be bought and sold, or rather, man himself becomes a commodity. This is hardly man's great "yes" to the body. On the contrary, he now considers his body and his sexuality as the purely material part of himself, to be used and exploited at will…. True, eros tends to rise "in ecstasy" towards the Divine, to lead us beyond ourselves; yet for this very reason it calls for a path of ascent, renunciation, purification and healing.[29]

Overall what is needed is indeed a new evangelization. In *Verbum Domini,* the recent post-synodal exhortation, we find that in "the face of widespread confusion in the sphere of affectivity, and the rise of ways of thinking which trivialize the human body and sexual differentiation, the word of God reaffirms the original goodness of the human being,

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[27]See Pope John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006). Also of interest is Christopher West's *Theology of the Body for Beginners* (Pennsylvania: Ascension Press, 2009) which gives a shorter and synthetic vision of the Pope's Theology of the Body.

[28]See Pope John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them,* 45.

[29]Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* 6.

created as man and woman and called to a love which is faithful, reciprocal and fruitful."[30]

Conclusion—A Time for Change

In the book of Exodus, we hear the appeal of our Lord: "I have heard the cry of my people and I have come down to rescue them from their suffering" (see Exodus 3:7–8). Surely there is no cry louder than that of the women and children forced into prostitution. We know that Jesus himself had a compassionate heart for women whom society derided and despised: the Samaritan woman with her five husbands, the adulterous woman caught in the act and even "the sinful woman" whose reputation preceded her (see Luke 7:37ff). Jesus was not afraid of criticism because he did not come for the righteous but for those in need of salvation and redemption.

As Church today, called to be a living continuation of our Lord's salvific mission, we have to be close to all those in suffering and in need. The opening words of *Gaudium et Spes* reinforce this appeal, calling the followers of Christ to be close to those who suffer, and to make their griefs and anxieties our own.[31] This is in harmony with the appeal of St. Paul to all the members of the body of Christ when he wrote to the Church of Corinth two thousand years ago—"if one part of the body suffers then all the parts suffer with it" (see 1 Corinthians 12:26).

We cannot be a Church that deals with these challenging issues at arm's length but rather need to be involved. A song called "Speak my Word" challenges us to not just sit around, keep silent and do nothing to help—"Look at you now, are you all right with what you see? This ain't what it's supposed to be…. Is it enough not to care just because you are not there? Is it enough to be far and safe? Is it enough to live

[30] *Verbum Domini* 26.

[31] *Gaudium et spes* 1.

with ease and not give a damn to others needs? Is it enough to mind your own?" Prostitution "exists because significant numbers of men are given social, moral and legal permission to buy women on demand."[32] As Church we need to work to change cultural standards, to not simply accept the evil of prostitution but to denounce it, especially the demand side. As the CATW-AP branch notes, "ultimately gender relations must be restructured so that sexuality can once again be an experience of human intimacy and not a commodity to be bought or sold."[33]

How rarely is the topic of demand for prostitution broached. Have you ever heard a homily asking why we are so apathetic as a society in front of these realities? Have you heard a priest ever speaking out to denounce the sex establishments existing in his parish? We should not simply presume that nothing can be done. As Christians we are asked to fight the good fight, not to throw in the towel! As the popular expression runs, "evil happens when good people do nothing." More thought should also be given to considering why men in particular go to prostitutes. The famous English writer G.K. Chesterton said that the man who knocks on the door of a brothel is searching for God. It is not only to denounce the men who buy women but also perhaps to seek and pray for their conversion. In Jesus' recounting of the parable of the prodigal son who spent his inheritance on prostitutes, the father did not disown him but instead received him back with mercy.

What can be done concretely? I was once awestruck when I read that seminarians prayed their rosary once a week outside a sex establishment! Here are some concrete suggestions:

- To pray for those involved in prostitution, in particular for the conversion of men who buy women, and for a

[32]Janice G. Raymond, "Sex Trafficking is Not 'Sex Work'," *Conscience* XXVI:1 (Spring 2005).

[33]Coalition Against Trafficking in Women—Asia Pacific, "Sex: From Intimacy to "Sexual Labor" or is it a Human Right to Prostitute?"

change of heart and mind for the pimps who sell them and for the sex establishment owners who encourage the industry.

- Organize a rosary and procession outside and alongside the sex establishments and girly bars in your neighbourhood or parish area.
- As a parish priest, to deal with the theme in catechesis or in a homily where adults are listening. It would not be prudent to address this theme in front of minors.
- If giving a retreat it could be a theme that is dealt with or made reference to.
- Create and sign a petition to close down nearby sex clubs.
- For theological schools to offer courses that study and analyze prostitution and trafficking.
- Work to cut down the influence of internet pornography.
- For more Religious Sisters to be concerned and involved in the plight of prostituted women.
- For a more vocal questioning of why many tourists are coming to the Philippines for sexual purposes.
- To denounce sex establishments and other places which have become a haven for prostitution.
- To support an NGO such as the Samaritana Transformation Ministries or the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women.

Perhaps what is needed most of all is a more focused and targeted Church ministry. Some sisters have made big efforts to combat the ills of prostitution but as Church we could do more. Certain groups

are doing sterling work but a lone ranger mentality will provide only partial solutions. What is needed is for NGO's, government efforts, concerned lay groups and the Church to combine forces but this also needs coordination. We necessarily have pastoral offices or committees to deal with mining issues, deforestation, people with special needs and a whole gamut of Church and pastoral concerns but no specific ministry to deal with prostitution, yet this reality alone probably involves 800,000 women. Perhaps this is the single biggest pastoral concern that has no specific office or personnel directed to it. A suggestion could be for the Catholic Church to set up a national coordinator to harness or collaborate with the efforts of various personnel and NGO's working in this area.

It is time for a renewal, a real Church presence to our prostituted brothers and sisters, a stronger denouncement of the customers frequenting prostitutes and a clearer and more vocal criticism of those running lascivious spas and sex establishments. I close with the appeal made by Fr. Reuter ringing powerfully in my ears—"Each of us has an obligation, in conscience, to reach out to our people, to those who are in need. The poor girl trapped in prostitution is [at] the bottom of the barrel—the one most desperately in need. Each of us can do something! If only we would try!"[34] If only we would try. It is time for change.

[34]Reuter, "Foreword," xiv.

Landas 24:1 (2010) 137–141

FACILITATING CONDITIONS OF CHURCH POWER

Seminar on the Church in Politics
April 18–19, 2011
Ateneo de Manila University

Jose Mario C. Francisco, S.J.

It seems that for the purposes of this seminar a more practical and less theoretical approach to the subject of church power is more useful. I am sure though that you may recognize strains of some theory or other in what you are about to hear. "Church power" here specifically refers to the influence of the Catholic Church in the Philippines when it acts through its institutionally recognized entities, be it an individual like a bishop, an official group like the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) or an organized group of laity like the Couples for Christ (CFC).

Allow me then to offer the following hypothesis for discussion: The Catholic Church would have greater influence on Philippine society regarding a particular social issue when all or some of the following conditions obtain: 1) the issue is perceived, whether consciously or not, to be linked with the Christian grand narrative of liberation and its accompanying symbols and rituals, 2) when the Church's position on the issue does not conflict with other views and interests, 3) when the Church mobilizes its institutional resources for the said position, 4) when the Church acts with other organized groups of the same or similar persuasion and/or provides them with its resources, personnel and logistics.

In the process of explaining this hypothesis, some constituent elements within it would be clarified. Among them are the differentiation between Christianity as church and as story, the nature and structure of church membership from theological and canonical perspectives, and the dynamics between institutional power and symbolic power.

Let us proceed to explain each of the conditions. The first is when the issue is perceived, whether consciously or not, to be linked with the Christian grand narrative of liberation and its accompanying symbols and rituals. In the 16th century, late medieval post-Reformation Spanish Catholicism came to the Philippines with Spanish colonization and brought not only the Roman Catholic Church but also the story and symbols of Christianity. Best exemplified by the *pasyon* tradition of chanting or dramatizing the life-story of Jesus Christ during Lent but also expressed in the many other texts and practices brought by Catholicism such as novenas and processions, these narrative and symbolic tropes have been woven into the social fabric of lowland Philippine life through the linguistic strategy of using and transforming the local languages for evangelization. This strategy translated Spanish Catholicism into a native Christian form defined by these narratives and symbols, and because of the inherent nature of narrative to be open-ended and of symbol to be polyvalent, their appropriation by its native readers could not be controlled by the Church. As discussed by Reynaldo Ileto, many 19th century movements for social change even subverted the nexus of colonial and church power on the basis of this tradition.

Thus when the Church takes a stand on a particular issue, and when this stand is perceived to be related to this grand narrative and accompanying symbols, then the Church's stand assumes greater power. For example, among other factors that facilitated it, EDSA I tapped into the narrative of liberation and the symbolic power of freedom. The long and profound Christian involvement in the anti-Marcos movement paved the way for the spontaneous irruption of Christian symbols in the form of statues or rosaries and the identification of the events as "the exodus of the Filipino people." A contrary example would

be Church attempts to engage in partisan politics as in its campaign against the Senate election of the pro-family planning advocate Juan Flavier. Such attempts often fail because they are not perceived to be linked to fundamental narrative and symbolic tropes of Christianity, even if the Church formulates it in those terms.

The second condition is when the Church's position on the issue does not conflict with other views and interests. The Catholic Church in the Philippines exists in a pluralistic society governed by constitutional democracy. Thus it interacts with other social actors with views and interests different from, if not contradictory to, its own. When its position on a particular issue runs counter to or is subverted by different views and interests from these other actors, then it is unlikely that its views would hold sway. One historic example from the 1950s would be the Church's opposition to the Rizal Bill, one that mandates the inclusion of Rizal's novels in the school curriculum. Here it ran aground against nationalist sentiments and the constitutional provision of the non-establishment of a particular religion.

A more recent and interesting instance relates to the issue of the death penalty. It was forbidden under the post-martial law 1987 Constitution, but was reinstated for those convicted of heinous crimes under President Fidel Ramos. The first execution took place during the following term of Joseph Estrada who later issued a moratorium in honor of the 2000 Jubilee Year. The death penalty was re-abolished in 2006 under President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. The Catholic Church and other civil society advocates were responsible for this. However, then as well as now, surveys reveal that most Filipinos support the death penalty and that the Church has failed to persuade its own Catholic constituents. It appears that many Filipino Catholics operate out of a more primal view of retribution.

The third condition is when the Church mobilizes its institutional resources. Though the Catholic Church's theological self-understanding is that of a communion of persons equal in dignity by virtue of baptism, its doctrinal, organizational and juridical structures are clearly hierarchical. Official pronouncements regarding doctrine have varying degrees of power depending on their nature and source, with

an infallible definition by an ecumenical council being the highest. Though consultations take place especially since the Second Vatican Council, decisions related to governance are made by clerics or bodies composed exclusively of clerics. The fundamental flow of governance proceeds from Pope to bishop to parish priest; not even the national bishops' conference like the CBCP has a juridical status.

This tension between equality on the theological level and hierarchy on practically all other aspects produces an unusual dynamic in the Catholic Church. On the one hand, it is highly centralized with clear lines of authority. On the other hand, uniformity in thought, word and deed is difficult to achieve.

Furthermore, in the case of the Catholic Church in the Philippines, one must take into account that it numbers around 80% of the total population and therefore its ethos and behavior are typical of majority religions. At the same time, only around 30% of its members have some form of regular contact with it, primarily through Sunday Mass.

These factors defining the nature and characteristics of the Catholic Church in the Philippines come into play when it mobilizes its institutional resources for a particular issue. One such instance is the impact of the Catholic Church on the electoral process through the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV). Formed in 1991, PPCRV has contributed to the relative quality and order in national and local elections because of the general support of Church leadership, both diocesan and religious. Moreover, because of its base in the parish, it is readily integrated into the organizational structure of the Church.

The fourth condition is when the Church acts with other organized groups of the same or similar persuasion and/or provides them with its resources, personnel and logistics. Since social power is greater when it involves more people and resources, the Church would more likely have greater impact when it acts with other organized groups on some shared agenda. These alliances on particular issues is either total, that is, when there is complete agreement between the Church and another group, or strategic, that is, when the agreement covers

only certain substantive or operational matters such as the sharing of resources or personnel.

The Church's support of the National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL), a non-governmental organization, during the 1986 elections proved crucial in defending the sanctity of the ballot and eventually unseating President Marcos. The Church did not only provide financial support but also key personnel. The "NAMFREL Marines" were nuns from different congregations who guarded and accompanied ballot boxes to safety, often past midnight and with some peril to their lives. This support diminished when the Church formed PPCRV and occasional battles over turf took place.

Another example of the Church working within an alliance is the movement against the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP) during the Marcos regime. This involvement occurred at various levels. Religious groups like the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines actively campaigned against the BNPP. Other church groups like Share and Care Apostolate for Poor Settlers (SCAPS) were organizing the local communities in Nagbalayong, Morong, Bataan. These multi-pronged church efforts cooperated with broad international and national alliances made of diverse sectors including scientists, educators and activists. Such breadth and depth of opposition forced President Marcos to call an independent commission under the much-respected Senator Lorenzo Tañada and eventually to mothball the BNPP based on its findings.

These different conditions facilitate the exercise of church power in Philippine society. They certainly interact with each other and have differing degrees of significance according to the social issue at hand and the surrounding social context. Weighing them in relation to each other can help us calibrate the extent of the Church's power regarding a particular issue.

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and Pastoral Approach," *Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinas* LXXXVII, No. 886, and "Developing an Informed Conscience: Reflections of a Priest Surgeon," *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 11, No. 3.

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