LOYOLA PAPERS

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BACCALAUREATE IN SACRED THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY SYNTHESIS PAPERS

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Mystery as a Renewed Pathway to Relate with God in a Secular World
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EDITOR'S PREFACE

In his second sermon for Lent 2024 for the Annual Retreat of the Roman Curia, Preacher of the Papal Household, Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM lamented an ongoing tendency in theology, especially in the West, to rely more on human wisdom than the power of the Holy Spirit. With this kind of approach, he said, God tends to be reduced to an object of study rather than a subject of relationship. At the same time, theological discourse becomes "more and more a dialogue with the academic elite of the moment and less and less nourishment for the faith of God's people." By way of advice, he recommends: "You only get out of this situation by prayer, by talking to God before you even talk about God."

What timely counsel as the Church also marks three important milestones in the life of the great Doctor of the Church, Saint Thomas Aquinas, who was renowned both for his unparalleled scholarship as well as his mystical intimacy with God! We celebrated his 700th Canonization anniversary on July 18, 2023, and his 750th death anniversary on March 7, 2024. And while we do not know the exact date of his natal day, it would be the 800th anniversary of his birth around the year 2025. In launching the three-year jubilee in honor of the Angelic Doctor, Pope Francis lauded the eminent philosopher-theologian as a "faithful disciple of Incarnate wisdom" and "tireless seeker of the face of God." Earlier in November 2022, during a meeting with the participants of an International Thomistic Congress held in Rome, he highlighted that "the passionate search for God is simultaneously prayer and contemplation so that Saint Thomas is a model of theology that is born and grows in the atmosphere of worship." Thus, he called on theologians, first

to imitate the saint and then to follow and learn from the great Doctor and Master. In effect, he teaches us: first, pray, and let your prayer overflow into your theology.

Aquinas himself was quoted as saying that he learned more from the crucifix than from any other book. And having been granted a vision a few months before his death, he despised and gave up his scholarly work as "so much straw" in comparison to the union with God, of which he was granted a foretaste. How From this point onward, he would devote himself fully to prayer until his theological vision of God gave way at last to sight. His precocious question in childhood, "*Quid est Deus?*" reflecting his intellectual quest for God, had now become the ardent and impassioned "*Non aliam, Domine, nisi teipsum.*" I desire nothing else but You Yourself, Lord.

As the Church prepares for the Ordinary Jubilee Year 2025, this is precisely the invitation of the Pope to all of us as he declared 2024 the Year of Prayer, dedicated to "rediscovering the great value and absolute need for prayer, prayer in personal life, in the life of the Church, prayer in the world." To us theologians, this call resounds with particular earnestness and calls for reflection and self-examination. How much of our theology is born of prayer and a fruit of prayer? How much of our theology leads us and other people to prayer, and to a deeper and more intimate knowledge of God?

In this issue of *Loyola Papers*, we humbly present to you some articles that are hopefully the fruit, not only of serious study, but of authentic encounter with the Truth.

Kevin Stephon R. Centeno, SJ's "Human Instrument United with God": The Dynamic of Grace and Freedom in the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus" explores the connection and relationship of divine initiative and human response as embodied in the Jesuit rule of life. The singular emphasis, which

can be traced back to Ignatius himself, on both the primacy of grace and cultivation of interior freedom, is the very foundation of Ignatian spirituality, if not all of Christian spirituality. In this article, Centeno reflects on this inextricable interplay of "cooperative grace" and how it is embodied in particular aspects of the Constitutions such as the general examen, the probation of formands, admission and incorporation into the Society, the personal life of Jesuits, their relationships with their mission collaborators and even the most desired trait in a superior general. The result is a humble but empowered understanding of ourselves as instruments in God's hands through which his grace overflows.

Next, we have **Patrick Vance Nogoy, SJ**'s "Growing into *Kusang-Loob* and *Ka-Kristong Loob*: Some Implications of Exploring *Loob* as the Filipino's Understanding of Conscience in Today's Times." Drawing on earlier attempts at inculturated theology by scholars such as Mercado, Miranda, and Alejo, Nogoy points to "loob" as a way to distill the moral concept of "conscience" as well as the unique nuances that the notion of "loob" can contribute to our understanding of conscience. Taking it a notch further, he proposes the idea of "kusang-loob" and "ka-Kristong loob" towards the formation and orientation of the "loob" towards Christ, emphasizing that the formation of one's conscience is a task both personal and communal; one that requires "plenty of listening and dialogue" on the part of the Church in a maturation process that is markedly synodal.

Meanwhile, "Understanding *Karai Kasang* and *Nats*: A Basis for Dialogue Between Kachin Traditional Religion and Christianity" by **Than Naing Lin, SJ** studies the native theology of Kachin traditional religion and its interface with the Christian faith. In particular, it looks at the Kachin figure of the Creator, known as Karai Kasang, a name which has been appropriated early on by Christians to refer to the Christian

God in an attempt to inculturate the faith and make it accessible to the Kachin people. Boldly pointing out the historical and present inadequacies in the attempt to inculturate the Christian faith in the Kachin context, he points to the discernment of the work of the Spirit in other religions, not confined to Western criteria but in a truly Asian manner, as a promising doorway to a Kachin pneumatology.

Jojo M. Fung, SJ's "Ethics of Alterity and Corporeal Pneumatology for a Climate-Stricken World" is a post-pandemic reflection on our world today from a Levinasian lens, with the philosopher's ethics of alterity as a vantage point. Applying his reflections to pneumatology in particular, Fung proposes an "alterity pneumatology" that emphasizes "pneumatic co-creativity" in the form of five crucial "alterity shifts." These alterity shifts take persons and societies from being turned in on themselves to turning to others, "alterizing them" to have a greater sense of interconnectedness with other creatures along with a deeper sense of responsibility for the planet. Read in tandem with Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* and the more recent follow-up document, *Laudate Deum*, his proposal is an important contribution to address unbridled anthropocentricism and its ravaging effects on our global climate and human society.

"*Substitute Families* and Suicidal Tendencies of the Adolescents and Youths of Kerala, India Today: Bowenian Model for Pastoral Approaches" by **Antony Thomas Ittikunnath, OCD** analyzes the growing trend of suicide among young people in Kerala, India, using the theories of the American psychiatrist, Murray Bowen. According to him, the problem often begins in the family, leading young people to cut off ties and look for substitute families like peer groups, who, unfortunately, are negative influences for them. This is exacerbated by other factors such

as social media and gadget abuse, as well as the high incidence of failed relationships on the part of young couples who are themselves running away from problematic family situations. All this contributes to the increasing incidence of suicide, seen as the final stage of this complex problematic. As a response, Ittikunnath proposes a Bowenian family systems therapeutic approach to lower feelings of anxiety, starting from the level of the original family and the parents in particular, along with other applications of Bowen's family systems theory.

Yung Hongmin, BMC's "Genuine Christian Martyrdom in Balthasar's Theology" presents a new understanding of martyrdom in its more practical or bloodless dimension. Appropriating the Trinitarian, Christological and pneumatological approach of Hans Urs von Balthasar, Hongmin frames "Christian martyrdom as a manifestation of divine love and obedience" applicable to daily life as a profound participation in the Paschal mystery. Martyrdom is then conceived not only as a singular event that is achieved by the shedding of blood and offering of one's life for the faith but in continual imitation of Christ's kenosis and solidarity in the company of the Holy Spirit. Not only does this help to avoid the over-spiritualization of Christ's suffering, but it also opens up a practical path to living it out in fidelity, devotion, and self-surrender to God as a witness to God's Kingdom.

Last but not least, we have **Kelvin Ruel Novabos**' "A Review of Gerd Lüdemann's Methodology in 'The Resurrection of Christ: a Historical Inquiry.'" In his critical analysis of Lüdeman's book, Novabos tackles the German scholar's book, where he posits the highly controversial claim that Jesus did not really rise from the dead and that accounts in the Scripture of Jesus' resurrection are only the product of the disciples' mass delusion. Locating the claim in relation to the three quests for the

historical Jesus, he points out the strengths and weaknesses of Lüdemann's work, especially in terms of its attempt at an exclusively historical methodology. A more updated methodology that learns from the limitations of the first two quests and incorporates the helpful insights of the third quest, he argues, would have led to a more sound exegesis and conclusion.

* * *

For our synthesis papers, we are very proud to present two excellent articles in this current issue: one by **Hugo Antonio Facio Hernandez, CS** titled "The Pilgrimage of Divine Love: A Theological Synthesis on the Relevance of Migration in God's Plan" and another by **Robert Rizzo SJ** on "Mystery as a Renewed Pathway to Relate with God in a Secular World." Both papers come from a profound personal experience of two realities that are of great pastoral relevance today: migration and secularization.

Hernandez is not only part of the Scalabrinian Missionaries, a congregation known for their charism of working with migrants, but was a migrant himself who experienced the struggles and pains of migration at a young age. In his paper, he reflects on the special love of God for migrants and expounds on important aspects of the mystery of faith from the lens of the phenomenon of migration. God is present in the journey of every migrant as he is in the journey of each one of us through life.

Meanwhile, Rizzo's paper embodies the human struggle with mystery, which in its very elusiveness, he ironically discovers as a potential bridge between spirituality and secularism. He then tackles important dogmas such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Holy Spirit as the fruits of this struggle to make sense of God's revelation. He sees in this

universal struggle an important opening for dialogue with the post-Catholic secular society in his native Malta, where he hopes that the fundamental experience of grappling with God, as opposed to simplifying the faith to what our minds could easily understand, can once again attract people who have learned to despise traditional religion but continue to search for meaning and transcendence. "The fundamental experience that facilitates an encounter with the Mystery is prayer," he says. It is truly a great consolation to know from this that LST students do not just grapple with concepts for quizzes and oral exams but are hopefully opening themselves up to God in prayer.

* * *

As the Angelic Doctor himself shows us, authentic theology is more than just acquiring competencies and skills, mastering concepts, or navigating their complex and subtle nuances. It is, above all, a disposition of the heart, a yearning from the depths of one's soul, a posture of prayer before the God who reveals himself, not only to be known but to draw us to his communion of love. May he continue to intercede for us today before the throne of Mercy while we, in turn, strive to impart the fruits of what we contemplate: *contemplata aliis tradere*.

Leo-Martin Angelo R. Ocampo, OP

ARTICLES

"HUMAN INSTRUMENT UNITED WITH GOD:" THE DYNAMIC OF GRACE AND FREEDOM IN THE CONSTITUTIONS OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

Kevin Stephon R. Centeno, SJ

The cooperation of God's grace and human freedom is an essential theme in the Constitutions and Jesuit spirituality in general. The creative tension between God's grace and human freedom is worth pondering, not only theologically but spiritually as well. God's grace empowers humans to be free for human action according to God's design is not deterministic. At the same time, without God's grace, humans can do nothing; God's grace retains its primacy over nature. Grace builds on and works with human freedom.

This paper aims to highlight the dynamic of grace and human freedom in the Constitutions. In the contemporary world, there is so much emphasis on human freedom and responsibility. What makes human existence specifically human is freedom. Freedom is the defining characteristic of humans; human beings are freedom. This freedom constitutes human existence with three interrelated relations: personal, social, and transcendent. In other words, human freedom is related to the self, to the world, and to God.[1] In connection with this, humanity in the twenty-first century has become more and more conscious of the ambiguity of human freedom: human freedom can be creative and humanizing and, at the same time,

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[1]Roger Haight, *An Alternative Vision: An Interpretation of Liberation Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 6-7.

can be destructive and dehumanizing. "Concrete human beings live out this drama of being simultaneously graced and dis-graced: 'Every human is Adam, every human is Christ.'"[2] What does it mean, then, to be interiorly free?

Interior freedom is exercising our human freedom in cooperation with God's grace. Through "the interior law of charity" (Cons. 134), which can be translated into God's grace dwelling in us, our human freedom is graced. Thus, we have the capacity to "cooperate with Divine Providence" (Cons. 134) for "the salvation and perfection of souls" (Cons. 3). Interior freedom demands attachment to God. The human person is fully and authentically free as long as he or she cooperates with God's grace. For Ignatius, attachment to God is compatible with the exercise of human freedom. God works in the world by means of our human freedom and he respects how we use this precious gift. Paradoxically, a proper and responsible exercise of human freedom in furthering God's values in this broken world is always under the influence of God's loving and sustaining grace. God's grace is humanizing and freeing. God empowers us as he acts through us. It follows that God still needs our free response.

The first section deals with the Ignatian worldview to set the tone and background. The worldview Ignatius offers makes a difference on how spirituality is embodied in our world. The image of God in the Contemplation to Attain Love is included because our image of God influences Christian living. Afterwards, Ignatius' reliance and dependence on God's loving grace is tackled. It is my contention that interior freedom cannot be properly understood without reference to God's grace. Then I proceed to the dynamic of grace and freedom found in the Constitutions. I particularly emphasize the phrase

[2]Leonardo Boff, *Liberating Grace* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 5.

"human instrument united with God" (Cons. 813). How I read interior freedom in the Constitutions has resonances with the notion of cooperative grace—the creative tension and relationship between God's grace and human freedom. I conclude with concluding reflections by weaving the principles laid down.

I agree with Roger Haight, SJ, that there is a need to reinterpret Ignatian spirituality for our contemporary context, for there exists differences between Ignatius' worldview and ours. The process of interpretation, despite its difficulties, strives to be faithful to the founder's fundamental principles and values while adjusting them to be intelligible to the contemporary situation. Interpretation is demanded by the nature of the text. However, there is no exact certainty that the reinterpretation will be faithful. The result is a plurality of interpretations; no one reinterpretation is definitive.[3] The need for hermeneutics arises.

This type of reinterpretation can be construed as a "sapiential reading" or what Andre de Jaer, SJ calls a "Spirit-infused reading."[4] This reading, for Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ strives to assimilate existentially and spiritually the wisdom of the Constitutions.[5]

---

[3]Roger Haight, "Foundational Issues in Jesuit Spirituality," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 19, 4 (September 1987): 4. In this challenging essay, Fr. Roger Haight, SJ, a renowned American theologian, reinterprets the tenets of Jesuit spirituality, especially the Spiritual Exercises, in light of the philosophy of action. His attempt is to translate the wisdom derived from Ignatian tradition to the contemporary context so that it will be more relevant, intelligible, and transformative. Ignatian spirituality is timeless and revolutionary. I've been personally inspired by the theological project of Roger Haight.

[4]Andre de Jaer, *Together for Mission: A Spiritual Reading of the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2001), 4. This book is a very good example of this kind of reading.

[5]de Jaer, *Together for Mission*, 4.

Since Ignatius neither specifically and explicitly devoted a section on the dynamic of grace and human freedom in the whole Constitutions nor wrote a work on this subject matter, I also attempt in this paper to explicate this dynamic and how this is operative in the Constitutions themselves. With this in consideration, the perennial wisdom of the Constitutions becomes truly relevant.

As an important note, the Spiritual Exercises are indispensable in understanding the Constitutions, for it is intertwined with them. The two documents form a unity; they are the two major wings of Ignatian spirituality. To borrow from Pope Benedict XVI, the Spiritual Exercises are the "fountain" of our spirituality and the "matrix" of the Constitutions.[6]

Ignatian Worldview: Grace-Filled World

Grace and Nature are United

In his companion volume to the newly updated Constitutions, Parmananda Divarkar, SJ comments on Ignatius' worldview present in Part X of the Constitutions, which is regarded as "the whole of the Constitutions in a nutshell."[7] At the heart of this is an Ignatian vision of reality: there is no dichotomy between nature and grace, sacred and profane, supernatural and natural, for everything is a pure gift coming from God. [8] Faithful

[6]Pope Benedict XVI, "Address of His Holiness Benedict the Sixteenth to the 35 General Congregation of the Society of Jesus" (February 21, 2008) in *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 31st– 35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009), 825. The citations from General Congregations also come from this collection.

[7]Parmananda Divarkar, *Faithful and Free: A Companion to the Updated Jesuit Constitutions* (New Delhi: Gujarat Sahithya Prakash, 1997), 77-78.

[8]Divarkar, *Faithful and Free*, 78.

to his Ignatian roots, Pope Francis beautifully defines the whole universe as embraced by God: "The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face" (Laudato Si n. 233).[9] Creation is graced.

If in the Ignatian worldview, there is no dichotomy between nature and grace, and the whole universe unfolds in God, we are "exhorted to seek God our Lord in all things, removing from themselves as far as possible love of all creatures in order to place it in the Creator of them, loving him in all creatures and all creatures in him, in conformity with his holy and divine will" (Cons. 288).[10] The grace-filled universe serves as the horizon for the human person's exercise of interior freedom. Human existence is graced, and so is our God-given freedom.

The Image of God in the Contemplation to Attain Love

We need to take note of this crucial principle: How we perceive God affects how we perceive interior freedom. Our image of God matters, for this has consequences for our Christian living. I will construct an image of God found in the "Contemplation to Attain Love" in the Fourth Week of the Spiritual Exercises, which I believe will be helpful in the discussions that follow.

The image of God provided by the "Contemplation to Attain Love" is the God who dwells in and labors creation (Spiritual Exercises nos. 235-236). God dwells in creation, thereby sanctifying it – making it grace-filled. God is an empowering and loving presence; the "interior law of charity and love which the

[9]Pope Francis, *Laudato Si, Encyclical Letter on Care for Our Common Home*, May 24, 2015.

[10]Citations from the Constitutions abbreviated as Cons. come from "The Constitutions of The Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms" (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996)

Holy Spirit writes and imprints upon hearts" (Cons. 134) can be interpreted in this light for theologically the symbol of God the Spirit corresponds to the image of God as empowering and loving presence. This has a bearing on how interior freedom among humans is understood. Consequently, Ignatius does not see God as a cosmic puppeteer who pulls strings to control everything, nor a Deus ex Machina who rectifies things at the end.[11] Ignatian theologians understand human history not as a marionette show in which God pulls all the strings, for they give precedence to the role of grace as gentle solicitation that respects and enhances human freedom.[12] Divine Providence and human freedom do not cancel out each other.

The traditional image of God, who operates outside creation as another entity, was influenced by the traditional image of a three-tiered universe in the medieval world. For Ignatius, as seen in the "Contemplation to Attain Love," God is a self-giving God who works within the universe, within human hearts, empowering men and women the grace to be self-giving as well. The incarnate God continues to "help souls"—feeding the hungry, healing the sick, releasing captives, and reconciling people, but with human hands.[13]

God is not "interventionist" in the sense that he acts in the world by empowering and accompanying our interior freedom

[11]Ronald Modras, *Ignatian Humanism: A Dynamic Spirituality for the 21st Century* (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2004), 296.

[12]Avery Dulles, "Saint Ignatius and the Jesuit Theological Tradition," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits XIV*, 2 (March 1982): 7.

[13]Modras, *Ignatian Humanism*, 296.

through the divine assistance of grace—Divine Indwelling.[14] We are "human instruments united with God" (Cons. 813).

Ignatius on the Primacy of Grace

From the outset, it should be mentioned that St. Ignatius was not technically an academic theologian. In his lifetime, he never wrote a single treatise on theology. Nevertheless, in both his writings and testimonies about him, it is undeniable that he underscores the primacy of grace. This theological principle underpins his spirituality, emphasizing the paramount importance of God's grace. Apart from God and his grace, we can do nothing (John 15:5).

Definition of Grace

In the Christian tradition, the meaning of grace is the simplest, yet at the same time, the most complicated. The word grace has acquired multiple connotations throughout history. However, one can simplify the meaning of grace; it essentially refers to God's love for human beings. All Christians will no doubt agree on this: Grace is God's love for us regardless of its technical formulations. What perfectly captures the meaning of grace is no less than God's love.[15]

For Karl Rahner, SJ, grace is "God's self-communication," which means "that what is communicated is really God in his own being, and in this way, it is communication for the sake of

[14]"The idea that God acts in history, however, is not understood naively in such a way that God is a doer in history, or that God does for human beings what human beings are themselves called upon to do. God has left the running of the world to human freedom; but God is present as an empowering force as Spirit." Haight, Alternative Vision, 85.

[15]Roger Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 7-9.

knowing and possessing God in immediate vision and love."[16] In a similar vein, St. Ignatius of Loyola states that "love consists in a mutual communication between two persons. That is, the one who loves gives and communicates to the beloved what he or she has, or a part of what one has or can have; and the beloved in return does the same to the lover" (SpEx 231). God primarily and with full gratuity gives Godself to humanity, and this is appropriately named grace, while humans, out of gratitude, give themselves to God in return by means of human freedom.

The definition of grace mentioned above is not far from how St. Ignatius understands God's grace. Grace is God's unconditional love for us. This is a foundational grace from the Spiritual Exercises.

Grace in the Constitutions

In the Constitutions, St. Ignatius obviously gives sheer importance to God's grace, to "the grace of the omnipotent hand of Christ our God and Lord (Cons. 812)." In fact, the entire document is replete with the word "grace," mentioning the term approximately forty times. It is clear that for Ignatius and his first companions, God is at the origin of and the one who continues to sustain this least Society of Jesus.[17]

Here are some sample citations from the Constitutions:

> The end of this Society is to devote itself with God's grace not only to the salvation and perfection of the members' own souls, but also with that same grace to labor strenuously in giving aid toward the salvation and perfection of the souls of their neighbors (Cons. 3).
>
> Although God our Creator and Lord is the one who in his Supreme Wisdom and Goodness must preserve, direct,

[16]Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 117-118.

[17]de Jaer, *Together for Mission*, 15.

> and carry forward in his divine service this least Society of Jesus, just as he deigned to begin it...(Cons. 134).
>
> In the formula of the first vows, the last line begs for God's grace: "Just as you gave me the grace to desire and offer this, so you will also bestow abundant grace to fulfill it" (Cons. 540).

Ignatius on Interior Freedom

It is important to distinguish between *human freedom* and *interior freedom*. Both terms are not equivalent in the strictest sense. A human person possesses freedom, yet it does not follow that he or she is interiorly free, for human freedom, as already mentioned, is ambiguous. Ignatius is not naïve on this. In fact, in the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises, he includes the reality of personal and social sin for our consideration. The meditations and considerations from this week are geared towards one's encounter with his or her sinfulness. On the other hand, human freedom has the capacity to follow and love Christ, thanks to the liberating grace of God.

Spiritual Exercises

The Spiritual Exercises altogether exhibit the principle of flexibility. Remarkably, the Spiritual Exercises are respectful to and concerned for human freedom. The exercitant is not told what to imagine, remember, or decide. It is forbidden for the director to interfere between the exercitant and God. The 15th annotation clearly states: "...the one giving the Exercises ought not to lean or incline in either direction but rather, while standing by like the pointer of a scale in equilibrium, to allow the Creator to deal immediately with the creature and the creature with its Creator and Lord" (SpEx 15). The expectation and goal is that the individual will encounter God in order for

him to reach a decision with interior and complete freedom.[18] Deducing from these observations, Ignatius positively appreciates human freedom. What is presupposed here is that human freedom can cooperate with God's grace.

On a deeper level, the primary purpose of St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises is for one to attain interior freedom: "the name of spiritual exercises given to any means of preparing and disposing our soul to rid itself of all its disordered affections and then, after their removal, of seeking and finding God's will in the ordering of our life for the salvation of our soul" (SpEx 1). The Spiritual Exercises were devised to bring the retreatant into a position of freedom in relation to themselves, other human beings, and God. In this way, the Holy Spirit is manifested in the exercise of this freedom.[19]

The Principle and Foundation located at the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises is indispensable in understanding the place of the human person in God's created world. In other words, it presents Ignatius' theological anthropology. Basically, the Principle and Foundation outlines a vision of life with basic criteria for discerning in life. Fundamentally, it says that by loving God above everything else we will attain our ultimate purpose. This requires us to freely choose the most loving choice, to always choose God.[20] Complete attachment to the Absolute One, who is no other than God, makes us interiorly free. Indifference is a by-product of interior freedom. Indifference is a passionate commitment to God who is our

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[18]Dulles, "Saint Ignatius and the Jesuit Theological Tradition," 7.

[19]John English, *Spiritual Freedom: From an Experience of the Ignatian Exercises to the Art of Spiritual Guidance*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 1995), 19.

[20]Dean Brackley, *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times: New Perspectives on the Transformative Wisdom of Ignatius of Loyola* (New York: Crossroad, 2004), 11.

ultimate goal that we are willing to sacrifice anything out of love. This makes one available for the mission out of generosity to offer one's self to God.[21]

We are created out of love by God and sustained by the same love. To experience this immense and unconditional love will certainly lead us into interior freedom. God's loving grace is freeing—it frees us for others and for the world.[22] This is consistent with how St. John understands the relationship between God's love and human love: "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Falling in love with God is an attachment to God. God's love empowers us to love God in return and others.

Roger Haight, SJ reinterprets the Principle and Foundation for the contemporary world with a sharp focus on the power and creativity of human freedom. For him, we have been bestowed the gift of freedom, which is our creative power to fashion new being and the world. Therefore, we are highly responsible to God. Eschatological salvation cannot be conceived in abstraction from our use of God-given creative and free human action in the world.[23] We must not underestimate human freedom. Ignatius himself warns us against overemphasizing God's grace at the expense of human freedom: "Similarly, we ought not to speak so lengthily and emphatically about grace that we generate a poison harmful to freedom of the will" (SpEx 369).

The Constitutions

The Constitutions, although containing legal elements, must not be seen, read, and implemented as a purely juridical document. Similar to the nature of the Spiritual Exercises,

[21]Brackley, *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times*, 12.

[22]Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace*, 153-154.

[23]Haight, "Foundational Issues in Jesuit Spirituality," 25.

the prescriptions of the Constitutions are to be implemented "according to the circumstances of persons, times and places." (Cons. 136) There is room for flexibility and no room for legalism. Ignatius prefers the "order of execution" to the "order of consideration" for the latter has the tendency to be rigid. The way of the "order of consideration" rejected by Ignatius first considers the end and then descends to the means to attain it (Cons. 137). As a realist and practical man, Ignatius prefers the concrete to the abstract, praxis to theory. He looks to the means in constant contemplation of the end, while attention is fixed on the end which is being sought.[24] This shows once again how Ignatius values learning from experiences and the exercise of human freedom.

The foundation of interior freedom in the Constitutions is found in Cons. 134: "the interior law of charity and love which the Holy Spirit writes and imprints upon hearts..." Antonio Aldama, SJ, explains this as follows:

> The interior law of charity, which is the Holy Spirit, infuses into a person an interior principle of action, moving him to do good and avoid evil out of love. A human being is free, then, because, though he submits to the exterior law, he holds to an interior principle of action that moves him to comply with the requirements of the external law.[25]

The Constitutions were written and codified "to aid us to proceed better, in conformity with our Institute, along the path of divine service" (Cons. 134). The exterior constitutions are useful and important as a means to the end, but Ignatius wants us to go beyond the external following of precepts.

[24]Joseph Veale, "How the Constitutions Work," *The Way Supplement* 61 (Spring 1988): 11-12.

[25]Antonio Aldama, *An Introductory Commentary on the Constitutions*, trans. Aloysius J. Owen (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1989), 69.

After mentioning the primacy of God's sustaining love and the interior law of charity dwelling in the human person, there follows the need to cooperate with grace which "frees one from all objective law because the very ideal that the law points to becomes internalized; the Spirit of love is the generating force of behavior. Quite simply, grace is the force of God working in human existence moving it in love."[26] In this way, interior freedom means following the lead of and being divinely empowered by the Holy Spirit through the appropriate and responsible exercise of human freedom. There are two presuppositions at work here. First, the human person can freely cooperate with God who interiorly dwells in the human person as Spirit. Second, human and natural means are helpful to the process of interiorizing God's values. Ignatius' primary concern in the Constitutions is not to force, rather, it is to open up a path to God through following Jesus in the Society of Jesus with the Constitutions as light and direction.[27]

In the General Examen, which gives expression to certain permanent values and spiritual attitudes and dispositions required of a companion of Jesus,[28] interior freedom is highly valued. In chapter four, the candidate must be informed first of all "that the intention of the first men who joined themselves together in this Society was that those received into it should be persons already detached from the world and determined to serve God totally" (Cons. 53). This demands living a life of poverty (Cons. 53-59). Also, following the counsel of Christ to detach from one's family, "he should take care to put aside all merely natural affection for his relatives and convert it into spiritual, by loving them only with that love which rightly ordered charity requires. He

[26]Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace*, 157.

[27]de Jaer, *Together for Mission*, 16.

[28]Ibid., 26.

should be as one who is dead to the world and to self-love and who lives only for Christ our Lord, while having him in place of parents, brothers, and all things" (Cons. 61). Furthermore, "for the sake of his greater progress in the spiritual life, and especially for his greater lowliness and humility," he must be willing to accept fraternal corrections within the religious community (Cons. 63). Towards the end of the General Examen, the candidate is reminded of the importance of rejecting the values of the world by accepting and desiring "with all possible energy whatever Christ our Lord has loved and embraced" (Cons. 101). True followers of Christ "desire to clothe themselves with the same garb and uniform of their Lord because of the love and reverence owed to him" (Cons. 101). They "desire to suffer injuries, false accusations, and affronts, and to be held and esteemed as fools because of their desire to resemble and imitate in some manner our Creator and Lord Jesus Christ" (Cons. 101). Jesus Christ is the supreme example and "the way which leads men and women to life" (Cons. 101). To sum up, interior freedom is attachment to the poor and humble Christ. The desire to embrace the lot of Christ is the pinnacle of Ignatian spirituality and the fullest expression of interior freedom not because humiliation and suffering are positive in themselves. On the contrary, these are consequences of imitating the Master.[29]

"The Human Instrument United with God"

Cooperative Grace

"The interplay between God's grace and human effort (human freedom) is an important dynamic in the

[29]Edward Kinerk, "A Model of Formation," *The Way Supplement* 61 (Spring 1988): 92.

Constitutions."[30] Theologically, this dynamic is termed as cooperative grace. The Thomistic theological principle of the compatibility between "grace and nature" coincides very well with the Jesuits' conviction that in pastoral activities they should not only rely on God's grace but also use all the "human means" at their disposal as prescribed in the Constitutions (Cons. 147-162). Closely connected to this principle is the positive understanding of the relationship between grace and human freedom. Human activity can be influenced by grace despite its woundedness. Grace, always the primary factor, allows human freedom to cooperate with it, so that mysteriously human responsibility played its part in the process of salvation. This understanding of cooperative grace is much more easily reconciled with the language and theology of the Spiritual Exercises and the Constitutions.[31]

Cooperative grace means that there is no either/or between grace and human freedom. God's grace is preeminently the initiator and sustainer of all self-transcendence by human freedom. However, since God works in creatures according to their natures, God's loving and sustaining presence through grace is at work precisely within human freedom.[32] There is an important distinction between "operative grace" and "cooperative grace." The operations of God's grace and human freedom occur on radically different levels; the two do not operate as equal partners for God is God and humans are humans.[33] The former refers to the effects of grace within the human person,

[30]Richard Baumann, "Our Jesuit Constitutions: Cooperation as Union," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 49, 4 (Winter 2017), 17.

[31]John O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 249-250.

[32]Haight, *An Alternative Vision*, 154. This understanding of cooperative grace is Thomistic in nature.

[33]Ibid., 154.

namely God's justification and sanctification. "Cooperative grace," as already explained, refers to the effects of grace as it is seen passing through the exercise of human freedom out into the world and the public sphere in action. There is no danger of Pelagianism in the case for the whole dynamic of grace and human freedom from start to finish is initiated and sustained by the impulse, force, and drawing of God's grace. As a corollary, through the witnesses of prophets, saintly figures, and self-transcending persons God's grace breaks through into the public sphere of everyday life and history and becomes visible, tangible, and concrete; God's grace is incarnated through the exercise of human freedom.[34]

The dynamic of cooperative grace is evident from the very beginning of the Constitutions. In the Preamble, particularly in Constitutions n. 134 "lies the first and vital reference to an idea that constitutes the heart of the Constitutions and the Jesuit charism: cooperation with God our Lord."[35] Cooperating with God requires our human freedom. The phrase "*ayudar a las almas*" or "to help souls" has solid historical roots for it dates to the earliest writings of the First Companions and this is the best description of what the Jesuits were trying to do. Helping souls needs the responsible exercise of freedom—a hallmark of the Jesuit charism.[36]

The Dynamic of Grace and Human Freedom in the Constitutions

In this section, I will attempt to briefly explicate how the dynamic of grace and human freedom is at work in some parts of the Constitutions.

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[34]Haight, *The Language and Experience of Grace*, 170.

[35]Baumann, "Our Jesuit Constitutions: Cooperation as Union," 14.

[36]Baumann, "Our Jesuit Constitutions: Cooperation as Union," 14.

General Examen

"We are God's fellow workers" (1 Corinthians 3:9). Labor, which is the stuff of cooperation, is apparent in the Constitutions (Cons. 149, 159, 216, 243, 308, 339, 603, 659, 732, 769, 797). The purpose of the Society of Jesus is to labor with God for the salvation and perfection of human persons.[37] God, with his loving grace, requires our free cooperation no matter how limited and frail we are. Ultimately, the labor belongs to God; humans are merely co-laborers. "God invites us to join with him in his labors, on his terms, and in his way. To discover and join the Lord, laboring to bring everything to its fulness, is central to the Jesuit way of proceeding" (GC 34, D 26, n. 8).

The General Examen mentions essential testing experiences or experiments future Jesuits must undergo for their formation (Cons. 64-70). The first experience is the month-long Spiritual Exercises followed by the hospital experiment, pilgrimage, community service in the house, and apostolic ministry. "Primacy in the novices' formation should be given to the Spiritual Exercises, since of all the experiments they are the chief and fundamental one" (CN 46 §2). The graces received during the Spiritual Exercises ought to be actualized and lived out during the subsequent experiments and beyond. The Spiritual Exercises don't just end in the Fourth Week because there is the so-called Fifth Week – the everyday life of the Jesuit. Exercising human freedom within the worldly sphere complements exercising the heart. The use of one's freedom ideally should flow from the intimate experiences and encounters one had with God and the interiorized values of Christ during the long retreat. The experiments outside the novitiate serve as testing grounds for whether a Jesuit can freely cooperate with God's grace. Truly, the experiments are "circumstances

[37]Ibid., 21.

wherein they (novices) can give evidence of what they really are and show how they have made their own the spiritual attitudes proper to our vocation" (CN 46 §1).

Part III – The Preservation and Progress of those who remain on probation

For Ignatius, as expounded in the Constitutions, formation is holistic. Progress in Spirit (244-276), progress in virtue (276-279), and preservation of the body (292-306) are interrelated and have the specific aim of forming effective laborers in Lord's vineyard (Cons. 243). Formation, as elaborated in the Constitutions, reflects an incarnational spirituality. Grace is not purely disembodied, for it builds on the total human person. Formation helps the novices enter into this incarnational dynamic and encounter with the real.[38] Cooperation with God's grace demands being grounded. God's grace does not bypass the exercise of human freedom for the sake of development.

Part V – Admission or Incorporation into the Society

Paradoxically, "our religious vows, while binding us, also set us free" (CN 143 §2). In the context of being a Jesuit, the religious vows are a means towards interior freedom. Every person is gifted with the capacity for self-transcendence – the capacity to go beyond one's self. Self-transcendence is possible since the human person is free.[39] The "abundant grace" of God is necessary "to fulfill the vows" (Cons. 540) because God's grace, in the first place, causes self-transcendence to occur in each one. Obviously, this requires the exercise of human freedom. Pronouncing vows is one way of cooperating with God's liberating grace, which liberates one for God, for humans, and for

[38]de Jaer, *Together for Mission*, 45.

[39]Divarkar, *Faithful and Free*, 54.

the world. In living out the vows, we rely on God's "infinite goodness and mercy" while freely leading our entire life in the Society in freedom (Cons. 540).

Part VI – The Personal Life of those already admitted and incorporated into the Body of the Society

After a long time of formation, "it is presupposed that those so admitted will be men who are spiritual and sufficiently advanced that they will run in the path of Christ our Lord" (Cons. 582). In this regard, "Ignatius is much more concerned with the spiritual makeup of the companion fully formed and with the depth of his commitment to the Lord than he is with the spelling-out of precise norms or rules."[40] There is an element of trust in the Holy Spirit's inspiration present in this dynamic. At the heart of formation is being conformed to Jesus Christ—the supreme exemplar of interior freedom and "the way which leads to life" (Cons. 101). The Spirit plays a pivotal role in the process of formation. On the other hand, as humans graced with freedom, we must cooperate with the promptings of the Spirit. Formation involves both God and the formand.

Part VII – The Relations to their neighbor of those already incorporated into the Society when they are dispersed into the vineyard of Christ our Lord

Part VII is "the nucleus of the Constitutions. Everything that goes before, from the General Examen to Part V, is actually a preparation; and what comes after, Parts VIII to X, is in response to it."[41] This description speaks forcefully of the centrality of mission for Ignatius and for the Society. The spiritual vision behind the "missions" is derived from the Spiritual Exercises, particularly the Contemplations on

[40]de Jaer, *Together for Mission*, 102.

[41]Ibid., 136.

the Incarnation, the Kingdom and the Two Standards. The confirmation at La Storta is of great importance as well.[42] The Constitutions contain a deeply apostolic spirituality. Jesuit life is oriented towards greater service of God by means of serving others in the world. Borrowing the language of the Jesuit theologian Juan Luis Segundo, Jesuits are involved in the project of God centered on the Reign of God—project of spirituality. Prayers, studies, and the vows are all for the mission.[43]

Based on the phrase "with that same grace" written at the beginning of the Constitutions (Cons. 3), grace for Ignatius serves two functions: it converts us to the love of God (Spiritual Exercises) and then empowers us to love our neighbor (Constitutions). This grace impels us to a world-affirming, apostolic, historically oriented spirituality—the spirituality of a project coined by Juan Luis Segundo, SJ.[44] God's grace empowers and inspires us to be agents of liberation in history by means of participation in building the Reign of God. God's grace is socially manifested in a "building of the earth" in history, among people, and in public institutions that shape human lives. Withdrawal from the world is alien to this conception of grace, for it pushes us to immerse in the processes of history.[45] In updating the contours of mission in today's world,

[42]Michael Amaladoss, "Sent on Mission" in *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus: Incorporation of a Spirit* (India: Gujarat Sahithya Prakash, 1993), 330.

[43]Peter Schineller, "The Pilgrim Journey of Ignatius: From Soldier to Laborer in the Lord's Vineyard and Its Implications for Apostolic Lay Spirituality," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 31, 4 (September 1999): 21. The main point of Schineller in this study is there was a shift on Ignatius' spirituality: from a spirituality where the main concern is for the salvation of one's soul as expressed in the Spiritual Exercises to a spirituality that is apostolic by laboring with the Lord for the salvation of others as expressed in the Constitutions.

[44]Schineller, "The Pilgrim Journey of Ignatius," 40.

[45]Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace*, 182.

the Complementary Norms is on the right track: "The mission of the Society today is participation in the total evangelizing mission of the Church, which aims at the realization of the Kingdom of God in the whole of human society, not only in the life to come but also in this life" (CN 245 §).

Part IX – The Society's Head and the Government which descends from it

"In regard to the qualities which are desirable in the superior general, the first is that he should be closely united with God our Lord and have familiarity with him in prayer and in all his operations" (Cons. 723). The Jesuit must develop an intimate relationship with God so that he can better cooperate with God's grace. Personal prayer is a foundational means towards interior freedom.[46] However, if prayer is not translated into action, union with God is incomplete. Personal prayer must nourish one's exercise of loving human freedom motivated by God's love. The praxis of love unites us with God. Without this, any spiritual act is an offense to God. Acts of love and prayer are inseparable.[47]

C. The Human Instrument United with God (Part X – How the Whole Body of the Society is to Be Preserved and Increased in Its Well-Being)

According to George Ganss, an expert on Ignatian spirituality, "to be a closely united instrument in the hands of God from whom the true efficacy comes is a prominent and characteristic aspect of Ignatius' concept of an apostolic worker (nos. 30, 638, 814). This concept flows naturally from his desire to

[46]Baumann, "Our Jesuit Constitutions: Cooperation as Union," 23.

[47]Brackley, *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times*, 246.

be cooperatively associated with Christ toward achieving God's redemptive plan."[48]

Here are citations from the Constitutions which mention "instrument:"

> "...in order to be good and faithful sowers in the Lord's field and to preach his divine word will be instruments the more apt for this purpose..." (Cons. 30.)
>
> "...that God may dispose them all to receive his grace through the weak instruments of this least Society" (Cons. 638).
>
> "...the means which unite the human instrument with God" (Cons. 813).

Roger Haight, SJ explains that the phrase "(human) instrument united with God" found in the Constitutions (813-814) "carried considerable weight in Ignatius's understanding of apostolic Jesuits."[49] He concludes his thought-provoking yet highly substantial re-interpretation of some aspects of Jesuit spirituality by using that phrase to summarize as a whole his theological point. It is worth quoting:

> The Jesuit should be an *instrumentum conjunctum Deo* (an instrument united with God). The instrument here is not a lifeless and dead tool, but a human person whose action is free and genuinely creative... We exercise this freedom in a secular world, and we must respond to this world like everyone else in a secular way in planning our categorical actions. But for Christians this transpires against an horizon and within a context of a transcendent faith vision. Our action is responsive to a personal God revealed in Jesus... Thus our action in the world is not only coaction with the world and other human beings,

[48]George Ganss ed., *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 473.

[49]The comment is from a footnote in his "Foundational Issues in Jesuit Spirituality," 44.

> but also as (Maurice) Blondel says the-ergy, work with God, a notion completely in line with tradition of the notion of cooperative grace.[50]

Spiritual means are needed to cooperate with God's grace for the preservation and growth of the body and the fulfilment of its mission. "The first and most appropriate means will be the prayers and Masses" (Cons. 812). Then, the cultivation of virtues and spirituality: "Thus it appears that care should be taken in general that all the members of the Society devote themselves to the solid and perfect virtues and to spiritual pursuits, and attach greater importance to them than to learning and other natural and human gifts" (Cons. 813). This requires the exercise of human freedom.

Natural means are also needed to cooperate with God's grace for the preservation and growth of the body and the fulfillment of its mission. "The human or acquired means ought to be sought with diligence, especially well-grounded and solid learning, and a method of proposing it to the people by means of sermons, lectures, and the art of dealing and conversing with others" (Cons. 814).

For Ignatius, supernatural means are more effective than natural means, yet both are still needed. "For he desires to be glorified both through the natural means, which he gives as Creator, and through the supernatural means, which he gives as the Author of grace" (Cons. 814). The preeminence of God's grace doesn't wipe out the need to cooperate using spiritual and human means. The "omnipotent hand of Christ our God and Lord" (Cons. 813) requires the cooperation of human hands.

There will always be a creative tension between God's grace and human freedom in the life of a Jesuit. This can be creative and life-giving as long as the two trusts are present in the

[50]Haight, "Foundational Issues in Jesuit Spirituality," 44.

human person.[51] The extreme overreliance on one's human freedom negates and relativizes the unique and preeminent role of God's grace. Simply put, it is idolatry: worshiping one's capacities, gifts, and freedom. The Constitutions reminds us that "the natural means which equip the human instrument of God our Lord to deal with his fellow human beings" should be "acquired and exercised for the divine service alone" and "not so that we may put our confidence in them, but so that we may cooperate with the divine grace according to the arrangement of the sovereign providence of God our Lord" (Cons. 814). The reason, I suppose, why the "means which unite the human instrument with God and so dispose it that it may be wielded well by his divine hand are more effective than those which equip it in relation to human beings" (Cons. 813) is that these supernatural and spiritual means purify the human and natural means. The exercise of human freedom and the utilization of natural means can be destructive, selfish, and disordered without the light of virtues and spirituality. For example, history has been traumatized by the invention of the atomic bomb. The other extreme is a blind and fanatical dependence on God's grace that strongly marginalizes the role of human freedom. For example, in preparing a homily, the preacher is not excused not to consult a biblical commentary because one will rely solely on the Spirit.[52] One can go extreme and fall into determinism: human freedom is unreal, and God is controlling us and the world like a puppet.

The strict separation between grace and nature affects how we view human and natural means. There is a tendency to exalt the supernatural means at the expense of human and natural means. True, the former is greater than the latter. However, a

[51]William Barry and Robert Doherty, *Contemplatives in Action: The Jesuit Way* (New York: Paulist Press, 2002), 23.

[52]Barry and Doherty, *Contemplatives in Action*, 23.

purely supernatural view of the human and the world can lead to a world-hating spirituality. While a purely naturalistic view of the human and the world risks being dangerous and unlivable. In the Ignatian worldview, grace and nature are intimately united. Ignatian spirituality is incarnational.

We trust primarily in God's loving and empowering grace, and we also trust in our God-given freedom. We are free, creative, responsible, and graced instruments of God. The supernatural and human means are for us to be closely united with God so that as His instruments, we can contribute to the preservation and growth of the body of the Society and the aid of souls to reach their ultimate and supernatural end (Cons. 813-814).

Concluding Reflections

Formation is Freely Cooperating with God's grace

In his letter "The Jesuit Formator Today," Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ stated that "God is the educator par excellence, and he makes use of human instruments."[53] I was particularly struck when he continued his letter by stating that "the second 'formator' is the one being formed himself. He learns to take responsibility for his own formation and to live as a Jesuit in creative fidelity."[54] Only after this does he mention the actual "formator who is God's instrument and the instrument of the Society in transmitting our way of proceeding and communicating a profound desire to serve God and 'help souls,' like St. Ignatius, mainly by the witness of his life."[55] What's the

[53]Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, "The Jesuit Formator Today" in *The Formation of Jesuits: From the Letters of Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ* (Rome: General Curia of the Society of Jesus, 2003), 2.

[54]Kolvenbach, "The Jesuit Formator Today," 3.

[55]Ibid., 3.

meaning of this arrangement? Curiously, the formand or the one being formed is considered as the second formator and not the formator himself. Formation is first and foremost the divine work of the Spirit who is "the interior law of charity" written and imprinted upon the heart (Cons. 134). The designated formator is the instrument of God in guiding and accompanying the formand towards growth in interior freedom. But all the efforts of the formator will come to naught if the formand will not take responsibility for his own formation through the proper exercise of his human freedom. At the end of the day, without denying the crucial role of the formator, the success of formation highly depends on the formand's own cooperation with the Spirit of God and with the formator, one of God's human instruments.

The title of the fifth chapter of Part VI: Personal Life of Those Admitted tells us: "the Constitutions do not oblige under pain of sin" (Cons. 602). Ignatius, in composing the Constitutions, did not intend to make it like a penal code. He preferred a regime of desire, love, and interior freedom instead of one of fear and obligation.[56] The Jesuit ideal is living in the Spirit: "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Galatians 5:1) and "now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Corinthians 3:17).

Closeness to God/Intimacy with Jesus Enhances and Fulfills Human Freedom

In the Contemplation on the Incarnation during the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises, the grace to beg for is the grace of the "interior knowledge of Our Lord, who became human for me, that I may love him more intensely and follow him more closely" (SpEx n. 104). This deep personal love for Jesus Christ

[56]de Jaer, *Together for Mission*, 104-105.

is "the foundational grace that binds Jesuits to Jesus and to one another. 'What is it to be a Jesuit today? It is to know that one is a sinner yet called to be a companion of Jesus as Ignatius was'" (GC 34 D. 26, n. 4). Intimacy and closeness with Jesus results in discipleship, the following of Jesus Christ as His companion, and "those who proceed spiritually and truly follow Christ our Lord love and intensely desire to clothe themselves with the same garb and uniform of their Lord because of the love and reverence owed to him" (Cons. 101). "For the one who enters the Society, following Christ will consist in a genuine desire to put on the garment of Christ; this means that the sum of his desires must be centered on and unified around the person of Jesus, who is loved and faithfully followed as the One and Only."[57]

In the eyes of the world, following Jesus and imbibing his way of proceeding is counter-cultural. One common reason is that it's constrictive for the values of Jesus prevent one from being absolutely free—doing anything one wants to do. On the contrary, the Constitutions provide a spirituality of attachment to the poor, humble, self-emptying, and servant Christ, who is the way that leads to life (Cons. 101) and authentic freedom. To love and to "put on the garment of Christ" (Cons. 101) is to reject the values that wreak havoc on the world, such as obsession with power, strong pride, inhuman greed, selfishness, disregard for human dignity, and oppression. Rather, it consists of embracing the way of proceeding of Jesus Christ out of personal love for Him. Christ-likeness is being interiorly free—free to be a servant for others, free to selflessly love, free to be rejected and to suffer, free to die for Him and for the well-being of the neighbor. In opposition to those who see a relationship with God as a source of unfreedom, Karl Rahner

[57]Ibid., 36.

counters with a theological principle: "Nearness to God and genuine human autonomy grow in direct and not inverse proportion."[58] The grace of the intimate knowledge of Jesus enhances and fulfills human freedom. "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

We are an Extension of the Divine Caring for all Humanity

In the spirit of the Constitutions, we are "an instrument in his (God's) hands—not a passive tool but a living limb, an extension of the divine caring for all humanity"[59] (Cons. 813-814). Christ, the Eternal King, continues to call us "to labor strenuously in giving aid toward the salvation and perfection of souls" (SpEx 95-98, Cons. 3) by "caring for the neediest" and "(extending) God's mercy to where injustice, suffering or despair seem to thwart the divine plan" (GC 36 D. 1, n. 40). "For the attainment of the objective it (the Society) seeks, which is to aid souls to reach their ultimate and supernatural end (Cons. 813), "or what might be called, in contemporary terms, the total and integral liberation of (human), leading to participation in the life of God himself" (GC 32 D. 2, n. 11) as "human instruments united with God" (Cons. 813-814) it is required of us to "cooperate with the divine grace according to the arrangement of the sovereign providence of God our Lord (Cons. 134, Cons. 814)." Let us beg for the grace of interior freedom so that we may exercise our human freedom in cooperation with God's salvific and liberating grace.

Pedro de Ribadeneira, a biographer of Ignatius, recounts an interesting conversation that took place in July 1541 between Ignatius and Diego Lainez. According to Ribadeneira, he was

[58]Quoted from Elizabeth Johnson, *Consider Jesus: Waves of Renewal in Christology* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 29.

[59]Divarkar, *Faithful and Free*, 30.

present during the conversation. When Ignatius asked Diego Lainez if he would die on the spot and be given a choice between receiving eternal life or remaining in this life to serve God in history, Lainez responded that he would prefer to see God and be assured of salvation. The reply of Father Ignatius was striking: "Now, I certainly should not have done so. Rather, had I judged that, remaining in this life, I could have rendered some singular service to our Lord, I should have besought him to leave me in it until I should have performed that service. And I should place my eyes on it and not on myself, having no regard for my danger or security.'"[60]

This short account demonstrates Father Ignatius' openness to serve God in history by being His instrument on earth. His spiritual legacy lives on.

[60]This story is quoted by Peter Schineller in his study The Pilgrim Journey of Ignatius from Juan Luis Segundo's challenging essay "Ignatius Loyola: Trial or Project?" in *Signs of the Times* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993), 169f. The original story, in Spanish, is found in Pedro Ribadeneira's sixth-century *Vita Ignatii Loyola* (Rome, 1965).

GROWING INTO *KUSANG-LOOB* AND *KA-KRISTONG LOOB*: SOME IMPLICATIONS OF EXPLORING *LOOB* AS THE FILIPINO'S UNDERSTANDING OF CONSCIENCE IN TODAY'S TIMES

Patrick Vance S. Nogoy, SJ

Why *Loob*: Addressing Current Filipino Moral Worldview Problems

In the Philippines, there are about 80-90% Catholics. It is the only country in Asia that has such an overwhelming majority of its population under the guidance of the Roman Pontiff. A gift from medieval Spanish conquerors, which was forcibly planted and nourished for three centuries, one may expect that Catholicism in the Philippines is progressively mature in terms of faith and moral practice. In closer introspection, however, there hovers a historical clout of *split-level* morality among most Filipino Catholics. Exteriorly, *Simbang Gabi* or the December novena masses celebrated in all parts of the country are brimming with Catholic warm bodies, Church Sunday Masses that are celebrated in more than eight timeslots appear to be insufficient for the attending flock, multitudes of devotees and a variety of devotions like the *Black Nazarene* or *Our Lady of Penafrancia* or *Our Lady of Pillar* sprout like mushrooms in the nooks and crannies of the republic, and bishops and priests are revered despite their human limitations and mistakes.

Yet the country ranks high in the corruption index of nations around the world, gossiping and backbiting are widespread and almost cultural, numerous cases of philandering are culturally

considered as signs of a "true" man, and entrenched deeply almost as habit is the election of erring and even convicted officials back to government positions. The prevailing notion of justice is closer to a conception of *mercy*: Filipinos tend to let the mistakes of others pass, forgetting the crucial element of justice needed to repair the damage inflicted by certain immoral acts. This is clearly seen in how political families, who have been convicted of plunder and other high crimes, are still being elected to positions of higher responsibilities in government without the benefit of a served sentence or jail term. These antithetical cultural realities cast long shadows over the transforming power of religious exterior activities and devotions that are eagerly and generously participated by Filipino Catholics. Fr. Dionisio Miranda SVD, a noted moral theologian writes similar observations:

> Although true of other societies as well, there has always been a perceived divide between what Filipino Catholics believe and how they behave and live...This is not to deny many positive elements. Everyday young boys can play pick-up games of basketball without a referee. Passengers pay their *jeepney* fares absent of any conductor...A significant number of church people strive to incarnate the love God has for his people...On the other hand one cannot deny its negative traits as well...Our politics reek of patronage, and because of cronyism and nepotism, we remain high on the list of countries shunned for graft and corruption...Human rights violations have been reduced only in its most formal technicalities. Visitors are appalled by the incidents of kidnapping and con games against tourists...How can all of this be explained? In the past this phenomenon is labeled as split-level morality or a gap between our ethos and ethics. But there is also a split between our ethos and our faith, or lack of integration between faith and morality...[1]

[1]Fr. Dionisio Miranda SVD, "Filipino Catholics and Christian Moral Life," *Diwa: Studies in Philosophy and Theology* 28, 1 (May 2003): 2.

The reality of split-level morality among Filipinos gives a concrete glimpse of the imperfect Filipino moral worldview that moves any observer to reflect and speculate on the possible causes of (and, further, on solutions to address) the gap between ethos and faith. Part of the key to understanding the Filipino moral worldview and its possible correction in light of Christian morality is found in its historical-cultural appropriation of the gift of the Christian faith. A Filipino moral theory is proposed by Fr. Miranda. He describes:

> Filipino morality is grounded in a sense of this *pagpapakatao*, an understanding of oneself as a free moral subject and responsible moral agent, where human acting is moral if *makatao* or humane, and immoral, if not...it is becoming more and more human not in isolation but through relating; morality is responsibility to the other without whom one cannot be...In more technical terms, Filipino morality is more character-oriented rather than ontological, not grounded on any metaphysical moral order but aiming at a moral balance or harmony of human relationships...In traditional theological language, the Filipino conscience responds to virtue summons more than it does to imposed duties deriving from norms, it discerns more through values rather than through principles. This bent explains in part why we are more prone to moralism rather than legalism, for example, or why we emphasize relationships over activism, or why we respond more to persuasion than to authoritarianism, or why we are impressed with moral character than moral achievement...This personalist bent explains why the ethical profile of the Filipino is defined primarily through the concept of "*loob*" or interiority.[2]

Fr. Miranda highlights some crucial elements of Filipino moral theory. In particular, he refers to the concept of *loob* as the primary *definitor* of the Filipino moral worldview. This paper will explore what *loob* is and its implications in

[2]Ibid., 3-4.

understanding the phenomenon of split-level morality among Filipinos of faith.

The paper aims to explain the Filipino's understanding of conscience through its cultural equivalent in the concept of *loob*. It will employ some linguistic and historical approaches. Thoughts of Leonard Mercado, SVD, Dionisio Miranda, SVD, and Albert Alejo, SJ will form part of this paper's primary sources. They will be complemented by sources from the Western theological notion of conscience as discussed by Richard Gula, SS, with some notes from Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI). The paper then will surface some important implications of these theological reflections on *loob* in terms of correction, formation, and language of conscience that are much felt when confronted with several current moral and social issues. It concludes with a set of recommendations on how the Filipino's concept of *loob* could be aligned more with Christian morality.

Exploring *Loob*: A Linguistic and Historical Survey

What is *loob*? How does a Filipino Catholic make sense of a given situation and eventually, enact moral decisions through *loob*? Fr. Miranda provides fascinating levels of meaning of *loob* in his introduction. He muses:

> Essentially *loob* refers to a local or spatial interior, or to that which is not open to the naked eye. It carries with it the notion of invisibility, whether partial or total... eventually, however, *loob* primarily refers to a symbolic interior and more particularly human interiority. *Loob*, thus, refers primarily to a core or a center, and the first question that suggests itself is, what is this human core we call *loob*? In the second place, whether in the spatial human sense, we note degrees of interiority: the inmost and the deepest part is characterized as *kaloob-looban, pinakaloob, kaibuturan*...To anticipate, *loob* as a synthetic concept is the individual's unique interiority; as an

> analytical concept, it is the unrepeatable complex of an individual's awareness and thought, his emotions and sense of value, his personality and character...[3]

Fr. Miranda describes *loob* as the totality of a person's interiority. This interiority has an invisible spatial dimension. It is composed of different elements: feelings, values, character, soul, and awareness, among others. Fr. Leonardo Mercado, SVD, offers similar descriptions of *loob*. He reflects:

> ...Conscience is usually presented as if it were a compartmentalized section of man. But this is not so for the Filipino because conscience for him is the same as *buot/loob/nakem*, a word which has no one English translation. *Loob* can be taken in the intellectual, volitional, emotional, or ethical sense of man. "The Filipino looks at himself as a self, as one who feels, as one who wills, as one who thinks, as one who acts; as a total whole—as a 'person,' conscious of his freedom, proud of his human dignity, and sensitive to the violation of the two."[4]

From these descriptions, one could view *loob* as a holistic concept which refers to the inner ethical world of a person. Though located interiorly, when moved and obeyed, *loob* stakes the whole person in its action. Furthermore, the interaction of important elements of moral decision-making happens in *loob*. Some of these elements are emotions, values, suspicions, gut feel, and thoughts. They act as ingredients of moral decision-making located within and they help create layers of meaning and philological uses in one's *loob*. Moreover, another essential part of the description is the choice the person will make. This includes how the person will actualize the choice in

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[3]Fr. Dionisio Miranda, SVD, *Loob: The Filipino Within, A Preliminary Investigation Into a Pre-theological and Moral Anthropology* (Manila: Logos Publications, Inc., 1988), 1-3.

[4]Fr. Leonardo Mercado, SVD, *Elements of Filipino Ethics* (Tacloban: Divine Word University Publications, 1979), 39-40.

concrete moral situations. This moral choice is the product of all these individual elements and most importantly, an evident manifestation of a person's *loob*.

Choices are enacted in the outside world; thus, pertinent to the understanding of *loob* is its relationship with the cultural notion of *labas* (outside). Fr. Albert Alejo, SJ, summarizes this relationship when he mentioned that *loob* has something to do with a person's interiority while *labas* is strongly related to action. Thus, a person does not remain within himself but progresses from the inside to the outside through his chosen action.[5] This refers to a cultural conception of morality on two counts: (1) the movement from what is within (*loob*) to without (*labas*) and (2) the impact of experiences found from without (*labas*) influencing (even challenging and measuring the quality) within (*loob*). Though this relational flow of outside-inside is universal, what gives *loob* a more particular shade is the Filipino notion of *kapwa*. *Kapwa* refers to a fellow human being. Fr. Miranda explains,

> Contrary to the perception reinforced by the prominence of *loob*, Filipino ethics is not crassly relativist; the moral agent's empirical reality as *tao* and the necessary reference to *kapwa* also as *tao* impose objectivity inescapably upon moral action and thought. Although not referred to **as** a cosmic order, the actual and real relationships entered into by moral actors are themselves a context which in turn is a measure of objectivity...[6]

The cultural notion of *pakikipagkapwa-tao* (fellowship with human beings) largely defines the Filipino view of the common good: *harmonious relationships*. At the foundation of any moral

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[5]Fr. Albert Alejo, SJ, *Tao po! Tuloy! Isang Landas sa Pag-unawa sa Loob ng Tao* (Quezon City: Office of Research and Publications, Ateneo de Manila University) 1990, 21.

[6]Miranda, SVD, "Filipino Catholics and Christian Moral Life," 6.

decision of *loob* is its effort to maintain harmonious relationships. *Loob*, though personal and internal, is much swayed by social forces. It is oriented towards the social world. Fr. Mercado argues,

> ...Since the Filipino is *sakop*-oriented, good is more social than individualistic. For example, before a Filipino dresses in the latest fashion (an example of a 'good'), he first sees to it that it is socially acceptable to others. In other words, his idea of good also concerns harmony with the *sakop*.[7]

Fr. Mercado uses the Filipino concept of *sakop* to indicate the boundaries of *labas*. *Sakop*, he reflects, has interpersonal and hierarchical aspects. Interpersonal *sakop* includes families, friends, relatives, and political parties among others; hierarchy is related much to degrees of authority based on succession (with the eldest or the oldest eliciting much obedience and respect from the younger siblings, for example). *Sakop* emphasizes relationships and ranks. *Sakop* prevails over the individual, erecting *pakikipagkapwa-tao* as the main Filipino virtue.[8] As a result, a common moral evaluation of a person's *loob* is through an assessment of his/her harmonious relationships within its *sakop*. Here, *loob* is not a static concept because its quest for peace and harmony is dependent on the person's state of harmonious relationships within his *sakop*.

An employment of a historical approach would help complement the foregoing linguistic approach in our exploration of *loob*. In particular, a historical survey shows different elements of loob that are very important in its evaluation: (1) the emphasis on the use of the faculties of reason and judgment, (2) the principle of rectitude, and (3) the idea of *collective conscience*. These elements provide us with a clear picture of

[7]Mercado, SVD, *Elements of Filipino Ethics*, 40-41.

[8]Ibid., 48-49.

the relationship between *loob* and (a) the use of reason, (b) **a** sense of straight and right path, and (c) the psyche of communal conscience. Fr. Miranda notes:

> A key concept among the Katipuneros was *katuwiran*; this can be seen in the view that the *landas* (way) from *dilim* (darkness) to *liwanag* (light) is *tuwid* (straight); if in accord with *katuwiran* (right reason)... There was a further nuance to conscience. *Loob* can be *mabuti* or *masama*, which refers at once to being in darkness or the light, as well as to being on the straight and right path or the crooked or wrong path...Jacinto's concept of morality plays an important role in reason. In the *Kartilla* of the *Katipunan*, he defined freedom as equality brought about by the development of *katuwiran*. *Katuwiran* impels the human person to love and help humankind and to hate and fight tyranny. Hence, like Rizal, Jacinto emphasized the necessity to educate the people for the full development of their intellectual and moral faculties.[9]

On the notion of collective conscience, Fr. Miranda continues:

> *Loob* as the Katipunan understands it, was not only the inner self of the Katipunero as an individual; it was also the inner self of the masses in general...Bonifacio saw in the people's expressed desires a common conscience and hence an echo of God's will and command. Thus, his Decalogue or *Katungkulang Gagawin ng mga Anak ng Bayan*" ends with the statement that the aims of the *Katipunan* were God-given and that the desires of the country were the desires of God...Mabini shared that view. For him, the common conscience of the people is the voice of God.[10]

Fr. Alejo, SJ, along the same lines, asserts that the prominent understanding of *loob* of most members of the *Katipunan*

[9]Fr. Dionisio Miranda SVD, "The Filipino Conscience: Some Historical Indices," *Diwa: Studies in Philosophy and Theology* 23, 1 (May 1998):10-11.

[10]Ibid., 11.

is a movement of radical change or transformation within all those who belong to a society.[11] From this, we derive some layers of the meaning of *loob* as an interiority where the sense of right and wrong are found and obeyed, where the faculty of reason is an important function in moral decision-making that should be developed to lead man to love humankind, and that radical changes within a person's *loob* could lead to an ethical transformation of society.

What is *loob*? First, *loob* is a holistic concept referring to the person's total interiority that can influence, through the enactment of moral decisions, his relationship to his *sakop* (world), whose chief element is his *kapwa* (fellow human being). Second, among its faculties, *loob* has to rely on *katuwiran* (reason and judgment) to incarnate the inner yet universal sense of a straight and right path (rectitude), which is none other than the love for humankind. This love for humankind is culturally expressed in the harmony of one's relationships, chiefly with fellow human beings (*pakikipagkapwa*), casting personalistic and humanist shades on the concept of *loob*. Last, *loob* and *labas* or *sakop* are intimately connected; radical changes from within can influence or even transform the situation without while the conditions from without greatly influences the moral choices within. From this, we could have a glimpse of the conception of sin and evil in Filipino moral worldview.

The idea of maintaining harmonious relationships gives reason to the Filipino value of hospitality. This brand of hospitality makes strangers or others (*Iba*) part of *sakop*. This defines the type of fellowship the virtue of *pakikipagkapwa* promotes. *Pakikipagkapwa* treats others as part of one's family. The locus of the common good lies in relationships. Sin or evil, therefore,

[11]Alejo, SJ, *Tao po! Tuloy! Isang Landas ng Pag-unawa sa Loob ng Tao*, 24.

is significantly understood in the language of a relationship. Fr. Miranda's reflections show notions of sin as a shortcoming (*pagkukulang*), mistake (*pagkakamali*), and irrational betrayal of humanity (*sira*).[12] Sin is more personal and interpersonal than societal and universal in scope and understanding. There is a strong demand for sensitivity in relationships more than the reliance on reason and judgment in the assessment of what is good or evil. Thus, the culture of shame (*hiya*) is strong; to a large extent, it defines justice. Evil is the opposite of what is human or *kapwa*. For instance, criminals are called *masasamang-loob* (persons possessing an evil interiority) because their acts damage and even destroy relationships. It also counts as a sin to be insensitive or unmindful of other's situations or to forward oneself without thinking of the impact on the other. Even progressing economically ahead of others is a kind of sin since the person lacks fellowship (*pakikisama*) by separating himself from the rest. For instance, the reality of *crab mentality* among Filipinos occurs when a person who does well in life is "pulled down" (either through gossip or backbiting) like crabs pulling down one another in a basket. There exists a social demand from a person to maintain harmonious relationships as part of his/her end or the highest good. Anything less (or even, contrary) results in sin or evil, experienced and manifested in shame (*hiya*). Here, guts (*kutob*) or feelings (*dama*) are often used instruments in moral decision-making and not so much reason and judgment (*katuwiran*).

This exposition brings into light some areas for the formation and correction of Filipino moral worldview through *loob*. In particular, some theological views of conscience from the West could help refine *loob* and its moral formation towards Christian morality. To this, I turn in the next section.

[12]Miranda SVD, "Filipino Catholics and Christian Moral Life," 8.

Kusang-Loob and *Ka-Kristong Loob*

The Filipino moral worldview through *loob* could be enhanced through some concepts culled from the Western idea of *conscience*. There are parallel characteristics between *loob* and conscience, and exploiting these matching traits could form part of *inculturated* theological thinking about conscience and *loob*. I begin with the nature of conscience as articulated in *Gaudium et Spes*. It states:

> In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience, when necessary, speaks to his heart: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God; to obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it, he will be judged. (9) Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths. (10) In a wonderful manner conscience reveals that law is fulfilled by the love of God and neighbor. (11) In fidelity to conscience, Christians are joined with the rest of men in the search for truth, and for the genuine solution to the numerous problems which arise in the life of individuals from social relationships. Hence the more right conscience holds sway, the more persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and strive to be guided by the objective norms of morality. Conscience frequently errs from invincible ignorance without losing its dignity.[13]

In *Gaudium et Spes*, conscience refers to (1) the most secret core and sanctuary of man (2) where God and man meet and dialogue that (3) summons man to do good and avoid evil, (4) revealing to man God's law that is written in man's heart, a law fulfilled by love of God and neighbor, (5) applied in specific situations. These elements resonate with the main features of

[13]*Gaudium et Spes* 16.

loob: the core of the human person and his interior space, a kind of sanctuary where the person struggles with his *saloobin* (inner world comprised of feelings, thoughts, and guts, among others). However, there is an important question about which good conscience/*loob* is oriented towards to.

For Filipino Catholics, the source of the good is what *Gaudium et Spes* described clearly: God Himself, incarnated in the "law written in human hearts." Yet within *loob*, God faces competition with the good of maintaining harmonious relationships. The main virtue of *pakikipagkapwa* reveals that the good which largely frames Filipino moral worldview is the harmony of relationships. The correction of *loob* lies in content. Richard Gula, SS, in outlining the three dimensions of conscience in his reflection on *Gaudium et Spes*, has the same observation. He describes:

> In light of this holistic sense of conscience, we can appreciate the three dimensions of conscience to which the Roman Catholic tradition ascribes: (1) *synderesis*, the basic tendency or capacity within us to know and do good; (2) *moral science*, the process of discovering the particular good which ought to be done or the evil to be avoided; (3) *conscience*, the specific judgment of the good which "I must do" in this particular situation. To simplify matters, Timothy O'Connell refers to these dimensions as conscience/1, conscience/2, and conscience/3, respectively. These are not three different realities, nor three different stages through which conscience moves in developing from infancy or adulthood, but simply the three senses in which we can understand the one reality of conscience.[14]

In application, the Filipino *loob* contains the three dimensions of conscience. It has the tendency or capacity to know

[14]Richard M. Gula, SS, *Reason Informed by Faith: Foundations of Catholic Morality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 131.

the good and engages itself to formulate a moral choice to apply what is good in certain moral situations. The tasks of correction and formation of *loob* are spiritual: to root more and more in the Gospel values as proclaimed and lived out by Christ. This is one of the pedagogical roles of religious practices and devotions (both personal and popular). They help a person develop his/her *loob* to accept Christ as its *terra firma,* or the final cause and definitor of what is good. It is to follow Christ, growing in courage (*tibay ng loob*) in choosing God when doing so sometimes demands the sacrifice of some important relationships. Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) similarly argues:

> A man of conscience is one who never acquires tolerance, well-being, success, public standing, and approval on the part of prevailing opinion at the expense of truth...Thus two standards become apparent for ascertaining the presence of a real voice of conscience. First, conscience is not identical to personal wishes or tastes. Second, conscience cannot be reduced to social advantage, to group consensus, or the demands of political and social power.[15]

The gap between ethos and faith in Filipino moral worldview might be overcome when a person exhibits *tibay ng loob*. This is accomplished when he/she allows the Gospel values to determine largely his/her moral choices in particular situations. In Filipino culture, *loob* can be easily swayed; there exists a real struggle **to** demonstrate courage (*tibay ng loob*) in making moral stances. In post-modern times, the culture of popular opinion is very much strong. Moral and political protagonists aim at persuasion and influence. Thus, the main struggle for an ordinary Filipino lies in his conviction (*paninindigan*) of his moral choice (*pasiya*). Conviction is determined, nourished,

[15]Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *On Conscience: Two Essays* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 26.

and sustained by the fundamental relationship between God and man found in his/her conscience. Joseph Ratzinger defines this as *anamnesis*. It is the ontological level of conscience that closely resembles *synderesis*. He explains:

> This means that the first so-called ontological level of the phenomenon of conscience consists in the fact that something like an original memory of the good and true (they are identical) has been implanted in us, that there is an inner ontological tendency within man, who is created in the likeness of God, toward the divine. From its origin, man's being resonates with some things and clashes with others...It is so to speak an inner sense, a capacity to recall, so that the one whom it addresses, if he is not turned in on himself, hears its echo from within. He sees: That's it! That is what my nature points to and seeks.[16]

In terms of *moral science*, which Gula identifies as one basic dimension of conscience, the person's *loob* would benefit much from the faculty of *katuwiran* (reason and judgment). *Katuwiran* does not only pertain to the use of the mind or intellect through the analysis of information crucial in moral judgment. The notion of *katuwiran* is largely about the use of intellectual faculties in the right or straight manner which is what its root word, *tuwid*, embodies in meaning (i.e *tuwid* means straight or right). Filipino heroes Emilio Jacinto and Jose Rizal are correct in emphasizing the formation of *loob* through the person's frequent and developed use of *katuwiran*. Yet the rectitude or the *way* is Christ none other; the use and formation of *katuwiran* should be grounded in faith. Similar to conscience, *loob* is formable, growing in deep personal relationship with God through the various moral choices in given situations that in return, deepen the fundamental relationship between Creator and creature, enabling for God and man to root intimately in

[16]Ibid., 32.

one another. Guts and feelings form part of the data that *katuwiran* will process in order to come up with a moral decision that can even go beyond debt of gratitude (*utang na loob*) in relationships. In this case, *loob* is formed partly through the development of skills and frequent practice of moral decision-making. Joseph Ratzinger agrees,

> ...It [conscience] is an organ because it is something that for us is a given, which belongs to our essence, and not something that has been made outside of us. But because it is an organ, it requires growth, training, and practice.[17]

The tendency to put a premium on maintaining harmonious relationships laid a challenging cultural context for Filipino conscience to grow, train, and practice his/her morality. The penchant for the politics of credibility often reduces morality to an image-conscious and superficial practice of accommodation and popular opinion. The pivot of the culture of shame *(hiya*) must move from relationships to the common good defined by Gospel values. In other words, Filipinos must be ashamed because of the loss of values and virtues due to the chosen evil or unjust acts and systems. It is for Filipinos to demand justice because some choices which privilege the preservation of harmonious relationships have compromised the basic Gospel values.

Is there any cultural Filipino concept that can embody suggested changes for the formation of *loob*? There is the cultural notion of *kusang-loob*. *Kusang-loob*, in Fr. Alejo's ruminations, refers to the (1) one's personal enacted choice, (2) discerned and determined in freedom, (3) interiorly and peaceful made, (4) not just a mere reaction from outside forces or even love of self, and (5) a kind of self-generosity to one's

[17]Ibid., 61.

neighbor that does not wait for anything in return.[18] *Kusang-loob* demands a lot of courage to go against any tide of popular opinion to enact the discerned good. In *kusang-loob*, the person employs largely the faculty of *katuwiran* as its primary motor. It is a display of a person's volition or will (*kusa*) in the environment of freedom (*kalayaan*). It is a proactive kind of *loob* that does not merely "ride the bandwagon" to preserve harmonious relationships (*pakikisama*). It is where a person is willing to invest his/herself (*pagtataya*) in the struggle for the common good (*pakikibaka*).

However, it seems that *kusang-loob* is still incomplete. It is neutral in content in terms of the basic foundation or fundamental orientation which is what conscience of Gula pertains to. In other words, any ethical value or set of virtues could serve as the foundation of a person's moral action. The tendency to know and have the capacity for the good in Christian morality is never neutral but skewed in favor of God, incarnated in Christ. The fundamental laws of love of God and neighbor written in human hearts are actualized in Christ, the model that any Christian conscience must strive to follow and grow in likeness to. *Kusang-loob*, therefore, must mature into *ka-Kristong loob*. Christ is the model *par excellence* of moral action. Only in deep knowledge, relationship, and imitation of Christ will *kusang-loob* truly find its fullness. A good case here is the debates on the Reproductive Health Bill that eventually was passed into law. If we only remain with *kusang-loob*, a person could employ scientific data or secular values as his/her moral motivation to follow and even evaluate the law. *Ka-Kristong loob* is different. It is rooted in Christ and the Gospel values. Here, a person makes a discernment which includes facts, ethical views, and other information pertinent to the law. But this

[18]Alejo, SJ, *Tao Po! Tuloy! Isang Landas ng Pag-unawa sa Loob ng Tao*, 139-140.

discernment is framed by the application and interaction of the Gospel values to the specific moral situation. It is what it will apply given the moral situation, in this case, in following the Reproductive Health Law. Fr. Miranda describes,

> Moral catechesis should become more Christological and Trinitarian: Christ is the *Tao*, the human person par excellence, on whom we base our *pagpapakatao*, who, at the same time is the Son of God who stripped himself of his divinity to show us what true *pakikipagkapwa-tao* implies. Beyond the moral heroes proposed to us by Philippine history, Christ must become more and more the Filipino's "moral law" and moral ideal.[19]

Though a personal task, the employment and formation of conscience requires aid from the Church. The Church should act like a midwife, helping bridge the gap between creature and Creator in given moral instances. Thus, *Ka-Kristong loob* implicates the Church and her role in helping form her faithful's consciences. Joseph Ratzinger exhorts:

> Here we need what Plato was referring to when he said the good cannot be known scholastically, but only after regular familial discussion can the notion of the good spring into the soul like lightning springing from a small spark. This constant "familial discussion" within the Church must build up the community of conscience—those who try to express their word in the teaching office, as well as those who wish to learn that word from within themselves.[20]

Joseph Ratzinger emphasizes how the notion, application, and continued pursuit of the good especially the common good are *both* personal and communal tasks. This avoids the extreme poles of relativism and authoritarianism; the Church, though a mother to her faithful, is the same companion along

[19]Miranda SVD, "Filipino Catholics and Moral Life," 11.

[20]Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *On Conscience: Two Essays*, 64.

the personal journey that helps each faithful incarnate the good in specific moral situations through discerned choices. To grow in *ka-Kristong loob* also demands *kusang-loob*; each faithful must learn to exercise his or her freedom of choice and be given enough room to practice moral discernment. The Church's exercise of moral authority, in this case, appears as a compassionate teacher rather than a police-like Mother.

The "familial discussion" that builds the community of conscience is a process of dialogue that is neither subjective nor rigid, but one in which the faithful prayerfully listens and reflects on available data and various voices of society. Here, fellowship (*pakikipagkapwa*) is viewed differently: a dialogue where one is *hospitable* to all voices in society yet refuses to simply compromise one's discerned position. Furthermore, dialogue employs *katuwiran* that reveals itself as discernment, which has, at its core, the Gospel values sought for and applied to specific moral situations. In cases of controversial laws and policies that might endanger the common good, reasonable dialogue among citizens is essential. It is also a space in which a Filipino Catholic can make a discerned choice which will help form his/her *loob*. The ability to make reasonable and spiritually grounded moral choices is an important moral and practical consideration for the faithful. They have to have opportunities to actualize their faith experiences through moral practice; in particular, to align their *loob* with Christ. This contributes to what Joseph Ratzinger suggests as the "building of community of conscience."

Conclusion: Maturing from *Kusang-Loob* to *Ka-Kristong Loob* and Some Notes for Further Reflection

The foregoing theological reflection on *loob* and conscience contributes to the articulation of the Incarnation. Each

culture has the seeds of God or the *Logos*; yet, they need aid or purification for them to realize their true nature. It is no different in the case of *loob*. The exploration of *loob* leads to the discovery of similar traits with a *conscience*—the spatial interiority, tendency to do what is good, discernment, and finally, conviction. It also reveals some marked differences, which form opportunities for critical reflection and maturity. In particular, the interior world of *loob* should be grounded in the basic relationship of God and man through Christ, who is the Way. This inner world also considers how *loob* should grow in *katuwiran* not only in its use of reason and judgment, but in using the straight or right way, showing how Christ is also the truth. And how *loob* should have courage in enacting its personal decision in a respectful struggle with fellow human beings, pursuing the common good, manifesting Christ's charity in actualizing God's kingdom on earth. The Filipino's understanding of conscience through the concept of *loob* reveals a synthetic and humanistic moral worldview. In this worldview, the person needs to grow into *kusang-loob* in his/her use of reason and judgment (*katuwiran*), and finally mature into *ka-Kristong loob* in grounding his/her moral choices in the Christian faith.

This *inculturated* task is both personal and communal. The Church's important role is a humble one, different from the authoritarian role of a mother if it wants to remain relevant and intimate with its flock. Plenty of listening and dialogue is required; the Church, especially in the Philippines, where the majority are Catholics, should be a *companion* along the way. Joseph Ratzinger, in addressing the bishops, stresses,

> Setting out from such a personal knowledge of the moral world of the Church, he must attempt to remain in discussion with those experts who seek the correct application of the simple words of faith to the complicated

> reality of a particular time. He must, therefore, be prepared to become a learner and a critical partner of experts...[21]

Some laws and state policies show the polarization of the Church. Instead of engaging in dialogue, people choose to remain in hard and uncompromising positions. It even went to the point of spiritual and political threats, of matters of excommunication, and the emergence of the myth of a "Catholic" vote. If the faithful will not be given enough space to exercise their conscience, how will *loob* grow into *ka-Kristong loob*? How will the Church discover and experience the rich meaning of its role as a midwife if it will not allow Filipino Catholics to struggle in their discernment, exercising *kusang-loob*? To maintain her relevance in these postmodern times, she needs, through her leaders, to be more of a companion than an authority.

Complex moral situations open up all these critical questioning about the roles of the societal forces whilst, calling into mind the need for prayerful and critical reflection. It is time for each faithful to let the communal spiritual activities of devotions and sacramental celebrations affect his/her *loob* towards authentic change or even conversion to Gospel values. The faithful must grow in volition (*kusa*) and not remain blind followers. They should *own* the faith by letting God, through Christ, be incarnated to root and shape moral choices. The faithful are strongly invited to be braver—*tibay ng loob*—especially if moral situations demand sometimes the re-ordering or even sacrifice of important relationships. This does not mean rebellion or the throwing away (*pagsasawalang-bahala*) of relationships. It is allowing the hospitality of *pakikipagkapwa-tao* (fellowship) to evolve into a respectful *pakikibaka* (common struggle).

[21]Ibid., 71.

The theological reflection is not yet finished; the inculturated task continues to be incomplete. Some notes for further reflection are proper. First, the concept of *loob* involves different levels of interiority. Emotions, gut feel, thoughts, or *saloobin* are part of *loob*. Much clarification has to be done about the particular use of *loob*. In the Filipino context, *loob* can easily be disobeyed or sacrificed, leaving the person to follow with a heavy heart (*mabigat ang loob*). In contrast, conscience**;** must be followed even if it errs. To put it simply, *loob* is a fuzzy concept. The Western theological reflection on conscience, on the other hand, appears to be more precise and systematic compared to a cultural understanding of *loob*. Further**,** nuancing can deepen the thinking brought forth by this paper.

Second, further investigations on the present changing cultural context of Filipino Catholics must be done. Fr. Miranda, Alejo, and Mercado, though they produce thorough reflections, may seem to be behind on the times. Today, we have been witnessing the phenomenon of Overseas Filipino Workers and its impact on families, especially on child-rearing. Further, the quick expanding access to the Internet has revolutionized the minds of the youth beginning with the plethora of data and information, diffusion of secular as well as varied religious and cultural values, and dialogue with peoples of other cultures. A good section to explore is the Filipino youth's notion of *loob* today. Another important factor is the media. Cases of high crimes and important law legislation processes are televised; the transcripts are easily accessible online. Information and protagonists behind current vital issues are within reach. Though this is favorable in Filipino's development and use of *katuwiran*, it is interesting to validate the intensity of influence of popular opinion and relationships to the *masa* or Filipino crowd. At what point or level of *katuwiran* can the *masa* or Filipino masses be located? What kind of *loob* is predominant?

And how far (or near) are they in *Ka-Kristong loob*? Amidst all these notes for further reflection, it is hard to deny the relevance of the Incarnation in moral decision-making. God is found in the particulars of a culture; Christ is a companion along the inconspicuous roads of moral practice. It holds the key to helping Filipinos close the "gap between ethos and faith" to have and live out a more intellectually mature and spiritually sound morality.

UNDERSTANDING *KARAI KASANG* AND *NATS*: A BASIS FOR DIALOGUE WITH KACHIN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

Than Naing Lin, SJ

Introduction

The majority of Christians in Myanmar belong to the Kachin, Chin and Karen ethnic groups, who share certain similarities in terms of their indigenous cultures. The Christian population is approximately 6.3 percent of the country's total population of 53 million, while the Catholic population is only 1.4 percent.[1] Most of the people belonging to the largest ethnic group called Burman in Myanmar are Buddhists.[2] Despite the rigorous attempts of Christian missionaries, only a handful of them have converted to Christianity. Buddhism has taken root in the Burman people and has become part of their identity.

On the other hand, Christian missionaries were very successful in their mission work among adherents of the primal religions. It is important to note that Protestant missionaries

[1]Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar, "Missionaries," accessed 20 March 2018, http://www.catholicmyanmar.org /About/missionaries.

[2]In the political landscape of Myanmar, Buddhism has been politicized amid internal conflict and civil war. In 1960, U Nu, prime minister till 1962, declared Buddhism as the State religion. Religious discrimination can be seen in rules such as the requirement of special permission from the government to hold Church celebrations and to construct Church buildings. Religion can be a criterion to be promoted to higher ranks in government offices. Discrimination against religious minorities is often time perceived as discrimination against ethnic minorities.

were able to bring about the conversion of more people among these ethnic communities and their zeal is as fervent today as it was in the past. Over time, the Catholic Church has also grown in number. As of 2018, there were sixteen dioceses with eighteen active bishops and five retired bishops, 937 diocesan and religious priests, 1,615 religious women and men, and 2,818 catechists.

However, many of the indigenous communities came to embrace Christianity at the expense of their cultures. To become Christians, they had to abandon their primal religion along with their traditional religious and cultural practices and slowly adopt the mindset of the colonial missionaries. Thus, they now view their ancestral religion with suspicion since it is believed to be under the influence of evil spirits. This perspective has become an obstacle for the churches to become more fully inculturated in the indigenous communities. Many indigenous Christians are afraid of evil elements in their cultures. Kachin Christians face the same challenges whenever they try to engage in inculturation.[3]

The Kachin Context

The Kachin people are one of the major ethnic groups in Myanmar, with the majority living in the northern part of the country. Many Kachins also inhabit Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland in India and the Yunnan Province in China. Kachin

[3]Inculturation consists not only in the expression of the Gospel and the Christian faith through the cultural medium but includes, as well, experiencing, understanding and appropriating them through the cultural resources of a people. As a result, the concrete shape of the local Church will be, on the one hand, conditioned by the culture, and, on the other hand, the culture will be evangelized by the life and witness of the local Church. The Federation of Asia Bishops Conferences, "*Theses on the Local Church: A Theological Reflection on Asian Context*," FABC Paper, no.60 (Hong Kong: 1991), 18, accessed 10 May 2018, http://www.fabc.org/fabc%20papers/fabc_paper_60.pdf.

people are known as Jingphaw in China and as Singpho in India. The group comprises sub-groups Jinghpaw or Jingpo, Atsi, Maru, Lashi, Nung (Rawang), and Lisu. Originally, Kachin settled in the Tibetan Plateau and gradually moved southward to the Yunnan province of China, Myanmar, and India. They are known as mountain dwellers. Today, many of them have moved to the plain.

The clan system is essential in the Kachin society. There are five original clans: Marip, Maran, Lahpai, N'hkum, and Lahtaw. These clans are bound by the intermarriage system which is clearly defined and strictly followed. The Kachin people practice *mayu* and *dama* (wife-givers and wife-takers) in the marriage system among the clans. Therefore, one may not take wives from the same lineages to which one gives wives.

The term "Kachin" is given by outsiders. The origin of the term is not clear. Some believe that it was given by the British, while others assume that the term existed before the arrival of the British.[4] Kachins call themselves Jinghpaw. However, even the term *Jingpo* is considered exclusive to some sub-clans. Thus, the inclusive term for all Kachin clans is *Chyurum Jinghpaw Wunpawng Sha Ni*, meaning "unity exists among the bloody propinquity and kinship of Kachins, who share the milk from the breast of the common typical mother."[5]

Christian evangelization has been very successful in the Kachinland since the nineteenth century. Today, about 99% of people in the Kachinland profess the Christian faith and most

[4]The word " Kachin" was found in a stone inscription that dates back in 1442. (Myanmar Socialist Party, *Culture and Custom of Ethnic People: Kachin* [Yangon: Yangon Sape Beit Man, 1967], 54. See B. D. Maran, " Kachin: Lera Wawra Kikkik Kawkkawk Mahkawng," *Laiza: Kachin Research Journal* [2010]: 29.

[5]Lasi Bawk Naw, *Traditions, Beliefs and Practices: Links with Nature Conservation in Kachin State* (Yangon: Today Publisher, 2007), 67-68.

of them are Baptists.[6] A few Kachins still practice their traditional religion that relates to *Karai Kasang* and the spirit world of *nats*. As the Kachin Catholic population grew, the community was elevated into the diocese of Myitkyina in 1961.[7] On March 27, 1965, the first Kachin priest. Paul Zinghtung Grawng was ordained. He later became bishop in 1976, taking over the diocese with only ten indigenous clergy. Gradually, the Kachin Catholic Church continues to grow as the diocese faces different struggles.[8]

On August 28, 2006, Pope Benedict XVI created the new Diocese of Banmaw. Bamaw diocese has a total of twenty-two priests, over sixty-six religious, and 183 catechists, serving 30,010 Catholics. Ethnically speaking, in Myanmar, there are three proper Kachin dioceses out of the sixteen dioceses: Myitkyina, Bamaw, and Lashio. Lashio diocese, located in the Shan ethnic region, is also considered a Kachin diocese because most of its members are Kachins. Today, the diocese has 40 diocesan priests and 134 religious and 724 catechists at the service of 86,550 Catholics in the Myitkyina diocese.[9]

As the Kachin dioceses grow, the churches are also trying to become local and inculturated churches. For example, there was a long struggle to use the Manau dance in the liturgy. Gradually, the Church Christianized the dance for the liturgical celebration by leaving out the rituals or offerings to *nats* (spirits)

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[6]Mandy Sadan, *Being and Becoming Kachin: Histories Beyond the State in the Borderworlds of Burma* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 387.

[7]Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar, "Myanmar Catholic Dioceses: General Characteristics of Myitkyina Diocese," accessed 20 March 2018, http://catholicmissionmm.blogspot.com.

[8]Edward Fisher, *Mission in Burma: The Columban Father's Forty-three Years in Kachin Country* (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), 146.

[9]Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar, *The Official 2016 Catholic Directory of Myanmar* (Yangon: CBCM, 2016), 56.

during Christian Manau dance festivals.[10] In 2000, the Manau dance was incorporated for the first time in the Eucharistic celebration during the celebration of the Great Jubilee.[11] Many Kachin Catholics and bishops were deeply moved. Some even shed tears of joy as they witnessed the Manau dance in the liturgy for the first time. One bishop expressed his views with strong emotion, saying that now he understood the meaning and the power of inculturation.[12] This inculturation has reaped many spiritual fruits for Kachin Catholics, such as a sense of belonging to their indigenous cultures, a stronger sense of Kachin identity, a more significant affiliation with the masses, and a deepening of their Christian faith.[13] In fact, for the Kachins, many dances await to be inculturated into Christian worship. Among them, some Kachin priests are doing research on how to inculturate "the Kabung dance" and the dance performed during the funeral ritual, which the local Church prohibits.[14] The main difficulty in inculturating the Kabung dance is the widespread misunderstanding that it is under the influence of the devil. This was also the kind of misperception encountered in the Manau dance before the Church Christianized it. The failure to attribute the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit to the local traditions has been one of the chief obstacles to inculturation in the Kachin Church.

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[10]Fr. John Zau Doi, "Manau Dance and Its Integration in the Liturgy of the Eucharist in the Diocese of Myitkyina Myanmar," Unpublished M.Sc. Thesis, Asian Social Institute Library (Asian Social Institute, 2004), 159.

[11]Ibid., 191.

[12]Ibid., 190.

[13]Ibid., 191.

[14]Fr. Zaw Min Latt from the Bamaw Kachin diocese is currently doing his dissertation research on "The *Kabung* Dance to be Incorporated into the Catholic Funeral Rite" at the University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines.

The Kachin Traditional Religion (KTR)

The ancestral religion of the Kachin is called *Nat-Jaw.* Etymologically, the word *nat* is derived from the Burmese Pali word, *nat,* denoting "Lord." *Jaw* is a Kachin word that means giving or offering. In a literal translation, *Nat-Jaw* means "Lord-Offering." Kachin's faith is not confined to the region. Other groups in Myanmar, such as Burman, Karen, and Chin have similar faith expressions. The Burmese and some other racial groups in Myanmar use the same word, *nat,* to describe the term "spirit." In Myanmar, *Nat* Veneration is deeply rooted and clearly defined.[15] This Kachin ancestral religion is primal and primary in the Kachin's faith.

The primal religion is very important for the Kachins as it is the source of their identity, myths, social structure, ethics, environmental knowledge, songs, and dances that are intertwined with their ancestral religion. The Kachin religion is not idolatry because they do not worship animals or trees, although they believe in the spirit's indwelling in trees and other environmental elements. The believers of KTR live in a web of relationships with spirits.[16] KTR has no written scriptures. Its faith and practices have been handed down from past generations through oral tradition.

Communal rituals and other household religious ceremonies are strictly observed under the leadership of traditional

[15]Ola Hanson, *The Kachins: Their Customs and Traditions* (Rangoon: American Baptist Missionary Press, 1913), 149.

[16]The believers of traditional religions do not classify reality as supernatural or natural but as the invisible and the visible. This classification implies that both the seen and the unseen are in constant interactions. So, the invisible spirits or the unseen are taken for granted as real, which affects the present living who are destined for the afterlife. The natural-supernatural model is based on Platonic philosophy, which views reality as having two floors. Kant translated it into the phenoma/phenomena? and the noumea/noumena? (Mercado, *From Pagans to Partners,* 14).

mediators or priests. An ecclesiastical or hierarchical setting, such as formal group structure, membership, and personnel is absent in the religion, but all the individual mediators help the communities in their respective roles. Today, however, the mediators and some adherents of KTR form the Association of the Kachin Traditional Religion (*Nat Naw Hpung*).[17] At present, only a handful number of the believers of KTR remain in Myanmar because of the collective conversion to Christianity in 1877.[18] In India, Buddhism has become the religion of the Kachins since 1892.[19] Large communities of Kachins in China still practice the traditional religion. However, the traditional religion is being shaped by the Cultural Revolution[20] in China and the presence of the Kachin Christian missionaries from Myanmar.

The Character of Karai Kasang, the Supreme Being

The Kachins lived in the domain of the spirits until the arrival of Christian missionaries in the nineteenth century. The Kachins call their God Karai Kasang, who is considered the Supreme Being. The word *Karai* already means Supreme Being; the word *Kasang* follows in the rhythmic manner of the language.[21] Karai Kasang is the spirit above all spirits. Karai Kasang is a spiritual being without gender. There is no idol or portrait of the Supreme Being. Karai Kasang is a single/

[17]Lajawn Ngan Seng brought together KTR adherents to form the association of KTR called the Nat Jaw Hpung in Myitkyina. In 2011, Lajawn Ngan Seng was made Chief Minister of Kachin State by the Military authorities (Sadan, *Being and Becoming Kachin*, 410).

[18]Conversion is primarily assumed that the Kachins became Christianity because the Kachin traditional religion has similarities with Christianity, such as one Supreme Being and the notion of ritual offering (Ibid., 393 and 398).

[19]Ibid., 377.

[20]Ibid., 364.

[21]Lahpai Zau Tang, interview by author, 12 July 2018.

one Being without a spouse. No one knows the origin of Karai Kasang. The origin of Karai Kasang has yet to be discovered. Later, this term *Karai Kasang* came to be used by Hanson to translate the Christian notion of God, underscoring that the Kachin people had an innate understanding of a singular God.[22]

Creator. The whole creation is attributed to the work of Karai Kasang. KTR believers believe Karai Kasang is the omniscient and omnipotent Supreme Being who has power over all existence. Karai Kasang is invoked in every religious ceremony and ritual. However, this notion of the creator appears to be at variance with the story of the creation account written by Gilhodes in which Karai Kasang was seemingly given birth. Later, it was explained to him that Karai Kasang is the creator of heaven and earth.[23] He was confused about who Karai Kasang/Kasand is. Probably, he did not comprehend the difference between Karai Kasang, Hpan wa Ningsang, and Chye Wa Ningchyang, other spirit beings who participated in creation.[24] Kachin Christians address Karai Kasang as *Hpan Wa Ningsang* (the Creator) and *Chye Wa Ningchyang* (the Omniscient).

Supreme Judge. Furthermore, Karai Kasang is considered the Supreme Judge. For instance, when the culprit hides and justice cannot be met, the aggrieved party will shout in pain: "*Karai Kasang, hkye la rit law!*" (Karai Kasang save me!); "*Karai ngai n masu*!" (O Karai, I do not lie). If unjustly insulted, one may utter the name Karai Kasang : "*Karai e! ngai phe roi de mada*

[22]Sadan, *Being and Becoming Kachin*, 397.

[23]Fr. Charles Gilhodes, *The Kachins: Religion and Customs* (Calcutta: The Catholic Orphan Press, 1922), 99.

[24]See, Tsa Magawng Gam, *Jinghpaw Labau Girung Ka Ai Wa* (Myitkyina: Sut Pan Press, 2016), 41; Pungga Ja Li, *Wupawng Ningpawt Ninghpang Karai Hpaji* [The Origin of Kachin Theology], (Laiza: Kachin Research Society, 20144), 31; Lagai Brang Shawng, *Natjaw Htungkring Hte Kaga Labau Lasang Lam Ni* [Nat Worship, Oral Traditions and Others of the Kachins], (Yangon: Genesi Media, 2015), 175.

yu law!" (O Karai, say that it should not be: see how they insult me!).[25] This swearing or uttering of Karai is a very powerful sacred action for the oppressed.

If a poor and insignificant person was oppressed by influential persons, they had nowhere to turn to demand for justice. In this circumstance, the oppressed party would go to a public space. Facing the sky, s/he would bounce with one leg on the ground seven times and shout, "*Lamu madu, Ga madu Karai e . . . yu la rit law*" (Karai, the Lord of heaven and earth . . . watch over me).[26] When people heard this uttering to Karai, they would be terrified. A terrible fate could befall the oppressor. Kachins were taught to refrain from such utterances to Karai because people would avoid the person or the village that was accustomed to such utterances.

Hence, elders would try their best to settle issues without swearing an oath. If elders could not settle a case, they would demand both parties to take an oath to Karai. Elders would place a Kachin sword on the necks of both parties while taking an oath to Karai. Kachins were so afraid of taking an oath because if one wrongly took an oath, sickness, and death might befall the person or his/her family members. Until 1962, in the Sumpra Bum area, the Kachin sword for taking an oath was kept in government courts together with the Bible.[27]

Karai Kasang is a benevolent being who grants favors and blessings without demanding or asking for any offering or sacrifice in return. No one can know Karai Kasang's realm or will; Karai Kasang is believed to live so far above humans that Karai Kasang has neither interest in daily human affairs nor any moral influence over them.[28] Another way of seeing it is

[25]Gilhodes, *The Kachins: Religion and Customs*, 5.

[26]Magawng Gam, *Jinghpaw Labau Girung*, 17.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Hanson, *The Kachins: Their Customs and Traditions*, 168–69.

that Karai Kasang does not directly interfere in daily human affairs because the Supreme Being governs the universe through *Nats*. Ordinarily, the *Nats* are the ones who are in contact with people, while Karai Kasang will only be involved when there are urgent cases.

Adherents believe that Karai Kasang never poses a danger to human beings like *Nats* and so they do not worship Karai Kasang regularly. However, there are times of crisis when the Kachins invoke the distant Spirit.[29] When a great natural disaster or war is looming, but the *Nats* are not able to help them, the believers of KTR will call Karai Kasang in their distress.[30] Interestingly, until today, when mediators of KTR pray, they first mention the name of Karai Kasang before addressing the respective *Nats*.

Karai Kasang becoming a Christian God. The traditional religious term, Karai Kasang was used by Hanson to render the Christian notion of God in the Kachin language. He translated the Bible with the help of Christian converts from traditional religions such as Damau Naw and Seng Li.[31] Hanson is the one who created the writing system for the Kachins and compiled the dictionary of the Kachin language. Over time, the majority of the Kachins became Christians, and the term Karai Kasang entered into Christian theology and the spiritual world.[32]

Today, there is no difficulty for the Kachins to accept that Karai Kasang is the same God as Christians and the believers of KTR. For the believers of KTR, Hpan wa Ningsang and Chye Wa Ningchyang are lesser beings, not Karai Kasang. However,

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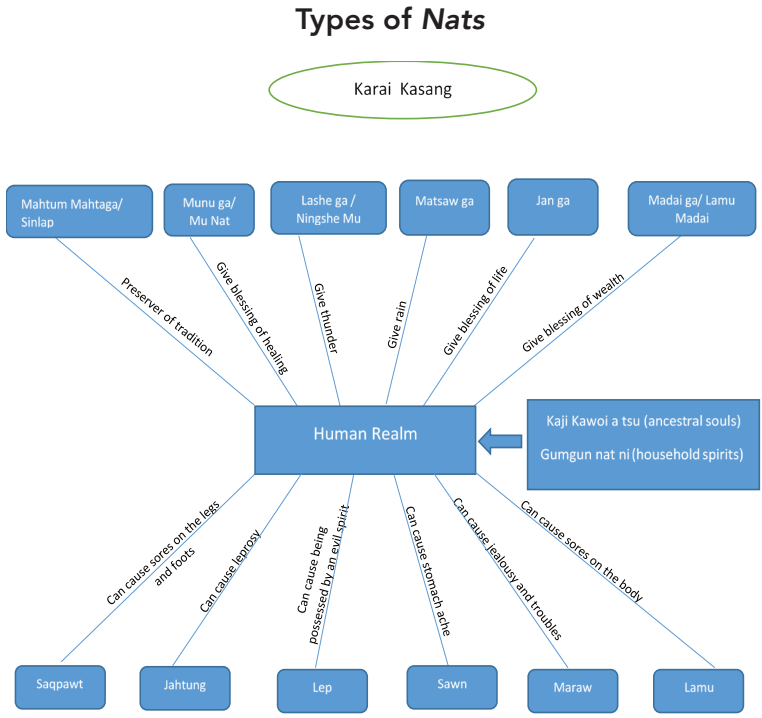
[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid., 169.

[31]Sadan, *Being and Becoming Kachin*, 398.

[32]Linguistically, some people consider that it is a process of losing the indigenous term, which contains an ideology system. Ibid.

some Christians might interchange these words with Karai Kasang, and address Karai Kasang using the attributes of the Creator and the All-knowing using the exact words, *Hpan Wa Ningsang* and *Chye Wa Ningchyang*. Because of the limitation of the language, the exact words are used to refer to both the spirit beings and the attributes of Karai Kasang (the Supreme Being). Thus, confusion may occur from that language limitation. Today, the Christian notion of Karai Kasang is gradually getting extended to believers of KTR.



The table above is taken from Pungga Ja Li who researched on the Kachin traditional religion.[33] The researcher consulted with three *dumsa* on the abovementioned chart; they do not have any objection but mentioned that there are other

[33]Li, *Wupawng Ningpawt Ninghpang Karai Hpaji*, 39.

powerful *nats*. There can be a slight variation in different localities. Pungga Ja Li put the more reputable *nats* in an orderly fashion. The chart is self-explanatory. The powerful *nats* from the upper world are *Mu nat* (thunder), *Nbung nat* (wind), *Lamu Madai nat*, *Ga Madai nat* (earth spirit), *Shata nat* (moon), *Bungga nat* (pacifier).[34]

The remaining *nats* from the lower or underworld: Hka Mazup Jahtung (the spirit at confluence), Matsa nat, Darawng Dara Ran *nat* (a protector of law and judgment), Ndang *nat* (who cause harm to women during pregnancy or after), Majoi Ningsum *nat* (who can cause trouble before the success of a business), Myihtoi *nat* (who can cause sickness and wellbeing of health), Maraw *nat,* having a monster body shape which gave birth to several *nats*, Bai *nat* (who became *nat* from the soul of the dead body of a stillborn child) who gave birth to various Bai *nats*, Sawa Katsing *nat* (who became *nat* from the soul who died suddenly and can cause sudden fear to demand sacrifices), Tinggyeng Nat gun *nat* (who became *nat* from the soul of family members who died of accident and suicide)[35] and Mung nat gun (who became *nat* from the soul who died of accident and suicide death).[36]

In general, there are three kinds of relationships with *nats* for the Kachins. They honor benevolent *nats* and revere household *nats*. But they try to negotiate with monovalent *nats*, or

[34]Shawng, *Natjaw Htungkring,* 11-26.

[35]These types of *nats* can follow another clan through marriage. They can protect people while traveling or going to war. It resonates with a guardian spirit. Dogs and goats can be sacrificial animals in dealing with them. There is a story for the genesis of the types of *Nat gun*. A snake was eating one boy. Before that, the boy shouted for help from his mother. However, his mother ignored and the boy was eaten. The spirit of the boy was unresolved and became nat. From then on, people began to know the nature of *Nat gun*.

[36]Shawng, *Natjaw Htungkring,* 11-26.

at times, expel them as they can give blessing and at the same time trouble. Mostly, the monovalent *nats* are regarded as evil because they bring more harm than good.

An Overview of the "Kachinization" of Christianity

Christian missionaries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had initiated laudable attempts to bring Christianity into Kachin culture despite their negative attitude towards KTR. Studying the Kachin language was the first successful attempt to know the Kachin people and culture. At the beginning of the study, the missionaries experienced clumsiness with the language and a lack of feeling for local customs.[37] Nevertheless, they pursued their study of the language and culture. The most outstanding person would be Fr. C. Gilhodes, a Paris Foreign Missionaries member, who published the book, *The Kachins: Religion and Customs*. His book even became a reference for some KTR priests.[38] The missionaries tried adapting the local culture to the Christian faith. An early inculturated Christmas Mass was recorded. During the midnight Mass in a Kachin village, at the consecration, to welcome Christ into the world, firecrackers, guns, drums, and gongs broke the silence outside the chapel.[39] Another important appreciation of the local culture was allowing the *Manau* traditional dance to be performed in the Christian context for the first time. Although the missionaries had a negative view of traditional beliefs, they were able to befriend the leaders of KTR. On some Christian occasions, Columban missionaries invited the leaders of KTR to celebrate together.[40]

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[37]Fisher, *Mission in Burma*, 29.

[38]Bawk Naw, *Tradition, Beliefs and Practices,* 140.

[39]Ibid., 30.

[40]Fisher, *Mission in Burma*, 22.

Similarly, Baptist missionaries contributed much to bringing Christianity into Kachin culture. Their most outstanding contribution was translating the Bible into the Kachin language and putting the Kachin language into a written system. In their missionary approach, the Baptist missionaries used the "functional substitutes" approach to facilitate cultural change.[41] The Kachin marriage system was allowed to be celebrated within the Christian wedding ceremonies. Prayer meetings were used to substitute KTR ceremonies such as natal ceremonies,[42] weddings,[43] funerals,[44] harvesting festivals,[45] and other important experiences such as recovery from illness, starting on a long journey, and a happy return from a very long trip.[46] Remarkably, the procedure of prayer meetings that was used by Baptist missionaries is still being used today.[47] Kachin

[41]Herman Tegenefeldt, *A Century of Growth: The Kachin Baptist Church of Burma* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1974), 331.

[42]One of these meetings is held following the birth of a baby. It includes thanksgiving, a petition for the health and growth of the child, and the announcement of the name(Ibid., 333).

[43]The *mayu* (wife-giving clan*)* has one prayer meeting in their home the night before the bride is sent off for the marriage ceremony. The *dama* (wife-receiving clan) will plan for a meeting in the home of the bridegroom's parents the evening of the wedding day and perhaps for one or two succeeding nights (Ibid.).

[44]Prayer services in the home of the deceased begin the evening after his/her death and may be held several nights, especially if some relatives and friends are staying for a few days. These are held in place of the traditional death dance (Ibid.).

[45]A special thanksgiving service is held in the church, which has been decorated with various vegetables and fruits from the fields (Ibid.,334).

[46]Ibid., 333.

[47]Commonly, the host will give a simple statement of the particular case for the need for prayer. The usual components are a hymn or two scripture reading and prayer by the leader, followed by a message on a biblical theme. The service is usually followed by at least tea or a light meal. Neighbors, regardless of religion, are invited to these services as an expression of social relationships. (Ibid., 333).

Catholics have a similar procedure.[48] Prayer meetings have become one of the significant identifiers of Kachin Christians.

Until now, the "Kachinization" of Christianity is ongoing as local Kachin Christians gradually continue this process. Under the early missionaries, Kachin traditional tunes were not allowed during worship in the Baptist Churches. Later on, young Protestant Kachins began to compose hymns in the traditional tunes. However, the tunes disturbed the elders who converted from KTR.[49] At present, Kachin Catholics are at the stage of finalizing their translation of the Bible into the Kachin language.[50] In terms of iconography, Kachinization can also be observed in a statue located in front of the Chapel of San Luka College where Mary is shown as a Kachin woman holding a baby Jesus in Kachin costume, which subtly illustrates the local Catholic Kachins' view on Christology and Mariology. Baptist Christians, whose forefathers and mothers have burnt the objects and altars of the *nats*, have become friendly with the believers of KTR to a greater extent. In 2002, Rev. Mading Hkaw Sau and Rev. Maran Seng Awng invited the leaders of the KTR association from Kawng Ra to Kamaing to participate in a Christmas party.[51] The gesture strongly signifies that relationships between Christianity and KTR have significantly changed over time.

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[48]The researcher participated in a prayer meeting of Kachin Catholic family in Myitkyina.

[49]Tegenfeldt, *A Century of Growth*, 335.

[50]Saya Felix Labau from Lasho Diocese, with whom the author had a chance to meet at San Luka College on 22 July 2018. He is one of the prominent members of the Kachin Catholic Bible translation team.

[51]Many believers of KTR attended the party, including prominent Dumsa such as Zau Nan and Du Naw Pat (Bawk Naw, *Tradition, Beliefs and Practices*, 141).

Positive Experiences of Inculturation

Although met with initial opposition, some Kachin traditions have been incorporated into the Christian liturgy and celebration to some extent. One of the most significant moments was the performance of the Manau dance in the Eucharistic celebration in the Great Jubilee of the year 2000. In his thesis, Fr. John Zau Doi, a Kachin priest, recorded this first Manau dance experience in the liturgy.[52] Today, on their Christian occasions, both Baptists and Catholics celebrate the *Manau* dance, which is used to honor *nats* with the utmost cultural respect.

The attempt to introduce the Manau dance into the Church's liturgy, especially in the Eucharist, requires much consideration. Thus, the bishop, by this time, a local Kachin, conducted meetings to understand the meaning, performance, symbols, and compatibility of the dance.[53] In fact, the main person behind the attempt to integrate the dance into the liturgy was a local priest who completed his study of liturgy in Rome. He was assigned to take charge of the liturgy during the Centennial Jubilee Celebration. His initiative at liturgical inculturation (Kachinization of the liturgy) was motivated by the local liturgical celebrations during the Pope's visits to different countries.[54]

His inspiration came from the offertory dance performed by the Indonesians at St. Peter's Basilica during the Asian Bishops' Synod in 1998. When he proposed the Manau dance in

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[52]Zau Doi, "The Kachin Funeral Rite: A Case Study in Dialogue with Culture in the Diocese of Myitkyina, Myanmar," Unpublished MA thesis, the Saint Anthony Mary Claret College Library (Saint Anthony Mary Claret College, 2016), 135-208.

[53]Ibid., 177.

[54]Ibid., 178.

the liturgy of the Jubilee Celebration, the bishop was hesitant. The bishop called for careful preparation and great caution in the Novena Masses before the celebration.[55] This initiative has now become a tradition in the Kachin Catholic Church to dance Manau in the liturgy during solemn occasions such as priestly ordinations and anniversaries.

The performance of the Manau dance in the liturgy brought tremendous joy and a sense of fulfillment for many Kachins as they witnessed their traditional dance in the Eucharistic celebration for the first time. Tears of overwhelming joy could be seen in the faces of the people who attended the liturgy including the two Kachin bishops who were so moved that tears welled up in their eyes.[56] One of the Kachin bishops commented that prior to this event, he did not know the essence of inculturation, but now he cherished the value of inculturation.[57] One priest expressed that the experience was as if he was ascending to heaven.[58]

This heartfelt experience brought a new dimension to the life of Kachin Catholics. Many felt that the liturgy is brought closer to people and their sentiments. Prior to this, the liturgy was viewed as a bit foreign, whereas now they began to see their cultural costumes and symbols in the liturgy.[59] The traditional tune that accompanies the dance also played a significant role in intensifying the feeling of interconnectedness between the Kachins' cultural identity and their Christian faith.[60]

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[55]Ibid., 179.

[56]Ibid., 190.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Ibid., 192.

[59]Ibid., 191.

[60]Ibid.

This experience of inculturating the Manau dance has motivated local priests to search for other traditional rituals to be integrated into the liturgy to deepen their sense of belonging to the local Church as Kachin Catholics.[61] Some felt that the Kachin dance in the Mass is perhaps the highest honor rendered to the Kachins' culture[62] and helps root liturgical worship in the local cultures.[63]

Inculturation: a Contested Exercise

Efforts towards the localization or indigenization of Christianity are proceeding in the Kachin Catholic Church in such a way that it brings them comfort and challenge. This is not easy for Kachin Christians because their culture is closely associated with KTR. Today, the Christian Manau dance is fully accepted by Kachin Christians. However, many individuals do not participate in the dance, believing that the dance is related solely to the KTR. In fact, in a recent Manau dance in Edin, Myitkyina in November 2018, some did not participate given the total rejection of the KTR.[64]

A negotiation process is taking place in preparation for many Manau dances. In the Kamai region, before dawn, the traditional rituals were done without publicizing them. Some of the group members of the committee for a Manau dance would perform a ritual offering of a sacrificial pig at the foot of the Manau posts. In the morning, the Manau dance was performed in a Christian way. These Christians still hold dearly to their beliefs in the *nats*. The "split" in the practices

[61]Ibid., 194.

[62]Ibid., 197.

[63]Ibid., 198.

[64]N Jai Sin Wa Naw, interview by Sr. Mornica Kai Ja, 19 November 2018.

suggests that the negotiation is still in the "kachinization" process of owning what rightly belongs to them as Kachins and Christians. Manau dance appears to be torn asunder by the contestation between KTR and the Christian traditions.[65] Dr. N-Gam Tang Gun rightly observes that "the Kachin Christian still faces a cultural as well as a theological conflict whenever this Manau Dance would be celebrated in the time of Kachin State Day and on other special occasions."[66]

The Kabung dance (*Kabung dum*) presents another controversy. The dance is used in funeral services. Literally, *Kabung dum* means "to make a movement with sounds and songs."[67] Although the dance is believed to be a purely traditional custom without the KTR ritual, the local Church is still reluctant to acknowledge it. Fr. John Zau Doi is taking an avid interest in "Christianizing" this dance.[68] The Kabung dance is usually performed at night to console and accompany the bereaved family during the era of the ancestors, an era before the majority of Kachins became Christians. The bereaved family tendered a party on behalf of their departed member. The bereaved family served traditional liquor until nightfall. The

[65]Gun, *The Origin of Kachin Manau*, 38.

[66]Gun, *Kachin Culture and Tradition in Myanmar*, 98.

[67]Zau Doi, "The Kachin Funeral Rite," 82.

[68]Fr. John Zau Doi has collected a group of elders to study the Kabung dance and make it a Christian dance. He sponsored the group to produce a modern version of striking the traditional gongs, that play during the funeral. After weeks of their trial, the group found out their new ways of gonging cannot supersede the ancient one. They said that the accident way of playing gongs can penetrate the hearts of Kachins. Whenever a Kachin hears the sound of the gongs, they are excited to go to the funeral. Fr. John Zau Doi reshaped the meaning of the dance. Instead of mourning for the dead, he intends the dance to be in line with our Christian Easter faith, that is to say, the dance is performed with the notion of resurrection. Sometimes, the experimental dance is performed in the cemetery. (Fr. John Zau Doi was interviewed by the author on 10 July 2018.)

consumption of liquor led to drunkenness and, sometimes, to sexual misconduct.

The initiators of integrating the Kabaung dance into the Church have adapted the dance in such a way as to avoid the occurrence of social misconduct. For several funerals of the affluent Kachins, the dance is performed in Myitkyina and Tanai.[69] On some occasions, a few priests have participated in a new Kabaung dance. Still, many priests and lay people are also deeply divided over this traditional dance. Some young Kachin Catholic theologians are willing to propose a Kachin Christian funeral rite.[70] Apparently, it is still a long way towards accepting the celebration of a Kachin funeral rite because, at the moment, the people are already struggling to adopt the *Kabung* dance, from the funeral custom of the KTR into a Christian dance. Sometimes, KTR beliefs can still be found in Kachin Christian funerals, especially in rural areas. Some elders evoked the ancestral spirits to bring the soul of the dead to God so that the soul would not be wandering in limbo. KTR believed that after death, they would be together with their ancestors.[71]

The natal ceremony faces a similar resistance among the Kachin Christians. Some still consider the ceremony as too traditional in its symbolic meaning. It is proper to KTR. Thus, some people opt to celebrate the natal ceremony with cakes instead of ginger and dry fish. On the other hand, some Kachins opine that if the traditional way of the natal ceremony is not carried out, it is "un-Kachin." The Kachin wedding ceremony is likewise contested. Some weddings are celebrated, first in the Church and then in the home, where blessings are sought from the ancestral spirits. A respected elder would usually lead the

[69]Fr. Peter Hka Aung Tu, interviewed by the author, 21 June 2018.

[70]Zau Doi, "The Kachin Funeral Rite," 91.

[71]Gam, *Jingpaw Labau Ginrung*, 17.

ceremony without the presence of a priest. Sometimes, the priests were not even invited to such ceremonies.

In the face of this, some Kachins appear to be "schizophrenic" or "double-minded" in their faith and practices. Others become highly conservative. These challenges in inculturation show us the need for respect and discernment on the part of the Church in its dialogue with the local cultures, including the KTR, be it with the *Nat Jaw* or *Nat Jaw Htung*, as urged by the FABC. In general, many Kachin Christians view the need for greater appreciation of the Kachin tradition. However, for some, it only means appreciation of the cultures apart from the belief system of their ancestors. For others, the Kachin tradition means an inclusion of the cultures and faith of their ancestors.[72] Today, the Kachins are even more poignantly aware of their cultural estrangement because of the alienating impacts of globalization and the modern way of life.[73]

Towards a Kachin Pneumatology

As we have seen, the worldview and belief system of KTR are strongly rooted in the spiritual domain, providing a holistic paradigm to understand human beings, nature, and the spirits/*nats* world. Thus, the nature and character of *nats*/spirits should be theologically valued by the local Church. Indigenous theologians like Yangkahao Vashum of Nagaland

[72]The most important elements are their belief (religion) and art (Culture dance). They cannot live without belief. They believe in the Creator (God) and spirits (*nats*) to whom they attribute everything for their living and environment." Interviewed by Zau Doi. Zau Doi, "The Kachin Funeral Rite," 74.

[73]Because the people are losing much of their culture due to globalization, it is proposed that another way to preserve the local culture is to continue the practice of oral storytelling. (Interviewed by Zau Daoi, Zau Doi "The Kachin Funeral Rite," 75).

began to speak of the spirits of the Christian faith.[74] So, too, do Kachin Christians, but not without their share of difficulties. Understandably, the spirits are still consigned to superstitious beliefs as if they are spirits in the forests and mountains. Those who believe in the spirits are regarded as persons having psychological issues. At best, if such spirits are considered real, they are regarded as evil spirits. Thus, some Kachin Christians still look at the believers of their traditional religion as devil worshipers. This is an existential challenge or quest for Kachin Christians who live among the many spirits.

The challenge posed to the Kachin Christians is either to regard the *nats* as evil spirits or ignore the many spirits because the spirit world is too complicated and incomprehensible. In this context, Kachin Christians are further pulled away by the modern sciences and even by their Christian theology since both have no interest in the spirits. Nonetheless, this tension does not discount or invalidate some of the experiences of the believers of the spirits as real and even good spirits, assisted by the research of a few anthropologists who have a different view on the spirits through their experiences of undergoing initiation, falling into trances, dancing ecstatically with the spirits and performing healing rites themselves.[75]

The Church seems theologically limited when it comes to contact with the many spirits in other religions and traditions. The Christian worldview is dominated by a Western rationality that fails to deal adequately with such beliefs. Hollenweger notes that "the fact that the issue of spirits has produced so

[74]Yangkahao Vashum, *Christology in Context: A Tribal-Indigenous Appraisal of North East India* (New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2017).

[75]Mary Douglas, "Other Beings, Postcolonially Correct," in *Mission and Culture: the Louis J. Luzbetak Lectures,* ed. Stephen B. Bevans (New York: Orbis Books, 2012), 65.

much dissension and discussion shows that it aggravates a weak spot in Western theology, which tends just to label such beliefs as 'psychological' or superstitious."[76] In general, this is a real challenge for Christians since Christian pneumatology has not always been given sufficient attention. The Holy Spirit and his activities were developed in books of "Spiritual Theology" or Spirituality, which were considered of lower rank in the academic hierarchy.[77] Christian systematic theology was excessively Christocentric and less Trinitarian until after the Second Vatican Council.[78]

One of the consequences of this limited development of Christian pneumatology is that the Catholic Church has indiscriminately designated all other spirits outside of Christianity as evil spirits. This notion was further accentuated by the belief that there is no salvation outside of the Church. God's saving will in all religions has been recognized since the time of the Apostolic Church.[79] Thus, the Second Vatican Council began the re-recognizing of the works of the Holy Spirit in other religions (cf. *GS* 22; *LG* 16). Vatican II's declaration, *Nostra Aetate* stipulates that "the Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions"[80] The Church realized that the Holy Spirit, in a manner known only to God, offers to

[76]Kirsteen Kim, *The Holy Spirit in the World: A Global Conversation* (New York: Orbis Books, 2007), 153.

[77]Ibid.

[78]Felipe Gomez, SJ, *The Holy Spirit: Theology and Spirituality* (Makati: St. Paul, 2010), 3.

[79]James H. Kroeger. M.M. "The Faith-Culture Dialogue in Asia: Ten FABC Insights on Inculturation," in *God the Creator: Universality of Inculturality*, ed. Christopher Shelke SJ, *Studia Missionalia*, vol.57 (Roma: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana , 2007), 91-115.

[80]Pope Paul VI, *The Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions* (*Nostra Aetate)*, 28 October 1965, Vatican Archive, accessed 15 February 2019, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/ documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.

every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery (*GS* 32). *Nostra Aetate* affirmed with all clarity that "from ancient times down to the present, there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers throughout things and the events of human history; at times some indeed have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father.[81] This perception and recognition penetrate their lives with a profound religious sense."[82] Furthermore, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 28 affirms that the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit are universal, limited by neither space nor time.[83]

Since the Second Vatican Council, Christian pneumatology has developed along with realizing the works of the Holy Spirit in other religions. This realization was also extended to traditional religions in Asia and Africa. In 1997, the FABC Office of Theological Concern recognized a theological paradigm shift in the Church's perception of indigenous peoples.[84] The FABC bishops recognized that God has been speaking to indigenous peoples through their cultures over the centuries. The Asian bishops began to study the traditional religions and came to understand that communion with nature, communion with ancestors and progenitors, communion with the world of spirits, and finally communion with the creator God are characteristics of most indigenous peoples in Asia.[85] In light of this, the Asian bishops affirmed with conviction that much of

[81]Ibid.

[82]Ibid.

[83]Pope John Paul II, *On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate* (*Redemptoris Missio*), 7 December 1990, Vatican Archive, accessed 15 February 2019, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html, no.28.

[84]Fung, S.J., *A Shamanic Theology of Sacred Sustainability,* 9.

[85]Karotemprel, "The Indigenous/Tribal people and Renewed Church in Asia,"12.

the indigenous peoples' worldview and ethos are compatible with the Christian faith. Thus, indigenous peoples' traditional beliefs, rites, myths, and symbols can provide material for developing indigenous theologies and liturgical ceremonies. [86] Thus, Christians in Asia are invited by the FABC to dialogue with the traditional religions along with other religions. In other words, the Asian bishops contend that the presence of the Holy Spirit in traditional religions needs to be recognized and appreciated.

Movements of the Spirit of God in the Kachinland

Recognizing the activities of God in the universe can be found in the biblical tradition. God is at work outside of the community of God's chosen people. We see this, for example, in the cases of Abraham and Melchizedek (Gen 14: 17 – 20), Moses and Jethro (Ex 18:1-26), Isaiah referring to Cyrus (Isa 44:24-28; 45:1; 2 Chr 36:22-23), Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10) and Jesus and the Syro-phoenician woman (Mk 7:24-30).[87] Concerning the movement of the Spirit, Walter Kasper poignantly notes, "Whenever something new arises, whenever life is awakened and reality reaches ecstatically beyond itself, in all seeking and striving, in every ferment and birth, and even more in the beauty of creation, something of the being and activity of God's Spirit is manifested."[88] Thus, it is important to note the activities and movements of the Spirit in the Kachin communities, especially from the missionary era to the contemporary period, since the arrival of missionaries and the Eurocentric

[86]FABC, FABC Document: 1997 -2001, vol, 3, *For All the Peoples of Asia,* ed. Eilers, Franz-Josef (Manila: Claretian Publications, 2002), 26.

[87]Kim, *The Holy Spirit in the World: A Global Conversation*, 164.

[88]Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Chris*t (New York: Crossroad, 2005), 22.

theologies posed a decimating challenge to the existing spirit world in the Kachin society.

The new villages established by these early missionaries were strong pull factors of evangelization. These early missionaries promoted human progress by bringing education, health, and modern social structures so that people were no longer under the power of their tribal chief. The new Christian converts loved the new villages. Living in a new village in the lowland with stable farming was much more comfortable than living in the mountains with the rotational slash-and-burn cultivation. The Kachin converts in the new villages experienced a sense of freedom from the traditional chiefs who had to obey and give some portion of their crops.

The schools attracted parents who wanted their children to have a modern education. Usually, the children from missionary schools would first become Christians, and only then would the parents of the children convert to Christianity. The downside of conversion to Christianity was the demand for allegiance, which at that time entailed belittling the traditional religious system, for instance, through the burning of religious objects of their former religion. Hence, the Western religion of the early missionaries supplanted the Kachin traditional religion. Though biblical theology states that the Spirit blows where it wills alas, God's omnipresent Spirit was trapped within the confines of Western trappings.

During these early encounters with the missionaries, some Kachins needed more clarity in embracing a new religion, even though many Kachins viewed both their existing faith and the faith brought by the missionaries as compatible. A case in point is the Kamlin village in the 1870s. When the Kachins heard about the Christian message, they appreciated the preaching of the missionaries. They approached the missionaries and asked if it

was possible to amalgamate Christianity and their traditional faith.[89] The missionaries could not respond to this request. The Spirit of God had challenged early missionaries, but they remained "walled in" by the confines of Western categories.

However, the activity and presence of the Spirit can be more easily recognized today. Both Catholic and Protestant Kachins have learned to respect their ancestral religion again. At present, believers of KTR and Christianity can come together at the same table to celebrate their friendship over meals and show their respect for each other's faith. Many Kachin Christians seek a KTR *dumsa* (priest) to study their ancestral religious practices to adapt them to Christianity. The movements of the Spirit outside of Western Christian institutions are gradually recognized. However, it remains very difficult to comprehend the works of the Holy Spirit in the religious practices of *nats*/spirits.

An Asian Way of Discernment of the Spirit and spirits

The realization of the goodness and wisdom in KTR enables Christians to recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit. However, some continue to stigmatize the believers of KTR as devil worshippers.[90] The experiences of rejection and denigra-

[89]Evans, *History of the Catholic Church in Burma*, 346.

[90]The primal religions were often accused of propagating idolatrous and satanic practices. Their members were called people living in "darkness and far from God" because they were considered to believe in a world full of evil spirits and powers and to depend on the intercession of dubious magicians, witch doctors, healers, and exorcists. The Christian message was presented to them as a liberating force, which, with the power of the Holy Spirit, brought light to the darkness and delivered these people from age-old oppression and slavery to religiously false ideas that could only be called superstitious and idolatrous (See. The Office of Theological Concerns of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, *The Spirit at Work in Asia Today*, 1-96).

tion of traditional Kachin religio-cultural beliefs remain stumbling blocks in local efforts of theologizing on the relationship of the *nats* to God's Spirit. In particular, using Western categories among Kachin Christians remains the greatest obstacle to appreciating and comprehending their traditional religiosity and worldview. Until now, the theological and cultural hurdle in dealing with their ancestral religion remains a challenge. There is no huge theological challenge for Kachin Christians to recognize KTR's God, Karai Kasang, as the same Creator God of Christians However, it is much harder to deal with spirits/ *nats* of KTR because nature and sacrificial offerings seem to be archaic or "primitive" in the eyes of Christians. The Asian Bishops rightly recognize that the indigenous worldview is distinct from that of other peoples.[91] At the same time, FABC stresses the need to "discern the presence of the Spirit as expressed, believed, imaged and symbolized by believers themselves in these Asian traditions."[92]

In light of this dialogue,[93] one theological challenge for the Kachi Church is to discern the work of the Holy Spirit in the KTR among the *nats.* In a broad stroke, the spirits of KTR can be distinguished and categorized. In the experiences of the Kachin Christians, discussing the *nats* has generated much-heated debate. Although believers of KTR claim that there are

[91]Sabastian Karotemprel, "The Indigenous/Tribal people and Renewed Church in Asia," in The Renewed Mission of Love and Service to the Indigenous Peoples of Asia, FABC Papers, no, 92 (Hongkong, FABC, 2000), 3, accessed 15 February 2019, http://www.fabc.org/fabc%20papers/fabc_paper_92g.pdf.

[92]The Office of Theological Concerns of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences,*The Spirit at Work in Asia Today,* 1-96.

[93]The final statement of the First Plenary Assembly of FABC states: "In dialogue with these religions, we will find ways of expressing our Christian faith. The great religious traditions can shed light on the truths of the Gospel. They can help us understand the riches of our faith."

good and evil spirits, the task of discernment of the spirits still needs to be improved for Christians to relate to the belief of KTR.

This is where the local Kachin Churches find themselves in a quandary. All spirits of KTR besides the Supreme Being were regarded as evil by early missionaries. Today, with the development of theology, Kachin Christians would not regard all spirits of KTR as evil. Thus, many Church leaders take a cautious position, saying, "Not all the spirits in KTR are necessarily evil spirits." At the same time, it is a challenge to accept all spirits, even the benevolent spirits of KTR, as good spirits. This is a great existential challenge for Kachin Christians, especially in their endeavor to become a truly local and inculturated Church. For instance, some Christians continue to resort to KTR rituals in times of crisis. Nevertheless, it remains a daunting challenge to reconcile the spirit world of KTR with the Christian spirit world, especially with the Holy Spirit. Besides, Christians are generally unfamiliar with the discernment of spirits.

There are at least, three well-known schools of discernment in the Catholic tradition: the practice of the interior life, the social involvement of religious orders and institutes as they adjust to modernity, and the experience of the contemporary renewal movement.[94] First, in relation to the practice of interior life, Ignatian discernment is well established. In Ignatian spirituality, "discernment of spirits" is used. However, Ignatian discernment focuses more on good and bad spiritual forces influencing the thoughts and affective states, leading to moral decisions and actions. This discernment is not concerned about the discernment of nature spirits.

In the second school of discernment, the discernment of spirits evolves around searching for the will of God or ways

[94]Kim, *The Holy Spirit in the World: A Global Conversation*, 169.

of social involvement for a particular mission or work. The third is discernment in the contemporary renewal movement, especially, in the charismatic movement, which is much more complex. For example, the Holy Spirit's experience of speaking in tongues in Charismatic prayer meetings is a delicate matter because few Church leaders are reluctant to endorse such experiences, even though speaking in tongues can be traced back to the Scripture.

On the other hand, the Asian bishops insightfully propose *five criteria* for the discernment of the Holy Spirit: the fruits of the Spirit, the values of the Kingdom, the sense of faith in the Church, a listening attitude, and fostering love, harmony, and unity. The first and most fundamental criterion for the discernment of the Spirits is the presence of the fruits of the Spirit, which St. Paul describes as "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5:16-25). As a tree can be known by its fruit, the presence of these fruits of the Spirit affirms the presence of the Holy Spirit.[95]

The second criterion is the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Christ, which goes beyond the institutional Church. The Asian bishops assert that the working of the Spirit of God in the history of humankind is to be understood and interpreted about the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Christ.[96] The third criterion concerns the sense of the faith of the Church which begins by paying attention to the role of the Holy Spirit in enabling the reception of divine revelation in which God is fully encountered by humanity through Jesus Christ.[97]

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[95]The Office of Theological Concerns of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, *The Spirit at Work in Asia Today*," 1-96.

[96]Ibid.

[97]Ibid.

The fourth criterion is a listening attitude and openness to be appropriately guided by the Spirit since the Spirit blows where it wills and the presence of the Truth and the Spirit is not limited to the Church.[98] The fifth criterion for discernment of the Spirit is the importance of love and unity in the world, among which love is the greatest (1 Cor. 13) biblical (Johannine) criteria.[99] Having these criteria in mind, the theological appraisal of the spirits of KTR will be explored.

Mutual Enrichment

After reflecting and discerning the fruits and characters of benevolent spirits in KTR, we can state that all the life-giving *nats* can be considered kindred spirits since they are indispensable for sustaining life in cultures, religions, and societies.[100] As such, KTR benevolent *nats* such as Sinlap *nat*, Mu *nat*, Ningshe Mu *nat*, Nbung *nat*, Lamu Madai *nat*, Ga Madai *nat* (earth spirit), Jan *nat* (Sun spirit), Shata *nat* (Moon spirit), Bungga *nat* (wind) and other benevolent spirits can be said to participate in the divine assembly of *Ruah Elohim* in the task of sustaining creation (Ps 29:1, 82:1; Deut 10:17).[101] Gumgun *nats* (ancestral household spirits) continue to intercede for blessings for the household. These benevolent spirits, akin to guardian angels, sustain and nourish creation. These indwelling spirits embody the sacred power of the absolute Creator.[102]

Christian pneumatology may shed light on KTR pneumatology about Christianity and other traditional religions. The nature of KTR spirits can be related to the biblical tradition,

[98]Ibid.

[99]Gomez, *The Holy Spirit*, 209.

[100]Fung, *A Shamanic Pneumatology in a Mystical Age of Sacred Sustainability*, 124.

[101]Ibid., 125.

[102]Fung, *A Shamanic Theology of Sacred Sustainability*, 96.

as mentioned above. This understanding can help Kachin Christian converts see that their indigenous faith is, in fact, related to Christianity. The universal characteristic of Christian pneumatology shows that *nats* also have a universal characteristic. Being intermediaries of God, the *nats*/spirits participate in the divine activity of God's life-giving Spirit, which continues to hover over the entire world in his unending work of renewal and re-creation(Job 34:14–15; Ps 104:30).

The KTR belief and experience of many spirits is very important for Christians. Christians, especially early missionaries, could not approach and deal with the phenomena of many spirits. Thus, Christian missions became a contestation of power between the Christian God and Karai Kasang, to the point that all spirits in KTR, whether good or bad, were relegated to the margin. One-Holy-Spirit Christian pneumatology faces a challenge to respond to this spirit-world reality.

In modern theology, mainly Protestant theology, angels and demons alike are generally condemned to the realms of superstition, and what remains is "God and man."[103] Catholic theologians Karl Rahner and Yves Congar consider only the Spirit of God and the human spirit.[104] For the local Churches in Kachinland, this is not only a theological concern but a serious pastoral challenge. Unfortunately, many local priests and pastors are unable to address this phenomenon of plural spirits for fear of the capricious activity and the need for fetishes and mantras that such a worldview with many spirits can generate.[105]

The pneumatology of KTR demonstrates that the believers of KTR live in a world of harmony with spirits under the

[103]Kim, *The Holy Spirit in the World: A Global Conversation*, 151.

[104]Ibid.

[105]Ibid., 152.

guidance of a sustaining Karai Kasang who assists believers with the heavenly spirits to overcome evil forces in times of trouble and struggle. Joy and harmony prevail in the lives of believers of KTR. The KTR pneumatology of many spirits may enable Christians to rediscover the plural character of divine activity. From the beginning of the creation, the Trinitarian God is at work. Besides that, intermediaries, angelic beings, are also involved in divine activity.

The experiences of KTR and other traditional religions show that the Spirit of God sacralizes and sustains the world through the angels, who are spirits. The appreciation of the context of many spirits might help Christians to have a better understanding of the nature, existence, and the work of the Holy Spirit, who has the power of indwelling (Rom 8:9) and life-giving (Gen 2:7).[106] It is an invitation to ponder and pay attention to the boundless activity and movement of the Spirit of God who blows at will (Jn 3:8).

However, our present Christian understanding of the nature of the spirits is still at the early stage. Christians are still learning to recognize and respect the spirits in KTR and other traditional religions. British theologian Kirsteen Kim, who had served as a missionary in India, hopes that these kindred spirits "will be seen and appreciated for what they are, without being rejected on the one hand or subsumed into Christianity on the other."[107]

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[106]Simon Pau Khan En, *Nat Worship: A Paradigm Doing Contextual Theology in Myanmar* (Yangon: Judson Research Center of the Myanmar Institute of Theology, 2012), 137.

[107]Fung, "What Christians Can Learn from Shamanic Pneumatology," 124.

Towards A Harmonic Pneumatology

The experience of the believers of KTR with the spirits is relational. The creation stories of KTR are about interrelatedness and connectedness between heavenly beings, human beings, and nature. They have a less anthropomorphic expression of the Divine in they encounter the Divine in spirits. They experience the divine through their senses and intuition. In the creation story, the Supreme Being appears as the Sustainer of the relational matrix of universal life forces, spirits, humans, and created things and beings. All existence, visible and invisible, is sustained in this relational matrix.

When dealing with undesirable spirits, believers of KTR do not cast them out, making the exorcism ritual of KTR very unique. There is no forceful repelling or rebuking of the malevolent spirits. These unwelcome spirits are asked to leave with a diplomatic approach. Besides giving them an offering, a traditional priest uses pleasant words with a nice tune to request the malevolent spirits to go away. This exorcism reminds us of how Jesus expelled the evil spirits he allowed to enter into a great herd of swine (Mark 5:8-13). A similar attitude is seen not only in many primal religions in Asia but also in Africa, where "exorcism" is understood and practiced as placating spirits rather than casting them out.[108]

The believers of KTR honor the benevolent *nats*, especially those of their households who are their ancestors. They believe that the benevolent *nats* are superior to the malevolent *nats*. In a traditional Manau festival, the offering is given to both kinds of *nats*, reflecting the Kachins' understanding of the interconnectedness of the *nats* to their lives. They live within a harmonic web of the spirit world. In the KTR, the benevolent

[108]Kim, *The Holy Spirit in the World: A Global Conversation*, 170.

spirits are given offerings to obtain blessings. However, they may cause harm to a household if the household members forget to perform the ritual. If the rituals are not properly done, trouble can befall the household. Another offering ritual is needed, showing that offerings and rituals are a means of communication and maintaining harmony within this matrix.

Sometimes, the malevolent *nats* may cause disorder and rupture this harmonic relationship seemingly without cause. But in most cases, human beings have violated the order of the harmonic web through negligence and wrongdoing. Reconciliation and restoration of the relationship can be achieved through offerings and sacrifices. This religious worldview of "relationship" can also be found in other traditional religions in Asia and Africa.[109] A mixture of fear and reverence may be present in the hearts of the believers of KTR as *nats* are more powerful than human beings. At the same time, the joyful communal dancing during the spirit rituals strongly suggests that the believers of KTR rejoice in the presence of the *nats*.

Based on his experiences with primal religions in the Philippines, Albert Alejo, S.J. remarked that negotiation is a better way to deal with spirits.[110] He reflected on how ordinary Catholics practice the "spirituality of negotiation." In the popular religiosity of Catholics, people express their faith and prayer through devotional prayers and sacrifices such as novenas, a series of nine days or nine weeks of unbroken devotion. People commit themselves to these novenas to grant particular blessings. One of the popular devotions of the Catholics in the Philippines is honoring the image of the

[109]Laurenti Magesa, *African Religions: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1998), 248.

[110]Alejo,"Religion and Secularization," 193.

Santo Niño, an image of the Child Jesus. Alejo remarked that "based on the people's experience, we human beings do not command the Lord to give us immediately what we want, but we have to haggle."[111] Offering sacrifice to benevolent *nats* may correspond to this Christian negotiation.

Thus, the faith of KTR believers is concerned with how to live in harmony with the nats in the web of relationships. Relationship is the ultimate concern in KTR. Even in rituals honoring particular *nats*, they offer some sacrificial meal to whichever *nats* may be present around the event. Thus, the worst mistake the believers of KTR can make is willful neglect of the spirits who are especially close to their households,[112] such as the respective *nats* who dwell in the trees or mountains. Such negligence may disrupt a person, a family, or a community. Ordinary believers of KTR decipher such disruptures as signs that they need to recommunicate or amend the harmonic relationship. Illness is one such phenomenon for the believers of the KTR. The communal dancing in some ritual offerings to benevolent spirits strongly demonstrates the notion of thanksgiving and rejoicing with the spirits. The relationship is expressed through bodily language through dancing in the community.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Fr. Leonardo Mercado, SVD, the Executive Secretary of the Episcopal Commission for Inter-religious Dialogue of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, boldly declared that traditional religions are Christian partners. His view reflects the new attitude of the Church promoted by recent popes and Church documents. For instance, Pope John

[111]Ibid.

[112]Ibid., 150.

Paul II and Pope Francis have apologized to the indigenous peoples for not giving sufficient respect to local cultures and religions. During the Great Jubilee 2000, Pope John Paul II even solemnly confessed that the Church has committed sins "in actions against love, peace, the rights of peoples and respect for cultures and religions."[113] For his part, Pope Francis humbly stated in Puerto Maldonado that "those of us who do not live in these lands need your wisdom and knowledge to enable us to enter into, without destroying, the treasures that this region holds."[114] With no less vigor, the Asian bishops have likewise encouraged Christians to engage in a constructive dialogue with traditional religions in Asia. In light of this new attitude of the Catholic Church towards traditional religions, this research has taken a step toward dialogue with the Kachin traditional religion through the lens of Christian pneumatology.

The challenges faced by the Kachin Christians in their encounter with their traditional religion show that what is at stake is a theological problem interlaced with a cultural issue. Colonial missionaries and anthropologists designated the Kachin's religion as primitive, uncivilized, and demonic and their traditional beliefs as animist or pagan.[115] Based on the theory of evolution, the Kachins were considered culturally

[113]Pope John Paul II, *Universal Prayer: Confession of Sin and Asking for Forgiveness*, Vatican Archive, accessed 12 March 2019, http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/documents/ns_lit_doc_20000312_prayer-day-pardon_en.html.

[114]Pope Francis, *A Meeting with Indigenous People of Amazon*, 19 January 2018, Speeches, accessed 12 March 2019, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2018/january/documents/papa-francesco_20180119_peru-puertomaldonado-popoliamazzonia.html.

[115]During the Age of Discovery or the sixteenth century, the Europeans looked on the other as demons. During the Enlightenment, the Europeans looked at the other as ignorant (Mercado, *From Pagans to Partners*, 26).

and religiously inferior and thus needed to be Christianized as well as Westernized so they could be delivered from darkness and brought to the light.[116] Thus, Christianity preached the message of liberation from this primitive way of life. However, this left the Kachin Christians in search of their lost cultural identity. Today, many Kachins, especially the young, no longer care to learn about KTR. What is urgently needed is a new liberation of the Kachin from the misinterpretation of the Kachin culture.

The Future of Inculturation

Inculturation must necessarily involve a discerning and open dialogue among all the stakeholders. Inculturation also requires an interfaith sensitivity to cultural ownership. An arbitrary or one-sided attempt at inculturation is a disrespect to KTR due to the unwarranted belittling of a centuries-old belief system and its followers. A truly indigenous Christianity must respect the beliefs that have long been attuned to the divine presence in Kachinland.[117] It is imperative for Christians to inculturate the gospel with integrity and dignity through a dialogical process in the context of Kachin society. To this end, the Church has converted Kachin people to Christ; it is the turn of the Church to allow itself to be converted by the wisdom of the Kachin people.[118]

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[116]Mercado, *From Pagans to Partners*, 26.

[117]See, Graham Paulson, "Toward an Aboriginal Theology," *Pacifica* 19 (2006), accessed 20 March 2019, https://unlearningthe problem .files. wordpress.com/2010/05/graham-paulson.pdf.

[118]John Mansford Prio, "Dignity and Identity: The Struggle of Indigenous People in Asia to Preserve, Purify and Promote Their Cultures," in *PCC Asian Convention: Proclaiming Christ to Asian Cultures: Prophecy and Fulfillment*, FABC Papers, no. 104 (Hong Kong: FABC, 2002), 20.

The liturgy can be the best venue for Kachin Christians to reclaim Kachin traditional culture and spirituality. This involves a communal effort among the laity and ordained leaders of the Church, along with the theologians who are in respectful dialogue with the reputable Kachin traditional women elders. The successful incorporation of the Manau dance in the Eucharist shows that what is good in Kachin's culture and spiritual values is compatible with Christianity. Furthermore, this process can be a venue for promoting lay participation in the Church. We recall that Kachin lay elders played a vital role in integrating the Manau dance into Christianity. The elders are considered consultors and bearers of cultural knowledge. In this way, the local church, the people of God, will be the primary agent involved in inculturation. A contextual ecclesiology can also emerge through this gradual Kachinization of the Christian faith.

Interreligious Social Engagement

The relationship between Christianity and KTR has changed in recent years. However, it is more out of social friendship that the leaders of KTR are invited to Christian celebrations. The leaders of KTR and Christianity can do more than socialization. Both parties may collaborate in promoting Kachin culture. The Church also encourages "dialogue of life" and "dialogue of action" with other religions, for instance on ecological concerns.[119]

Amid the political crisis in Kachinland, with regular skirmishes and wars that have driven out many Kachins from their towns and villages, the Christian Churches have tried to

[119]PCID, *Letter of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue to the Presidents of Episcopal Conferences in Asia, the Americas and Oceania,* 21 November, 1993, Vatican Archive, accessed March 13 2019, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_21111993_trad-relig_en.html.

contribute to the peacebuilding process by facilitating peace training programs, helping the internally displaced and calling out injustices done by the government. However, the role of KTR is still invisible. The spirituality of the harmonic relationship of KTR may be put at the service of the peacebuilding process. Its age-old spiritual wisdom can enable the believers of KTR to live in harmony against all evil forces and be resilient during crises. This will be a new frontier for the Church to work with believers of KTR in search of political stability and peace in the Kachinland.

Across the border, the role of KTR is very significant as most of the Kachin communities in China belong to KTR. The Kachin elders and leaders from Myanmar need to respect the Kachin communities from China and India who profess different religions.[120] The change of attitude toward traditional religion has become a theological and social-political challenge for cross-border interfaith dialogue. Thus, Christians, believers of KTR (especially from China), and Buddhists (from India) need to become partners in building up Kachin identity, unity, and solidarity.

Towards a Fruitful Rather than Tragic Encounter

Mary Douglas, who did her anthropological research with the Lele people in Congo, remarked that Christianity and the Lele religion met, but both religions lost in the encounter. The Lele religion was reduced to techniques of identifying sorcerers, while Christianity acquired knowledge of sorcery.[121] It was a traumatic experience.

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[120]Sadan, *Being and Becoming Kachin*, 365.

[121]Mary Douglas, "Other Beings, Postcolonially Correct," in Mission and Culture: the Louis J. Luzbetak Lectures, ed. Stephen B. Bevans (New York: Orbis Books, 2012), 51.

In the case of the Kachin, if there is no constructive encounter between Christianity and KTR, a centuries-old belief system might be reduced to black magic or sorcery, while Christianity wastes the opportunity to gain from its wisdom that comes from the same Holy Spirit, the source of all truth and goodness. Hopefully, the attempts towards integrating Kachin culture into the Christian faith will continue and contribute to a renewed and deeper appreciation of both the Christian faith and Kachin culture for present and future Christians in Kachinland.

ETHICS OF ALTERITY AND CORPOREAL PNEUMATOLOGY FOR A CLIMATE-STRICKEN WORLD

Jojo M. Fung, SJ

The current viral pandemic and climate crises are global menaces. Life as we know it has been ruptured by the resurgence of the contagious Omicron BA.5, the newest subvariant of the COVID19 omicron variant, besides the Alpha (Q lineages) and Gamma (P.1 lineages) variants, that has claimed almost 5 million lives globally. With recurrent droughts, fires and floods, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, glacial melting, rising sea levels and the earth's temperature, climate changes are becoming commonplace. Global growth, impeded by uneven vaccination, is expected to accelerate to 5.6% in 2021, as major economies like the United States and China bounce back. But the level of global GDP in 2021 is expected to be 3.2% below pre-pandemic projections. The per capita GDP among many emerging markets and developing economies is anticipated to accelerate to 6% in 2021 and drop to 4.7 % in 2022. This impending trend is occasioned by the erosion of skills from lost work and schooling, a sharp fall in investment, higher debt burdens, and greater financial vulnerability.[1] In relation to global climate-scape, Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary of UN Climate Change, warned of climate emergency in terms of "the devastating loss of lives and livelihoods this year [2021] due to extreme weather events" as the earth is "on track for a global temperature rise of 2.7 °C, while we should be heading

[1]"The Global Economy: on Track for Strong but Uneven Growth as COVID-19 Still Weighs," June 8, 2021, https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2021/06/08/the-global-economy-on-track-for-strong-but-uneven-growth-as-covid-19-still-weighs.

for the 1.5 °C goal," unless the world leaders make deep cuts to CO_2 and other greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 or 2060.[2]

The global climate and viral menace have posed an unprecedented challenge to the capitalistic rationality that has failed to forge a tangible cohesion among nations of EU, G7 and G20 with their manifest xenophobic ethnocentricity and geopolitical "breach of trust" between developed and vulnerable nations. Since 2014, most EU countries have closed their borders to an estimated 200,000 refugees and migrants who fled across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe for safety, turning the sea into a mass graveyard. The US, under the Trump Administration, has tightened immigration restrictions, ended the Obama-era protections for unauthorized immigrants, and proposed the construction of a border wall to halt the inflow of Latin American refugees and migrants since 2017. With the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) to be held in Egypt this October and COP15 in Canada this November 2022, climate financing and decarbonization, after the Paris Agreement, has become all the more urgent.[3]

This Western subjectivity and rationality as the *modus operandi* of managing a "closed society" and determining the

[2]UN Climate Press Release, "Greater Ambition Now Critical" as UN Climate Change Conference Opens," October 31, 2021, https://unfccc.int/news/greater-ambition-now-critical-as-un-climate-change-conference-opens; IPCC Report, "Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis," (2021), https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_Full_Report.pdf.

[3]The UN Climate Change Executive Secretary, Patricia Espinosa, has called on the developed countries to honor their pledges to mobilize US$100 billion annually, up by US$1.3 trillion in the year 2030, for the long-term climate funds after the Paris Agreement to support the decarbonization efforts of the low-middle-income nations. See "UN Climate Chief Urges Countries to Deliver on USD 100 Billion Pledge," June 7, 2021, https://unfccc.int/news/un-climate-chief-urges-countries-to-deliver-on-usd-100-billion-pledge; David Ljunggren, "Developed nations to deliver climate fund 3 years late, hope to rebuild trust," October 25, 2021, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-climate-un-funds-idAFKBN2HF19T.

climate financing of the nations of the global South have to be critiqued in the light of a reimagined Levinasian ethics of alterity in section two. The Levinasian ethics alterity has to be grounded in a corporeal pneumatology that explains the inspirational role of *Rûah Elohim* that offers the ethics of alterity with a pneumatic dynamism will be dealt with in section three. The last section will explain the discernible signs of *Rûah*'s creativity in the multiple "alterity-shifts" occasioned by the vulnerabilities of our fellow humankind, otherkinds, and the wounded earth in the transitional process to the post-pandemic-COP27-15 (PPC) world.

Reimagining Levinasian Ethics of Alterity

Bearing in mind Levinas' aforesaid dictum that "history is worked over by the ruptures of history, in which a judgment is borne upon it," the current disruptive pandemic and climate crises have subjected Western subjectivity, mired in military, technological and geopolitical rivalry, and its virulent effects on the poor and the earth to a historic scrutiny through the lens of a Levinasian ethics of alterity.[4]

[4]To gain an overview of Emmanuel Levinas' scholarly thoughts and philosophical thoughts that led to the articulation of his ethics of alterity, see Stanford Encyclopedia on Philosophy, 'Emmanuel Levinas,' July 23, 2006, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/levinas/; Bergo, Bettina, "Emmanuel Levinas," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), https://plato.stanford.edui/archives/sum2015/entries/levinas/; Matthew Eaton, "An-Archy and Awakening: The Ethical and Political Temporalities of Christology and Pneumatology," *The Heythrop Journal: A Bimonthly Review of Philosophy and Theology*, 60 (2019): 624-641. On the rupture of history, see Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, Alphonso Lingis (trans.), Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969. The Western subjectivity has become the Westernized subjectivity of the oligarchy in league with the business elites of every conceivable nation whose alter ego/psyche/mindset is manifestly myopic, self-indulgent, at times, narcissistic, but hegemonic and xenophobic towards the vulnerable other who are our fellow humans and the wounded Earth.

Foremost, the Levinasian ethics of alterity calls for the unleashing of Western subjectivity from its self-indulgent ethnocentricity and tyrannical anthropocentricity in order to return to an experiential and authentic encounter with the migrants and the wounded earth at the level of pre-intentional embodied sensitivity that is denoted by *arche* (beginning/origin). *Arche* is "an archic time" that privileges a level of embodied experience prior to both reflective activity and practical interests that is infinite and, therefore, beyond the phenomenological temporality of finite cognitive interpretation, dogmatic thematicization, and representational analogy. This an-archic time facilitates the awakening of an I, endowed with sovereign power "that gives birth to worlds of language, cognition, and subjectivity."[5] An archic time, Levinas averred, is prior to the finite temporality of a thinking subject which is locked within the basic temporal framework in which "the subject is enchained to itself, unable to embrace the alterity of another *kath'auto*."[6] Entrapped in this finite temporality, the self-possessed subject silences and erases the self-expression of alterity, constituting a violent interruption of ethics.

Once unchained, the eruption of ethics occurs, especially with "an authentic revelation of and relation with another person" within "the an-archy of affective face-to-face encounter of alterity in the depths of its own self-expression by itself (*kath'auto*)" that Levinas called the "face" that is experienced

[5]For Pre-Socratic natural philosophers on Archy as the beginning, source, or sovereign power from which the world emerged, see Karl Popper, *The World of Parmenides: Essays on the Presocratic Enlightenment* (London, UK: Routledge, 1998); James Warren, *Presocratics* (Stocksfield, Uk: Acumen, 2007).

[6]The Greek *kath'auto* is interpreted as 'in itself'. See Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* 78.

in its nudity.[7] Levinas painstakingly emphasized that "the nakedness of the "face" is not what is presented to me because I disclosed it, what would therefore be presented to me, to my powers, to my eyes, to my perceptions, in a light exterior to it."[8] Alterity is only possible when "the face has turned to me – and this is its very nudity. It *is* by itself and not by reference to a system."[9] Furthermore, the experience of alterity, while it is cognitive, is "beyond quantification, calculation, and observation," allowing an-archy of another to be present and take up residence as "an incision made in time... a visitation and a coming."[10]

In an-archic time, the embodied sensitivity of the awakened I in the "close society" experiences multiple affects – anger, illusion, frustration, haplessness, empathy, and solidarity, in an encounter of intersubjective nudity. Most poignant, Levinas[2] opined, is "the eruption of affect into the present time of the subject is experienced as a 'trace' – i.e., the reverberation of an-archy into the subjective present time of the subject as a ghostly, non-phenomenal revenant who haunts the subject through the moods and feelings that travel from one time to another, summoning subjects to take responsibility for a

[7]Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburg, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 99-129; 'Humanism and An-archy' in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dondrecht, NL: Nijhoff, 1987), 127-39; 'Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity,' in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dondrecht, NL: Nijhoff, 1987), 65-66.

[8]Levinas, 'Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity,' 74.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Levinas, 'Phenomenon and Enigma,' in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dondrecht, NL: Nijhoff, 1987), 61-73; 'The Trace of the Other,' trans. Alphonso Lingis in Mark Taylor, ed., *Deconstruction in Context* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 345-59, at 354.

vulnerability encountered."[11] Levinas further explained the "trace" as "what is left over from a fully material encounter, carried bodily into the subjective present; it is a disincarnate, though sensuous, an echo whose fullness lies in another time, but now resides within the present."[12]

A return to this an *archic* encounter of intersubjective nudity transforms the existent subjectivity in our globalized temporality to embrace the marginal humans, otherkinds, and the earth in their *illeity*. The alterity of the "face" of the other is "always a threesome: I and you, and the Third who is in our midst," who is always entangled with the "face" of the vulnerable other– a jobless migrant worker, a refugee in the border camp, a carbonized atmosphere and a plastic-polluted ocean, all inextricably entangled within the face/body of the marginal-vulnerable other.[13] The "face" is the marginal-vulnerable other, beyond the you, described by Levinas as "the *illeity* of the other – the *il* or the *elle*, the he, she, or otherwise beyond the 'you' met in the present" and "the *illeity* of the other is the other as such, the one who expresses an-archically through affect within the face-to-face relationship."[14] The marginal other, in her/his *illeity*, "is an irreducible, transcendent singularity, the infinite expression from which the idea of God becomes

[11]Ibid.

[12]Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburg, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2013), 220-47; Robert Gibbs, "The Disincarnation of the Word: The Trace of God in Reading Scripture," in Kevin Hart and Michael Alan Signer, eds. *The Exorbitant: Emmanuel Levinas between Jews and Christians* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2010), 32-51.

[13]Levinas, "Ideology and idealism: in Sean Hand, ed. *The Levinas Reader* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1089), 235-248 & "The Ego and Totality,' *in Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingus (Dordrecht, NL: Nijhoff, 1986), 25-46.

[14]Levinas, "Phenomenon and Enigma," 72.

possible, awakens, and comes to mind."[15] For Levinas, "*Illeity* is itself divine. God [and] is not a subject mediated through the face of another; God is entangled within, even if irreducible to, the face of another."[16]

To a certain extent, the viral disruption is a *kairos* for envisioning a PPC world beyond the financialization of the earth's human and non-renewable resources through "resource extraction, labor exploitation, capital accumulation, and what is known as "ecocide"." [17] More fundamentally, this rupture disposes the awakened to an archy when the subject is "without clothing, without a shell to protect oneself, stripped to the core as in an inspiration of air, an ab-solution to the *one*, the one without complexion, [because] it is a denuding beyond the skin to the sounds one dies from, denuding to death, being as vulnerability."[18] It is a nudity of vulnerable bodies exposed to the agony of a violated earth, agonizing over the erratic climate changes, rising sea levels and the earth's temperature, the zoogenic illnesses due to deforestation that drastically reduced the natural habitats of animals, causing viral pandemic and death. For Levinas, awakening is "putting the Infinite into thought, but this is wholly different from what is structured as a comprehension of a *cogitatum* by a *cogitation*."[19] In the an-archic time, the awakened subjects experience freedom from their enchainment to the indulgent-xenophobic-anthropocentric self, imprisoned in the mass fear and hysteria of an

[15]Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 77-9.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Kathleen Kesson, "Three Scenarios for the Future of Education in the Anthropocene," April 12, 2020, jfsdigital.org/2020/04/12/three-scenarios-for-the-future-of-education-in-the-anthropocene/.

[18]Levinas, "Language and Proximity," 116.

[19]Levinas, "God and Philosophy," in *Collected Philosophical Papers,* vol 100. Springer, Dordrecht, 1987.

afflicted world and carbonized earth.[20] Upon awakening, the liberated subjects whose bodies have been impacted by the multiple effects of a pre-original event, choose how to react to their emergent feelings - either to joyfully welcome the other with hospitality or deny/erase the summons of alterity. A disruption of the eruption of the ethics of alterity will relinquish all the vulnerable kinds and the earth to untold human suffering due to overexposure to the "geno-ecocidal toxicity" of a violated earth. The experience of ethical alterity interrogates the sovereignty of the self-indulgent, xenophobic, and anthropocentric West in its hegemonic exercise of geopolitical aggressivity.[21] This other-directed alterity motivates the apathetic populace to become awakened subjects who mount an "uncompromising resistance" to such tyrannical xenophobia and anthropocentrism,[22] exemplified by Pope Francis in his unflinching resistance to the "closed society" in Europe in stating that "being a migrant is not a crime but summons to greater commitment on behalf of the dignity of every human being" and "future generations will never forgive us if we miss the opportunity to protect our common home. We have inherited a garden; we must not leave a desert for our children."[23]

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[20]Ibid.

[21]In addition to the Five Eyes (1941), the recent formation of QUADS (2017) and AUKUS (2021) are regarded by some critics as typical of the hegemonic geopolitical aggressivity of the US and its allies.

[22]Levinas, "The Trace of the Other," 352; *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, 122-23.

[23]"Pope Francis' vision for the refounding of Europe: text of Charlemagne Speech Award address," May 6, 2016, https://www.catholicvoices.org.uk/blog/2016/05/06/pope-francis-vision-for-the-refounding-of-europe-text-of-charlemagne-speech-award-address; Jonathon Braden, "Pope Francis, faith leaders sign joint appeal before UN climate summit," (Rome, Oct 4, 2021), https://laudatosi-movement.org/2021/10/04/pope-francis-faith-leaders-sign-joint-appeal-before-un-climate-summit/.

The unchaining of the awakened self through the Levinasian archic face-to-face encounter and the subsequent respons-*ability* facilitates the fulfillment of justice in the embrace of the *illeity* of the vulnerable other and the wounded Earth. As an incarnated *Rûah*, God is now corporealized in the vulnerable neighbors and the violated earth. The corporealized *Rûah* becomes the inner dynamism that facilitates such a personal *encounter with* and *experience of* the Divine in the vulnerable poor and the wounded Earth. Hence, this reimagined Levinasian ethics of alterity has to be supplemented with a pneumatic orientation grounded in a corporeal pneumatology that emanates from the corporeal trinitarian theology of Mark I. Wallace and Matthew Eaton.

In-spirational Role of *Rûah Elohim*

The pre-existent *Rûah Elohim*, Mark I. Wallace posits, "breathes the world into existence and therefore enfleshes herself in the creation and maintenance of the natural order."[24] For Wallace, this pneumatic creation of the world, is entangled with "the trinitarian enfleshment of God in nature," which Wallace envisions as "a tripartite movement,", marked by the sequential corporealization of God, Jesus, and *Rûah Elohim*, at different epochal times of creation.[25] Hence, in Wallace's sequence, the corporealization of the Spirit begins "after the work of the Son, revealing God, and co-creating and redeeming creaturely life through ethics."[26] *Rûah Elohim*, Wallace postulates, is not only the power of *koinonia* in the triune God, but the *Rûah* "between God and the whole creation as well."[27] Wallace

[24]Mark I. Wallace, "The Green Face of God: Christianity in an Age of Ecocide," *Cross Currents* 50 (Fall 2000): 318.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid., 317.

believes that *Rûah Elohim* is continuing the in-spirational co-creativity of the God who "as Trinity subsists in interpersonal unity through incarnating itself in all things that swim, creep, crawl, run, fly, and grow upon the earth."[28] This corporealization of *Rûah Elohim*, Wallace adds, "is consistent with the scriptural portrayal of the Spirit as a revolutionary force who labors to invert the established social order."[29]

In Matthew Eaton's postulation, *Rûah Elohim* continues "the in-spirational work of redemptive co-creativity, awakens the subject as the trace of the other within the same, guiding the subject into her or his responsibility to seek the justice and the common good within a plurality of political ecologies" and thus promotes "justice to the vulnerable, reconciliation to enemies, healing to the divisions that break unity, and a communion of love insofar as this is possible."[30] On the other hand, Wallace believes "the Son perpetually births the Spirit of God as the other in the same, who works for a sustainable peace within Earth's more-than-human communities in this cocreativity of redemption."[31] This co-creative redemption of the Son and *Rûah Elohim* is a relational koinonia, so much so that "the Spirit is the cruciform and political awakening of the Son's an-archy" and "together, the Son and the Spirit labor for peace within the socio-political realm by reconciling difference, demanding justice, and calling the violence of sovereignty into question."[32]

As Wallace notes, the Spirit can be said to assume "a creaturely lifeform always already interpenetrated by the material

[28]Ibid., 318.

[29]Ibid., "The Wild Bird Who Heals," *Theology Today* 50, 1(1993): 19.

[30]Eaton, "An-Archy and Awakening," 631, 633.

[31]Wallace, "The Green Face of God," 318.

[32]Ibid.

world."[33] This means, Eaton opines, "the Spirit *is* in nature as its interanimating force, as important as that is, but that Spirit *is* a natural being who leads all creation into a peaceable relationship with itself."[34] And both *Rûah Elohim* and the cosmos "internally condition and permeate one another without collapsing into undifferentiated sameness or equivalence."[35] In this interpenetration, God, who is *Rûah Elohim,* and the cosmos are, in Leonardo Boff's opinion, "perichoretically involved in one another" so that "everything that happens in the world somehow affects God, and everything that happens in God somehow affects the world."[36] In Eaton's postulation, both *Rûah Elohim* and the cosmos "internally condition and permeate one another without collapsing into undifferentiated sameness or equivalence" for God is not identical with the cosmos, nor is the cosmos identified as God.[37] In this perchoretic process, the triune God, who is *Rûah Elohim,* has radically corporealized in the Cosmos-Earth as to be pervasively manifested in everything that moves and exists in the Cosmos-Earth.

[33]Mark I. Wallace, "Christian Animism, Green Spirit Theology, and the Global Hope in an Age of Radical Ecology," in Deiter T. Hessel and Rosemary Raford Ruether, eds. *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 51-72.

[34]Cited in Eaton, "An-Archy and Awakening," 633.

[35]Wallace, "The Wild Birds who heals," 15.

[36]Leonard Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor,* trans. Philip Berryman (New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 159, 169. Also see Reynaldo D. Raluto, *Poverty and Ecology at the Crossroads: Towards an Ecological Theology of Liberation in the Philippine Context* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2015), 133.

[37]Eaton, "An-Archy and Awakening," 633.

The age of "Anthropocene"[38] has not fully eclipsed the age of *Rûah Elohim* or the era called the "Pneumatolocene" which witnesses the inspirational cocreativity of the *Rûah* of the triune God. This God is corporealized in the Cosmos and the planet Earth and all humankind and otherkinds. All created things are "Divine expression, be it the Son's or the Spirit's, is neither disembodied nor phantasmal; it burns and shivers in the face of all the vulnerable kinds and the disfigured earth that call the power of sovereign violence into question."[39] Now all created kinds and the earth are "bearers of the sacred; everything that is, is holy; each and every creature is a portrait of God."[40] But the shivering bodies must now include the wounded Earth, wailing due to deforestation, the toxification of the air, soil, and water, the cataclysmic climate changes, the melting of glacial ice, the rising of the sea, the submergence of the islands and coasts, the increase of the earth's temperature to 2.7°C. Ultimately, corporeal pneumatology alerts us that the Cosmos-Earth is shot through with the co-creativity of *Rûah Elohim,* "including the dust-we-are, is saved, transfigured, spiritualized because of its relationship with God in Christ through the incarnation and consummation in the final commonwealth. All as the work of the Holy Spirit," asserts Robert D. Hughes.[41]

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[38]Paul Crutzen opines that the Anthropocene "refers to the geological epoch shaped by human activities since the early Industrial Revolution,' perhaps even earlier, in which 'humans have become such a dominant force that they co-determine the state of the earth's crust" for the first time in world history. See Paul J. Crutzen and E. F. Stoermer, "The 'Anthropocene,'" *International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme Newsletter* 41 (2000): 17-18.

[39]Wallace, "Christian animism, Green Spirit Theology, and the Global Crisis Today," 221.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Robert Davies Hughes, III, *Beloved Dust: Tides of the Spirit in Christian Life* (New York & London: Continuum, 2008), 274.

This corporeal pneumatology is the basis for positing that *Rûah Elohim* is the pneumatic dynamism in the Levinasian ethics of alterity as *Rûah Elohim* awakens the subjects after the intersubjective *encounter with* and *kenotic embrace of* the nudity of the vulnerable other, and enables them to respond to the cries of the marginal-vulnerable neighbor and the ruptured earth. The inspirational co-creativity of *Rûah Elohim* in all awakened subjects is manifested in discernible signs in current globalscape in the gradual emanation of a more sustainable PPC world.

Rûah's Co-creativity in a PPC World

Rûah Elohim's inspirational creative power is actively present in the concerted and collaborative agency of the awakened subjects. Such pneumatic co-creativity is manifested in at least five discernible "alterity-shifts" in the emergent process of a PPC world, ranging from an alterity driven by sophia, the nascent public values, visibilized in sacrificial services, climate financing and strategic political actions in our globalscape.

1. *Alterity driven by Sophia/wisdom.* The current global rupture has indicated the untenability of the androcentric-positivistic rationality, which has occasioned a discernible shift to (re) value biblical and religiocultural wisdom. As *Sophia* is equated with *Rûah Elohim* in the Hebrew scriptures, *Rûah Elohim* is the Spirit-power that pervades all of creation. Hence, Gerhard von Rad believed that "life wisdom" is not differentiated from "nature wisdom."[42] In this vein, the awakened subjects have arguably much to learn from the revelatory nature of the poor but more so from the earth and creation (Wis. of Sol. 13:1). This means the ants, locusts, lizards, badgers (Pro. 30:24-28), beasts, birds, reptiles and creatures (James 3:7) have much to teach

[42]Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 71.

humans about "life-nature-wisdom". The ancestral wisdom of Native American religious life manifests, Kenneth Morrison contends, "power [that] is always conceived as a gift that forges solidarity" between humankind and otherkinds.[43] This gift of the power of interbeing solidarity is grounded in the ancestral wisdom of the indigenous wo/men elders, healers, mystics, and shamans. A case in point is the wisdom of the Lakota Sioux nations that pronounces such interbeing solidarity as "*All Are Related*" or "*Mitákuye Oyás'iŋ.*"[44] For this reason, Anthony Iannarino is correct in advocating that "Knowledge Is Not Power – Wisdom Is Power."[45] Furthermore, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza posits that wisdom is a capability that refers to "the quality of life and of people" and, at the same time, a "female personification," depicted as a spiraling presence (*Shekhinah*) that is "global, embracing all creation," much akin to a "spiraling circle dance of wisdom/Wisdom," driving "a Spirit/

[43]Kenneth Morrison, "The Cosmos as Intersubjective: Native American Other Than-Human Persons", in Indigenous Religions: A Companion, ed. by Graham Harvey (New York: Cassell, 2000), 85.

[44]"Mitákuye Oyás'iŋ translates as "All Are Related" in the Lakota language. This wisdom-saying reflects the worldview-feel of interconnectedness experienced by the Lakota people in many Yankton Sioux prayers, as well as by ceremonial people in other Lakota communities in North America.

[45]Anthony Iannarino, "Knowledge Is Not Power – Wisdom Is Power," March 24, 2010, http://www.thesalesblog.com/blog/knowledge-is-not-power-wisdom-is-power.

spiritual intellectual movement in the open space of wisdom/Wisdom" who inspires justice-seeking earth sojourners."[46]

2. Nascent Public Values. The co-creativity of Rûah Elohim is discernible in the gradual shift in the global "econo-scape" that Paul Carney, the former governor of the Bank of England, perceived. It is an observable shift from "a market economy to a market society" to the extent that "the price of everything is becoming the value of everything."[47] What is needed in the PPC world, Carney adds, is "public values [that] help shape private values," prioritizing "health first ... and then looked to deal with economic consequences...[and] we need to act as an interdependent community not independent individuals," so that "the values of economic dynamism and efficiency have been joined by those of solidarity, fairness, responsibility and compassion," responsibility and compassion, sacred communion with Mother Earth, heartfelt gratitude to the boundless divine gratuitousness.[48] To this cluster of public values must be added

[46]Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Come Eat of My Bread . . . and Walk in the Ways of Wisdom," Foreword, Elisabeth Editor's Introduction to Wisdom," in Antoinette Clark Wire, Mary Ann Beavis, Barbara E. Reid, 2 Corinthians, WISDOM COMMENTARY, Vol. 48 (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2002), xxiii-xxv, at xix, xxiii; https://books.google.com.ph/books?id=di45DwAAQBAJ&pg=PR7&lpg=PR7&dq=Elisabeth+Sch%C3%BCssler+Fiorenza,+%E2%80%9CCome+Eat+of+My+Bread+.+.+.+and+Walk+in+the+Ways+of+Wisdom,%E2 %80%9D+Foreword, +Elisabeth+Editor %E2%80%99s+Introduction +to+Wisdom,%E2%80%9D&source=bl&ots=i DAuyIP_lc&sig=ACfU3U2O bxDeUHfEfPlf82PCpdLYF cge4g&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiVpOaF1vbzAh UHy4sBHW0lCpcQ6AF6BAgQEAM#v=onepage&q=Elisabeth%20Sch%C3%BCssler%20Fiorenza%2C%20%E2%80%9CCome%20Eat%20of%20My%20Bread%20.%20.%20.%20and%20Walk%20in%20the%20Ways%20of%20Wisdom%2C%E2%80%9D%20Foreword%2C%20Elisabeth%20Editor%E2%80%99s%20Introduction%20to%20Wisdom%2C%E2%80%9D&f=false.

[47]Paul Carney, "Putting Values above Valuations," *The Economist* (April 2020): 64.

[48]Ibid.

planetary fitness that prioritizes a planned global practice of circular economy, sustainable lifestyle, persistent reforestation coupled with deforestation by 2030, de-financialization of earth's fossil fuels, and resolute decarbonization of the global society through the use of electric vehicles, solar, thermal gas and wind energies.[49] After all, Carney contends, "our ambitions should be bolder – nothing less than to make a fit planet for our grandchildren,", otherkinds, and the Earth to survive sustainably in the PPC world.[50]

3. *Alerity visibilized through Sacrificial Services.* The awakened subjects, inspired by a Spirit-driven alterity, offer sacrificial services that embrace the denuded self of the vulnerable other. These sacrificial services are emblematized in the ordinarily invisible and often scorned service professions - the cleaners, day laborers, small traders, rubbish collectors, delivery drivers, mail carriers, supermarket employees, police, social workers, public transport staff, pharmacists, soldiers, teachers, funeral workers, and relief-aid workers at the refugee camps. This further includes the frontline doctors, nurses, and healthcare-givers, though ill-equipped, vicariously embrace the vulnerable nudity of the infected whose lives hang in the balance, supported by the ventilators. Many of the doctors and nurses are infected and some perished in this kenotic service. Those emergency workers also embody the sacrificial service in the relief shelters and cramped refugee camps, where vulnerable bodies are fatally exposed to the double threats of infection and hunger. Such sacrificial services signify the cocreativity of Rûah Elohim in infusing passion and vitality into the emanation of a PPC world.

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[49]"Planetary Fitness: Falling Emissions should be maintained as countries recover," *The Times* (April 23, 2020): 27. Also see "Bucking the trend," *The Economist* (April 2020): 58.

[50]Carney, "Putting Values above Valuations," 64.

4. *Climate Financing as Actionizing Alterity.* God's Cocreative Spirit is the power behind the mobilization of funds at the Glasgow COP 26, symbolizing the eruption of the ethics of alterity in the collective conscience of the wealthy nations in response to the plight of the vulnerable nations. An "alteritized conscience" impinges on the wealthy developed nations, responsible for 76% of global greenhouse gas emissions, to shoulder the mitigation-adaptation cost of the low-middle-income nations for their decarbonization efforts.[51] Moreover, climate finance has to consider the loss and damage cost of climate impacts caused by rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and droughts that affects them the most. The World Bank estimates the natural disaster cost at $18 billion a year with further costs to households and businesses totaling $390 a year in these countries. The UN Environmental Program calculates that the adaptation costs in developing countries to be $70 billion, and predict they will rise to anything from $140 billion to $300 billion by 2030 – an increase of at least 50%.[52] The United Nations forecast that vulnerable countries will need up to $300 billion per year by 2030 for climate adaptation alone, discounting the potential economic losses from crop failure or climate-related disasters. Hurricane Maria in 2017

[51]The G7 developed countries agreed in 2009 to contribute $100 billion a year in climate finance to poorer countries by 2020. But the target was not met, in part because of the Covid pandemic. Catherine Pettengell, director at Climate Action Network, told Reuters news agency: "We had hoped that the leaders of the world's richest nations would come away from this week having put their money their mouth is." Cf. "G7 summit: Leaders pledge climate action but disappoint activists," *BBC News*, June 13, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-57461670.

[52]Gareth Redmond-King, "Climate Finance and COP 26," https://eciu.net/analysis/briefings/cop26/the-glasgow-climate-summit-finance; Redmond-King, "G20 Meeting and Climate Pledges," https://eciu.net/analysis/briefings/international-perspectives/g20-meetings-climate-pledges.

cost the Caribbean $69.4 billion. Moreover, actionizing alterity through climate finance is crucial in bringing on board the 150 developing nations with just over 6.5 billion people. In Espinosa's advocacy, the Race To Zero emission is only tenable with them, for "to think we can address climate change without them; to think we can make the transition to a cleaner and greener future without them; to ultimately ensure the safety of humanity on this planet without them – is impossible."[53]

5. Strategic *Political Actions. Rûah Elohim* acts gently and mightily from within the courage and passion of the *"alteritized agency"* of the like of scholar-activist, Vandana Shiva, who advocates the need to engage in a plurality of political activities with the "small-scale, counter-cultural communities."[54] Michael Northcott believes that these communities are the source of "resistance to corporate power ...in the recovery of place, and that religious tradition is a potentially powerful source of such resistance."[55] These communities engage in political activities, ranging from the reconciliation of differences, building alliances of resistance against the centralized and structural violence of biopiracy of corporate globalization behind the covert patenting of seeds, water, mustard oil, oilseeds and biodiversity, to the industrialization of agriculture. The

[53]UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa has persistently made her appeal to the nations of G7 and G20 to honor the 2012 commitment to climate financing. See "UN Climate Chief Urges Countries to Deliver on USD 100 Billion Pledge," June 7, 2021, https://unfccc.int/news/un-climate-chief-urges-countries-to-deliver-on-usd-100-billion-pledge.

[54]Vandana Shiva, *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability and Peace* (London: Zed Books, 2016).

[55]Michael Northcott, *Place, Ecology and the Scared* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015 [Kindle Edition]), location 379. Also see Gerard Whelan SJ "Integral Ecology and Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Michael Northcott and Michael Northcott, Bernard Lonergan in Dialogue," *The Heythrop Journal: A Bimonthly Review of Philosophy and Theology* (November 6, 2018): 934.

awakened subjects also engage in building networks of local communities, connected with the global spheres of political influences for a sustainable livelihood and flourishing future for the grassroot communities, the biodiversity and ecosystems within the earth community.[56] For reasons of the climate adversities that affect the grassroots communities the most, these grassroots networks need to collaborate with global campaigns such as "Race To Zero," which involve a "coalition of leading net zero initiatives, representing 733 cities, 31 regions, 3,067 businesses, 173 of the biggest investors, and 622 Higher Education Institutions."[57] These are "real economy" actors who join 120 countries, committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050, which "now cover nearly 25% global CO2 emissions and over 50% GDP."[58]

Conclusion

In envisioning a PPC world, a reimagined Levinasian ethics of alterity with a pneumatic orientation, grounded in a corporeal pneumatology, offers a pertinent and timely critique of a Western subjectivity that is mired in a self-indulgent life, turning inward instead of the welcoming embrace of the vulnerable other and the violated Earth. Only this kenotic encounter enables *Rûah Elohim* to liberate the enchained self and the developed nations, and subsequently motivate both to embrace the nudity of the vulnerability of fellow humans and the low-middle-income nations.

The exercise of a Spirit-driven alterity has allowed *Rûah Elohim* to awaken in humankind a discernible, albeit gradual realization, that "everything in this world is related" (LS §91)

[56]Shiva, *Earth Democracy*.

[57]UN Climate Change Climate Action, "Race to Zero," https://unfccc.int/climate-action/race-to-zero-campaign.

[58]Ibid.

and "genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice, and faithfulness to others" (LS §70).[59] Co-arising from the rubble of this pandemic and the climate-stricken world is a reimagined existence: "I relate within the we-earth-cosmos," therefore "we-are-with-in-Earth-Cosmos," beyond Bird-David's "I relate, therefore I am" and Descartes's "I think, therefore I am" that Sigurd Bergmann posits.[60]

Such an emanation signifies the corporeal co-creativity of *Rûah Elohim* in the discernible glocal shifts in the world whence awakened subjects actionize/visibilize alterity in response to the cries of the vulnerable humans, nations, and wounded earth. Through the pneumatically *"alteritized"* subjects, institutions, and networks, *Rûah Elohim* is emanating an emergent PPC world that signifies the inbreaking of a New Creation, a New Earth with a New Heaven from the residues of a currently ruptured world.

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[59]LS is the abbreviation of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' Second Encyclical Letter. Cf. Francis, *Laudato Si: On Care For Our Common Home*, Encyclicals, May 24, 2015, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

[60]Sigurd Bergmann, "Millions of Machines are Already Roaring': Fetished Technology Encountered by the Life-Giving Spirit," in *Technofutures, Nature And The Sacred*, edited by Celia Deane-Drummon, Sigurd Bergmann and Bronislaw Szerszynski (Surrey, UK & Burlington, VT, USA: 2015), 115-137, at 132;. Burit Bird-David, "Animism" Revisited: Personhood, Environment and Relational Epistemology', *Current Anthropology* 40, no. 1 (1999): 69-91; Alf Hornborg, 'Submitting to Objects: Animism, Fetishism and the Cultural Foundations of Capitalism', in *Handbook of Animism,* Graham Harvey, ed., (London: Acumen 2014), 244-59.

SUBSTITUTE FAMILIES AND SUICIDAL TENDENCIES OF ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTHS IN KERALA,INDIA TODAY: BOWENIAN MODEL FOR PASTORAL APPROACHES

Antony Thomas Ittikunnath, OCD

Introduction

According to Murray Bowen, an American psychiatrist, the more intense the cut off, the more an adolescent is vulnerable to find *substitute emotional refuge* in the first available other persons.[1] An adolescent does an *about-face* by rejecting many of parents' beliefs and values and then adopts viewpoints learned from peers, books, movies, television, and music. The author examines the existing trends in Kerala among adolescents and youths and finds out their emotional refuge or substitute, which results from their emotional cutoff from their parents and finally ends up in suicidal behavior and attempts.

As M. McGoldrick and F. Walsh observe, "Any number of problems in living, fueled by the strong peer and media influences, contribute to an adolescent's self-destructive behavior, such as eating disorders, cutting, or an actual decision to commit suicide."[2] In the context of Kerala, the author addresses three such emotional substitutes, namely *Peer group, Media,*

[1]Murray Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice* (Oxford: A Jason Aronson Book, 1978), 383.

[2]Monica McGoldrick and Froma Walsh, "Death, Loss, and the Family Life Cycle," in *The Expanded Family Life Cycle: Individual, Family, and Social Perspectives*, 4th ed., ed. Monica McGoldrick, Betty Carter, and Nydia Garcia Preto (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2011), 287.

and Love affairs which the adolescents and youth in Kerala rely upon and finally result in self-destructive means, leading even to suicidal attempts.

Suicide in Kerala

The ever-increasing rate of family suicide in modern societies makes us aware of the dark side of the family life today. According to M. Kandankary, "Compared to the national average, Kerala has the highest suicide rate and to be more precise it is three times the national average, which is substantially higher than in other states. In fact, it is 50 percent more than the second highest state in India."[3] The official report presented by the Kerala Mental Health Authority (KSMHA) in 2014 says that the total number of suicides in Kerala during 2014 was 8,446. The suicide rate in Kerala for the year 2014 is 24. 9 per 100,100 population. In 2014 the total population of Kerala was 33,900,662. The report also says that compared to the other states suicide among youngsters and family suicide are also on the highest side in Kerala.

According to a report by the New Indian Express, "While the general suicide rate has been decreasing gradually compared to other states, the suicide rate among youngsters and family suicides are on the rise in the state."[4] The author collects data and findings mainly on the increase in the suicidal tendency among the teenagers and the youths, and also on the family suicide in Kerala.

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[3]Mariamma Kandankary, "Suicide in Kerala: a Psychological Approach," *Indian Journal of Family Studies* 2, no. 2 (August, 2004): 50.

[4]M. Arun M, "Suicide Rate on the Rise Among the Youths in Kerala," *The Times New India*, 9 May 2018. Web, accessed 19 October 2018, http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2018/may/09/suicide-rate-on-the-rise-among-youths-in-kerala-1812140.html.

Reasons for Suicide in Kerala

According to R. Nehra et al: "Suicidal behavior is now understood as multidimensional in origin, resulting from a complex interaction of several risk factors like psychiatric disorders, chronic physical illness, family factors, psychological characteristics of the person, stressful life events and socio-demographic factors and so on."[5] The state's Crime Records Bureau in Kerala has presented the statics of the reasons that led to the suicides reported from 2009 to 2012. Below is the table of the report:

Table 7. Causes of suicide from 2009 to 2012 in Kerala as reported by the Crime Records Bureau in Kerala[6]

Causes/Year	2009	2010	2011	2012
Family problems	40.2	42	47	44.1
Physical illness	17.6	16	13	12.3
Mental illness	16.3	15	12	13.9
Financial problems	6.5	5.2	4	4.9
Unemployment	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3
Failure in examination	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.4
Love failure	1.4	1.6	1.2	1.3
Job related problem	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.8
Drug abuse/addiction	3	3.4	3.4	3.2
Others	14.5	15.7	18.3	18.7

Family problems are cited as the major cause of suicide, followed by physical illness, mental illness and economic reasons.

[5]Ritu Nehra et al., "Psycho-Social Risk Factors in Suicide," *Indian Journal of Clinical Psychology* 34/2 (2007): 159.

[6]Kerala Mental Health Authority, "Suicide Rate in Kerala from 1991 to 2014," accessed 28 January 2018, http://www.ksmha.org/Suicide2014.pdf.

Suicide Among the Adolescents and Youths

A study in 2012 shows that, "In India suicide among adolescents is higher than any other age group. Forty percent of suicide in men and 56 percent of suicide death in women occurred in the age category of 15-29 years. Four percent of adolescent shows suicide behaviors, females are four times prone than males."[7] P. T. Sasi observes that suicidal behaviour among the adolescents "is associated with absenteeism, independent decision making, premarital sex, unfulfilling wishes for vehicles and high-cost phones, academic problems and mental disorders."[8]

A workshop conducted by the Kerala Security Mission in association with the National Rural Health Mission and the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuroscience, Bangalore in 2010 presented the following reasons for suicide among teenagers and youths: "Pressure to perform well and failure in examinations, lack of family support system, low self-esteem, love failure, psychiatric disorders, physical, mental and sexual abuse all were reasons that could drive a child into chronic depression."[9]

Susha Janardhanan comments that the teen suicides have to be considered as a social problem in general and she lists some major problems for suicide of the teenagers: "Change of social, familial and cultural dimensions has been contributing to the issue. Nuclear families, single parent system, alcoholism of parent, financial problems and lack of harmony in the family

[7]P. T. Sasi, "Challenges Concerning Adolescent Mental Health in India," *Indian Journal of Clinical Psychology* 44, no. 1 (2017): 10.

[8]Ibid.

[9]The Hindu, "'depression a Leading Cause of Suicides,'" *The Hindu,* [February, 25, 2010], accessed October 21, 2018, https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/lsquoDepression-a-leading-cause-of-suicides/article15991662.ece.

are common reasons that affect children. Without sufficient support system many children find it difficult to cope with the situation," she said.[10]

From the Bowenian system thinking the author will deal with the problem of the suicide among the teenagers and youths as the result of the projection of the parents to one or more children. When the less-differentiated parents project their problems in the marital relationship to a child through the way of *triangling*, the child undergoes intense anxiety and develops a pseudo-personality. And in the long run, the child starts forming emotional cut off from the parents. Suicide could be considered as the final stage of emotional cut off.

Peer Groups Associated with Negative Influences in Kerala

As in any other region or culture, becoming part of a peer group as part of the transition period of an adolescent is common in Kerala society too. According to a report in the context of Kerala, "Unsupportive parents and teachers who hardly go beyond their academic duties are driving an increasing number of adolescents to turn to their peers for problem-solving."[11] Taking into consideration the observations of the *supporting nature* of the peer group, the National Rural Health Mission joined with the National Service Scheme (NSS) has formed many phases of developing a constructive culture of peer group in India, by formulating 'students' counselors.'[12]

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[10]Ibid.

[11]Meedhu Miriyam Jospeh, "Changing Face of Peer Groups," *The Hindu*, [July 26, 2013], accessed 31 December 2018, https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/changing-face-of-peer-groups/article4954890.ece

[12]Ibid.

Despite the positive influence of the peer group during adolescents, the Kerala society witnesses the peer group as often associated with experiments on drugs, alcohol, tobacco, physical violence, robberies, and even sexual acts. A less differentiated adolescent would easily yield to the peer pressure to *fit in* with the group. The peer group is often formulated on the feeling that they are more independent and autonomous and feel rebellious when the family and society interferes with their freedom. Bowen says that the intensity of an adolescent's rebellion parallels his or her lack of emotional separation from one's family.[13]

N. Gracia Preto observes that some adolescents reject their own culture and disconnect from their families when their cultural differences interfere with their increased need to fit in with their peers. When the expectations of the family and society confront with what they are able to achieve, result at high risk of depression, anxiety, physical problems, and suicide attempts.[14] A paper on the reasons for adolescent suicides in Kerala indicates *loss of identity among peers* as one of the reasons for suicide.[15]

Abuse of Social Media and Mobile Phones in Kerala

Medias like TV, cinema, internet, cyber clinics, mobile phones, newspapers, et cetera create and favour a new culture.

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[13]Murray Bowen and Michael E. Kerr, *Family Evaluation: An Approach Based on Bowen Theory* (New York: Norton, 1988), 216.

[14]Nydia Gracia Preto, "Transformation of the Family System During Adoloscence," in *The Expanded Family Life Cycle: Individual, Family, and Social Perspectives*, 4th ed., ed.Monica McGoldrick, Betty Carter, and Nydia Garcia Preto (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2011),237.

[15]Norvy Vithayathil, "Delving into Adolescent Suicides in Kerala and Suggesting Measures to Prevent," *DIST E-journal*, De Paul Times, accessed December 31, 2018, https://sites.google.com/a/depaul.edu.in/de-paul-times/022009/020905.

John Paul II referred to this as the *risk of media.*[16] M. Kandankary writes, "In Kerala, many of the college going students possess a computer set or go regularly to computer café to make chatting. Owing a mobile phone is nothing extra ordinary in the life of the youth. It is true that these advanced technological developments save much time and energy of man and make family life easier. But their abuse creates enormous negative effects in the personality development of young generation."[17]

Abuse of mobile phones among the adolescents is a big issue that the worried Kerala Government has banned the use of mobile phones in the schools. D. Sreedevi, the Kerala Women's Commission Chairperson Justice (retd.) reports, "The rising suicide is a serious social issue. We have identified the use of mobile phones as the problem. Last month we had four cases where teenaged girls came to us complaining their lovers had ditched them. All of them were pregnant."[18] This report shows that the misuse of the mobile phones among the teenagers have resulted in building up unhealthy and irresponsible relationships that lead them to sexual abuses.

N. Vithayathil observes, "Over exposure to modern technologies, such as internet, television, 3G mobile phones [Now 5G] are another area of risk factor to adolescent suicide. ... Thus unwarranted influence of media generates depletion in the

[16]John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio,* Apostolic Exhortation on the Role of the Christian Families in the Modern World, 22 November 1981, Vatican Archive, accessed September 20 2017, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html, no. 76.

[17]Kandankary, "Nature of Family in India: The Changing Trends in Christian Fmailies," *Indian Journal of Family Studies* 5, no. 3 (2008): 67.

[18]Ians, "Suicides Due to Failed Love Rise in Kerala," Two Circles. net: Main Stream News of the Marginalized, accessed January 01, 2019, http://twocircles.net/2010mar07/suicides_due_failed_love_rise_kerala.html.

value, culture, tradition, mores transferred from older generation to younger."[19]

The pastoral counselors in Kerala have to keep in mind this trend among the adolescents and try to guide them in making use of the internet facilities and other social media in tune with the teachings of the Church. The Pontifical Commission for Social Communication suggests that schools and other educational institutions and programmers for children and adults should provide training in discerning use of the internet as part of comprehensive media education including not just training in technical skills- 'computer literacy' and the like-but, a capacity for informed, discerning evaluation of content.[20]

Dropped Love Affairs and Its Effects in Kerala

Bowen had already mentioned the existence of the practice of *living together* as a consequence of the increasing percentage of adolescents and youth *running away* from their families in American societies. According to him, "These substitute families are very unstable. They are made up of people who ran away from their own families; when tension builds up in the substitute family, they cut off from that and move on to another. Under the best conditions, the substitute family and outside relationships are poor substitutes for original family."[21]

In Kerala, suicides caused by *dropped love affairs* are rising steadily. According to a report, "A total of 117 jilted lovers took their lives in 2008, according to the Economic Review, released by the Kerala State Planning Board. In 2006, 70 people killed

[19]Vithayathil, "Delving into Adolescent Suicides in Kerala and Suggesting Measures to Prevent."

[20]The Pontifical Commission for Social Communication, *Ethics in Internet*, 2002, no. 15.

[21]Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice*, 383.

themselves after failed love affairs. The figure rose to 81 in 2007."[22]

Pastoral and Family Therapeutic Approaches and Interventions

Before discussing the Bowenian therapeutic approaches and interventions on suicide, the author acknowledges the fact that there are studies and interventions based on the neurobiology of suicide. These studies prove the biological basis of suicide and suicidal behavior. According to G. Pandey, these studies and interventions "show an abnormality of serotonergic mechanism, such as increased serotonin receptor subtypes and decreased serotonin metabolites, such as 5-hydroxyindoleacetic acid."[23] According to such studies, genetic and neurobiological risk factors may be important in the predisposition to suicide. The author acknowledges the need for psychiatric interventions as part of the treatment plan for suicidal persons considering the behavioral risks involved in the nature of suicide. The researcher in these sections, limits his discussions to Bowenian interventions.

Bowen and Kerr emphasize on the principle of family systems therapy that "parents are more capable than their children of assuming responsibility for change in the family. So even if the presenting problem in a family is a symptomatic child, the primary focus of therapy is the parent's working toward more differentiation of self- in relationship to each other and in relationship to the children."[24] So in Bowenian

[22]Ians, "Suicides Due to Failed Love Rise in Kerala."

[23]Ghanshyam N Pandey, "Biological Basis of Suicide and Suicidal Behavior," *US National Library of Medicine National Institute of Health* 15, no. 5 (2013 June): 425-542, accessed March 10, 2019, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3749837/.

[24]Bowen and Kerr, *Family Evaluation*, 215.

family systems therapy, much focus is given to calm down the parents and coaching them to deal with the problems more effectively. Thus, the primary therapeutic approach in bridging the emotional cut offs is to work with the parents in the counseling sessions.

E. Berman and A. Heru who speak of the need of diagnosing the symptoms of depression in adolescents, emphasize the involvement of parents in the treatment sessions. They write, "Undiagnosed, untreated depression in adolescents frequently leads to substance abuse and suicide attempts. When children are seen by the therapists, parents must be involved in the treatment plan."[25]

B. Groholt, in his paper on the family systems therapeutic approach to suicidal behavior, also highlights the same approach: "Families should always be involved when young persons have harmed themselves. Educating the family is important. A family therapy approach to reducing the conflict level should often be combined with individual approaches to the young person."[26] R. Nauert also observes, "Adolescents with suicidal thoughts and elevated depression had stronger and faster reduction of symptoms when treated with family therapy than with standard treatment in the community."[27]

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[25]Ellen Berman and Alison Heru, "Psychiatric Illness and the Life Cycle" in *The Expanded Family Life Cycle: Individual, Family, and Social Perspectives*, 4th ed., Edited by Monica McGoldrick, Betty Carter, and Nydia Garcia Preto (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2011),408-409.

[26]Berit Groholt, "Family Therapy, System Theory and Suicidal Behavior," *The Suicide Research and Prevention Unit, University of Oslo*, accessed December 21, 2018, https://www.med.uio.no/klinmed/english/research/centres/nssf/articles/youth/GroholtFamily.pdf.

[27]Rick Nauert, "Family Therapy Helps Suicidal Teens," *PsychCentral*, accessed February 2, 2018, https://psychcentral.com/news/2010/02/08/family-therapy-helps-suicidal-teens/11256.html.

In Kerala and Indian contexts, studies conducted on the conduct disorders of the adolescents, including the suicidal behavior, report that the quality of the parent's relationships matters and specific evaluation and inclusion in the therapy plan is unavoidable.[28] Therefore the pastoral counselors are suggested to include the parents when counseling the symptomatic children or identified patient (IP).

The following are the major Bowenian family therapeutic techniques, which the pastoral counselors can make use of in bridging the emotional cut offs in the family relationships and dealing with the suicidal behavior in adolescents and youth.

Lowering Anxiety in the Family, Primarily by Lowering the Parents' Anxiety

This involves, according to Bowen and Kerr, by shifting the focus of the parents' *emotional involvement* with the child *to* their emotional involvement with their own family of origin. Only by *shifting the focus* in this way, they will gain a clear and objective perspective on their emotional involvement with their symptomatic child.[29] If the existing anxiety in the child is explicitly due to the over-involvement of the parents with one child, the counselor should first help the parents to address their unresolved attachments to their own families.[30]

According to family systems therapy, if at least one parent is motivated by the counselor and is able to address his or her unresolved emotional attachments to the family of origin, dramatically the emotional flexibility of a strongly child-focused family increases. The family as a whole improves in its

[28]Shalini and Ahalya Raguram, "Marital Conflict Among Parents: Implications of Family Therapy with Adolescent Conduct Disorder," *Indian Journal of Clinical Psychology* 32, no. 2 (2005): 177-81.

[29]Bowen and Kerr, *Family Evaluation*, 327.

[30]Ibid.

adaptability.[31] The therapeutic techniques like *developing a proactive position, re-defining the level of responsibility, asking more self-defining questions, reducing dependency in marriage, differentiating rather than distancing, and differentiating self from parents, siblings, and extended families,* are some of the Bowenian techniques used to help the couple to assess their own unresolved emotional attachments and other marital issues.

So, the pastoral counselor should not limit his/her focus on the identified patient or symptomatic child, rather direct it to coach the parents to become more *differentiated in self* in relationship with each other and to their children. The pastoral counselor has to take into consideration that the parents have failed in all their copping skills to manage the symptomatic behaviors of the child, and have been emotionally burned out. They are unable to see things objectively and base their parenting on their intellectual capacities. Therefore they are emotionally fused with the symptomatic child and is in a helpless situation. The counselor's primary focus must be in strengthening the differentiation level (strength of separating emotion and thinking) of the parents. The parents must be involved in the counseling sessions. R. Nauert also observes, adolescents with suicidal thoughts and elevated depression had stronger and faster reduction of symptoms when treated with family therapy than with standard treatment in the community.[32]

Systems Questioning or Circular Questioning

The most practiced way of asking questions to clients in the Kerala clinical setting is *linear questioning* rather than *circular*

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[31]Ibid.

[32]Rick Nauert, "Family Therapy Helps Suicidal Teens," PsychCentral, accessed February 2, 2018, https://psychcentral.com/news/2010/02/08/family-therapy-helps-suicidal-teens/11256.html.

questioning. To find out the unresolved attachments between parents and the identified patients or the children with suicidal tendencies, the pastoral counselors must ask more circular or system questions to the client and his/her family members. Linda Metcalf quotes Segne to say that *reality is made up of circles, but we see straight lines*.[33] When working with an individual or the family in a systemic model of therapy, systemic therapists operate with the hypothesis that each member of the family *is connected with everyone else* in the relationship "system." Thus, Person A's behavior affects Person B. In turn, Person B's response to the A's affect can go on to affect others in the system (and even affect Person A back in return). This is known as a Circular Effect and is distinct from a *linear* or a *casual* effect.[34] As M. Nicholas and R. Schwartz comment: "The questions are designed to help clients think about, rather than react to, their dilemmas, and discover how to modify their own role in troubled relationships, Bowen himself was a very laid-back therapist: all he did was ask questions. (Incidentally, Bowen's questions were always circular questions: questions designed to tease out patterns of relationship.)"[35]

Thus, the systems questioning happens when the therapist questions the client in terms of the involvement and attitude of other members on the situation being examined. This allows the therapist to understand the existing relationship patterns and lets the client move beyond his or her own subjectivity to see the perspectives of the spouse, children, parents, grandparents, and extended family members. Both the therapist and the

[33]Linda Metcalf, ed., *Marriage and Family Therapy: A Practice-Oriented Approach* (New York, NY: Springer Publishing Co., 2011), 5.

[34]Jac Brown, "Circular Questioning: An Introductory Guide," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy* 18, no. 2 (1997): 109.

[35]Michael P. Nicholas and Richard C. Schwartz, *Family Therapy: Concepts and Methods*, 2d ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1997), 386.

client get a big picture, which further facilitates their 'systems thinking.' It can reduce self-blaming or blaming the other persons in the family. Thus, circular questioning increases the possibility of obtaining a higher level of functioning.[36] As Papero puts it, "Each bit of fact leads to further inquiry and a clearer view of how each person fits into the patterns and events of the family."[37]

In Kerala, pastoral counselors must be aware of this emotional network among the members of the family as emotions pass from one person to another very easily. The practice of asking lineal questioning rather than circular questioning, will not help the counselors or the family members to get a bigger picture of the emotional family system.

Encouraging *Person-to-Person* Conversation

As discussed earlier, the importance of *person-to-person* conversation is a constitutive part of the Bowenian therapy. R. Gilbert made an experiment with ten to fifteen adolescents with a *group home treatment facility.* They were separated from their parents which actually promoted the mechanism called *cut off* in the participants. But when she introduces the systems thinking, by encouraging the participants to have more *frequent contact* between the adolescents and the family through phone calls, letters, and by monthly in-person visits, it resulted in significant changes that took place. She writes, "There were dramatically fewer emergencies, such as absconding, cutting, *suicide attempts*, and conflicts requiring the director to come in

[36]Peter Titelman, "The Concept of Differentiation of Self in Bowen's Theory, in *Differentiation of Self: Bowen Family Systems Theory Perspectives*, ed. Peter Titelman (New York: Routledge, 2015), 52.

[37]Papero, *Bowen Family Systems Theory* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon), 1990: 71.

from home."[38] She explains that the director of the institution carried a pager so that the director can respond to anyone involved in such emergency event, received no messages in the pager after introducing *group home treatment facility*.

Prayer as a Person-to-Person Conversation, A Spiritual Coping and *Triangling* in God/Jesus

Triangle is one of the eight concepts of Bowen. It stands for the natural tendency of a person to seek out a third person when there increase of tension in a two-person relationship (dyad). Instead of solving the problem by *person-to-person* conversation, one prefers to bring in a third person (*triangling in*). Although it is maladaptive method the author sees the possibility of presenting it in as bringing in God into our broken relationship through the exercise of prayer.

As a pastoral counselor, one must be able to impart the importance of prayer to the adolescents and youth of Kerala and to their family. Just as the counselor encourages about Bowenian method of person to person conversation, he or she can introduce the concept of prayer as a spiritual coping in dealing with their struggles in life. So prayer could be pictured as a person to person conversation with God or a way of *triangling in* God into the anxiety of the person. Although, for Bowen, *triangling* is a maladaptive method, when we consider God as the most differentiated person in an emotional system, the presence of God can increase the level of differentiation of other members. Thus prayer could be interpreted as a spiritual coping or *triangling in* God.

[38]Roberta M. Gilbert, The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory (Falls Church, Virginia: Leading Systems Press, 2006), 62.

Positive and Negative Feedback Loops on Suicidal Disclosure

L. Frey et al. have developed a research on the role of family intervention in the prevention of suicidal behavior. They explain about the systems concept of the feedback loop and the possible results that take place in the system. There can be both positive and negative feedback loop to suicide disclosure. For example, when an adolescent boy makes a suicide disclosure to his mother by commenting that the family will be happier without him, the mother adopts a negative feedback loop. She ignores the comment by negative feedback loop to restore the equilibrium of the system and discourage the son from expressing additional thoughts that might disrupt the homeostasis of the system.[39]

Whereas positive feedback loop in a system can mediate positively in reducing the depression level on the suicidal person. Studies revealed that "increase in the disclosure predicted more positive reactions, which also predicted less severe depression symptoms in the suicidal person."[40]

[39]Laura M. Frey, Jason D. Hans, and Rebecca L. Sanford, "Where is Family Science in Suicide Prevention and Intervention: Theoretical Application for a Systemic Perspective," *Journal of Family Theory and Review* 8 (December 2016): 452. *See also*: Laura M. Frey and Quintin A. Hunt, "Treatment for Suicidal Thoughts and Behavior: A Review of Family Based Interventions," *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 44, no. 1 (2017): 107-24.

[40]Ibid.

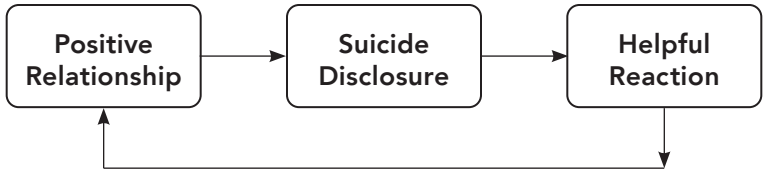


Fig. 8. Positive Feedback loop between Disclosure and Reaction[41]

A positive relationship theoretically leads to an increase in the suicide disclosure, which in turn lead to more helpful reaction, which then lead to a more positive relationship, and so on. This Approach seeks to improve relationship between adolescent and the parents or caregiver and elevates the capacity for discussing and negotiating affectively charged issues in the relationship.[42] The counselor facilitates the family members to develop a family environment which is receptive and potentially adaptive to disclosure, which in turn helps the family to improve the patterns of communication positively and remedying suicidal behavior.

Christian Maturity as Positive Response to the Problems of Other

The discussions on positive and negative feedback loops among the family members, reveal how positive response could be helpful to release the anxiety of a person in the family. Pastoral counselors have that task of facilitating a positive response and feedback among the members of a family as part of building up their Christian maturity. Christian maturity as

[41]*Source*: Laura M. Frey, Jason D. Hans, and Rebecca L. Sanford, "Where is Family Science in Suicide Prevention and Intervention: Theoretical Application for a Systemic Perspective," *Journal of Family Theory and Review* 8 (December 2016): 452.

[42]Guy Diamond and Roger Kobak, "Attachment Based Family Therapy for Suicidal Adolescents," *Clinical Trlias.gov*, accessed March 01, 2018, https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT01537419.

a relational spirituality must be responsibly sensitive to the problems of others.

As pointed out by Majerus and Sandage, the individual Christian is in relationship with God (Matt 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27; Gal 2:20) but it is also called into a relationship with other believers (Rom 12; 1Cor 12) as well as with the unbeliever/neighbor around them (Matt 5:16; 1 Pet 2:12).[43] All the personal gifts among the members of the Church are meant for the building up of the Christian community. And each family as a *Domestic Church,* must spend their time to listen to the problems of other members in a responsible and positive way.

Leaving Home Stage and Differentiation *Separating* Without *Cutting Off*

According to M. McGoldrick et al. *leaving home stage* is an inevitable part of the family life cycle with a primary task of emotional responsibility. M. Nicholas and R. Schwartz writes, "In the *leaving home stage* the primary task for young adults is to *separate* from their families without *cutting off* or fleeing reactively to a substitute emotional refuge. This is to become an autonomous self before joining with another person to form a new family."[44]

L. MacKay explains that even in a family with higher levels of differentiation, parents may express disappointment while still *respecting* their young adult's move to more *self-directed* decision making about their future. So humanly speaking, it is natural to have expressions of disappointment. In such a family, the young person in this *leaving home stage* is more

[43]Brian D. Majerus and Steven J. Sandage, "Differentiation of Self and Christian Spiritual Maturity: Social Science and Theological Integration," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 38, no. 1 (2010): 45.

[44]Michael P. Nicholas and Richard C. Schwartz, *Family Therapy: Concepts and Methods*, 376.

likely to have the *capacity to manage* the parents' disappointment and find a way to 'self-soothe' or down-regulate the level of anxiety.[45]

This is achieved *without* either accommodating to the parents through attempting to please them or by cutting off contact with them, either physically or emotionally. The ability to self-soothe in the process of separating without cutting off requires *conscious awareness* with well-thought-out and determined action. But this is possible only if the person has a solid self. If the person is sensitive to how others respond and react, organizes behavioral adaptations, feeling states, neuroendocrine stress responses and mediates health and well-being.[46]

Thus, we speak of the importance of developing the level of differentiation. P. Titelman says, "Intense or complete cut off is characteristic of lower levels of differentiation of self. The rebellious youth who runs away and the young adult, or adolescent, who stays or returns home but withdraws or collapses internally are emotionally cut off from their parents. Both have an intense amount of unresolved attachment to their parents."[47] Thus, the ultimate therapeutic effort is to convert the cut off into an orderly differentiation of a self from the extended family.

And differentiation can be achieved not by getting away from the presence of important persons in life, but by maintaining oneself in the presence of them. As D. Schnarch

[45]Linda MacKay, "Trauma and Bowen Family Systems Theory: Working with Adults Who Were Abused as Children," *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy* 33, no. 3 (November 2012): 235.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Peter Titelman, "The Concept of Differentiation of Self in Bowen's Theory, in *Differentiation of Self",* 42.

explains, "The difference between *running away* and *walking away* after you are 'unhooked' is a critical distinction."[48]

Taking into consideration the present scenario of Kerala, in pursuit of quality education and professional courses, the youth and adolescents are compelled to distance themselves from their parents by moving to far-off places, both parents and children undergo separation anxiety. The pastoral counselors have to examine whether there remains still some sort of unresolved enmeshment in their relationships. If so, they must be helped to convert this *separation* into a *well-thought-out* decision for the brighter future of their children.

Pastoral Care for the Guilt Feeling Parents in Kerala from a Bowenian Therapeutic Approach

The society in Kerala often looks down on the *family with a member who has committed suicide,* as a cursed family and therefore, avoid as possible as they can, making any visit to this family. Years ago, even from the pastoral side, the local Church too looked down on such family with contempt that a decent burial was denied to the person who committed suicide. He or she was buried in a separate section in the cemetery called *Themmady Kuzhi.*[49] Thus the family, after meeting the tragedy, has still the challenge of facing the society for a long period. This disgrace is mainly centered on the parents, who are considered to be very irresponsible in bringing up their adolescent child. The researcher, taking into consideration, the attitude of the Kerala society, clarify the stance of Bowenian

[48]David Morris Schnarch, *Passionate Marriage: Love, Sex and Intimacy in Emotionally Committed Relationships* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2009), 64.

[49]Literally means *pit (section) for the rogue's body* or body of the unprincipled person.

approach regarding the interaction of the counselor with the parents and the family of the suicide victim.

As B. Groholt points out that, "Our society is permeated by linear *cause-effect thinking*, not least when it comes to suicide and suicide attempts."[50] The parents are also preoccupied with the self-criticizing questions: Where did I fail? Where did I do wrong? B. Groholt is of the opinion that even attending a family therapy session for such parents would be a confirmation of their guilt. He says, "A sense of guilt is virtually always present when a loved one is suffering: Love and guilt are like light and shadow. When good wishes do not suffice, guilt easily follows, irrespective of what the parents have done."

In Bowenian family therapy, cause of guilt is not the main agenda. The counselor is not there to affirm the guilt feeling of the parents, instead, he or she collects facts and looking for the areas where the family needs a change. The principle is to heal the parents of the guilt feeling, because according to Bowen, the person with most vitality is the agents of change in the family, and not the *guiltiest*.

Forgiveness: Mark of a Differentiated Person

Forgiveness is a major element in the healing process during the pastoral counseling. As a person differentiate his or her self, that person becomes mature enough to go beyond the pain of hurtfulness and make a very personal decision to forgive. Because, a person with a well differentiated level is able to make forgiveness as his or her personal decision. In most of the pastoral counseling centers in Kerala, before the termination takes place, the clients are encouraged to approach the Sacrament of Confession. As Friedman observes, the increasing of the level of differentiation of self in a person

[50]Groholt, "Family Therapy, System Theory and Suicidal Behavior."

actually results in a *spiritual conversion*.[51] Thus, a well-differentiated person can make an effective confession since the act of forgiving becomes his or her own personal mode of action.

Summary

To conclude the discussion on the issue of suicidal behavior among the adolescents and youth in Kerala and the Bowenian therapeutic approach with special reference to the concept of differentiation, the author made an attempt to look into the specific aspects of the *substitute emotional refuges* of the adolescents and youth today. This was to expose the fact that how these *seemingly good* emotional substitutes, when abused, can contribute to the distortion of the personality and thinking patterns of the Kerala adolescents and youth.

The Bowenian family systems therapy conceptualized suicide as the extreme form of emotional cut off. Basically, this originates from the *un-differentiation* of the parents, who have their own unsolved emotional attachments to their family of origin. This results in the *projection to one or more children,* and eventually forces the child or children to make adjustments to the emotional fusions through the mechanism of emotional cut off. Only by raising the level of differentiation in the patterns of relationship among the family members, can help the parents and the children to *separate* from emotional fusion, without *cutting off*.

This article also brought in the importance of including the parents in the sessions, when doing counseling to the identified patient or the child with suicidal tendencies. All the therapeutic approaches and techniques of Bowenian method calls for a typical *family counseling* rather than individual counseling.

[51]Les Parrot III and Leslie Parrot, "Relationship Development," in *Christian Marital Counseling*: Eight Approaches to Helping Couples, ed. Everett Worthington (Downers Grove: Wipf and Stock Pub, 2000), 114.

It demands time, and cannot be solved through any panacea. The healing will take place only through many sessions of interventions. Both counselor and the counselee in Kerala clinical setting look for a speedy method to handle the crises. As discussed, the Bowenian approaches are time-consuming. But when done systematically, they bring integral healing not only for the identified patient, but also for the whole family.

GENUINE CHRISTIAN MARTYRDOM IN THE THEOLOGY OF HANS URS VON BALTHASAR

Yun Hongmin, BMC

Embarking on a profound journey into the essence of Christian martyrdom, Hans Urs von Balthasar's theological perspective reveals a unique, deeply Trinitarian, and Christocentric understanding. At the heart of his interpretation is the concept of being "crucified with Christ," which transcends mere physical sacrifice to signify a spiritual communion with Christ's passion and mission. This exploration differentiates Christian martyrdom from secular heroism or sacrifice, emphasizing its nature as a profound spiritual and existential commitment. Balthasar's approach articulates the interconnectedness of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the act of self-sacrifice, thus framing Christian martyrdom as a manifestation of divine love and obedience. The essence of this martyrdom extends into everyday Christian life, profoundly influencing practices like Baptism and the Eucharist, symbolizing the believer's deep participation in Christ's death and resurrection. This theological exploration thus portrays Christian martyrdom as a holistic and dynamic expression of faith, rooted in a deep identification with Christ's suffering and a commitment to the mission of God's Kingdom.

Martyrdom as Means to Be Crucified for Christ: The Trinitarian Motivation for Martyrdom

What is the Christological definition of martyrdom? This is the constitutive question that motivates Balthasar's theology to discern genuine Christian martyrdom. Throughout

his writings, particularly in his books *New Elucidations*, *The Moment of Christian Witness,* and *Mysterium Paschale*, Balthasar consistently attempts to theologically anchor the following definition of martyrdom: "The reason He made Christian martyrs outstanding and special is because he was 'crucified with Christ'."[1]

Through his outstanding Trinitarian theology, Balthasar clearly establishes the centrality of martyrdom to Christology. Primarily, Christian martyrs are crucified with Christ, who had already been crucified for them. Their motivation for martyrdom differs from that of martyrs who die for humanistic ideals or heroic sacrifices:[2]

> I would much rather go straight to the heart of the matter, to the true and decisive motive of Christian martyrdom, which today as ever distinguishes it from every other self-offering, however heroic. ... 'I am crucified with Christ. I live; and yet it is no longer I; but Christ living in me. But what I am now living in the flesh, I live in faith in the Son of God who loved me and delivered Himself up for me' (Gal 2:19-20). He is saying that there is one who, anticipating my existence, has suffered a martyrdom completely different from any that I or anyone else – even if he were Socrates – can suffer: a martyrdom for me, for my sake, in my place, vicariously for me who should have suffered it.

With respect to how Christian martyrdom is to be identified, Balthasar establishes his first principle of the theology of martyrdom in Christ's Crucifixion. To be crucified with Jesus Christ is a response to the love of Christ. In Balthasar's Christology, he presupposes (1) Pauline theology as the biblical principle of martyrdom; (2) exposits a theological framework

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[1]Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Moment of Christian Witness,* translated by Richard Beckley (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 24.

[2]Balthasar, *New Elucidations,* 286.

for his Trinitarian approach to martyrdom with "Jesus' self-giving love and obedience"; and (3) extends this definition to the daily lives of the Christian faithful.

Biblical Principle of Balthasar's Theology of Martyrdom

Because the fabric of Balthasar's biblical principle on martyrdom is remarkably realized on the Cross, the Christian martyr is patterned after the "crucified Christ." Balthasar identifies a martyr with Jesus Christ, who was crucified and gave up his life. He then compares the biblical motive of the Old Testament and Christ's suffering based on Pauline fundamentals, recognizing that "for Paul, the proclamation of the Gospel coincides with that of the Cross of Jesus Christ" (cf. I Corinthians 1,17).

Through his biblical principle, Balthasar's exposition reflects on Paul's inspiration, which connects "crucified Christ" and "Christian faith." His theology of Christ's Passion parallels Paul's view on the Crucifixion. For Balthasar, this is Paul's contribution to the theology of martyrdom, even though he affirms that the whole Bible testifies to the death and resurrection of Christ.[3]

First, "Being crucified with him," the prime principle of Christian martyrdom in Balthasar's theology, is inspired by the letter to the Galatians (2,19–20). Christian martyrdom distinctively follows the "crucified Christ." Hence, the true martyr does not die for an ideology but for him, with him, and like him. Inspired by Paul, his biblical fundamentals stem from the following:

[3]Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale,* 14-15.

> This is the distinctive, special characteristic of the Christian martyr: he is "crucified Christ," and the giving up of his life is an act of proper response, of self-evident gratitude. He does not die for an idea, even for the highest – not for human dignity, freedom, or solidarity with the oppressed (though all of these may be included and play a role). He dies with someone who had died for him in advance. (Gal 2.19–20)

Second, drawing on Paul's evidence regarding the meaning of imitating the Cross, Balthasar elaborates on another aspect of the theology of martyrdom. Paul's letters penetrate the heart of the Christian faith, highlighting how Christians follow in the suffering of Christ. Balthasar asserts that "Christian existence is a 'reflection' of the form of Christ as "Jesus died for all so, ... all have died" (II Corinthians 5, 14).[4] Christians must manifest this form of Crucifixion even though the death happened out of love "for me."

Third, following Jesus' Crucifixion, martyrdom became a distinct motivation for Christians. In Balthasar's analysis, which occupies a considerable part of the Pauline epistles, a synthetical demonstration, including prophetic and historical books, introduces the "hands-over-motif in the Passion of Jesus Christ" to distinguish between martyrdom in the Old and New Testament.[5]

Balthasar determines the motive for the "hand-over" of Jesus' Passion. He compares this motive as it is presented in both Jesus' sacrifice and martyrdom in the Old Testament. In the latter, the Apocrypha, the apocalypses, and rabbinic literature adopt this motive for the righteous person's suffering. Further, Daniel and Maccabees occupy a prominent place in the martyrdom of Judaism. The handing-over of self is a "total

[4]Ibid., 16-17.

[5]Ibid., 107–109.

existential commitment." From the Old Testament to later Judaism, the motive of handing-over encapsulates the sacrifice of the innocent person.

However, Balthasar maintains that the "hand-over" motive is distinguishable from Christ's suffering because it is limited to highlighting ethical, moral, and religious discipline, just as the Maccabean martyrs were regarded as heroic witnesses. The most identifiable factor of Christian martyrdom is that for Jesus' Crucifixion, these motives were renewed and achieved in the Son's cry of abandonment on the Cross. Thus, a Trinitarian fashion in Christ's obedience is presented in contradistinction to the late Jewish theology of martyrdom. Christ's suffering, as the original model of Christian martyrdom, does not aim to accomplish the moralization of Jewish culture to which Daniel and Maccabees aspire:

> That God 'hands over' his Son forms part of the most unheard-of affirmations of the New Testament. We must understand the expression to 'hand-over' in its proper meaning, without diluting it to a mere 'mission' or 'gift'. ... The Christ was deliberately given over by the Father to a deadly destiny. God rejected him and delivered him to the death-dealing power, whether these be called 'man' or 'death' ... 'God made him to be sin' (II Corinthians 5, 21), the Christ is the accursed of God ... Here the *theologia crucis* comes to expression in a way than which none more radical can be conceived.[6]

Balthasar contends that the theology of martyrdom should be based on this Trinitarian view of Jesus' suffering in the relationship between the Father and the Son. Christ's sacrifice is distinct from the Old Testament's motive for martyrdom because genuine Christian martyrdom imitates Christ's "hand-over" to his Father in the inner life of the Trinity. Balthasar

[6]Ibid., 111-112.

elaborates that late Jewish literature, which stressed human ethics and morals, narrows down the divine surrender and human obedience in the relation of the Father and Son. Christ's voluntary obedience (Phil 2, Rom 8, 32) in this Trinitarian theme forges the meaning of Christian martyrdom.[7]

The Trinitarian Theme in Christian Martyrdom

Intrinsically, the "Trinitarian theme" in Jesus' suffering constitutes genuine Christian martyrdom. As Balthasar demonstrates, the late Jewish theology of martyrdom impacted the theology of Jesus' Passion. However, Balthasar contends that this downgraded the absolute originality of Christ's Passion to the level of moral thought: "it produces a flattening out of a moralizing kind which threatens the absolute originality of Christ's Passion."[8] The late Jewish theology did not consider martyrdom when reflecting on the unique and absolute meaning of Christ.

Therefore, the distinguishing principle of theology must originate from the theological proposition of the Son's obedience to the Father and the world. Through Christ's Passion, such a theology is defined through the self-giving love of the Father and the Son. In Balthasar's Trinitarian approach, genuine Christian martyrdom is defined and motivated by these principles.

Balthasar rejects themes of martyrdom that narrow Christ's Passion to a moral value, instructive direction for life, or ethical meaning. He contends that Christian martyrdom does

[7]Ibid., 107-111. Balthasar elaborates on "the handing over of Jesus" in Chapter 3, "Good Friday" in *Mysterium Paschale.* His purpose is to attend to "the Trinitarian theme" in Christ's sufferings. Balthasar's contribution to understanding the Paschal mystery in the Trinitarian view is explained through the theme of "handing over" of the Son.

[8]Ibid., 111.

not stress humanitarian values or heroic aspects. A martyr's participation in the Son's Passion and death reveals the love of the Triune God. Therefore, Christian martyrs imitate this love, which motivates them to follow Christ's sacrifice. This absolute and unique sacrifice carves God's eternal love onto the hearts of Christian martyrs. To elaborate on this Trinitarian view of martyrdom, Balthasar highlights the following differences:

(1) martyrdom in the Trinitarian theme: distinctive characteristic of Christian martyrdom compared to martyrdom in late-Judaism;

(2) martyrdom by imitating "the suffering of his God" in the kenosis motive;

(3) martyrdom that accompanies the Holy Spirit.

First, the theology of martyrdom is anchored in Jesus Christ's sacrifice for God the Father. According to *Mysterium Paschale,* "the Cross of Christ becomes transparent; as the medium of reconciliation between the Father and ourselves."[9] The original actor on the Cross is God the Father, and the Son reconciles us to Him through this perspective on Triune love. In so doing, Christ's self-surrender surpasses the anthropocentric tendency to interpret Jesus' sacrifice as having a humanitarian and moral function.[10]

> ... It will not do to separate the idea of following Christ from that of imitating him (Paul also speaks of this) in such a way that the one crucified with Christ could not by grace obtain a share in Christ's redemptive work.[11]

Ultimately, a Christian martyr is "one crucified with Christ" within the Triune love. This is the most distinctive

[9]Ibid., 137.

[10]Ibid., 139–140.

[11]Balthasar, *New Elucidations,* 290.

characteristic in opposition to which an anthropocentric understanding limits the meaning of martyrdom to a moral function, heroic instruction, or humane value. Balthasar suggests that the Triune God's revelation in Christ is absent from the Jewish theology of martyrdom.[12] Maccabees is grounded in the reward for the faithful, while the second Isaiah's sacrificial motive (suffering righteous man) in the substitutionary theology of martyrdom only targets the just.[13] The theology of martyrdom in Judaism formed this anthropocentric value of the righteous victory which concerned only the old covenant with God, even though it sought to recover the relation of God and human.

The Jewish understanding of martyrdom is comparable to Christian martyrdom, as reflected in the Trinitarian view. In this context, Claude Tassin identifies a gap between the Jewish literature and Christ's self-surrender in the Triune God. A clear difference exists between them, but in the late Jewish theology of martyrdom, the progression from a call to heroism to a morality for daily life permeated the Gospel.[14]

This formed a particular understanding of martyrdom that proves the Law of Israel before God; as a rabbi, Akiba was martyred in A.D. 132. The martyrdoms of Akiba and Saint Ignatius are similar, but there is a critical difference. Tassin states that Christian martyrs, such as St. Ignatius of Antioch, died and corresponded to the forgiveness of Christ. However, there

[12]Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale,* 95.

[13]Ibid., 97.

[14]Claude Tassin, "A Theology of Martyrdom in Ancient Judaism (2,3, and 4 Maccabees)," in *Theological Studies on Martyrdom,* Series of Martyrdom, edited by Cardinal Walter Kasper and others (Seoul: Brotherhood, 2013), 72-75. According to Tassin, there is no chemically pure martyrdom. In Maccabees, the Jewish theology of martyrdom defended the Jewish faith against Hellenism and attained aesthetic value.

is no theme of pardon in the old Jewish stories of martyrdom, as in the case of Akiba.[15] According to Tassin, the most distinguishable characteristic is that Jewish martyrdom means to die for the Law, while Christian martyrs die for the love of God and forgiveness of sins in Jesus' sacrifice.[16]

Second, Christian martyrdom in the Trinitarian motivation assimilates Jesus' suffering, forgiveness, and love. More precisely, Walter Kasper argues that Christian martyrs experience "Christ's Kenosis in its utmost extreme, the total surrender of their person."[17] For Balthasar, self-giving love "to be crucified with Christ" parallels Christ's *kenosis*. The unity and communion in suffering with Christ take this form.[18] Balthasar deliberates on *kenosis* in *Passion of Christ*, where Christian martyrdom follows Jesus Christ's *kenosis*:

> In Matthew 16:24–25, Jesus says to his disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." Some strands of traditional Christianity interpret this (and other biblical passages like it) in a

[15]"Rabbi Akiba was executed by the Romans between 132 and 135 A.D. Akiba was killed for having supported Bar Kokhba, whom he revered as the Messiah in the Second Jewish War." Conversely, St. Ignatius was martyred a dozen years before Akiba's death. Akiba died for the Law, but there is no motivation for forgiveness of sins. Only a Christian martyr bears witness to the motivation of love of the enemy. See: *Ibid*., 74.

[16]Ibid., 73.

[17]Kasper, "Dogmatical Studies on Martyrdom," 350.

[18]Christian theology describes "the goal and process" by which human beings partake in the divine nature in the sense of "Deification" or "divinization." For Balthasar, God's self-communication in reciprocal "Kenosis" calls for human beings to share the nature of God's love. See: Brendan McInerny, *The Trinitarian Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020), 88-89.

> manner that encourages self-abnegation and personal trauma in the name of Christian discipleship.[19]

Balthasar's theology establishes a kenotic motive in Christian discipleship. In his marvelous work *Mysterium Paschale*, he decodes the mystery of Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection, theologizing on the love of Jesus from the Holy Friday to Jesus' Resurrection. Balthasar stresses that the Son's kenosis is the supreme expression of inner-Trinitarian love.[20] This "Trinitarian" distinction is concretized in Christ's kenosis, which calls every Christian to discipleship of the same self-damnation, self-abnegation, and self-surrendering love. God's inner love is embodied in the martyr's *kenosis*.

Jesus' obedience during the Paschal three days exemplified filial responsiveness to the Father, and his "Descent into Hell" completes the kenotic love of God. Ultimately, this self-giving love becomes the model of discipleship. As Timothy J. Yoder exposits regarding the kenotic motive in Christian witness (martyrdom), Balthasar values the motive of kenosis "in terms of the disciples' emulation of Jesus' emptying in his death."[21] Finally, Balthasar's theology defines Christian martyrs as "dying with Christ, who died for them in the sense of Kenosis."

Third, Balthasar's theology includes the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ's Passion. There is no doubt that "a martyr of Christ responds to the martyrdom of Christ."[22] Balthasar affirms that the Holy Spirit accompanies Jesus Christ's Passion, a

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[19]Timothy J. Yoder, "Hans Urs von Balthasar and Kenosis: The Pathway to Human Agency" (Dissertations of Doctor of Philosophy, Loyola eCommons, Loyola University Chicago, 2013), 19.

[20]Adian Nichols, O.P., "Introduction- Balthasar, his Christology, and the Mystery of Easter" in *Mysterium Paschale* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 7.

[21]Yoder, "Hans Urs Von Balthasar and Kenosis," 21.

[22]Balthasar, *The Moment of Chrstian Witness,* 117.

pneumatological accompaniment of the martyr. The testimony of Jesus on the Cross and his martyrdom echo St. Paul's pneumatology: "He will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (Jn 16:13–14). The advocate of Christ is never absent in Christian martyrdom.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit can distinguish genuine martyrdom. In a martyr's testimony, this pneumatological aspect confirms that the Holy Spirit leads them to become a true Christian witness. Balthasar identifies genuine Christian martyrdom as a testimony which is not independent of the Spirit. "When the Spirit imparts his knowledge, it is Christ that he glorifies. There is no independent glorification in which the Spirit imparts his knowledge; it is Christ that he glorifies."[23] Martyrs are not true witnesses of Christ even though they bear the testimony of blood. The Holy Spirit binds Christ and the martyrs.

> At this point, however, the discerning of spirits comes into its own. There is no doubt that the area that Christian thinking has to accord to the Holy Spirit can never be wide enough. ... Someone who is 'in the Spirit' is 'removed'; he has lost the ground beneath his feet; he could not be 'in the Spirit' if he held on to something. The Spirit is also he who bears witness (Rom 8:16; Jn 5:9–10), and the disciples are witnesses with him (Jn 15:26–27).[24]

Therefore, Christian martyrs die with Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit teaches the martyrs what they should witness: "For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that moment what you should say" (Luke 12:12). Jesus proclaimed that the Holy Spirit assists when the disciples face persecution. The "martyrdom

[23]Ibid., 117.

[24]Ibid., 116.

of Christ" is inseparable from this Trinitarian dimension. Balthasar's theology synthesizes the Son's suffering and the advocacy of the Holy Spirit.

To summarize the first criterion of Christian martyrdom, the prime means of discernment is formed by a Trinitarian fundamental of Balthasar's view. The first formulation of Christian martyrdom is evaluated as follows: "Christian martyrdom is to be crucified with Jesus Christ by imitating the Son's Love, obedience, self-giving love aided by the Holy Spirit." Three factors in the Trinitarian motive support this:

(1) The martyrs of Christ were distinguishable from the Jewish tradition of martyrdom because they died for God's love, not for heroic, ethical, and anthropocentric values.

(2) Christ's self-giving love to his Father motivates Christian martyrdom through discipleship, imitating the same suffering and sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

(3) The Holy Spirit is embodied in the martyrdom of Christ and Christians.

Christian Martyrdom Enters into Solidarity with Jesus Christ: Christological Solidarity in Genuine Christian Martyrdom

In Balthasar's theology, Christ's suffering is inseparable from the concept of "solidarity." As demonstrated in the previous chapter, a martyr imitates the Father's love and the Son's

obedience in the Holy Spirit.[25] This constitutes the first characteristic of "being crucified with Jesus Christ" in Balthasar's Christology. Furthermore, the martyr enters into solidarity with Jesus, who accepted the same "suffering of people, the sinful destiny of humans, and the death itself." In this context of "*com-passio*" (to join in the same suffering), Balthasar understands the second criterion of Christian martyrdom as solidarity.[26]

He rejects any reductionism that accentuates the humanitarian value and social justice dimension of the martyr's sacrifice. Balthasar thus emphasizes the "solidarity" of Christ's suffering and death. Whilst a sacrifice for socio-political justice alone is admirable in Christian martyrdom, it is not found in Balthasar's Christology. This concept of solidarity must correspond to that of Christ. Balthasar maintains that such solidarity lacks Jesus' atonement in the discourse of martyrdom; [the] "Christian martyr... is crucified with Christ, ... He does not die for an idea, even for the highest – not for human dignity, freedom or solidarity with the oppressed."[27]

> ... It will not do to separate the idea of following Christ from that of imitating him (Paul also speaks of this) in such a way that the one crucified with Christ could not by grace obtain a share in Christ's redemptive work. Otherwise, why would Jesus have invited his friends to follow him so closely and foretold for them persecution, rejection, court trials, even Crucifixion (Jn21)? This

[25]Self-giving love in the Father and Son denotes the "always more" of communion in the Spirit. For Balthasar, the Holy Spirit is also drawn to the Father and the Son in the unity of their essence. Christian martyrdom is also drawn into this solidarity of love in the Trinitarian relationship. For more about the communion in the Spirit, please see: Brendan McInerny, *The Trinitarian Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 58.

[26]Balthasar, *Myterium Paschale,* 133-134.

[27]Balthasar, *New Elucidations,* 286.

> close bond between the follower and the 'founder of our faith' (Heb 12:2) was fully familiar to the early Church. Paul himself speaks of filling up in his body what is still lacking to Christ's sufferings, that is, what Christ in mercy had reserved of his Cross in order to let his Church share in his work and suffering (Col 1:24).[28]

According to Balthasar, solidarity is axiomatic in identifying Christian martyrdom. However, this is not to extend martyrdom to every socially engaged action of self-sacrifice and self-giving testimony. Balthasar positions the axis of solidarity on the Cross in Jesus Christ's being-with-us. Thus, the parallels between Jesus' solidarity and genuine Christian martyrdom are clear when the self-sacrificial solidarity of martyrs harmonizes with Jesus' Crucifixion, which is associated with all of humanity's sinful destiny, deadly suffering, and miserable isolation from God. This Christocentric understanding defines olidarity in Christian martyrdom.

Accordingly, it can be defined by taking into consideration:

(1) how Jesus Christ accomplished solidarity with human beings in his Paschal mystery;

(2) what elements of genuine Christian martyrdom imitate Jesus Christ's solidarity in the meaning of "atonement";

(3) how Christian martyrdom can contribute to solidarity as the love of God and neighbor.

First, the "Trinitarian initiative" in Jesus' suffering involves "real communication (solidarity) of the humanity assumed with the reality of humankind..."[29] According to Balthasar's theology of the Paschal mystery, Jesus Christ drew Himself into

[28]Ibid., 290.

[29]Balthasar, *Myterium Paschale,* 105.

co-suffering.[30] His obedience on the Mount of Olives strengthened the solidarity of co-suffering with human beings. From his incarnation, Jesus took the destiny of human life. He even descended to the world of sinners in order to co-bear the mortal suffering of human beings. Through kenosis, He co-suffered in his descending, emptying, and dying.

Solidarity in Jesus' co-suffering during the Crucifixion is a distinct characteristic of Christian martyrdom. Martyrs do not die solely for social justice; rather, they sacrifice themselves to enter into solidarity with Christ. For Balthasar, such solidarity is inclusive in embracing the suffering of Christ and the neighbors. According to Choi Hyun Soon's understanding in *Mysterium Paschale,* Christians are called to practice three-fold solidarity with Christ's suffering: "being-with," "co-suffering," and "co-crucified." [31] Thus, a distinguishable characteristic of Christian martyrdom is anchored in Christ's solidarity, which propels Christian witnesses to embrace all suffering.

However, Christian solidarity in martyrdom is not exclusively intended to save and liberate the poor neighbor, oppressed

[30]According to Balthasar's use of the term "solidarity" in the Paschal mystery, the solidarity of Jesus Christ has three dimensions. Firstly, Jesus underwent "co-suffering" with sinners and the dead, expressed as "co-suffering," "*compassio*," and "*Mit-Leiden*" (cf. Mysterium Pascale, 102-104). During His Paschal three days, Jesus experienced absolute loneliness and abandonment by God to co-suffer with all human beings. Secondly, Jesus' incarnation represents the kenosis of Christ in forming solidarity with human beings, expressed as "being-with" and "*Mit-Sein*" in Balthasar's vision of "*Theo-Drama*" (cf. Hyeon Soon Choi and Jong-Gou Park, "The Christological Meaning of Solidarity in Mysterium Paschale of Hans Urs von Balthasar," *Theological Perspective* 196 (2017): 43). Finally, Jesus Christ entered into solidarity with the dead, representing a "being-with" the dead in the mystery of Holy Saturday (cf. *Mysterium Pascale*, 152-153).

[31]Hyeon Soon Choi and Jong-Gou Park, "The Christological Meaning of Solidarity in *Mysterium Paschale* of Hans Urs von Balthasar," *Theological Perspective* 196 (2017): 68.

people, and victims of contemporary society. Consequently, the Christological significance of Christian martyrdom is pivotal to Jesus' compassion, to bear the Cross together like Simon of Cyrene (Mk 15,21). Second, Christian martyrs respond to "Christ's vicarious suffering"[32], which enables solidarity with Christ through co-suffering with God and neighbors.[33] Eberhard Schockenhoff introduces "atonement" to Balthasar's theology:

> For Balthasar, martyrdom is the utmost event of faith required to all Christians. Therefore, he tries to be exposed through himself to the miracle of God's love manifested in the extreme Passion on the Cross of Atonement without taking care of Himself. In order to give a proper answer to the enormous love exceeding human understanding, Christians must be prepared throughout their whole life. Christian faith is based on the simple fact that humans if it were not a whole being, cannot appropriately return God's love in any way.[34]

The love between the Father and the Son embraces "the whole world" to reconcile them, and Christian faith reproduces the same love, which culminates in martyrdom. Whilst Schockenhoff provides the key to understanding the Cross as atonement, Balthasar notes that "God is always forgiveness." Christ's atonement on the Cross reconciles the people to the Father. In this faith, true Christian witnesses embody the Son's vicarious forgiveness in their martyrdom. This statement

[32]Fiddes summarizes Christ's vicarious suffering as follows; "it is vicarious suffering, in that Christ experiences the effects of human sin, including the response of God towards sin - that is, he experiences utter alienation and forsakenness, the very darkest point of human existence." See: Paul S. Fiddes, "Sacrifice, Atonement, and Renewal: Intersections between Girard, Kristeva, and Balthasar," in *Sacrifice and Modern Thought,* edited by J. Meszaros and J. Zachhuber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 55.

[33]Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale,* 133.

[34]Schockenhoff, "What Makes a Martyr," 184.

illuminates the divine forgiveness in the Cross: "finally, by means of this expiation, we are restored to our sonship in Christ. The Paschal mystery makes possible a new creation."[35]

Furthermore, Jesus Christ takes the place of sin, hell, and even death. His solidarity in atonement love accomplishes divine forgiveness. His death is a form of "vicarious suffering" on behalf of all sinners.[36] According to Balthasar, "we should not carry our suffering, but rather "the death of Jesus," because Christ died for the sins of all human beings.[37] Through Christ's Passion, he suffered for all the punishment due to all sinners, and thus realized universal salvation. Christ's solidarity thus surpasses a particular social value or political cause.

Balthasar's elucidation of solidarity in Christ's suffering is significant for discerning genuine martyrdom in the light of "atonement." Christ forgives sinners, purifies deadly sins, and liberates humanity from its mortal destiny. Thus, the principle of "Christian martyrdom" is embodied in the "atonement of Christ," which grants the persecutor unconditional

[35]O'Donnell, *The Mystery of the Triune God*, 71.

[36]Balthasar draws on the concept of vicarious salvation from the *Sententiarum Libri*, stating that Christ's death offers not exclusive, but vicarious salvation, "which takes all other co-sufferings, for the excess of his love transcends that of his suffering" (*Mysterium Paschale*, 104). G.F. O'Hanlon further elaborates on this concept, explaining that "it is Christ who then takes our place and who suffers in himself, for and instead of us, the effects of sin" (Rom. 8, 3; Eph. 2; 2 Cor. 4, 14-15) (*The Immutability of God in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 31). This representative substitution of Christ for us, which goes beyond the notion of his solidarity with us, is successful so that we are truly and ontologically transformed into a state of reconciliation with God, not just in an external, juridical way. This substitution makes the event of the Cross, in both Paul and John, more than just a pure symbol of God's intense love for us or of the absence of any anger in God: it is the means by which God reconciles the world to himself (*Ibid.*, 31).

[37]Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 135.

forgiveness. True Christian martyrs witness Jesus' solidarity to testify to God's vicarious suffering; as Balthasar states:

> What, then, should a Christian be? He should be one who offers up his life in the service of his fellow man because he owes his life to Christ crucified. But what does he possess of such worth that he can give to his fellow men? Certainly not visible things. The gift he has to give – that which was given him by God – is deeply rooted in the unseen and invisible nature of God. "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3). If a Christian were to imagine that he could make visible and give to his fellow men all the qualities he possesses, he would simply become mere surface and would no longer have anything deeper to offer.[38]

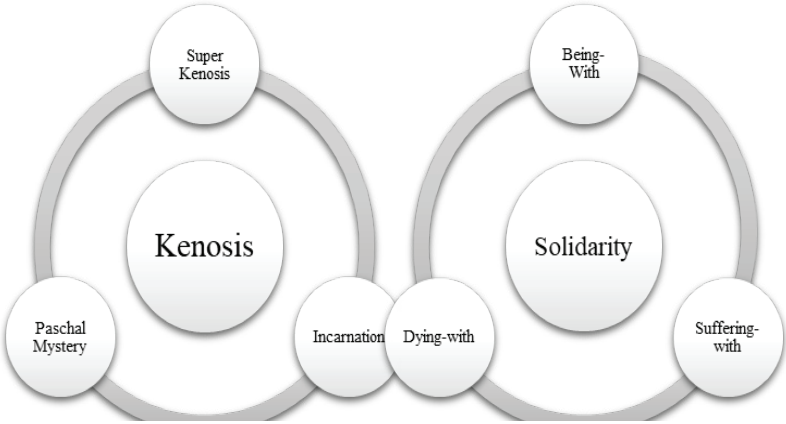
Therefore, a martyr dies for his neighbors to reveal Christ's solidarity with suffering humanity. Jesus' atonement already included the martyr and his fellow men. The genuine Christian martyr imitates His sacrifice. Christian martyrdom does not relativize the exclusiveness and uniqueness of this.[39] Through Christ's solidarity with us, the solidarity of martyrs invites their colleagues to join the Passion on the Cross of Atonement.

Third, "solidarity" in Christ's "atonement" – the second criterion of Christian martyrdom in Balthasar's theology – is paralleled in the Second Vatican Council's teaching. In genuine Christian martyrdom, "Love for God and love for neighbors" are intertwined. For Balthasar, such inter-connectedness reflects the self-revelation of the Holy Triune God. The Second Vatican Council connects central themes in Pauline and Johannine theology with the solidarity of martyrdom: "thus the first and most necessary gift is love, by which we love God above all things and our neighbor because of God."[40]

[38]Balthasar, *The Moment of Christian Witness,* 133.

[39]Schockenhoff, "What Makes a Martyr," 185.

[40]*Lumen Gentium*, 42.



△ **Three Keywords of Kenosis and Solidarity**

According to Schockenhoff, Balthasar's *Perichoresis* expressed the following understanding of martyrdom: "If someone were killed violently for justice or sacrificed their lives for protecting the rights of the poor and the marginalized, they ought to be regarded as martyrs for Christ."[41] However, this is not an arbitrary expansion of the idea. Martyrs who sacrifice themselves for social justice, political rights, and ethical values are distinguishable if they have died to testify to Christ's atonement, His vicarious suffering, and non-violent love. Not every voluntary death, regardless of its purpose, is entitled to be called martyrdom. The prerequisite of true Christian martyrdom is that it must fit with the unconditional forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

> (...) It is the love of God and the love of one's neighbor that points out the true disciple of Christ. Since Jesus, the Son of God, manifested His charity by laying down His life for us, so too, no one has greater love than he who lays down his life for Christ and His brothers. From the earliest times, then, some Christians have been called upon—and some will always be called upon—to give the

[41]Schockenhoff, "What Makes a Martyr?," 190-191.

> supreme testimony of this love to all men, but especially to persecutors. The Church, then, considers martyrdom as an exceptional gift and as the fullest proof of love. By martyrdom, a disciple is transformed into an image of his Master by freely accepting death for the salvation of the world—as well as his conformity to Christ in the shedding of his blood ... [42]

Finally, Balthasar's theology of martyrdom establishes the true significance of solidarity in Christ's solidarity with us and his vicarious substitution on our behalf. Just as *Lumen Gentium* recognized martyrdom as the supreme testimony, the Christian martyr's solidarity with the crucified Christ and suffering humanity demonstrates the love of God and of one's neighbor. The Christian martyr imitates "his Master's death" to enter into solidarity with Christ, while the martyr's solidarity connects the love of Christ on the Cross to his neighbor. This two-fold solidarity establishes the second principle of Christian martyrdom in Balthasar's theology: "Christocentric solidarity."

Hence, solidarity with Jesus Christ's atonement establishes "how Christian martyrdom builds solidarity." Motivated by discipleship, Christian martyrdom enters into solidarity with Christ and manifests love of God and neighbor. Balthasar's following statement clarifies the genuine Christian martyrdom generated in Christ's solidarity: "What then should a Christian be? He should be one who offers up his life in the service of his fellow man because he owes his life to Christ crucified. But what does he possess of such worth that he can give to his fellow men? Certainly not visible things. The gift he has to give – that which God gave him – is deeply rooted in the unseen and invisible nature of God."[43]

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[42] *Lumen Gentium,* 42.

[43] Balthasar, *The Moment of Christian Witness,* 133.

The Bloodless Martyrdom of Devoting One's Life to God

Balthasar affirms various forms of martyrdom, including the Sacrament of Baptism, Eucharist, and religious life. In his theology, the form of death is not decisive in defining genuine Christian martyrdom. More broadly, Balthasar argues that "the physical sacrifice of one's life" is not final but that Christian martyrdom pursues "dying to the world in Baptism together with Jesus" and devoting one's life to the immortality of Christ.[44] He exposits non-bloodshed martyrdom as follows:

> Martyrdom means bearing witness. It is not so very important what form this finally takes – the physical sacrifice of one's life by bodily death, the surrender of one's whole existence to Christ by vowing to live according to his commands, or by dying to the world in Baptism together with Jesus in such a way that this death and resurrection may truly enable one to live one's life for the sake of that other, immortal life (cf. Rom 6:12 ff.). Man becomes aware of the nature of his particular mission in life when he calmly puts his trust in God. But whatever particular Christian state the believer may live in, he lives as one who has died and been resurrected, because his whole existence is an attempt to make a loving and thankful response to God 'by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me' (Gal 2:20).[45]

This does not imply an unqualified extension to the definition of Christian martyrdom. Balthasar emphasizes that genuine Christian martyrdom is anchored in the Trinitarian and Christological imperatives of "being crucified with Christ" and "practicing love for God and one's neighbor." As he explains, "surrender of one's whole existence to Christ" is the pivot of Christian martyrdom.[46]

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[44]Ibid., 140–141.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Ibid.

Therefore, genuine Christian martyrdom is determined by motive rather than form. One example of this in Balthasar's theology is "Mary's assent." He clearly exposits her "unbloody martyrdom," which involves full consent and submission to the Son.[47] This entails "non-bloodshedding martyrdom, bloodless martyrdom, and witness to the truth without death," provided that the witness originated in the Crucifixion, experiencing both the suffering of Christ and the absence of God.

Similarly, Balthasar's theology affirms the motives of "self-submission" and "self-sacrifice" in the Church's Sacrament and consecrated life of Christian witnesses. This non-bloodshedding martyrdom does not reduce the uniqueness of the Christian testimony. Instead, it is motivated by the "Word" and contemplates Christ's Crucifixion, as Mother Mary became the model of bloodless martyrdom. Pivotally, martyrdom cannot take an excessive meaning beyond the Cross of Christ. He continues:

> This fearful need for love to give its assent to death, this "unbloody martyrdom" on the part of Mary, is the crucial situation out of which the Church springs to life. It is the fertility of the *Mater Dolorosa*, the apocalyptic woman in her birth pangs. The cry uttered by the Church at her birth is heard at the same moment as the mother's inaudible cry uttered as she beholds her dying Son.[48]

"How is genuine Christian martyrdom defined?" The third criterion of Balthasar's theology adopts bloodless martyrdom through theological reflection on Baptism, Holy Eucharist, and the Consecrated Life. As the passages on Mary's bloodless martyrdom elucidate, this theology does not elevate every kind of self-sacrifice to the status of martyrdom but brings martyrdom to the core of "Crucifixion."

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[47]Ibid., 38–40.

[48]Ibid., 39.

The Sacrament of Baptism: Motive of Christian Martyrdom

Bloodless martyrdom does not derogate the supreme witness of bloody martyrdom. In the Sacraments, non-blood-shedding martyrdom is clearly associated with the genuine motive of Christian testimony. As St. Paul noted, a person dies to sin through Baptism: "... the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:19-20).[49] Balthasar clarifies that the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Eucharist motivate Christian witnesses to bear the Cross and be crucified with Jesus Christ:

For Christians, there is no question of such an attitude, for 'all of us who have been baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death' and 'we were buried therefore with him by Baptism.' It holds good for all the Christians that 'our old self was crucified with him' and that 'if we have died with Christ' (Rom 6:3, 4, 6, 8) and are 'buried' (Col 2:12) we are also 'raised' with him and 'sit with him in the heavenly places' (Eph 2:6; Col 2:12) so that 'our common wealth is in heaven' (Phil 3:2; Heb 12:22) and consequently we are 'strangers and exiles on the earth' (1 Pet 2:11; Heb 11:9, 13). Mark stresses that Jesus 'called to him the multitude with his disciples' when he said to them: 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his Cross and follow me' (Mk 8:34 ff.), and Luke does likewise (Lk 14:25 ff.), adding the speech concerning the complete surrender of all earthly goods: 'So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple' (Lk 14:33).[50]

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[49]*Lumen Gentium,* 44.

[50]Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale,* 135.

For Balthasar, Baptism initiates every Christian to be formed in the likeness of Christ, especially his Death and Resurrection.[51] The Sacrament of Baptism ultimately directs the Christian's discipleship, which "denies himself and takes up his Cross." Hence, becoming a Christian in the Baptism manifests "the death of Jesus" and 'Jesus' Suffering.'[52] In "being co-crucified", Christian life is inseparable from martyrdom.

In Balthasar's perspective on Baptism and martyrdom, the willingness to lay down "one's life" for the love of God leads to one's vision of the death of Christ.[53] Just as Balthasar stresses the "co-crucified" in his theology of Christ's suffering, baptized Christians are also invited to experience such suffering. Consequently, bloodless martyrdom in Baptism awakens Christians to rebirth and resurrection, such as in Christ's Paschal mystery.

The Motive of Christian Martyrdom in the Holy Eucharist

Balthasar views the Sacrament of Eucharist as a motive of Christian martyrdom. He contends that "the whole Church must be co-crucified" with Christ through the Eucharist.[54] He asserts that the Cross "takes me to him again in the Eucharist."[55] The calling to "co-Crucifixion" is initiated with the Baptism and leads to the Eucharist, which nourishes the Christian and promotes the motive of martyrdom. Balthasar integrates Baptism and the Eucharist with this motive when he writes, "the Christ who lives in me is so deeply within me,

[51] *Lumen Gentium*, 7.

[52] Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale.,* 135.

[53] Balthasar, *The Moment of Christian Witness,* 28–29.

[54] Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale,* 134.

[55] Ibid., 112.

... because he died for me."[56] Ultimately, the non-bloodshed motive of martyrdom is completed in the Eucharist, which presents the death of Christ.

Furthermore, Balthasar's theology synthesizes the meaning of Christ's blood in his sacrifice. This renews the sinners and shares the "precious blood" (I Peter 1, 19).[57] He elaborates that Christ's blood is granted to all people. It becomes a gift for Christians and accomplishes God's love as revealed in Christ's Crucifixion. In this Paschal mystery, Balthasar induces the Christian motive of martyrdom by clarifying the implications of sacrificial meal and drink.

In addition, the Holy Eucharist engages the Christian vocation to the daily life of witnessing and sacrifice. It renders the Christology of martyrdom to incorporate the faithful in Christ's blood. Non-bloodshed martyrdom is connected to the Blood of Christ. The "atonement of Christ," as the identifiable motivation for Christian martyrdom, implies that Christ's blood was shed for the guilt of sinners vicariously. For Balthasar, this Eucharistic meaning of martyrdom is fundamentally directed toward Christ's salvation through His Holy Blood. In so doing, Christian martyrdom is extended to include daily devotion and self-abstinence. As Jennings explains:

> But sanctification also begins at Baptism and the ritual and participatory inclusion of the convent within the Christian corporate body. Literal martyrdom is, in fact, simply the completion of one's baptismal vows. Finally, however, one's martyrdom can be daily, existential death in Christ. And this is where ascesis finds its logical

[56]Ibid., 112–113.

[57]Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale,* 98.

> place within Christian doctrines of sanctification and martyrology.[58]

Consequently, Christian martyrdom can be discerned even in non-bloodshedding Christian participation in charity and daily dedication, provided it is incorporated into the Blood of Christ. Through the assimilated Christian motive, the spiritual meaning of bloodless martyrdom is manifested in Balthasar's theology of the Paschal mystery. "Co-crucified," Balthasar's critical essence of martyrdom, is enshrined in the motive for the non-bloodshed martyrdom of the Sacrament of Baptism and Holy Eucharist.

Significance of Non-bloodshed Martyrdom in Balthasar's Theology

Balthasar cautions against overly spiritualizing Christ's suffering and emphasizes the Trinitarian dimension of genuine martyrdom in the sense of Christ's Paschal mystery.[59] He outlines the distinctive characteristic of bloodless martyrdom as a "Trinitarian" dimension, extending beyond an anthropocentric, psychological, and spiritualized approach to Jesus' suffering as the model of genuine martyrdom.

According to Balthasar, non-bloodshed martyrdom has been interpreted and practiced in the form of asceticism. He criticizes this narrow understanding of Christ's suffering, such as in the "spiritual Cross," which enlightens the genuine meaning of martyrdom without losing the Trinitarian background or relying on the functional aspect of Christ's suffering. He argues:

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[58]Nathan G. Jennings, *Theology as Ascetic Act: Disciplining Christian Discourse,* American University Studies, Series VII., Theology and Religion (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 81-82.

[59]Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale,* 40. (It has been designated "affective" or "spiritual" theology by focusing on ascetic interpretation of the martyrdom.)

> Despite the major impulses given by the saints, the official theology did not succeed in constructing a genuine theology of the *Triduum Mortis* to complement the abstract soteriology. By and large, that was because, on the one hand, the implicit theology of the saints was at times narrowed down to a specialized 'affective' or 'spiritual' theology, while on the other hand, it was taken captive by anthropocentric schemata of ascent and purification, still dominant in the doctor of the Church John of the Cross himself.[60]

Balthasar opposes an "affective" and "spiritual" understanding of Christ's Cross, which discredits the Trinitarian pivot of genuine Christian martyrdom. Such a reductive approach separates a martyr's witnessing from Christ's sacrifice, which unveils the Son's absolute and voluntary obedience to the Father. He asserts that the genuine motive of Christian martyrdom prompts reflection on the emotional, spiritual, and ascetic characteristics of Christ's suffering. Ultimately, in this Triune relationship, genuine Christian martyrdom includes bloodless martyrdom through "participation" in God's mutual love.

Moreover, as Timothy Yoder asserts, a commitment to monastic life and evangelical counsel are also related to martyrdom, which invites one to be the perfect witness of Christ's self-surrender unto death.[61] As a spiritualized attitude to martyrdom, *Fuga Mundi* is overcome by Balthasar's extension of Christian martyrdom. It avoids an over-spiritualized and emotionalized attitude of accepting Christian faith about Christ's suffering and directs the faithful to the Son's self-giving love for God. The bloodless martyrdom in Balthasar's

[60]Ibid., 39–40.

[61]Timothy J. Yoder, "Hans Urs Von Balthasar and Kenosis: The Pathway to Human Agency," 259-261.

theology achieves "participation" in Christ's love and the Church's Sacraments.

It also introduces the continuation of martyrdom in the Sacrament of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, which are interrelated in "an unbloody martyrdom." As Ignatius of Antioch states, the Christian vocation is directed toward dedicating oneself to becoming the pure bread of Christ, to be "ground by the teeth of wild beasts."[62] This is initiated in the moment of Baptism and fulfilled in the Holy Eucharist. In Balthasar's extension, the sense of martyrdom is summarized as follows:

(1) Genuine Christian martyrdom incorporates even bloodless martyrdom.

(2) Like the example of Mother Mary, self-submission and sacrifice essentially constitute a Christian martyrdom which signifies co-Crucifixion with Christ;

(3) The Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Eucharist propel the Christian vocation to bear witness, including "bloody martyrdom" and "bloodless martyrdom";

(4) Pivotally, a bloodless martyrdom must involve the Trinity's self-giving and self-surrender.

In summary, the extension of Balthasar's definition of martyrdom to bloodless martyrdom avoids the indiscreet expansion of all kinds of self-denial, such as suicide bombing, and the spiritualized view of martyrdom. Notwithstanding the bloodless testimony, a genuine Christian martyrdom pursues a "co-crucified" love for Christ. Significantly, this criterion emphasizes that Christian life in the Sacrament and all religious life incorporates the whole vocation into the absolute

[62]Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Moment of Christian Witness,* 140-141 and Timothy Yoder, "Hans Urs Von Balthasar and Kenosis," 259-261.

and unique sacrifice of Christ. The life of the Church bonds the faithful to the Cross.

Martyrdom in Testimony to "God's Kingdom of Love"

In Balthasar's theology, "the atonement of the Son" on the Cross is a criterion of genuine Christian martyrdom, which imitates Christ's solidarity with us and vicarious forgiveness for human beings. Also, the solidarity of the Christian witness with one's neighbor is anchored in the Trinitarian fundamentals of martyrdom. Surrendering one's life and freedom is also initiated by love and obedience to Christ. In Balthasar's view on the Cross, genuine Christian martyrdom is formed by Trinitarian initiatives and Christological centeredness, which invites all Christians to be "co-crucified" from the moment of Baptism.[63]

Through the abovementioned criteria, the final criterion for genuine martyrdom deepens the practice of love for one's neighbor and for God. Self-giving love and the practice of one's Christian vocation were elaborated on in detail in the previous chapter. Furthermore, Christian martyrdom aims to build the "Kingdom of Heaven." Balthasar rebukes the theological tendency to consider the discourse of Christian martyrdom in terms of human autonomy and indiscreet heroism. The two-way love of God and neighbor motivates the Christian witness, and its aim is to establish God's rule and righteousness

[63]Cf. Balthasar argues that the discipleship of human beings is to participate in Christ. Human beings are drawn to join this eternal self-giving love of the Trinitarian life which Jesus revealed in the Crucifixion. "Participating in Christ, human beings discover themselves their own true calling and personhood as they are drawn into God's drama with the universe, into the encounter of the finite with the infinite. (*Theodramatiks II*, 302-11). See: Mark A. McIntosh, "Christology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar,* edited by Edward T. Oakes, SJ and David Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 34-35.

in this world. The "Kingdom of Heaven" is a specific factor in discerning genuine Christian martyrdom, as Balthasar explains:[64]

> This can be proved theologically by highlighting the 'radical identity' of the love of God and one's neighbor precisely as the central message of Christ. According to him, the commandments are alike (Mark 12:31 and parallels); they are together the epitome of the Old Testament, and, in the judgment, the 'love of one's neighbor will be the only criterion for admittance to the Kingdom of God' (Mt 25:34 ff.). Paul emphasizes these statements several times, and, according to John, we are loved by God (Jn 14:21) and Christ, so that we can love one another (Jn 13:34), which love is the new commandment of Christ (Jn 14:34), that for him is specific (Jn 15:12) and is what is asked of us (Jn 15:17). And so for John the consequence that God, who is love (1 Jn 4:16), has loved us, is not that we love him back but that we should love one another (1 Jn 4:7, 11).

Balthasar's criterion does not consider Socrates as a genuine Christian witness. Technically, Balthasar recognizes Socrates as a witness who sacrificed himself for the truth.[65] However, this sacrifice is regarded as "an ethical and philosophical model."[66] Moreover, his death was not oriented toward establishing the Kingdom of God in the name of Christ. As Balthasar explains,

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[64]Balthasar, *The Moment of Christian Witness,* 103.

[65]Balthasar, *New Elucidations,* 287.

[66]Socrates was recognizable as a witness to the truth before the advent of Christianity, but not as a Christian martyr. Balthasar summarizes the meaning of Socrates' death as follows: (1) Socrates died for self-conquest in the of philosophy and ethics, (2) Socrates rejected "suicide," and (3) Socrates had an insight into the ultimate destiny of life in the sense of immortality (but this was in terms of reincarnation.) Although Balthasar's theology acknowledges Socrates as a former model of martyrdom, Christian martyrdom requires the notion and motivation of "co-Crucifixion with Christ." *See*: *Theo-Drama II*, 137-138., *Theo-Drama IV*, 100-101.

genuine Christian martyrs are presented if their testimony insists on God's justice and his eternal love, as revealed on the Cross. The criterion for admittance to the Kingdom of God is conformity to Christ's complete self-surrender to the Father on the Cross.[67]

In this Christocentric discourse on Christian martyrdom, Balthasar's discernment of true martyrdom focuses on that to which the witnesses testify and how they confess their faith. His criticism of the undiscerned extension of martyrdom arguably targets an extended definition of this concept by Karl Rahner. Balthasar criticized Rahner's view in *The Moment of Christian Witness,* with his fiercest criticism aimed at the "anonymous Christian."[68] Balthasar rejects the "radical identity" of the love of God and one's neighbor in identifying Christian martyrdom.

Consideration of the argument surrounding the radical extension of Christian martyrdom highlights the theological difference between Rahner and Balthasar. The discussion concerns "Christology," that defines genuine Christian martyrdom. Balthasar evaluates Rahner's "anonymous Christian" as an "evolutional Christology," which he regards as secular. Balthasar's critique of Rahner has two aspects: (1) prioritizing the love of God, and (2) distinguishing between the "anonymous Christian" and "anonymous Christianity."

First, Balthasar criticizes Rahner for proposing "the unity of love of God and love of one's neighbor" in the theology of the "anonymous Christian." He argues that Rahner's humanism reduces and underestimates the significance of the priority of God's love, and that his transcendental Christology "leads

[67]Balthasar, *The Moment of Christian Witness*, 103.

[68]Karen Kilby, "Balthasar and Karl Rahner," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar,* edited by Edward T. Oakes, SJ and David Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 259.

to a loss of the distinctiveness of Christianity, and also a loss of commitment."[69] According to Balthasar, if one becomes a Christian anonymously, why does a genuine Christian bear witness by paying the cost of their life and making sacrifices?

> Anyone who speaks of 'anonymous Christians' cannot avoid (nor doubtless would he want to) the conclusion that there is ultimately no difference between Christians who are such by name and Christians who are not. Hence – despite all subsequent protests – it cannot matter whether one professes the name or not. And anyone who proclaims the identity of the love of God and one's neighbor and presents the love of one's neighbor as the primary meaning of the love of God must not be surprised (and doubtless is not) if it becomes a matter of indifference whether he professes to believe in God or not. The main thing is that he has love. Admittedly, this is true if he knows what love is. But by what criterion does a man who is essentially a sinner measure love? ... But a person who does this assuredly knows God alone.[70]

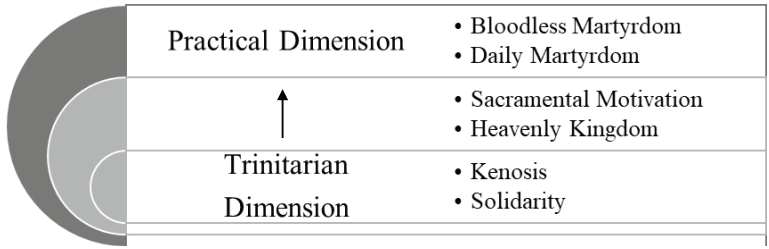
In this criterion of the unity of love, Christian martyrs practice and implement the same love of Christ for their neighbors. Through Christ's love, the Christian faith imitates the same love for all people, whether through social justice, political righteousness, or abundant charity. However, the outcome of the righteous person's actions does not render them Christian. Their motivation and personal love are what decisively distinguish the genuine Christian witness. Furthermore, Balthasar warns that if Christian martyrdom is reduced to ethical goodness, it can lapse into a form of "Neo-Catholicism," which "contradicts so radically the Church's entire canon of

[69]Ibid. 260.

[70]Balthasar, *The Moment of Christian Witness,* 120–121.

sanctity."[71] Therefore, anonymous martyrdom is unacceptable in Balthasar's theology.

Second, to refute the reductionist Christianity in Rahner's theology, Balthasar adopts Henri de Lubac's distinction between "anonymous Christians," which has long been argued but not developed,[72] and an "anonymous Christianity," which is urgently revealed in this era.[73] The sense of an "anonymous Christian" is valid in that all human beings can be saved by Christ's salvation. However, Christians are motivated to lay down their lives for Christ and their neighbors by the love they have received from Christ. Therefore, "anonymous Christianity" does not exist; genuine Christian martyrs die for Christ "in His name and in the Church's name."[74] This becomes a testimony about Christ, that is, martyrdom conducted by giving up one's life for Christ. Therefore, there is no anonymity in the Church as it has a name, "the love of God."



△ **Criteria of Genuine Christian Martyrdom**

Balthasar accepts this distinction, which functions to affirm "anonymous Christians" and reject "anonymous Christianity." De Lubac's formulation is acceptable in the way genuine Christian martyrdom can be identified. If a martyr has testified to the truth in the name of Christ, they cannot be

[71]Ibid., 149.

[72]Karen Kilby, "Balthasar and Karl Rahner," 261.

[73]Balthasar, *The Moment of Christian Witness*, 122-124

[74]Ibid., 151.

considered anonymous. For instance, Pope Francis names the thirteen Egyptian Coptic Christian martyrs who were killed by Islamist extremists in 2015 as "witnesses of Jesus."[75] They did not protest against social injustice on behalf of an oppressed people but were simply migrant fathers trying to feed their families. They were slain but proclaimed the name of "Jesus Christ" against the violence of Islamist extremists. Ultimately, these unnamed Christians were named Christian martyrs.

> ... the Church has canonized (elevated to a standard rule) in two thousand years as sanctity according to the measure of the Gospel corresponds unequivocally to the criterion proposed in The Moment of Christian Witness: every saint has attempted to shape his life into a loving response to the crucified Trinitarian love of God and thus placed himself at the disposition of Jesus' work of establishing God's Kingdom of love among men. The attempt to reduce religion to ethics, love of God, and personal love for Christ to love of neighbor contradicts so radically the Church's entire canon of sanctity that one would have to contrast it sharply with the tradition and say, 'Neo-Catholicism'.[76]

In distinguishing the true Christian witness in Trinitarian love and God's Kingdom of love, Balthasar suggests a criterion for identifying genuine Christian martyrdom. True martyrs shape their lives into a "loving response to the crucified Trinitarian love of God" and establish "God's Kingdom of Love." Finally, Balthasar's Christ-centered view of immanent Trinitarian theology circumscribes the boundary of Christian martyrdom. It is the "love of God" and the "Kingdom of Love."

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[75]Pope Francis, *Visit to "Villa Nazareth" Address of His Holiness Pope Francis*, 18 June 2016, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/june/documents/papa-francesco_20160618_villa-nazareth.html (accessed 25 May 2022)

[76]Balthasar, *The Moment of Christian Witness*, 149.

Christian martyrs thus die for love in the name of the Church in order to establish the Kingdom of God.

Conclusion

By joining the "co-crucified" with Jesus Christ, Balthasar adapts his Trinitarian and Christological theology to clarify the criteria of Christian martyrdom. Being constituted by the self-giving love of the Father, Son, and the Spirit is a primary criterion for distinguishing the genuine Christian witness. The second criterion privileges Christ's solidarity, which is described in Jesus' reconciling work of atonement by posing "solidarity with God and one's neighbor." The third criterion is motivated by the Sacrament of Baptism, the Eucharist, and daily sanctification. Balthasar accepts bloodless martyrdom as a model of genuine witness to Christ, akin to Mother Mary's total dedication. The fourth criterion sustains Christian engagement in building the Kingdom of God's love through martyrdom.

Finally, Balthasar's theology of martyrdom is formulated as follows: "a genuine Christian martyr is crucified with Christ" in the sense of (1) "giving up his life for love of God"; (2) "imitating Christ's solidarity"; (3) practicing the Christian faith in their day-to-day life; and (4) pursuing God's rule and promoting His Kingdom. These are the distinctive characteristics of true Christian martyrdom. In Balthasar's view, Christian martyrs do not die simply for an ideal, social justice, or political righteousness; they sacrifice themselves to testify to God's love, His forgiveness, and His Kingdom.

A REVIEW OF GERD LÜDEMANN'S METHODOLOGY IN "THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST: A HISTORICAL INQUIRY"

Kelvin Ruel G. Novabos

Introduction

In his book, "*The Resurrection of Christ: A Historical Inquiry*" (2004)[1], Gerd Lüdemann, the New Testament scholar and acclaimed German historian, made waves of controversy in Europe and abroad. He puts into question the historical basis for the resurrection of Jesus.[2] Challenging the resurrection as the central event and foundation of Christianity and its whole enterprise of faith, evangelization, and mission in today's world, the book he published invited a great deal of attention and debate.[3] His earlier book, "*What Really Happened to Jesus?: A Historical Approach to the Resurrection (1996)*," first caused widespread reactions and served as the basis of his later book.

As a dedicated historian, Lüdemann rebuts theologians who are against his call for a historical investigation of the resurrection. These theologians argue that the historical foundations of this one-time event, which get increasingly remote and inaccessible over the centuries, are insignificant to the Christian faith. Moreover, he dissents opposition from thinkers who maintain that the reality of God raising Jesus

[1]Gerd Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Christ: A Historical Inquiry* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2004).

[2]From here onward, the term "the resurrection" refers to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and not the general resurrection of the dead as understood by the Jewish mindset.

[3]Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Christ*, 7.

from the dead is considered a properly supernatural or divine event only assented to by faith and not through manufactured devices such as science and history.

In his book, Lüdemann attempts to analyze the historicity of the early Christian texts touching on the Easter narratives and reconstructs the historical development of the Easter tradition. At the end of his work, he makes a sensational and startling conclusion: that the resurrection of Christ fails the test of historical investigation.[4] There was no resurrection, but only a story of mass delusion, fabricated from grief-induced psychological visions of the primary Christian founders Peter and Paul and then handed on by tradition from the early Christian community. In other words, there was no empty tomb.

Certainly, with such a provocative claim, Lüdemann brought consequences not only to his own faith and professional life, but also to the Christian community of believers in his sphere of influence. The Confederation of Protestant Churches in Lower Saxony objected to his scholarly publications. He was also forbidden to be designated as Chair of New Testament Studies by the administration of the University of Göttingen, where he taught. On the 4th of July 2016, he was interviewed by Frankfurter Rundschau, with the transcript uploaded and entitled "*The Man Who Loves God*" on his internet homepage:

> The doubt was already there much earlier. I found that the Church lies to the public on this point. Whoever does research on the New Testament does not believe in the resurrection as it is preached and talked about by the Church in the creeds/confessional statements. The results of research are kept quiet from the congregation. This is not right. But it gets worse - the Bible - and all exegetes have become united on this point - is not the

[4]Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Christ*, 190.

> word of God. On Sundays, however, something completely different is said. I find that impossible.[5]

Causing a considerable stir in Germany and dominating the discussion on the historicity of the resurrection in his time, Lüdemann's book was subsequently reacted to by several scholars.

Does the Cornerstone Still Hold Up?

Could he be right? This article gives a review of Gerd Lüdemann's book. In particular, it will examine the German scholar's methodology - how he investigated the resurrection historically and what he deems as properly "historical." An assessment of his procedure is significant because it generated his controversial conclusions. The process defines the outcome.

This study bears great importance as it either affirms or challenges Lüdemann's claims surrounding the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, "the end-all and be-all of Christian Faith."[6] As the foundational truth or cornerstone on which Christianity hinges[7], the resurrection is the singular definitive moment that brings to fulfillment all that has been said, revealed, and done by a 1st-century Jewish man named Jesus of Nazareth – whom the church now proclaims as the Christ.

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[5]Gerd Lüdemann, "Gerd Lüdemann's Homepage," Nashville, TN, 2020, https://wwwuser.gwdg.de/~gluedem/eng/ (accessed 25 April 2023).

[6]Robert Barron, *The Word on Fire Bible (Volume 1): The Gospels*. The Word on Fire Bible 1 (Park Ridge: Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, 2020), 188.

[7]Eph 2:19-22 NKJV – [19]"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, [20] having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, [21] in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, [22] in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."

The historicity of the resurrection is not frequently asked by the average Christian. The resurrection is already an accepted article of faith among believers. When seeking explanations for the resurrection particular to its theology, the ordinary believer can immediately find answers from within the church doctrine. However, when a non-believer challenges the typical Christian to prove if the resurrection was an actual historical event (not literary fiction) established by scientific or naturalistic ways, he will find it challenging to seek ready-made and sufficient answers from within the stories of proclamation themselves.

As Lüdemann may have discovered, there is more to uncover from the Gospels' Easter narratives. While these are testimonies of faith, they are not comprehensive histories. A markedly different perspective is seen for people outside the Church's tradition. They could ask, "What if the Easter reports were all made-up myths or fictional stories to promote a specific evangelistic agenda?" Within this group of people, we would like to include skeptics, scholars, and historians like Gerd Lüdemann, who earnestly inquire into the historicity of the resurrection. Individuals like him employ modern means of investigating truth; such means have been dismissed, overlooked, or even denounced by the Church during its earlier centuries. Among these people, the starting point of their inquiry is not faith or church teaching *per se*, but the more naturalistic and scientific route of arriving at what is true and what counts as objective evidence.

This article agrees with Lüdemann and his call for a fresh and "strictly historical" investigation of the resurrection, the foundation upon which Christianity stands or falls.[8] In terms of faith, Christians will surely benefit from such a study. For

[8]Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Christ*, 11.

Lüdemann, only this kind of investigation affirms the resurrection as real. Otherwise, no amount of alternative interpretations on the resurrection can hold any value as he asserts:

> If Jesus' resurrection did not take place (in time and space), neither revival myths nor metaphorical interpretation nor sermons guised in hermeneutical reflections can help. In that case Christian faith is as dead as Jesus and can be kept alive only by self-deception.[9]

In other words, he says, "No historical evidence of the Resurrection, no Christianity." As followers of Christ, we need to base our faith proclamations (*kerygma*) not only on religious sources (i.e., church doctrines handed down by tradition over generations) but also on non-religious sources such as history, natural science, or archeology. We should seek to know the Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History. In this way, Christians would be better informed with the knowledge and historical evidence available, fostering dialogue with other disciplines, thereby bolstering their faith.

The Three Quests for the Historical Jesus

Since the 17th century, there have been many efforts to "recover the Jesus of history." Thomas Rausch states, "The historical Jesus refers to the man Jesus of Nazareth as he can be known through historical research."[10] These efforts to search for the historical Jesus are categorized into three quests, like "waves" or generations of searches. Each pursuit is driven by principal scholars whose approaches or techniques of historical investigation define the quest. Each quest paved the way for the development of the next quest.

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[9]Ibid., 19.

[10]Thomas P. Rausch, *Who Is Jesus? An Introduction to Christology* (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2003), 9.

The First Quest: Reimarus to Schweitzer (1694-1768)

Reimarus, a professor of Oriental languages in Hamburg, Germany, launched the first quest for the historical Jesus. He recognized the distinction between the Historical Jesus (what Jesus actually said and did) and the Christ of Faith (what Christians profess about Jesus as Messiah, Son of God, etc.).

He argued that "the aim of Jesus and that of his disciples was basically different. He noticed that Jesus' preaching in the Gospels, particularly in the Synoptics, was centered on repentance in preparation for the coming of the kingdom of heaven."[11] After Jesus' death, Reimarus reasoned that "they stole his body and claimed that he had been raised from the dead."[12] Consequently, the apostles "were the ones who created what became the Christian story." [13]

During this quest, Reimarus and other scholars were still under the philosophical influences of the Enlightenment. Using secular rationalism, they questioned all of divine revelation and were hostile to Christian proclamations and dogma. "They assumed that once the overlay of Church preaching and dogma, as well as the Jewishness of Jesus, was stripped away, the real, historical Jesus would emerge."[14]

However, dominated by the principles of the Enlightenment era or modernity, scholars like Reimarus produced less objective work than they claimed. Joachim Jeremias considers their conclusions of portraying the historical Jesus (only as a wise ethical teacher, social reformer, friend of the poor, etc.) as absurd, amateurish, and fashioned according to their own image.[15]

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[11]Ibid., 10.

[12]Rausch, *Who is Jesus?*, 10.

[13]Ibid., 11.

[14]Ibid., 11.

[15]Joachim Jeremias, *The Problem of the Historical Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), 15-47.

The Second Quest: Käsemann to Schillebeeckx (1953-1980)

Ernst Käsemann, a New Testament professor at Tubingen in Germany, called the New Quest. Käsemann called on scholars to move on from the Enlightenment's heavily rationalistic and secular approach. He argued for a second quest, now possible with the new so-called "historical-critical" methods such as source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, and tradition criticism.[16]

Walter Kasper notes three historical and theological principles of Käsemann's New Quest. First, he admits that while the Gospels are not histories in themselves, he recognizes that they contain more historical material than previously acknowledged. Second, he argues that Faith not only focuses on what was proclaimed by the early church. Instead, it should be firmly tied to the life history of the earthly Jesus. Lastly, Kasper espoused a dialectical approach to Christology, a continuity that could not be ignored between the kerygma and the historical Jesus. For this, he emphasizes the proper approach:

> The New Quest does not bypass the kerygma, as a purely historical approach would do. Rather it proceeds from the medium of that preaching, so that the historical Jesus is interpreted through the kerygma while, at the same time, the historical Jesus helps us to interpret the kerygma.[17]

With its rediscovery of the kerygma, the New Quest, departed from First Quest, which was heavily burdened by the Enlightenment, rejecting divine revelation and approaching the scriptures in a rationalist, secular manner. However, most

[16]Ernst Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 13-14.

[17]Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ,* new ed. (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 33-34.

of the proponents of the second quest too quickly dismissed the miraculous, prophetic, and eschatological, thus remaining half-liberal and modernist in their presuppositions, reflecting thinking from the Enlightenment characteristic of the previous quest.[18]

In response to new methods available, a host of books emerged searching for the historical Jesus and Christology. Scholars from this quest were Protestant commentators G. Bornkamm, E. Fuchs, H. Conzelmann, H. Braun, J. Robinson, G. Ebeling, F. Gogarten, W. Marxsen, and W. Pannenberg. There were also Catholic scholars J. R. Geiselmann, A. Vogtle, H. Schurmann, F. Mussner, R. Schnackenburg, H. Kung, J. Blank, R. Pesch, W. Kasper, J. Sobrino, and E. Schillebeeckx. It is worth noting that most of them were Europeans, particularly Germans.

The Third Quest

Since the early 1980s, scholars have begun talking about "The Third Quest" for the historical Jesus. The efforts in this period were marked by proper historical methods and, increasingly, the social sciences rather than the literary disciplines (e.g., source, form, redaction criticism).

In this period, importance was given to historical-cultural studies to understand better Jesus' 1st-century Jewish Palestinian context. Third Quest scholars took an interest in appreciating the social, cultural, and anthropological factors at play in the life of Jesus in his own milieu and within the social hierarchy and fabric of Galilean life. To further appreciate his political and religious environments, research was done into the 2nd temple Judaism - how the tradition was passed on and

[18]Ibid., 15.

communally expressed, who the ruling elites were, the impact of Roman oppression, and its taxation system. What does it mean to be "holy" during this time?

Unlike prior quests, a distinct feature of this Third Quest was the use of sources outside the traditional biblical and canonical sources (such as the Gospels, Pauline writings, and Old Testament literature). These ancient sources include the works of Josephus, a 1st-century historian whose writings were long ignored by scholars, documents from Qumran, and the apocalyptic writings used to give depth to Jesus' historical context.

Most notable among the Third Quest scholars was John P. Meier, who produced a massive three-volume work entitled "*A Marginal Jew*," considered "the most ambitious modern reconstruction of the historical Jesus."[19] Employing the discipline of archaeology, Meier's historical investigations yielded new and ground-breaking findings, affirming the historicity of Jesus' resurrection and changing the game on the quest for the historical Jesus. Against objections from secular critics, Meier accepts the miraculous as having historical value. "That Jesus acted as and was viewed as exorcist/healer has as much historical corroboration as almost any other statement we can make about the Jesus of history."[20]

While emphasizing the historical, the proponents of the Third Quest, also took seriously the eschatological themes of Jesus' context, breaking free from the closed system of secular

[19]Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 826.

[20]John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, Vol. One, *The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (New York: Doubleday, 1991); Vol. *Two, Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1994); Vol. *Three, Companions and Competitors* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

rationalism. With the onset of the Third Quest, the narrow mindset of Enlightenment scholars lost its grip on the ongoing conversation on the search for the historical Jesus.

Other scholars from this quest were J. P. Meier, N. T. Wright, B.F. Meyer, A. E. Harvey, E. P. Sanders, and Ben Witherington. More radical critics include Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza and Richard Horsley.

In Light of the Three Quests

In the succeeding sections, this article praises to Lüdemann's work, highlighting what he finds admirable and of great value. What follows are criticisms of Lüdemann's study, focusing on the author's applied methodology of historical investigation, which gave rise to his provocative conclusions.

To provide criticism, this article assesses Lüdemann's methodology of historical investigation as defined in Chapter 3, "The Procedure" of his book,[21] and what the author considers as strictly "historical." To do this, a comparison will be made, putting Lüdemann's methodology of historical inquiry *vis-à-vis* the related literature on the Three Quests for the Historical Jesus.

This study does not intend to make a point-by-point criticism of Chapter 3, where Lüdemann extensively applies textual translation and analysis[22] on the various Easter narratives and proceeds to make his historical reconstruction of what happened on Easter. Aside from being a very lengthy process, this part already falls in the area of biblical exegesis, which is not the focus of this article. Moreover, by examining Lüdemann's methodology alone, the foundation of his analyses, this study

[21]Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Christ*, 23.

[22]Ibid., 39.

opens up a wide room for future studies to critique the rest of the book's claims and conclusions of the Easter story.

Finally, this article provides a set of conclusions that summarizes the method of historical inquiry made by Gerd Lüdemann, a critique of his claims on the non-resurrection of Jesus.

The Historian's Work: Lights and Shadows

Summary of Lüdemann's Methodology

For the purpose of discussion in this article, this part summarizes the methodology of historical investigation used by Lüdemann indicated in the section "The Procedure" of his book.[23] His methods are mainly that of textual analysis, drawing from sources, both canonical and non-canonical early Christian writings, ordered by date below:

1 Cor. 15:1-11: The Easter Traditions in Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians

The Easter Narrative in the Gospel of Mark

The Easter Narrative in the Gospel of Matthew

The Easter Narrative in the Gospel of Luke

The Easter Narrative in the Gospel of John

The Easter Narrative in the Gospel of Peter

The Easter Narrative in the Epistle of the Apostles (*Epistula Apostolorum*)

His methodology is systematic and is described as follows:

> Chapter 2 surveys the early Christian sources for the resurrection of Jesus. Here, I not only compare the content of the individual texts, but also classify them by characteristics of form in order to arrive at a starting

[23]Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Christ*, 23.

> point for the history of the resurrection traditions. This task is especially important for the present work, not only because it is about the resurrection of Jesus, but also because it deals with the origins of the resurrection traditions.[24]

He expounds on how the texts are to be treated:

> The task of Chapter 3 is to offer fresh translations of the most important early Christian texts concerning Jesus' resurrection and to assess their historical value. [...] I analyze the texts in three steps -purpose, reworked tradition, and historical elements. [...] Among the chief tools for identifying the purpose of the author and the reworked tradition are linguistic and stylistic considerations or tensions in the text. [...] Only after establishing the purpose of the author [redaction criticism] and the reworked tradition [tradition criticism] may one meaningfully evaluate the historical worth of the text and so gain a credible understanding of the events it relates.[25]

From here, he then proceeds to implement his methodology of textual analysis on the various Easter narratives he surveyed. He makes his version of the Easter story from his historical reconstruction upon which he draws his conclusions.

Strengths of Lüdemann's Methodology

In Chapter 2, Lüdemann uses his skills in form criticism to survey and classify the various texts containing reports of Jesus' resurrection according to six groups.[26] He draws parallels among the passages to determine the earliest written ones where he makes his starting point, the narratives constituting the origin of the Easter faith.

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[24]Ibid., 23.

[25]Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Christ*, 23.

[26]Ibid., 29.

From Chapter 3 onwards, Lüdemann makes a solid and remarkable work of scholarship. He performs what biblical scholars call an "exegesis." He deals with the scripture passages concerning Jesus' resurrection listed under the section that defines his procedure. In his actual analysis of the texts, Lüdemann engages and deconstructs all available scriptural details on Jesus' resurrection in a manner akin to "splitting hairs" with the texts. He ensures a smooth flow from one narrative to the next, identifies loose ends in the stories, and determines how the stories interrelate even from independent Gospel traditions. He is very particular about the chronology of the events, even referring to Old Testament writings to expose cross-references and further meaning among the texts.

Some Critiques of Lüdemann's Methodology

In light of the related literature discussed earlier, this section assesses Lüdemann's methodology and where and how it figures among the Three Quests of the Historical Jesus and findings from historical investigations of other scholars.

The Outdated Method of Historical Investigation

While Lüdemann 's work is praiseworthy, it is important to note that the methodology of his historical inquiry is outdated. To interpret the many Easter narratives, he employs only textual analysis reminiscent of the Second Quest, dated before the 1980's. During this quest, the historical-critical methods used were source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, and tradition criticism – all are purely literary disciplines adopted by Lüdemann.

Furthermore, Lüdemann's historical investigations could have been more up-to-date had he followed approaches from the Third Quest of the historical Jesus. It was observed that

he did not account for any historical evidence apart from the canonical and non-canonical texts he identified through which he derived their historical value by heavily using redaction and tradition criticism. Had he examined new historical evidence and material, as Third Quest scholar J. P. Meier did by consulting archeological findings, Jewish socio-cultural data, or documents from other historians like Josephus, his understanding of Jesus' historical context would have been deeper and more holistic. His conclusions of the Easter story would have been more accurate, and thus told a story entirely different from what he "reconstructed from history." [27]

Hence, from these findings, we categorize Lüdemann's historical methodology and scholarship as belonging to the Second Quest, despite his book already being published (in 2004) long after the quest's timeline.

Lüdemann's Position in the History-Kerygma Dialectic

What is "historical" for Lüdemann? Does he understand history to be in continuity with the kerygma, or as independent from it? Here, this study probes not only the methodology he used, but also attempts to go further, into the mindset of the historian and what he intends for a strictly historical investigation into Jesus' resurrection. We discern Lüdemann's position on this matter by referring to Chapter 1 of his book, entitled *"On the Need for A Fresh Investigation into the Historicity of the Resurrection,"* where he makes a discussion before delving into the actual historical investigations.[28]

Lüdemann was aware of the dialectic approach of Christology espoused by Second Quest scholars like Kasper,[29]

[27]Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Christ*, 153.

[28]Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Christ*, 11-28.

[29]Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 33-34.

who understand the historicity of Jesus by recognizing a continuity between history and kerygma. Lüdemann believes that history is necessarily part of the proclamation, although the notion of "fact" was coined only in modern times. On this, he agrees with Gerhard Ebeling (presumably from the Second Quest):

> As long as theology is "paired" with historical thought (as it is on the one hand by the character of its central sources and on the other by modern criteria of truth like history)... then it must be interested in a natural explanation of the miracle...[30]

However, Lüdemann insisted that in this continuity, history precedes proclamation. He sides with those who support a purely historical investigation:

> Yet even if the concept of factuality was unknown to the writers of sacred history...[and in] their narration of events they thus allow heterogeneous elements to flow together which the historian today must fundamentally separate.[31]

Lüdemann sees the historian's task as separating or discriminating fact (physical evidence) from faith testimonies. He disagrees that historical facts are merely derived from faith testimonies. He responds to a common objection:

> Event and interpretation are always interlocked so that it is impossible to access the event [resurrection] without the interpretation [kerygma]. Thus, many Easter texts are unfit for historical investigation.[32]

To this, Lüdemann responds that this objection applies not only to Christian texts but all texts and myths in general. Lüdemann rejects the postmodernist slogan, "There are no

[30]Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Christ*, 21.

[31]Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Christ*, 14.

[32]Ibid., 21.

facts, only interpretations." He believes the facts exist first, before their interpretations. He is skeptical of those who say that "the resurrection traditions cannot be disentangled and the historical sources inadequate"[33], for they might only serve an apologetic agenda to defend the faith.

Lüdemann's position in the history-kerygmatic is clear. Between two ends, he situates himself on the far end of history. He insists that there must be historical evidence first on Jesus' resurrection, before any discussion of faith is opened up. For him, the natural explanations lay firmly on the grounds of faith and belief. Seemingly a scholar from the Second Quest, he agrees with Kasper's first two principles on history and theology.[34] However, having made his point, Lüdemann rejects Kasper's third principle, stating the inter-dependency of history and kerygma. Unlike scholars from the Third Quest who have the New Testament proclamations as their starting point, Lüdemann strongly argues that history can stand alone and be independent of the kerygmatic interpretation. Therefore, he affirms continuity *only* from history *to* kerygma, and the reverse direction of continuity is impossible: history *through* kerygma. In other words, for Lüdemann, before there could be any form of Easter faith, there has to be a prior proven and untouched-by-faith Easter history. In summary, he maintains that a one-way, not two-way street, exists between history and kerygma.

Back to the First Quest mindset

In this sense, Lüdemann does not fully subscribe to the principles of the Second Quest; but only partially, as he insists on his biases. Here, we see that although the historian's methodology

[33]Ibid., 20.

[34]Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 33-34.

belongs to the Second Quest, his mindset remains on the outdated First Quest. Scholars from the First Quest are notable for their allegiance to the principles of the Enlightenment, where rationalistic thinking is glorified while doctrines and miracles are easily dismissed.[35]

From his book, we quote Lüdemann's own words, admitting his influences from the Enlightenment. He comments on the objection that even if we have no eyewitness accounts of the resurrection, we do have the testimony of Paul himself, who claims to have seen the "Risen One." He says:

> Even if the above objection is correct, the question of the manner of the resurrection must be legitimate as long as theology makes a claim to be "scientific" and to be related to the enlightenment.[36]

Lüdemann wants it to be scientific and related to the Enlightenment. Additionally, in Chapter 5 of his conclusions, he claims the non-resurrection of Jesus. Reacted upon by modern scholars who see this as a negative consequence of the historical search, he accepts that:

> This 'modern' circle, which always wants to be in tune with the times, has recently criticized me for being an Enlightenment fundamentalist, for slashing and burning religion, and sowing only doubt [...] "Precisely because our nature is such that we cannot face life without illusions, I happily accept the taunting label of historical or Enlightenment fundamentalist.[37]

The man has spoken. Lüdemann even claims for himself the title of "historical or Enlightenment fundamentalist." This reveals that, like the First Quest scholars, he is dominated by the principles and mindset of the Enlightenment, producing

[35]Jeremias, *The Problem of the Historical Jesus,* 5.

[36]Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Christ*, 20.

[37]Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Christ*, 204.

work that was not as objective as they claimed.[38] They reconstruct a portrait of a historical Jesus fashioned in their own image, which is only earthly and not divine and over the Church.[39]

The Limits of the Historian's Presuppositions

This section puts into further question Lüdemann's methodology, which only had the Christian texts as its starting point and basis. In Chapter 3, "The Procedure," he says:

> The task of Chapter 3 is to offer fresh translations of the most important early Christian texts concerning Jesus' resurrection and to assess their historical value [...] Therefore, my analysis begins with the old kerygmatic formulations and only after that turns to the texts of the Gospels and of other noncanonical early texts.[40]

The kicker here is the phrase "my analysis begins with the old kerygmatic formulations." It is hard to think that a serious historian like him, who strongly insists that historical fact precedes and is independent of the kerygma, actually begins (and ends) his historical inquiry and arguments from within the kerygma - the Christian proclamation itself. Is not his "strictly historical inquiry" questionable and self-defeating? Thomas Raush has a supporting statement:

> The Gospels and other New Testament documents are written in light of the Resurrection and of the disciple's Easter experience of new life in Jesus; they are products of Christian Faith. Though there is considerable historic memory enshrined in the texts... they do not count as historical writings in the modern sense.[41]

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[38]Rausch, *Who is Jesus?*, 15.

[39]Jeremias, *The Problem of the Historical Jesus*, 15-47.

[40]Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Christ*, 23.

[41]Rausch, *Who is Jesus?*, 6.

Rausch understood that primarily, the scriptures were born from the kerygmatic proclamation, as he explains, "the early Christian texts were written to proclaim faith in the risen Jesus present in the Christian community and the lives of his disciples, not to document the story of his life as a modern historian might do." By entering his historical investigation through the kerygmatic formulations, the products of the Christian faith themselves, Lüdemann mistakenly contradicts himself. He is undermining his own historical assertions, rendering his conclusions unfounded and totally absurd. This leads to a question: are there limits to a historical-critical study of Jesus, particularly on his resurrection? Thomas Rausch has more to say on the limits of historical-critical research. He states:

> Historical-critical research by itself is not sufficient. First, some elements at the center of the Jesus story, for example, his resurrection, are not accessible to historical research or are only obliquely so...[42]

Rausch explains further that a "strictly historical" approach is not really objective but is conditioned by the proponents' own unrecognized secular, modernist, or postmodern biases. Such an approach cannot "prove" the resurrection, nor establish the truth of miracle stories, but only tell if these are rooted in the Jesus tradition or are later additions.

Thus, we are drawn to believe that a pure or "strictly historical inquiry," particularly on Jesus' resurrection, is a tough subject to tackle. Especially when the methods used are characteristic of Second Quest methodology coupled with Lüdemann's narrow, overly rationalistic, and naturalist approach, such a study can only go so far.

[42]Ibid., 6.

Conclusion

While Lüdemann's impressive work and sincere scholarship of the historicity of Jesus' resurrection are admirable, his methodology finds several weaknesses, compromising his historical reconstructions and conclusions.

For one, his methodology of historical inquiry is outdated and limited, reflecting approaches of historical inquiry from the Second Quest of the Historical Jesus. Also, his presuppositions of a strictly historical-critical method reveal vestiges of a First Quest mindset still glorifying the rationalistic thinking of the Enlightenment from the 1680s. He intends his study to be a purely historical investigation with historical facts per se as starting point, but instead begins his analysis in the kerygma or the church's faith interpretation of the resurrection. This largely contradicts his desired methodology.

Lüdemann would have arrived at different conclusions had he updated his methods of "historical inquiry" on the life and story of Jesus, especially the resurrection. Despite Lüdemann performing solid exegetical work on the Easter narratives, a more comprehensive historical investigation clearly necessitates new historical methods from the Third Quest. This is proven by Third Quest scholars like J.P. Meier[43] who affirm the historicity of the resurrection with their more recent findings. The Resurrection of Christ can, therefore, stand the scrutiny of historical research. Albeit pure textual analysis, using literary disciplines alone from the Second Quest - or perhaps, a personal skeptical bias - is in itself insufficient as Lüdemann has proven.

As a recommendation, future studies should continue to investigate the historicity of Jesus' Resurrection. Such studies

[43]Meier, "The Real Jesus," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAN3kQHTKWI.

take on great significance as they spell vast contributions to the whole of Christian faith and tradition. Related studies could look into how Third Quest scholars like J. P. Meier, Gary Habermas, or William Lane Craig provided new evidence for the historicity of the resurrection. During Lüdemann's time, from the late 20th century to the early 21st century, Meier had already produced his remarkable three-volume work "*A Marginal Jew*" while Habermas was in the works of building his case for the resurrection debating with Antony Flew.[44]

Unfortunately, Lüdemann did not interact as much with these Third Quest contemporary scholars from what he calls the "modern circle."[45] It is tragic to read his chilling Epilogue in the last pages of his book. In his closing statements, we discover that the acclaimed historian and New Testament scholar firmly stands his ground on the non-resurrection of Christ, effectively "annuls the Christian tradition", re-interprets Easter faith as only keeping the flame of love and goodness for others in this brief and passing human existence in a cold impersonal universe. He sees the end of his life discarding all belief in the hope and joy of the resurrection, refuting an ultimate eschatology where Christ lovingly awaits him in the life hereafter.[46]

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[44]Gary R. Habermas, Antony Flew, and Terry L. Miethe, *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? The Resurrection Debate*. 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 15-29.

[45]"Book Review on Lüdemann 's 'The Resurrection of Christ: A Historical Inquiry,'" *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 4, no. 2 (2006): 225–29.

[46]Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Christ*, 209.

BACCALAUREATE IN SACRED THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY SYNTHESIS PAPERS

THE PILGRIMAGE OF DIVINE LOVE: A THEOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS ON THE RELEVANCE OF MIGRATION IN GOD'S PLAN

Hugo Antonio Facio Hernandez, CS

Migration has been an essential experience in my journey, leading me towards self-discovery and the revelation of divine presence through experiences of anguish, pain, and joy. In this context, three motivations underlie the development of this writing.

Firstly, migration has been an essential component in my life, as I became independent from my family and immigrated to the United States at an early age. In this process, I had the privilege of encountering God through the Scalabrinian Missionaries, with whom I initiated my formative journey and to whom I owe my presence today.

A second motivation is rooted in my missionary charism, which focuses on caring for migrants. Throughout my trajectory, I have accumulated diverse experiences that have reinforced my vocation, strengthening me as an individual committed to the migrant cause.

Finally, the deepest motivation arises from the certainty that in the near future, I will dedicate my work to the field of migration. This endeavor will provide me with the necessary tools to connect the pain and suffering of migrants with the love of God. This unwavering love does not forsake and accompanies every pilgrimage step. This future commitment is envisioned as a valuable opportunity to contribute to the well-being of those who, like me at one point, embark on the migration journey.

Introduction

Throughout human history, migration has remained a persistent phenomenon, molding societies, cultures, and the lives of individuals. This constant movement of people from one place to another reflects a timeless quest for personal and familial well-being[1]. However, beyond its presence in our reality, migration also manifests itself as a theologically significant element. Thus, this study aims to provide a synthesis that inspires a deeper and more meaningful understanding of *how divine love manifests in the pilgrimage of those seeking a home away from their place of origin.*

As we delve into this topic, we will not only focus on scriptures to uncover the biblical foundations of the relationship between God and the migrant but also contemplate other themes such as revelation and faith in the migrant experience, the Trinity, Mariology, and Christology. Furthermore, we will examine how Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium of the Church have historically shaped the faith response to the migratory phenomenon.

Love of God for the Migrant: Biblical and Theological Foundations

As the principal source of divine revelation, the sacred Scriptures provide a wealth of passages illuminating the relationship between God's love and the migrant experience. These passages not only describe the physical migrations of individuals and communities but also reveal profound theological truths about the nature of God and His loving commitment to those who experience migration in their lives.

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[1]IOM, "About Migration," accessed January 15, 2024, https://www.iom.int/who-is-a-migrant.

Abraham and the Call to Leave His Land (Gn12:1-4)

The account of Abraham's call is fundamental to understanding the connection between migration and divine will. In this passage, God commands Abraham to leave his homeland for a place He will show him. This act of obedience and trust establishes a theological precedent, demonstrating that migration can be a means by which God guides and reveals His plan.

The Exodus of Israel and the Journey through the Desert (Ex 12-15)

The liberation of Israel from slavery in Egypt and their pilgrimage to the Promised Land is a paradigmatic narrative. In this event, God demonstrates His redemptive power and reveals Himself as the God who guides and protects His people amidst migration. The pillar of cloud and fire symbolizes God's constant presence during their pilgrimage.

Ruth and Naomi (Ru 1:16)

The story of Ruth and Naomi offers a poignant portrayal of migration and solidarity. Ruth, a migrant, chooses to accompany Naomi, her mother-in-law, in a gesture of loyalty and love. This narrative highlights how God can work through relationships between migrants and the receiving community.

Joseph and Mary Fleeing to Egypt (Mt 2:13-15)

The episode of Joseph, Mary, and the infant Jesus fleeing to Egypt reveals God as the protector of the vulnerable and persecuted. The migration of the Holy Family establishes the premise that even the Savior of the world experienced the reality of being a refugee.

Analyzing these passages reveals a pattern of divine love manifested through guidance, protection, and redemption during migration. These biblical narratives lay the groundwork for a deeper theological understanding of God's role in the life of the migrant, demonstrating how migration is not only a social phenomenon but also a sacred ground where divine love is manifested and where the migrant does not walk alone but is accompanied by the presence of God throughout their journey.

Revelation and Faith and Migration

Divine Revelation in the Migratory Experience of the People of Israel

The migration of the people of Israel begins with oppression in Egypt (Ex 1:8-12) and God's call to Moses from the burning bush on Mount Horeb (Ex 3:1-6). This revelation not only establishes the divine identity as Yahweh but also reveals God's deep concern and connection with the suffering of His people. The initial revelation anticipates constant divine guidance throughout the journey of the people of Israel.

Continuous manifestations of divine revelation mark the exodus. The pillar of cloud during the day and fire at night symbolize the divine direction guiding the people in their migration experience (Ex 13:21-22). Additionally, divine intervention is evident at critical moments, such as crossing the Red Sea (Ex 14:21-22), highlighting God's constant protection and care.

Divine revelation in the migration of the people of Israel goes hand in hand with the development and testing of faith (Ex 14:4-8). Despite the initial certainty expressed by the people in their willingness to follow divine instructions (Ex 12:31-42), the journey becomes an experience where faith is tested in various circumstances.

The most emblematic test occurs when spies are sent to explore the promised land (Num13:1-2). Here, the faith of the people is challenged by discouraging reports. The majority's response reflects a lack of trust in the divine promise, resulting in forty years of wandering in the desert (Num 14:26-34).

However, faith is not nullified by these challenges. The next generation, shaped by the lessons of migration and strengthened by divine providence, responds with renewed faith upon reaching the promised land (Jos 3:14-17).

The Theological Meaning of Divine Revelation in Migration

The divine revelation in the migration of the people of Israel reveals that God manifested Himself to His people freely and out of love[2]. This love can only be reciprocated through faith, which is essential to comprehend divine guidance properly. Revelation does not eliminate the need for an active and committed response from the people. Faith is not merely a passive component but a vital factor that determines people's ability to embrace and understand divine direction and overcome migration challenges.[3]

The connection between divine revelation and faith is evident throughout the migration of the people of Israel, from their liberation in Egypt to their entry into the promised land. This theological relationship emphasizes that faith is not static but a divine grace in constant development and strengthening as the people respond and understand this gesture of love amid challenges and uncertainty. Despite facing difficult moments

[2]Vatican II, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*," in *Documents of Vatican Council II*, edited by James H. Kroeger (Pasay City: Paulines Publishing House, 2011), nos. 1-2. Hereafter DV.

[3]DV 1-5.

where faith may not fully comprehend reality, it is observed that this faith strengthens as it integrates more into daily life and recognizes God's revelation as an act of gratitude, love, and friendship[4].

Trinity and Migration

Self-Identity in the Trinity and Migration

The Trinity, being a central mystery of unity and diversity hidden in God and known only through revelation[5], highlights the importance of self-identity in understanding divine love for migrants. Each Person in the Trinity retains their unique identity while participating in a joint act of love[6]. Similarly, the migrant, embarking on their journey, carries their own identity forged by their history, culture, and experiences.

Migration becomes a transformative encounter where the migrant's self-identity intertwines with the divine identity expressed in the Trinity. Just as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit maintain their distinct roles but unite in love,[7] the migrants, with their unique identity, join God's salvific plan in their pilgrimage. The Trinity provides a model of unity in diversity that invites migrants to embrace their self-identity as an integral part of the divine narrative.

In the realm of migration, each individual comes with a specific history and mission that sets them apart from others. Although they share the general label of "migrant," each plays

[4]Cfr. CCC. 152-165.

[5]Cfr. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Pasay City: Paulines Publishing House, 2005), no. 234.

[6]Cfr. Josef Neuner, SJ and Jacques Dupuis, SJ, eds., *The Christian Faith: In the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (New York: Alba House, 1996), no. 320. Hereafter ND.

[7]Cfr. Council of Toledo XI (675), ND 311-314.

a unique and valuable role in the migratory experience. This perspective can be reflected in the Trinitarian understanding of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who, despite being a single deity, are truly distinct from each other.

Similarly, in the migratory phenomenon, we can recognize the authentic diversity of each individual, understanding that they are not merely a homogeneous form. Just as "it is not the Father who is the Son, nor is the Son the Father, nor is the Holy Spirit the Father or the Son," each migrant carries a unique identity, enriching the global community with their singularity. This approach inspires us to respect and value the richness of individual experiences, recognizing that each migrant contributes uniquely to the diverse phenomenon of migration.

In this process, the Trinity and the migrant collaborate in a dance of love and transformation. The migrant's self-identity does not dissolve in the journey but is enriched as it merges with the divine narrative. The Trinity, as a community of love, offers a space where the migrant's identity connects with divine love, transforming not only the life of the migrant but also enriching the divine narrative of the salvific plan.

The Trinity and migration intertwine in a dialogue of identities, showing how diversity and uniqueness converge in divine love. Just as in the Trinity, where each person has a specific role, but none is more important than another, the migrant is no less important than the receiving country. Instead, they enrich and complement, bringing their own unique identity to the social fabric of their new home.

In this exchange of identities, divine love is manifested not only in the welcome of the receiving country but also in the mutual enrichment that arises when the migrant and society engage in the process of immersion and mutual understanding.

Mariology and Migration

Mary as a Model of Faith, Hope, and Compassion in Migration

When we contemplate Mary in the New Testament, the vision is a portrait of singular strength and grace. Mary is not merely a figure who has accompanied her Son in silence (Luke 2:51), but a woman who challenges the stereotypes of her time (Luke 1:26-35). Her presence transcends cultural limitations, and her role goes beyond a conventional maternal figure. Mary emerges as a symbol of strength, breaking with the preconceived expectations of her time (Luke 1:26-38).

In the most crucial moments, Mary stands out as a consoling mother at the foot of the cross, holding her Son with unwavering love even amid the most profound suffering (John 19:25-27). This powerful symbolism reflects a mother's unconditional love for her children, manifesting in her ability to move forward despite the pain, accompanying our paths with patience and dedication. Mary's silence represents the depth of suffering and maternal compassion that embraces all humanity.

This connection of Mary with suffering resonates with the experience of migrants. Like any mother, Mary understands the pain and uncertainty accompanying the journey of those seeking a home away from their homeland. Her consoling role extends to those facing the migration challenge, offering a silent yet understanding presence. The story of Mary, depicted in the Scriptures, serves as a reminder of maternal love that

embraces migrants in their journey, providing them with comfort and hope amid difficulties[8].

Also, Mary reveals herself as a complete model of faith, hope, and compassion for contemporary migrants. Her "Yes" to the divine plan establishes her as an example of unwavering faith, calling migrants to trust in divine providence on their journeys. Her hope is reflected in the promise of the Assumption, reminding them that their journey can lead to a heavenly destination. Her compassion, expressed in her divine motherhood, calls for solidarity and love toward those who, as migrants, seek refuge in foreign lands.

Mary becomes a ray of hope in this dialogue between Mariology and migration, reminding the Christian community of its duty to welcome and love migrants as she did with her own Son. In this special bond, the pilgrimage of divine love is enriched by Mary's loving and compassionate presence, offering comfort and guidance to those searching for a new home. In Mary, migrants find a model of faith and hope, reminding them that their pilgrimage is wrapped in the tenderness and divine love she personifies.

Christology and Migration

The Incarnation and Its Impact on the Reality of Migration

Christology, a theological reflection on Jesus Christ, reveals a profound connection with the reality of migration. Jesus, as the incarnate God, not only identifies with migrants but also

[8]Cfr. Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, accessed February 29, 2024, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/documents/rc_pc_migrants_doc_20040514_eerg-migrantes-caritas-christi_en.html, I, 15.

embodies divine pilgrimage on earth, sharing in sufferings and relinquishing celestial comfort for the love of the Father and humanity's salvation[9].

The incarnation establishes an intrinsic link with the migratory experience. Jesus, as a divine pilgrim, lived the joys and challenges of earthly life, immersing himself in the human condition and forsaking heavenly comfort to walk among us[10]. His life reflects the vulnerability and suffering experienced by many migrants, resonating deeply in their stories.

Jesus not only shares vulnerability but also relinquishment for love. His earthly ministry involves leaving the divine comfort zone, where He has always existed, demonstrating complete renunciation of comfort and security for the love of humanity: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (cf. John 3:16). This act echoes the migrant's experience, who, for the sake of a better life, leaves their place of origin to venture into the unknown and out of unconditional love for those they cherish.

Jesus' life, marked by persecution and poverty (Luke 2:6-7), reflects the reality of many marginalized migrants in their quest for a home. Identifying with the marginalized, Jesus becomes a beacon of hope and comfort for those facing difficult conditions and persecution on their journey.

The connection between the pilgrimage of Jesus Christ to the world and the migratory experience deepens in the process of rediscovery. Just as Jesus progressively understood His mission on earth (Luke 2:52), the migrants rediscover themselves in their immersion into the unknown until they find God's will

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[9]Cfr. "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*," in *Documents of Vatican Council II*, edited by James H. Kroeger (Pasay City: Paulines Publishing House, 2011), no. 2. Hereafter LG.

[10]Cfr. *CCC* 451.

in their migratory experience. Both journeys reveal a God who not only accompanies but also guides and transforms, leading the migrant to a deeper understanding of their purpose in the journey into the unknown.

In Christology and migration, the incarnation of Jesus Christ is not only a historical event but a paradigm that transforms the theological understanding of migration. Christ, as a divine pilgrim, reveals a God who embraces the reality of migrants, sharing in their suffering and walking alongside them in the search for destination and hope. In this incarnate mystery, the pilgrimage of divine love finds its most profound expression, inviting all migrants and non-migrants alike to participate in the pilgrimage of redemption and divine communion.

Tradition and Migration

The Church's Pilgrimage in the Face of Migration

In the historical trajectory of the Church, Tradition and the Magisterium have converged to inspire and establish the Church's Social Doctrine. This theological fabric has been a guiding light for understanding and addressing social realities, recognizing that the response to injustices should be not only spiritual but also concrete, seeking to safeguard the dignity of individuals through their sufferings.[11]

The Social Doctrine of the Church, shaped by Tradition and the Magisterium, acknowledges that divine love is expressed not only in prayers but also in concrete actions that defend

[11]Cfr. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, accessed February 29, 2024, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html, 71.

justice and protect human dignity.[12] In the context of migration, this doctrine manifests as a call to active compassion, solidarity, and the defense of the rights of migrants.[13]

The Church has understood that the pilgrimage of those seeking refuge and hope is not only a spiritual matter but a call to action. As the custodian of the Church's official teaching, the Magisterium has reiterated the need to address social issues comprehensively, recognizing the interconnectedness between faith and the tangible realities faced by the most vulnerable. "The promotion of peace in the world is an integral part of the Church's mission of continuing Christ's work of redemption on earth."[14]

In this way, Tradition, permeated by the wisdom accumulated over centuries, has inspired leaders and thinkers to discern appropriate responses to contemporary challenges. The experience of Tradition and the Magisterium has shown that injustices and suffering are not merely spiritual problems but wounds that require concrete attention and care.

Through the Church's Tradition, many individuals have been inspired by the Holy Spirit to offer effective responses to the challenges of reality. A notable example is John Baptist Scalabrini, who, upon understanding the needs of his migrant community, identified the problem and provided a precise response by founding a congregation of Missionaries dedicated to accompanying migration. "The cross of Christ consoles the emigrants, encourages them, and sustains their religious principles. It preserves the emigrants from the dangers of corruption and apostasy, which, little by little, would lead them to

[12]Cfr. ibid, 81.

[13]Cfr. ibid, 298.

[14]Ibid, 516.

deny not only Christianity but their duties to the motherland as well."[15]

This act exemplifies how Tradition, guided by the Holy Spirit, motivates individuals to be agents of change, responding with compassion and concrete action to the complexities of migration.

Conclusion

Throughout this theological work on migration and divine love, we have explored various biblical verses, the connection with divine revelation, faith, the Trinity, Mariology, Christology, and the Church's stance on migration.

A consistent pattern has been revealed in this writing. God has not only witnessed the pilgrimage of His people but has been a constant guide, protector, and redeemer. Considering this perspective, we can confidently assert that if God has accompanied His migrant people since their origins, He will continue to do so today. It is not just about a God present in the transcendent moments of history, such as the exodus of Israel, but a God who walks with each migrant in their personal journey.

In this dialogue between divinity and pilgrimage, an inseparable bond between God's love and the migrant's journey is revealed. God is present not only at the final destination but in every step of the journey. Thus, both God and the migrant continue their pilgrimage, one as a guide and eternal love, the other as a traveler trusting in that love that accompanies them at every step of the way. Ultimately, this theological synthesis leaves us with the certainty that divine love is not static; it

[15] *L'emigrazione italiana in America* (Piacenza 1887), 47-48, *A Living Voice,* p. 399.

manifests in action, in the constant walk alongside those seeking a home away from their place of origin.

Therefore, this conclusion gives me hope as a migrant who has tangibly experienced God walking beside me every step of my journey. Though I initially faced numerous difficulties and lived through challenging situations, this migratory journey has been transformative, guiding me to where I am today.

With all its complexities and challenges, the migratory journey has become a living testimony to God's constant presence in my life. Through adverse experiences, I have learned to trust in divine guidance and to recognize how, despite difficulties, I have never been alone. God's grace has been evident in every encounter, unexpected support, and moment of personal growth.

Today, amidst foreign lands, God's pilgrimage with me is especially manifested through my Scalabrinian community and all the individuals who have been instruments of love and solidarity on my path. The support of those around me, whether friends, professors, family, or even strangers, becomes the tangible expression of divine love in my life. Through spiritual and human relationships, I have experienced God's redeeming grace, transforming difficulties into opportunities for growth and strengthening of faith.

Thus, my migratory experience has constantly reminded me that God walks with me and uses all the people around me as channels of His love and care. This journey of love has strengthened my faith and taught me to see the divine presence even in the most challenging moments, filling me with hope to continue my pilgrimage as a migrant with gratitude and confidence in God's plan for my life.

MYSTERY AS A RENEWED PATHWAY TO RELATE WITH GOD IN A SECULAR WORLD

Robert Rizzo, SJ

Introduction

I prepare this paper in an attempt to give words to something that has eluded me throughout my theological studies, something that permeated every area of my studies, even overflowing into my spiritual and pastoral life, even as it continuously slipped from my grasp. I approached these studies with intellectual rigor and academic integrity, yet my thirst to understand all I could about God through my studies was left with an unquenchable, undefinable perception. Fuelled with a Descartian desire that my studies would make my experience of God as *clear and distinct* as possible, I was left with a desire for more – for something that went beyond logic and reason.

Mystery,[1] as we shall explore it here, is does not pertain to something we can know nothing (or very little) about. Neither does it denote something we could potentially know

[1]I will clarify some nuances in the ways in which I employ the use of the word Mystery. Mystery, capitalised and in the singular – veiled, beyond definition and comprehension – is what we will address primarily in this paper. In the plural form: Mysteries – may refer to derivatives of Mystery into Religious Mysteries or Mysteries of Faith. The general term mystery, uncapitalised, may refer to natural mystery or mystery as the lack of knowing, or unfulfilled knowledge. On the indefinability of Mystery cfr. Karl Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," in *Theological Investigations IV More Recent Writings*, trans. Kevin Smyth, vol. 4 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), 53–54. In an ontological sense, I may seem to be falling into the very ontic issue I am trying to avoid in giving a name to the unnameable, but such is the limits of our language in talking about Mystery.

everything about, given the right conditions.[2] Rather, we approach Mystery as the fundamental relational experience of transcendence between man and God – that which our being will never exhaust exploring, deepening, and experiencing; that which lies beyond the finite intelligence of human beings yet hidden within the reach of our experience.[3] When describing the Church as a Mystery, Pope Paul VI defined Mystery as "a reality that is deeply imbued with divine presence..."[4] Thus, it is our relationship with the Divine that we will explore here.

In the general sense, mystery is often given a negative meaning when compared with knowledge as that which is as yet unknown but is ontologically *knowable*.[5] Yet the essence of Mystery does not lie in its relation to knowledge. Mystery supersedes logic and reason – perceivable yet hidden behind a veil – and, therefore, must come to us through Revelation in Grace[6] – through God's self-communication. Thus, Mystery is knowable, yet it cannot be contained by knowledge. Anything we can come to through reason or provide logical proof for is not Mystery. The veracity of Mystery's truth does not come

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[2]Cfr. Thomas Aquinas, *The Power of God*, trans. Richard J. Regan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 209. (*De Potentia Dei*, q. 7, art. 5.); cfr. also Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," 38.

[3]Some Scriptural passages that further describe this are 1 Cor 2:6-11; Eph 3:1-6; Col 1:26-27; Mt 11:25.

[4]Pope Paul VI, *All'inizio Della Seconda Sessione Del Concilio Ecumenico Vaticano II*, September 29, 1963, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/it/speeches/1963/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19630929_concilio-vaticano-ii.html (accessed January 16, 2024). "*La Chiesa è un mistero, cioè una realtà arcana che è profondamente impregnata di presenza divina*." Translated by myself as the only languages of the text available of the website are Latin, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish.

[5]Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," 40.

[6]Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Roy Deferrari (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto Publications, 2004), para. 1816.

from its logical rigor or coherence but from the source of its revelation: God.

As studying[7] theology transformed me, while noticing and accepting this further step into Mystery, I realized that just as it helped develop my own faith, it may also prove to be helpful in responding to the rapid secularisation that has taken place in my home country of Malta, where Church participation has been plummeting.[8] I, therefore, wondered: Can Mystery, in its very elusiveness, serve as a bridge between two seemingly disparate realities of religion or spirituality and the secular? Can it open doors to the Transcendent in the midst of skepticism?

Our History of Expressing Mystery – Ecumenical Councils

Ecumenical Councils have served as milestones in our understanding of Christian doctrine, where discernment regarding different possibilities in particular aspects of our Faith reached a climax. Their dogmatic declarations and definitions serve as waypoints in our experience of the Christian Mystery, guides that pass on what aspects of the Mystery have been revealed and how they have been discerned and recognised. The path followed by the Councils to arrive at these recognitions and understandings of Revelation was not straightforward and clear. In the struggle to give words to this Mystery, pronouncements were made, reasoning laid out,

[7]Studying is not what transformed me. Studying is a reminiscence of my intellectual rigour, but it was reflecting on my experience of God's love, when placed in relation to my studies, which transformed me.

[8]"Mass Attendance Set to Collapse in the Years to Come," *Times of Malta*, accessed January 16, 2024, https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/mass-attendance-set-to-collapse-in-the-years-to-come.700305. It is important to note that this survey was done just before COVID. The pandemic took another big tole on Church participation, so I would expect the decline to have accelerated.

convictions held, and even some heresies[9] formed. They wrestled with giving expression to the Mystery, the God who reveals Godself to us. They attempted the colossal task of describing and, at times, even defining aspects of this Mystery. However, the Mystery of the Divine Reality that the dogma describes far exceeds its definition or description – this is how doctrine and dogmas are able to unfold and develop through the ages.[10]

The first eight ecumenical councils struggled, in particular, with the great Trinitarian and Christological aspects of Revelation over a span of more than 500 years. The journey begins with the first Council of Nicaea (325 AD), where the Arian controversy forced a confrontation with the nature of the Trinity and the situating of Jesus Christ in the Trinity. The response of the Church was to declare Christ's consubstantiality (*homoousios*) with the Father and enshrine this dogma in the Nicene Creed. We get a taste here that Mystery is not an obstacle but the very essence of the Trinity, a truth beyond human comprehension yet communicated by God and approachable through Faith. In the process, numerous positions were then declared to be incongruous with the Truth Revealed: Macedonianism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism, Monothelitism, Adoptionism – the number of these heresies is a sign of the intensity with which the Church was exploring Revelation. In this unfolding, we find negative declarations in the condemnations of heresies and positive declarations and definitions – such as the creeds.

[9]Important to note that I do not intend that those who were later declared heretics by Councils set out to be heretical. They simply held on to their conviction after the Council declared the position incongruent with the Faith. It would be their refusal to submit to the Council, and therefore to orthodoxy, which led to them being heretical.

[10]Cfr. Josef Neuner and Jacques Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, 7., rev. enlarged ed. (Bangalore: Theological Publ. in India, 2001), XXXIV. (From here on this book will be referenced as ND)

The integration of non-scriptural terminology within theology was another vital step explored in these early councils, with the terms *homoousion*, *hypostasis*, and *prosopon* in the attempts to give words to describe and define the Mystery.[11] However, it is essential to note that these attempts were not made using isolated intellectual reasoning but out of a preliminary experience of the Mystery. In Ephesus (431 AD), there is a focus on the Person of Christ – understandably wrestling with how one person can be fully human and fully divine and recognizing that within Revelation, we find Jesus as one person with two natures. Here, Mystery leads us beyond intellectual reasoning, grappling to understand the experience the disciples had in meeting one integrated person who was fully human and fully divine.

The creeds[12] are a treasure in our journey of unfolding Revelation as they serve as an essential compendium of what we believe – a summary of what we experience and come into contact with in the Mystery.[13] The creeds do not contain everything, yet they are monumental attempts to describe God, our relationship with God and the economy of Salvation. Nicaea I, and Constantinople I (381 AD) would immediately come to mind in light of this, as well as the commonly known Apostles Creed. Similarly prominent in theological circles would be the *Quicumque* and the Profession of Faith promulgated during John Paul II's Papacy in 1989, which also incorporates

[11]For further reading on this cfr. Norman Tanner, "Greek Metaphysics and the Language of the Early Church Councils: Nicaea I (325) to Nicaea II (787)," *Gregorianum* 90, no. 1 (2009): 52–57.

[12]For a comprehensive collection of creeds cfr. ND par 1-41. The side by side exposition in the CCC is also helpful, cfr. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000), 49–50. (From here on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* will be referenced as CCC).

[13]Cfr. CCC paras. 167, 187.

the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.[14] Part 1 of the current Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) follows the structure of the Apostles Creed and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, giving testament to their monumental significance.[15]

Mystery Experienced in the Mysteries of Faith in Systematic Theology

Let us now consider how we experience Mystery through different aspects of our Faith, as expressed by the Church through the ages. In demonstrating the *simplicity* of Faith, Rahner states that "fundamentally there are only three absolute mysteries in Christianity: the Trinity, the Incarnation, and sanctifying grace; and we must be aware of the internal relationships among these mysteries and especially of the essential unity of incarnation and sanctifying grace."[16] The General Catechetical Directory, published in 1971, structures the hierarchy of the truths of Faith under four headings: the Mystery of the Trinity, the Mystery of Christ's Incarnation, the Mystery of the Holy Spirit and the sanctification of the Church, and the Mystery of the Church as Christ's Mystical Body.[17] Due to brevity, I will address these two categorizations together in my analysis.

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[14]ND 1-2, explains in a concise manner a development of the form of the creed, with the final essential structure being Trinitarian and Christological.

[15]CCC para. 196.

[16]Karl Rahner, *The Practice of Faith: A Handbook of Contemporary Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 39. Cfr. Karl Rahner, "Mystery," in *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*, vol. 4 (New York: Herder and Herder New York, 1969), 139, where in elaborating one Mystery into three Rahner mentions these three. Also Cfr. Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," 65.

[17]"General Catechetical Directory," *Vatican*, para. 43, accessed January 20, 2024, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_cclergy_doc_11041971_gcat_en.html.

Trinity

The CCC expresses that "The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian Faith and life. It is the mystery of God, in himself. It is, therefore, the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them."[18] It is fitting, therefore, to begin our exploration with the Mystery of the Trinity and follow as it flows into other branches of Systematic Theology. The distinction is often made between the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity, and according to the type of position held, used as a basis for further theologizing.[19] While this distinction is made to make considerations on the Trinity more reasonably manageable, the experience of Mystery facilitates the integration of these two positions– to keep the two intellectually separate may lead to fragmented theology. I venture to say that the distinction, while making intellectual study easier, if heavily relied upon, may take away from the Mysterious beauty of encountering the Mystery as Mystery – of encountering God.

The Mystery of the Trinity is vital to our Christian life, as it is about the *being* of God. Not about what God does but about who God is – and God's 'acting' flows from God's *being*. Therefore, God's Revelation, God's self-communication, is Trinitarian, and it is fundamental for us to see this first so as to shed light on all of God's Revelation. As Rahner stated, "If God is Trinitarian

[18]CCC para. 234.

[19]The distinction was also addressed in our classes, without a particular focus on their integration, allowing for the different approaches to the Trinity. Rahner reflects on this distinction in Karl Rahner, "The Mystery of the Trinity," in *Theological Investigations XVI Experience of the Spirit*, trans. David Morland, vol. 16 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979), 256. It is also a well-known axiom of Rahner that the Economic Trinity is the Immanent Trinity, and the Immanent Trinity is the Economic Trinity, as he elaborated in his book on the Trinity.

and is really related to man and not merely by appropriation, then the communication of being and of self by God must also be Trinitarian."[20]

As we attempt to define or describe qualities of the Revelation of the Trinity, such as *oneness*, unity, distinction of Persons, equality, and immutability, even exploring the relationships between these characteristics causes apparent paradoxes to emerge. These paradoxes reveal a path beyond the rational into the supernatural Mystery, without contradicting the rational. While dogmatic definitions give us structure and order, with which we can begin to know the One Triune God, it is God's Revelation, God's offer of a relationship, and our response to that relationship that plunges us into the Mystery. As the Catechism eloquently puts it, using the words of St Augustine, "Even when he reveals himself, God remains a mystery beyond words: 'If you understood him, it would not be God.'"[21] Being the central Mystery of our Faith, the Trinity is a reality that we would not come to by reason alone in any way. It is a truth which was communicated to us by Godself. It is a fundamental truth we could only recognize through revelation, through Jesus Christ.[22] This brings us to explore Mystery as we encounter it in the Second Person of the Trinity.

The Incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity

We encountered this Mystery briefly in the Council of Ephesus above – the Mystery of the hypostatic union, of Jesus Christ's two natures within the various Christological controversies in the early Ecumenical Councils. It is also an aspect of

[20]Rahner, "The Mystery of the Trinity," 258.

[21]CCC para. 230, quoting St. Augustine, *Sermo* 52, 6, 16: PL 38:360 and *Sermo* 1 1 7, 3,5: PL 38, 663.

[22]Cfr. CCC paras. 237, 243; Mt 3:16-17; 28:19; Lk 3:21-22.

the Mystery of God, which people frequently confront, even if unknowingly, in areas with a Christian history and cultural foundation. Some tend to have an excessively divine view of Jesus, and others an inordinately human view of Him. However, to have an appreciation of Jesus as fully human and fully divine is difficult and rare because it means not taking control of Jesus and fitting Him into our concept of what He should be but allowing Him to be the Second Person of the Trinity, whom we relate with – out of our grasp but within our reality.

From the beginning of Jesus' history, as a person within time, we again see that the Second Person of the Trinity does not act alone.[23] The Incarnation intimately relates the human and divine within the one person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. With this, our humanity is intimately related with the divine. Analogously, through the Trinitarian relationship between the Father and the Son, we become adopted children of God – God is our Father by adoption through the Son,[24] while Jesus is the only begotten Son of the Father.[25]

Jesus, as fully human and fully divine, was He who could inaugurate the Kingdom of God here on earth. He did this by fulfilling the *tria munera* as priest, prophet and king.[26] Through Jesus, the *tria munera* is shared with humanity. He who embodied and fulfilled it perfectly through His humanity shared this gift and responsibility with us.[27] His inauguration of the Kingdom of God also led to His crucifixion by the authorities of the time, through which God continued to enact His plan of

[23]Cfr. Lk 1:26-38; Mt 1:18.

[24]Cfr. Eph 1:5-6, which also links this with the following part on Sanctifying Grace.

[25]CCC paras. 441-445.

[26]Jesus as priest Mt 21:12–17; Mk 2:1-12; Jn 17. Jesus as prophet: Mt 21:11; Lk 4:24. Jesus as king: Lk 1:31-33; Jn 18:36.

[27]CCC paras. 439-440.

Salvation through the Paschal Mystery, raising Jesus from the grave.[28]

For many, Jesus' humanity remains a crucial entry point into a relationship with God, as it is more usual for us to understand and relate with humanity rather than the Divinity itself. It is essential, though, that His humanity is not reduced into the goal, holding Him solely as a human role model.[29] Since the Trinity always *is* and acts together, *being One*, then Jesus' humanity can be the entry point in our relationship with God. As we relate with and pray to Jesus, we relate with the Trinity. Indeed, "Christ's whole life is Mystery,"[30] and the Mystery does not end here – for it would be improper for Mystery to end at all – but it flows into all that it touches. For instance, the Mystery of Jesus' humanity and divinity has led to reflection about Mary, trying to grapple with how a human person can be the mother of God.[31] The mystery of the Incarnation opens up doors to and sheds light on other aspects of our faith.

The Holy Spirit and Sanctifying Grace

The Mystery of Sanctifying Grace would not come to mind immediately for many Christians, yet it is a Mystery we encounter already at our Baptism. "Sanctifying Grace is a habitual gift, a stable and supernatural disposition that perfects the soul itself to enable it to live with God, to act by

[28]Cfr. CCC paras. 571-572; ND para. 680 (*Dives in Misericordia*).

[29]We also must avoid the gnostic temptation of transforming Jesus Christ into a symbolic archetype of the perfect human, as Kant does in the second book of *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone.* Again, here we see that Mystery cannot be contained within the limits of reason and logic but supersedes and overflows reason drawing us deeper, beyond.

[30]CCC paras. 512-518.

[31]Here I am referencing the dogma of the *Theotokos*. Cfr. ND 279-280, paras. 335, 605, 606/1.

his love."[32] We immediately see that the Mystery of Sanctifying Grace flows directly from the Trinity and is received through the Holy Spirit at Baptism to dispose our soul for the Trinity.[33] Sanctifying Grace is how God heals us from sin, accompanying us as we respond to God's call back to Godself. Along this path, God has blessed us with the Community of the Church and the Sacraments, which serve as channels and direct experience of God's Grace.[34]

In the current age, since the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is the Person of the Trinity, which we most 'directly' relate to, as God vivifies the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church. Even if the Holy Spirit is the 'last'[35] Person of the Trinity to be revealed to us, as St Gregory of Nazianzus asserted, "The Old Testament proclaimed the Father clearly, but the Son more obscurely. The New Testament revealed the Son and gave us a glimpse of the divinity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit dwells among us and grants us a clearer vision of himself."[36]

Indeed, we worship the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. Jesus Himself promised us the Holy Spirit, who will come to be in us, help us, and accompany us in this journey to the Father.[37] Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit in a personal way. Yet, in my experience, the Holy Spirit is the Person of the

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[32]CCC para. 2000.

[33]Cfr. CCC para. 1266, 1999. Cfr. also ST, I, q. 43, art. 3. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, vol. 1 (New York: Benzinger Brothers, Inc, 1946), 221.

[34]CCC para. 2003.

[35]When I say last, I intend it in a sense of the pedagogy of Revelation.

[36]CCC para. 684, quoting St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio theol.*, 5, 26 (= *Oratio* 31, 26): PG 36, 161-163.

[37]Jn 14:15-16, 26.

Trinity most mysterious for people. Although incomplete, we can analogously understand the Father's Fatherhood and the Son's Sonship. However, the Holy Spirit's Spiration escapes a personal analogy.[38] The Mystery of the Holy Spirit escapes our complete understanding. As we saw earlier, the Church has contended with this from at least as early as the Council of Constantinople I, when it declared Macedonianism – the belief that the Holy Spirit was either not Divine or not fully a Person of the Trinity – heretical.

A more profound experience of the Person of the Holy Spirit is now possible in the Church in light of an axial shift in perspective from what Congar themed the pre-Vatican II 'Christomonism' towards a more Trinitarian and communal perspective.[39] The Church Herself is Mystery and is so as the Mystical Body of Christ and the Holy Spirit who enlivens Her. Through the Church, we may tangibly encounter God through the Sacraments, sustaining us with God's Grace on our journey through time toward a more profound unity with God.

Application to Post-Catholic Secular Society in Malta

Nowadays, in Malta, many people believe in 'God' but are not religious. They believe that a god exists, and because of our Catholic historical culture, they will assume that this god is the Christian God. They arrive at what can be considered a rational understanding of the existence of a god, but stop there. They vaguely know Catholic teachings and Scripture yet find certain aspects confusing or contradictory to their ordinary reasoning. In response, many Catholics often try to simplify the Faith to

[38]Even in many of the analogies used through history, such as St Augustine's analogy of Lover, Beloved and Love, the Holy Spirit is less immediately recognised personally. For example, see *De Trinitate* Book 8, para. 14.

[39]Cfr. Bruno Forte, *The Church, Icon of the Trinity: An Introduction to Ecclesiology* (Makati: St. Paul Publications, 1990), 17–18.

make it more rational and easier to conform to facts and logic. In my opinion, those who no longer believe in God but only accept a rational god do so because they have been presented with a finite, limited image of a god, by those who attempt to simplify the Mystery and make it 'understandable'.[40] Thus, many people go in search for something else in mindfulness and Eastern spirituality. Some find what they are looking for in social work and serving others. Most end up resigning themselves to the endless rat race, trying to satisfy their desire for the infinite, with finite mundanities. The Catholic faith they have heard of fails to respond to their desire for meaning and transcendence. Therefore, I believe that we need to facilitate an experience of the profound Mystery – of God – with all its so-called complexities so that people may be led beyond logic and reason into a relationship with God.

The fundamental experience that facilitates an encounter with the Mystery is prayer. "This mystery, then, requires that the faithful believe in it, that they celebrate it, and that they live from it in a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God. This relationship is prayer."[41] Allow me to qualify the use of this quotation. It's not that prayer – often understood as formal prayer – is the solution. Rather, that the solution is prayer, understood as the transcendental experience of relating with God. This takes place in any context and condition as long as we are open to it. It can happen enjoying the calm sea, or serving boats of refugees. It can happen admiring the beauty of a masterpiece or fighting the rising wage inequalities. God is the fount of all transcendence, indwelling in the innermost

[40]Cfr. Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, Vatican Archive, accessed January 20, 2024, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html, par. 19.

[41]CCC para. 2558.

part of our being, and so we can find the fingerprint of God in all transcendence.

I get my inspiration from St. Paul – who, coincidentally, is also considered the father of the Maltese Faith because of his shipwreck in Malta.[42] Paul was an avid Jew and knew the Scriptures well – yet it took a mystical experience for him to go deeper into the revelation he knew and ask God, "Who are You, Lord?"[43] It is something I experienced myself, where I have had to go beyond my intellect and understanding and, in prayer, ask God, "Who are You, Lord?" every time God superseded the image I had of God, peering through the veil of Mystery – and it is something I hope to continue experiencing for the rest of my life.

Concretely, what this means for the application to the post-Catholic Maltese context is that we need to facilitate and accompany experiences of Mystery, of the transcendental encounter with a loving God, following the model of St. Paul. This means that, as Church, we need to 'wait' with them. It means being there in every context where they are searching for meaning, which I mentioned above, so that when they "fall to the ground"[44] as Paul did on the road going to Damascus, from an experience of transcendence, or an existential crisis, we may accompany them as they come to know God.

Conclusion

Mystery shows that since it deals with Revelation and Faith, it will and can never be *explained away*; that our Faith is not a crutch – tackling gnostic criticisms. Faith cannot be superseded by reason. Our intellectual rigor is not to create a closed system but to explore an open one. Reason can arrive to the point where

[42]Acts 27:39-44.

[43]Acts 9:1-19.

[44]Acts 9:4.

it recognizes that for God to be God, God must be more than anything we can conceive by reason – and therefore touch on the existence of the Mystery of God. However, it will never be able to explore that Mystery; for that, we need the Grace of Revelation.

Mystery is where we find unity, where the complex and the simple are brought together: how the faith of the old lady who prays the rosary and goes to mass twice a day, maybe without understanding all of it, and the biblical scholar who researches and studies God's Word are the same Faith; how the firmness of dogmas can be kept with the unfolding inspired interpretation of the Holy Spirit; how my prayer in thanksgiving before a meal is heard by the same God who hears the hungry cry of the poor.

I do not only agree with Rahner when he said, "the devout Christian of the future will either be a 'mystic', one who has 'experienced' something, or he will cease to be anything at all."[45] But I experienced this myself in my studies. If I had left theology on the pages of the books I read, I would have been left dry and frustrated – maybe understanding something but knowing no *one* new. It was only the experience of the Mystery which seeps through the cracks of the structure that our reason builds that made me experience awe and wonder, that brought me to know some*one* rather than somethings about faith. My desire is not for understanding; my desire is that through my theologizing, God may draw me closer to the beatific vision.[46] My inability to know everything about God is not a hindrance but an invitation – to know God more intimately so as to love Him more profoundly and follow Him more closely.[47]

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[45]Karl Rahner, "Christian Living Formerly and Today," in *Theological Investigations VII Further Theology of the Spiritual Life 1*, trans. David Bourke, vol. 7 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971), 15.

[46]Cfr. CCC para. 1028.

[47]Cfr. Spiritual Exercises para. 104, Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises*, trans. Louis Puhl (New York: Random House, 2000).

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