LOYOLA PAPERS

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Theology and Ministry Program
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Rev. Fr. Catalino G. Arévalo, S.J.

1925-2023

First Dean and President of Loyola School of Theology

EDITOR'S PREFACE

In this issue of *Loyola Papers*, we humbly pay tribute to one of our former editors who was also the first Dean and later on President of Loyola School of Theology: Rev. Fr. Catalino G. Arévalo, S.J. (1925-2023) who passed away at the ripe age of 97 on January 18, 2023.

Fr. Arévalo finished his doctoral studies in Dogmatic Theology at the Gregorian in 1959. The first doctoral student of the renowned ecclesiologist Fr. Francis A. Sullivan, S.J., he became the first Filipino to teach at the Jesuit theologate in Woodstock College, Maryland. Upon his return to the Philippines, he taught at San Jose Seminary until 1965, when he became the first dean and eventually president of what is now Loyola School of Theology.

Hailed as the "Father of Asian Theology" by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference, he was the secretary of the 1970 meeting of the Asian bishops with Pope Paul VI in Manila and served the Federation since then as its main theological peritus. He was the mind behind the programmatic document "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia" of the first FABC Plenary Assembly in 1974 and headed its "Theological Advisory Commission" for more than a decade.

He also served the local Church in the Philippines, working very closely with the late Jaime Cardinal Sin, who dubbed him the "Dean of All Filipino Theologians and the Godfather of Hundreds of Priests." In 1997, he received the distinguished papal award, *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*, from Pope John Paul II and was conferred the title, Doctor of Humanities *honoris causa,* by his alma mater, Ateneo de Manila University. With nothing more than a slim book of homilies published under

his name, he penned (or rather, typed) thousands of pages, all in humble and quiet service to God and his people. He was quoted as saying in the citation for his honorary doctorate: "All this writing has been done, I trust, in the service of the Church. My Jesuit vocation places my life completely at the service of the Church: her people, her communities, her leadership, her works."

* * *

Our first article, "Illusions of Influence: Clerical Partisan Engagement During the 2022 Elections," by moral theologian **Rev. Fr. Eric Marcelo Genilo, S.J.**, is an attempt to draw the line between the duty of the Church to form the consciences of the faithful in order to help them make prudent political choices, and what he calls "public partisan political activity." Analyzing last year's elections, he applies key distinctions, such as the difference between "political rejection" and "political endorsement" to evaluate the political involvement of some clergy. In this incisive essay, he observes "a disturbing disconnection between church leaders and ordinary citizens regarding assessing political candidates," resulting in the dilution, if not drowning, of the Church's "prophetic voice." He warns that "when a cleric engages actively in campaigning for a candidate, there is a conflation between the cleric's identity as a representative of the Church and his partisan political advocacy." Thus, he comes to the rather bold but perhaps prophetic opinion that "The CBCP should have known better than to allow public political partisan activity by the clergy during the last elections."

The next article by **John Lemuel Lenon,** titled "Faithful Citizenship in the Person of Jesus," is a Christological inquiry into the political stance of Jesus. He notes that while earlier scholars may have been reluctant to consider Jesus as political,

a rediscovery of politics that now appraises it in a more positive light lets us take a second look at him as a citizen. In this very insightful paper, Lenon contends that being a faithful citizen is an inextricable part of Jesus' faithfulness to God that "calls for a kind of political engagement that seeks to orient society towards the common good and to structure it justly." He then goes on to discuss the Beatitudes and Jesus' teaching on retaliation and how they embody this idea of faithful citizenship. In light of the growing tendency nowadays to bracket religious beliefs in the civic and political sphere and vice versa, this model of citizenship inspired by the Gospels can be a viable application of the "better kind of politics" that Pope Francis advocates.

Gabriel Liu, S.J.'s "Divided Yet One: The Two Catholic Communities in China" offers a first-hand glimpse at the situation of the Catholic Church in China where he avers that instead of two Churches - one sponsored by the government and another underground - there are instead two divided communities. Tracing the history of this unfortunate division and the Communist government's continual attempt to regulate religion in China, Liu refers to a deepening wound that this has engendered between the two segments of the one Catholic Church. At the same time, he points to some glimmers of hope that seem to signal an ongoing shift towards change and openness in the relationship between these two communities, as well as in the relationship between the Chinese government and the Holy See.

"Wisdom: The Feminine in the Divine" by **Rev. Fr. Rogel Anecito L. Abais, S.J.** dives deep into the character of "Sophia" or Lady Wisdom as expounded in the Scriptures. Building upon the critique of American feminist scripture scholar Rosemary Ruether, who considered the Wisdom Literature as still heavily androcentric despite its seeming

exaltation of certain feminine figures, Fr. Abais invites us to revisit the text, focusing his analysis on the figure of "Sophia" and her "three-tiered unfolding" in the book of Wisdom. Here he demonstrates how Lady Wisdom is not only highly exalted in the book, but is virtually identified with the Divinity himself/herself, who "manifests his being in both feminine and masculine realities."

We also have **Christiane Joseph Jocson**'s "Juan Luis Segundo's Hermeneutical Circle: A Continual Hermeneutical Encounter of the Word and the World" wherein he examines the work of the Uruguayan Jesuit theologian and a prominent figure in Latin American Liberation Theology. The author takes a close look at Segundo's "hermeneutical circle," which he describes as "an arduous journeying with one another," not unlike the synodal process. This "feet on the ground" theology — or a kind of theology 'done on our feet' as described by Fr. Daniel Franklin Pilario, C.M. in his Facebook tribute to Fr. Arévalo: — advocates a mutual encounter between the Word and the world in the process of trying to understand divine revelation. Adopting a critical attitude of "suspicion" that enables an awareness, if not unraveling of the "ideological veil" in existing interpretations, this method that promotes that the poor are the decisive "hermeneutical key" in understanding the Word of God, especially in contexts where poverty rooted in injustice afflicts the lives of many people. It challenges our traditional ways of doing theology and banks on the "creative power of the Spirit" to unleash the dynamism of the Word that longs to be incarnated again in us by way of praxis.

Kenjie Cortez's "A Church in Communion: PCP II and the Early Church" revisits the ecclesiological vision of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, in time for the 30th anniversary of PCP II in 2022 and coinciding with the ongoing Synod on Synodality. Responding to the lack

of a "synthetic ecclesiology" that was observed by Cardinal Tagle in PCP II's section on the Church, Cortez attempts to gather its insights in light of the witness of the Early Church as expressed in Acts 2:42; 4:32-35. This he does under three emblematic headings: "A Church in the Spirit," "A Church in Search," and "A Church in Sharing," which he applies to PCP II's vision of being Church of the Poor to elaborate on its pneumatological, missionary and eucharistic aspects. He reaffirms the significance of PCP II as a "watershed moment for a local Church" that, at the same time, continues to be "a gift and task" for us after three decades.

The last article "Ignatius of Loyola and C.S Lewis in Dialogue on Discernment" by **Ramon Mikhail Paulo Nicdao** juxtaposes the teachings of the Jesuit founder and known "Master of Discernment" in *The Spiritual Exercises* with the insights embedded in the great English novelist's *The Screwtape Letters.* In this interesting analysis, Nicdao even goes on to imagine a battle between the demon Wormwood, mentored by his uncle, Screwtape on the one hand, and Ignatius on the other, over the soul of the Patient in the four turning points of his life. Here he shows how Ignatius' "Rules for the Discernment of Spirits," drawn from his own experiences of spiritual struggle, effectively combats the diabolic tactics being taught by Screwtape to Wormwood. He concludes with a brief treatment on how literary narrative belonging to the first level or order of language that is "rich in symbols, metaphors, and images" complements the second level or order of language to which the elaboration of theology and doctrine belongs, and will hopefully help one to arrive at the third level or order of language which is that of encounter with Mystery.

* * *

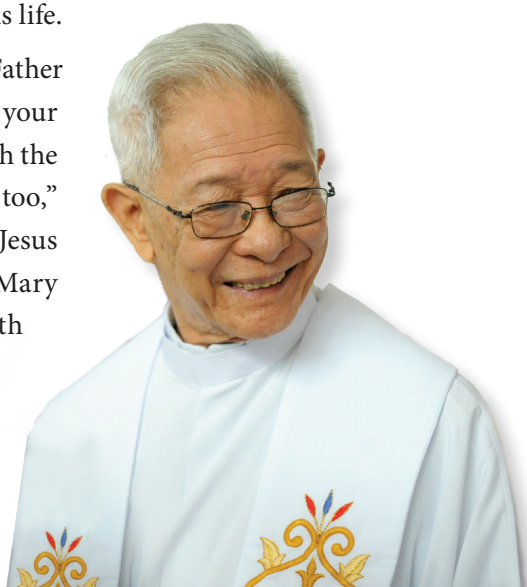
For our synthesis papers, we are pleased to have **Eduardo Miguel Ramirez**'s "Healing Grace: A Framework of Hope for Sexual Abuse Survivors" for Theology and **Tuyet Trinh Tran**'s "In the Realm of Silence, I Long for the Missing" for Philosophy.

The first one adopts the complex and painful framework of sexual abuse as a lens to examine the mysteries of faith which become a way towards hope and wholeness through God's healing grace based on the experience of the author himself. The second invites us to plunge into the beckoning silence in the search for truth, identity, and meaning.

* * *

Turning our thoughts once more to the great figure of Fr. Catalino Arévalo, S.J., what comes to mind are those moving lines he added to the poignant hymn that we sing in San Jose Seminary that are now immortalized in the stained-glass image of Saint Joseph over the main door of their chapel: *corda nostra tecum custodi*. Keep our hearts with you. His incomparable theological legacy aside, he bequeaths to all of us, who were blessed to have encountered him, a sterling witness of love for Jesus Christ, for Our Lady, and for the people of God expressed in his tireless service to the Church as well as in his quiet fidelity in the twilight of his life.

Our dear Fr. Revs, may the Father of Priestly Sons continue to keep your heart, as he always has, "...through the noonday years and life's evening too," ever close to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary whom you loved and served with all your heart.



ARTICLES

ILLUSIONS OF INFLUENCE: CLERICAL PARTISAN ENGAGEMENT DURING THE 2022 ELECTION

Eric Marcelo O. Genilo, SJ

This paper will discuss the public partisan political activity of some priests and bishops during the 2022 Philippine presidential elections. This author will argue that this activity was contrary to the proper role of clergy in politics and undermined the Church's moral credibility and pastoral mission.

Definitions, Distinctions, and Parameters

This paper focuses on diocesan and religious clergy because of their role as ordained ministers of the Church. The points of this paper also apply to religious sisters and brothers whose public partisan political activity affects their apostolic work and communities.

This paper uses the term "public partisan political activity" to refer to public action or speech intended to influence voters to support or reject a candidate or party in an election. Applied to clergy, this can include public statements of endorsement or denunciation of a candidate, intentionally wearing or publicly exhibiting the party colors, symbols, images, or slogans of a candidate while identifying one's self as a cleric, hosting political activities of a candidate in church facilities or properties while excluding other candidates, using homilies and liturgical rites to support or denounce a candidate, and other actions that associate clerical identity with an endorsement or rejection of a candidate.

The term "public partisan political activity" is not applied to voting or having a private political opinion. The term also

does not refer to activities supporting honest, peaceful, and clean elections nor to efforts to eliminate all forms of corruption, injustice, misinformation, or violence in society. These are not partisan activities but are necessary contributions to the common good that every citizen, regardless of political affiliation, should promote.

A discussion of the qualifications of specific candidates for public office is not within the scope of this paper. The paper will only focus on the Church's teaching on political participation, the factors that contributed to the partisan political activity of some clergy during the 2022 presidential elections, and the moral and pastoral implications of such activity.

The Church and Political Participation

The Church's social teaching calls for the promotion of integral human development and the defense of human rights to ensure a just and humane society. The Magisterium considers politics an area of public life where Catholics should take an active role as responsible citizens. The *Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith* emphasizes the importance of political participation of every citizen to the proper functioning of a democratic state.

> It is commendable that in today's democratic societies, in a climate of true freedom, everyone is made a participant in directing the body politic. Such societies call for new and fuller forms of participation in public life by Christian and non-Christian citizens alike. Indeed, all can contribute, by voting in elections for lawmakers and government officials, and in other ways as well, to the development of political solutions and legislative choices which, in their opinion, will benefit the common good. The life of a democracy could not be productive without the active, responsible and generous involvement of everyone, 'albeit in a

> diversity and complementarity of forms, levels, tasks, and responsibilities.'[1]

While the Magisterium recognizes that the Church's mission in the world is primarily religious and that the Church and the State are independent of each other, this does not mean that the Church cannot engage the State on matters of religious, moral, and social importance.[2] While the Church recognizes that it does not have specific competence to speak about political structures and programs, it shares with the State the task of promoting justice for the good of every person under their care.

> Building a just social and civil order, wherein each person receives what is his or her due, is an essential task which every generation must take up anew. As a political task, this cannot be the Church's immediate responsibility. Yet, since it is also a most important human responsibility, the Church is duty-bound to offer, through the purification of reason and through ethical formation, her own specific contribution towards understanding the requirements of justice and achieving them politically (Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, #28).

Church documents distinguish between the roles of the clergy and the laity in politics.

> We have seen that the formation of just structures is not directly the duty of the Church but belongs to the world of politics, the sphere of the autonomous use of reason. The Church has an indirect duty here, in that

[1]Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Questions regarding their Participation of Catholics in Political Life,* 24 November 2002, accessed 6 July 2022, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_ cfaith_doc_20021124_politica_en.html#_ftn4.

[2]Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Washington, DC: USCCB Publishing, 2004), #424.

> she is called to contribute to the purification of reason and to the reawakening of those moral forces without which just structures are neither established nor prove effective in the long run. The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society, on the other hand, is proper to the lay faithful (Deus Caritas Est #29).

> ...the clergy can teach moral doctrines covering politics but cannot actively involve themselves in partisan politics. In practice, religious men and women are also included in this prohibition.[3]

> That pastors have competence in the moral principles governing politics and that laity have competence in active and direct partisan politics is a good rule of thumb to follow (PCP II, #342).

The Church has a duty to form the consciences of Catholics to guide them toward just and prudent political choices. This duty can involve educating the faithful on the necessary qualifications of a candidate for elective office and the correct way of making a discernment when faced with political choices. It is part of the formative duty of the Church to speak out against any political program or law that it considers gravely harmful to the common good. For example, John Paul II expressed his explicit opposition to laws threatening human life and called for Catholics to act according to their conscience and not vote for such laws.[4]

> In the case of an intrinsically unjust law, such as a law permitting abortion or euthanasia, it is therefore never licit to obey it, or to 'take part in a propaganda campaign in favour of such a law, or vote for it.'

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[3]Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), *Catechism on Church and Politics,* February 1988, accessed 27 June 2022, https://cbcponline.net/catechism-on-the-church-and-politics/.

[4]John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* #73 quoting CDF, Declaration on Procured Abortion #22.

It is crucial, however, that any Church-supported campaign against specific laws and programs must pursue the common good of all and not focus on promoting Catholic interests. In a predominantly Catholic country such as the Philippines, some Church leaders tend to presume that, since most Filipinos identify as Catholics, national laws should embody Church teachings. In his essay, "People of God, People of the Nation: Official Catholic Discourse on Nation and Nationalism," Jose Mario Francisco analyzed the pastoral statements of the CBCP on nationhood and drew out an underlying "imaginary of a Catholic nation" in their discourse. The bishops' statements identified being Filipino with Catholicism and linked patriotism with support for the Church.[5] This imaginary of the Philippines as a Catholic nation emboldens the CBCP to make political interventions when it perceives that proposed national laws will violate Church teachings. Many non-Catholics and dissenting Catholics do not share the bishops' presumption that legislation should always conform to Catholic teaching. This is evidenced by the general public's support for passing the 2012 Reproductive Health Law despite the Church's opposition to the law.

The Compendium of the Social Teaching of the Church rejects any imposition of norms by a majority religion that is discriminatory to the rights of minority religions.

> Because of its historical and cultural ties to a nation, a religious community might be given special recognition on the part of the State. Such recognition must in no way create discrimination within the civil or social order for other religious groups.

[5]Jose Mario C. Francisco, "People of God, People of the Nation: Official Catholic Discourse on Nation and Nationalism," *Philippine Studies* 62, 3-4 (2014): 341-375.

> Those responsible for government are required to interpret the common good of their country not only according to the guidelines of the majority but also according to the effective good of all the members of the community, including the minority (Compendium#169).

The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines warned pastors against violating the religious freedom of non-Catholics and even dissenting Catholics:

> It needs emphasizing, that, although pastors have the liberty to participate in policy debate and formulation, that liberty must not be exercised to the detriment of the religious freedom of non-communicants, or even of dissenting communicants. This is a clear implication of Vatican II's *Dignitatis Humanae.* This is not just a matter of prudence; it is a matter of justice.[6]

> There may even be some Catholic believers who in all honesty do not see the truth the way the Church's magisterium discerns, interprets, and teaches it. In such a situation, the Church must clearly and firmly teach what it believes is the truth and require its members to form their consciences accordingly. Yet the Church must also, with all charity and justice, hold on to its doctrine on religious freedom -- that the human person is bound to follow his or her conscience faithfully, and must not be forced to act contrary to it.[7]

Church leaders have to respect the religious freedom of non-Catholics and the primacy of conscience of dissenting Catholics when they publicly oppose laws and programs that they consider to be contrary to the common good. Care must be taken to ensure that the interpretation of the common good is not simply drawn from a Catholic perspective but is achieved through communal discernment, dialogue between

[6]PCP II #358

[7]PCP II # 362-363

different disciplines and sectors, and respectful negotiation among stakeholders within and outside the Church.

Clergy Partisan Activity in Elections and its Implications

The question arises whether the Church's duty to form consciences during elections includes explicit clerical endorsement or rejection of specific candidates or political parties. A distinction needs to be made between political rejection and political endorsement.

a) Denouncing a Candidate

Suppose a candidate or a political party publicly expresses an intention to introduce a law or political program considered unjust by the Church (e.g., restoring the death penalty or legalizing physician-assisted suicide). In this case, pastors must inform the consciences of Catholic voters regarding the harmful consequences of such a law or political program if these are implemented. The Church's teaching on the primacy of conscience, however, respects the right of Catholics to vote according to the best judgment of their conscience, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of each political option. There are situations where a particular candidate or party already has a historical record of gravely harmful policies or practices (e.g., racist policies or abusive use of power). Such situations can provide a basis for Church leaders to warn Catholics of possible negative consequences if a particular candidate or party is elected.

There is a historical pattern of campaigns by the clergy to denounce and reject candidates in Philippine elections. These rejections are not expressed through official public statements of the bishops' conference but in individual or group statements of some bishops and priests. Some candidates have

been denounced because of their religion (Fidel Ramos)[8], moral character (Joseph Estrada and Rodrigo Duterte), or family history (Ferdinand Marcos, Jr.). Some candidates have also been rejected because they disagreed with the Church on a critical issue.

Contraception is an example of an issue that can influence the Church to launch a negative campaign against a candidate. The clergy waged a partisan campaign against Juan Flavier during the 1995 senatorial elections. Flavier had been the Health Secretary, and he received much opposition and vilification from Church leaders because he promoted contraceptives in government health centers and distributed condoms to prevent the spread of HIV.[9] Similarly, some clergy denounced several legislators running for office in the 2013 midterm election who supported the passage of the Reproductive Health Law that allowed greater public access to contraceptives and sterilization.[10]

Does the Church have the authority to tell Catholic voters to reject a candidate? The CBCP's Catechism on Church and Politics allows bishops to oblige Catholics to vote for a political option under pain of sin, but this is only for rare and extraordinary cases.

> Is there any case when the Bishops can authoritatively order the lay faithful to vote for one particular and concrete option? Yes, there is, and the case would

[8]Robert L. Youngblood, "President Ramos, the Church, and Population Policy in the Philippines," *Asian Affairs* 25, 1 (1998): 3-4.

[9]Raymund Jose G. Quilop, "Religion and Politics in the Philippines," in *The Politics of Religion in South and Southeast Asia,* Ishtiaq Ahmed, ed. (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2011), 163.

[10]Eleanor R. Dionisio, "Catholic Partisanship in the 2013 Elections: 'Churchifying' Democracy or Democratizing the Church?," *Philippine Sociological Review* 62 (2014) 11-40.

> certainly be extraordinary. This happens when a political option is clearly the only one demanded by the Gospel. An example is when a presidential candidate is clearly bent to destroy the Church and its mission of salvation and has all the resources to win while hiding his malevolent intentions behind political promises. In this case, the Church may authoritatively demand the faithful, even under pain of sin, to vote against this particular candidate. But such situations are understandably very rare.[11]

There is no objective basis to consider the presidential candidacies of Ramos, Estrada, Duterte, and Marcos a threat "to destroy the Church and its mission of salvation." Even when some bishops expressed opposition against these candidates, the episcopacy never obliged the faithful to vote against them under the pain of sin.

The problem with clerical attempts to publicly reject a candidate is that the issues which the clergy use as a basis to denounce a candidate are not necessarily the issues influencing Catholic voters decisively in elections. This is demonstrated by the fact that most of the denounced candidates mentioned above won despite Church opposition, some by a wide margin. The numerous times that Filipinos have rejected clerical appeals to vote against specific candidates reveal a disturbing disconnection between Church leaders and ordinary citizens regarding assessing political candidates.

Suppose Church leaders seek to prevent the election of a candidate who intends to introduce an unjust law. In that case, clergy can speak on the grave harm to society that the candidate's proposed laws or political programs can cause while acknowledging that other pressing social issues are also crucial to voters. This approach allows voters to decide

[11]CBCP, *Catechism on Church and Politics*, Part III, 6.

on the merits of the Church's position on an issue while also considering other national concerns (e.g., poverty, human rights violations, militarization, unemployment, food insecurity, environmental degradation, etc.). The clergy should not demonize candidates with offensive words. This is uncharitable, unjust, and inappropriate for pastors who are supposed to be signs of unity in the community and are expected to exercise civility in public discourse. Negative political campaigning by the clergy is disedifying to the faithful. It is also counterproductive because it increases sympathy and support for the denounced candidate, who will be perceived as an underdog bullied by the church authorities.

b) Endorsing a Candidate

The endorsement of political candidates by the clergy happens less often than political denunciations but is more problematic. One can understand why the Church could object to a candidate because of a perceived danger to the common good that the candidate represents. It is, however, difficult to justify clergy endorsement of a particular candidate if other qualified candidates are also running for the same office. A priest or bishop's endorsement of a candidate explicitly communicates to the public that this candidate has the qualities and political programs that the other candidates lack. If enough clergy unite their endorsements for a candidate, it can give the impression that the Church is calling for a Catholic vote in favor of the candidate.

As a body, the CBCP has denied the existence of a Catholic vote. The Church wants to differentiate itself from other religious groups whose leaders endorse candidates to their followers.

> The Bishops in the CBCP, while respecting what the leaders of El Shaddai and other groups have been

> doing for years, still maintain the freedom of Catholic members to choose their candidates. We expect them to discern, discuss and personally decide whom to vote for. To dictate to them who to vote is as bad as buying their votes. In the end, we cannot be genuinely sure whether the candidates who have been dictated on the voters will really serve them. All the more if the voters are taken with a 'buy and sell attitude.' Proof of this is the past experience of elections. The CBCP does not want the candidates to be indebted to the bishops; instead we want the candidates to make a genuine covenant with the electorate: that if elected they will serve the people and not themselves.[12]

> Are there so-called "Catholic candidates," or is there a "Catholic vote"? The Gospel does not prescribe only one way of being political or only one way of political governing (such as monarchical, presidential, parliamentary, etc.), much less only one political party or even one slate of candidates. No one political option can fully carry out the Gospel mandate of renewing the political order or of serving the common good. No one political party or platform or set of candidates can exclusively claim the name Catholic. Hence to Catholics, there are many political options that the Gospel does not prohibit. Therefore, there is generally no such thing as a "Catholic vote" or "the Bishops' candidates". This is simply a myth. The Bishops do not endorse any particular candidate or party but leave to the laity to vote according to their enlightened and formed consciences in accordance with the Gospel.[13]

While the Church allows lay Catholics to be members of political parties, the Magisterium also cautions the faithful from thinking that a political party can fully embody the Church's social vision and teachings.

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[12]Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Freedom to Choose Candidates,* 13 March 2007, *CBCP Monitor* Vol II #6 (18 March – 1 April 2007).

[13]CBCP, *Catechism on Church and Politics.*

> To claim that one party or political coalition responds completely to the demands of faith or of Christian life would give rise to dangerous errors. Christians cannot find one party that fully corresponds to the ethical demands arising from faith and membership in the Church.[14]

Despite explicit statements of the CBCP denying the existence of a Catholic vote, there have been attempts by clergy and lay organizations to organize a Catholic vote for or against specific candidates. An official of the Episcopal Commission on Family and Life of the CBCP issued a threat to candidates during the 2010 elections, warning that "the Catholic Church knows how to mobilize its members not to vote for anti-life politicians."[15] In the 2013 midterm elections, Catholic lay groups such as Couples for Christ, the Knights of Columbus, and the Catholic Women's League started a Catholic Vote Movement to punish legislators who voted for the Reproductive Health Law.[16] The Council of the Laity (Laiko), directly under the CBCP Episcopal Commission on the Laity, called for a Catholic vote in the 2022 presidential elections.[17]

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[14]Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* #573.

[15]Carmen Crimmins, "Birth Control Battle Weighs on Philippine Economy," *Reuters,* 18 August 2008, accessed 6 June 2022, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-birthcontrol-idUSMAN9685220080818.

[16]UCANews, "Catholics Unite Against RH Bill Lawmakers," 14 December 2012, accessed 6 July 2022, https://www.ucanews.com/news/catholics-unite-against-rh-bill-lawmakers/66849.

[17]Sunstar Manila, "Laity Pushes for 'Catholic Vote' on 9 May," 29 April 2022, accessed 6 July 2022, https://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/1927656/manila/local-news/laity-pushes-for-catholic-vote-on-may-9.

Pastors who objected to Church partisan activity in previous elections have supported clergy political endorsements in the 2022 elections. For example, Archbishop Socrates Villegas of Lingayen Dagupan spoke out against Church partisan endorsement in the 2013 midterm elections:

> In endorsing candidates, the Bride of Christ, the Church tarnishes her spiritual mission with the stain of the mundane. The endorsed candidate might win, but religion has been reduced to a political party; religion has been used for political gain, and our spiritual mission has been compromised. We will be lonesome widows after the elections for marrying partisan politics during the campaign.[18]

However, during the 2022 election campaign period, Archbishop Villegas defended the public support of clergy for the candidacy of Leni Robredo.[19]

When a cleric engages actively in campaigning for a candidate, there is a conflation between the cleric's identity as a representative of the Church and his partisan political advocacy. Some priests and bishops claim that they engage in partisan politics as individuals as if they can easily disassociate themselves from the Church they represent as ordained ministers. This argument presumes that priests and bishops can easily step out of their role as shepherds, ministers, and leaders and act in a politically partisan manner without any danger of confusion or scandal for the communities that they serve and represent. However, the Magisterium sees the cleric as intimately associated and identified with the Church. Even private actions of the clergy can have repercussions on their

[18]Dionisio, "Catholic Partisanship in the 2013 Elections," 26.

[19]UCANews, "Filipino Clergymen Defend Outspoken Support for Robredo," 20 April 2022, accessed 11 July 2022, https://www.ucanews.com/news/filipino-clergymen-defend-outspoken-support-for-robredo/96969.

priesthood, ministry, and the Church. One hard lesson that the Church has learned from the clerical sex abuse scandal is that an individual priest's inappropriate actions can seriously affect his priesthood, apostolate, fellow clergy, the institutional Church, and the communities he serves. A priest's or a bishop's identity as an ordained minister of God's people is not like a cloak one can take off while acting publicly in the political sphere. It is more like a person's skin that always expresses a unique ecclesial identity and carries with it the image and authority of the Church that ordained that person.

Pastoral and Moral Implications of Partisan Political Activity by the Clergy

The CBCP should have known better than to allow public political partisan activity by the clergy during the last elections. Past statements of the CBCP have already warned against clerical engagement in partisan politics and the harm it can cause to the unity of the Church.

> Why should priests, religious men, and women refrain from involvement in partisan politics? As we have seen, the prohibition is not because of any Philippine constitutional provision. But the Church prohibits clergy participation in partisan politics because they are considered symbols of unity in the Church community. For them to take an active part in partisan politics, with its wheeling and dealing, compromises, confrontational and adversarial positions, would be to weaken their teaching authority and destroy the unity they represent and protect.[20]

> It is precisely because of the possibility of plural options in politics that Church people who hold positions of leadership in the Church do not ordinarily engage in what is called "partisan politics". Church leaders represent the entire community which they head or

[20]CBCP, *Catechism on Church and Politics,* 1988, Part III, 2.

> lead and for them to publicly and officially, as it were, push for one option over others when, these are equally compatible with the Gospel and hence moral, would be tantamount to claiming theirs is the only option in the Gospel to take and the people should follow their lead. This would be disastrous for the unity of the community.[21]

Concerned Filipino clergy have also objected to the overt partisan activity of some priests and bishops in the recent elections. Ranhilio Aquino argues that the teaching of Vatican II on partisan politics draws a line that should not be crossed.

> So, in these uncertain times, when on the one hand we have clerics asserting the right of the Church to repudiate evil — and by that, they mean campaign openly against the candidacy of one who they consider the embodiment of everything they dislike, other bishops have warned against the use of the pulpit for endorsing candidates and have cautioned against "crossing the line" separating the permissible from the impermissible. So, just where is the line? In the Church, the answer must come from the Chair. The answer must be built on rock!
>
> First, there is the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*) that teaches: "Christ, to be sure, gave his Church no proper mission in the political, economic or social order. The purpose which He set before her is a religious one" (GS #42). "The Church, by reason of her role and competence, is not identified in any way with the political community nor bound to any political system. She is at once a sign and a safeguard of the transcendent character of the human person" (GS #76).
>
> Clearly then, when bishops and priests immerse themselves in partisanship that they form part of the

[21]CBCP, *Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Politics,* 16 September 1998.

> divide between supporters of candidates or worse, bring it about; then, by the standards and precepts of the Second Vatican Council, the line has been crossed. That they must, however, speak against injustice or the perpetuation of iniquity is clear — but to identify a candidate as the harbinger of doom or the embodiment of corruption is quite another.[22]

In a clergy recollection, Joel Tabora warned of the dangers of partisan political activity and the clericalism it can foster.

> As clerics we stand for and identify ourselves with a message of salvation, our Gospel, that transcends the well-being any political party may offer for the temporal world. We do so officially and personally. We ought not endanger or compromise our message by confounding its truth and authority with the promise of any political program for the temporal world which promotes necessarily only a limited aspect of fraternity.
>
> The assessment of the current political situation as dire and the conviction that one's partisan political conviction is truth may distract clerics from their mission as proclaimers of the Gospel to all and as pastors for all through different political seasons and a diversity of political systems and choices. The graced identification of the cleric with the Gospel he proclaims liberates him from the compulsion in a dire situation to identify with a temporal political program.
>
> With the Gospel shedding light on our temporal situation, we make our own personal political choices. But we ought not allow our fallible partisan political choices to be confounded with the infallible Gospel whose proclamation is our mission. We must not insinuate that our personal partisan political judgement is anything more than just that, having no added argumentative weight because it is pronounced by ourselves as clerics.

[22]Ranhilio Aquino, "Chair and Rock," *Manila Times,* 23 February 2022, accessed 14 July 2022, https://www.manilatimes.net/2022/02/23/opinion/columns/chair-and-rock/1833928

> We who have access to the confessional must also take special care that we do not pass moral judgement on the character, the benevolence, the motivation of all candidates because we are convinced of the goodness of one or of the perfidy of another.
>
> The clerics' partisan political position is not privileged in persuasiveness because it is the position of clerics. This is a type of clericalism we need to avoid in a synodal Church. Instead, we need to listen to the citizens who may not be voting as we do; we must allow our perceptions and convictions to be challenged by those who live and think differently from ourselves.[23]

Whether a political candidate endorsed by the clergy wins or loses in an election, there will always be negative repercussions to the Church's identity, moral authority, and mission. If an endorsed candidate loses, the Church's moral credibility and voice in politics is diminished. The election loss of the endorsed candidate can be interpreted as a repudiation of the church leadership's inappropriate partisan political interventions, and it is like a resounding slap on the face of the Church.[24]

If an endorsed candidate wins, the Church's pastoral and religious mission can also be compromised. The clergy will be encouraged to continue their partisan activity in future elections. This will foster political clericalism that gives priests and bishops the illusion of being political power players in the country. Candidates who win because of the Church's support

[23]Joel Tabora, "On Church Involvement in the 2022 Elections: Fraternity, Social Friendship, and Politics," *Fr. Joel E. Tabora SJ Blog*, 9 March 2022 (14 July 2022) https://taborasj.wordpress.com/2022/03/09/on-church-involvement-in-the-2022-elections-fraternity-social-friendship-and-politics/.

[24]Franco Jose C, Barona, "Poll Results a 'Slap in the Church's Face,'" *Manila Times* 11 June 2022, Accessed 29 June 2022, https://www.manilatimes.net/2022/06/11/news/national/poll-results-a-slap-in-churchs-face/184688.

may feel indebted to the church leaders and grant Catholics special favors not given to other groups. Bishops may start pressuring the government to pass laws that enshrine Catholic moral teachings to create a theocratic society.

Turning to the 2022 elections, one may argue that the Church has reason to object to a Marcos presidency. Still, partisan campaigning for Leni Robredo was not appropriate for clergy, even if it seemed an obvious choice from a strategic point of view. The partisan clerical campaign ultimately failed to move the majority of Filipino voters. It failed not just because of misinformation or the political tactics of the Marcos campaign. It also failed because it was offensive to many Filipinos who have consistently rejected clerical partisan interventions in past elections.

The argument that the Church prohibition on clergy participation in partisan politics can be justifiably suspended because of the urgency of preventing a Marcos presidency now appears rash in hindsight. This argument draws from the flawed principle that "the ends justify the means." This is a principle that the Church has constantly rejected. Using a wrong or harmful means to achieve a good end brings various unexpected consequences that can undermine the good one seeks. By allowing clergy to engage in politically partisan activity in favor of one candidate in the 2022 elections, the Church's leadership violated its directives for political participation. The CBCP's cooperation with and support for the partisan activity of its clergy contributed to the erosion of the bishops' moral authority on national issues and the increasing irrelevance of the Church as a formative and trustworthy guide in elections.

When priests are allowed to campaign for or against a candidate, the laity are forced to choose whether to support

or oppose the partisan advocacies of their pastoral leaders. Communities will be divided along partisan lines. Liturgical services that are supposed to unite the community are given a political color that will either attract or repel the faithful, depending on their political affiliation. Difficulties will arise in the pastoral relationship between the clergy and the people they serve. Clergy engaged in political campaigns may be uncomfortable ministering to Catholics who support candidates they oppose, and the laity may feel uneasy approaching a pastor who publicly rejects their political choice.

Contributory Factors to Clergy Participation in Partisan Politics

A narrow interpretation of Church prohibitions is sometimes used to justify inappropriate political activity. For example, Canon Law prohibits clergy from running for office. Some priests would interpret this as permission to engage in direct partisan campaigning for or against a candidate as long as they do not run for office. A bishop's instructions to his clergy not to use partisan language in homilies is interpreted by some priests as implied permission to campaign outside the pulpit.[25] Such interpretations overlook the value of non-partisanship that the prohibitions seek to emphasize. It is like saying that premarital sex can be acceptable since the Ten Commandments only prohibited adultery, ignoring the virtue of chastity that the commandment seeks to teach.

Another factor that draws clergy to partisan politics is imagery and language that frame an election as a battle between good and evil, with candidates belonging either to forces of darkness or forces of light. Church leaders either demonized or canonized candidates based on a single issue or

[25]UCANews, "Filipino Clergymen Defend Outspoken Support for Robredo."

qualification that acts as a litmus test. Some priests associate political choices as either voting for or against God: "God will judge us for the way we vote. . . How would Christ vote? Vote like Christ."[26] In reality, most elections are not reducible to a choice between a perfect candidate and an evil candidate. Using holy war or crusading language to mobilize votes for or against candidates is dangerous because it fosters division, prejudice, and hatred. A black-and-white approach to partisan politics by the Church is not only reductionist but is contrary to the example of Christ. He saw the possibility of conversion in every person.

Some clergy appealed to their sincere and prayerful conscience discernment to justify their partisan political actions being correct despite numerous prohibitions and warnings against such activities. A cleric's claim that his conscience led to his decision to cross the line between partisan and non-partisan political participation does not take away the possibility of error, nor does it diminish the objective harm that decision can cause. Even done with sincerity, a person's discernment can still lead to objectively wrong decisions if one's conscience is affected by peer pressure, fears, personal biases, intense emotions, inadequate consideration of consequences, and the bad examples of others, especially those in authority. The error may not be a sin, but it must be corrected, and any damage caused should be repaired.

Some clergy believed they were justified in their partisan political activity because of the encouragement and support of laypersons who agreed with their political advocacy. The problem with this justification is that we tend to talk with those who agree with us rather than engage and understand

[26]Tina Santos, "Bishop Soc Villegas Tells Faithful: Vote Like Christ," *Inquirer.Net,* 29 April 2019, accessed 11 July 2022.

those who disagree with us. We sometimes prefer to stay within the echo chamber of our circle of allies rather than engage people with divergent views. We choose to look at the smaller picture that is more encouraging to our advocacy (e.g., the size of pro-Leni rallies) and ignore the bigger picture (e.g., the actual size of the Philippine voting population and the results of surveys by reputable polling institutions).

Some clergy erroneously thought that being non-partisan in the last election meant doing nothing and letting injustice win. This idea is incorrect. There are many things that a cleric can do to ensure justice, fairness, transparency, and truthfulness during an election without engaging in partisanship. Non-partisan voters' education programs and citizen organizations such as PPCRV always need volunteers. Clerics can speak against unjust laws, policies, and structures without making a political endorsement. Misinformation can be countered by the dissemination of accurate and truthful information. Being non-partisan in the election does not mean being indifferent to wrongdoing. It means protecting the integrity of the election process without telling voters who they should elect.

Some clergy who engaged in partisan political activity in the last election claimed that their actions represented a prophetic stand for truth, justice, and democracy, despite numerous statements from both the Magisterium and the CBCP that such partisan activity was not the way of the Church. PCP II states that "the public defense of gospel values, especially when carried into the arena of public policy formulation, whether through the advocacy of lay leaders or the moral suasion by pastors, is not without limit (PCP II #358)." Being prophetic does not take away the responsibility to act with prudence. There are limits to the means one

can use to promote or achieve justice. The fight for justice must be prudent enough to choose only those means that will not undermine the possibility of reconciliation in the future. Pastors who use harsh partisan means to influence the outcome of an election jeopardize their role as ministers of unity and communion in the Body of Christ, and they contribute to deeper divisions in the civic community that will be harder to heal, regardless of who wins the election.

A structural limitation in the CBCP prevents a consistent approach to political participation by the clergy. While bishops can suspend priests who seek to run for political office and order the clergy of their diocese to avoid explicit partisan political activity, the CBCP does not have a mechanism to prevent a bishop from engaging in partisan politics. The bishops' conference can come out with statements consistent with the catholic social teaching on political participation. However, it is up to every bishop to interpret and implement these statements. Bishops can ignore CBCP guidelines and act independently in their diocesan jurisdictions. The most that the CBCP can do is to declare that the non-compliant bishop acts as an individual and does not represent the bishops' conference. For example, during the 2013 midterm election, after the passage of the Reproductive Health Law, some bishops sought to endorse candidates who opposed the law and punish candidates who supported the law. Archbishop Ramon Arguelles of the Archdiocese of Lipa campaigned for the candidates of the *Ang Kapatiran* Party. The bishop claimed that "they are the only ones who are committed to promote what is good, true and Godly."[27] The Diocese of Bacolod hung posters outside its cathedral with a list of endorsed candidates as Team *Buhay* (Team Life) and a list of candidates to be rejected as Team

[27]Aloysius Lopez Cartagenas, *Becoming a Leaven of Society* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2014), 56.

Patay (Team Death). The CBCP did not stop these bishops nor publicly disavowed their overtly partisan campaigns. The bishops' conference tolerated these campaigns because these activities aligned with the CBCP's pro-life agenda and the bishops' opposition to the Reproductive Health Law. If this is the case, the bishops acted not according to the principles of Catholic social teachings but according to strategic goals to promote their political advocacies.

Where Do We Go from Here?

Filipinos disappointed by the Marcos victory have largely blamed disinformation for the election outcome. Blame is also placed on undiscerning or misinformed voters. The Church has called for intensive voter education and campaigns against historical distortions. However, some lay people find this response arrogant, insulting, and condescending since it seems to imply that Filipino voters are too ignorant, too gullible, or too corrupt to make correct conscience decisions, and they need "more enlightened" Church people to tell them how to vote. This condescending attitude further distances the Church from ordinary Filipinos and erodes any remaining goodwill and trust they have in the Church. The focus on "re-educating" voters ignores the need for a critical assessment of the partisan political activity of the clergy and its damaging effect on the Church's moral leadership.

Since the CBCP's defeat in the battle over the Reproductive Health Bill, politicians have learned to ignore negative clerical campaigns against their candidacy. Using populist appeals and relying on the dissatisfaction of Filipinos against clerical interference in politics, politicians can now win elections even with opposition from church leaders. The hierarchy has effectively lost its prophetic voice in elections because of its misuse of political influence.

As long there are clergy who still believe in the illusion of their political influence, they will keep making the same mistakes in future elections. A vocal and engaged laity concerned about the integrity of the whole Church is needed to initiate and pursue the necessary change in the clergy's political attitudes and practices. Concerned laity must speak out in an organized and forceful way to the CBCP on why they object to clerical partisan political interventions. Just as priests and bishops have made statements endorsing and denouncing candidates, the laity should also come out with statements opposing improper clergy interventions in politics. The laity should not be relegated only to auxiliary roles as assistants and benefactors of the clergy. In the spirit of synodality, their diverse voices must be heard. Bishops and priests should listen not only to the laity who agree with them but also to those who disagree.

The CBCP should admit that it had been remissed in fulfilling its role as a formator of conscience during the last election and that its tolerance of clerical partisan political activity has damaged its credibility. The call of Vatican II for the Church to read the signs of the times should remind the clergy that the Spirit also speaks to God's people and that the clergy do not have a monopoly of wisdom. The clergy must recognize that the urge to engage in partisan politics is a temptation rather than an inspiration. Tabora compares the clergy's temptation to engage in partisan politics to the three temptations of Jesus in the desert.

> A cleric's engagement in partisan politics is similar to Jesus' temptation to reduce his mission to the temporal sphere and misuse his power to turn stones into bread. Facing this temptation, Jesus said, "One does not live by bread alone."

> Or, a clerics' engagement in partisan politics is similar to Jesus' temptation to acquire all temporal power and glory, but just worship Satan. It is a temptation to disengage from the proclamation of the power and the glory of the Paschal Mystery as willed by God in order to engage in a political solution for a messy world. Jesus responded, "You shall worship the Lord you God, and him alone shall you serve."
>
> Or, like the temptation of Jesus to throw himself down from the pinnacle of a temple, a clerics' engagement in partisan politics is reckless with the transcendent content of the Gospel and a presumption that the angels of God will save it from this recklessness. Jesus' response: "You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test".[28]

Just as Jesus ran away from the crowds who wanted to make him a king after feeding the five thousand, the clergy should also run away from the temptation to exercise partisan political influence in the life of our nation. The Church should remain vigilant against this temptation because, as Scripture reminds us, temptations can return at an opportune time.[29] We shall find out in future elections if the Church's leaders have genuinely learned from the lessons of history or if they will continue to cling to their illusions of political influence and further diminish their formative role in the country's political life.

[28]Tabora, "On Church Involvement in the 2022 Elections."

[29]Luke 4: 12, "And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time."

"FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP" IN JESUS

John Lemuel L. Lenon

"Faithful Citizenship," as used in this article, presupposes a favorable relationship between the Christian faith and political engagement. This presupposition necessitates a further inquiry into whether Jesus himself was concerned with the political matters of his time. This question, of course, implies an even broader investigation into the person and mission of Christ not unlike earlier Christological inquiries, such as what characterized the "quests" for a more historically accurate picture of Jesus of Nazareth. Without delving too deeply into the latter, this author can summarize the "quests" in the following manner.

Scholars like Hermann Samuel Reimarus proposed the possibility that the words and intentions of Jesus might have been misinterpreted by the Apostles to suit their own personal agenda. Reimarus speculated on the possibility of the Apostles intentionally beginning a movement around the resurrected Christ to protect themselves from subsequent persecution and having to return to their old ways of life.[1] Other scholars made use of the modern social sciences and the tools of literary criticism to attempt to segregate which among the details in the Gospels were based on historical evidence, and which were the result of mere faith-statements of the nascent Christian movement.[2]

[1]Thomas Rausch, *Who is Jesus? An Introduction to Christology* (Quezon City: Claretian, 2016), 9-10.

[2]Ibid., 20-21.

While the quests in themselves were not without merit, and some of their contributions continue to be significant today, it is slowly becoming clear that it is naïve to expect that a purely objective reconstruction of Jesus can ever be possible. Much of the life of the Nazarene—unrecorded in the Gospels—will remain unknown, and any attempt to fill in the gaps will be nothing more than conjecture. Furthermore, while there has been an increasing awareness of the importance of history and scientific study on theology, there has nonetheless been a recognition that a "purely historical Jesus," apart from being nearly impossible to recover, is also insufficient to inspire faith and be normative of theology.[3]

This excerpt does not claim to finally lay to rest the debates surrounding Jesus' supposed interest in political matters, or lack thereof. The New Testament remains to be the prime authoritative witness to who Jesus was, what he said and did, and what his intentions apparently were. But outside of the New Testament writings, there is little (if at all) that is available that could objectively shed light on the political motivations of Jesus.[4] Moreover, together with this sparsity of materials is an endless array of varying Scriptural interpretations that makes settling the question all the more impossible.[5] While the very polyvalence of Scripture can argue for its truly being the "living Word of God," it also makes discussions about its meaning and application an almost never-ending task. The most that can be done, then, is to make educated inferences from what can be known from Scripture as well as from what

[3]Rausch, *Who is Jesus,* 21-22.

[4]Marcus Borg, *Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 19-20.

[5]Carl Vaught, *Sermon on the Mount: A Theological Investigation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2001), xiii.

can be realistically deduced about Jesus' unique context. This author hopes that this effort can contribute to what can reasonably be asserted concerning the question at hand.

The Exclusion of Politics

Among theologians and thoughtful believers, there is disagreement with regards to Jesus vis-à-vis political engagement, i.e., how politically involved was Jesus? There are those who wish to separate Jesus from politics altogether. Marcus Borg offers a long and complex list of possible areas of contention for what he calls the "exclusion of politics" from the teachings and ministry of Jesus. Some of these areas of contention would include lengthy discussions on existentialism, its implications on Jesus' teaching, and a skeptical reading of the Gospels. Here scholars argue that the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God (or, as Jesus would say, that it is "at hand") leaves no room for any ethics in the interim. What good would it do to concern oneself with paying taxes to Caesar, with the pursuit of social justice, or with temporal matters in general, when all will pass away very soon anyway?[6] Furthermore, these scholars would argue that the Judaism of Jesus' time has been increasingly accommodating to apocalyptic thought, the thinking of which is that the fulfillment of all they have been promised would come, not in the immediate future, but at the end of time.[7] What is most relevant to this study, however, is what Borg claims to be an increasingly myopic understanding of politics and political activity, which acts as a significant stumbling block to recovering any semblance of Faithful Citizenship in Jesus.

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[6]Borg, *Conflict, Holiness,* 26-28.

[7]Rausch, *Who is Jesus,* 51-60.

Rediscovering Politics

Borg suggests that the hesitation to implicate any political content in the teachings and ministry of Jesus might come from a narrow understanding of what politics is and what political activity entails. Politics has often been unfairly and exclusively defined as disruptive insurrectionist activity, and, in the context of Jesus, is made synonymous with being part of, or at least being sympathetic to, the Zealot movement.[8] Recent scholarship on Jesus has convincingly established his uncompromising stance against any form of violence, making it difficult to imagine that Jesus was part of or could ever have been sympathetic to such a violent group (cf. Lk 9:51-56; Lk 22:51; Mt 26:52). As a result, New Testament scholars like L. H. Marshall have asserted that it is unthinkable for Jesus to have ever "dabbled in politics." In Marshall's view, Jesus was exclusively a religious reformer. One proof of this is the lengths to which the Sanhedrin had to go in order to convince Pilate that Jesus was a threat to Roman rule (and to eventually execute him). This showed that Jesus could never have been interested in politics.[9]

Underlying these assertions is what could justly be called a narrow understanding of politics that falsely dichotomizes political involvement: either one belongs to an insurrectionist movement like the Zealots, or one is completely indifferent to political matters, with nothing in between. Borg calls this "strange language" in that it fails to give credence to the

[8]The Zealots were a political Jewish sect in first century Palestine that refused to compromise with pagan rule and used violent means such as guerilla warfare to overthrow the Roman government in order to restore the sovereignty of God over Israel. Cf, accessed February 23, 2021, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Zealot.

[9]L. H. Marshall, *The Challenge of New Testament Ethics* (London: Macmillan, 1946), 149.

spectrum of varied political stances that fall in between.[10] In the first place, to detach oneself from political matters is a political stance all on its own – one that kowtows to the status quo, even to the benefit of the ruling elite, as some would say.[11] On the other hand, it would be a mistake to define political involvement exclusively to mean being on the vanguard of some violent uprising, given that it is not the only avenue by which political engagement is expressed.[12] All in all, the hesitation of scholars to highlight the political implications of Jesus' teachings and ministry stems from a fear of casting Jesus as a Zealot figure.

In addition, politics has also been narrowly equated with partisanship or partisan politics, which refers to a slew of activities geared towards competing for and retaining positions of authority.[13] Seen in this light, perhaps for some scholars it becomes even more urgent to distance Jesus from "politics." Are not the Gospels unequivocal in portraying Jesus as being indifferent, perhaps even averse, to assuming any position of temporal authority for himself (cf. Jn 18:36; Mt 4:8-9; Mk 1:13; Lk 4:6-8; Jn 6:15)?

In reality, political scientists today would say that there is no such thing as a single, all-encompassing definition of politics. Some might define it broadly to mean a social activity that permeates through every single human interaction, while others might restrict it to the decision-making process proper

[10]Borg, *Conflict, Holiness,* 22.

[11]Lydia N. Yu Jose, "Politics, You, and Democracy," *Philippine Politics: Democratic Ideals and Realities* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2014), 36.

[12]Jose, "Politics", 37-38.

[13]CBCP, "Catechism on Church and Politics," *CBCP Online*, accessed February 24, 2021, http://cbcponline.net/catechism-on-the-church-and-politics/.

only to the government. At any rate, these experts would reject the various understandings of "politics" mentioned above as being far too general, simplistic and shallow.[14] While conflict, partisanship and insurrectionism can be a part of the rich dynamic of political activity, as evidenced in the histories of people all over the world, they are by no means exhaustive of all the possible meanings of politics. There exists a spectrum of definitions, convictions and expressions that could all fit snugly under the umbrella term "politics."[15] No less than the CBCP has echoed this point, and the Philippine bishops even offered a three-fold definition of politics as: 1) a dynamic organization of society that seeks the common good, 2) the art of government and public service, and 3) the avenue by which the State is able to realize its purpose.[16]

Therefore, to say that Jesus could not have been political "because he was not a Zealot" or "because he did not seek a seat in the Sanhedrin for himself" indicates that one has a narrow definition of politics. When the larger context of political activity is considered, one might be able to say that Jesus need not be a Zealot nor be interested in securing power for himself in order to be considered politically engaged. Indeed, in light of the CBCP's understanding of politics as an "organization of society that seeks the common good" and "an art of public service," it might even be possible to say that Jesus was quite politically active.

Jesus, the Faithful Citizen

In first-century Palestine, the bifurcation of *religious* faithfulness and citizenship *in society* was practically unheard of. It would be strange to regard religious questions separately

[14]Jose, "Politics," 27-30.

[15]Ibid., 26.

[16]CBCP, "On Church and Politics."

from other pressing societal concerns such as politics, law, and social justice. Such a notion would be alien to the community to which Jesus belonged. The people of Jesus' time would not narrowly and exclusively understand "religion" simply as the performance of rituals, private prayers, or what one does to relate to the divine. Rather, the religious dimension would include matters that pertain to the structure, purpose, and destiny of society as a whole. Religion and politics are thus always intertwined. Therefore, to claim that Jesus could have been interested only in the former and not in the latter would be to alienate him from his history, culture, and community.[17]

Furthermore, the Judaism of Jesus' time taught an inviolable unity between faithfulness to Yahweh and doing what is right to one's neighbor. While fidelity to God is paramount, this loyalty is expressed not only through the offering of ritual sacrifice but also through one's commitment to the just structuring of society as well. The Torah, as a sacred book, functions not only as a channel of divine revelation, but also as a legal document – the binding constitution of the people of Israel.[18] In other words, an internal cohesion exists between the demands the Decalogue imposes on one's relationship with God and the demands that it makes on one's relationships with others. The commands to love God and to love one's neighbor are inseparable. Having no other gods besides Yahweh goes hand in hand with honoring one's parents, respecting the good name and property of one's neighbor, preserving human life, upholding marriage, and all the rest.[19]

Moreover, the Jewish people to which Jesus belonged traditionally identified themselves as the chosen people of God, while at the same time contending with a long history

[17]Borg, *Conflict, Holiness,* 21.

[18]Ibid., 26-27.

[19]Ibid., 27-28.

of conflict with other nations. As God's special people, inexplicably they suffered violence, subjugation, and exile. All of Israel's messianic hopes and expectations was born in this paradoxical state of affairs. The Jewish people keenly anticipated the fulfillment of all that they had been promised: the triumphant coming of the Messiah whom they understandably expected to be a warrior-king and who would liberate them from their enemies;[20] their deliverance from their foreign overlords; and, in the end, "new heavens and a new earth" (Is 65:17). With this as the context when Jesus appears on the scene, it becomes increasingly difficult to imagine how his persistent preaching of the Kingdom of God could not have evoked in his audience images of this ideal socio-political reality.[21] Such preaching would inevitably be understood by his contemporaries as having implications on their social structures and political institutions. How Jesus could have preached a message about a "kingdom" completely devoid of messianic, eschatological, and even immediately political overtones is difficult to justify.[22]

Borg's assertions about Jesus' "political engagement" are not at odds with what the Church would more traditionally teach about Jesus. To be sure, he was sent by God the Father who "so loved the world" and through his only begotten Son wished to save it (cf. Jn 3:16-17). The Church's *kerygma* of the saving work of Christ is, after all, *the* Gospel or good news. This message must remain paramount, its content and understanding carefully safeguarded, and its proclamation *ad gentes* ceaseless until Christ comes again. To claim, however, that Jesus' saving work was "purely religious," causing hardly

[20]Rausch, *Who is Jesus,* 42-43.

[21]Ibid., 84-91.

[22]Borg, *Conflict, Holiness*, 20.

any temporal or societal ripples is to alienate Jesus from the Judaism of his time and the society to which he belonged. As previously mentioned, for the Jews, faithfulness to the covenant is expressed not only in one's ritual piety but also in one's commitment to the building of a just society.[23] Borg says that

> [t]o separate Jesus in this way from his historical situation is reminiscent, according to Amos Wilder, "of those orchids that are said to live on air. They bloom up off the ground and nourish themselves on ozone" and have nothing to do with the dust of life…. However, to take seriously the Christian understanding of "incarnation" means precisely that God in Christ did become enmeshed in the circumstances of human life in a particular time and place, which need not (and perhaps cannot?) exclude the turbulent political questions of that time and place.[24]

This excerpt aims to connect Jesus Christ with the idea of Faithful Citizenship. In doing so, the author is not arguing that temporal citizenship must now be the primary preoccupation of any faithful follower of Christ. No, indeed, this writer strongly believes that citizenship with God in heaven is and will always be a disciple's ultimate purpose (cf. Col 3:2; Phil 3:20). What this article hopes to achieve, however, is the recovery of the essential idea — call it *truth* — that faithfulness to God calls for a kind of political engagement that seeks to orient society towards the common good and to structure it justly. One might be able to say then that love for God *expressed in faithfulness* needs to overflow into love for neighbor *expressed in citizenship* (cf. Mt 22:38-40; Mk 12:28-34; Lk 10:25-28). Such is Faithful Citizenship.

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[23]Rausch, *Who is Jesus,* 56-60.

[24]Borg, *Conflict, Holiness*, 24, citing Amos Wilder, *Otherworldliness and the New Testament* (London, 1955), 67.

A Way Forward: The Sermon on the Mount

In an attempt to better understand how Jesus might have exemplified Faithful Citizenship, the excerpt will now examine select parts of the Sermon on the Mount as a primary resource. While there might be other texts that could be used for this purpose, the discourses preserved here by Matthew could arguably be among the most useful in demonstrating Faithful Citizenship in Jesus. With such powerful units as the Beatitudes (cf. Mt 5:1-16), true righteousness (5:17-37), loving one's enemies (5:38-48), and true piety (6:1-18) among others, small wonder that these texts are held in such high regard by Christians and non-Christians alike.[25] It is thus unsurprising that these chapters in Matthew are said to contain the "classical expressions of Christian conduct"[26] and have been variously described as the "Christian Magna Carta," the "compendium of rules for Christian living," and the like.[27] Charles H. Talbert describes the Sermon as a potent "catalyst for the formation of character," and a significant "contributor to decision-making."[28] Furthermore, its use in the defense of early Christian communities,[29] and in Tertullian's apologetics

[25]Among the Sermon's non-Christian admirers was Mahatma Gandhi.

[26]Robert Guelich, *A Foundation for Understanding the Sermon on the Mount* (Dallas: Word, 1982), 14.

[27]Ibid., 13-15.

[28]Charles Talbert, "The Functions of the Sermon," *Reading the Sermon on the Mount* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), 29.

[29]Warren Kissinger, *The Sermon on the Mount: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow and the American Theological Library Association, 1975), 5-6.

against the Gnostics and the Manicheans,[30] all make the Sermon an invaluable text for informing Christian political engagement. What follows will elucidate on the sections that contain the Beatitudes (cf. Mt 5:1-12) and the teaching on retaliation (cf. Mt 5:38-42).

The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12)

Biblical "beatitudes" (Greek *makárioi*) belong to a literary genre called "blessing formulas" (or *macarisms*) found throughout the Bible, a large concentration of which is located in the Psalms and the Wisdom Literature. They fall into two general categories: 1) those that bless God, as is the case with standard Jewish prayers that begin with "Blessed art thou, O Lord," and 2) those that bless human beings either for their current circumstances (e.g., Prov 3:13) or for that which they are to receive in the future (e.g., Tob 13:14).[31] The Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount clearly belongs to the latter category, where Jesus blesses the poor in spirit, the hungry, and the afflicted as "the privileged beneficiaries of the Kingdom,"[32] not because they are better disposed religiously, but simply because they suffer.[33] Matthew's beatitudes comprise eight

[30]Ranko Stefanovic, "The Meaning and Message of the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)," Andrews University, accessed March 5, 2021, https://www.perspectivedigest.org/archive/22-3/the-meaning-and-message-of-the-beatitudes.

[31]Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The Sermon on the Mount: Inspiring the Moral Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 41.

[32]Jacques Dupont, *Les Béatitudes* vol. II (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1969), 215, cited by Anna Wierzbicka, *What Did Jesus Mean? Explaining the Sermon on the Mount and the Parables in Simple and Universal Human Concepts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 54.

[33]Anna Wierzbicka, *What did Jesus Mean? Explaining the Sermon on the Mount and the Parables in Simple and Universal Human Concepts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 277.

distinct sayings; the ninth (5:11) is usually regarded as an expansion on the eighth.[34] The text is as follows:

> [1] When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. [2] Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:
>
> [3] "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
>
> [4] "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
>
> [5] "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
>
> [6] "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
>
> [7] "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
>
> [8] "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
>
> [9] "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
>
> [10] "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
>
> [11] "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account."
>
> [12] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (New Revised Standard Version)

In the New Testament, blessing formulas are found mostly within the Gospels, particularly in Matthew and Luke.[35] Matthew's version is arguably more well-known than Luke's; together the eight *macarisms* form the "heart of Jesus'

[34]Ibid., 30.

[35]Guelich, *Foundation for Understanding,* 65.

teaching" (CCC 1716) and the "quintessence of the Christian faith."[36] While there is still some debate surrounding just what function the Beatitudes really had in the ministry of Jesus, they are nonetheless "revered for expressing the values on which Jesus placed priority."[37] Thus, constructing a framework for Faithful Citizenship might be impossible – or worse, even futile – if done without the invaluable guidance that the Beatitudes can provide. As the light that guides "the actions and the attitudes characteristic of the Christian life" (CCC 1717) and as sayings which "reveal the goals of human existence" (CCC 1719), the Beatitudes can reasonably be used as a lens by which Faithful Citizenship could be clarified, and a metric by which it could be judged.

Interpreting the Beatitudes

The Beatitudes are unique in that they explicitly wrestle with the reality of human suffering, the severity of which has led many to seriously question the existence of God in the first place.[38] Jürgen Moltmann says the text embodies suffering as its quintessential theme, addresses the reality head-on, and shows just how much God is affected by it all in ways that have no parallel anywhere else in Scripture.[39] They portray God as one who is scandalously affected by the affliction of his beloved children, and is thus firm in his resolve to not only undo the evils of the present but more so to console the victims

[36]Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New Haven: Doubleday, 1977), 226.

[37]Ibid., 227.

[38]Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 49.

[39]Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 28.

with reward.[40] The texts function as "paradoxical promises which sustain hope in the midst of tribulation" (CCC 427), a hope anchored on the conviction that God is committed to acting on behalf of the oppressed. The texts describe an "eschatological paradox" motivated not only by God's tender love and compassion *(hesed)* for the marginalized but also by the firmness of his justice *(sedeq)*.[41] In this reading, the structure of the unit is itself significant: the eight Beatitudes present the grim realities of the people juxtaposed with the blessings they are to receive in the future. The following table by Allison gives a convenient contrast:

Table 1. The present condition of the people and the rewards they are to receive[42]

Present Condition	*Future Condition*
poor in spirit	possess kingdom
mourn	obtain comfort
meek	inherit the earth
desire righteousness	obtain satisfaction
merciful	obtain mercy
pure in heart	see God
peacemaker	sons of God
persecuted	possess kingdom
oppressed	great reward

Wierzbicka asserts that the Beatitudes address an audience that has greatly suffered in the world.[43] This assertion necessitates an inquiry into what exactly caused their suffering. Raymond Brown describes the context of Jesus' audience as one ridden in strife and oppression from centuries of being caught between the power struggles of the Mediterranean

[40]Allison, *The Sermon on the Mount,* 42.

[41]Wierzbicka, *What Did Jesus Mean*, 50.

[42]Allison, *The Sermon on the Mount,* 42.

[43]Wierzbicka, *What Did Jesus Mean*, 33.

superpowers.[44] Apart from this, the people of the time also broke their backs on the yoke of an oppressive taxation system – a fate made necessary by the lofty quests of the Roman empire.[45] As a consequence, exorbitant taxes were imposed on just about everything, making it almost impossible to make a decent living. Worse still, the collection of taxes was egregiously farmed to the highest bidder, usually to the notorious "publicans" or tax collectors who, in their desire to derive a lucrative "return on investment," would demand even greater amounts of tax money. The end result was a situation in which the average citizen was crushed under the weight of insurmountable debts, a populace vulnerable to the ebbs and tides of an unforgiving economy, and a society constantly devastated by poverty "similar to that of the Third World today where people have no place to live or even scraps to eat, and so are in constant danger of perishing."[46]

When the text is read squarely within its historical context, it becomes clear that the grim realities described in the Beatitudes exist due to an oppressive social structure that systematically exploits and dehumanizes people.[47] Such a society could rightly be judged to be in opposition to God's will insofar as it prioritizes anything other than the dignity of the human persons it was meant to serve.[48] Walter Wink aptly

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[44]Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament,* 104-112.

[45]Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 103.

[46]Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament,* 114.

[47]Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation,* trans. C. Inda and J. Eagleson (London: SCM, 1974), 175, cited by Hormis Mynatty, "The Concept of Social Sin," *Louvain Studies* vol. 16 (1991): 3-26, in 4.

[48]Hormis Mynatty, "The Concept of Social Sin," *Louvain Studies* (vol. 16, 1991): 3-26, in 13.

calls this a "system of domination" or a society "characterized by unjust economic relations, oppressive political relations, biased race relations, patriarchal gender relations, hierarchical power relations, and the use of violence to maintain them all."[49] The injustice and oppression of such a system could not be felt more starkly than by those who were its victims – the oppressed, the weeping, and the persecuted – the very audience to whom Jesus addressed his lavish blessings.

The Beatitudes and Faithful Citizenship

The Beatitudes make it abundantly clear that human suffering is not something that could ever sit well with God. But while the text clearly indicates that God is committed to granting a better future to those who are marginalized, it is not as clear what God might or would be doing to address their suffering in the here and now. This raises a problem: Is God in fact concerned with alleviating present-day suffering? Can the Beatitudes be read as promising not only future reversal and reward but also immediate relief?

First of all, that Matthew 5:3-12 either uses the future tense or speaks of one's reward being "great in heaven," gives the impression that the promises contained here are intended to be fulfilled only at the end of time.[50] Add to this the fact that many biblical scholars see Jesus as believing in the imminent coming of the Kingdom and thus regarding day-to-day existence as meaningful only when viewed through the optic of eternity.[51] Furthermore, that the Beatitudes are thought to function more as a poetic text rather than a legal codex makes it all the more challenging to use them directly to

[49]Wink, *The Powers That Be*, 39.

[50]Allison, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 12.

[51]Ibid., 11.

inform an engagement that might help address the situation immediately.[52]

For scholars like Robert Guelich, however, to say that the Beatitudes are solely concerned with the eschatological overturning of the status quo is to reduce them to nothing more than bland aphorisms without any real consequences.[53] The salvific character that comes with calling the poor in spirit "blessed," the relief that comes with the promised comfort to those who mourn, and the vindication that comes with assuring a rich inheritance to those who have nothing in this world, would all be diluted if the Beatitudes were to refer only to what God will do in the future, not to anything that he is doing now.[54] More importantly, an exclusively eschatological interpretation of the Beatitudes risks alienating the texts from Jesus himself who, in his preaching and ministry, demonstrated that commitment to the eschatological fulfillment of the Kingdom of God need not be isolated from a sincere desire to proclaim and effect it in history.[55] Allison says that the Beatitudes must not be separated from the rest of the Gospel.[56] When taken together, they coherently express Jesus' intention to bring his audience to "a kingdom that has both come and is coming and into a way of life that makes it possible for us to live in terms of the end toward which we ought to be directed."[57] The dual nature of God's reign and the promises that come along with it mean that, while the consummation of the *basileia tou theou* is indeed

[52]Ibid., 11.

[53]Guelich, *A Foundation for Understanding,* 99.

[54]Ibid., 100.

[55]Ibid., 28.

[56]Allison, *The Sermon on the Mount,* xi.

[57]Vaught, *Sermon on the Mount,* 9.

a future event, Jesus' ministry makes it tangibly accessible in the present nonetheless.[58] As Guelich puts it, "The Beatitudes promise not only that God will, metaphorically speaking, wipe away all tears and compensate suffering with joy but also that the apparent injustice of the human lot on earth will in some way be overcome and compensated for and that God's love for *all* will become apparent to all."[59]

Societies that are unjustly structured are unusual in that the individuals who make them up are simultaneously their victims as well as their cause.[60] After all, a "system of domination" does not exist by and for itself alone; it exists only insofar as human freedom allows it to.[61] Oppressive societies emerge as a composite of unjust choices made by individuals who habitually behave unjustly, and so it follows that the agency of these same individuals will largely determine whether the oppressive conditions would persist or be eventually curtailed.[62] While the eschatological promises of the Beatitudes inspire hope for a better future, they cannot be used to rationalize apathy, complacency, and inaction. After all, God in the Incarnation entered into human history, becoming a direct actor in it and showing through word and deed that concern for the just ordering of society is not simply an adjunct to his mission but is in fact essential to it.[63] Truly, through his preaching and ministry, Jesus actively opposed the "system of domination" in his time through:

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[58]Guelich, *A Foundation for Understanding,* 99.

[59]Guelich, *A Foundation for Understanding*, 55.

[60]Mynatty, "Social Sin," 18.

[61]Ibid., 14.

[62]Ibid., 22.

[63]Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Consider Jesus: Waves of Renewal in Christology* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 70-73.

- his parables that shed light on its evils (cf. Lk 10:25-37; Mt 18:27; Mt 25:14-30),
- his public ministry that privileged its victims (cf. Mk 11:15-18; Jn 8:1-11; Lk 19:1-10),
- and his radical disdain for it that ultimately brought about his death on the cross (cf. Mk 14; Lk 22; Mt 26-28; Jn 19).

The Teaching on Retaliation (Matthew 5:38-42)

Walter Wink has observed that many people "who have committed their lives to ending injustice simply dismiss Jesus' teachings about nonviolence out of hand as impractical idealism."[64] This observation, if true, might be based among other reasons on interpretations of Jesus' teaching on retaliation (cf. Mt 5:38-42) that portray him as supposedly making blanket statements against all forms of conflict. Such an interpretation renders the teaching "impractical" in the sense that it is reduced to a mere metaphor that has no real use to anyone who wishes to engage with the problems of the world.[65] But what if the text were rather to be interpreted differently—and, it is to be hoped, correctly—such that the exegesis would be useful to a social reformer or activist?

The text is as follows:

> [38] "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' [39] But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; [40] and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your inner cloak as well; [41] and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile.[42] Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not

[64]Walter Wink, *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2003), 9.

[65]Guelich, *A Foundation for Understanding*, 97.

> refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you." (New Revised Standard Version)

Mt 5:38-42 has been described traditionally as Jesus' subversion of the *lex talionis*. In what could arguably be called the bedrock of all legal codices going as far back as the code of Hammurabi, the *lex talionis* (law of retaliation) is a legal principle that calls for a kind of justice that seeks punishment equal to that of the crime committed.[66] It intends to limit retribution to only what strict justice requires, and to prevent the excess of vengeance. "An eye for an eye" captures the principle best. That Jesus would subvert this "law" is in itself unsurprising; it might even be considered a defining feature of Jesus' teaching in which a profound love for one's enemies (cf. Mt 5:43-48; Lk 6:27-28; Rom 12:14), the scandalous mercy of God (cf. Lk 15:1-31), and the steadfast commitment to non-violence (cf. Mt 10:28; Lk 22:36; Jn 16:33; 1 Jn 3:15) all take centerstage as the hallmark of Christian ethics.

Wink, however, would say that despite the moral high ground signified by these verses, they have also been used to justify monarchial absolutism, pacifism, and unconditional docility.[67] According to him, no less than Augustine himself used these same texts to teach against any form of self-defense.[68] It is also common for the injunction "turn the other cheek" to be used to justify pacifism of a dangerous kind – the extremes of which is a masochistic inertia in the face of domestic violence and bullying.[69] These pacifist interpretations of Mt 5:38-42, combined with the interpretations of other relevant

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[66]Diarmuid O' Murchu, *Inclusivity: A Gospel Mandate* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2015), 20.

[67]Wink, *The Powers That Be,* 100.

[68]Ibid., 99.

[69]Vaught, *Sermon on the Mount,* 97.

texts that pertain to authority such as Romans 13:1-7 have been used to absolutize political authority. As Wink puts it,

> 'Turn the other cheek' suggests the passive, Christian doormat quality that has made so many Christians cowardly and complicit in the face of injustice. 'Resist not evil' seems to break the back of all opposition to evil and to counsel submission. 'Going the second mile' has become a platitude meaning nothing more than 'extend yourself,' and rather than fostering structural change, encourages collaboration with the oppressor.[70]

The earlier parts of this excerpt should by now make it increasingly clear just how inappropriate it would be to use these texts to conclude that Jesus taught this kind of passivity. To say that Jesus taught his disciples to simply let themselves be trampled on like doormats is utterly misrepresentative of Jesus, given that the Gospels unanimously portray him as a figure who resisted evil with every fiber of his being (cf. Mt 4:1-11; Lk 8:2; Mk 1:25; Jn 2:11). When taken in their original contexts, "to turn the other cheek," "to give your inner cloak," and "to go the second mile" might not be prescribing unconditional passivity after all. Instead, they might be some of the most revolutionary statements ever uttered! What follows are brief summaries of Wink's interpretation of Jesus' teaching on retaliation.

"Turn the Other Cheek"

In many situations, a slap on the face is more than simply a random or thoughtless act of aggression. In Jesus' time, as in the present, a slap to one's cheek was an insult intended to put one in his or her place.[71] That the text specifically mentions being slapped on the *right* cheek all the more implies the

[70]Wink, *The Powers That Be,* 98.

[71]Wink, *Jesus and Nonviolence*, 14.

intention of a superior to insult and demean his subordinate. In a right-handed world, to slap another on the right cheek is to imply the use of a *backhanded* slap. Culturally speaking, a slap of this kind is used exclusively by masters to chastise their slaves or for men to discipline their wives, their children, or anyone considered a social inferior.[72] These are situations of social inequality in which a superior intends to humiliate one having lesser power or status through a backhanded slap.[73] In this context then, to "turn the other cheek" is hardly a masochistic request to be slapped once again but more a defiant assertion to be treated the way one would an equal.[74] It is a dignified way to stand up to one's oppressor, a clever means to rob him of his ability to humiliate, and a nonviolent injunction to force the oppressor to treat the oppressed as an equal human being.[75]

"Give your inner cloak as well"

Jesus' second instruction to "give your inner cloak" needs to be understood in light of the contemporary Jewish legal system that requires an accused who cannot pay his debts to give his clothes as some kind of collateral.[76] Wink understands Jesus to be critical of a judicial system that is so unfairly biased towards the wealthy that it would go so far as to demand the clothes on the back of the poor as payment for his or her debts.[77] As one's imagination might have it, "to

[72]Robert E. Barron, *Catholicism: A Journey to the Heart of the Faith* (New York: Image, 2011), 54.

[73]Vaught, *Sermon on the Mount,* 100.

[74]Vaught, *Sermon on the Mount*, 101.

[75]Wink, *Jesus and Nonviolence*, 15-16. See also Barron, *Catholicism,* 55.

[76]Ibid., 18.

[77]Ibid., 19.

give your inner cloak" means literally to give up all of one's clothing, leaving one naked in court. For Wink, however, Jesus' injunction does not mean capitulation or accepting defeat. It is rather a form of protest against the oppressiveness of the legal system. The irony here is that, while nakedness is taboo in Judaism, the shame falls not so much on the one who is actually naked but on the one who causes it (cf. Gen 9:20-27).[78] While the debtor is the one who stands naked in court, his nakedness is not cause for embarrassment but is rather the means by which he shames the creditor for his greed.

"Go the second mile"

Finally, Wink asserts that Jesus' third instruction to "go the second mile" hardly refers to some form of connivance with the Roman occupying forces but is rather a reference to military law that states that a legionnaire could impress a civilian to carry his pack for only one mile and no further.[79] These laws are enacted in order to pacify governed peoples, with the intention of making Roman rule seem more amicable.[80] For a civilian then to insist on carrying the soldier's pack for another mile is a clownery of sorts, where the situation is once again, as it were, turned on its head, and the soldier is now the one frantically asking to get back his pack out of fear of receiving punishment.[81] Just like the previous two, this third instruction of Jesus is not meant to imply some form of unconditional docility but is rather a creative and a nonviolent way for the oppressed to be able to stand up to their oppressors and restore their dignity.

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[78]Ibid., 20.

[79]Wink, *Jesus and Nonviolence*, 23.

[80]Ibid., 23.

[81]Ibid., 24.

Jesus' "Third Way"

For Walter Wink, Jesus' commitment to non-violence should not be construed as unconditional surrender to the instruments of oppression. The injunctions to "turn the other cheek," "give your inner cloak," and "go the second mile" cannot in any way mean that Jesus was instructing his followers to be inert in the face of exploitation and abuse.[82] To do so would be to imply that Jesus is counseling passivity to, or worse, is complicit with, the powers of evil. As John Stuart Mill has famously put it: "Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends than that good men should look on and do nothing."[83]

This writer argues, following Wink, that Jesus truly abhorred the violent overthrow of evil as much as he abhorred inaction in the face of it. To an oppressed people, Jesus is in effect saying: Do not violently react to your oppressors but do not acquiesce to them either.[84] St. Paul gives a similar teaching in some of his letters (cf. Rom 12:14; 1 Thess 5:15) that non-resistance to evil does not mean complete docility in the face of it but rather resistance in ways that are not evil in themselves.[85] The upshot is that there seems to be no basis for concluding that Jesus was making a blanket statement against all forms of retaliation. Rather, Jesus offers what Wink calls a "third way," a middle ground between unconditional docility and mindless aggression, which Jesus himself practiced in confronting his enemies. Wink calls this set of responses a "third way" because, when

[82]Wink, *The Powers That Be*, 103.

[83]John Stuart Mill, *Inaugural Address Delivered to the University of St. Andrews* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867), 36, accessed May 18, 2021, https://books.google.com.ph/books/about/Inaugural_Address.html?id=8w8qAAAAYAAJ&redir_esc=y.

[84]Wink, *The Powers That Be*, 110.

[85]Wink, *Jesus and Nonviolence,* 27.

facing an adversary, one is not restricted to responding only with either violence (fight) or complete passivity (flight). While such are the usual responses to an opponent, he says that there exists a middle ground or "third way" that does not necessarily annihilate the opponent, but neither does it condone his or her evil ways. Furthermore, the end goal of it all is to call the enemy to conversion and thus also to restore communion.

Wink describes Jesus' "third way" as follows:

- Seizing the moral initiative
- Finding a creative alternative to violence
- Asserting your own humanity and dignity as a person
- Meeting force with ridicule or humor
- Breaking the cycle of humiliation
- Refusing to submit or to accept the inferior position
- Exposing the injustice of the system
- Standing your ground
- Recognizing your own power
- Being willing to suffer rather than to retaliate
- Causing the oppressor to see you in a new light
- Depriving the oppressor of a situation where a show of force is effective
- Being willing to undergo the penalty for breaking unjust laws
- Dying to the fear of the old order and its rules.[86]

[86]Wink, *Jesus and Nonviolence,* 27-28. The application of Jesus' "third way" might vary depending on the unique situation of a society trying to live it out. In the fourth chapter of this thesis, the author will attempt to demonstrate how the Philippine Church has exercised Jesus' "third way" at various points in its history, most notably in the 1986 People Power Revolution.

Jesus' teaching on retaliation is a stern reminder for his followers not to become the very thing they are trying to oppose. His words in Mt 5:38-42 should not be taken to mean a blanket prohibition against all forms of retaliation.[87] It so often happens that unconditional docility becomes the very condition by which people are inured to a lifetime of sinfulness, and inaction the milieu that encourages the perpetuation of abuse. In this regard, it is significant that Jesus' teaching on retaliation is immediately followed by his command to love one's enemies (cf. Mt 5:43-48). After all, the instruction to retaliate must always go hand-in-hand with the commitment to seek not only the liberation of the oppressed from injustice, but also the redemption of the oppressor from sin.[88]

[87]Wink, *The Powers That Be,* 123.

[88]Wink, *The Powers That Be*, 111. See also James Martin, SJ, "Is Turning the Other Cheek Even Possible?" *America Jesuit Review* February 19, 2011, accessed June 15, 2021, https://www.americamagazine.org/content/all-things/turning-other-cheek-even-possible.

DIVIDED YET ONE: THE TWO CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES IN CHINA

Gabriel Liu, SJ

Most people with good intentions believe that there are two Catholic Churches in China. As a native Chinese Catholic, I have experienced the confusion and pain caused by that division. However, I would never say that there are two Catholic Churches in China. Instead, there are two divided Catholic communities. No one from the Church intended such division. Even though the division was not the initial intention of the Chinese communist government, the latter took advantage of it. Hence, in this short paper, I will review the two divided communities and their formation and evolution over the last decades. While some explorations will include reflections in the context of Chinese social and political realities, the primary aim of this paper is to introduce a public image of the Catholic Church in China, which has its clear cultural mark but remains a part of the Universal Church.

Suppression and Control

After winning the civil war, the new Communist regime established tight control over all Chinese religious communities. From its perspective, the Catholic Church was a minority religious group that was anti-communist, and its foreign network included nation-states that opposed the Communist regime. One of the regime's strategies to control extra-territorial influence was establishing organizations that would serve as transmission belts from the party to the Church. According

to Richard Madsen, "these organizations were formally under the authority of religious leaders deemed 'reliable' by the government, but they were really under the control of the Chinese Communist Party's United Front Work Department, whose policies were implemented by the state Religious Affairs Bureau."[1] In other words, the nature of these organizations was religious on the outside but political on the inside.

In 1950, the government set up local Catholic reform committees, which eventually became the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA). The Vatican denounced these committees and excommunicated their members.[2] The government retaliated by expelling the Vatican internuncio and all the foreign missionaries. From these exchanges, the Sino-Vatican tensions began. Different levels of persecution commenced in local churches, including the Shanghai Catholic Church's crackdown. The CCPA's formal establishment in 1957 led to centralized control of all local Catholic patriotic associations. The Vatican appealed to Chinese Catholics to "resist any patriotic movement even to the point of bleeding and death."[3] However, the Chinese government permitted the ordination of several bishops without a mandate from the Holy See. As a result, Pius XII released the third encyclical that denounced the CCPA and its episcopal

[1]Richard Madsen, "Catholic Conflict and Cooperation in the People's Republic of China" in *God and Caesar in China: Policy Implications of Church-State Tensions*, eds. Jason Kindopp and Carol Lee Hamrin (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 94.

[2]Pius XII's encyclical in 1952 defended the missionaries and condemned the communist. Two years after, he issued another encyclical that denounced the brewing CCPA's self-governance, self-support, and self-propagation. Ibid., 94.

[3]Kim-Kwong Chan, *Struggling for Survival: The Catholic Church in China* (Hong Kong: Christian Study Centre on Religion and Culture, 1992), 52.

consecrations.[4] His successor, John XXIII, formerly called the pro-government faction a schism in 1958.[5]

The CCPA-controlled church communities were few. A number of lay people shunned the bishops and priests who collaborated with the CCPA and remained united—although in the least passive opposition—to government control. However, the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) persecuted Catholics and members of other faiths. There was neither pro-CCPA nor resistants in these series of torments. Bishops, priests, and lay people were imprisoned, tortured, humiliated, and died as martyrs for the Catholic faith.

The Chinese government's new leader, Deng Xiaoping, started an era of reform and ended the harshest forms of religious repression. Under his rule, the CCPA founded the Bishops' Conference of the Chinese Catholic Church (BCCCC) and the National Administrative Commission of the Chinese Catholic Church (NACCCC). The purpose of these was "to make it easier to change the overall leadership of the Patriotic Association to special foreign affairs in the future. The Bishops' Conference and the National Administrative Commission of the Chinese Catholic Church will manage doctrinal and pastoral affairs."[6] The BCCCC could appoint and dismiss bishops without the pope's approval. Thomas Qinghe Xiao explains that "if the BCCCC appoints and removes bishops, it violates the Canon Law."[7] During those years, the quick actions of the government intervening in

[4]Chan, *Struggling for Survival*, 55.

[5]Madsen, "Catholic Conflict and Cooperation," 95.

[6]Thomas Qinghe Xiao, "中国教会史 Chinese Church History blog," *Academy: To Think Positively*, May 12, 2008, accessed May 15, 2022, http://academier.blogspot.com/2008/05/blog-post_7822.html.

[7]Xiao, "中国教会史 Chinese Church History."

Church affairs set the tone for a further movement toward an explicit division of the Catholic Church in China.

Division and Confusion

In 1982 the government launched a series of new regulations on religions, which led to the reopening of previously existing churches. Although the Catholic bishops and priests were autonomous in their decisions about doctrine and worship, they were prohibited from accepting the Holy See's leadership. The CCPA claimed power to decide in almost all affairs, from simple matters such as constructing places of worship and communicating with foreign church members. Nevertheless, Madsen writes that "the Chinese government had relaxed its regulatory framework enough that many Catholics found it acceptable to worship publicly in officially approved 'open churches.' The open churches filled up."[8] Yet, division and confusion prevailed and progressed.

Some bishops, like Bishop Peter Joseph Xueyan Fan (1907-92) of the Baoding diocese in Hebei province of Northern China, opposed episcopal ordinations that did not receive the Holy See's approval. The Congregation of the Evangelization of Peoples in 1978 specially allowed local bishops to ordain a priest but not a bishop.[9] Nevertheless, Bishop Fan secretly consecrated three bishops without the Holy See nor the CCPA's knowledge. He asked for an exemption from the Holy See afterwards. According to Rachel Xiaohong Zhu, John Paul II "exempted him and gave Bishop Fan his blessing and the authority to make decisions on church affairs without

[8]Madsen, "Catholic Conflict and Cooperation," 97.

[9]The full name of the document is *Sacra Congregatio Pro Gentium Evangelizatione Seu De Propaganda Fide Facultates Et Privilegia Sacerdotibus Fidelibusque in Territorio Sinarum Degentibus Concessa His Perdurantibus Circumstantiis,* while the archive number is Prot. N. 3242/78.

first receiving the Vatican's approval."[10] Since then, the bishop (and those he consecrated) had ordained more than eighty bishops.

In the sacramental theology of the Catholic Church, the sacraments are efficacious for as long as the ministers are validly ordained and are in communion with the Pope. In the beginning, most Catholics were willing to receive sacraments from priests approved by the CCPA. However, Bishop Fan's secret ordination started an opposition publicly confronting the CCPA and the government. Hence, confusion between "underground" and "approved" approaches began.

Even unto death, Bishop Fan did not waiver. After several arrests and imprisonments, the bishop died in April 1992. A few years before his last detention in 1988, he released the "Thirteen Points," a document that opposed the approaches of the CCPA. Zhu explains, "the 'Thirteen Points' declares that the CCPA is trying to break away from the Vatican's influence and separate the Chinese Church from the Apostolic Church."[11] For this reason, several faithful avoided receiving sacraments from priests who joined the CCPA. The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples backed the protests with the "Eight-point Directive," a document that confirmed the statements made in the "Thirteen Points." The Holy See granted "full and legitimate exercise of Episcopal jurisdiction" to underground bishops, and stated that the CCPA, "is not a religious organization in full communion with the universal church, and therefore, is not qualified to

[10]Rachel Xiaohong Zhu, "The Division of the Roman Catholic Church in Mainland China: History and Challenges," *Religion,* 8, 39 (March 14, 2017): 6.

[11]Zhu, "The Division of the Roman Catholic Church in Mainland China," 7.

direct any ordination of bishops and religious activities."[12] Under such circumstances, the underground bishops founded the Bishops' Conference in Mainland China on November 20, 1989, at the Sanyuan diocese of the Shanxi province. The approaches of the "underground" and "approved" became more apparent, but the wounds of the division became deeper.

Conflict and Wound

One of the side effects of the underground's public opposition is "the anger of the underground church toward fellow church members whom they believe have betrayed the faith."[13] Furthermore, the underground Church hurled bitter and harsh verbal denunciations against bishops, priests, and lay people closely associated with the so-called "patriotic" Church. Growing up in a Catholic family in Northern China, I have heard many stories about the tensions and struggles between the two communities. Being not far from Bishop Fan's hometown in Baoding,[14] our local communities were heavily influenced by their conflicts. As misunderstandings and hatred prevailed over the Mainland, suspicions amongst the faithful of the "underground" also grew. Those who were found suspicious in reporting the "underground's" activities would be reprimanded with verbal and physical assaults. Some families were broken for entering into different communities. But the most horrible cases against the "approved" could have been the poisoning of the mass wine in 1992 and cutting the

[12]Ibid.

[13]Madsen, "Catholic Conflict and Cooperation," 100.

[14]The other three are Fuzhou in Fujian, Wenzhou in Zhejiang, and Shanghai. During the 1980s and 1990s, these four dioceses were called by the underground Catholics the four "loyal and faithful dioceses" of Chinese Catholicism.

ear of an open-church priest in Heilongjiang Province on Good Friday in 2001.[15]

The tension seemed to diminish when the Holy See quietly gave an apostolic mandate to bishops from the open Church. By 2002, Rome had approved more than two-thirds of such bishops.[16] As a result, more bishops sought forgiveness from the Vatican who, in the process, regained the respect of the faithful. Ideally, these movements could have ended the tensions. However, the wounds are deep, and reconciliation is far from reality. If bishops from both the "approved" and the "underground" received the mandate, who would take the place as the head of a local diocese? Some of those who were approved were still accused of being unfaithful.

Change and Openness

Shades of gray seemed to replace a black-and-white conflict in any event. Madsen remarks that "open" and "underground" are no longer sociological divisions.[17] Furthermore," "official" and "unofficial " became another pair of contrasts referring to the divided Catholic communities. Although the two communities are divided, the official and unofficial are not strictly separated. For example, some local dioceses are "unofficial" in not joining CCPA or other related organizations. But they evangelize openly for as long as the local government permits them to do so. Another example is that some official theological and liturgical training institutions would invite religious nuns from the unofficial community and offer scholarships and better learning resources. Recently, the younger generation of Catholics appears less committed to the old divisions.

[15]Madsen, "Catholic Conflict and Cooperation," 100.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid.

They freely choose to attend services based on convenience rather than ideology.

There are also changes in the official church communities at the higher level. Many younger bishops in the official church communities began with "creative" approaches to dealing with the government. For instance, since all the bishops are automatically the head of the diocesan CCPA, the older generation bishops tried to avoid it so as not to be criticized by the counterpart unofficial community members. However, instead of avoiding the position—like most of their predecessors did—the younger generation of bishops accepted it out of practical concern. Since all the members of CCPA are the Catholic faithful of his diocese, the bishop who accepts the position becomes the policy manager. Nevertheless, this kind of "creative" approach is still condemned by ideological mindsets who paid less attention to the practical needs and common good of the local Church in China.

On May 27, 2007, Pope Benedict XVI wrote a public letter to all the Catholics in China. It was the first open letter from a pontiff. It sought to console the suffering Catholic communities and advised movements toward reconciliation and unity. The late pontiff affirmed the positive developments[18] and stressed the need for pastoral actions during difficult times.[19]

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[18]"The requisite and courageous safeguarding of the deposit of faith and sacramental and hierarchical communion is not of itself opposed to dialogue with the authorities concerning those aspects of the life of the ecclesial community that fall within the civil sphere." Pope Benedict XVI, *Letter to the Bishops, Priests, Consecrated Persons and Lay Faithful of the Catholic Church in the People's Republic of China,* May 27, 2007, no. 7.

[19]Pope Benedict XVI, Letter to the Bishops, Priests, *Consecrated Persons and Lay Faithful of the Catholic Church in the People's Republic of China,* no. 18.

He revoked the special privileges, not to abandon the "underground" church but to insist on its irrelevance. [20]

I would like to believe that neither Bishop Fan nor any "underground" community bishops wanted to increase the divide. The wounds over the years complicated the circumstances. This personal reflection resounds with Anthony Lam's take over the special privilege granted by John Paul II to bishop Fan and senior bishops in China.[21] This is not to justify what bishop Fan and the rest did, nor to give signals for comprising with the communist government. On the contrary, clarifying unclear or correcting false information is for the common good of the Catholic Church in China.

The decades-long issue of episcopal appointment was yet to be resolved. Three years after Benedict XVI's letter from 2010 to 2012, several illicit episcopal ordinations happened across the Mainland. The Holy See responded to those ordination events with a solid objection. Furthermore, the Church also waited for time to make a further step.

Hope and Dream

On March 13, 2013, Argentine Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected Pope. Since the beginning of his papacy, Pope Francis has repeatedly expressed his sincere and cordial attention to the Chinese people, which "has helped create a new and relaxed atmosphere and effectively resume dialogue

[20]Anthony Lam, "Recalling the 1981 Episcopal Ordinations and Their Consequences for the Chinese Catholic Church," *Tripod,* No. 163, Winter 2011, 31.

[21]"Bishop Fan clearly understood that in that difficult period for the Church in China, the Holy Father had a lot of trust in him and in the other bishops, who were struggling in the midst of difficulties. This was also the background and the reason why Pope John Paul II later gave special faculties to the 'old bishops.'" See Lam, 26.

between the Holy See and the Chinese authorities."[22] After a period of effort, on September 22, 2018, the Holy See and the People's Republic of China signed a two-year Provisional Agreement regarding the appointment of bishops. The agreement has been renewed for two more years in 2020 and 2022. Such action exclusively treats the process for the selection of bishops. Andrea Tornielli explains, "the goal of the Provisional Agreement has never been merely diplomatic, much less political, but was always genuinely pastoral."[23] In the hopes of easing the Sino-Vatican tensions, the agreement directed that the appointment of bishops must be from both the Holy See and the Chinese government. This was to help in the reconciliation between the two communities.

Shortly after the agreement was signed, Pope Francis wrote a public letter to all the Catholics in China. He restored to full communion the seven bishops who were ordained and appointed without the Holy See's approval. Furthermore, he said, "the Catholic community in China is called to be united to overcome the divisions of the past that have caused and continue to cause great suffering in the hearts of many faithful pastors. All Christians, none excluded, must now offer gestures of reconciliation and communion."[24] Some opposite voices could be heard not so much from the Church in China

[22]Federico Lombardi, "Looking back on the long journey of the Holy See's relations with China," *Vatican News,* September 25, 2018, accessed May 16, 2022, https://www.vaticannews.va/zh/vatican-city/news/2018-09/zh-china-holy-see-agreement-lombardi.html.

[23]Andrea Tornielli, "The Holy See and China: reasons for Agreement on the appointment of bishops," Vatican News, September 29, 2020, accessed May 16, 2022, https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2020-09/holy-see-china-provisional-agreement-appointment-bishops.html.

[24]Pope Francis, Message of the Holy Father to the Catholics of China and to the Universal Church, September 26, 2018, 6.

but outside it. For instance, Cardinal Fernando Filoni said in an interview with the *L'Osservatore Romano*, "only with a superficial spirit or in bad faith could one imagine that Pope Francis and the Holy See would abandon the flock of Christ."[25]

Pope Francis' efforts in dialogue with the Chinese communist government have greatly inspired and encouraged the two Catholic communities. Perspectives of each gradually changed to positive. Some bishops from both camps expressed both support and calls for the resumption of dialogue.[26] Two incidences of dialogue are worth mentioning. For instance, Mindong and Shantou's southern dioceses started the bishops' transition from their respective communities. Although the process was painful for each, their efforts and sacrifices would eventually bear fruits. After all, the bishop's leadership is "not only a formal unity but also a real unity, yet without being forced. The underground status will fade away, but not the people involved. The entire diocesan community still enjoys their faith, traditions, and spirituality".[27] The path toward unity and reconciliation is challenging but possible.

[25]PIME AsiaNews, "Card. Filoni: The China-Holy See Agreement is historic, but I share some perplexities," PIME AsiaNews, April 02, 2019, accessed May 16, 2022, https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Card.-Filoni:-The-China-Holy-See-Agreement-is-historic,-but-I-share-some-perplexities-46151.html.

[26]Vatican News, "The Vatican and China: Dialogue and Negotiation." Vatican News, July 03, 2018. accessed May 16, 2022, https://www.vaticannews.va/zh/vatican-city/news/2018-07/dialogue-china-5.html.

[27]PIME AsiaNews, "Card. Filoni: The China-Holy See Agreement is historic, but I share some perplexities."

The efforts of the two Catholic communities and the Holy See[28] will never go in vain. Despite the unpredictability of the Chinese community government's religious policy, the path of unity and reconciliation for the Catholic Church is not over-optimistic but real hope.

To conclude, I would like to quote the late Jesuit Bishop of Shanghai Aloysius Jin. As controversial as he was, his vision was beyond many of his contemporaries and many of us today regarding the Catholic Church in China:

Why talk about two churches in China? There is only one Catholic Church in China. We can discuss two of these groups: one that recognizes the Vatican. There is a discord between the authorities and the Chinese authorities; the other recognizes both the Vatican and the Chinese government and maintains a dialogue with both sides. I believe that the confrontation should be overcome through dialogue to achieve cooperation and mutual respect with both sides. Our efforts in this direction have yielded some results, but there is still a long way to go. Our only goal should be to seek dialogue and cooperation together.[29]

[28]"What the Holy See has strived to do for thirty years has been to foster reconciliation between the two communities by rediscovering and reinvigorating their properly Christian and Catholic identity through a common journey toward a greater realization of what it means to be Christ's Church in China today." Ibid.

[29]Stephan Rothlin, "Anticipating China's Future: The Legacy of Jesuit Bishop Jin Luxian," *La Civiltà Cattolica,* January 23, 2020, accessed May 20, 2022, https://www.laciviltacattolica.com/anticipating-chinas-future-the-legacy-of-jesuit-bishop-jin-luxian/ .

WISDOM: THE FEMININE IN THE DIVINE

Rogel Anecito L. Abais, SJ

Who is Lady Wisdom (σοφία)? Is she God personified or is she an attribute of God?[1] The Wisdom of Solomon presents an elaborate and rich characterization of the figure of Wisdom which goes unparalleled in other sapiential works. This rich imagery attempts to define who Wisdom is and, in the process, unfolds her relationship with God. The imagery also challenges the reader's perception of characteristics which are traditionally identified with the male gender and lesser with the female. In the end one asks: what role does Wisdom play in a largely androcentric milieu? Does she, in fact, give the figure of woman due acknowledgement in Scripture?

To understand this figure, we are invited to trace first the development of this scriptural figure. Second, revisit the assessment of Rosemary R. Ruether on the notion of a feminine vision in Wisdom literature. Then, we propose to center our attention on one text, Wisdom 7:22b-8:1 and see if we can give a positive view of the woman in Wisdom.

[1]Cf. Rosemary R. Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine: A Western Religious History* (California: University of California Press, 2005), 90: "The Wisdom Literature—Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiasticus (also known as the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach), and the Wisdom of Solomon—contains a personified female figure, Wisdom, that seems at times to be a secondary manifestation, or hypostasis, of God. Scholars of this literature have debated whether Wisdom is simply a literary device, a metaphor for God's wisdom, or a being that has ontological status "alongside" Yahweh."

The Hebrew God and the Figure of Wisdom

What gives rise to the representation of Wisdom as a woman in Hebrew literature? We have to understand the cultural setting out of which Wisdom is formulated. When Israel sets itself apart from its Near Eastern neighbors with its monotheistic religion, it struggled to establish itself in the midst of a polytheistic world where a plethora of gods and goddesses catered to the people's various needs. These deities had their set of functions—a god of rain, a goddess of fertility, a goddess of war, a god of the dead, et al. The movement towards one God and the elimination of other gods was by nature a difficult and a long process of appropriation. The Hebrew Scriptures, when examined carefully, will show the telltale signs of this rough journey of getting rid of "the other gods." The process would gradually shift from the polytheism the people used to practice to a monotheistic form of religion. The psalmist would sing, "There is none like you among the gods, O Lord" (Ps 86:8). This conflation of the gods into one single deity forced the people to subsume the functions of the various deities to whom they brought their concerns to Yahweh.

Some extra-Biblical texts will suggest that Yahweh had a consort or wife in the form of the Hebrew goddess Asherah. This conception would later evolve so that Yahweh would simply adopt the function of Asherah into himself as his hypostasis. An important element in this monotheistic religion of the Israelites is their choice of a male God. As Yahweh assumes or takes over the function of various deities, he had to absorb those of the goddesses. In Genesis we see him assuming the role of the Sumerian mother Goddess Ninhursag. The war language of Yahweh is most similar to those of the war goddesses like Inanna, Ishtar, and Anat.

The elimination of the female deity saw the shift of many relational characteristics. The motherly qualities of the divinity were necessarily taken over by a divine father figure. The spousal relationship shifted from God and king to God and people. How can the king marry a male God? Thus, the feminine role was given to the collective, the people of Israel became the bride and God the bridegroom. The discrepancy in this whole relationship was that the collective was represented by a predominantly male elite. Women were far from power and communication with God.

It is then quite surprising that in the midst of this predominantly androcentric religion, Wisdom is personified as a female figure. This seeming secondary manifestation or hypostasis of God shows a lot of characteristics which are reminiscent of the Near Eastern goddesses. The academic arguments have been inconclusive but much of the studies show how much of Wisdom in Proverbs, Qoheleth, and Ben Sirach have been influenced by the Egyptian goddess Ma'at or the Goddess Isis. We have already mentioned the Hebrew Asherah, consort of Yahwe, but not least would be the Canaanite Astarte or the Mesopotamian Inanna. Many have concluded that Lady Wisdom is the female expression of God, a mediator between God and man which was a reconceptualization when Yahweh absorbed the function of Asherah.

While all of these conjectures are quite plausible, they are not mutually exclusive and neither are they exhaustive. We must also consider that Lady Wisdom of the Hebrew literature is an original creation. She is a new configuration without an equivalent in the past. Our study of the sapiential literature leads us to conclude that this figure evolves from a rougher earlier version for example in Proverbs that is "goddess-like" in her appearance to the more subtle figure in the Wisdom of Solomon.

Rosemary Ruether's Assessment of Women in Wisdom Literature[2]

In her book, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine* (2005), Ruether makes a very short assessment on how women are treated in the vision of Wisdom Literature. She points out that at first glance, women seem to be given an exalted identity as quasi-divine mediators between God and "men". However, she quickly adds that this vision is quite androcentric. In her own estimation, women are only made to "whisper" as counseling wives and mother figures but they are totally absent as the seekers of knowledge and teachers of wisdom. For her, the whole world of Wisdom is defined by relations between men, relations between men and a male God which are most usually played out in relations between father and son and between male teachers and students. The female figures appear as two contrary liminal symbols on the borders of this male world.

This book is a very excellent survey of the *sitz im Leben* of Lady Wisdom and her appropriation by various traditions leading up to Medieval religious literature and even by Protestant Mystical writers. Her conclusion above is fair given that she looks for active female figures other than Wisdom herself as reference points. Since the cultural milieu when these texts were written was male dominated, much of the female action is downplayed.

Our own suggestion is to revisit the text itself and see how we may be able to reappropriate it. For us, Lady Wisdom cannot be relegated as a liminal figure because she occupies the center stage in this huge corpus within Sacred Scripture. There is a clear development in this female figure from the "little child" that was beside God in his work of creation (cf. Prov 8:30) to the Wisdom that comes forth from the mouth of God (cf. Sir 24:3) to her figure acquiring divine characteristics

[2]Cf. Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine,* 96-97.

(cf. Wis 7:22b-8:1). Lady Wisdom clearly provides a key in reading and interpreting the divine characteristics that are touched on in this latest addition to Wisdom Literature. One becomes aware that in touching on the mystery of God, the writers of this part of the Sacred Scripture was led to appeal to a feminine mediator.

Wisdom 7:22b-8:13

1. The Nature of Wisdom

One of the affirmations that can be made of the Hebrew wisdom tradition is the close relationship between God and Wisdom. Her own coming to being preceded all of God's creation (Prov 8:22-26) and she witnessed this act of creation (Prov 8:26-30). In Prov 8:30 she is seen as the "delight" of the Lord. In Job 28:20-21, 23, it is told that only God knows Wisdom's origins and her ways again express her intimacy with God. The most revealing of these texts is her own self-proclamation in Sir 24:3 saying she "came forth from the mouth of the Most High". In my opinion this statement expresses divine origin and divine nature. It is supported by her claim to dwell in the highest heavens and to have a throne on a pillar of cloud (Sir 24:4). It is therefore not surprising that the book Wisdom describes her as "the breath of the power of God" (7:25), "living with God and the Lord of all loves her" (8:3), or "she who knows your [God's] works" (9:9).

All twenty-one attributes of Wisdom characterize this intimacy with God with a greater precision and directness thus far unseen in the Hebrew wisdom tradition. The direct application of divine qualities to Sophia is for me another

[3]The whole section on Wisdom 7:21b-8:1 is culled from my unpublished licentiate thesis entitled "The Relationship between God and the Figure of Wisdom: An Exegetical Study of Wisdom 7:22b-8:1" (Unpublished Thesis, Pontifical Gregorian University, 2011).

clear indication to what Sinnott describes as one and same reality in reference to the attribution of the same saving power to God and to Wisdom.[4] There is also an internal coherence in which this list of characteristics constructs the image of Wisdom. Some authors have analyzed the attributes and have seen pairings, word formations (such as the strong presence of alpha privatives) or alliterations as indications of this coherence. What Vílchez Líndez affirms however is not so much the intention of the author towards an individual conceptual sense for each adjective but rather that they come together to form a more collective sense.[5] Following this intuition, we shall attempt to examine them as contributing to three major themes: spirit, knowledge, and divinity. The structure of this unit may be presented in this manner:

[22] ἔστιν
γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ πνεῦμα **νοερόν** ἅγιον
μονογενές πολυμερές
λεπτόν
εὐκίνητον τρανόν
ἀμόλυντον
σαφές ἀπήμαντον φιλάγαθον
ὀξύ
[23] ἀκώλυτον εὐεργετικόν φιλάνθρωπον
βέβαιον ἀσφαλές ἀμέριμνον
παντοδύναμον πανεπίσκοπον
καὶ διὰ πάντων
χωροῦν
πνευμάτων
νοερῶν *καθαρῶν*
λεπτοτάτων

[4] Alice M. Sinnott, *The Personification of Wisdom* (London: Routledge, 2017), 163-164.

[5] Cf. Jose Vílchez Líndez, *Sabiduría* (Madrid: Editorial Verbo Divino, 1991), 258.

The above division into three columns or groupings corresponding to the proposed themes reveals three inclusions: πνεῦμα…πνευμάτων; νοερόν/λεπτόν …νοερῶν/λεπτοτάτων[6]; ἅγιον…καθαρῶν (all in v.22 … v.23).

1.1 Sophia and the Spirit

To proceed with an interpretation of the twenty-one attributes necessitates an explanation of the statement that introduces them: "For in her, there is a spirit" (7:22b). On the one hand, "spirit" in this statement can be understood to mean an innate quality of Wisdom; her spirit. On the other, "spirit" can be understood as an entity that dwells in her; the "Spirit" that is in her. In examining the uses of πνεῦμα in the book of Wisdom, it has been observed that it occurs 20 times with the following distribution in meanings:

Spirit of God	Spirit of Sophia	Human Spirit	Wind
1:5	1:6	2:3	5:11
1:7	7:7	5:3	5:23
9:17	7:22	7:23	7:20
11:20 (2x)		15:11.16	13:2
12:1		16:14	17:17

It is instructive to see the context in which the nine occurrences are used as the spirit of God and the spirit of Sophia.

In 1:4-7, Wisdom, spirit and God are tightly enmeshed so that it is difficult to take one of the three apart. Verses 4 and 5 forms a parallelism: Wisdom not entering where there is deceit and the holy spirit fleeing from deceit. This parallelism seems to imply that Wisdom and spirit are one. Moreover in v.6 Sophia is described as a "spirit friendly towards humans"

[6]Cf. Helmut Engel, "'Was Weisheit ist und wie sie entstand, will ich verkünden,'" in *Lehrerin der Gerechtigkeit,* edited by Georg Hentschel and Erich Zenger, *Erforder Theologicsche Schriften* 19: 75.

(φιλάνθρωπον πνεῦμα). In the same verse, the firmness of Wisdom on blasphemers is related to God who is the one who knows what lies in their hearts. In a way this also implies that Sophia knows what God knows. Verse 7 indicates that the "spirit" being talked about in verses 5 and 6 is that of the Lord. This forms a chain of close relationships or synonymity of terms.[7] Both ἅγιον and φιλάνθρωπον are among the attributes enumerated in 7:22c-23.

Wis 7:7 further strengthens the argument of interrelation seen above. It is God[8] invoked by Solomon and yet it is the spirit of Wisdom who responds. Again in 9:17, Wisdom and the Holy Spirit are sent by God to enlighten man. Is what we see a literary device that expands a single simple statement into a compound form? Perhaps "Who have learned your counsel, unless you have given wisdom and sent your holy spirit from on high?" simply means "Who have learned your counsel, unless you have sent your spirit of wisdom from on high?" C. Larcher calls this *une identification pratique*[9] between divine Wisdom and the divine Spirit. What he observes is a comparison already made between Wisdom and the Spirit in various O.T. texts which is further developed in the book of Wisdom. The result is an assimilation of activities which the Spirit has by Sophia. An example is the similarity between the exhortation to the King in Wis 6:22ff. and Solomon's desire for Wisdom in Wisdom 8 in comparison to Isa 11:2-8. What is attributed to the Spirit in Isaiah is attributed to Sophia in the book of Wisdom.

[7]Joseph R. Dodson, *The "Powers" of Personification: Rhetorical Purpose in the 'Book of Wisdom' and the Letter to the Romans* (Boston: Walter De Gruyter, 2008), 101.

[8]Note that "God" is the implied addressee of the call but is not explicitly stated in the LXX text. However, the NRSV translates so that the text goes "I called on God, …".

[9]Chrysostome Larcher, *Études sur le livre de la Sagesse* (Paris : Gabalda, 1969), 364.

There is a certain amount of ambiguity in the πνεῦμα found in 11:20. First of all, most translations of the phrase ὑπὸ πνεύματος δυνάμεώς σου express the idea "by the breath of your power." The NAB differs with its rendition "by your mighty spirit." This translation underlines the power of the spirit that acts and states it in a direct manner. The more common translation may come to the same meaning using a metaphorical interpretation of the expression. Second, using NAB's translation, the spirit is attributed to God as the second person singular addressed in this verse refers back to Wis 10:20 where Lord is the logical antecedent. However, if the common translation were followed, an ambiguity arises as "the breath of your power" recalls Wis 7:25 describing Sophia as "the exhalation of the power of God." This usage mirrors the O.T. description of God's breath as רוּחַ or wind manifesting God's "terrifying majesty."[10]

Due to this ambiguity, one is encouraged to think that God and Sophia are but one reality and that a defining aspect of this one reality is the spirit. The spirit of Sophia is the same as the spirit of God. Thus, when most scholars refer to the twenty-one attributes as "attributes of Wisdom" even if those attributes are grammatically attached as modifiers of "spirit," the understanding is that spirit is an innate quality of Wisdom and not a separate entity in itself. From this perspective, Sophia can be viewed as spirit (Wis 1:6) or imbued by the divine Spirit (Wis 7:22b). This explains how she is capable of all that is attributed to her and all that she is capable of

[10]Cf. Rainer Albertz and Claus Westermann, "רוּחַ *rûah spirit,*" *in Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (TLOT), edited by Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, translated by Mark E. Biddle, 3 vols (Peabody, Hendrickson, 1997), 1206; Larcher, *Études sur le livre de la Sagesse,* 365: "On pourrait songer à une simple imitation des textes bibli-ques parlant de la rouah qui est en Dieu, qu'il possède: à l'instar de Dieu, la Sagesse possèderait, elle aussi, une *rouah*, un pneuma."

doing. The spirit, through which her attributes are conceived, "takes care of explaining how Wisdom can communicate all the sciences to Solomon."[11] That Wisdom is spirit is shown likewise by the attributes "mobile" and her being able to move "through all spirits."

1.2. The Incisive Knowledge of Sophia

Among the twenty-one attributes, the first in the list is νοερός. It is also used as a term of inclusion reoccurring at the end of the list and thus marking vv.22b-23 as a sub-unit of the pericope. This precedence and use of the word as a term of inclusion implies the overarching characteristic of Wisdom. Whether both were deliberately devised by the author or unconsciously positioned, it is undeniable that when one talks or thinks of Wisdom, the first thought that would come to mind would be "knowledge" or its cognate concepts. The word ἅγιος which is naturally paired off with πνεῦμα and could have come before νοερός to be right beside πνεῦμα but is placed only second. This is another subtle indication that the author's interest lies in defining Sophia itself and not the spirit. Putting ἅγιος next to πνεῦμα would have highlighted the spirit and rallied all the attributes to itself rather than behind Sophia.[12]

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[11]Larcher, *Études sur le livre de la Sagesse,* 367.

[12]Cf. Larcher, *Études sur le livre de la Sagesse,* 365: "Ainsi, on peut mettre aisément au compte des influences bibliques les textes (surtout VII, 7 et IX, 17) où la sagesse principe supérieur de connaissance s'identifie avec un pneuma; sans oublier cependant que les milieux grecs n'avaient cessé d'attribuer à une inspiration ou à un souffle divins les facultés les plus mystérieuses ou les plus étranges de l'esprit de l'homme. De plus, l'auteur veut insister sur le fait que la Sagesse est communiquée ou agit sous la forme d'un pneuma, tandis que les textes bibliques antérieurs voient surtout en elle un effet de l'Esprit divin (cf. Is. xi, 2)."

The immediate context yields a very rich number of images that links to Wisdom's broad "intelligence." Just before the enumeration in v.22a, Wisdom is depicted by Solomon as the one who taught (ἐδίδαξεν) him. Teaching even in the layman's situation presupposes a minimum of intellectual capability on the part of the teacher. More so is required of Wisdom who initiates Solomon to the secrets of the universe. A beautiful parallelism shows how this attribute is divine and not merely human in Wis 7:7:

> Therefore I prayed, and understanding was given me;
> I called on [God], and the spirit of wisdom came to me.

Praying is obviously "calling on [God]" and the gift of φρόνησις is none other than the spirit of Wisdom. This understanding is elaborated further in the knowledge of things in the universe, "both what is secret and what is manifest," which is given by God but as Solomon professes, he has learned through the teaching of Sophia (Wis 7:15-22a). Wis 8:4 explains how Sophia is party to God's knowledge being his initiate. Thus, her knowledge extends to history and what comes in the future, her ability to discern through riddles, signs and wonders, and the inner working of the seasons (Wis 8:8). In Solomon's prayer for Wisdom, he says that "she knows and understands all things and she will guide me wisely in my actions". This all-knowing attribute of Sophia establishes her νοερός characteristic to be beyond the limitations of mere human intellect.

This intelligence is further distinguished by qualities of discernment and clarity. Discernment is shown in the attributes subtle (λεπτός) and keen (ὀξύς) while clarity in τρανός and σαφής. The ability to see different levels of reality and the sharpness by which that is accomplished is apparent in her dispensation of the virtues (8:7), her ability to understand and solve riddles (8:8), and the good counsel she lends to the king

(8:9). The penetrating depth with which ὀξύς characterizes Sophia's understanding and knowledge of things is further crystallized with clarity. In most translations, τρανός and σαφής are rendered as clear and distinct. The first is translated by Winston as "lucid" with his indication of how this term is used by Philo to mean clear impressions and in an Isis Aretalogy as referring to clear knowledge.[13] The word τρανός appears only three times in the LXX (in Wis 7:22, 10:21, and Isa 35:6). In both the other occurrences, it modifies tongue thus rendering the idea "clarity of speech". While it is not totally impossible to apply this meaning to our text, it must be recalled that Sophia does not speak in the book of Wisdom and thus renders this meaning a weak option. The interpretation of Winston is preferred since "lucidity or clarity of knowledge" fits better in the context of 7:22b.

1.3 The Holy, One and All-Powerful God in Sophia

In the structural analysis above, the third column reveals an inclusion of the pair ἅγιον–καθαρῶν. While the more commonly cited inclusions are those of same words, here we propose an inclusion composed of two different words but related terms. According to Procksch ἅγιος becomes commonly used only in the Hellenistic period. A lot of this usage is seen in the LXX thus it is undeniable that the term received much influence from Hebrew and any discussion must refer to the Hebrew term קדשׁ. Often, material relation is seen between holiness (קדשׁ) and purity (טהר). The first is the cultic term while the second is the ritual term[14]. In

[13]Cf. David S. Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979), 181.

[14]Cf. Otto Procksch, "*Ἅγιος*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament I* (TDNT), edited by Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley, Gerhard Friedrich, 10 vols (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1977), 89.

the Akkadian and Arabic derivations, the stative verb form means both "to be holy" and "to be pure."[15]

The word "holy" in the Old Testament carries with it not only the inherent purity that is asserted above. Above this basic relationship is the word's assignation to divinity and all that relates to the divine. For example, in the LXX, ἱερόν is never used to refer to the temple sanctuary. Instead, τὸ ἅγιον or τὰ ἅγιον is used to indicate that it belongs to YHWH and not to a pagan god.[16] Holiness carries with it also various connotations of divine "power and significance"[17] (2 Sam 6:6f; Isa 6:3). This divine might is expressed by the all-encompassing characteristics of παντοδύναμον and πανεπίσκοπον in v.23. The power and the image of one who oversees is best pictured by Isaiah's vision in the temple of God seated on a throne high above and his robes covering the temple (Isa 6:1).

At the center of the inclusion are five attributes that flow logically from the idea of purity. Basic to the conception of purity is being free from any form of blemish or defilement (ἀμόλυντον). This is followed by ἀπήμαντον which can have both passive and active connotations. In a passive sense, it directly supports the idea of purity by meaning that it cannot undergo corruption or mutation. In terms of action this bears a predisposition to do no harm.[18] Opposite to doing what is harmful is embracing or loving what is good (φιλάγαθον) and actively working for the good (εὐεργετικόν). C. Larcher affirms that the word φιλάγαθον has "two probable applications: a natural inclination of the spirit towards

[15]Cf. Hans-Peter Müller, "קדשׁ *holy,*" *TLOT III,* 1104.

[16]Cf. Procksch, "*Ἅγιος*" 95.

[17]Here we see a dynamistic concept of holiness (cf. Müller, "קדשׁ *holy,*" 1110).

[18]Cf. Giuseppe *Scarpat, Libro della Sapienza* (Brescia, Paideia, 1989),119.

the good comparable to that which inspires virtue, thus the spirit is holy or the emphasis is on its benevolence, because it wants and seeks only the good of creatures in its universal activity"[19]. This inclination towards the good of creatures can be manifested in particular as a beneficent stance towards human beings (φιλάνθρωπον) or what some would translate "humane" and yet others "friendly to humans."

The attributes that precede and follow the central attributes seem to unify them under the unique (μονογενές) and yet multi-faceted (πολυμερές) character of the divine. This singularity is also supported by three other qualities of solidity (βέβαιον), confidence (ἀσφαλές), and security (ἀμέριμνον). Even from lexical point of view, the presence of four *hapax* terms among the attributes in this group helps to highlight the uniqueness of that which is being described.

2. Sophia in Motion (7:24)

This verse is carefully worded so that it creates a very smooth transition from vv.22b-23 to vv.25-26. In this verse there is an intensification of two attributes already mentioned in the previous verses —mobile and undefiled— putting Wisdom now "directly in the divine medium".[20] Within itself, a two-part structure is evident:

[24] πάσης	γὰρ	κινήσεως κινητικώτερον	σοφία
διήκει	δὲ	καὶ χωρεῖ διὰ πάντων διὰ	τὴν καθαρειότητα

The γάρ marks a delineation signaling the end of the previous section and the beginning of a new one. H. Engel sees the separation of this verse from the previous but at the same time affirms a clear association because of the similarity in content between v.23de (καὶ διὰ πάντων χωροῦν [πνευμάτων…]

[19]Larcher, *Livre de la Sagesse,* 487.

[20]Cf. Vílchez Líndez, *Sabiduría,* 259-260.

καθαρῶν) and v.24b (καὶ χωρεῖ διὰ πάντων [διὰ τὴν] καθαρότητα)[21]. In fact in v.24a γάρ also flags the reader to an accompanying change in the subject. The "spirit" is left behind and now Sophia is directly treated as the subject. In the same manner the δὲ signals a break dividing v.24b from v.24a. The subject continues to be Sophia but another aspect regarding her activity independent of v.24a is presented in v.24b.

With this syntactic formation, Larcher suggests a separate interpretation of the first stich from the second stich.[22] His perspective is focused on explaining "motion" in v.24a and shifting to "purity" in v.24b. There is a validity to this approach specially when dealing with the philosophical school that sees motion as a form of imperfection and therefore inconsistent with other transcendental qualities. What Larcher outlines is an explanation of Sophia's motion as a mode of her perfection indicating that her movement is superior to the movement of all other beings so that she becomes the universal principle of motion and at the same time she is immediately (or simultaneously) present in all beings because of this movement. Likewise, he develops his explanation of purity as Sophia's transcendental and metaphysical nature justified by her intimate relation with God. This reference to God makes her different and superior to all other creatures of God.

This two-part, two-explanation approach is a good starting point but, in our opinion, it has to be explained as one unit. Vílchez Líndez agrees with Larcher's idea on motion and sees v.24b as a deepening and expansion of Sophia's power over beings due to her purity. He asserts that this transcendental quality introduces us to the very origin of Wisdom which is the divine. Neither does he develop an explicit unity between

[21]Cf. Engel, "Was Weisheit ist und wie sie entstand, will ich verkünden," 75.

[22]Cf. Larcher, *Livre de la Sagesse*, 493-496.

v.24a and b but what we propose as a solution may already be hinted by his understanding of v.24b as "underlining and amplification" of Sophia's power.[23]

The key to a unified explanation of v.24 is Sophia's mobility. She is seen as continually in motion in both stichs of v.24. Verse 24a qualifies this mobility as superior (shown in the comparative κινητικώτερον) over all other movements while v.24b provides the application of her mobility in the use of two verbs of motion, διήκω which means "pervade" or "extend and reach out" and χωρέω meaning "to move far and abroad". For us it is the second stich which validates Larcher's interpretation of Sophia's mobility in the first stich that "the author wanted to express in this way not only the universal causality of Wisdom, but also her immediate presence in all beings, an active and personal presence."[24]

This mobility of Sophia recalls the three attributes implying motion (εὐκίνητος, ἀκώλυτος, χωρέω) which were grouped under the spirit. From that connection with the spirit, the author shifts to divinity, the other category we created by reasoning that the superiority of Sophia's mobility is caused by her purity καθαρειότης[25] (here recalling the attributes ἅγιος and ἀμόλυντος).

Pulling back to the larger picture, it is to be noticed that v.24a forms an inclusion of sorts with v.22a. While v.22a does not technically belong to our pericope, it supports the idea of v.24 as a transitional verse.

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[23]Cf. Vílchez Líndez, *Sabiduría,* 260.

[24]Larcher, *Livre de la Sagesse,* 495.

[25]This word appears in the form *καθαρότης* in *Codices Vaticanus, Alexandrinus,* papyrus fragment of the Sinaiticus corrector, and minuscule manuscript 253. The difference is orthographic and does not affect the meaning of the word.

v.22a – ἡ **γὰρ** πάντων τεχνῖτις ἐδίδαξέν με **σοφία**

v.24a – πάσης **γὰρ** κινήσεως κινητικώτερον **σοφία**

This is something already seen right at the beginning of the book where in a similar structure Sophia is described as a "friendly spirit:

1:6a – φιλάνθρωπον **γὰρ** πνεῦμα σοφία

The "outer frame" formed by verses 22a and 24a, according to Neher provides a mode of inserting the *pneuma* related attributes as something that operates within Wisdom. It corresponds exactly to v.22b, "there is a spirit in her," animating and determining Sophia.[26] Thus this structure provides a connection for all the spirit attributes to the main subject who is Sophia.

3. The Five-fold Metaphor on Wisdom (7:25-26)

This unit of the pericope presents the closest and most direct link between Sophia and God. Sophia is now presented with five divine characteristics without the mediation of the spirit as was done in v.22b-23. A simple but well-designed structure is discernible:

25 ἀτμὶς γάρ ἐστιν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ δυνάμεως
καὶ
ἀπόρροια τῆς τοῦ παντοκράτορος δόξης εἰλικρινής
διὰ τοῦτο οὐδὲν μεμιαμμένον εἰς αὐτὴν
παρεμπίπτει
26 ἀπαύγασμα γάρ ἐστιν φωτὸς ἀϊδίου
καὶ
ἔσοπτρον

[26]Cf. Martin Neher, *Wesen und Wirken der Weisheit in der Sapientia Salomonis* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 114.

ἀκηλίδωτον τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἐνεργείας
καὶ
εἰκὼν τῆς ἀγαθότητος αὐτου

For ease of identification, we have aligned to the left all the adjectives that introduce the divine attributes. All exhibit the feminine ending in the nominative (functioning as predicate nominative) in reference to a feminine subject or antecedent. Aligned towards the right are the divine attributes all in genitive form as extensions of the predicate nominative.

Sophia is the implied subject with both γάρ ἐστιν introducing the metaphors referring back to the nearest logical antecedent in v.24a (γάρ…σοφία). Each of the five metaphors is marked by the γάρ ἐστιν and the καί. In v.25c, an extended explanation of the second metaphor is inserted. This interrupts the flow of the enumeration for which, in our opinion, the author necessarily had to terminate the sentence there and restart the list with another γάρ ἐστιν. Continuing with a καί in v.26a would have left the three remaining metaphors hanging. Another possible explanation for the division of metaphors between verses 25 and 26 is the affinity of the adjectives used. The first two have similarities just as the last three seem to go together.

In these two verses, the author engages the reader into a graphic description of Sophia. The use of "metaphors, not pure concepts, so that what is meant is included in the symbolism of images [like] origination, emanation, reflection, mirror and image,"[27] is a key to understanding this unit as an expression of the Sophia-God relationship. This symbolic language is the closest the author could have expressed the idea but,

[27] "...metáforas, no puros conceptos, por lo que lo significado queda englobado en el simbolismo de las imágenes efluvio, emanación, reflejo, espejo e imagen...". Vílchez Líndez, *Sabiduría*, 260.

in a way, the last verses (7:27-8:1) give us the feeling that he is not altogether satisfied hence another round of descriptions. However, this process lends to a certain clarity in the explicitation of the lady Wisdom's identity. A. Niccacci's insight gives a global understanding of the five metaphors at hand:

With respect to the older texts, the Book of Wisdom explicitates the relationship God-Wisdom. She is not only the firstborn (Pro 8) that emanated from the mouth of God (Sir 24), but is his image; she is not only known by the Creator, and known by him only (Gb 28). Rather she knows the created.[28]

3.1 God's δύναμις and δόξα (v.25)

Sophia comes from God. She is ἀτμίς of the Lord above all and ἀπόρροια of the Almighty. Both adjectives give us a sense of Wisdom deriving or originating from God. One is in the sense that she issues forth (effluvium) from God's power while the other pictures her flowing out (effluence) from the glory of the Almighty. It is easy to visualize the movement of gas or vapor as it shoots up from the spout of a kettle with boiling water or of the continuous flow of water on the riverbed. However, with Sophia, we are confronted with a spiritual, non-visual emanation. And yet, the image captures the reality of her being continuously drawing from its source—God's power and glory—and issuing forth as she penetrates all other beings in her purity.[29]

[28]"Rispetto ai testi più antichi, il libro della Sapienza esplicita il rapporto Dio-Sapienza. Essa non è solo primogenita (Pro 8), uscita dalla bocca di Dio (Sir 24), ma è sua immagine; non è solo conosciuta dal Creatore, e da lui soltanto (Gb 28), ma conosce il creato." Alviero Niccacci, *La casa della Sapienza: Voci e volti della sapienza biblica* (Milan: Edizioni San Paolo, 1994), 155. The English translation is ours.

[29]Cf. Scarpat, *Libro della Sapienza,* 70.

Sophia is potent because it is God's power that drives her. She also exudes God's δόξης εἰλικρινής which v.25c explains is the reason why impurities cannot affect or enter her. By this time, one notes how the theme of purity recurs throughout the pericope and how it is expressed by different words: ἀμόλυν̂τον, καθαρῶν, καθαρειότητα, and here εἰλικρινής. Each word contributes to the theme a particular facet of purity. The first the idea that purity is being not defiled or blemished or not having imperfections, the second and third, cleanliness; and the fourth of not containing any foreign element. Again, the recurring insufficiency of any one singular term that can satisfactorily define or describe Sophia is brought to light. This elusiveness underlines further the mystery that shrouds her transcendental nature.

3.1. Sophia, Image of God

Reflecting (ἀπαύγασμα), mirroring (ἔσοπτρον), and imaging (εἰκὼν) divine attributes or divine action are indirect ways of saying Sophia is the image of God. In these three metaphors just as in the previous two, one realizes that dealing with or referring to a particular divine attribute forces us to grapple with the reality of God himself. What does everlasting light represent if not God who is eternal and who is light (1 Jn 1:5) of all light? When one talks of the activity of God, one cannot imagine of the activity without being conscious of the doer—that God is the protagonist of the action. The divine goodness again needs one to act it out. In each of these divine attributes, only an aspect of the divine reality is revealed or expressed and yet the totality of God is made present for he cannot be divided into parts or aspects. So too does it occur with the author's attempt to attach these qualities to Sophia.

In the first two metaphors, the continuity of the flow expresses a unity between Sophia and God. The adjectives

of the last three metaphors, on the other hand, provide an ambiguous situation. If we take the use of image in Gen 1:27, where man is created in the image of God, it implies a certain alterity in the created in whom resides the likeness of God. But with Sophia, the existence of a separate entity reflecting divine qualities does not seem to be the function of her personification. Rather Sophia, is the Wisdom of God present through his divine attributes. Sophia, in so much as various divine attributes are attached to her, reflects, mirrors, or images only such aspects as the limitedness of human metaphors allow their expression.

4. Another Look at the Characteristics of Wisdom (7:27–8:1)

The analysis of the vocabulary of this section has revealed to us (cf. Chap. I, 3.7) that no new quality or characteristic is developed or attributed to lady Wisdom to add to those already mentioned in the two previous sections of the pericope. They simply reiterate those previously mentioned. What is therefore the function of these last five verses? Of the three major sections, this is the longest composed of 12 stichs (the first with only 9 stichs, the second with 6 stichs, and the transitional verse with 2 stichs). Observing the structure below, we can safely assume that no evident pattern or mode of arrangement presents itself as contrasted to the previous sections examined:

7[27] μία
δὲ οὖσα πάντα δύναται
καὶ μένουσα ἐν αὑτῇ, τὰ πάντα καινίζει
καὶ κατὰ γενεὰς
εἰς ψυχὰς ὁσίας μεταβαίνουσα
φίλους θεοῦ

καὶ προφήτας κατασκευάζει
[28] οὐθὲν
γὰρ ἀγαπᾷ ὁ θεὸς εἰ μὴ τὸν σοφίᾳ συνοικοῦ
ντα
[29] ἔστιν
γὰρ αὔτη εὐπρεπεστέρα ἡλίου
kai. u`pe.r pa/san a;strwn qe,sin
φωτὶ συγκρινομένη εὑρίσκεται προτέρα
[30] τοῦτο μὲν
γὰρ διαδέχεται νύξ
σοφίας
δὲ οὐ κατισχύει κακία
8[1] διατείνει
δὲ ἀπὸ πέρατος ἐπὶ πέρας εὐρώστως
καὶ διοικεῖ τὰ πάντα χρηστῶς

The first section presented a list of attributes by enumeration. The second section presented five metaphors with basic parallelism in its structure. What we see in 7:27–8:1 instead is a free-flowing discussion which now takes Sophia's attributes at random and shows how they allow her to act in all.

This section is introduced with a subtitle by some commentators. Larcher calls it "the universal activity of Wisdom."[30] Vílchez Líndez, on the other hand, calls it "the external activity of Wisdom." He explains how the author moves from an inner exploration of the divine attributes to Wisdom's use of these same attributes "*ad extra*, i.e. in the universe and in our history, especially in the intimacy with the just."[31] Winston offers a subtitle for the twenty-one attributes and then includes this section under the subtitle "Five-

[30]Larcher, *Livre de la Sagesse,* 505.

[31]Cf. Vílchez Líndez, *Sabiduría,* 262.

fold metaphor describing Wisdom's essence and her unique efficacy" without explaining.[32]

We see two possible themes that can be developed from this section. Verses 27-28 presents the transformative effect of Sophia on all things and all persons so that they are brought closer to God. Verses 29-30 develop the theme of light and darkness. The final verse, 8:1, is a summative statement.

4.1 Sophia: God's Salvific Wisdom (vv.27-28)

In these two verses there is no direct and explicit mention of Sophia as savior. We will find only in later verses such as "and thus the paths of those on earth were set right, and people were taught what pleases you, and were saved by wisdom" (9:18), "when the earth was flooded because of him, wisdom again saved it" (10:4), and "Wisdom rescued from troubles those who served her" (10:9), where Wisdom is explicitly in the act of saving.[33] What we want to assert here is that vv.27-28 set the foundation for Wisdom's salvific claims especially in the latter part of the book. Sinnott cites Wisdom's power to renew things as the reason why she can make holy souls friends of God and the prophets (v.27) and then she moves on to say:

> Wisdom not only does deeds associated with YHWH, but she speaks words that have God like qualities. This female personification of the creative and saving power of God in the world, is active and present in creation, all-knowing, all-powerful, omnipresent, renews all things, works in history to save her chosen people, guides and protects them through their struggles and crises, and carries out functions elsewhere attributed to YHWH.[34]

[32]Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon,* 184.

[33]The verb used in these three verses is sw,|zw "rescue, liberate, save".

[34]Sinnott, *The Personification of Wisdom,* 163.

The verb καινίζω "make things new" coupled with Sophia's πάντα δύναται "ability to do all things" lends to a transformative action—a cleansing that renews things. But the verse moves on to indicate that once things have been renewed, she also can do this to people, making them holy and moving them into this state of holiness, lead them to be friends of God and of prophets.

It is important to note that v.28 holds a key element to Sophia's salvific action. She does not only affect the lives of people, she dwells in them. The companionship that describes this indwelling is akin to a spousal relationship as expressed by the verb συνοικέω. At a deeper level, this cohabitation of Wisdom and the just is the realization of a community of life where the expression of love is freely given because the relation of intimacy is already established.[35] In the end, what is salvation if not that one is brought to this intimate union with God.

4.2 Sophia: The Light that Overshadows Darkness (vv.29-30)

Sophia is the reflection of everlasting light (v. 26a) and we have argued above that this statement could be interpreted so that Sophia herself is everlasting light. This argument is supported and made even clearer by vv.29-30 which compares Sophia to sources of light and light itself. As the everlasting light, she is more beautiful than the sun and she is seen high above all the stars—she is the brightest of all light. For Larcher, the introduction of beauty here reflects not only a physical beauty but one which is transcendent. Because of this incomparable beauty, he says, Wisdom becomes most desirable for companionship. This maintains the link to the previous stich. The stars are often considered mysterious objects often

[35]Cf. Vílchez Líndez, *Sabiduría*, 263-264.

admired and contemplated upon. For Sophia to be above the stars reinforces such desirable and enticing beauty.[36]

Just as the concept of Wisdom as savior develops more clearly in succeeding texts, the light-darkness antithesis develops also much later in the book (Wis 17:1–18:4). Vílchez Líndez explores these oppositions and says that "evening is the true kingdom of darkness, an apt moment for great misfortunes."[37] A parallelism is formed between vv.30a and 30b where light in v.30a (represented by τοῦτο) is parallel to Sophia in v.30b. At the same time night (νύξ) in v.30a is parallel to evil (κακία) in v.30b. Because Wisdom is the greater light, evil that lurks in the darkness of night will never prevail. Wisdom is light that shines in the darkness dispelling it. Thus, the metaphor of light can also be a parallel to purity. While darkness or evil cannot overpower light, so too that which is defiled or stained is renewed by the purity and holiness of Wisdom.

4.3 A closure (8:1)

"She extends from end to end with vigor and administers all things in proper manner" is a fitting summary of this pericope which attempts at describing lady Wisdom. The first idea that is put across is the breadth of her dominion as expressed by ἀπὸ πέρατος ἐπὶ πέρας literally "from end to end". End here is in the sense of limit or boundary thus the NRSV for example renders it as "from one end of the earth to the other". In other words, she is omnipresent expressing in it all her potentialities such as mobility, freedom of action, omnipotence, universal concern, and penetrating all spirits. This stretching of her reach is manifested εὐρώστως "with vigor" or "strongly" which implies "mightily" (evoking the

[36]Cf. Larcher, *Livre de la Sagesse,* 512-513.

[37]Vílchez Líndez, "La luz en el libro de la Sabiduría", 285.

παντοκράτωρ). Finally, that she administers all things well underlines her love for the good, beneficence, steadfastness, and universal concern. What 8:1 presents is "the active and permanent influence of Wisdom" and "the attribution to Wisdom of the function of universal governance or of Providence. Something which in other parts is a function exercised by God himself."[38]

Conclusion

Our pericope is seen as a three-part presentation of lady Wisdom. Many entitle it as the *Nature of Wisdom* or *In Praise of Wisdom* alluding to the characterization of lady Wisdom or the unveiling of her identity. Intensification is employed in the exposition of this "unveiling". The first section reveals the raw attributes of Wisdom by defining her "spirit" with a list of these qualities. The second section brings the qualities of Wisdom to a higher level of intensity by the use of metaphors and symbolic language. Also, the author shifts from talking about the "spirit" of Wisdom to talking about her and her divine origin. In the third section, all of the characteristics and metaphors of Wisdom from the first and second sections are re-elaborated to reflect not only her nature and identity but now to present her activity and effect upon the universe. Running throughout this three-tiered unfolding of lady Wisdom's identity is a deepening awareness of an increasing closeness between lady Wisdom and God. At a certain point in the pericope, there is a merging of identities so that Sophia's actions become extensions of God's actions. Sophia becomes the mediator of God's presence in the universe.

In the New Testament, much is said of the Father "sending" the Son to the world. The Word that becomes flesh

[38]Vílchez Líndez, *Sabiduría*, 264.

is central to the Johannine theology and is explored in various ways. But an important aspect is the Father-Son relationship expressed: "I and the Father are one" (Jn 10:30); "I am in the Father and the Father in me" (Jn 14:10). In this sending and incarnation, God is ever present in the universe. One possible conclusion from this is that Sophia represents an earlier form of "sending" that satisfied the need to concretize God's presence. Thus, an abstract concept containing divine aspects took on the personification of lady Wisdom. The figure of a woman stands as the expression of God's self-manifestation. The "incarnation" is the entrance of the divine into human history in flesh and bones. What may be amazing is that later theologians, to grapple with the reality of the incarnation of Jesus, have looked into Sophia and found some needed illumination into the mystery. The Word-made-flesh, Jesus, came into the world through a woman, Mary. In his great wisdom, God manifests his being in both feminine and masculine realities.

JUAN LUIS SEGUNDO'S HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLE:

A CONTINUAL HERMENEUTICAL ENCOUNTER OF THE WORD AND THE WORLD

Christiane Joseph C. Jocson

Introduction

Juan Luis Segundo is a notable figure in Latin American Liberation Theology. Like other liberation theologians, he fosters a notion of a critical attitude concerning social structures, ideologies, and even other theologies.[1] One of the problems that a theologian must confront is the reality that some ideologies and theologies can consciously and unconsciously lead to domination and exploitation.[2] Thus, the task of a theologian, according to liberation theology, is to open the path for an encounter of the Word of God and

[1]"The fact is that dozens of groups, movements, and parties claim to possess the one key to a real revolution.» (Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology.* Trans. John Drury. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979, 101.) J.L. Segundo taking a note from the post-Marxist scholar György Lukács cautions against taking any conceptualization of liberation wholesale. Even theologies of liberation must be considered and understood with a critical attitude. This critical distance would help us to avoid any messianism that would obscure the true face of liberation, which is the face of God.

[2]"In other words, the oppressor constructs an ideological edifice in which the cause of the oppressed people suffering is not even mentioned, much less studied." (Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 28) The problem lies in complacency or indifference, where people take their situation for granted and forget to understand it in the context of a loving and liberating God. Even worse is the tendency to justify such oppressive systems as God-imposed systems in several ways.

the World. Faith, then, is a liberative process.[3] It builds on relationships, for the liberative hermeneutical process is an arduous journeying with one another. With each encounter of the Word and the World, a new horizon or possibility of being is unveiled.

Furthermore, it must be essential to note that this task of unmasking the oppressive structures, according to liberation theologians, cannot be done in the usual way of doing theology, where theology is done from the privileged point of the theologian's ivory tower.[4] Theology cannot be simply an engagement with ideas and spiritual matters, but it must be done where the people of God are. Theology must touch the ground where the people, especially the poor, toil. Pope Francis, during his Chrism Mass on March 28, 2013, said: "This I ask you: be shepherds, with the 'odor of the sheep,' make it real, as shepherds among your flock, fishers of men."[5] In the same way, the theologian must foster a spirit of accompaniment—walking with the people in any theological undertaking. Only by being immersed in the people's suffering and standing in solidarity with their plights can theology be liberating. Thus, this study will explore the notion of a "feet on the ground" understanding of theology in Juan Luis Segundo.

In consonance with the "feet on the ground," understanding theology is reevaluating our understanding of hermeneutics. Gustavo Gutierrez and other liberation theologians in the past have described this methodological break as "the

[3]Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 110.

[4]C.f. Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 19.

[5]Pope Francis, Chrism Mass Homily. 28 March 2013, Homilies, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130328_messa-crismale.html. (Accessed on October 10, 2021)

epistemological leap" or "the hermeneutical shift."[6] The basic principle guiding liberation theology in its hermeneutical shift is the need to reevaluate, rephrase, and reinterpret our understanding. The task of interpretation is creating a connection between the past, present, and future. This vision of hermeneutics is a dialectical process between reading the life world and reading Scriptures and Tradition.[7] In short, interpretation is an encounter between the Word and the world.

It is here where Segundo's notion of the hermeneutical circle comes into play. For Juan Luis Segundo, the hermeneutical circle is "the continuing change in our interpretation of the Bible which is dictated by the continuing changes in our present-day reality, both individual and societal."[8] Scholars comment that a proper understanding of Segundo's hermeneutical circle can be adequately achieved if we envision a hermeneutical spiral. For Segundo, like Paul Ricoeur, hermeneutics is a continual effort to bring the text alive in our context. In the same way, a hermeneutical shift according to liberation theology can only be effective if there is an encounter between the human and the divine, between the living world and the living Word of God.

Ideology and Faith

One of the critical starting points of our discussion on Segundo's hermeneutical circle must begin with his

[6]Gustavo Gutierrez, Praxis de Liberacion y Fe Cristiana (Lima 1973, 16) Jose Miguez Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, (Philadelphia, 1975), 88. Quoted in Juan Stam. "The Hermeneutics of Liberation Theology." Bangalore Theological Forum. Vol. XI. No. 2 (1979): 126.

[7]"… the word of God has always dialogued with human beings preoccupied with efficient problems.» (Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 12.)

[8]Stam, "The Hermeneutics of Liberation Theology," 131.

understanding of ideology. According to Segundo, our understanding of faith is always grounded in the lens of a particular time and space. Thus, consciously or unconsciously, our ideological lens allows us to make sense of our world which also influences how we understand the faith through our particular context. As Heidegger claims, we are beings in the world, and our work of interpretation is permanently anchored in our very situatedness.[9] John Ries adds: "As such, human understanding is essentially interpretive, and its interpreting includes the one interpreting. As a human being, the one seeking is intrinsically entangled in the very process of interpretation."[10] Some ideological lens also informs even our way of doing theology.

Polemicizing against Schillebeeckx, Segundo argues that theology cannot be the application of the Word of God to present-day reality, as though the Word of God and its meaning first is understood in some pure sense, in an antiseptic laboratory immune from ideological struggles.[11]

Nevertheless, in contrast to other theologians who take the notion of ideology in a purely negative manner,[12] for

[9]C.f. John Ries, "Of Truth and Method: Juan Luis Segundo's Mapping of a Liberating Hermeneutic Circle," *Louvain Studies* 22 (1997): 212.

[10]Ries, "Of Truth and Method," 208.

[11]Harold Wells, "Segundo's Hermeneutic Circle," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 34 (1984): 25-26

[12]Ideology would be the systematization of the perception of the real.» Insofar as one seeks to grasp reality concretely, one must use ideologies. Segundo insists upon this term since he believes that our way of seeing the world is objectively affected by what we understand. He realizes that every understanding, including *fides quaerens intellectum,* entails a pre-understanding that already colors the reality sought. (Ries, "Of Truth and Method: Juan Luis Segundo's Mapping of a Liberating Hermeneutic Circle," 210)

Segundo, a theologian's task is always to be aware of the ideological veil present in the interpretation and even his own interpretation of the text. For Segundo, the goal of the work of interpretation and the hermeneutical circle is to allow the interpretation to be questioned on whether it illuminates or obscures the gospel message.[13] Segundo considers ideology as having both a positive and a negative dimension. The goal is to be aware that in doing our work of interpretation, we may either be an agent of liberation or one who propagates oppression. According to Wells: "The theology of liberation, especially this contribution from Segundo, has much to say about "slothful neutrality" which deserves our urgent attention."[14]

Ries highlights, "One crucial aspect of the hermeneutic circle is that it reminds us that every understanding is an interpretation, and as such needs to be called into question, re-opened so that its ideology can be unmasked of those elements which hide the gospel message."[15] Thus, Segundo must use the word "circle" to describe his methodology since every interpretation seeks its criticism so that it becomes aware of its conscious and unconscious ideological underpinnings.

[13]C.f. Ries, "Of Truth and Method," 210.

[14]Harold Wells, "Segundo's Hermeneutic Circle," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 34 (1984): 31.

[15]John Ries, "Of Truth and Method," 210.

The Hermeneutical Circle[16]

These two preconditions mean that there must, in turn, be four decisive factors in our circle. Firstly, our way of experiencing reality leads us to ideological suspicion.[17]

The first decisive factor, according to Segundo, is the initial motivation to look at and question reality. A person content with the world will not be interested in unmasking the mechanisms that conceal the authentic reality.[18] For example, an individual who is too entrenched in the attitude of consumerism will have a hard time building a critical attitude to question his or her buying habits. The problem is that many of us prefer to maintain the status quo rather than take the hard road toward life. From the Gospel, we know that collective human praxis disguises itself, shuns the light, prefers darkness, and does not want to stir up crisis.[19]

Through the lens of Sigmund Freud, James O'Donnell emphasizes this innate tendency of the human being to prefer a stable and comfortable life rather than to seek possibilities beyond the present and strive for self-transcendence.

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[16]Two preconditions must be met if we are to have a hermeneutic circle in theology. The first precondition is that the questions arising out of the present be rich enough, general enough, and basic enough to force us to change our customary conceptions of life. The second precondition assumes it can respond to new questions without changing its conventional interpretation of the Scriptures. (Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 8-9.) According to Segundo, the first precondition for the hermeneutical circle is one's critical disposition in confronting our understanding of our life and destiny. The second precondition task is about the connection between the original intention of the Word of God and the changing situation of our present context.

[17]Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 9.

[18]*Segundo, The Liberation of Theology,* 9.

[19]Juan Luis Segundo, *Signs of the Times* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 7.

According to Segundo, the contrasting energy from this tendency towards an "easy life" is faith.[20] "Described from a Freudian perspective," O'Donnell states that "faith is the vital attitude that is not a surrender to one's instinctive desires and mechanisms for the "easy way out."[21] For O'Donnell, Segundo takes a cue from Freud's hermeneutics of suspicion in describing the tension between sin and grace, between a life of indifference and a life configured to the suffering Christ.

Nevertheless, no matter how much one tries to look the other way around and maintain a blind eye to the atrocities and sufferings around him/her, God finds a way to stir the heart toward something life-giving. Segundo thus states, "There belongs to the primordial reality of authentic Christianity a deep suspicion of any collective praxis that conceals its real motives, ignores its mechanisms and takes refuge in ideal conceptualizations of its most concrete and keenest reality."[22] No matter how much one tries to become apathetic and indifferent to the heart's stirrings, there is something inherent and natural in a person that stirs her/him towards concern for another.[23]

One concrete manifestation here is the presence of the poor in our society. No matter how our modern society tries to cover up the reality of the poor, the poor will allow us to

[20]See Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 43.

[21]James O'Donnell, "The Influence of Freud's Hermeneutic of Suspicion on the Writings of Juan Segundo," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 10, 1, Spring (1982): 29.

[22]Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 7.

[23]"… the theology of Jesus derives theology from the openness of the human heart to man's most urgent problems. Indeed, Jesus seems to go so far as to suggest that one cannot recognize Christ, and therefore come to know God, unless he or she is willing to start a personal commitment to the oppressed." (Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 81.)

see the reality that we have been so accustomed to seeing with new eyes.[24] Beyond the great lights and the towering skyscrapers of a great metropolis lies the simple daily wage earners struggling in their daily commute to make a living. We also see street children running after buses and jeepneys to beg for some coins. The presence of the poor disorients and dislocates us from our seemingly utopian world of abundance.

At the end of the first session of Vatican II, Cardinal Lercaro lamented that "something has been missing so far in the council," and he asked, "where shall we find that vital impulse that soul let us say that fullness of the Spirit?" He replied, "This is the hour of the poor, of the millions of poor everywhere on the earth."[25]

In Cardinal Lercaro's words, we can observe that a critical element in the renewal of the Church is emphasizing a focus on the poor as a presence that allows the Church to look at itself with an ever-renewed vigor.[26] Archbishop Romero said insightfully, "The glory of God is that the poor live," these words can be taken as a "summary" of Christianity.[27] It is when the poor and the outcasts of society have been given a space to express the work of the Spirit in their lives. Only

[24]"But Jesus' theology says something very different. It suggests that when people stop at theological certitudes, those certitudes fall apart in their hands. They are not designed to take the place of an upright human heart as the primary source of any historical judgment.» (Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 80.)

[25]Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor,* 22.

[26]Thus, Enrique Dussel coined for theologians and pastoral agents the expression of the discipleship of the poor. Furthermore, Leonardo Boff spoke about a new "ecclesiogenesis," *a church born from the poor.* (Segundo, Signs of the Times, 74.)

[27]Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor,* 26.

then can we say that the glory of God has truly shone in our world.[28]

We will do so by understanding salvation in relation to the poor and by seeing in the poor a locus and a potential for salvation.[29] The very prophetic presence of the poor allows us to be conscious of the scope of the work of salvation. Even the silent presence of the poor can become salvific if it allows us to reconsider and rethink our way of life. Through those humbled by the reality of poverty, the Spirit of the Lord has not refrained from using them as a channel to effect salvation but made them the very center by which salvation is to be fulfilled. "That very formula exceeds our grasp: *extra pauperes nulla salus."*[30] One could only hope to be lost in abstraction and hopeful fantasy outside the poor.[31] Medellin gave particular importance to the "option for the poor," but we now go a step further and do so with some novelty: we propose "the option to let salvation come from the poor."[32]

Secondly, our ideological suspicion is applied to the whole ideological superstructure in general and to theology in particular.[33]

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[28]In the Christian customs of an evangelized people, the Holy Spirit adorns the Church, showing her new aspects of revelation and giving her a new face. (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium,* 1 January 2013, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html. (accessed July 25, 2022), no. 116.)

[29]Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor,* 49.

[30]Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor,* 49.

[31]"Eternal salvation depends on the living out of a love of preference for the poor because the poor and needy bear the privileged presence of Christ." (PCP II, 312)

[32]Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor,* 50-1.

[33]Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 9.

We discussed in the previous chapter the task of prophecy in the light of Christ. Prophecy is a courageous confrontation of the evils of the Word, such that even in the face of alienation and oppression, one would remain committed to following Christ in denouncing the world's evils. Therefore, we read in *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*: "The Church is called to exercise a truly prophetic role, condemning the evils of man in their infected source, showing the root of divisions and bringing hope in the possibility of overcoming tensions and conflicts and reaching brotherhood, concord, and peace at all levels and in all sections of human society."[34] Here, the Church must emphasize the role of the poor as a prophetic witness in helping the Church be attuned to the rhythm of History. To emphasize, it is also crucial that the Church recognizes the poor's prophetic role in denouncing the modern world's evils.

The poor are our hermeneutical key in addressing the culture of indifference prevalent in our technologically advanced world.[35] The poor are also a constant reminder that the Church is an *ecclesia semper reformanda;* the face of the poor allows the Church to look directly at the face of Christ.[36] Each time we become a witness to the plight and sufferings of the poor, we are confronted with the figure of the crucified

[34]John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia, in The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortations of John Paul II,* December 2, 1984, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_02121984_reconciliatio-et-paenitentia.html. (accessed July 30, 2022), no. 4.

[35]"However, when we speak of God's revelation to the oppressed, the analysis is incorrect. His revelation comes to us in and through the cultural situation of the oppressed. (Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 30.)

[36]C.f. PCP2 130 "We need to recognize the saving presence of Jesus among the poor he loved so much and whose faces bear his image.» (PCP II, 278)

Christ whose silent gaze questions and challenges us.[37] The Church faces many challenges, but we believe none is more vigorous—and leaves the Church more defenseless—than the poor and the victims of this world.[38]

We realize in our History has often testified to events that have often used the Gospel as an instrument of oppression. Beyond our ideological lens, we must constantly be reminded of the person beyond the ideological veils of History; interpretation must return to Christ. Thus, our interpretation of the Bible must always go back to Christ rather than be fixated on the letter. Segundo emphasizes, "We will thus rescue them (the poor) from a tradition which, for various reasons indicated, has (been) transmitted (to) them in corrupted ways."[39] Our understanding of the Word of God must reach the depths of love beyond the letter and affirm the life-giving Spirit of the law.

Furthermore, we have the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which a person who neither knew nor understood the law but whose heart was open to an option to an attitude interpreted the law. This parable is situated in the context of the interpretation of the law. It is not a parable about charity. Jesus is being asked how he reads the law regarding one's neighbor. He responds that persons who do an authentic reading of the law with an open heart have come to the aid of their neighbor.[40]

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[37]C.f. David Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology* (Boston: Brill, 2002), 197; "Similarly, the Church encompasses with love all who are afflicted with human suffering and in the poor and afflicted sees the image of its poor and suffering Founder." (LG 8)

[38]Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor,* 33.

[39]Segundo, *Faith, and Ideologies,* 178.

[40]Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 124.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Christ asks how we read the law, for one must be wary of whether his or her hermeneutical lens can be a source of charity or oppression. When appropriately used, biblical criticism could free the reader from the fundamentalist prison of the letter.[41] The Spirit of the law is always directed towards the liberation and the manifestation of the freedom proper to all. Any understanding of the law that moves in the opposite direction is in danger of being lethal and stifles the freedom of another. Unfortunately, the letter continues to be the letter, which can be lethal.[42] Any attempt to interpret the Word of God must be able to elucidate the liberating power of the Word. Therefore, hermeneutics must be understood in the context of love, and become hermeneutics of charity, allowing mercy and compassion to propagate in our world rather than punishment and suppression.

Neoliberal ideology (one of the slogans, with unintended irony, proclaims 'the end of history') has its way of reading the historical future of humanity; it dispossesses the developing nations of their past and disguises an economic and social process that is increasing the imbalance.[43]

"In Latin America, millions of people are dying because the gospel has been interpreted in a particular way for five centuries."[44] One must be aware that the Gospel can be interpreted in either salvific or oppressive light. Thus, every hermeneutics must pave the way for its criticism. In making itself vulnerable, the interpretation can make itself open to the touch of

[41]Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology,* 185.

[42]Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 120.

[43]Gutierrez, *The Density of the Present* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999), 132.

[44]Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 119.

the Spirit. This point of vulnerability in the interpretation process allows for space for dialogue to be nourished by the interpretation of another. The goal of interpretation must always be a reiteration of our connection with God and God's people. Any interpretation that does the contrary is in danger of being oppressive. Genuine hermeneutics is to be vulnerable with the poor.[45]

"Almost automatically, we cling vainly to some letter of ours, to some past figure who is no less in contradiction to the very revelation of Christ and the outpouring of his Spirit for being the very figure of Christ."[46] Any genuine interpretation seeks to touch its wounds, for these gaps can become spaces for transformation and conversion. For Segundo, hermeneutical suspicion must be understood as an invitation to openness rather than a direct criticism. In touching its wounds, it also seeks to touch people whose lives have been affected negatively by its misuse or disuse. Interpretation is an expression of power that one can either unveil or cover up the truth.[47] "The Church (and the society) seriously needs to be challenged, for it has a natural tendency to hide its miseries."[48]

The Gospel can be read apart from any relation to the liberation of the poor from their poverty, which is why it has been read for so long without the poor experiencing any change in their situation.[49] The poor are often neglected in

[45]"I am glad, brothers and sisters, that our Church is being persecuted precisely because of its option for the poor and because it seeks to be incarnated in the interest of the poor.» Oscar Romero. «Homily of July 15, 1979,» quoted in Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor,* 32.

[46]Segundo, *Our Idea of God,* 30.

[47]C.f. Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor,* 43.

[48]Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor,* 33.

[49]Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 119-20.

any hermeneutical undertaking on the Gospel, which is why the Gospel often appears stale in front of oppressed people. I have an answer —my own —to this hermeneutic problem. "My answer is the option for the poor."[50] The presence of the poor revitalizes our understanding of the Word. The eyes of the poor allow us to look again and reevaluate how we are as a humane and civilized people.[51] Through the presence of the forgotten in History, we find a wealth of meaning in the Word.

Through the paradigm of love, the work of interpretation seeks to renew its outlook on the world, beginning with those suffering and oppressed. Through the lens of love, hermeneutical suspicion also gives way to the creative unfolding of salvation history. For Segundo, "God-in-us, attuned to the rhythm of history, ensures the continuing presence of Jesus' word in a creative way."[52] Our hermeneutical attempt must always be both a looking back and a looking forward. The possibilities of interpretation are a testament to the creative work of the Spirit. Hans de Wit adds: "Thus the interpretation process of biblical texts should not be limited to the exploration of the historical meaning of the text... but should concentrate just as much on how the surplus of the meaning of the text is made operational from the praxis in the interpretive communities."[53]

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[50]Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 120.

[51]"This change is at the heart of Christian discipleship lived in a world of poverty, oppression, exploitation, and conflict." (PCP II, 272)

[52]Segundo, *Our Idea of God,* 30.

[53]Hans de Wit. "'It Should be Burned and Forgotten!': Latin American Liberation Hermeneutics through the Eyes of Another." *The Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation.* Edited by Alejandro F. Botta & Pablo R. Andinach (Altlanta: Society of Biblical (Literature, 2000), 44–5.

Thirdly, there comes a new way of experiencing the theological reality that leads us to exegetical suspicion, that is, to the suspicion that the prevailing interpretation of the Bible has not taken essential pieces of data into account.[54]

God's Spirit, Who, with a marvelous providence, directs the unfolding of time and renews the face of the earth, is not absent from this development.[55] Any work of interpretation is one's participation in the work of renewal. In the face of each new juncture in History, active and critical listeners will make the good news sound out anew—ever the same (the message of Jesus) but ever different.[56] God seeks everyone to become aware of their capacity for interpretation, especially the poor. The particular context of each interpreter allows people to enflesh the Word of God through their setting in life (*sitz im leben*).

For Segundo, our hermeneutical key in understanding the Word of God is based on reading the signs of the times. So Jesus gives them, as an example of a sign of the times and of a reading of the signs of the times, the pagan people who, in the sensitivity of their hearts, have attuned themselves to what God was trying to tell them.[57] Without the hermeneutical key of love and option for the poor, any interpretation of the Word of God is bound to be focused only on the letter. Segundo discusses: "Meanwhile, here are the Pharisees looking at Jesus, and out of tune with God because they lack sensitivity in their hearts to interpret the Word. The signs of the times somehow precondition the reading of the Word."[58]

[54]Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 9.

[55]*Gaudium et Spes,* 26.

[56]Segundo, *Our Idea of God,* 29-30.

[57]Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 124.

[58]Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 124.

"The option for the poor is the human attitude that we adopt, on our responsibility and at our own risk, toward the Word of God, before the reading of that Word."[59] This sensitivity to the negative realities of the world and the cry of the poor in a seemingly "utopian" world of abundance is essential in facilitating an authentic encounter with the Word of God. Therefore, an interpreter needs to develop this sensitivity of the heart to see only the letter of the law and encounter the Spirit of the law.

Segundo writes: "I shall approach the option for the poor not as a conclusion drawn by liberation theology, or as one of its favorite themes, but as a hermeneutic key —that is, as the antecedent element required to interpret the gospel and keep its letter from killing."[60] One must be able to go back to the teachings of Christ on the two greatest commandments—the love of God and the love of neighbor. Only through love can any interpretation be purified of any narcissistic tendency and become genuinely inspired by the Word of God. Furthermore, interpretation must allow for a greater connection with the world.

In these lines, Hans de Wit takes a note from Ricoeur and emphasizes the notion of a "surplus of meaning" from liberation hermeneutics, with the latter drawing inspiration from the former. Compared to classical hermeneutics, the main goal is only to return to the original historical context. "In classic hermeneutics, Croatto observes, the biblical text is considered a *deposit* that is exhausted in its first production

[59]Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 126.

[60]Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 120.

of a meaning (*produccion de sentido*)."[61] In other words, in classical hermeneutics, the message is directed only to the original audience; we, as readers, are only spectators as the text unfolds. It must be stressed again that the simultaneous presence of past and present in biblical interpretation is an essential hermeneutic principle.[62] As Segundo claims: "God will keep coming to speak to us from the very same Bible.[63]

For this to make sense, the challenge is to do things differently from what we have been doing. However, it is to fight creativity for the exact cause in one's context, tools, and, above all, hearts.[64]

"'The not said of the text' found in the contextualized reading is not just a free-floating new meaning or a parasite on a flower; no, it *reorients, remodels, enriches the original*."[65] The Spirit of the law allows us to "reorient, remodel, and enrich" our understanding of the law. There is much left unsaid in History; our task is to read again and reflect on how something that was said in the past could still be meaningful in our present context.[66] Segundo further insists, "… God in us, *God within us*. Or, to put it another way: the Word of God made our Word, the Word of God transformed into a creating, communitarian word that reveals our History because it follows its rhythm."[67]

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[61]de Wit, "'It Should be Burned and Forgotten!': Latin American Liberation Hermeneutics through the Eyes of Another," 44.

[62]Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 31.

[63]Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 32.

[64]Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 80.

[65]de Wit, "'It Should be Burned and Forgotten!'" 45.

[66]C.f. Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 31.

[67]Segundo, *Our Idea of God,* 31.

Fourthly we have our new hermeneutic, that is, our new way of interpreting the fountainhead of our faith (i.e., Scripture) with the new elements at our disposal.[68]

One must be aware that liberation hermeneutics does not depart from the Bible but seeks to encounter the person behind the text. The key to doing this is constant and rigorous walking with the Word. We encounter not a dead text but an Incarnate Word of God that constantly pitches his tent with us wherever our hermeneutical journey will lead us. "The liberation theologian goes to the scriptures bearing the whole weight of the problems, sorrows, and hopes of the poor, seeking light and inspiration from the divine Word. A new way of reading the Bible: the hermeneutics of liberation."[69] Segundo concisely believes that "God will keep coming back to speak to us from the very same Bible."[70]

It is intended only as a way into the hermeneutic circle, a way of breaking into this closed circle and becoming convinced that the Gospel itself is giving us a response to our human problems, the problems of poverty. Nevertheless, it demands a pre-attitude, a preunderstanding—and that it only opens itself (as the very letter of the Gospel has it) to those with this attitude, wager on the attitude called the 'option for the poor.'[71]

There is, nevertheless, a "hermeneutical circle" or "mutual appeal" between the poor and the Word.[72] The reality of the poor is a constant reminder that the work of interpretation is

[68]Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 9.

[69]L. & C. Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, 32.

[70]Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 33.

[71]Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 124-5.

[72]C.f. EN 29, see L. & C. Boff. Introducing Liberation Theology, 33.

a progressive and continuous effort.[73] Each historical context must be treated as an opportunity where the Word meets the world,[74] It must specifically be the Word of God and the poor. In other words, the face of the poor dislodges our usual understanding of the Word of God and calls us to re-encounter the Word in all its vigor and strength.[75] This dislocation breaks our usual gaze and learns to see the world and Word with a fresh perspective. In the case of poverty, it allows us to be aware of our human capacity and acknowledge our tendency for hubris and self-sufficiency. The viewpoint of the poor is thus placed into a broader viewpoint—that of the Lord of History—whence the Word of God derives its consistency and strength.[76]

It is with all its dynamism that the social teaching of the Church accompanies men in their search. If it does not intervene to authenticate a given structure or to propose a ready-made model, it does not thereby limit itself to recalling general principles. On the contrary, it develops through reflection applied to the changing situations of this world, under the driving force of the Gospel, as the source of renewal when its message is accepted in its totality and with all its demands. It also develops with the sensitivity proper to the

[73]Segundo's methodology is considered a circle because of the need to go "… back and reinterpret the word of God again, and so on." (Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 8.)

[74]The Word of God has always dialogued with human beings preoccupied with convenient problems… Jesus himself dialogued with disciples who were constantly preoccupied with ensuring they would get the choice spots in the coming of the kingdom. (Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 12.)

[75]In the diversity of peoples who experience the gift of God, each by its own culture, the Church expresses her genuine catholicity and shows forth the «beauty of her varied face .»(EG 116)

[76]L. & C. Boff. *Introducing Liberation Theology,* 33.

Church, characterized by a disinterested will to serve and pay attention to the poorest.[77]

The creative power of the Spirit of the Lord inspires each believer to uncover the vast wealth of meaning behind the Word of God. "A great creative force is necessary to confront the present challenges."[78] Each hermeneutical endeavor to understand the Word of God is to understand it as if Christ is walking alongside us, present in our every situation.[79] "Thus, theological reflection also cannot stay the same."[80] In a way, the creative power and the richness of meaning present in the Word of God testify to its characteristic as a "living" Word of God. "It combines a deep sense of God's gift of love and the urgent need for solidarity with those who historically come in last."[81] Interpretation unveils a call to be responsible for another, be s/he the excluded poor or the violated earth.

For Segundo, for our hermeneutical project to be liberative, it must espouse a commitment to the poor. "When God opts to allow us to give salvation and liberation to the poor, it shows that we are graced by a God who is scandalously present in them."[82] In such a manner, we configure our hermeneutical undertaking with the counter-cultural Christ. "And it is with this attitude, with this sympathy for those who suffer most, an

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[77]Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens,* May 14, 1971, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniens.html (accessed August 3, 2022), no. 42

[78]Gutierrez, *The Density of the Present,* 111.

[79]The fact is that God shows up in a different light when his people find themselves in different historical situations. (Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 31.)

[80]Gutierrez, *The Density of the Present,* 125.

[81]Gutierrez, *The Density of the Present,* 128.

[82]Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor,* 19.

attitude and sympathy like God's, that I shall read the Gospel, to see what it tells me about those persons to whom, and together with whom, I make my commitment."[83] "As it was in Bonhoeffer's day: 'Only a God who suffers can save us.'"[84]

From Word to Flesh: Hermeneutical Praxis[85]

The Bible is read and studied to know better the present situation and the calls from God that exist in it. The ultimate aim of the people's use of the Bible is not so much to interpret it but to enflesh or incarnate it in their lives.[86]

To interpret is to reflect on our lives, such that through our hermeneutical endeavors, we are open to the possibility of transforming the way we live our lives and how we relate with people.[87] In short, hermeneutics is directed toward the fulfillment of a good life. Therefore, every struggle to interpret is a struggle to lead an ethical life. The reason for the essential connection between hermeneutics and praxis. From Word to Flesh. It must involve a process of inculturation if the Gospel is to take flesh in each people's culture and context.[88] As Leonardo and Clodovis Boff discusses: "Liberation theology is far from being an inconclusive theology. It starts from

[83]Segundo. *Signs of the Times,* 120.

[84]Sobrino. No Salvation Outside the Poor, 56.

[85]"Ask, what shall I do to bring down the crucified people from the cross?" (Ignacio Ellacuria. "Las Iglesias latinoamericanas," 230 quoted in Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor,* 34)

[86]Mesters. *Defenseless Flower: A New Reading of the Bible* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989), 71 quoted in Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology,* 180

[87]This stage can be viewed historically as a transition to Ignatian spirituality, which sought a problematic but fruitful synthesis between contemplation and action: *in actione contemplativus* ("contemplative in action"). Cf. Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation,* 58.

[88]CCC 854.

action and leads to action, a journey wholly impregnated by and bound up with the atmosphere of faith."[89] Interpretation is not just an intellectual activity but also a practical activity that calls everyone responsible.

In liberation hermeneutics, praxis is the space within which biblical texts' humanizing and liberating potential is explored. Praxis is a continual process of searching, transformation, continually deciding, choosing, judging, and determining who we are and who we shall be, not as a private or an individual act, but as a public and communal activity.[90]

Hermeneutical praxis is a continuous effort to transform our lives and attitudes toward how we deal with the world. Segundo's concept of the hermeneutical circle testifies to the richness of the Word of God in guiding us on how we live in a just society with others. Committing to action is a constant struggle to walk with the voiceless in History. Faithfulness to the God of our faith and the poor implies a permanent tension between the Gospel and walking with people living in a changing situation.[91] Any work of interpretation experiences this tension of being faithful to the author's original intention and its capacity to invoke a new understanding in its reader.[92] The new Gospel preaching will have to address the challenges which the past and present history of the continent present.[93]

God's revelation is about making a difference. Moreover, in terms of the simplest definition, one who communicates

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[89]L. & C. Boff. *Introducing Liberation Theology,* 39.

[90]de Wit, "'It Should be Burned and Forgotten!'" 45.

[91]Gutierrez, *The Density of the Present,* 112.

[92]"Without this connection between past and present, there is no theology of liberation in the long run. (Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 8.)

[93]Gutierrez, *The Density of the Present,* 110.

conveys to the interlocutor "a difference that makes a difference."[94]One could understand Segundo's proposal of understanding hermeneutics as not simply interpreting things in a new light. Instead, the hermeneutical endeavor is a practical endeavor. Each effort to interpret the Word of God calls for an effort to interpret our way of interacting with the world. Segundo writes: "It is not a mere matter of perceiving something (for which our knowledge must receive a 'different' content from the one it had before). The 'difference' must also 'make a difference.'"[95] To interpret is to look again at the Word of God and how it makes a difference in how we live our lives.

The difference transmitted commences to signify when the receiver perceives what it should affect or change in his or her actual existence or behavior —that is, when the perceived difference is related to another correlative difference that ought to take place in the existence of the receiver.[96]

"Only then is there a true 'communication': when there is a difference that makes or produces a difference?"[97] Part of communication is a communion of difference; it is when we avoid the temptation to reduce one another to the same and the acceptance to live in a loving struggle with another.[98] We read in *Gaudium et Spes:* "Christian revelation contributes

[94]Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 130.

[95]Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 130.

[96]Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 130.

[97]Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 131.

[98]The council, then, does not regard revelation as something that, without transforming our historical life—with¬ out "making us better," to use Augustine's expression —constitutes a "truth": that is, something that can be possessed, be deposited, and have value in God's sight (see Matt. 25:24 and parallels) by magically performing its salvific activity (see GS 7, 43) (also see Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 132)

greatly to the promotion of this communion between persons, and at the same time leads us to a deeper understanding of the laws of social life which the Creator has written into man's moral and spiritual nature."[99]

At the same time, Vatican II believes that "This social order requires constant improvement. It must be founded on truth, built on justice, and animated by love; in the freedom, it should grow daily toward a more humane balance."[100] Any intention to maintain the *status quo* must be considered; the way that the Gospel may be allowed to break into our lives is through a continual and loving critique of our beliefs and values.[101] An entrenched system of beliefs and values tends to be an instrument of salvation or oppression. "Thus, according to the Council, the intent of God's revelation is not that we know (something that otherwise would be impossible or difficult for us to know), but that we are different and act better."[102]

One attitude that Segundo also proposes in undertaking any hermeneutical project is to see it as a wager. One must always be open to different possibilities of how a hermeneutical project plays out.[103] "When you start a revolution, you

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[99]GS, 23.

[100]GS, 26.

[101]"Jesus' question points to a level before any theological questions, "where human beings make their most critical and decisive options: i.e., the heart. Furthermore, the theology of the Pharisees has bypassed the human entirely, as if it were insignificant by comparison with loftier criteria and certitudes. Jesus is saddened and angered by their silence." (Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 78.)

[102]Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 132.

[103]What is this "faith" that precedes "revelation," and which, as we have seen, makes revelation possible as the necessary precondition for the revealed "difference" to effect the essential praxic "difference" without which there could be no authentic communication between God and ourselves? (Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 13)

do not yet know what historical price it will demand of you or what will remain of your project even after you have paid the price."[104] One can never dictate how his or her project will progress and conclude. Nevertheless, a disposition of openness is always necessary to never constrict the possibilities of such undertaking to one's possibilities. As Segundo states: "History is exciting. It is like an open promise."[105]

> …we have a freedom that opens to us a specific spectrum of opportunities or routes to various values or satisfactions; all the same, we realize that our free existence is a kind of wager. Why a 'wager?' Because we have only one existence and cannot 'test out' in advance what we will choose. We are not granted to traverse a course to the end but to observe whether it has been satisfactory. And then, in all assurance and (empirical) cognizance of the cause, we return to our starting point —and then make our option knowing beforehand what awaits us at the end of the road.[106]

Hermeneutics must begin with the poor; thus, it must avoid emphasizing the usual comforts of the theologian's ivory tower.[107] When we talk about the text, we must be aware that it must end with the text, but it must touch the ground where the people of God have trod. Any theological project that cannot become relevant to the lives of the poor by giving them opportunities to interpret their lives can lead only to

[104]Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 133.

[105]Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 133.

[106]Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 133.

[107]C.f. Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology,* 19.

unwanted abstraction and alienation of the people.[108] As Segundo claims: "Without this process of consciousness-raising, the task of evangelizing and catechizing runs the risk of being a cultural invasion: i.e., the learning of new words that do not correspond to life's realities, and mere conceptual games that leave intact old alienations stemming from fear, enslavement, and ideology."[109]

Rather than mere objects of History, the poor must be understood as subjects of History. At the same time, the poor are not just objects in the eyes of the Church, but they are subjects. That is, they actively participate in building up the kingdom of God here on earth. "Thus Enrique Dussel coined for theologians and pastoral agents the expression, *the discipleship of the poor.* Moreover, Leonardo Boff spoke about a new 'ecclesiogenesis,' *a church born from the poor."*[110] Gutierrez further adds: "History, where God reveals himself and where we proclaim him, must be reread from the side of the poor."[111] In short, the challenge posed by liberation theology is a rereading of salvation history from the side of the lowly and allowing it to unfold gradually through mutual accompaniment and interpretation.

Gutierrez speaks: "At the same time, it is important to observe that poverty is not only a matter of not having. On the contrary, the poor are brimming with abilities and

[108]"The 'poor,' with all the variety of shades that we will analyze, and above all the 'poor with spirit,' as Ellacuria called them… are those who humanize and offer salvation, those who can offer inspiration and energy for the creation of a civilization based on solidarity, as opposed to selfishness." (Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor,* 53.)

[109]Segundo, *Our Idea of God,* 174.

[110]Segundo, *Signs of the Times,* 74.

[111]Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor,* 201 quoted in Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology,* 191

possibilities."[112] The problem with the common understanding of the poor is that we often begin seeing what needs to be improved rather than the vast possibilities waiting for them.[113] One such possibility is the poor's hermeneutical possibility.

Quoting from Segundo: "The Church as a whole is a community which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, should unceasingly be about the work of creatively translating this message, *spoken* in different circumstances, in terms of the problems that are posed today by human beings who are subjects of history."[114] Through the guidance and the gifts bestowed by the Spirit of God, everyone part of the community has the capacity and responsibility to become active and creative agents in bringing about the presence of God's kingdom through the various translation opportunities afforded by their various contexts. "The poor, the sick, the marginal people construct the future earth if they expend their forces to the limit in the work of liberating love."[115]

"All the functions and structures of the Church, from the magisterium to the sacraments, from the papacy to the laity, have no other meaning than this translation work."[116] The work of translation is an endeavor to open the possibility of an encounter between the Word and the world. Although one can visualize this encounter in terms of Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam*, the very touch of God and Adam in the modern world is made possible by the work of translation. As

[112]Gutierrez, *The Density of the Present,* 133.

[113]C.f. PCP2, 280.

[114]Segundo, *Our Idea of God,* 175.

[115]Segundo, *Our Idea of God,* 46.

[116]Segundo, *Our Idea of God,* 175.

Segundo says: "… God *attuned to the rhythm of history.*"[117] Each effort to translate is a creative opportunity for the encounter of the human and the divine.

Summary and Conclusion

Juan Luis Segundo's notion of the hermeneutical circle has presented two crucial starting points before any hermeneutical endeavor. First, a critical attitude must be nourished to transcend and question any deeply embedded ideological understanding of reality. Any person that follows the natural tendency of a comfortable, easy-to-understand perception of reality is bound to be narrow and closed-minded in any hermeneutical endeavor. Second, the richness of one's experience of reality is directed to both an experience of positive and negative realities. Such is our case; the richness of our experience is based upon our connection with all of creation, especially the poor, the suffering, the forgotten, and the voiceless in History—the more that we can establish relationships, the more that our hermeneutical horizons are broadened.

After fulfilling the two preconditions of the hermeneutical circle, we can proceed with the four steps of the hermeneutical circle, according to Segundo. The first step is a critical attitude to question reality to open ourselves to the various realities in our world. For Segundo, the different faces of the poor in our world are our hermeneutical key in awakening ourselves from our self-inflicted blindness. The second step is the hermeneutics of suspicion, a questioning of ideological structures that can propagate or banalize the structures of sin and oppression. The third step is an application of the hermeneutics of suspicion to our theological understanding; one must be wary of our tendency to illuminate or obscure the Gospel message. The "unsaid" of the Gospel here is

[117]Segundo, *Our Idea of God,* 29.

emphasized, hermeneutics as a way of listening to what the Gospel of love has to say about our present context. Fourth and last, we have given birth to a new hermeneutical understanding, and the cycle repeats.

The goal of the hermeneutical circle is the continuous purification of our hermeneutical understanding to avoid compartmentalizing and reducing the Word of God. Furthermore, with every completion of the hermeneutical circle, we are afforded a new way to approach reality and find a new way of living our lives. Every effort to renew and change our understanding of reality also becomes an effort to transform our lives to be configured to the person of Christ.

The Bible is more than a material for exegesis; as Hans de Wit claims, it is a place of encounter between the Word and the world. Through the Bible, we feel a connection with everyone who struggles to hear the message of the Lord in their specific context. Thus, one must appreciate the work of interpretation as more than just an academic endeavor. There is a kind of interpersonal endeavor that is initiated in every encounter with the Word of God. Interpretation is an encounter. The role of the hermeneuticist is to facilitate the encounter in a way to act as a bridge.

The Bible is a window, a breath of air, as a new perspective—this is what one encounters in the communities of faith.[118] Everyone's encounter with the text allows us to re-encounter the world. Through such re-encounter with the world, we become nourished with a new-found experience to encounter again in the light of faith in the Word of God. Hence, Hans de Wit reminds us, "The Bible and life are bound to each other in grass-roots reading practice, and there is a circularity that

[118]de Wit, "'It Should be Burned and Forgotten!': Latin American Liberation Hermeneutics through the Eyes of Another," 42.

is fed from concrete life."[119] Our re-encounter with the Bible through the experience of the grass-roots facilitates an interpretation that grounds our feet in the concrete.

[119]de Wit, "'It Should be Burned and Forgotten!': Latin American Liberation Hermeneutics through the Eyes of Another," 42.

A CHURCH IN COMMUNION: PCP II AND THE EARLY CHURCH

Kenjie Cortez

This paper examines PCP II's vision of a Church of the Poor. Addressing what appears to be lacking in the Council's ecclesiology, this paper ventures into a theological reflection on the summaries in Acts 2:42; 4:32-35.

2022 marked the 30th anniversary of the promulgation of the Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II).1 The decrees do not only attest to the Council's legislative power but are meant to ensure a fuller and faster reception of PCP II. This milestone in our local Church, however, is not just a moment to celebrate but be critical. Thus, we can ask, how much of PCP II have we received so far? To answer this question, we must first ask what kind of a Church we envisioned thirty years ago.

[1]The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) is a significant historical landmark in the life of the Philippine Church. Represented by 146 lay faithful, 12 presidents or rectors of Catholic universities, 24 rectors or deans of seminaries, 21 major religious superiors, 181 priests, and 96 bishops, the Philippine Church has decisively identified itself as a community of disciples, a community opting to be a Church of the Poor, and embarking on a renewed integral evangelization. Hence, the Council was convoked from 20 January – 17 February 1991 at the San Carlos Seminary Complex. After days of sessions, discussions, and deliberations, the Council unanimously approved an integrated document, which was later sent to Rome for *recognitio.* With Rome's decree of *recognitio* issued on 25 April 1992, Archbishop Leonardo Legaspi promulgated the Decrees of the Council on 22 July 1992. The publication of the proceedings and the Acts and Decrees of PCP II took place that same year.

In 2022, in their collective statement on the National Consultation on the Synod on Synodality, the bishops of the Philippines confessed, "We are yet far from our dream of a Church of the Poor."[2] This unsettling realization was expressed once again by the present CBCP President, Bishop Pablo Virgilio David. According to him, "It has been very humbling to admit that, despite PCP II's vision of promoting a Church of the Poor, the poor have remained not only in the margins of society but also in the margins of the Church."[3] Similarly, Manila Archbishop Jose Cardinal Advincula's recent admission of the "'dark and wide gap' between the Church and the poor in our country" is indicative of our reception of the vision of a Church of the Poor.[4]

Filipino ecclesiologists note that PCP II's ecclesiology is mainly contained in Part II of the Acts, "Envisioning a

[2]Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, "CBCP Statement on the National Synodal Consultation," *CBCP Archive,* 11 July 2022, accessed 10 November 2022, https://cbcpnews.net/cbcpnews/how-good-and-pleasant-it-is-when-gods-people-live-together-in-unity-psalm-1331/.

[3]This is taken from Bishop Pablo Virgilio David's talk delivered at a conference in preparation for the 50th general conference of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) in Bangkok, Thailand. See "New Pathways for Synodality" in CBCP Archive, 26 September 2022, accessed 10 November 2022, https://cbcpnews.net/cbcpnews/new-pathways-for-synodality/.

[4]In a Mass he presided at the *Pontificio Collegio Filippino* last 28 August 2022, Cardinal Advincula expressed, "the Church does not know the poor and the poor do not know the Church." See "Manila archbishop Admits 'Dark and Wide' Between Church, Poor," *CBCP Archive*, 29 August 2022, accessed 10 November 2022, https://cbcpnews.net/cbcpnews/manila-archbishop-admits-dark-gap-between-church-poor/.

Renewed Church."[5] This vision of a renewed Church is then defined under the subheading, "Discipleship in Community." As expressed by the conciliar text, this overarching theme is derived from the summaries of the life of the early Jerusalem Church in Acts 2:42; 4:32-35.[6] However, the ecclesial model of the early Church in Acts is not sufficiently explicated nor sustained in the subsequent subtopics. For Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle, there are notable deficiencies in the overall ecclesiological thrust envisioned by the Council. Treating PCP II's text on the Church, he concludes that "there is no one synthetic ecclesiology present in the section analyzed. What we have are elements of a possible response which have not been knitted together to form a coherent unified vision." [7]

Given these evaluative points on PCP II and the importance of assiduous discourse, perhaps, a theological reflection on the summaries in Acts 2:42; 4:32-35 can help us fully understand the vision of the Council. If PCP II's vision of a Church of the Poor, as Bishop Teodoro Bacani puts it, is "inspired by the example of communal sharing by the first Christian community in Jerusalem,"[8] how can their expe-

[5]See Cardinal Luis Antonio G. Tagle, "Discipleship in Community – the Church" *Journeying with the Spirit: A Commentary on PCP II* edited by Paul Bernier and Manuel Gabriel (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1993), 45; Antonio Moreno, "PCP II Ecclesiology: A Critical Evaluation" in *Landas* 8, 1 (1994), 36-37; Amado Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed: Living the Ecclesiology of Vatican II & PCP II* (Quezon City, Philippines: CCFI, 2022), 19.

[6]See Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees,* nos. 89-90.

[7]Tagle, "Discipleship in Community," 56.

[8]Teodoro Bacani Jr., "Church of the Poor: An Unfinished Agenda," in *The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines: Quo Vadis* edited by Eric Marcelo O. Genilo, Agnes M. Brazal and Daniel Franklin E. Pilario (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2015), 69.

rience of communion help us better see what becoming a Church of the Poor is?

The Early Jerusalem Church

In the Acts of the Apostles, Luke offers three major summaries in describing the early Jerusalem community. [9] However, with their brevity and abruptness come an array of questions about their authenticity and meaning.[10] Such questions are important not only in understanding the Church they portray but also in the task of renewing our Church today. To begin with, Filipino theologian Fr. Amado Picardal points out that the summaries should be interpreted as "ecclesiological and

[9]See *Acts of the Apostles* 2:42-47; 4:32-37, and 5:12-16. The minor or briefer summaries are found in 6:7; 9:31; 19:20; 28:31. For our purposes, we focus on the first two – to which PCP II anchors its vision of a Church Renewed as a Church of the Poor.

[10]Over the years, there have been conflicting findings on Luke's incorporation of the summaries in Acts. On the one hand, they are understood as one of the ingenious literary techniques of Luke. While on the other hand, the summaries are seen as a detriment to the historical value of Acts. In any case, a key to understanding them is to be aware of the literary character of the book in which they are contained. In Acts, Luke does not only provide some raw data about the early Church. But just like any other historian, he blends his sources with insights relevant to him and the audience he intends to reach. This makes Acts, as Justo Gonzalez puts it, "a selective narrative." See *Acts: The Gospel of the Spirit* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 6. Like the other evangelists, Luke adds, omits, and edits. He knew that his task was not a mere passing on of the tradition; instead, in the words of Ernst Haenchen, it was "a work of edification." See *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), 103. In other words, Acts can be considered a "theological history." As such, its truth should not be "measured in terms of accuracy in reporting some historical incident but in its correspondence to the apostolic faith in Jesus Christ, which forms the church." See William H. Willimon, *Acts* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1988), 6. To conclude, seeing Acts' literary character as a sort of theological history is true not for the entire book in general but also for the summaries in particular.

kerygmatic texts rather than a strict historical report."[11] This is not to say that the summaries are not anchored on actual events. Nonetheless, Picardal claims that Luke's summary-technique is geared toward a greater purpose – "to provide a model for his contemporary Church."[12]

The summaries, then, reflect Luke's vision of a Church. Hence, they tell us how the infant Church evolved and how the Church should be. As Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) puts it, "Luke intends to clarify the nature of the Church; that is, when he sketches out in the picture of the primitive Church the exemplary form of the Church of all ages."[13] For Picardal, "The summaries in Acts give us a model of the Church as communion."[14] At this point, we can ask: how is this notion of communion expressed in the early Jerusalem Church?

1. A Church in the Spirit

According to Picardal, "Luke is regarded as the evangelist of the Holy Spirit and the Acts of the Apostles can also be referred to as the Acts of the Holy Spirit."[15] Thus, when the summaries are read synoptically, we can detect the presence of recurring ideas and parallel details. However, theologian Archbishop George Panikulam explains that "this should not lead the reader to conclude that these summaries are just

[11]Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed,* 39-40.

[12]Ibid., 40.

[13]Joseph Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion,* trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco, USA: Ignatius Press, 2005), 63.

[14]Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed,* 47.

[15]Ibid., 40. New Testament professor David Peterson also shares the same position as he remarks, "Luke's special interest in the Holy Spirit is indicated by the fifty-seven occurrences of the noun *pneuma* ('Spirit') in Acts alone." See *The Acts of the Apostles*, 60.

repetitions set by Luke or a redactor. … The author is depicting the growth of the first Christian community under the guidance of the Spirit."[16] By placing the first summary after the accounts of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13) and Peter's preaching (Acts 2:14-41), and, at the same time, by describing the community being filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:31) before the second summary, Luke is implying that "the community in Jerusalem and the communion that the members experience is the consequence of the Pentecostal event."[17]

Similarly, Ratzinger develops his notion of a Church as communion by highlighting the distinct role of the Holy Spirit. Categorically, he claims "that the Church herself, in her essence as the Church, is a creation of the Spirit."[18] Ratzinger then concludes:

> The definition of the Spirit as 'communion'… opens up pneumatology in the direction of ecclesiology, or we might say, vice versa, that it opens a connection from ecclesiology back into theo-logy: becoming a Christian means becoming 'communion' and, thus, entering into the mode of existence of the Holy Spirit. That can, however, in turn take place only through the Holy Spirit, who is the power of communication, its element of mediation, of enabling, and who is as such himself a Person.[19]

Luke's image of the early Jerusalem Church was defined and distinguished by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit reconstituted God's people and built them into a Church in communion.

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[16]George Panikulam, *Koinonia in the New Testament: A Dynamic Expression of Christian Life* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979), 112.

[17]See Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed,* 40.

[18]Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith,* 39.

[19]Ibid., 42.

Nonetheless, their Pentecost experience was still not the culmination – but only the inauguration – as the early Jerusalem Church would search for ways to live out the Spirit's gift of communion.

2. A Church in Search

New Testament professor Richard Hays claims, "In the Acts of the Apostles, the ministry inaugurated by Jesus is transferred over to the church."[20] Through the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, the early Church in Jerusalem was born and tasked to continue Jesus' mission. For the infant Church, this meant searching for ways to carry this out in the context of communion. While Methodist theologian William Willimon argues that the summary in Acts 2 can be described as "a fourfold embodiment of the gospel," Picardal stresses that they can also be seen as "the four basic elements of communion that we find in Acts."[21]

Luke reports that the early Jerusalem Church, first of all, devoted itself to the teaching of the apostles. Historical theologian Justo Gonzalez emphasizes that "persevering in the 'teaching' of the apostles does not only mean that they did not deviate from the doctrines of the apostles or that they remained orthodox. It means also that they persevered in the practice of learning from the apostles – that they were eager

[20]Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (Broadway, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996), 120.

[21]See Willimon, *Acts*, 39-40. Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed,* 48. Similarly, Jerome Crowe notes, "placed as it is after the first missionary discourse and the conversions that established the growing community, this first summary [Acts 2:42] features the four central, if not constitutive, elements of the Church's life." See *The Acts* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1979), 18.

students or disciples under them."[22] For Tagle, their desire and openness to learn were important in preserving the memory of Jesus and in sustaining the community's spirit of communion.

> Members of the early Christian community also opened themselves to the instructions of the apostles. The apostles were eyewitnesses to Jesus Christ. They were the ones who remembered most about Jesus and told and re-told his story. Aside from keeping his memory alive, the apostles also tried to interpret how Jesus would have dealt with the new situations of their time. Their memory and creative insight into who Jesus was and how he would have addressed certain situations were their contributions to the growing Christian community.[23]

Moreover, the teaching of the apostles – as an expression of communion can be seen on two levels. As Picardal argues, "If the teaching function of the apostles is emphasized, this can be the basis for speaking about the teaching office within the Christian community that fosters unity of faith. If the focus is on the teaching as content (that which is taught) then we can talk about the Word that builds and unites the community."[24] In any case, both the act of proclamation and the Word proclaimed made the Church a communion. Thus, as the apostles preached the Word, their hearers were empowered to do the same – making everyone in the community united in the work of *kerygma*. This, in turn, highlights the importance of seeing evangelization as a collective endeavor. While there was an emphasis on the role of the apostles, their authority

[22]Gonzalez, *Acts*, 50.

[23]Tagle, *Easter People,* 40.

[24]Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed*, 43.

did not render the community members powerless.[25] In fact, through the apostles' preaching of the Word, they became evangelizers themselves, not only in word but also in deed. Thus, only when *kerygma* becomes a communal affair that genuine *koinonia* follows.[26]

Secondly, Luke offers a picture of the infant Church that persisted in communal life. According to Picardal, communal life here is often translated as "fraternal communion [or] *koinonia* understood in the sense of community (*Gemeinschaft*)." [27] According to Ratzinger, while exegetes have proposed various interpretations of the meaning of communal life here, as its "context scarcely permits a definitive judgment… [The fact that] the word stands between the two concepts 'teaching' and 'breaking of the bread' (Eucharist); in some respect it seems to link the two together, to be a kind of bridge between the two."[28] In doing so, Luke clarifies that the fellowship among

[25]Willimon observes that while Acts mentions several prominent figures in the early Church, for example, Peter and Paul, these individual characters were not treated "with much depth of detail." Instead, Willimon points out that "Luke had little interest in apostolic biography or a primitive life of the saints. The protagonist of Acts is the Holy Spirit, enlivening and driving the young church. This summary of the activity of the church focuses our attention away from preoccupation with individual actors toward the true concern of the story – the community." See *Acts*, 42.

[26]See Ibid.

[27]Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed*, 41.

[28]Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith,* 66.

community members cements the unity of the Word and the Sacrament.[29]

Thirdly, Luke draws a picture of a community that persevered in "the breaking of the bread."[30] While we may have hinted at it earlier in our discussion, it is important to reiterate that this is "a technical term adopted by the primitive community for the Eucharist."[31] According to Sulpician priest Frederick Cwiekowski, "For the people of Jesus' culture, sharing a meal implied a bond of unity, a sharing of one's life. Even more, table-fellowship in Judaism implied fellowship before God: those who broke bread at table shared in the blessing which the head of the household pronounced over the bread."[32] While cultural and religious practices may have influenced the first Christians into seeing table-fellowship as

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[29]In parallel with Italian theologian Archbishop Bruno Forte's insights on the second level of communion in the Church as "communion with holy things," or the intrinsic unity of the Word and Sacrament is achieved through communal life. See *The Church Icon of the Trinity: An Introduction to Ecclesiology* (Makati: St. Paul Publications, 1990), 77-84.

[30]Tagle explains, "the early disciples were a Eucharistic community, that is, they gathered together to break bread and to recall the passion and death of Jesus Christ until he came again." See *Easter People,* 38.

[31]See Panikulam, *Koinonia in the New Testament*, 122. William Dowd proposes that by using this phrase twice in Acts 2 – one in verse 42 and the other in 46, Luke has left scholars perplexed and in disagreement. However, Down also points out that the contention is mainly on verse 46, for "all agree that in 42 the Eucharist is meant." In summary, Down writes, "Most of the details he [Luke] uses are clear enough, but commentators are not agreed on the meaning of 'breaking bread' in verse 46. For some the phrase means the Eucharist or at least the agape which in the early days preceded the Eucharist, but for others it means merely the taking of ordinary meals." See "Exegetical Notes: Breaking Bread (Acts 2:46)" in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 1, 4 (October 1939), 358.

[32]Frederick Cwiekowski, *The Beginning of the Church*, (Mahwah, NY: Paulist Press, 1988), 56.

such, ultimately, they took their cue from Jesus, who treated those whom he shared tables with as friends. In Jesus, tables turned, as it were.[33] Shared meals became both expressions of friendship and a means for salvation.[34] As Filipina theologian Estela Padilla puts it:

> Table fellowship set Jesus apart as a prophet in His time since other prophets also perform healing and miracles. In doing so, His ministry moved away from sacred space: temples, synagogues, altars, and focused on ordinary space: seashores, hillsides, streets, villages, houses, tables. He was invited for meals but He also hosted and served meals. He visited people's homes and used mealtimes as a way to relate with people and express His message of salvation, not so much through words but through welcome and friendship. He believed that commensality – eating at the same table – manifests egalitarianism, shared spiritual and material resources, and is the way of the Kingdom of God.[35]

[33]For the contemporary theologian Sallie McFague, "Jesus' table fellowship with the outcasts of society, his eating with them as a friend (Matt. 11:19), epitomized the scandal of inclusiveness for his time, for he invited the others that were rejected to the fellowship of a meal… Thus, Jesus' invitation to the outsiders to join him as friends at the table became an enacted parable of God's friendship with humanity: the God of Jesus is the One who invites us to table to eat together as friends." See *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 167-168.

[34]A fitting example is the story of the tax collector Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10.

[35]Estela P. Padilla, "Eating and Risking: Jesus' Meal Stories and Eucharistic Praxis in Our Local Churches" in *Theological Symposium Papers and Proceedings of the 51st International Eucharistic Congress* (Paranaque City: Don Bosco Center of Studies, 2017), 327-328.

Since bread breaking was a gesture of "amazement and familiarity" for the infant Church,[36] it became "the celebration of communion, which from the beginning and for many centuries has been the center of Christian worship."[37] Thus, as pointed out by Picardal, "it is for this reason that down through the centuries, receiving the body of Christ in the Eucharist has been called 'going to communion.'"[38]

Finally, Luke's fourth description of the early Jerusalem Church is a community that persisted in the prayers.[39] Earlier, Ratzinger pointed out that the second description could be seen as the link between the first and the third. However, he also claims that setting these four elements in pairs, namely – "teaching and communion" and "breaking of the bread and prayers" – can also be a meaningful way to perceive them.[40] When the community's practice of the bread breaking is read alongside their persistence in the prayers, we see how their table fellowship affects their Jewish cultic and religious life, not to its detriment but its satisfaction. As they frequently met in the temple area

[36]For Filipino liturgist Anscar Chupungco, Jesus' act of bread breaking was a familiar yet compelling scene for his disciples. With great stress on the Last Supper narrative and the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Chupungco highlights how Jesus opened the eyes of the disciples to see that sharing always involved breaking. See *Meditations on the Mass* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2010), 74-75.

[37]See Gonzalez, *Acts*, 51.

[38]Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed*, 45.

[39]Peterson observes that "to the prayers *(tais proseuchais),*" with an article in the plural form, "suggests that the reference is to specific 'prayers' rather than to prayer in general. In the context, this most obviously points to their continuing participation in the set times of prayer at the temple." See *The Acts of the Apostles*, 162.

[40]Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith,* 66.

and broke bread in their homes,[41] the first Christians remained faithful to the faith of their ancestors.[42] As Tagle claims:

> The early disciples retained the Jewish character of prayer, using the psalms, the prophets, and the teachings of Moses. The early disciples did not break their ties with origins of their spiritual life that were rooted in the prayers of Israel. The prayer of Zachary, the canticle of Mary, and the song of Simeon do not mention Jesus but rather his ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose hopes are now being fulfilled before their very eyes.[43]

To this day, Jewish texts and practices are still part and parcel of Christian liturgies, especially the Eucharist. This is partly because the early Church allowed their liturgies, notably their table fellowship, to be shaped by their Jewish patrimony. The Eucharistic gatherings of the first Christians did not cancel out their ancestral ties. On the contrary, whenever they celebrated the Eucharist, they were not only in fellowship with their fellow Christians but also in communion with their Jewish roots.

True enough, as the Spirit broke through the lives of individual disciples, they were made a Church. Moreover, as they were sent forth by the same Spirit, the four features of their communal life were considered a perennial breakthrough for the Church. As Willimon writes, "in all these activities of teaching, fellowship and sharing, breaking of bread, and praying we see a well-rounded picture of the church, the marks of authentic embodiment of the Spirit in the community's life."[44] Nonetheless, they paint not just any picture

[41]See Acts 2:46.

[42]See Willimon, *Acts*, 41-42.

[43]Tagle, *Easter People,* 36.

[44]Willimon, *Acts*, 42.

of the Church but the most profound being of the Church – communion.[45]

3. A Church in Sharing

New Testament scholar Jerome Crowe claims that the summaries are "brief tableaux bringing out the essential features of [the early Church's] life" [46] Hence, for Panikulam:

> We will not be mistaken in thinking that in the first summary, especially in vv. 41-42, the author sets in general terms the main elements that went to constitute the life of the first Christians. The concepts which are left unexplained there receive interpretation in the same summary and verification in the other two. Understood this way, we can observe a progress in thought in the three summaries.[47]

With that in mind, the fourfold description of the early Jerusalem Church receives further elaboration both in the following verses and succeeding summaries.[48] The story of the infant Church, which was in search of ways to express its experience of communion, did not end with their persistence in apostolic teaching, fellowship, bread breaking, and prayers. Instead, these four elements were ultimately demonstrated and concretized in the sharing of goods. As Dominican theologian J.-M.R. Tillard explains:

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[45]See J.-M.R Tillard, *Church of Churches: The Ecclesiology of Communion*, trans. R.C. De Peaux, O. Praem (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 169.

[46]Crowe, *The Acts*, 18.

[47]Panikulam, *Koinonia in the New Testament*, 112. Correspondingly, Peterson suggests the four details in Acts 2:42 "are recorded in a different order and in an expanded form in 4:32-37 and 5:12-16." See *The Acts of the Apostles*, 158. Hence, underlining the progressive character of the summaries is key to understanding them more fully.

[48]The first summary in Acts 2:42 is further amplified in verses 44-45 and in the subsequent summaries in Acts chapters 4 and 5.

> It is not by chance that the first description of the Christian community follows immediately the account of Pentecost (Acts 2:42-47). The word *koinonia (communion)* is found in it. Many interpretations have been given concerning the meaning of this word in this context, connected with the other terms which go side by side with it. We have seen that the most exact one seems to be the one which evokes life through sharing, *communion* in the mutual caring for the good of others. It states precisely, in fact, that Christians 'were united, held all things in common *(hapanta koina),* sold their property and their goods in order to share the proceeds with all according to the needs of each one.' And it is clear that it is again a question of this *koinonia (communion)* in the second description of the same community several pages farther on: 'The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed for his own use anything that he had, as everything they owned was held in common *(panta koina)*' (4:32). We discover here the indication of an attitude of mutual caring, expressed in the concern for others, especially for those in need, and rooted in the common union with Christ Jesus. Here, *communion* or at least the fact of sharing by putting all in common *(panta koina)*, expresses, 'demonstrates' the unity into which Salvation thrusts believers.[49]

Nevertheless, the sharing of goods – as the decisive expression of communion in the early Jerusalem Church – raises more questions than answers. For one, the early Church's economic life, as portrayed in Acts 2 and 4, has often been regarded as the earliest evidence of "Christian communism."[50] Furthermore, with a great deal of mandates

[49]Tillard, *Church of Churches,* 151-152.

[50]See Timothy Luckritz Marquis, "Between Text and Sermon: Acts 4:32-37" in *Interpretation* 69, 4 (2015), 470. See also Halvor Moxnes, *The Economy of the Kingdom: Social Conflicts and Economic Relations in Luke's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 75; 95-96.

on money and possessions throughout Luke-Acts, the idea of the sharing of possessions has become a conundrum for the Church.[51] Throughout the centuries, though, there have been countless attempts among local communities to live out the communion of goods, not to mention the cenobitic and monastic movements that adopted a more literal and radical interpretation of it.[52] Given the contentions and controversies surrounding this detail, it is necessary to discuss its probable inspiration and implications.

According to Picardal, "the phrase *hapanta koina* (all in common) appears twice," one in Acts 2:44 and the other in Acts 4:32, indicating a strong emphasis on the sharing of material possessions in the early Church.[53] Thus, the second time *hapanta koina* is used, it is predicated on another pivotal remark – of the community of believers being "one heart and mind."[54] That being the case, Crowe argues that the early Jerusalem Church is being portrayed as the fulfillment of the Jewish sense of promise and the Hellenistic ideal of friendship:

> The second summary takes up two elements of the first (2:42-47) to elaborate on the unity of the community and the position of the apostles. It singles out their communion of mind and heart. This group fulfils the noble human aspiration of the Hellenistic world, the ideal of friendship enshrined in the slogans older than Plato and Aristotle, 'friends are one heart and soul,' 'the possessions of friends are common property.' Luke

[51]For an in-depth discussion on the seemingly conflicting stances on material possessions in Luke-Acts, see Luke Johnson, *Sharing Possessions: Mandate and Symbol of Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 11-30; 117-139.

[52]See Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed*, 46.

[53]Ibid. 45.

[54]See Acts 4:32.

> repeats that this communion lies deeper than the pagan one, at the level of faith. It is a unity of 'believers' whose sharing of goods is a sign of the deeper life they share in their faith. Thus God's promise of a time when 'there will be no poor among you' (Deut 15:4) is realised in the first community which thus models both the Hellenistic ideal of friendship and the Jewish expectation of a land free of need.[55]

Alluding to these great aspirations of the ancient world, Luke presents the communion of goods in the early Church as the signal of a new era – "God's end-of-time promises" were being fulfilled.[56] Thus, the sharing of goods shows "how the primitive community in Jerusalem realized 'the best ideals both of Hellenism and Judaism concerning life together.'"[57] Having been encouraged by the Spirit at Pentecost, edified by the apostles' preaching, their devotion to the communal life, the bread breaking, and prayers, the first Christians have boldly confronted "the challenge of possessions."[58] More importantly, their sharing of goods affirmed that "the church was called to be an alternative community, a sign, a signal to the world that Christ had made possible a way of life together unlike anything the world had seen."[59] Furthermore, this made the early Jerusalem Church's communion not just realize but

[55]Crowe, *The Acts*, 29-30.

[56]See Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 158-159.

[57]See Ibid., 204. For a detailed discussion on the probable sources of the sharing of goods in the summaries, see Panikulam, *Koinonia in the New Testament*, 114-117.

[58]See Willimon, *Acts,* 52.

[59]See Ibid., 54.

even surpass the ideals of the ancient world.[60] More than anything else, their sharing of goods was founded on their profound memory of Jesus. What led them to the communion of goods was their deep rootedness to Jesus – whose life was marked by sharing and whose being was communion.[61]

In the final analysis, while we can argue that the inspiration behind it is "the wisdom of the ancients," the first Christians' sharing of goods is an imitation of the example of their Lord and a realization of his teachings.[62] It was Jesus – who called the poor blessed (Luke 6:20), told the story of a rich fool who stored all his possessions (Luke 12:16-21), whose disciples left everything to follow him (Luke 5:11), and who challenged the rich official to sell all his possessions and distribute it to the poor (Luke 18:18-22), who was at the heart of this seemingly paradisal scene in the early Church. This Christological character of the sharing of the goods is what prevents us from

[60]According to Gonzalez, the idea of the commonality of goods found in Plato's *Republic* "does not include all citizens but only those of the two higher classes, the rulers and the soldiers or 'guardians'… The purpose of Plato's insistence on the commonality of goods – limited as it is to ruling classes – is not distributive justice but the proper ordering of the state. Extreme poverty is to be banned from the ideal society, not so much because it in itself is evil as because it threatens the stability of the state." See Justo Gonzalez, *Faith & Wealth: A History of Early Christian Ideas on the Origin, Significance, and Use of Money* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1990), 5-8. Against this background, Gonzalez argues that what Luke describes in the summaries is "a community in which mutual love is such that if someone has need others go and sell their real estate in order to respond to those needs." See Gonzalez, *Acts*, 72.

[61]See Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith,* 79-89.

[62]For an extensive discussion on the commonality of goods in relation to the ancient worlds – Greek, Roman, and Jewish, see Gonzalez, *Faith & Wealth,* 3-27. For a summary of Jesus' mandate on the use of possessions, particularly in Luke-Acts, see Johnson, *Sharing Possessions*, 11-29.

construing this vital tenet in the life of the early Church as something too ideal, romantic, and even utopian.[63]

Finally, the issues surrounding the practice of communion of goods in the nascent Church boil down to the question of implications. As Picardal validly asks, "Does it mean the abolition of private property and adopting the system of communal ownership?"[64] Gonzalez argues that the rigid interpretations of the sharing of goods claim that while it was practiced for a while, the early Church soon had to abandon it – as it contributed to the widespread poverty in the early Jerusalem Church.[65] In sum, positions supporting this argument hold that the commonality of goods was a complete economic disaster.[66] Gonzalez asserts that there are several ways to rebut such claims. For him, nonetheless, it is crucial to pay closer attention to the verbs used in the passages.

> Verses 44 and 45 are then an explanation of this *koinonia*. This consisted precisely in that they 'had all things in common' – the word translated as 'common' comes from the same root as 'communion' or *koinonia*. This does not mean, as it is often thought, that they simply sold all their resources and put them in a common fund, so that no one any longer had anything. The verbs in this verse are in the imperfect, which means that they used

[63]According to Gonzalez, the detail of the commonality of goods in Acts has always been questioned for its historicity and often labeled as Luke's "fictional reconstruction" or "idyllic fiction." See Gonzalez, *Faith & Wealth,* 80-81.

[64]Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed*, 46.

[65]For an extensive analysis of these arguments, see Gonzalez, *Acts*, 70-71. Also, *Faith & Wealth,* 79-86.

[66]Gonzalez points out that proponents of this claim even use Paul's collection of donations for the poor in Jerusalem as evidence. See *Acts*, 70-71.

> to sell and used to distribute resources. This implies a continued action, done 'as any had need.'[67]
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> In parallel, New Testament professor David Peterson observes:
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> He [Luke] does not mean they automatically sold everything and put the proceeds in a common purse (cf. 4:36-37). They formed a closely knit community, but lived in their own homes and used them for the benefit of the church. There was a readiness to share what they had, because *no one claimed that any of their possessions were their own*. They did not regard possessions as being exclusively for their own benefit and were consequently not captivated by the need to hold on to them. As the need arose, *they shared everything they had* in order to help others (vv. 34-35). Sharing was not a matter of compulsion, and only some property was sold (v. 37). Possessions and money were disposed of at will, as individuals saw fit (5:4). [68]

The story of Barnabas, which immediately follows the second summary, further elaborates and concretizes the sharing of goods in the early Church.[69] For Peterson, "The generosity of *Barnabas* is highlighted as a prime example of the common practice of the Jerusalem church."[70] Thus, the sharing of goods "does not imply the abolition of private property within the Christian community."[71] Nevertheless, as

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[67]Gonzalez, *Acts*, 51.

[68]Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 204-205.

[69]Gonzalez asserts that the story of Barnabas is not an isolated nor an exceptional case in the practice of the sharing of goods. On the contrary, Gonzales maintains that "the fact that what Barnabas did is mentioned specifically does not mean that it was an extraordinary case, which would contradict what Luke has told us. This is simply one more case in which Luke, after a general summary, offers a concrete example." See *Acts* 74.

[70]Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 206.

[71]See Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed*, 47.

Barnabas exhibited, it is the readiness to share what we have for the good of the community.[72] It is the willingness to let go of our riches when circumstances in our community call for it. Thus, the ancient ideal of having all in common will only be possible when, like Barnabas, we can humbly share our prized possessions and lay them at the apostles' feet in self-denial.[73] Ultimately, his generous sharing "is an expression of unity, love and service in accordance with Christ's teaching and example."[74]

The Vision of a Church of the Poor

At the conclusion of PCP II on 17 February 1991, the members of the Council affirmed that "The ideal of this Church of the Poor remains the first Jerusalem community, where the faithful were 'united, heart and soul' (Acts 4:32) and where no one was in want (Acts 4:34) because everyone shared out of love."[75] By all means, familiarity with the life of the community being exemplified is necessary to realize the Council's vision. However, such articulation of a Church of the Poor by PCP II consequently left to the Philippine Church the complex task of exploring the life of the early Church. While Tagle and Bacani both say that PCP II's vision of a

[72]Peterson writes, "Although only *a field* was sold, ownership of land was the principal source of wealth and social standing in the Greco-Roman world. Barnabas thus embodies the ideal of the 'servant-benefactor', well known in that culture, but to Luke 'pre-eminently exemplified by Jesus of Nazareth (Luke 22: 26-30)" See *The Acts of the Apostles*, 206.

[73]According to Peterson, Barnabas, as a Levite, must have enjoyed the high social regard of his time. However, "when he humbly places the proceeds *at the apostles' feet*, he foregoes the usual social benefit of praise and public honour. In effect, his donation is a private contribution to the common purse." See Ibid., 207.

[74]See Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed*, 47.

[75]Ibid.

Church of the Poor is definitely "a Filipino contribution to the ecclesiological enterprise," both admit that this project remains an "unfinished task."[76] With our insights into the early Church's life, we look at what critical themes of PCP II need further development in its vision of a Church of the Poor.

1. Pneumatology

While the Council has correctly identified communion as the overarching theme of the life of the early Church, it missed the very foundation of their communion – the Holy Spirit.[77] As Tagle states, "There is a virtual silence on the Holy Spirit."[78] As a result, for Filipino Jesuit Fr. Antonio Moreno, "This absence of pneumatology weakens the theological motivation to realize the local Church which is primarily the activity of the Holy Spirit."[79] Given this lack of well-defined pneumatology, mixed signals are given.[80] For Moreno, this void poses one pivotal danger: that "the hierarchy does not

[76]See Tagle, "Discipleship in Community," 57. Bacani, "Church of the Poor: The Church in the Philippines' Reception of Vatican II," 157; "Church of the Poor: An Unfinished Agenda," 67-72,

[77]See also Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees,* nos. 88-97.

[78]Tagle, "Discipleship in Community," 48.

[79]Moreno, "PCP II Ecclesiology and Other Essays," 10.

[80]See Moreno, "PCP II Ecclesiology and Other Essays," 11. In the same vein, for American ecclesiologist Georgia M. Keightley, "The failure of Roman Catholic theologians to give proper accounting of lay ecclesial reality must be attributed to the lack of a robust pneumatology in the West. As a consequence, most ecclesiologies fail to reflect the fact that if it is Christ who institutes the church, it is the Spirit who constitutes it." See "If the Church Makes the Laity, the Laity Make the Church: Ecclesiology and the 99 Percent" in *A Realist's Church: Essays in Honor of Joseph A. Komonchak* edited by Christopher D. Denny, Patrick J. Hayes and Nicholas K. Rademacher (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015), 186.

seem to fully motivate the lay (whose baptism seals the presence of the Holy Spirit), like the charismatic communities, to respond to the signs of the times."[81] In addition, by treating the idea of diversity before equality, the Council seems to maintain a hierarchical view of the Church – one which is incongruent with its aspiration of empowering all members of the Church – particularly the poor.[82] For Tagle, the arrangement of themes "should have been reversed in keeping with the consistent methodology of Vatican II of stressing first what binds in common before discussing what differentiates."[83] In sum, Tagle claims that "the already big lacuna in Filipino spirituality and theology regarding the Spirit is here manifest and maintained."[84]

Conversely, the life of the early Church is founded on the Holy Spirit. In the words of Ratzinger, "The origin of the Church is not the decision of men; she is not the product of human willing but a creature of the Spirit of God."[85] Luke presents the diversity in the nascent Church in the context of its Pentecost experience. In doing so, the stress is on who united the first Christians rather than what differentiated them. The Holy Spirit, who, for Ratzinger, is "the love that unites and draws into abiding unity,"[86] made it possible for people with diverse charisms to become a Church in communion. Furthermore, this solid pneumatological emphasis on the life of the early

[81]Moreno, "PCP II Ecclesiology and Other Essays," 11.

[82]In expounding the theme of communion, the Council employed two subheadings, "Unity in Diversity" and "Equality in Dignity." See Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees,* nos. 91-97.

[83]Tagle, "Discipleship in Community," 48.

[84]Ibid., 48-49.

[85]Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 43.

[86]Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 45.

Church did not do away with ecclesiastical hierarchy. On the contrary, its reception of the Spirit enabled it to persist in the apostolic teaching.[87] In the early Jerusalem Church, apostolic instruction went hand in hand with communal fellowship. As New Testament scholar Fr. Eugene LeVerdiere succinctly puts it, "'The teaching of the apostles' is the foundation for 'the communal life.' And 'the communal life' is a concrete expression of 'the teaching of the apostles.'"[88] In the final analysis, the first Christians' familiarity with the Spirit made them the perfect prefiguration of what PCP II envisioned for our local Church.

> Therefore we need to emphasize today the insights of Vatican II on co-responsibility, shared responsibility in the mission of the entire Church. The movement must henceforth be towards the actual and active sharing of responsibilities among pope and bishops, clergy and religious, lay men and women. And if heavier emphasis is laid on the laity now, it is not to set them against the hierarchical part of the Church nor to form them into a so-called 'Church of the People,' understood as having no place for hierarchical authority and office. It is rather to restore their neglected role of evangelizers, to enable them to exercise that role more fully and efficaciously for the spread of Christ's Kingdom.
>
> When we participatively share charism and ministry for the one mission, we become a Church of Communion

[87]We can also hardly miss that right after the story of Pentecost, Peter – the head of the eleven stood up and preached. Peterson perceives this as "in line with Jesus's commission (1:8), the apostles now presented themselves as his witnesses in Jerusalem. Empowered by the Spirit, they showed a new boldness in confronting their contemporaries." See *The Acts of the Apostles*, 139.

[88]Eugene LaVerdiere, *The Breaking of the Bread: The Development of the Eucharist according to Acts of the Apostles* (Chicago: Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1998), 77.

> in truth and in deed. It is a veritably new way, at least for us of this century, of being Church.[89]

Our reception of PCP II should be anchored on a deeper insight into the Holy Spirit. If we deem the early Church's life paradigmatic, then, Pentecost should also be the *terminus a quo* of our ecclesiology. Indeed, only when we build our ecclesiology on pneumatology will every member of our local Church be empowered to realize a shared ecclesiological vision. Correspondingly, only then can there be a communion between the hierarchy, the lay, and most especially, the poor.

2. Mission

Another key theme that PCP II has failed to develop adequately is mission. To an extent, Tagle maintains that this inadequacy stems from the conciliar document's "lack of a pneumatology."[90] Tagle's main critique of the Council's treatment of mission is the seemingly vague correlation between mission and communion. For him, "Mission appears in this section of the text not so much as fully constitutive of communion but as an off-shoot of communion. The impression is given that the community is already constituted prior to mission. This is not totally accurate both in praxis and in theory, especially as the basis of a dynamic local ecclesiology."[91] Furthermore, this observation can be seen in parallel with the

[89]Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees,* nos. 100-101.

[90]In summarizing his comments on PCP II's treatment of mission, Tagle concludes, "the many valid points raised by this section should have been supported by a more explicit theology of the kingdom, of an eschatology and a theology of history. But given the lack of a pneumatology, it becomes understandable why these theological strands associated with the Spirit are also absent in the treatment of mission." See "Discipleship in the Community," 51.

[91]Ibid.

recent remarks of David during the National Consultation on the Synod on Synodality. In his homily during the closing Mass, David underscored, "PCP II already broke new ground when it spoke of the Church as a 'community of disciples' but it never went to the extent of stretching that ecclesiology to also speak of the Church as a 'community of apostles,' obviously because we have also tended to clericalize apostleship."[92] While the overall idea of "discipleship in the community" is a step in the right the direction, the Council's inability to stress the primacy and exigency of mission hampers the realization of its vision of a Church renewed. Consequently, for David, "A Church that is not in mission is not a Church."[93]

On the other hand, the life of the early Church was geared toward mission. Since Pentecost was its *terminus a quo*, mission was its *terminus ad quem*. In other words, the first Christians' reception of the Holy Spirit made them receptive to the mission at hand. As Hays puts it, "The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost is the event that empowers the church to continue Jesus' work."[94] Hence, the Spirit's empowerment was never exclusive to the apostles but to the entire community. As Hays further argues, "Despite Luke's special interest in telling the story of the apostles as successors to Jesus, his vision of the power of the Spirit in the church extends in a more comprehensive and egalitarian way to the whole people of God."[95]

[92]Bishop Pablo Virgilio David, "Community of Disciples in Mission: Bishop David's homily for the closing Mass of Nat'l Synodal Consultation," in CBCP Archive, 07 July 2022, accessed 10 November 2022, https:/ cbcpnews.net/cbcpnews/full-text-bishop-davids-homily-for-the-closing-mass-of-natl-synodal-consultation/.

[93]Ibid.

[94]Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 121.

[95]Ibid.

Moreover, mission in the early Jerusalem Church was not the consequence of their communion but its cause. For Tagle, their reception of the Spirit meant "the birth of a new reality… [making them] a new people of commission."[96] This commission, in turn, made them persist in the apostolic teaching, fellowship, bread-breaking, prayers, and the mission to share their goods. Thus, these elements and expressions of communion were predicated on actual needs in the community. More than a depiction of ancient ideals, Luke's description of the early Jerusalem Church mirrors a community in mission. This also best explains why the practice of the sharing of goods, in particular, even outlived the very community that started it. As Gonzalez writes:

> The commonality of good, far from being an ephemeral element in the life of the early Church, continued for a long time. In the *Didache*, a document that could well date from the end of the first century or early in the second, we are told that 'you are not to overlook the needy but rather are to share (*synkoinonein*, that is, being *koinonoi* jointly) all things with your brother, and are not to say that they are your own. Because if we are partners (*koinonoi*) in the eternal, how are we not to be partners even more in that which perishes?' The same ideas appear, perhaps some fifty years later, in the so-called *Epistle of Barnabas*. At about the same time, that is, toward the middle of the second century, the *Address to Diognetus* claims that Christians 'share a single table, but not a bed.' This is probably a brief way of distinguishing the commonality of goods that Christians practice from that which had been proposed by Plato and others, which also included sexual promiscuity. In any case, what is important is that the commonality of goods described in Acts continued at the time of that other writing. Furthermore, similar assertions appear in the writings of Justin Martyr, also

[96]Tagle, *An Easter People,* 89.

> from the middle of the second century, and after that in Tertulian, toward the end of that century.[97]

Although Tagle and David are both not participants as far as the celebration of PCP II is concerned, their assertions help us better assess our reception of the Council. If becoming a Church of the Poor is the Spirit's most urgent call for our local Church[98] – like the early Church – our communion should be derived from and oriented toward mission. Only then will every member of our local Church, especially the poor, realize that we all share in the mission of "consciously prioritizing the ones Jesus himself would prioritize."[99]

3. The Eucharist

In assessing the state of evangelization in our country, PCP II admits, "For most of our people today the faith is centered on the practice of the rites of popular piety. Not on the Word of God, doctrines, sacramental worship (beyond baptism and matrimony). Not on community. Not on building up our world unto the image of the Kingdom."[100] Despite this sorrowful confession, Tagle asserts that the Council has failed to incorporate the central role of the Eucharist in developing its communion ecclesiology.

> There is also a 'real absence' of any eucharistic discourse in the treatment of communion. An opportunity to 're-construct' the devotion of Filipinos to the eucharist along the lines of fostering community (the scholastic *res sacramenti*) is missed, as well as the chance to retrieve

[97]Gonzalez, *Acts,* 73-74.

[98]See Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees,* no. 122.

[99]See David, "Community of Disciples in Mission."

[100]Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees,* no. 13.

> the meal or supper tradition of the eucharist, central to the Filipino experience of communion in the family.[101]

In addition, if we survey PCP II's vision of a Church of the Poor, we will realize that there is no mention of the Eucharist – except a marginal note on stipends or stole fees that often prevent the poor from accessing the sacraments.[102] Six years after the Council, however, the *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* expressed, "The most serious weakness is that so many Filipino Catholics *separate the Mass from their daily lives*. For many Filipino Mass-goers, the Eucharistic celebration has little to do with their ordinary moral activities, especially any social action for the poor."[103] Given these observations, what insights can we draw from the first Christians whose communal life was centered on the Eucharist?

In the early Church, the Eucharist is described as "the breaking of the bread." For LaVerdiere, although this expression originated from the Old Testament, the first Christians were convinced that Jesus "gave the breaking of bread new and distinctive meaning."[104] As such, LaVerdiere further claims,

> 'The breaking of the bread' *(he klasis tou artou),* Luke's name for the eucharist, highlights the sharing

[101]Tagle, "Discipleship in Community," 49.

[102]See Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees,* no. 128

[103]Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Catechism for Filipinos Catholics,* (Manila: ECCCE Word & Life Publications, 1997), no. 1674.

[104]For LaVerdiere, it was customary at the beginning of every Jewish meal for the head of the family or the guest in the banquet to take the bread, say a blessing, break, and share it with those at the table. "In the Old Testament, the gesture of breaking bread can be traced back at least to the time of Jeremiah (Jer 16:7)." See Eugene LeVerdiere, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 103-104.

> aspect of the eucharist. It speaks of the eucharist as a community event. Bread that is broken is bread to be shared, strengthening and building up the community as an *ekklesia*, an ecclesial community. As a community event, the breaking of the bread is thus an ecclesial event, expressing both 'the communal life' (*he koinonia*) and the mission of the church. The breaking of the bread is both a *koinonia* event and a mission event.[105]

Luke's description of the Eucharist reveals how the sacramental life of the early Jerusalem Church is essentially linked to its missionary task. As Picardal underscores, "The 'breaking of bread' or table-fellowship is, therefore, both the concrete and sacramental expression of communion between the members of the Christian community and with Christ."[106] Since bread was the staple food in the ancient Mediterranean world, LaVerdiere argues that "sharing bread, sharing a meal, joined people in solidarity."[107] In their breaking of the bread, the early Church makes us see an ecclesial communion that is oriented by, and toward, mission. Ratzinger sums this up as,

> Fellowship in the body of Christ and in receiving the Body of Christ means fellowship with one another. This of its very nature includes mutual acceptance, giving and receiving on both sides, readiness to share one's goods. The fact that some people are indulging themselves while others are in want cannot be reconciled with Church fellowship. This is always 'table fellowship' in the most demanding sense of the word, and its members always have to give each other 'life' – physical and spiritual, but especially physical, too. In this sense, the social question is given a quite central

[105]LeVerdiere , *The Breaking of the Bread,* 12.

[106]Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed,* 45.

[107]LaVerdiere, *The Breaking of the Bread,* 12-13.

> place in the theological heart of the Christian concept of communion."[108]

Conceivably, the early Jerusalem Church's understanding of the Eucharist can aid us in arriving at what PCP II calls "a renewed worship."[109] Like the early Church, by seeing every eucharistic celebration as "the breaking of the bread," we can recover its meal dimension, which for Moreno, "is a symbolic expression of solidarity and communion."[110]

Concluding Thoughts

Unequivocally, PCP II is a watershed moment for our local Church. With the vision of a Church of the Poor as its distinguishing stamp, the Council has gifted us with a renewed sense of identity and mission. Nonetheless, with thirty years of creative and concrete attempts to implement the Council, we cannot help but wonder what hinders us from fully realizing it. With our earlier evaluation of PCP II's ecclesiology, we cannot deny that interpretation, by and large, affects the implementation. While it is true that the Council is "pastoral in nature, in orientation, and in objectives,"[111] we cannot dispense with the need for a well-developed ecclesiology to define and direct the Church's pastoral endeavors. In short, articulation directs the course of reception.

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[108]Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 69.

[109]Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees,* no. 167-168.

[110]Moreno, "PCP II Ecclesiology and Other Essays," 11.

[111]Quevedo maintains, "The Acts and Decrees of PCP II are not the work of systematic theology. They are fundamentally pastoral in nature, in orientation, and in objectives… Therefore, PCP II was not meant to give a fully developed ecclesiology for our situation. It would not be proper to critique the ecclesiology of PCP II for something it did not scientifically attempt to do." See "Notes on PCP II Ecclesiology," (January 1992), quoted in Moreno, "PCP II Ecclesiology: A Critical Evaluation," 46.

Our evaluative points on PCP II, in no way, belittle its achievements. At most, they attest to the reality that PCP II is a gift and a task all at once. Responding to the task of exploring the community on whom the Council predicated its vision of a Church renewed, "we are led back to an understanding of the Church as communion." Although for Tagle, "renewal as restoring the primitive Church" has its own limits,[112] we cannot deny that the first Christians' way of being a Church captures, at the same time, enriches what we mean by a Church of the Poor. Like them, we are called to be of "one heart and mind" (Acts 4:32), receptive to the promptings of the Spirit, and ready to exploit avenues where the poor are not passive objects but active subjects of the Church's mission.

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[112]In elaborating on the theological frameworks of renewal in the Church, Tagle maintains that unchecked replication of early Church life can also posit serious dangers. Hence, he argues, "Based on the assumption that the Church was perfect in its inception, renewal therefore means a re-pristination, eliminating accretions or corruption by returning to the beginnings. While providing motivation for correcting abuses, this theory is criticized for idealizing the period of Christian origins and ignoring its defects. It also tends to ignore the action of the Holy Spirit in the more recent past." See Luis Antonio G. Tagle, *"It is the Lord!" Occasional Lectures at Loyola School of Theology* (Quezon City: Loyola School of Theology, 2003), 78.

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IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA AND C.S. LEWIS IN DIALOGUE ON DISCERNMENT

Ramon Mikhail Paulo E. Nicdao

Since my prep school days, I have been fascinated with stories I read in books. Such stories brought me to another world where I imagine myself to be a part of battles that fight the forces of evil, where I, together with the protagonist, would solve murder mysteries. I would also find some stories that uplift my spirits and remind me of love.

My love of such stories also introduced me to various authors, one of which is the atheist-turned-theologian, a patriotic soldier whose affluent creativity brought him from the hills of Poland to the farthest corners of the world: Clive Staples Lewis. His creativity in weaving theology into his narratives can inspire anyone to look into one's heart and discover God.

But this does not mean we cannot access theological premises, even truths, from fiction novels. A critical reader can notice that the author's beliefs and ideologies[1] (societal, religious, philosophical, etc.) are inserted, consciously or otherwise, in the complexity of their plots. Among theologians, it is challenging to look for streaks of faith in very secular or out-of-this-world stories that are available, put them into light, and bring to the public the message of The Divine Author.

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[1]Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina, Ken Follet's Pillars of the Earth, Tom Clancy's The Hunt for Red October.

One such example is CS Lewis. One can find that his novels and stories are imbued with his faith, theology, and beliefs. A good example of this is his famous anthology, the *Chronicles of Narnia*. He alludes to several theological themes in this 7-book series: from creation to eschatology, from soteriology to ecclesiology, and other central Christian themes. These books were originally meant for children to learn key Christian concepts through adventure stories. He has other works that talk about more serious things with regard to his faith. One of these is *The Screwtape Letters*. This novel is a compilation of 31 letters of a master tempter teaching his nephew how to ensure his patient stays far from their Enemy (God). One can enjoy the satirical attacks of Screwtape Letters without going through the details of Christian doctrines. Translating theological concepts, Church doctrines, and dogma into enjoyable stories and good plots can help greatly in this age of New Evangelization.

With all the varieties and genres of novels and fiction stories, the challenge remains on how to identify which ones are worth reading and are in line with Christian doctrines. Some of which are not even intended to convey such truths. This is where Ignatian Spirituality comes in very handy.

Ignatian Spirituality was practiced not only by the followers of St. Ignatius of Loyola but also by those to whom the Jesuits ministered. Now, its popularity is widespread among Christians and non-Christians alike. The practicality and depth of this type of spirituality are a living testimony of one of its pillars: finding God in all things. St. Ignatius of Loyola also designed a set of meditations, contemplations, and other prayer exercises that are divided into four weeks and done within 30 days.

However, though it is divided into weeks, each week does not have to correspond to seven days. Each week, the Exercitant[2] begs and prays for a particular grace. The general movement of the Spirit may indicate the Exercitant's readiness to move on to the following weeks of exercises. At the root of the Spiritual Exercises[3] of St. Ignatius is the principle and practice of discernment. The goal of SpEx is to help the retreatant (hopefully by God's grace) make an Election and become a person of discernment.

Upon reading *The Screwtape Letters* of Lewis, one can glimpse what may be happening on the other side of the fence. Though fictional in character, the intricacies of the advice of Screwtape to his nephew mirrors the advice of Ignatius to the director and exercitant that can be found in his *Spiritual Exercises*.

Characters

Any narrative that has no characters is not a story. The characters are those who do the events discussed above. The characters are those who showcase different points of view. "Characters are the actors in a story, the ones who carry out the various activities that comprise the plot"[4]. However, the characters must not be limited to human beings. Some stories have animals or even inanimate objects that were personified. Others have groups of people that act as one character. To dig deeper into a story, one can get to know the characters more.

The implied reader can either tell or show the attributes of a character. In the case of *The Screwtape Letters*, Screwtape may

[2]The person making the retreat.

[3]From here on, this will be referred to as SpEx.

[4]Mark Allan Powell, What is Narrative Criticism (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1990), 44.

be the only character that can be shown. To get to know the other characters, the reader only has Screwtape's descriptions to rely on.

The first character that must be explored is Screwtape. Screwtape is a devil that seems to be an expert in tempting. From his stories to Wormwood, his nephew, he must have seen different wars. He is also aware of the different strategies to snatch a soul from the grasp of the Enemy. He must also be one of the higher (or lower, depending on how one looks at it) officials of Hell. Clearly, he is an experienced follower of their Father Below. From his strategies and anecdotes, Screwtape is very cunning, calculative, opportunistic, and brilliant in his own craft.

However, what is interesting about Screwtape is his discourses. Reading through his letters, one can certainly say that deep within himself, he believes that the Enemy is good and loves human beings beyond even his imagination. He believes this to his core but is bound by his being, bound because he is a devil that must always look for what is evil in the world. Screwtape is also great at nuancing things. He does not take things as they are but thoroughly thinks about them and carefully decides what to do after. Throughout the 31 letters, the reader can feel his paternal affection (if they are capable of it) towards Wormwood. Nonetheless, as warned by Lewis, readers should not trust Screwtape at all. His warning is this, "Readers are advised to remember that the devil is a liar. Not everything that Screwtape says should be assumed to be true even from his own angle."[5]

All these characteristics of Screwtape are shown by the implied author through Screwtape's letters and his anecdotes

[5]Lewis, The Screwtape Letters (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996), xi.

when he was still on earth, tempting humans. Other characters can be known only through his perspective. Wormwood is Screwtape's nephew. No one can really know if there exists any familial love down below, and devils can raise their own families and clans. At this point, readers can only take in what Screwtape has to say. Wormwood is a tempter that is assigned to a patient. It is not also indicated in the novel if this particular patient is his first assignment. However, from his correspondence with Screwtape, Wormwood seems to be an inexperienced tempter. He has a lot to learn. He is also easily distracted by simple victories and often loses his focus. On the other hand, he also has good points. Some letters begin with Screwtape praising his progress. Perhaps, Wormwood is a tempter who is still trying to make a name for himself in their home down below. Consequently, as much as Screwtape cares for him, he, in turn, probably in his lack of experience, tries to clear things up with other authorities that may have caused Screwtape's incident with the Secret Police. Compared to his uncle, Wormwood lacks the cunningness that is needed in their line of work. He also lacks the practicality of Screwtape when it comes to using neutral things and turning them into opportunities for others to belong to their Father Below.

The character who is the center of contention throughout the story is called by Screwtape as the Patient. The Patient is most probably a young adult that is beginning his own life. He still lives with his mother, though. He belongs to the middle class of European society, as indicated by his friends and acquaintances. The Patient, just like Wormwood, seems to be trying to find his rightful place in the world. He recently converted to Christianity and is trying very hard to live virtuously. Though there are times when Wormwood wins, the Patient slowly and continuously progresses toward the Enemy's favor. His relationship with his mother is not that

perfect, and is being exploited by Wormwood at Screwtape's suggestion. He is quite friendly but still has his old habits that Screwtape wants to use as leverage. He fell in love with a young woman of high Christian values. Eventually, his relationship with this woman and her family brought him closer to the Enemy. His patriotism is not clearly seen, but he surely has fears just like anybody else. He is afraid to be drafted to war. He is afraid of the imminent danger brought about by the war. Unfortunately for Wormwood, he is a casualty of bombings and is snatched immediately by the Enemy from their grasp. This allows the Patient to see Wormwood with all his ugliness.

Finally, there are two more characters that are not directly involved in the events of the narrative per se but are vital in the overall plot: the Enemy and their Father Below. These two characters are two opposing poles that constantly persuade the patient to be on their side. The Enemy, though Screwtape already has thousands of years of experience, remains mysterious. Screwtape even said in his last letter to Wormwood that their Intelligence Department continues to fail to know why the Enemy loves so much the hairless bipeds. Screwtape cannot understand why the Enemy wants these creatures to love him freely and without any stain of coercion. On the other hand, Screwtape understands the Enemy has an advantage because He has become a human being.

The Father Below, on the contrary, seems to be, in Screwtape's perspective, the incarnation of evil. He wants to get as many souls as he can by all means possible. He wants these souls to be eternally damned Below. He is the source of Screwtape's cunningness and his fear of him is what drives him to be the best tempter he can be. He is full of pride that he distanced himself from the Enemy a long long time ago. The Enemy wants all beings to be united with Him but still be distinct. On the contrary, their Father Below wants all beings

to be absorbed by him. He wants all things to be him, the epitome of pride and greediness.

There are also minor characters that contribute to the plot as a whole in their own right. The mother of the patient has her share of peculiarities. Glubose, the one assigned to the patient's mother, handled her well enough. She is guilty of Gluttony not of excess but of delicacy as described by Screwtape. The love interest of the patient is another minor character that earned her right to be explored briefly. She is a woman of middle-class society. She is classified by Screwtape as virtuous and very Christian in her ways. Her family also lives Christian lives. Her presence and her relationship with the patient affected his spiritual growth. There is also Fr. Spike who ran dry of anything spiritual in his life and unfortunately became the cause of so many disappointments.

Most of the characters in the novel can be considered flat. Flat characters are those characters that are typically boring and have no development. Screwtape is arguably round. The patient is the only character in this novel that can be classified as a round character. His developments are at the center of the plot. "Narrative critics sometimes distinguish different kinds of characters on the basis of their traits. The best-known such distinctions is that which Forster makes between round characters, who possess a variety of potentially conflicting traits, and flat characters, whose traits are all consistent and predictable."[6]

Settings

Events and Characters cannot be imagined and placed correctly without the setting. The setting of a story is where and when the characters enact the events. The setting also adds

[6]Powell, What is Narrative Criticism, 48.

another layer to a beautiful fabric interwoven by events and characters. "Settings serve a variety of functions. They may be symbolic. They may help to reveal characters, determine conflict, or provide structure for the story."[7] Settings can also be divided further into three: Spatial, Temporal, and Social.

The settings in *The Screwtape Letters* are very simple. However, like the plot and the characters, there are several layers one can dig through. Since the whole novel rests on Screwtape's narration through his letters, the general setting would be his office Down Below. One can imagine Dante's cantos and circles deep down and find somewhere there a humble office of one of the senior tempters. It all depends really on the reader's colorful imagination. With these letters and Screwtape's narration of events, the implied reader can go from one place to another in an instant. The patient goes around from a church to his bedroom to their dining room with his mother. Another important spatial setting is the house of the patient's love interest. Though this may be brief, this is where the patient learns and develops most of the virtues that snatched him away from Wormwood and toward the Enemy. Even with all these places, there is a general spatial background where all the events in the life of the patient took place: Europe. The exact location may not be specified, but the anonymity of the patient and where he is serves a deeper purpose.

The setting of the story sometimes feels like a blast from the past as Screwtape talks about the strife that happened thousands of years ago between the Enemy and their Father Below. Or, when he talks about the advantage of the Enemy as he became a human being and thus had an advantage over them. As discussed above, there is no concrete time frame with regard to the letters or their interval. However, from

[7]Ibid., 61.

Screwtape's description of the time, the reader can place the first four letters before the war. The rest can be placed during wartime. Screwtape calls it the 'European War' and most probably he pertains to the Second World War wherein Europe, led by Churchill, is the center of the resistance against Germany and Hitler. Unfortunately, the readers cannot know exactly how long is the correspondence between Screwtape and Wormwood. It could have happened in one year or the whole 5 to 6 war years. World War II is a good starting point to determine the social setting of this novel. The social crises happening during that time must be the current problems in the social background of the novel. However, unlike the novels *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina*, and *Winter of the World*, *The Screwtape Letters* does not capitalize much on the events of the war. Though there were mentions of the bombings, it is not described as detailed as in the other novels. The readers may also place the patient in the middle class or the upper-middle-class society from his acquaintances.

Sympathy, Empathy, Antipathy

One of the benefits of reading novels and various stories is the chance to live a thousand lives. Any bookworm can attest to this. There are even times when the reader identifies himself or herself as one of the characters or feels like one of them. The reader can be a wizard, a member of the Fellowship of the Ring, or a believer of Aslan. He/She can also be a member of the high society in Russia post-war or out in the streets with Tom Sawyer. The reader can be anybody he/she wants to be while reading. "Literary critics call such an effect empathy. It has been described variously as an 'involuntary projection,' as an 'inner mimicry,' and as an 'observer's participation in the sensation of that which is perceived.'"[8] This usually happens

[8]Ibid., 48.

when the character has a similar evaluative point of view as the implied reader. The connection between a character and the implied reader becomes stronger as the list of similarities adds up.

Readers can find themselves in characters that are similar to them. This is called realistic empathy. Others empathize with whom they want to be. This is called idealistic empathy. However, there are other reactions aside from empathy. The implied reader can also feel sympathy for the characters. Though this may seem similar to empathy, sympathy is lesser in quality. Instead of feeling like one of the characters, entering into their consciousness, sympathy is feeling for the characters; it "consists of a 'feeling- alongside-of.'"[9] This happens when the implied reader does not fully agree with the character's evaluative point of view but can feel the character's anguish of joy and the like.

Another reaction an implied reader can have is antipathy. Antipathy is the aversion or dislike of the implied reader with a character or characters that may or may not be disliked by the character with whom he or she empathized. However, more often than not, the one the protagonist hates or dislikes is the one disliked by readers.

In the novel *The Screwtape Letters*, there are only a few characters to choose from. However, not naming the Patient, who is arguably the main actor in the novel, is a good move. Even though the gender of the Patient is revealed, any man or woman who reads the novel can easily empathize, or at least sympathize, with the character's predicaments as he transitions from a non-believer to a believer. Other readers may also find themselves under similar conditions as that of the patient. Placing one's self in the shoes of an unnamed

[9]Ibid., 50.

character is easier in the long run. Moreover, by adding the events of the story, the plot, the different levels of conflicts, and the setting of the story, the implied reader can even more empathize or sympathize with the patient. Tying all the elements of the narrative together, having a bigger picture and whole view of the narrative, an implied reader can even feel sympathy with Screwtape as he struggles to understand why the Enemy loves the 'hairless bipeds' so much despite their imperfections. Perhaps the abundance of irony and sarcasm in the novel elicits a feeling of dislike for those characters praised by Screwtape like Fr. Spike. On the contrary, the implied reader can feel sympathy for those who receive the ire of Screwtape, like the patient's girlfriend and his family. Furthermore, the implied reader can also empathize or antipathize with the Enemy and their Father Below respectively.

Empathy, sympathy, and antipathy can also lead the implied reader to a deeper experience. These can lead to an encounter with the implied author or for some can even lead to an encounter with one's self, or for others even an encounter with the Divine Author. Reading a story, a narrative, and a novel can bring the implied reader or real readers not only to places described in the novel but also to self-actualization or to spiritual maturity. This deeper connection to the self and the Absolute will be discussed in the next chapter.

Core Memory

Inside Out is a 2015 movie produced by Pixar Animation Studios and released by Walt Disney Pictures. It is about Riley, an American girl, and her emotions. The movie happens inside her head where five personified emotions namely Joy, Anger, Sadness, Fear, and Disgust, control her actions. Riley's experiences turn into memories like colored orbs and are sent to the long-term memory area regularly. The memories that

power different aspects of her personality are called "core memories." The aspects of her personality take the form of floating islands.

Just like Riley, Ignacio de Loyola has his core memories that greatly influenced his life, conversion, and works particularly his Spiritual Exercises. Ignacio or Iñigo Lopez de Oñas y Loyola was born in Basque Country, Spain. He grew up in Castle Loyola where he learned how to live a life full of vanity. His ambition and thirst for fame drove him to be a great soldier. There are accounts of his life that describe him as a womanizer, sensitive to insult, and a fancy dresser. He participated in a lot of battles and survived them without any injury. However, in the Battle of Pamplona in the year 1521, he was hit by a cannonball that greatly injured his leg. What happened next turned his life upside down and brought him closer to the Light and must be recounted slowly and carefully. This particular part of his life will serve as a "core memory" powering his advancement in Spiritual maturation.

After the momentous battle, Ignacio was brought back to his father's castle at Loyola. Because of the cannonball, his leg was shattered and he had to undergo several operations without the not-yet-invented anesthetics. His leg has to be set and rebroken several times to eventually arrive at some semblance of the natural leg. Consequently, and in the absence of modern medicine, his recovery period took months. It was said that he suffered so much pain but because of his strength and patience, he did not show any sign of it more than a clenched fist. After the bones were set, there remained a bone on top of another below his knee. It did not look good and was also painful. Because of his vanity, he asked the doctors if they could cut it despite their warning that the pain would be greater.

They waited for the wound to close and heal. To ensure that his leg would not be too short because of the operation, ointments were applied and, with the use of an apparatus, he was regularly stretched. Despite all these, he continued to recover. After some time and because he was accustomed to reading books of chivalry, books about great battles, he asked for these to pass his time. Unfortunately, they have none of what he wanted. Instead, he was given a copy of the *Imitation of Christ* and a book of the lives of the saints.

While recovering, he also had thoughts of future glory. He continued to plan on how he could go to a certain lady, do her service worthy of her status and that would eventually win her attention, on what verses he would use to woo her. He dwelled on these thoughts, basked in them, and enjoyed every drop even though he knew that it was very unlikely to happen because of her very high status. He stayed with these thoughts sometimes for hours. Upon noticing how much he spent with them, he set them aside to think of other matters.

Other times, as a result of what he was reading over and over again, his mind would wonder about things he would do to be like the saints. He would imagine himself doing the work of God. He would tell himself that if St. Francis could do it, so could he, that if St. Dominic could do that, so could he. He would also think of begging and going to Jerusalem to make a pilgrimage. These thoughts come and go like that of worldly things.

For a time his thoughts would wander from one set to another, from the vanities of this world to the deeds of the saints. After some time, he noticed that there was a difference between the two sets. "When he was thinking about the things of the world, he took much delight in them, but afterward, when he was tired and put them aside, he found that he was

dry and discontented."[10] However, when he thought of the pilgrimage he wanted to do, the long journey, the hardships along the way, and the things the saints would have done, he would not only feel consoled but after putting them aside, would remain contented and happy. Little by little and just after lingering and reflecting on this difference did only he realize and recognize the movements of the spirits.

This recognition of the movement of the spirits, one from the demon and the other from God, is the foundation of what is now called Ignatian Discernment. Though this may not be the only source of experience, nonetheless, the great injury he received paved the way for his metamorphosis not only physically but more importantly, spiritually.

This movement of the spirits was further developed in his writing of the Spiritual Exercises. Though this is his life's work, he did not write it as a whole in one night. Another life marker happened when Ignatius was passing by the river Cardoner. While walking he was suddenly immersed in the presence of God. In an instant, an insight came to him and he understood "how all creatures emanate from God and, in Christ, return to God; how Jesus Christ completes human nature in taking our flesh; and how Christ is present in the sacrament."[11] This encounter emboldened him to venture into deep spiritual conversations with others even without the proper academic training in theology. At first, he cannot stop talking about the mysteries of the Holy Trinity. However, he noticed that this topic that he enjoyed much was not as appealing to others.

[10]Ignatius of Loyola, The Autobiography of St. Ignatius of Loyola with Related Documents, trans. by Joseph F. O'Callaghan, ed. by John C. Olin (New York: Fordham University Press: 1992), 24.

[11]Joseph A. Tetlow, S.J., Ignatius of Loyola: Spiritual Exercises (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992), 22.

Later on, "he grew bold enough to start talking with them on topics they need to hear about: the waste of any sinful action, the names of our daily evildoing, the threat of living lost forever."[12] Because of his natural gift of doing things systematically, he was able to talk through the rigors of revelation. At the same time, he was already starting to take notes of what later will be known as the Spiritual Exercises.

Carrying in his pocket the seed of his life's work, he started his pilgrimage to Jerusalem. From 1522 to 1540, he would work on completing the Spiritual Exercises even though its outline and core ideals were already clear in his mind. By the time he went to Paris to do his theology and after studying Latin, he had given the Spiritual Exercises to several people already. He even had a couple of skirmishes with the inquisition that apparently condemned and accepted it alternately several times. Finally, sometime in the year 1540, "Ignatius of Loyola put the final touches on the sheaf of notes that became Spiritual Exercises."[13] When it was already officially published, the Spiritual Exercises had already been used to guide people for years.

With a lot of principles and Christian doctrines found in the Spiritual Exercises, Discernment is at its center, if not its fundamental tool.[14] "However, discernment is not exclusive to Ignatian Spirituality nor an invention of St. Ignatius of Loyola. In fact, "the rules of discernment" in the Spiritual Exercises "incorporate a tradition which reaches back through the fathers of the Church to the New Testament, especially the Pauline

[12]Ibid., 23.

[13]Ibid., 30.

[14]Cf. James Walsh, "The Discernment of Spirits," The Way Supplement 16 (Sum 1972): 62; see also: Heinrich Bacht, "Good and Evil Spirits," The Way 2, no. 3 (July 1962): 188.

and Johannine writings."[15] Other spiritualities also have their concept of discernment but that is not the concern of this study. Nonetheless, what separates Ignatian Discernment from others lies in the two movements of the spirits: consolation and desolation. Discerning between these two and from which spirit they came are the basic tasks of Spiritual Directors during the Spiritual Exercises. Moreover, "Ignatius Loyola, whose Rules for the discernment of spirits are culled from a body of doctrine first developed by Origen and Cassian out of sacred scripture, states that his rules in their fulness apply to those who are exercising themselves in an illuminative way: that is, those accounted as proficient in the spiritual life, in as much as, purified from inordinate attachment to creatures, they are consciously enlightened by the Holy Spirit."[16] From this, one is almost certain that discernment is not an easy task nor a task for everybody and anybody without proper practice and guidance. Since even a seasoned spiritual director needs some guidance on how to properly distinguish one from another, Ignatius gives two sets of rules for discernment. These rules are to be used primarily not by the exercitant but by the director.[17] So much so that "their importance in the Exercises, as well as the need to apply them appropriately, is established in the Annotations 8th and 9th; the two movements they deal with are of central significance in the prayer of the Exercises from the First Day onwards."[18] Finally, as beautiful as it is, discernment is not an end in itself. It was, is, and always will be for the salvation of souls and the further glorification of God by following His divine will.

[15]Michael Ivens, S.J., Understanding the Spiritual Exercises, (Trowbridge, Wiltshire: Cromwell Press, 1998): 205.

[16]Walsh, "The Discernment of Spirits," 54-55.

[17]Cf: Bacht, "Good and Evil Spirits," 190.

[18]Ibid.

Clive Staples Lewis's conversion is very similar to Ignatius's. Though he was born into a Christian family, he never really quite warmed up to it not because he is not religious but because his reasoning has not yet reached enough logic for him to believe in a deity. Just as Ignatius's conversion came about through reading, so did Lewis'. His quest to search for answers, and his love for literature, brought him close to that Which he wanted to avoid, to that Whom he wanted to deny. In his book *Surprised by Joy*, he even said that an atheist young man cannot remain so because of "traps everywhere." His life from an atheist to a deist to a Christian, his conversion though it may seem logical, is more of a crystalization of what has already been on his mind. The final step happened during a night conversation with J.R.R Tolkien. Lewis came to believe not only in God but in Jesus Christ, not because Jesus' story invalidates other myths but because Jesus' story enlightens every other story and clarifies the very logic of everything.[19]

After the discussion above, Consolation and Desolation will be defined in the light of Ignatian Spirituality. Thereafter, with Narrative Criticism in mind, a dialogue between Screwtape and Ignatius will be presented still following the basic structure of the Screwtape Letters. The exchange of pieces of advice between the masters shows how the Rules of Discernment found in the *Spiritual Exercises* are applied to everyday choices. This also exemplifies how much the Rules of Discernment is connected with the First Principle and Foundation of Ignatian Spirituality.

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[19]Alister McGrath, C.S. Lewis–A Life: Eccentric Genius, Reluctant Prophet, (Carol Stream, Ill: Tyndale House Publishers, 2013). See Also: C.S. Lewis, Surprised by Joy:The Shape of My Early Life, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956). William Broderick, "First Week: Rules for Discernment," The Way Supplement 48 (Fall 1983): 32.

Consolation

Learning from a master is already a blessing. Learning from two masters is like receiving a fruitcake in June. What kind of animal is Consolation then? How can it be felt? What are its characteristics? Effects? Telltale signs? On what occasion does one receive Consolation? Are their prerequisites? From whom is it? To answer these questions and maybe more, it is beneficial to call on that fruitcake and get into the business. The best way possible for anyone to know more about Consolation is to discuss it using the structure of Ignatius. Fortunately, or otherwise, Screwtape can add spice for further clarification about Consolation.

Ignatius knows very well how confusing and hard it is to identify consolation from desolation. He experienced it himself. With this in mind, he gave three signposts, markers, and indicators that he believes are true occasions of Consolation. However, "the definition does not claim to be exhaustive, and in describing three situations of consolation, does not exclude others."[20] The first situation is identified when one's soul is "inflamed with the love of the Creator and Lord" [Exx. 316]. This love for God is intense and includes the love for creatures. But this love of creatures is not ordinary. It must be a love out of one's love for the Creator and Lord. The intensification of love one feels for others is just a consequence, an outside indicator of her love for her Creator and Lord. This is in contrast with loving a creature for itself which for Ignatius means "is a love which disjoins the creature from the Love which is the ground of its being, and such a love is, therefore, a defective love."21 This has its roots in Ignatius's First Principle and Foundation which says that everything

[20]Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 214.

[21]Ivens, Understanding the Spiritual Exercises, 215.

that hinders a soul from loving God must be removed. If one loves others for their sake and not out of her love of God, then this hinders her from loving God freely. Screwtape knows very well that love of others must come from love of God when he said that

One must face the fact that all the talk about His love for men, and His service being perfect freedom is not (as one would gladly believe) mere propaganda but an appalling truth. He really does want to fill the universe with a lot of loathsome little replicas of Himself—creatures whose life, on its miniature scale, will be qualitatively like His own, not because he has absorbed them but because their wills freely conform to His.[22]

He even tells Wormwood that the "Enemy wants to turn the man's attention away from self to Him, and to the man's neighbours."[23] One cannot love one's neighbors first before God. It has always been the other way around. The point here is, the love of God that one feels that Consolation must come first but this love will eventually lead to the love of others, not of themselves but because of God. "Such consolation, while it lasts, is incompatible with any feeling or attitude that, in the name of love, disconnects creature from Creator and the Creator's love."[24]

The second situation is "when a person sheds tears which lead to the love of our Lord" [Exx. 316]. Tears are an expression of intense feelings. Tears of consolation have very specific sources and effects. One's tears are a consolation if it comes from one's grief over personal sins and leads her to love God. "Sin has served only to bring out more strikingly

[22]C.S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, 39.

[23]Ibid., 70.

[24]Ivens, Understanding the Spiritual Exercises, 215.

the goodness and love of God."[25] The other source is "grief over the passion of Christ our Lord" [Exx. 316]. Finally, tears are also considered consolation if they "in some way move the person forward to God's greater service and praise."[26] Screwtape cannot agree more with Ignatius. In his 27th letter, he said, "Anything, even a sin, which has the total effect of moving him close up to the Enemy, makes against us in the long run."[27] Ignatius and Screwtape both believe that even sin, if recognized, accepted, repented can lead anyone closer to God. There are also particular prayer exercises during the long retreat that specifically ask for this grace of tears. "Nevertheless, in spite of his own gifts, and the clear value he sets on tears in the Exercises, Ignatius held that tears were not 'absolutely good and fitting for everyone and should not be asked for 'unreservedly.'"[28]

Lastly, Ignatius calls consolation "every increase of hope, faith, and charity, to all interior happiness which calls and attracts to heavenly things and to the salvation of one's soul, leaving the soul quiet and at peach in her Creator and Lord" [Exx. 316]. This may sound more general and all-encompassing than the first two occasions, but one has to take into consideration the criteria Ignatius gives for anything to be considered a consolation. An experience must result in an increase of either one or all of the cardinal virtues and happiness that will eventually give one peace. This experience of increase of virtues and happiness must always be directed to a deeper and more intimate relationship with the Creator and Lord, with God. Screwtape poetically expressed the

[25]Broderick, "First Week: Rules for Discernment," 32.

[26]Ivens, Understanding the Spiritual Exercises, 216.

[27]C.S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, 147.

[28]Ivens, Understanding the Spiritual Exercises, 216.

same idea when he said, "even if we contrive to keep them ignorant of explicit religion, the incalculable winds of fantasy and music and poetry – the mere face of a girl, the song of a bird, or the sigh of a horizon – are always blowing our whole structure away."[29]

Desolation

Unlike popular belief, Desolation is also a spiritual experience in the mind of Ignatius. This is very evident in the opening line of the Fourth Rule: "On spiritual desolation" [Exx. 317]. The broadest and easiest definition of this may come from what Ignatius writes on the Fourth Rule which says that desolation is "everything contrary to what is described in Rule Three."30 Nonetheless, Ignatius gives three examples of how one can experience desolation for better clarification: darkness and disturbance in the soul, attraction to what is low and of the earth, and disquiet arising from various agitations and temptations. This may seem very general but Ignatius also gives explanations of how it can be distinguished from other similar experiences. Just as consolation leads to an increase of hope, faith and love, these experiences, on the contrary, lead to a lack of confidence when hope, faith, and love are absent. When the cardinal virtues are absent, one may feel "lazy, lukewarm, sad and cut off from one's Creator and Lord."31 The feelings of desolation can be known easier by their effect on one's soul and disposition. "The desolate feelings tend directly and by their very nature to destroy faith, hope and love."[32] Again, contrary to what is commonly

[29]C.S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, 156.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Broderick, "First Week: Rules for Discernment," 33.

known, spiritual desolation is not, however, a non-religious experience, an experience without God at the centre. It is as much a God-centred experience as spiritual consolation. Spiritual desolation is a faith- experience, with the desolation grounded in faith. Only a person who has living faith can experience spiritual desolation.33

Instead of just a lack of hope, faith, and love, one can look at the effects of desolation as a want of an increase in the cardinal virtues. With this in mind, the experience of desolation can be turned upside down and seen more as a way to develop and reach a higher, more mature spirituality. Desolation, therefore, is not just an end but a path. Ignatius is very aware of this fact which is why he devoted four more rules on how to deal with desolation. He knows that if one can handle desolation properly this may lead to wonders and changes unimaginable.

Just as in Consolation, the feelings draw a person toward God, so it is contrary to desolation. The feelings brought about by desolation move the person away from God. Screwtape's advice to Wormwood says the same. In all of his instructions, strategies, and actions, Screwtape has only one goal, to snatch away the patient from the Enemy. He may employ several tactics and strategies wherein the patient might feel he is drawing closer to God but in reality is doing the opposite. Somehow the wisdom he gained from being a tempter for centuries has allowed him to maneuver wilily. He even said that a lukewarm religion is as good as no religion at all. Screwtape is ready to allow his Enemy to win small battles as long as he wins the war in the end. In the same way, Screwtape is also aware of the uses of desolation for the advancement of one's soul to maturity. His discussion

[33]Ibid., 34.

with the Law of Undulation, the troughs, and peaks of one's spirituality is very interesting and will be dealt with in more detail later. Finally, Ignatius and Screwtape are both aware that the thoughts that come from desolation are contrary to those that come from consolation, so much so that Ignatius's advice for those who are in desolation is to refrain from making any major decision.

The Dialogue

To better illustrate the interconnectedness of Consolation and Desolation, the different tactics of the devil, and how Ignatius would answer them, some things still need to be settled. A good fiction novel invites the reader to suspend her judgments and accept the realities found in the story and follow the logic presented. *The Screwtape Letter* is somewhat one-sided. It only talks about how the devil is trying to snatch the patient from the grasp of the Enemy. This section will supply the other half. As it was said earlier, it is very beneficial to learn from two masters. It is now time to allow them to work on the same patient and try to outdo one another. It would be very difficult if not impossible to have the opinion and advice of the real Ignatius because he is already living in the Eternal City. The Ignatius of the Spiritual Exercises following its various Rules of Discernment will be the one to dialogue with Screwtape and cross swords with him for the soul of the patient.

To do this in an orderly manner, four key turning points in the life of the patient will be identified. The pieces of advice from Screwtape to Wormwood on how to persuade the patient to remain on their side will be presented. On the side of Ignatius, imagine that the patient goes to him for spiritual direction, bringing with him the thoughts Wormwood implants in him.

The first significant event in the life of the patient happens in the second letter of Screwtape: his conversion. After his conversion, Wormwood asks Screwtape, his uncle, for advice on how he can snatch back the patient. Screwtape's advice is very cunning and clever. He says to Wormwood to be aware and be very careful with how he uses and let the patient use his reason. According to him, he must not let the patient properly use his reason for logical reasoning is in the realm of the Enemy. To allow the patient to think about the universal concepts and get into the habit of it. He must also not allow the patient to get used to arguing for this usually leads back to the Enemy. Screwtape recognizes that one's intellect and reason are from their Enemy and the constant, healthy use of it will only be for their destruction. Instead, Wormwood is to let his patient "fix his attention on the stream. Teach him to call it 'real-life' and don't let him ask what he means by 'real.'"[34] Haziness and confusion are the two tools of Screwtape that he wants Wormwood to use with his patient.

Ignatius is very aware of this tactic. He says in the Second rule of discernment that "it is characteristic of the bad spirit to harass, sadden and obstruct, and to disturb with false reasoning, so as to impede progress" [Exx. 315]. This is more true with those people who are advancing in their spiritual life. The patient's conversion to Christianity is an advancement, allowing the patient to climb higher toward God. However, this use of false reasoning of the devil will be more evident in the next life marker of the patient. Ignatius would probably point this out to the patient as he relates what happens to him whenever he tries to contemplate universal realities like his conversion, the teachings of the Church, God, and the like.

In connection with this, are the patient's habits and virtues. After his conversion to Christianity, Screwtape says

[34]C.S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, 2.

that all his habits, mental and bodily, are still in their favor. Meaning, because the patient was so used to not having any belief in any Absolute, living primarily for himself, he has developed habits that are contrary to a life of moral standards based on one's belief. Screwtape did not elaborate on what these habits are. Nonetheless, it is easy to presume that these habits lead the patient to sin regularly. Screwtape unhesitantly encourages Wormwood to use these old habits to still keep the patient in their hands even though he is already a believer. He is very much aware that these habits are hard to unlearn.

Similarly, Ignatius is also aware of the difficulty of changing for the better. It is very clear in the First Rule of Discernment that for those who are going from one grave sin to another that "it is the usual practice of the enemy to hold out apparent pleasures; so that he makes them imagine the sensual delight and satisfaction in order to maintain and reinforce them in their vices and sins." To counter this, Ignatius says that the "good spirit uses the opposite procedure, causing pricks of conscience and feelings of remorse by means of the natural power of rational moral judgment" [Exx. 314]. With this, Ignatius could be imagined saying to the patient to be aware of these episodes of remorse and pinpricks in one's conscience, identify what causes them and try to find one's pattern of sin. To counter the old habits that are still in favor of the devil, Ignatius would advise the patient to slowly develop new ones that are in accordance with his newfound faith and ask the patient to be aware of the after-effects of these new habits. Later on, these habits develop into virtues.

Another aspect that Screwtape wants to use or attack during the initial stage of the patient's conversion is his relationship with his neighbors. Screwtape is aware that in connection with the habits that are still in their favor, Wormwood can easily guide the patient into thinking that he is doing better than

others. Take for example his advice as soon as the patient goes inside the church to pray. In Screwtape's mind, the patient, because of his old habits, looks at other churchgoers as flawed people. He cannot but compare himself with them. The patient is still full of himself and tries to feed his ego by saying to himself that he is better than most of them, if not all. Worst, he even uses the Church itself to advance his propaganda. He says to Wormwood, "Make his mind flit to and fro between an expression like 'the body of Christ' and the actual faces in the next pew."[35] With this in mind, Screwtape wants the patient to focus on the imperfections of his neighbors without any hint of himself having the same or even more.

A particular relationship that Screwtape wants to exploit is the patient's relationship with his mother. Screwtape knows that it is very easy to form unhealthy relationships with people one lives with. In this case, the patient's mother. Screwtape's advice is easy. He wants Wormwood to highlight those qualities that the patient dislikes about his mother. He wants the patient to pray for his image of her and not the real her. Screwtape wants his relationship with his mother to be hazy and shady. He wants him to be kept in the dark without knowing it by replacing his mother with an illusion.

Ignatius will probably address the patient's relationships with the following. He would ask the patient which relationships are leading him toward God and which are not. He would advise the patient to also be aware of his thoughts while thinking about others during church services and advised him to focus not on his neighbors' flaws but on God. Furthermore, he might also ask the patient to pray over his own sins and allow him to be more realistic about his self-image. He would lead the patient to focus not solely on his

[35]C.S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, 6.

sins but on how God forgives them, how God really loves him. He would even go further by allowing him to be aware of his feelings whenever he prays for his neighbors, especially his mother. Ignatius would probably do these based on the Third Rule of Discernment and based on his First Principle and Foundation, wherein, anything that hinders one from getting closer to God must be removed. If the patient, by being aware of the effects of thinking ill of his neighbors and his mother, realizes that these thoughts stop him from advancing in his spiritual growth and that these ill feelings are brought about by the devil, he might freely choose to go against them. Secondly, by asking the patient to be aware of God's mercy amidst his sinfulness, he may be led to be more accepting of his neighbors and in turn, be also merciful with them. Ignatius's main weapon against Screwtape's deceit and manipulation is awareness. This will be repeated several times in the following life markers of the patient.

The next turning point in the life of the patient is more of a series of episodes rather than one single event like his conversion. Borrowing from Screwtape, "as long as [one] lives on earth periods of emotional and bodily richness and liveliness will alternate with periods of numbness and poverty."[36] Wormwood reported to Screwtape with glee that the patient is undergoing some dryness in his spiritual life. Screwtape, therefore, opted to explain to Wormwood what this phenomenon is. He calls this the Law of Undulation. It is when a person constantly changes from feeling high and low about something. Usually, at the beginning people often feel ecstatic and happy about doing something new but as soon as that something new feels repetitive, it becomes dull and tiresome. This is true with love, work, studies, and a whole lot more. It is also true with one's spiritual life. It is a series of

[36]C.S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, 36.

ups and downs, troughs and peaks. Screwtape, with his long experience of tempting humans, is aware of the dangers as well as the advantages of this series of episodes of troughs and peaks.

In his 9th letter to Wormwood, he advises him how to use the trough periods better. According to him, this is the best time to tempt the patient with sexual sins. He says, "trough periods of the human undulation provide an excellent opportunity for all sensual temptations, particularly those of sex… The attack has a much better chance of success when the man's whole inner world is drab and cold and empty."[37] Side by side with this is his main tool, confusion, and blurriness. According to him, these pleasures are still gifts from their Enemy and must be used sparingly. Otherwise, allowing the patient to experience real, authentic, pleasures will just push him farther away from them. He says, "Hence we always try to work away from the natural condition of any pleasure to that in which it is least natural, least redolent of its Maker, and least pleasurable."[38] Moreover, Screwtape also uses the troughs period to exploit further the patient's relationship with others. At this point in the life of the patient, he became acquainted with people who, in Screwtapes' mind, are skeptics and worldly. He wants the patient to develop a double life. He is allowing the patient to continue to go to the church hoping that he will compartmentalize this life and cultivate another for the amusement of his newfound friends. This life of double standards side by side by the tendency of the patient during trough periods to be lukewarm with his religion or newfound faith creates an atmosphere wherein, the patient effortlessly changes masks depending on who he is with. "If

[37]Ibid., 43.

[38]Ibid., 44.

prolonged, the habit of Flippancy builds up around a man the finest armour-plating against the Enemy."[39] The key to these temptations lies in his advice found in his 12th letter. According to him, Wormwood must not let the patient realize that he is slowly moving away from the habits he formed after his conversion. He says:

Anything is better than that. He should realize the break he has made with the first months of his Christian life. As long as he retains externally the habits of a Christian he can still be made to think of himself as one who has adopted a few new friends and amusements but whose spiritual state is much the same as it was six weeks ago.[40]

Screwtape tells Wormwood to be very careful with his handling of his patient during this time. His advice is to be subtle and discreet. For Screwtape, "indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one-the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts."[41] To ensure that the patient goes down without him noticing these signposts, Screwtape advises Wormwood to "Keep him out of the way of experienced Christians (an easy task nowadays), to direct his attention to the appropriate passages in scripture, and then to set him to work on the desperate design of recovering his old feelings by sheer will power."[42]

Ignatius, like Screwtape, is aware of the mechanisms of the Law of Undulation. In his 9th Rule, he enumerates three causes why people find themselves in desolation. The first

[39]Ibid., 56.

[40]Ibid., 58.

[41]Ibid., 61.

[42]Ibid., 45.

is primarily because of the lukewarmness, laziness, or carelessness of the person with regard to one's spiritual life. The second cause focuses on the ability of the person to remain faithful to the new habits one formed during consolation days. The second reason is more of a test of the quality of one's progress "without the generous remuneration of consolation and overflowing graces" [Exx. 322]. Finally, the third cause looks at periods of desolation as an opportunity to gain true knowledge and understanding that one cannot survive without God's graces. Screwtape agrees with Ignatius on these causes. He even warned Wormwood that their Enemy, in reality, depends more on periods of troughs. He says:

> Now it may surprise you to learn that in His efforts to get permanent possession of a soul, He relies on the troughs even more than on the peaks; some of His special favorites have gone through longer and deeper troughs than anyone else... He is prepared to do a little overriding at the beginning... Sooner or later He withdraws, if not in fact, at least from their conscious experience, all those supports, and incentives.[43]

Ignatius knows the difficulty of being alone in one's journey to holiness. To counter Screwtape's advice with regard to hindering the patient from knowing a good Christian, he would probably tell him that going to him for direction is a big leap already. He will recognize that the patient is undergoing desolation and may slowly go into the depths if not checked early on. Ignatius, knowing that spiritual desolation is also an opportunity for growth much more than periods of consolation devotes Rules five to eight to deal with it. Based on these rules, he would probably tell the patient to continue making the new habits he formed during the time of consolation. Ignatius would give the patient three pieces

[43]C.S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, 40.

of advice. First, that he "should never make any change but should stand firm and constant in the resolutions and decisions by which one was guided... during the preceding time of consolation" [Exx. 318]. Second, though he should not make any changes from past resolutions, he can still "make changes in [himself] against this desolation" [Exx. 319]. Ignatius would tell him to intensify his prayers and meditations and do some penance even provided that they were suitable to his conditions. Finally, he would guide the patient to a realization that he can win over this period for "although the Lord has withdrawn [his] fervour, deeply felt love and intense grace, He has still left [him] the grace sufficient for eternal salvation" [Exx. 320]. Ignatius then would probably remind the patient about the graces he received during the time of consolation. He would lovingly guide the patient to go through this phase of troughs, of desolation for he knows that this is an indication of spiritual maturity.

As the life of the patient continues, the plot also thickens. The third turning point in his life is a result of an experience of the Real, an experience of real pleasure, and an experience of God. For Ignatius, the grace of consolation may come from one's efforts to be faithful. However, he also recognizes that an experience of God cannot also be limited to these. In the Second Set of the Rules of Discernment, Rule Two says that there are consolations without a preceding cause. Ignatius would probably recognize this kind of consolation of the patient when he read a good book and had a nice walk toward the mill and had tea there. Furthermore, as a result of these two real pleasures, the patient underwent a second conversion. In Screwtape's words, "probably on a deeper level than the first."[44] This type of consolation is also an indication

[44]C.S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, 63.

"of a person moving from good to better, [which] Ignatius holds to be an unambiguous sign of God's leading."[45]

Screwtape, on his part, recognizes the danger of having a second conversion and thus, heightens his attacks with more cunningness. He takes up several virtues and twists them to his liking. In particular, he took up the virtue of humility as an example. This is an answer to the patient's development from someone who promises big things to God to someone who relies on God's everyday graces to fight everyday temptation. For Screwtape, the patient has truly become humble. Nonetheless, as a good tempter, he always has something up his sleeves. He advises Wormwood to take up this newfound humility and try to guide the patient to think that he is humble and therefore produce some pride out of him. His cunningness almost reached its full potential with this one. He allows the patient to develop virtues only to turn them upside down the moment the patient goes down from feeling high. His idea of false humility is very much to the point. He wants Wormwood to let his patient "fix in his mind the idea that humility consists in trying to believe those talents to be less valuable than he believes them to be."[46] On the contrary, Screwtape also gives a very good explanation of what real humility looks like. According to him, real humility is knowing one's real worth without being proud of it and without looking down on others at the same time. His illustration speaks better:

The Enemy wants to bring the man to a state of mind in which he could design the best cathedral in the world, know it to be the best, and rejoice in the fact, without being any more

[45]Ivens, Understanding the Spiritual Exercises, 228.

[46]C.S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, 70.

(or less) or otherwise glad at having done it than he would be if it had been done by another.[47]

Humility according to Screwtape is knowing how to appreciate one's gifts and talents without any prejudice against one's neighbors.

Another virtue that Screwtape twists is that of simplicity. He puts it beside a nuanced version of gluttony. In Screwtape's mind, humans are already very much aware of the danger of the gluttony of excess. The world has already, or almost, exhausted preaching against this capital sin. However, there are far fewer preachers against the gluttony of delicacy because it hides under the guise of simplicity. Taking the patient's mother as an example, he illustrates that this capital sin prejudiced the patient's mother into thinking that she only wants the simple things, like a perfect cup of tea and a perfect biscuit. And, because no one can give and provide her with these simple things, she often loses her temper or pretends to like whatever is given to her without really appreciating the sacrifices of the people around her. This "daily disappointment produces daily ill temper."[48]

Screwtape even tries to distort love. He uses the same strategy as with the previous two virtues. He is willing to allow the patient to fall in love only because he has some plan to distort it. According to him, because of their tireless efforts to get as many souls as possible, they have discovered that humans tend to focus on the good feeling that falling in love gives and forgets the real meaning of love. He is fully aware of the dangers of marriage and thus tempts humanity to get married in the pretext that the feelings of falling in love are constant and will never change. The moment these

[47]Ibid., 71.

[48]Ibid., 89.

feelings change, much so within marriage, they will have the opportunity to slowly snatch the souls from their Enemy. In reality, Screwtape admits that with all their research, they cannot believe nor accept that there is a kind of love that never asks anything in return and has no prior cause except love itself. Screwtape, though he contradicts himself in the other letters, cannot believe that the Enemy truly loves humans because, for him, it is an impossibility. For Screwtape, "all His talk about Love must be a disguise for something else--He must have some real motive for creating them and taking so much trouble about them."[49]

During the time of consolation, Ignatius gives two pieces of advice. In the case of the patient, after his second deeper conversion, Ignatius would ask him to gather his strength and save up enough energy to endure another episode of desolation. In helping the patient discern and develop further into becoming a virtuous person, Ignatius would probably ask him to practice true humility. Ignatius's idea of humility is almost parallel to that of Screwtape. He would tell the patient to "try to humble and lower [himself] as much as possible by thinking how little [he is] worth in time of desolation without the grace of consolation" [Exx. 324]. Instead of directing the patient's attention toward his humility, Ignatius would stir the boat toward an understanding of one's true standing in front of God. He would remind the patient of his nothingness without God's grace especially during the time of desolation. In doing this, he can prevent himself from being too proud of his newfound virtue. Ignatius would invite the patient to adopt and imbibe "a view not to self-belittlement, but to authenticity."[50] In the same manner, to counter Screwtape's temptation

[49]Ibid., 100.

[50]Ivens, Understanding the Spiritual Exercises, 224.

concerning gluttony of delicacy packaging it as simplicity, he would invite the patient to look into himself closer and ask for the grace of authenticity. Knowing one's desires, prejudices and tendencies will allow the person to be equipped when the devil uses them. He would also again draw his attention to his relationships with his neighbors and ask him if he truly treats them with the same treatment he received from God during the time of consolation. Moreover, Ignatius would invite the patient to meditate and pray over the love he received during the time of consolation and remind him to love his neighbors not for themselves but out of his love for his Creator and Lord.

The final turning point in the life of the patient and marked the defeat of Wormwood is when he falls in love with a woman, a good Christian woman. Screwtape is very disappointed with Wormwood in his 22nd letter as he scolds him for letting the patient fall in love. This is the time when Screwtape unleashed his most dangerous advice. He advises his nephew to remember what he has learned and try to appear as an angel of light. Screwtape then begins to act more like a military leader who carefully inspects his opponents and attacks where the opponent is weakest.

As an angel of light, Screwtape advises Wormwood to do three things. The first is to allow the patient to assume that he knows the Enemy by using what scholars brand as the Historical Jesus. Screwtape says, "We thus distract men's minds from who He is, and what He did. We first make Him solely a teacher, and then conceal the very substantial agreement between His teachings and those of all other great moral teachers."[51]

Screwtape wants Wormwood to allow the patient to be exposed to these studies with the end idea of substituting

[51]C.S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, 125.

the real image with those of their creation. He also wants to use humanity's drive for social justice by focusing on it. He wants humanity to use religion and faith as tools to achieve such goals. He wants humanity to "first value social justice as a thing which the Enemy demands, and then work him on to the stage at which he values Christianity because it may produce social justice. For the Enemy will not be used as a convenience."[52]

Secondly, Screwtape wants to use the woman's religiosity and illicit in her some pride. Screwtape tells Wormwood to let the patient and the woman compare themselves with those who are not as learned as they are. From this comparison, he may tempt them to have, what Screwtape calls, Spiritual Pride. Screwtape says, "teach him to mistake this contrast between the circle that delights and the circle that bores him for the contrast between Christians and unbelievers."[53]

Finally, the third is to twist his patient and the woman's acts of selflessness. According to him, humans are fond of doing selfless acts only to feel proud of themselves for doing such. Moreover, while doing so, they tend to compete among themselves and try to outdo each other in being selfless. Screwtape wants to substitute "negative unselfishness for the Enemy's positive Charity [and]... teach a man to surrender benefits not that others may be happy in having them but that he may be unselfish in forgoing them."[54]

Ignatius, as a master discerner, would have seen through these temptations. He compares the devil to someone who flies immediately when confronted strongly. According to Ignatius, "it is characteristic of the enemy to weaken and lose

[52]Ibid., 127.

[53]Ibid., 132.

[54]Ibid., 141.

courage and to turn to flight with these temptations, when the person engaged in spiritual life shows a bold front" [Exx. 325]. However, if that person shows any sign of weakness, the devil will take advantage of it and attack the person immediately. Ignatius uses three images to capture the deceitfulness of the devil. The first image is that of a false lover, a seducer. The devil will use flowery words and package his temptations beautifully to make them attractive to the person. In the case of the patient, he uses selflessness, humility, and love and twists them at the end to his liking. "The enemy of human nature brings his deceits and inducements to bear on the just soul; he wants them to be received and kept secret." [Exx. 326] Equally, Ignatius compares the devil to a military leader, "setting about the conquest and seizure of the objects he desires. The commander of an army, after setting up his camp and inspecting the fortifications and defenses of a fortress, attacks it at its weakest point." [Exx. 327] Lastly, he would tell the patient the devil could appear like an angel of light proposing "good and holy thoughts well adapted to such a just soul, and then succeeds little by little in getting his own way, drawing the soul into his hidden snares and his perverted purposes." [Exx. 322]

After exposing the strategies of the devil to the patient, Ignatius would probably guide the patient to ask for the grace of clarifying two things. First, he would lead the patient to pray over his image of God. Only God can reveal Himself to the patient. If the patient receives this grace, then he could maintain his focus on the real Jesus and not the Jesus of the books. To achieve this, Ignatius would invite the patient to cultivate a personal relationship with Jesus and ask for the grace to know him more clearly, follow him more nearly and love him more dearly. Equally, he would also invite the patient to purify his intentions in following his faith. Ignatius would

guide the patient to a better understanding of the centrality of his relationship with God and help him deepen this relationship.

In the end, what gave Wormwood the *coup de grâce* is when the patient, because of his fear, felt no pride whatsoever and did "everything his duty demanded and perhaps a bit more."[55] Finally, because of the bombing, the patient "saw Him... clarity itself, and wears the form of a Man."[56]

The Benefits of Narrative Criticism

The use of Narrative Criticism, though it was developed with biblical stories in mind, has proven to be beneficial and serves as a midwife to smoothly deliver the dialogue of the masters. As discussed in chapter three, Narrative Criticism aims to return the biblical stories from the critics back to the readers. With that in mind, *The Screwtape Letters* has also been used by various academicians as a workbook about temptation, human tendencies, and the like. Subjecting it to Narrative Criticism brings it back to the original target reader of C.S. Lewis, back in the hands of people. Upon its return to the fiction shelf, space has been created, a chance for another voice to contribute to the overall plot without distortion. The suspension of disbelief that readers generously give to fiction novels opens a path wide enough for Ignatius to come in, interact with the patient, and crossword with Screwtape. Finally, the dialogue that emerged from the encounter of the two masters exemplifies that God is present in everyday living especially in the choices of every moment. This allows anyone and everyone to find God in all things, to be as close as possible to His will, to His very being.

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[55]C.S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, 165.

[56]Ibid., 174.

There is another way to look at stories as narrative: Paul Riceour's Threefold Mimesis. He playfully calls them $Mimesis_1$, $Mimesis_2$, and $Mimesis_3$. This threefold mimesis is a process that a reader, a listener or an author goes through. The first mimesis can also be called Prefiguration. According to Riceour, if it is true that the plot is an imitation of reality, the reader or the listener must have some experience of reality to recognize the elements found in both. For this to work, the reader, listener or the composer of the plot must recognize a structure that can be applied to the plot, and must be able to recognize a symbolic mediation that can be placed in time.

The second mimesis is called Configuration and is what is generally understood as narrative. It serves as a mediation between $mimesis_1$ and $mimesis_3$. It is the act of telling or receiving any story.

The third mimesis is called refiguration. For the cycle of mimesis to be complete, there has to be a third. Refiguration is the intersection of the world of text and the world of the reader and thus returns to the world of real action in real-time. Without this, Riceour says, narration is not possible. What is wonderful in this process from prefiguration to refiguration through configuration is its refinement every time a specific plot undergoes it. The more the story goes through this cycle, the more the reader understands its lessons, topics and ideas.

With this, *Screwtape Letters* and the dialogue of the masters can now go back to the real world, to the readers and listeners. With this, the story can pass through the spiral staircase of mimesis and help everyone understand discernment better.

Importance of Discernment

"Discernment of Spirits" is almost as old as Christianity. Like everything, the concept thereof was not spared of changes

over the centuries. Nonetheless, its importance remained constant and proven to be beneficial to humanity.

The ball started rolling with St. Paul's first letter to the Church of Corinth. Chapter 12 begins with Paul's recognition that the Christians of Corinth were pagans and were and still can be led astray to idols. With their newfound faith, Paul does not want them to remain ignorant of the various spiritual gifts that Christians receive. However, these come from the same Spirit. He then enumerated what these graces are. In verse 10, he mentioned the "discernment of spirits" among others. This is in line with the chapter's theme about having several members but one body, the Mystical Body of Christ.

In an article entitled *On "Discernment of Spirits" in the Early Chruch*, Joseph T. Lienhard, SJ traces the development thereof in the writings of the Fathers of the Church. He starts with the Greek commentaries spearheaded by John Chrysostom. Chrysostom discussed the "discernment of spirits" twice. Because the Christians in Corinth were once pagans, they received the grace of "discernment of spirits" to identify which of the soothsayers were speaking from the clean spirit and which were from the unclean. Secondly, for Chrysostom, Paul wants the Christians of Corinth to identify the true prophets from the false ones. "For Chrysostom, therefore, discernment of spirits was a gift whereby a Christian could identify the kind of spirit that spoke through a man (soothsayer, prophet or deceiver—i.e., false prophet) and also distinguish different kinds of persons, those who are spiritual from those who are not."[57] Lienhard proceeds to the Latin Fathers that generally took the list of the spiritual gifts to be meant for the clerics

[57]Joseph T. Lienhard, SJ, "On 'Discernment of Spirit' in the Early Church," Theological Studies Vol. 41, Issue 3 (1980): 509-510.

that they "might understand and judge what is said, whether it is of a holy spirit or a worldly one."[58]

He then discusses Origen lengthy. In the third part of Origen's *On First Principles*, he presented a systematic discussion of freedom of the will and the question of evil as his answer to the Gnostic denial of human freedom. This is where he introduces the idea of "discernment of spirits." For Origen, human freedom is part of the whole doctrine thereof as well as the good spirit, which is "recognized by the fact that the soul's tranquility is undisturbed and its freedom is respected"[59] and the evil spirit. Finally, for Origen, to distinguish between these spirits is grace and a marker of the person's spiritual advancement.

In the fifth century, there came a change in the idea of "discernment of spirits." Spirits were largely understood as referring to the evil spirits and later to evil thoughts. Furthermore, in the monastic tradition, "St. Benedict makes *discretio* the basic virtue of his monastic constitution and therefore of Benedictine life."[60] St. Ignatius of Loyola, being immersed in Patristic and Monastic writings, must be aware and knowledgeable of the nuances of the use of "discernment of spirits."

The Second Vatican Council was driven, sustained, and energized by the doctrine of "discernment." In the discussion of the people of God as sharers in Christ's prophetic ministry, *Lumen Gentium* says that

The entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole people's supernatural

[58]Ibid.

[59]Ibid., 512.

[60]Ibid., 527.

discernment in matters of faith when 'from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful' they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals.[61]

Thus, the grace of discernment of spirits is offered to and shared by all. Pope Francis reestablished the importance of discernment in Christian life. After reaffirming the existence of the devil, he defined discernment as "something more than intelligence or common sense."[62] Moreover, through reason and prudence are included, this grace allows the person to have a "glimpse of that unique and mysterious plan that God has."[63]

He identified three particular purposes of why Discernment is important today more than ever. In addressing the young, he warns them of the danger of multitasking. A youth can interact virtually with several people while doing other things and thus can "become prey to every passing trend."[64] According to him, Discernment allows a Christian to be mindful and aware of one's surroundings and of what are the essentials. Secondly, Discernment is particularly important for identifying one's vocation. To help in identifying that vocation, one is led to know one's self deeper, and to realize how one can serve others better.

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[61]Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, 21 November 1964," in Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, ed. Austin Flannery (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1975), sec. 12 (hereafter cited as LG).

[62]Catholic Church and Francis, Rejoice and Be Glad: Gaudete Et Exsultate; Apostolic Exhortation, (Manila: Paulines, 2018), section 166 (hereafter cited as GE). See also: Pope Francis, Christus Vivit (Manila: Paulines, 2019).

[63]GE 170.

[64]GE 167.

Finally, Pope Francis also emphasized that discernment should not only be done during extraordinary circumstances but more so in everyday living, in small choices and decisions. "Often discernment is exercised in small and apparently irrelevant things, since greatness of spirit is manifested in simple everyday realities."[65] This exercise of discernment in everyday living is intuned with the First Principle and Foundation of Ignatian Spirituality which states that all creatures are created to serve, love, and reverence God.

Finally, one thing that can be drawn about discernment from the dialogue above is the importance of the Image of God. From St. Paul, to the early Church Fathers, to Pope Francis, it is very important to have a true and clear image of God. This is one of the very basic yet powerful strategies of Screwtape which Ignatius is very much aware of.

Levels of Language

One of the greatest, if not the greatest, inventions of humanity is language. Expression of one's thoughts, ideas, dreams, emotions, and beliefs helped humanity form civilizations and arrive at today's standards of living. This is even more so important when one experiences something that is beyond one's limits. When the finite meets that infinite, wonderful things are bound to happen.

In Robin Ryan's book entitled *Jesus & Salvation*, he introduced a lacuna in the theology of salvation. According to him, there was never a positive statement on how humanity is saved by the Jesus event unlike other doctrinal pronunciations like that of the Trinity, or even Jesus' full humanity and full divinity. As an introduction to soteriology, he discussed the distinction theologians make about the different expressions

[65]GE 169.

of the experience with the Divine. Theologians would distinguish between two levels or orders of language.

The first level of language is rich in symbols, metaphors, and images that try to encapsulate something inexpressible like that of a divine experience. They can be in poems, sayings, myths, legends, and other forms of literature that grapple with expressing something beyond human language. "These primary expressions communicate meanings directly and appeal to the imagination and the heart."[66] The first order/level language tries to show and illustrate an experience that is beyond one's finiteness. It aims to show rather than explain. Most of the salvific experiences of the people in the Old Testament are expressed through these. The narrative stories found in the four gospels are also under the first-level language. This primary form of expression is also used in prayers during liturgies.

The second-order/level language builds from the former and "is the language of doctrine and theology."[67] Thinkers, theologians, and the Church Magisterium formulate positive statements, pronouncements, and teachings. Unlike the first level language that aims to show, this secondary form of expression aims to explain that which is inexpressible. Second-order/level language can also be in the form of theories.

The doctrine of the Trinity was first defended by Tertullian in the 3rd century but is expressed and experienced by the apostles early on during Jesus' baptism at the river Jordan. In reality, the doctrines of the Catholic Church are codified

[66]Gerald O'Collins, Jesus Our Redeemer: A Christian Approach to Salvation, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2.

[67]Robin Ryan, Jesus, and Salvation: Soundings in the Christian Tradition and Contemporary Theology, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2015), xvi.

religious experiences of the first Christians. Nonetheless, the codification of what is extracted from the first level language is still the result of an experience of the same Divine Being, of the same Absolute, of the same, one true God. However, these positive statements, though very true to the last iota, seemingly over time lose their flavor due to overemphasis on exactness and excessive philosophizing.

Just like in any translation, something of the original is lost in the process. The same is true with the process from the first level to the second level language. Since symbols, images and metaphors can be interpreted in thousands of ways and can carry several layers of meaning, they can have more flavor and can be absorbed easier as they appeal to the imagination and the heart of humanity. On the other hand, since the second-order/level language aims to explain and define boundaries, they tend to be drier and highly intellectual in form. Nonetheless, both are important and neither loses its redemptive quality over the advantage of the other.

As illustrated by the previous chapters, there can be a third-order/level of language. Just like the second is built upon the first, so is the third built upon the second. The first aims to show. The second aims to explain. The third order/level language aims to recapture what is seemingly lost in the process of codification. The third order/level language aims to rediscover mystery. Mystery here must be taken in two senses: St. Paul's *Mysterion* and Rahner's Mystery.

The word *mysterion* appears in Paul's letters 21 times. In his letter to the Ephesians, which is called the "epistle of mystery," he uses the word *mysterion* six times. How exactly does Paul use this word? Is it something new? In Paul's mind, *mysterion* is not something that is hidden in the future and cannot be seen, or known but something that is known

already but is not understood completely or properly. He usually uses *mysterion* to refer to salvation brought about by Jesus Christ because for St. Paul, this salvation has already been known in the past by patriarchs and prophets but is completely revealed only by Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of scripture. In Ephesians 3, Paul particularly discusses that the salvation of the Gentiles together with the Jews is not completely new but has already been written in parts and is completely revealed during the time of Jesus Christ. "What he does mean is that this mystery truth, although known and written in kernel form in the text of the Old Testament, was not fully comprehended nor understood until the times of the New Testament."[68] Paul's idea of mystery therefore is more of the process of revelation of what was previously known but has only been fully understood.

Rahner's idea of Mystery is deeper and more elaborate. Rahner is constantly mindful of the problem of one and the many. In his brilliant mind, the mysteries of Christian doctrine, "though spoken of in the plural, are really only so many facets of the one mystery with which the Christian revelation confronts mankind."[69] Rahner's anthropology says that the very being of humanity is transcendence, the holy mystery that has always been there and is also found in the whole of creation. Moreover, since the transcendence is in the very fiber of any human being, no person can escape the longing for the mystery. "It implies that the religious dimension of human life is not an option for people who happen to have a religious blik. According to this anthropology, every man

[68]W. Harold Mare, "Paul's Mystery in Ephesians 3," Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society 8, no. 2 (Spr 1965): 83.

[69]Karl Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," in Theological Investigations IV, (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1966), 722

is inescapably religious."[70] It is in transcendence that one finds the goal of humans "and that goal is nothing less than the infinite itself."[71] This transcendence is explicated by the unquenchable thirst of humanity for answers, for knowledge. Knowing the finite always has the Infinite as a background. The knowledge of the finite and the infinite always come together. The very ability of human beings for an infinite query. This unquenchable search can only be satisfied by Infinity itself, by God, but "God recedes as infinite horizon every time [humans] try to lay hold of him." However, God is not only the Infinite or the Transcendence. Revelation means God wants to communicate Godself to creation. For Rahner, God gives Godself in two ways. The first is through grace while a person is still alive. This grace is, in accordance with the doctrine of revelation, is Godself or in Rahner's terms, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, of the Holy Mystery. Through this indwelling of the Spirit, humanity participates in the life of the Trinity. God then, after death, gives Godself through beatific vision.

With this doctrine of Grace, Rahner is saying that as much as humanity is made to journey towards the Infinite, towards the Transcendence, humanity is, at the same time, made with the Spirit within. What is distant, what is infinitely out of humanity's grasp is also in the deepest part of one's being. What is transcendent and Wholly Other is also found in the very fiber of humanity. This Holy Mystery is both within and without, near and far, very different and one with humanity. Rahner also argues that grace is universal and is offered to all. However, the universality of grace does not in any way diminish its giftedness. Moreover, the universality of grace,

[70]John J. O'Donnell, "The Mystery of Faith in the Theology of Karl Rahner." Heythrop Journal 25, no. 3 (July 1984): 302.

[71]Ibid., 303

or at least its offer, suggests that before hearing the proclamation of the gospel, "the soil for receiving the gospel has already been prepared."[72] By the time the person hears the gospel, and learns the doctrines and teachings of the faith, that person recognizes one's experience and personal story.

The third order/level language aims to recapture Paul's *mysterion*, that which is already known in the past but is revealed fully by Jesus, and Rahner's Holy Mystery, God who is both transcendent and immanent, outside and within. This Mystery is the same God that the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and early Christians encountered.

The only question that remains is how one can transition fully from the second-order/level language to the third level, the recapturing. There may be several ways for God can fully reveal Godself to whomever God wants in ways only known to God. Nonetheless, Christians, lay and religious alike, need to train their hearts to be sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit so that they may recognize the Holy Mystery.

In Ignatian Spirituality, Consciousness Examen is practiced to help the individual to be more aware of these encounters with the Mystery. George Aschenbrenner, SJ in his article entitled Examen of Consciousness, identifies two kinds of spontaneity: one toward God and one away from God. Contrasted with the examen of conscience which is directed toward knowing the good and the bad, Consciousness Examen is being sensitive to how God moves a person. "The concern is with the way God is affecting and moving... (often quite spontaneously!) deep in [one's] affective consciousness."[73] In a

[72]Ibid., 307.

[73]George Aschenbrenner, S.J., Consciousness Examen, Ignatian Spirituality, accessed October 1, 2020, https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/consciousness-examen.

more general term, this sifting through of God's involvement in one's affective life is called Discernment. The everyday practice of Examen of Consciousness to discern God and identify instances where one encounters the Mystery trains one's heart to be more aligned to that of God as each day passes.

Furthermore, the recognition of these encounters with the Mystery, the very encounter with the Mystery compels the person, still out of one's free response, to preach, to share, to tell one's stories. Consequently, these encounters with the Mystery not only fill one's soul but overflows with one's actions, words, and works consciously or otherwise. So much so that a person, who has trained one's heart to be sensitive to the Mystery, will encounter the same Mystery through stories, novels, artworks, through creation. C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters* is an example of this overflowing experience with the Mystery, an example of a teacher becoming a preacher. The expression of these recognized experiences with the Mystery through one's work, passion, or life stories is an example of the third-order/level language, and Ignatian discernment through consciousness examen helps a person to do just that. Finally, the translation of the Christian doctrines into these stories imbued with the Holy Mystery is needed in today's world. With this, a teacher of Christian doctrines becomes a preacher of Christ. With this, every whisper is God's voice; every call is God's invitation; every bush is burning.

BACCALAUREATE IN SACRED THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY SYNTHESIS PAPERS

HEALING GRACE:
A FRAMEWORK OF HOPE FOR SEXUAL ABUSE SURVIVORS

Eduardo Miguel F. Ramirez

There is nothing to glorify about Sexual Abuse (SA). The actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions[1] is an intrinsically evil act, and perpetrators should be held morally and criminally liable for them. Countless survivors of SA walk among us unnoticed, doing their best to lead upright lives. Tragically, within them are deep wounds that can fester for decades if not addressed.

The phenomenon of SA among children and adults can be a complex pastoral challenge.[2] As a youth minister and community leader, a number of survivors of SA have thrown me questions like: *"How can I finally forgive?" "Why God?" "Why me?"* It is also painful to see individuals failing in their

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[1]United Nations, "Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: Thematic Glossary of current terminology related to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) in the context of the *United Nations,*" United Nations, 2nd Edition, 24 July 2017, accessed 14 February 2023, https://policy.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/SEA%20Glossary%20%20%5BSecond%20Edition%20-%202017%5D%20-%20English_0.pdf 5.

[2]In the Philippines, the occurrences of sexual abuse increased by 264.6 percent (or 202,605 more reports) during the imposition of the "Enhanced Community Quarantine" from March to May 2020, compared to the 76,561 cases during the same period in 2019. (Save The Children Philippines, "Online Sexual Abuse of Children Rising Amid COVID-19 Pandemic," *Save the Children,* accessed 13 February 2023, https://www.savethechildren.org.ph/our-work/our-stories/story/online-sexual-abuse-of-children-rising-amid-covid-19-pandemic/.

work and relationships because of their limiting beliefs of *"I'm not worthy,"* or *"I'm bad"* which were brought about by a radical SA experience. But I know there is hope.

It is possible for individuals who have been sexually abused to live normal and productive lives. It is possible that their stories are able to uplift and encourage others to open up their wounds so that it can heal in the warmth of the love of positive friendships.[3] I believe it is possible because God's healing grace is present and active.

This paper attempts to put together "Sexual Abuse" in the same breath as "Theological Synthesis." I do not intend to moralize or spiritualize the phenomenon of SA using theological categories, nor do I intend to fit the theological enterprise into a singular phenomenon. This paper aims to provide a "Framework of Hope" for the reader as they understand the struggle of the SA survivors, especially those who have lost faith in a God who is gracious, steadfast, and merciful. If desired, this paper may also be used in the future for ministering to SA survivors, or people with other patterns of brokenness.

This framework follows significant themes in Theology. I aim to answer the question: *"How is Grace real and at work in the life of sexual abuse survivors?"* In doing so, I hope to illustrate the presence of Healing Grace in different moments of the journey to wholeness.

The first part of the paper looks at the phenomenon of sexual abuse and its effects. This can only be understood in the light of God's "Healing Grace" which we propose as a

[3]An example is Bro. Bo Sanchez, who openly writes and preaches about the effects of his sexual abuse experience. He is a charismatic leader of *The Light of Jesus Family,* and has inspired countless individuals in their healing from SA.

fitting image to God's gratuitous self-communication especially for people who have struggled with SA. The second part of the paper discusses the journey of Healing Grace in the life of the SA survivor: how they are awakened into it, and how they are deepened by it. Finally, we conclude the Framework of Hope with a personal testimony of hope.

The Phenomenon of Sexual Abuse in the Light of Original Sin

Humanity and all creation are created good because we come from a good God. This is also revealed to us in Scriptures when "God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good" (Gen. 1:31, NABRE). Two chapters after however, we encounter the story of Adam and Eve, the archetype of our human nature, being portrayed as desiring to "be like gods" despite being created good (Gen. 3:5). This resulted in "the fall" of humanity, and our "banishment from the Garden" (Gen. 3:24). Later on, this would be called by St. Paul as "Adam's sin," and juxtaposed with the grace of the "New Adam," Jesus Christ, who brings life to all (*CCC* 402). This loss of our original state of grace is taught by the Church as **Original Sin**: a deprivation of original holiness and justice, wounding the natural powers of freedom, inclining the human being to sin ("concupiscence"), and necessitating the salvation brought about by God (*CCC* 405). It is not personal sin, nor is it a passed-on guilt. Original sin may also be understood as the negative influence exerted on people by communal situations and social structures that are fruits of people's sins (*CCC* 408).

The effects of SA elucidate these "negative structures." Whether child or adult, the person who survives SA immediately feels broken. Countless negative effects can be *physical* (chronic fatigue, disease, or self-harm); *mental* (post-traumatic

stress disorder, depression, or suicidal thoughts); and *emotional* (mistrust, unnecessary guilt and shame, or disorientation).[4] Moreover, SA can lead to deep *spiritual* wounds such as developing false images of God, doubt, anger, and fear of death.[5] In all these, the survivor has *not* committed a personal sin of their own, but has been thrust shamelessly into a wounded world. The survivor then is faced with the possibility of continuing this vicious cycle, or co-operating with a kind of healing process.

Perpetrators, on the other hand, experience this brokenness in a subtler, yet equally powerful way. Studies show complex causes for predatory behavior such as: poor relationships with primary caregivers, cognitive distortions, exposure to sexually violent pornography, being sexually abused as children, and more.[6] While the perpetrator *has* committed personal sin bearing guilt and consequences, we can infer that there is an evil structure greater and beyond the workings of personal sin. Their brokenness is caused by a vicious cycle of victimhood unbeknownst even to them. The perpetrator is at the same time a victim and victimizer—a *survivor* in another sense.

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[4]Joyful Heart Foundation, "Effects of Sexual Assault and Rape," *Joyful Heart Foundation,* 2002, accessed 15 February 2023, https://www.joyfulheartfoundation.org/learn/sexual-assault-rape/effects-sexual-assault-and-rape.

[5]Victor Vieth, "When Faith Hurts: The Spiritual Impact of Child Abuse," *Zero Abuse Project,* 15 June 2017, accessed 15 February 2023, https://www.zeroabuseproject.org/when-faith-hurts-the-spiritual-impact-of-child-abuse/.

[6]Susan Faupel, M.S.W., "Etiology of Adult Sexual Offending," *Somapi Research Brief,* July 2015, accessed 15 February 2023, https://smart.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh231/files/media/document/etiologyofadultsexualoffending.pdf 2.

The Gift of Healing Grace

SA survivors and perpetrators seem to be "inserted into a race and an environment contaminated by corporate evil. Each person is infected by the contagion before being able to offer the least resistance."[7] But amidst all these, our God does not leave us alone. He intimately knows the woundedness of creation, and thus wills to save us and bring all things into one in him (Eph. 1:10). God communicates His very self to us, graciously, steadfastly, and mercifully despite our sinful condition. This is the gift of **Grace** which journeys with us, and heals our brokenness.

After the Fall, God kindled in our first parents the hope of salvation (Gen. 3:15), and He continued to journey with humankind. In his elected time, He chose to make a covenant with Abraham and gathered a people to Himself (DV 3). In the Old Testament, God is portrayed as *"hen"* and *"hanan"*—Hebrew words for a God who is benevolent and condescending to those who are weak and oppressed; as well as *"hesed"* to describe his steadfast covenant of love. In the New Testament, these characteristics including *"charis"* and *"eleos" [Gk.]* (*"gratia"* and *"misericordia" [Lat.]*, i.e. graciousness and mercy of God), are fully revealed in Jesus Christ: the very Word of God made flesh, Grace Incarnate.[8] Jesus shares with us our humanity, heals and liberates us from sin, and invites us to be whole and holy. Grace, therefore, is not a "thing," but a Person—Jesus Christ—God's very self-communication to us.

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[7]Stephen J. Duffy, "Our Hearts of Darkness: Original Sin Revisited," *Theological Studies* 49 (1988): 616.

[8]Stephen J. Duffy, The Dynamics of Grace: *Perspectives in Theological Anthropology* (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1993), 18-ff.

Among the many images of Grace, I propose the image of "Healing Grace" as hope-giving for the SA survivor. This calls to mind the healing (forgiving) of the adulterous woman, where Jesus says "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin any more" (Jn 8:11). This unconditional grace of forgiveness given by Jesus embraces the shame and secrecy of the SA survivor, even before they ask for it. On the other hand, the "two-stage" healing of the blind man of Bethsaida (Mk 8:22-26) also gives hope to the SA perpetrator who, because of psychology and negative habits, may need to be reminded of the patience of Jesus who emphasizes the process more than the result.

Awakening to Healing Grace

The experience of sexual abuse itself can seem to be a barrier of Grace. Some survivors of SA turn their anger towards God, and doubt His goodness: *"Is He a 'sadistic' God who continues to create even though he knows that we will only be hurt by the problems of the world?"* I think this is a question marred by one's woundedness of faith, and should not be answered immediately. One who ministers should exhibit deep empathy by means of accompanying the SA survivor throughout the questioning process. This accompaniment is patterned after the intimacy of God with creation, most eloquently shown in the Incarnation, and consequently, in the Paschal Mystery of the Trinity.

In the **Incarnation**, we believe that the Divine Logos out of sheer love for the Father, and in perfect union with the Spirit, *became flesh and made his dwelling among us* (Jn 1:14). He took on human nature in the lowliest of human conditions (Lk 2:6-7) so that thus we might know God's love, and thus become partakers of the divine nature (*CCC* 458, 460). **Jesus of Nazareth**, lived among us, ministered to the poor, healed

the sick, gave hope to the hopeless. He revealed his intimate relationship with God as "Abba," Father (Mk. 14:36) and sent the Spirit of Truth to lead us into all truth (Jn 16:13). And his words and deeds—culminating in his passion, death, and resurrection—pointed to and actualized the Kingdom of God on earth, to which we are called sons and daughters (Jn 1:12).

When the accompaniment of an SA survivor is patterned after the loving intimacy of God to humanity as seen in the mystery of the Incarnation, it is very possible that the person would slowly take down their guard and awaken to Healing Grace. Most often, it only takes *one* unconditional, accepting, and healthy friendship for an SA survivor to open up their secret wounds. This is the power of the Kingdom of God—as it is "already but not yet"—it breaks the walls of secrecy and shame, and grants to the person that glimmer hope that healing and forgiveness is possible.

Another powerful symbol and source of strength for SA survivors is the crucifix: the symbol of the divine act of forgiveness done by Christ on the cross. Jesus, who was totally obedient to the will of the Father, was led to die the most shameful of deaths. By intimately uniting themselves with the **Paschal Mystery** (suffering, death, and resurrection) of Christ, the SA survivor's suffering is not meaningless. Christ's **suffering** transforms their subjective suffering into an opportunity for self-sacrificing love. Suddenly, it is not anymore a question of *"Why me?"* but an overwhelming realization of *"For me!"— if I suffered, Jesus suffered for me first!*

This Paschal Mystery continues into Christ's **death** or *descent into hell*, which according to Hans Urs von Balthasar

is the pinnacle of the Trinity's self-revelation in history.[9] Our God is one who chooses to suffer with us, not only by undergoing physical death, but also spiritual death–that of being made to be sin (2 Cor. 5:21). As the Divine **Son** unites himself with sin, he suffers and becomes totally estranged from the Father. The **Father**, out of his intimate relationship with the Son, shares in this suffering of longing for the Son. And like a divine dance, the **Holy Spirit** unites both of them in Divine Love, proving its power over sin and death, and rendering sin ultimately powerless to separate man from God. This **Trinitarian** intimacy even unto death can surely give hope to the SA survivor that even in the most unimaginable sufferings, God is present.

But death never has the final say. Therefore, as we unite ourselves with Christ's suffering and death, we are also united with him in the **Resurrection**. By His death, Christ liberates us from sin; by his resurrection, he opens for us the way to a new life: a life that reinstates us in God's grace (*CCC* 654). Our dignity is restored and our goodness is affirmed. When an SA survivor finally realizes this empowering love of the Resurrection, they instantly recognize their worth as children of a God who is steadfast, merciful, and just. This overflowing love is then translated into mission, which gives the SA survivor hope to co-operate with Grace, and break the vicious cycle of evil.

Deepening of Healing Grace

These initial moments of hope deepen when the SA survivor is embraced into a loving community of service, the

[9]Lyra Pitstick, *Christ's Descent into Hell: John Paul II, Joseph Ratzinger, and Hans Urs von Balthasar on Theology of Holy Saturday* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 5.

Church. Unfortunately, because of the growing mistrust in religious institutions due to her human fault of perpetrating this kind of abuse,[10] there is also difficulty in presenting the Church as a safe space for SA survivors.

Among the Trinitarian images of the Church, I would like to suggest emphasizing her as *Temple of the Holy Spirit*. We may present the Church as *People of God*, but this may connote authority and rigidity. We may also present the Church as *Body of Christ*, but this may subject them to judging their own bodies as "defiled and unworthy." Highlighting the empowering, permeating and unifying presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church affirms the sacredness of the Temple where God dwells, and the dignity of their bodies as "temples of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19). It also declares that God dwells in them, as well as in their very *perpetrators*. This gives hope that someday forgiveness may even be possible.

Presenting the Church as *Temple of the Holy Spirit* may, however, connote a "faceless" and impersonal church. But to this, Pope Francis says that the church needs nearness and proximity; much like a *field hospital* after battle. In a 2013 interview, the Pope emphasizes that we cannot lock ourselves up in small things and small-minded rules, instead:

> "The church's ministers must be merciful, take responsibility for the people and accompany them like

[10]Tim Sullivan (AP), "Why is no Priest Ever Convicted of Child Abuse in Philippines?" *Gulf Press,* 09 September 2019, accessed 13 February 2023, https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/philippines/why-is-no-priest-ever-convicted-of-child-abuse-in-philippines-1.1568030082665.

> the good Samaritan, who washes, cleans and raises up his neighbor. This is pure Gospel. God is greater than sin."[11]

We cannot, however, turn a blind eye to the abuse of power and scandals of her members in terms of SA. In 2018, Pope Francis acknowledges the wounds of those who suffered, and forcefully condemns the perpetrators:

If, in the past, the response was one of omission, today we want *solidarity*, in the deepest and most challenging sense, to become our way of forging present and future history *(emphasis mine)*."[12]

This solidarity is most eloquently seen in the **Eucharist**, which is the efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the People of God by which the Church is kept in being (*CCC* 1325). In the Holy Communion, we unite ourselves with Christ's offering of his body and blood to the Father, and we receive this *bread of angels*, *bread from heaven*, and *medicine of immortality.*[13] Unfortunately, sometimes these same "communicants" and "church-goers" are the first to make SA survivors feel "unworthy" and "ostracized." Thomas O'Loughlin criticizes this as he develops his Theology of the Eucharist as a "sharing in *one* cup." He says that all Institution narratives which contain Jesus' *gestures* (instead of words), emphasize that "He took

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[11]Antonio Spadaro, SJ, "A Big Heart Open to God: An interview with Pope Francis," *America Magazine,* 30 September 2013, accessed 2 March 2023, https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis.

[12]Pope Francis, *Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to the People of God,* Documents, 20 August 2018, accessed 19 February 2023, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2018/documents/papa-francesco_20180820_lettera-popolo-didio.html.

[13]St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Eph*. 20, 2: *SCh* 10, 76, as quoted in CCC 1331.

a / *the* cup."[14] Drinking from *one* cup was counter-cultural, because then "the wealthy would have shared it with the poor, benefactors with clients, slaves with owners."[15] This, he says, was the contention of Paul when he admonished the Corinthians: "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and also the cup of demons" (1 Cor. 10:21). These unifying actions had *ethical* consequences which identified Christian discipleship. Therefore, each time we partake of the Eucharist, we are bound to be in solidarity with everyone—SA survivor, or otherwise—and we acknowledge that we *all* need Healing Grace to make us whole as persons, and as a Church.

Conclusion: Healing Grace and Hope

Today, as I complete my theological studies and continue on the path of formation to the ministerial priesthood, I am grateful for the journey of healing and wholeness that has characterized my years in formation. I have come to truly experience Healing Grace as real and at work in me as one who has suffered from sexual abuse. It was a traumatic childhood experience, which I was able to talk about openly only when I was in college. The overwhelming shame from SA resulted in my image of God who "loved me only if I had done something right"—to which nothing seemed to make the cut. The overwhelming experience of this evil "greater than me" threw me into a vicious cycle of addictions and unhealthy patterns from which I needed to be saved.

I was awakened to God's healing grace slowly but constantly all throughout my life. Loving people: family, friends and

[14]Matthew 26:20-29; Mark 14:17-25; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25.

[15]Thomas O'Loughlin, *The Furrow,* vol. 68, no. 2, "We Drink from One Cup – Towards a Theology of the Eucharist," 2 February 2017, 74.

formators, have accompanied me and simply allowed me to let down the walls of shame in my heart. The more I opened up, the more I was healed. This healing grace deepened as I served as youth minister and community leader. This gave me a chance to prudently share and write about my SA story in witness to God's healing grace in my life—and almost always, someone would come up and say: *"It happened to me too. Thank you for giving me hope."* My personal experience of the Paschal Mystery continues up to now, as I continue to experience this "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7) in the daily crosses of discipleship (Mat. 16:24). But this experience remains imperfect and incomplete if they are not united with Christ's once and for all sacrifice, sacramentally offered in the Eucharist, of which I strive to participate in daily, with people who are also broken and in need of healing.

Indeed, *spe salvi sumus*, "In hope we are saved" (Rom. 8:24). Our ministry to SA survivors does not come from our ability to listen, teach, or accompany, but it flows from Jesus Christ our savior who is Healing Grace himself, real and at work even in our deepest brokenness. United with the Father, and in the Holy Spirit, He is always present and active despite our negative experiences (be it sexual abuse or other patterns of sin). To Jesus we ought to cling and offer our lives, he who bore the punishment that makes us whole, [for] by his wounds we [are] healed (Is. 53:5).

IN THE REALM OF SILENCE, I LONG FOR THE MISSING

Tran, Tuyet Trinh

Introduction

The other day, as I was thinking about the topic for my synthesis paper, the first thing that came to my mind was the song "Sound of Silence" written by Paul Simon.

"Hello darkness, my old friend
I've come to talk with you again
Because a vision softly creeping
Left its seeds while I was sleeping
And the vision that was planted in my brain
Still remains"

As the melody started to play in my mind, I thought, what was so special about silence that I felt as if I was spelled by its charm? I fell in love with it. Silence. Is it a dead valley of sound or a deep well that hides ancient wisdom whose existence has been long forgotten, I wonder? And in listening to this sound of silence, whether or not I was able to touch the treasure that it's hiding – "*a vision softly creeping, left its seeds while I was sleeping…*"

Wandering with that thought, I slowly followed the path of silence, which led me to Beethoven – a giant figure of musical talent. He is one of my favourite composers – a tragic genius who struggled with deafness during the last 10 years of his life. Those years were the most challenging time for Beethoven, but it was also those very years that brought him to the apex of his career. In the midst of this trial, he was able

to summon his creative intuition from the depth of silence, as he composed his best masterpieces. I wonder how he trained himself to get familiar with the sound of silence from which he was able to draw the sweetest drops of honey even as he also tasted the bitterness of life. Encouraged by Beethoven, I thought, perhaps, I can also draw the most beautiful sound out of silence. I am not sure how I am going to make it happen. Yet, 'how' shall not be a matter for me now. I just have the desire to do so.

By the time I settled myself in the presence of silence, I was overwhelmed by its gravity. But strangely, this overwhelming somehow filled up the void within me, giving me a glimpse of wholeness – the thing that I have been looking for. Floating on the ocean of silence, I started longing for what was missing. And there, my voyage commenced.

"…Within the sound of silence
In restless dreams, I walked alone…"

The Missing Truth

The flow of thought slowly brought me to a famous saying of Socrates, "I know that I know nothing." I somehow felt like him as I experienced this inadequacy. The more I learn, the more insufficient I find myself. I cannot exactly recall when I became aware of my thirst for knowing and for truth, triggering my curiosity and desire to know all that there is. I asked many questions but the answers that I received did not really quench my thirst. There was always this sense of inadequacy that continued to disturb me - not necessarily because of the incompetence of those who answered me - but because of something else. I tried to ignore this restlessness but could not.

To calm this thirst for knowing, I cannot but sink myself into the unknown and the missing, longing for the more and the greater. The unknown pertains to the things waiting to be discovered but yet to be discovered or cannot be discovered because they are hidden in the realm of mystery. The missing, on the other hand, is the one that has been discovered, albeit only in part, so that one remains restless from within. W. Norris Clarke was on point in saying that one hardly finds oneself at ease with conclusions merely from the authority of someone else without subjecting whatever one perceives to the critical test of one's own intelligence and experience. One cannot easily take the truth of things for granted. Yearning for the greater, one is not satisfied by mere fragments of truth. If it's not the whole, one remains restless and continues to look for that eternal spring. One would keep asking: What is the truth?

Encountering difficulties in defining the term and its essence, one might be tempted to take on the notion of relativism, insisting that there is no absolute truth but different truth-values varied by context. This notion of relativism has been there since ancient times, as we see in a typical statement of the Sophists who claimed that "man is the measure of all things". This reflects the belief that truth depends on one's subjectivity and contexts, denying the possibility of a single truth shared by all. On the one hand, the Sophists might have a point in asserting a relative approach towards truth, acknowledging the diversity and richness to be found in human experiences. This approach, to some extent, allows further insights to emerge and enrich the human understanding of what is true. On the other hand, Truth – understood as the greatest Truth - is not relative. What is relative is only our perception and interpretation. If Truth is going to be modified by a subjective point of view, Truth will no longer

be itself but something else – a fiction, probably - that people make up like a strawman to serve a particular purpose. By fiction, I mean Yuval Noah Harari's concept of imagined reality - a product of imagination that allows people "to weave common myths," like the nationalist myths of righteous war and different types of truth that there is. Though an imagined reality, myths such as these can seem frigtheningly real and powerful, as long as people continue to believe the fiction[1]. Truth, however, is irreducible, being neither a fiction nor a tool that one might manipulate to serve personal interest. Truth remains be free to be itself, independent from human subjectivity and propositions.

How, then, can I know what is true and what is not true? According to Heraclitus, humankind cannot perceive the absolute truth because they only see the seeming, not the truth itself. There is no exception in this seeming, he insisted. Even the most esteemed people "ascertain and hold fast" to this seeming.[2] If that is the case, even the way Heraclitus perceives the seeming is also a semblance. More importantly, there is no way that genuine truth or knowledge can be attained. That would be bad news for those who love truth as much as their lives. Is Truth a mere illusion of human desire that we seek in vain? Perhaps, as one asks this question, one might feel like throwing the quest into the deep valley of silence. Faced with inadequacies in intellectual perception and linguistic expression, one becomes aware of one's poverty and helplessness in reaching one's goal. Nevertheless, this awareness need not

[1]Yuval Harari, "The Tree of Knowledge." in *Sapiens: A Brief History of Mankind* (New York, Harper Perennial, 2015), 23 – 39.

[2]John Burnet, Arthur Fairbanks and Kathleen Freeman (trans.) "Fragments by Heraclitus," *Antilogicalism,* accessed January 28, 2023, https://antilogicalism.files.wordpress.com/2016/12/heraclitus_fragments_final.pdf, DK B28, 4.

prevent one from pursuing Truth. One might not be able to achieve the Truth *per se*, yet thanks to the inexhaustible desire to know all that there is, one has the hope to go beyond and have some foretaste of this Truth in the reality as a whole, at least by way of one's intention and desire.

Moreover, the reality is that the world in which one lives carries within it the multi-folding of the true and the untrue - a haven of mysteries and riddles that one sooner or later might encounter. Determining the "gray area" is the most confusing. Or perhaps, there really is no black, white or "gray area" because the separation might only exist in the human mind. In other words, there is nothing that can be considered as "true" or "untrue" in "Truth" itself. This reminds me of a saying from Fr. James V. Schall who restated Plato's point of view about Truth, saying that "the whole truth includes a knowledge of what is not true and all error is based on certain truth". In light of this, everything is worth considering, even the ideas that seem most erroneous and ridiculous. All are fragments of Truth, offering a glimpse of Truth. Whether or not one can sort out the gold among stones would be another question. Perhaps, with a sharp eye to see through, an undivided mind to perceive, and a pure heart to conceive, one would be able to find the gem that one is looking for.

Yet, what does one look for as one longs for truth? On the one hand, Truth has such a beauty that attracts one's attention, urging one to reach out of one's castle to know all that there is. This desire to know more, on the other hand, might generate a temptation to possess Truth *by all means*. Thus going further in this quest of truth, one might be tempted to satisfy one's desire of knowing rather than seeking for the Truth itself, only to find out in the end that what one has been looking for was a mere satisfaction of one's egoism. To follow

this path is to deceive oneself with a mere illusion of Truth and to get involved in "endless crusades" to fight for Truth and justice. Yet Truth does not depend on the seeker for its survival or demise.

There are also those who might search for Truth for the sake of freedom as it is said: "the truth will set you free" (Jn 8:32). A desire for freedom is one of the distinctive traits of human beings. Yet not all truths can liberate human beings. Truth does not always generate liberty. In fact, it can at times be so painful to the point that one chooses to deny or ignore it. To stay in the comfort of lies can feel much better than to be tortured by the light of truth. Plato's allegory of the cave well illustrates how people can perceive truth as a burden or even a threat. If it is so, would one act in accordance with the truth that one perceives or shall one consider the cost that one might pay before acting? To betray the Truth and to act against one's conscience, a person is likely to be imprisoned by the feeling of guilt – with or without one's awareness.

Moreover, since the incomplete leaves one restless, one might long for truth only for the sake of peace and wholeness. Thus, given the development of technology and science, many people tend to trust and rely merely on scientific truth - the knowledge of the mind, taking it to be the only source of true knowledge, whereas there are many types of knowledge that cannot be proven by evidence or experiment alone. It also seems easier for one to obtain head knowledge by spending time on studying and researching. The knowledge of the heart, in contrast, requires one to ponder and live it. It might even be the kind of knowledge that one just "knows," without being able to explain how one knows what one knows. It is not the kind of knowledge that can be proven and validated by facts and evidence either, but is sometimes perceived as

mystical intuition or "personal revelation". The knowledge of the body, on the other hand, is the knowledge that is generated from body memory that we can find in many athletes who can perfectly perform difficult movements. Although they might not be able to explain how they do it, their knowledge of the body is not invalidated because of that. There are even more types of knowledge that people have not discovered yet, but all these kinds of knowledge have their own place in contributing to the greater understanding of human beings - from which genuine truth can be obtained. To forsake any of them is to frustrate the longing for the missing truth.

From the depths of silence, however, one would not be easily satisfied by earthly truth to be revealed in the realms of reason, of senses, and of emotion. One longs for something more than the visible and the finite. One looks beyond and sails further into the land of mystery that cannot be seen through the eyes of the flesh but through faith – one descends to the realm of the infinite. There, one finds one's soulmate – the One – through whom the greater truth is revealed. By way of intimacy with the One, a person encounters a different type of knowledge that one cannot perceive by the power of the intellect nor explain by the cleverness of reason. These I call religious experiences. However, for those who believe in the absolute power of reason, one may wish to argue whether religious experiences or faith is a kind of knowledge. If one is going to use Gettier's justified true belief (JTB)[3] to judge, one would doubt the authenticity of faith. JTB model is a helpful outline; nevertheless, it is not an absolute standard – a "one-size-fits-all" model that can adequately define knowledge or perfectly determine the authenticity of knowledge.

[3]Gettier's justified true belief (JTB) is a traditional analysis of knowledge. If a belief can prove to be true with good reasons and well justification, that belief is considered as knowledge.

There are certain beliefs that can satisfy JTB's criteria but cannot be considered true knowledge and there is genuine knowledge that does not meet its criteria. Religious belief belongs to the latter. It is not a kind of knowledge justified by reason nor achieved by effort in learning but through the depth of relationship and intimacy with the One. In addition, it is not the kind of knowledge that is reserved only for the elite or the intelligent but is open to anyone who will allow oneself to be sunk in the ocean of mystery and be embraced in the light and wisdom of the One. In this process of encounter, one cannot rely on oneself but wait for the knowledge to be revealed and unveiled.

The Missing Identity

In searching for Truth, one is not merely searching for the reality from "without" but also the reality from "within" – one asks the question Who am I? What makes me … "me"?

When I was a child, I was not troubled so much by these questions. I was satisfied with answers like, "I am a child of Mr. A and Mrs. B, I am a student, I am a Catholic, I am Vietnamese, etc. Yet, when I grew a little bit older, I started to wonder what if I change my religion, my nationality, my career, my living environment…Would that change my identity as well? Would that mean that I am no longer "me"? If this identity of mine fluctuates and varies, it would seem impossible for me to establish any solid ground to anchor myself. And that thought irritated me.

Even though uncertainty is a very common experience that humankind shares, it is not an experience that leaves one at ease. I think Descartes can understand quite well this feeling of restlessness that uncertainty brings up. For him, everything has the potential of being an illusion, except for the *Cogito* that he arrives at – "I think, therefore I am." But I might take that

challenge further to the point that if everything is capable of deception, the thought that "I think, therefore I am" might submit itself to the same risk. In other words, the act of thinking is not self-evident. Descartes, perhaps, might wish to wonder if his claim of the Cogito is made in a dream or in real life. In describing this fluctuating condition, Heraclitus put it in a different direction, focusing more on the changing nature of the universe rather than its potential of deception. He insisted that the universe, including human beings, is in constant flux. Everything is subjected to change. Therefore, "one cannot step into the same river twice." In this sense, it would be no surprise if one's identity is mutable and wavering. However, even though a human person and his identity can be changed, it is essential that one find a ground in which to root one's being - from which one's being can grow and manifest. That I refer to as the essence – the core of one's identity.

In terms of essence, Jean-Paul Sartre insisted that existence precedes essence and there is no pre-given human nature or intrinsic universal design for all human beings. It is the human person who is responsible for creating one's own identity and essence. Sartre, for sure, is not a fan of predestiny. Instead of offering one's fate to be willed by someone else, he preferred to hold it in his own hand, taking responsibility for his own life. He believed that one is free to "behave like a fool or a machine" and no authority can impose any moral guideline or code upon another. Rather, such is left to the individual moral agent who exercises one's own freedom in defining and shaping one's own life. However, this freedom does not seem to be a good thing. It is experienced as "an anguish of freedom", according to Sartre himself. This anguish summons the image of a child abandoned by its creator, living and walking its earthly journey alone. Is it true, I asked myself many times?

Wandering with the thought, I looked at the plants on the balcony. While enjoying the beautiful greenery and admiring the intricate design of a leaf's veins, I wondered if a plant without a seed can exist and thrive. And having no essence, from which base is one going to create one's own? Can one create something out of nothing? I think that is hardly the case unless one is the Creator, i.e. the First Cause. Hence, instead of nothingness, I tend to perceive human essence as seeds given to each one of us – a quality that is inseparable from our existence.

Human essence might not appear fully as how it is supposed to be, yet it does not mean that we are born with no essence. These seeds carry within themselves the potential to be manifested along the journey of seeking for the true Self. Yet, one might argue that a seed has no freedom to choose where it is planted. If one's essence is perceived as a seed, does it indicate that the person has no freedom from the beginning? I shall reply that it is true that a seed cannot choose where to grow, yet this does not mean a seed has no choice to will its life. It can will to either accept the given and make the most out of it or reject and give it up. In the same manner, one is free to either embrace or reject these gifts of the essence by making choices in life. Being born from the heart of the intellect, the will does not limit itself to the finite, limited, and particular good. Its object is the Good-lacking-in-nothing. Under the act of the will, one is free to choose what is good for oneself. And this good, subjectively formed in the intellect, however, appears to be an impediment to the search for the greatest Good pursued by the will. On the other hand, the freedom, lying at the heart of the will, can grant one with decision-making power to achieve one's subjective good but not the greatest Good. One can, for example, decide to stop living in a toxic environment or stop associating with toxic

relationships that prevent one from living one's true identity. One, therefore, is still free to design one's own life.

Furthermore, in growing a tree, besides watering and fertilizing, trimming is an essential task that keeps the tree healthy and makes sure that it would bear fruit abundantly. By the act of trimming unhealthy branches, water and nutrition is not wasted but directed to healthy ones. In the same manner, one also needs to be trimmed so that one is in a good state to develop one's essence. Yet, how does one determine what needs to be kept and what needs to be trimmed in oneself? While the essence acts as the root of one's being hidden under the soil, identity is the manifestation of the essence visualized through the shapes and components of a tree. However, as I discussed above, the key elements of one's identity are not biological characteristics and external properties but an internal force that roots itself from the essence – that I call the Self.

In terms of the Self, it is usually divided into two types – the false Self and the true Self. The false Self, also known as the idealized Self or the Ego, is the identity that one thinks one is, being mentally and socially constructed through interaction with living environments. In Buddhist teachings of the Anatta, the Ego is the imaginary Self characterized as one's false belief about who one is. It is the root of selfishness, distorted attachment, pride, egoism, and so forth. One who indulges the Ego is also tempted to indulge pride, the root of all evil. The false Self is what needs to be trimmed.

In Vietnamese, pride is also translated as *lòng tự ái* which means "the love for oneself." Instead of a healthy love for oneself, *lòng tự ái* is more about narcissism rooted in the illusion that one is the best. When ruled by *lòng tự ái*, one easily gets upset whenever people say or do something that does not go with one's wishes. We talk about pride and the

Ego as twins, being inseparable and supporting the growth of one another. The greater the Ego, the higher the pride. And sadly, one who is blinded by pride will soon forget from whom all things spring forth. In Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna reminded Arjuna of this very truth, "I am the source of all; from Me, everything flows. Therefore, the wise worship Me with unchanging devotion…. I am the beginning and the life, and I am the end of them all."[4] Those who make themselves the center of living and deny the role of the One let the fire of pride take control of themselves and will sooner or later be consumed by the same fire that they set. The destruction of pride, moreover, does not stop at hiding one from its true Self. It also prevents one from growing. If one finds oneself as the best, one has no wish to learn new things. If one is adequate, one refuses to long for the missing. Pride, in this sense, brings about the death of the being. And unfortunately, once toxified by the venom of pride, the person is no longer able to realize its destructive side, "…misled by pride, thou wilt not listen, then indeed thou shalt be lost…."[5]

And yet, pride is not the only problem of the false Self. There is another thing generated from the false Self that destroys the being even more – the masking. On the one hand, the Ego, because of pride, loves to be pleased. Masking, on the other hand, strives to please people so that one is loved and accepted. Yet the one whom the Ego desires to please the most is itself. For the sake of respect and approval, the pseudo self is urged to mask oneself with an identity that is favored by people – a devoted Christian, a caring friend, a

[4]Shri Purohit Swami (trans.), "The Bhagavad Gita," *Holy Books*, accessed January 28, 2023, https://www.holybooks.com/wp-content/uploads/The-Bhagavad-Gita-Translation-by-Shri-Purohit-Swami.pdf, 27-28.

[5]"The Bhagavad Gita," 50.

friendly priest, a dedicated sister, and so forth. In accordance with one's wishes, the false Self creates a collection of masks that one can put on in varied contexts. Living a life that is no different from a "fashion show" where people make an effort to be special and standout from the crowd. Sadly, though the false self might seem to achieve what it desires, it struggles, at the same time, with the restlessness of living a fake life. One is burnt out to be "on stage" most of the time, putting on someone else's face but not one's own. The enjoyment of praise, admiration, and flattery will soon become tiresome and meaningless. Once the person starts masking oneself, one finds an obligation to put on a mask whenever people are watching. One becomes imprisoned in one's own masks.

The mask, from a quick glance, is not bad and evil. They can be beautiful masks associated with virtues and characteristics that human beings pursue. Some might ask what is wrong with these beautiful masks if they help one to become a virtuous person. I then reply, there is a difference between one who tries to practice virtues and one who masks oneself as a virtuous person. Motivation distinguishes the two. While the former is driven by a true love of virtues, the latter is triggered by the desire to be loved and accepted. More importantly, the problem with masking lies in the authenticity that it violates - one claims something that is not part of one's reality. Wearing masks, in this sense, is lying and betraying one's being. And I wonder if there is any experience as agonizing as the pain caused by self-deception and self-betrayal. Of the many people one can lie to and betray, it is oneself that one would want to lie to and betray last. Regardless of its fancy appearance, masking is an excruciating experience for any human person. The longer one puts it on, the more painful it is to remove the mask.

While reflecting on the Self, I suddenly thought about death. I wonder how long one's life might be to play around with vanity, fame, and the like. If one day death comes as a surprise, would one regret the past of wasting time to live a fake life? And because of this, would the "I" of the present hate the "I" of the past, stirring up one's peace with a sense of self-hatred and resentment? Perhaps, one who is wearing a mask once tried to live a life in one's bare skin. Unfortunately, one quickly learned that people did not welcome and even rejected this "true color". This painful experience remained and became sealed in the phantom of the Ego, establishing a whole lot of defense mechanisms and masks collection for the sake of survival. In this light, the Ego is not always one's enemy. It is thanks to the Ego that one survives. For survival, it triggers the defense mechanism to protect us from the painful reality that one, at that point, cannot accept yet. However, in order to protect us from a truth that we cannot accept, it consequently also deceives us a lot.

On the one hand, one cannot pursue an ethical life and be happy being a liar, not only to others but especially to oneself. To live such a deceitful life, one prevents oneself from being loved as who one is and achieving true happiness. On the other hand, the false Self or the Ego can be one's friend if one can eventually detach from its illusion. Lord Krishna said, "to him who has conquered his lower nature by Its help, the Self is a friend, but to him who has not done so, It is an enemy."[6] Let us hope that there will be a time that the Ego renounces the stage and allows the true Self to emerge and guide the person.

The true Self, from first sight, is the opposite of the false Self. While the false Self appears as strong, the true Self is a vulnerable Self, hiding its true beauty behind tenderness and fragility. Yet, vulnerability is not a sign of weakness but

[6]"The Bhagavad Gita," 17.

courage. It is only with the grace of courage that one exposes one's vulnerability to other beings. With love and resilience, the true Self will grow to its fullest capacity to be able to generate authenticity and wisdom to direct one's life. This true Self, in the teachings of Buddha, is the "well-subdued" self - "the lord of the self" that only a few can find[7]. This victory over the false Self is achieved by renouncing self-centered desires that make one selfish, arrogant, biased, proud, and ill-willed. The realization of the true Self cannot be attained unless one is able to overcome attachment to pleasure and power.

Where can we start, one might ask? For me, I believe in the statement that every change starts with awareness. Awareness can be achieved either by listening to the wisdom of other people or by self-reflection. To achieve self-awareness, Hinduism teaches one to pay attention to oneself in the act of meditation through the spiritual wisdom of yoga, spending time to reflect and examine one's life. Sharing the same thought, Socrates also emphasized the importance of reflection for the growth of the human being, "life without reflection is not worth living". Among the two, self-awareness is essential for change to happen. In many cases, words of wisdom and enlightenment do not work. If one cannot be aware of the masks that one is wearing, one finds no need to remove them. However, if one allows the light of reflection to guide oneself, one is able to experience a moment of awakening. One then has a good starting point for transformation.

Yet, for one who has been through the painful experience of being rejected to remain resiliently wearing one's bare skin, it is not an easy thing to do. However, may one find consolation in what Lord Shri Krishna said to Arjuna:

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[7]E.A. Burtt, *The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha* (New York: The New American Library, 1995), 60.

"Those external relations which bring cold and heat, pain and happiness, they come and go; they are not permanent. Endure them bravely…. be steady in truth, free from worldly anxieties and centered in the Self."[8] Trials will come and go; they are not there forever. And for those who manage to walk through it, they grow and thrive beautifully as plants after the rain. Injuries and damages are inevitable but by looking at one's scars, one knows how courageous one is in battle. Slowly walking through this tunnel of darkness, one will realize, "the wound is the place where the Light enters."[9] While earthly things can be discouraging, one is encouraged to keep one's gaze not only to the Self but to the One whom one loves and from whom one may draw strength.

To live an authentic life does not always equate with a joyful and pleasant life. It is always easier to wear masks. We can observe this phenomenon in social media platforms. In the cyber world, one can create any kind of identity that one believes will be well-accepted. One can slowly get addicted to virtual living, perhaps to the point when one cannot anymore distinguish between what is real and what is fake. Consequently, one later forsakes one's "real skin". Having no wish to leave "the stage" where one is the lead act, one becomes hooked to people's attention, admiration, love, applause, etc. _ things that one seems to lack when simply being one's true self. Moreover, a world full of liars would not make it easy for those who love truth and want to live truly. It is an ongoing battle and one can foresee its fierceness. In facing both the temptation of an easy life and the challenge of a true life, one might still doubt if it is possible to fight for an authentic life.

[8]"The Bhagavad Gita," 8-10.

[9]This is a statement made by Rumi - an 13th-century Persian poet.

Nonetheless, as Rumi said, "You are not a drop in the ocean; you are the entire ocean in a drop". The human essence is not something that can be destroyed by all these forces. Its reality is shared in the living of the One – the Divine. Therefore, as long as one does not cease seeking for one's true Self, there will be a time that one can find the way to the ocean where one encounters one's finest essence as the ultimate identity of one's being –the reality – the Atman. And even if one cannot wait until one meets one's reality, one soon realizes that one is already there, at least by one's desire and hope to be there.

In living an authentic life, one might recognize that there is a common point shared by authenticity, humility, and wisdom, springing forth from the act of knowing oneself. It is the wise self who knows who one is, achieving a proper proposition of the human condition. By accepting both light and darkness in oneself, one perceives oneself as neither superior nor inferior to others. Similarly, humility is to know oneself and be grateful for the gifts one has been given. And how can one know oneself without living authentically? The one who lives truly and sincerely, wearing no mask, suffering no vanity, practices wisdom par excellence. Max Scheller used to associate humility as a virtue of the rich; whereas, pride belongs to the poor. As soon as one is aware of one's non-deserving condition, one is then given all that there is. Adoring the depth of humility, one touches the heart of the Self and allows it to enlighten and enrich the being. Furthermore, humility is not to be found merely in gratitude for all that has-been-given but also in acceptance of all that has-not-been-given that makes one remain imperfect and limited. In facing one's limitations and vulnerabilities, one keeps longing for the more, the missing, inspiring a movement of boldness, of courage.

Last but not least, God created humankind among other beings. To be born and to exist is to be in a relationship, firstly with ourselves, our parents, relatives, then friends, the environment, and other creatures that this universe embraces. We are more or less interconnected and it is beyond our will to choose to be in a relationship or not. Hence, one's identity is not defined independently by self-awareness but in relation to others. As the concept of Ubuntu puts it, "a person is a person through other persons". Though self-awareness is found in the very structure of the soul, this knowledge is best brought out by knowing other beings. In the search for the "I" or one's "whoness," the intellect, as the mirror of things, reflects its act and reality, seeing itself in others. On the one hand, this knowledge of the "I" is enhanced through the free act of will, perceiving itself as the cause of whatever might result from its autonomy, for it is one's will through which the person claims responsibility for the "I". On the other hand, one cannot perceive the wholeness of the "I" outside the context of "the others," the "we." In seeking for one's identity, therefore, one is also seeking for the "wholeness" of the "we" – the belonging. In this light, for one to live truthfully, one will need support from the community to see the "I" within "the others." Moreover, it is also important that the person feels safe to live an authentic life by knowing that one is not judged and condemned for being one's true self but instead, encouraged to actualize one's potentials and overcome given shortcomings. In seeking for our identity – our whoness, let us accompany one other, becoming light and inspiration for others through our authentic life.

Conclusion

One who longs for the missing usually struggles with a state of restlessness, desiring something more than what is given and

available. Yet, this restlessness need not be an obstruction for one to enjoy and appreciate the gift of life. As the saying goes, "you cannot wait until life isn't hard anymore before you decide to be happy." Neither shall I wait until I feel complete inside to live fully. Happiness is something that I decide to do for myself. Happiness is not generated only if wholeness is achieved. To live fully without abandoning my longing for the missing is a way that I express my gratitude towards life and practice the virtue of humility towards the mysteries hidden in the missing. At the end of the day, regardless of how much one possesses in life, one never ceases to be a being of longing. This feeling of restlessness would never cease until "it rests in Thee."

I would like to end my paper with a statement made by one of my philosophy professors and he said: "You will forget what you learn and you learn so that you can forget." There is something interesting and profound in what he said. It is easy to realize that one's memory will fade as time goes by. However, when I thought of the second part of his statement, I could not understand what he meant. While wandering with the thought, I was reminded of the story of a guru who asked his disciple to go to the river to take the water and fill some vases in the house. However, the guru gave the disciple a basket with holes in it. Thus, the water could not be kept in the basket but leaked out. By the time the disciple reached the house, the water was all gone. The disciple got angry at his master, being asked to do a non-sense thing. It was a waste of time and energy, thought the disciple. Later, the guru said that what the disciple did was not useless at all. Thanks to what he did, the dirty basket now became clean. The water that leaked through the holes also brought with it the dirt. And thanks to the leaked water, sideroad flowers now bloomed beautifully. The disciple who focused too much on his work and anger could not see this until the guru showed him.

But then, one might ask, so what is the connection between the story and what my professor said? The dirty basket with holes is similar to the mind's limited capacity in perceiving reality. The mind is covered with dirt because of the ignorance and stubbornness that one refuses to let go of. As the water cleans the dirty basket, thanks to these holes, knowledge would act in the same way to purify one's mind. And that's the reason why one learns so that one can forget. Let us allow the power of knowledge and the flow of time to wipe away our stubbornness and the foolishness of the old days that clogs up our minds. Then, there will be spaces for new wisdom to emerge.

At the end of my reflection, I was tempted to ask the last question: Where did all this longing come from? I hesitated to dig any further into the nature of my longing. And I thought it might not be a good idea to do so in a rush. Hence, to respect the profound truth that the mind fails to capture and words fail to express, I might just dwell in it and let my longing for the missing grow as it wishes. And somewhere, a whisper keeps echoing, "…go to the limits of your longing…embody me…."[10]

In awe, once again, I am embraced by silence.

[10] *Go to the Limits of Your Longing* is a poem written by Rainer Maria Rike – a Bohemian-Australian poet and novelist.

CONTRIBUTORS

Rogel Anecito L. Abais SJ obtained his Baccalaureate and Licentiate in Sacred Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He worked on the figure of Wisdom for his licentiate tesina. He started his doctoral research also at the Gregorian but earned his Doctorate in Biblical Theology from the Loyola School of Theology in 2021. He currently teaches Wisdom Literature, Biblical Archaeology, and Italian for Research in LST.

Kenjie I. Cortez is a faculty member of the Department of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University. He is currently pursuing a PhD in Systematic Theology at the Loyola School of Theology. His research interests include Vatican II, PCP II, local Church, and Church of the Poor ecclesiology.

Eric Marcelo O. Genilo SJ earned his Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology at the Loyola School of Theology and his Master of Arts in Theological Studies at the Ateneo de Manila University. He earned his licentiate and doctoral degrees at Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He is a professor of moral theology in LST and a formator of diocesan seminarians at San Jose Seminary in Quezon City, Philippines.

Christiane Joseph C. Jocson is a seminarian of the Diocese of Kalookan. He completed his Bachelor of Arts Major in Philosophy in 2010, Master of Arts Major in Philosophy in 2012, and Doctor of Philosophy major in Philosophy in 2017

at the University of Santo Tomas, Manila. He obtained his Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology at the Loyola School of Theology in 2022. Currently, he is under the pre-diaconal program of the Diocese of Kalookan.

John Lemuel L. Lenon obtained his Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences from the Ateneo de Manila University in 2013. After spending a few years pursuing a degree in medicine, he shifted career paths and obtained a Master of Arts in Theological Studies in 2022 also from the Ateneo de Manila. Since then, he has continued to pursue further studies in Theology, currently enrolled as a PhD student in Systematic Theology. He also serves as a member of the Theology Department of the Loyola Schools, teaching Theology 12: The Theology of the Catholic Social Vision.

Gabriel Liu is a Jesuit Scholastic from China. He obtained his Certificate in Philosophy at the seminary in China. He is currently enrolled in the Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology program at the Loyola School of Theology.

Eduardo Miguel F. Ramirez is a seminarian of the Archdiocese of Manila. He obtained his Masters in Pastoral Ministry from the Ateneo de Manila University in 2022, and is currently finishing his Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology from Loyola School of Theology. He finished BS Secondary Education, Major in English in 2007, and served as a full-time lay missionary for the Light of Jesus Charismatic Community from 2009-2016. Migs writes more about his experiences in his book, "*Imagine This: Doodles to Draw out your Life Purpose*" (2015), available on FeastBooks.ph. He is currently under formation in San Jose Seminary, Quezon City.

Tran Tuyet Trinh, from Vietnam, is a temporarily professed sister of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM). She obtained her Diploma in Pre-Theology Studies from the Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University in 2022. She is currently pursuing further studies in Theology at the University of Divinity, Australia.