



# PHILIPPINE JOURNAL OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

The Journal of Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary

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From the Editor

**Dalamhati at Luwalhati: Kahalagahan ng Wika sa Theology**

Honorina Lacquian

Federico Villanueva

Responses to “Dalamhati at Luwalhati”

**Dalamhati at Luwalhati sa Kulturang Filipino at Bible**

Armando Canoy

**Malayo Pa Ang Umaga**

Michael Janapin

**Rhetoric of Remembrance in Job 29–30: A Reflection of Job’s Anthropomorphic Concept of God as a Means to Assuage Pain**

Myra Patrocenio

**Establishing “Mordor” in God’s Creation: Natural Disasters, Barth’s “Lordless Powers,” and Filipino Indigenous Beliefs**

Francis Jr. Samdao

**Locating Filipino Pastoral Care Perspectives: Bahala Na, Ecclesiastes, and Psychological Flexibility**

Fritz Gerald Melodi

**Muddy Footprints in the Ivory Tower: Missiological Reflections on Language and Localized Theology**

Robert Munson

**Banaag na ang Umaga: Pagtawid mula sa Dalamhati Patungong Luwalhati ng Pagteteolohiyang Filipino**

Honorina Lacquian

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## CONTENTS

From the Editor <i>Honorina Lacquian</i>	v
Dalamhati at Luwalhati: Kahalagahan ng Wika sa Theology <i>Federico Villanueva</i>	1
Response #1: Dalamhati at Luwalhati sa Kulturang Filipino at Bible <i>Armando Canoy</i>	19
Response #2: Malayo Pa Ang Umaga <i>Michael Janapin</i>	25
Rhetoric of Remembrance in Job 29–30: A Reflection of Job’s Anthropomorphic Concept of God as a Means to Assuage Pain <i>Myra Patrocinio</i>	31
Establishing “Mordor” in God’s Creation: Natural Disasters, Barth’s “Lordless Powers,” and Filipino Indigenous Beliefs <i>Francis Jr. Samdao</i>	43
Locating Filipino Pastoral Care Perspectives: Bahala Na, Ecclesiastes, and Psychological Flexibility <i>Fritz Gerald Melodi</i>	59
Muddy Footprints in the Ivory Tower: Missiological Reflections on Language and Localized Theology <i>Robert Munson</i>	75
Banaag na Ang Umaga: Pagtawid mula sa Dalamhati Patungong Luwalhati Ng Pagteholohiyang Filipino <i>Honorina Lacquian</i>	91
Supporting Institutions	107



## From the Editor

I was a Master of Divinity student when I last served as an Associate Editor for PBTS' *Philippine Journal of Religious Studies*. We had to arrange a symposium then with the topic on "Evil and Suffering." It was then my task to welcome some of the key speakers and participants at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport and bring them safely to Baguio and make sure that they felt comfortable throughout the journey. It was a difficult task because the flight we were about to get was cancelled because of the weather. I remember one of them was not feeling very well. I had to take them to an 8-hour-bus ride to Baguio.

As an associate editor, I consolidated materials written by different authors and make sure that they followed a unified format. The simplest task I did gave me a wonderful feeling of fulfillment. Dr. Graham B. Walker, Jr. led the project and I worked hand-in-hand with Mrs. Elizabeth Agwayaway as we both were assisting. At that time, I was dreaming of doing more and seeing more academic writings come out from PBTS. I thought that the task of doing theology should begin with us, using our own cultural lens and the richness of our own language.

I am a product of 50/50 theological work. As a student, I was trained by a faculty of which 50% were Americans and 50% Asians. It was a time of transitioning from majority American missionaries teaching and the movement towards Filipinized seminary leadership. It was a perfect timing for me to dream that in this seminary, Filipino theology will bloom. This dream is in progress towards fulfillment.

I am thankful for the coming of young innovative theologians who can join me in this journey. Dr. Francis Jr. Samdao, Dr. Fritz Melodi, and Dr. Czarina Sarmiento jumped in as we were given the assignment to host a symposium to celebrate the 70th year founding anniversary of PBTS. I am also thankful for Dr. Federico Villanueva who welcomed our invitation to make him the first and only speaker for this symposium. I thank the respondents: Dr. Armando Canoy, PBTS president and Dr. Michael Janapin, PBTS Academic Dean. I want to express gratitude to all writers who contributed to the scholarship of this journal. We are in this together.

I also appreciate those who graced our symposium with their presence: pastors, seminary and Bible School faculty, church workers, seminarians, and fellow theologians. I am indebted to the generous giving of those individuals who supported us financially to make this project a possibility. The day of symposium held on the 10th of October 2022 was considered a success.

I am grateful to Dr. Robert Munson, who generously accepted the challenge to become the Editor-in-Chief for this project. The result of such a wonderful moment of theological conversation becomes the reawakening of this Philippine Journal of Religious Studies. It is with great joy that I was given a chance to be a part of this momentous event. It is evident that theological thinking is done to benefit Filipino theology. There are articles written in English and some in Filipino. This is the beginning. I know this is God's dream for PBTS because this seminary is His and He is the one who wants to see theology continue to bloom where the Gospel is preached. The journey towards theological writing continues were I become a learner once again.

Honorina Lacquian  
*Associate Editor*

# DALAMHATI AT LUWALHATI

## Kahalagahan ng Wika sa Theology

Federico Villanueva

### Introduction

*Maong ya kabwasan ed sikayon amin.* Yan ang pagbati ng “magandang umaga sa inyong lahat” sa salitang Pangasinan. Ako po ay tubong Sta. Barbara, Pangasinan. Alam niyo ba na sa Pangasinan unang isinalin ang Biblia? Ang unang salin sa anumang wika sa Filipinas ay ang Ebanghelyo ayon kay Lukas sa Pangasinan. Naaalala ko pa ang itim na lumang Pangasinan Bible ng lolo ko, na nagsilbing deacon sa Tuliao Baptist Church, Sta Barbara Pangasinan.

Ang ating paksa ay hindi patungkol sa Bible translation, pero may kaugnayan din ito dahil bibigyan natin ng diin ang kahalagahan ng ating wika. Ipapakita ko ang kahalagahan ng ating sariling wika sa pang-unawa sa Biblia at teolohiya. Tatalakayin natin ang Tagalog na salitang “dalamhati” at “luwalhati” at ang ambag nito sa biblikal iskolarsiyip patungkol sa hibik (“lament” sa wikang Ingles).<sup>1</sup> Bagama’t napakarami ng pagtalakay sa hibik mula sa biblikal, teolohikal, sikolohikal, pastoral, sosyolohikal, at iba pang disiplina,<sup>2</sup> wala pang ginagawang pag-aaral patungkol sa dalamhati at luwalhati kaugnay sa mga hibik sa Biblia.

### Kahalagahan ng wika

Mahalaga ang wika. Ayon sa Filipinong Antropologo na si Prospero R. Covar, sa “wika [pasalita man o pasulat] . . . nakapaloob ang kultura.”<sup>3</sup> Kalakip sa ating wika

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<sup>1</sup>Nakakalungkot dahil mas alam pa ng marami ang Ingles na salitang “lament” o ang Espanyol na “lamentacion” kaysa sarili nating salitang “hibik.” Makasaysayan ang salitang ito at napakayaman. Tatalakayin ko ito sa pag-aaral na ginagawa ko patungkol sa hibik at himagsik sa teolohiya at kulturang Filipino.

<sup>2</sup>Isa sa pinakaunang pagtalakay dito ang isinulat ni Joachim Begrich, “Das Priesterliche Heilsorakel,” ZAW 52, no. 1 (1934): 81–92. Joachim Begrich, „Das Priesterliche Heilsoraker,“ zaw 52. NO. 1 (1934): 81-92. Para sa sarbey ng mga akda patungkol sa paksang ito, tingnan ang Federico G. Villanueva, *The “Uncertainty of a Hearing”: A Study of the Sudden Change of Mood in the Psalms of Lament*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

<sup>3</sup>Prospero Reyes Covar, “Kultura ng Wika,” in *Mga Babasahin Sa Sikolinggwistikang Filipino*, ed. Lilia F Antonio, Anatalia G Ramos, and Albano-Aura Abiera (Quezon City, Philippines: C & E Publishing, Inc., 2011), 46. Prospero Reyes Covar, “Kultura ng Wika,” in *Mga Babasahin sa Sikolinggwistikang Pilipino*, ed. Lilia Antonio, Anatalia G. Ramos, at Albano –Aura Abiera (Quezon City, Philippines: E & E Publishing, Inc., 2011), 46. Dagdag pa niya: “Magkalakip ang ugnayan ng wika at kultura” (46).

ang ating pagkakakilanlan (identity). Sa ating wika nahahayag kung ano ang totoo sa atin. Makikita natin ito halimbawa sa salitang “rice” sa Tagalog. Sa Ingles, iisa lamang ang salita para sa rice – “rice.” Pero sa Tagalog napakarami. Ang mga sumusunod ay ilan sa mga ito:<sup>4</sup>

yung halaman ay tinatawag na “palay”  
pag inani na at tinanggal ang balat/husk, ang tawag na ay “bigas”  
kapag isinaing ang bigas ang tawag ay “kanin” yung pagsasaing ng kanin kapag  
dinagdagan ng maraming tubig ito ay nagiging lugaw kapag medyo nasobrahan ang  
pagsaing at nasunog ang ilalim, ang tawag naman dito ay tutong  
pwede ulit iluto ang sinaing para maging sinangag (fried rice)  
ang kanin nagiging kakanin, bibingka (rice cake), puto (rice muffin) suman (ito ang  
paborito kong gawa ng lola ko sa Pangasinan tuwing pasko!) at marami pang iba!  
Katulad ng Basi—rice wine.

Ang wika natin mismo ang nagsasabing mahilig tayo sa rice. Kaya sikat ang *Mang Inasal* dahil meron silang unli-rice. Ang sarili nating wika mismo ang nagpapatotoo tungkol dito. Tama nga naman dahil gaya ng sinabi ni Mina Ramirez, “Hindi ba ang sariling wika ang tanging nagbibigay pagkakilanlan (identity)?”<sup>5</sup> “Ang wika ay nagsasalita,” pahayag ng German philosopher na si Martin Heidegger.<sup>6</sup> Ayon sa Heswitang Anthropologist na si Albert Alejo, “ang salita ay isang uri ng ‘pagsasabi ng tapat.’”<sup>7</sup>

Ang wika ay hindi lamang nagpapahayag ng kung sino tayo, ito rin ang nagpapahiwatig ng ating *worldview* o pananaw sa mundo. Paliwanag ng nagpasimula ng “Sikolohiyang Pilipino” na si Virgilio Enriquez at ni Amalia Alfonso, “ang yaman ng bokabularyo ang makapagpapahiwatig sa pananaw sa mundo.”<sup>8</sup> Napansin nina Enriquez, halimbawa, na ang Tagalog ay mayaman sa mga salitang may kinalaman sa pagpapahayag ng damdamin, gaya ng mga salitang tampo (paano mo ito isasalin sa Ingles?), sama ng loob, hinanakit, at galit.<sup>9</sup> Kung paanong napakarami nating salita para sa Ingles na “rice,” ganun din sa mga salitang may kinalaman sa masasakit o mapapait na damdamin. Ewan ko kung bakit mas marami tayong salita para sa mga itinuturing na ‘negatibong’ emosyon gaya ng dalamhati kaysa sa positibong emosyon

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<sup>4</sup>Tingnan: <https://www.tagalog-dictionary.com/search?word=rice> (accessed September 7, 2022).

<sup>5</sup>Mina M. Ramirez, “Kaalaming Kulandong,” in *Pamamaraan: Indigenous Knowledge and Evolving Research Paradigms*, ed. Teresita B Obusan (Quezon City: Asian Center, University of the Philippines, 1994), 44.

<sup>6</sup>Albert E. S.J. Alejo, *Tao Po! Tulo: Isang Landas Ng Pag-Unawa Sa Loob Ng Tao* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1990), 46.

<sup>7</sup>Alejo, 48.

<sup>8</sup>Virgilio G. Enriquez and Amelia B. Alfonso, “Ang Pananaw sa Buhay at Weltanschauung na Mahihiwatigan sa Sikolohiya ng Wikang Tagalog,” in *Mga Babasahin Sa Sikolingwistikang Filipino*, ed. Lilia F Antonio, Anatalia G Ramos, and Albano-Aura Abiera (Quezon City, Philippines: C & E Publishing, Inc., 2011), 83.

<sup>9</sup>Enriquez and Alfonso, 83.

gaya ng luwalhati. Ito ba ay sadyang likas sa atin o dulot na rin ng ating mga mapapait na karanasan na likha di lamang ng ating kapaligiran (halimbawa mga bagyo at lindol) kundi ng mahabang panahon ng pagkakapailalim sa mga dayuhang mananakop. Halimbawa na rito ang ating Pambansang makata na si Balagtas na sumulat ng “Labindalawang Sugat ng Puso.”<sup>10</sup> Kasama rito ang ating paksa – dalamhati:

Hirap, Kalungkutan, Dalita’t Hinagpis

Pighati at Dusa, Dalamhati’t sakit

Paninibugho’t sindak, Bagabag, ligalig

Umuuwing lahat sa aba kong dibdib.<sup>11</sup>

Isang bagay ang maliwanag: matimbang ang pandama para sa atin. Di-tulad ng mga taga-Kanluran na may gawing rasyonal at lohikal kung mag-isip, ang mga Pilipino ay mas pinapakiramdaman ang mga bagay-bagay. Ang ating pamamaraan ng pagbibigay-kahulugan sa ating mundo ay sa pamamagitan ng pagdama. Ito, ayon kay Jose de Mesa, ang ating “indigenous hermeneutics which highlights the affective-intuitive aspect of the interpretative act.”<sup>12</sup> Hindi ibig sabihin nito na nakabatay lamang tayo sa damdamin. Kasama sa pandama ang pag-iisip.<sup>13</sup>

Marahil, isang dahilan kung bakit hindi pa talaga namumunga ang Kristiyanismo sa ating bayan bagama’t daan-daan taon na ang lumipas nang dalhin sa atin ang Kristiyanismo ay sapagkat hindi naisa-kultura ang mensahe sa Filipino.<sup>14</sup> Hindi tumalab sa loob. Hanggang ngayon ang namamayaning wika ng teolohiya ay dayuhan. Nanatiling western din ang pamamaraan. Masyadong rasyonal at lohikal kaya’t hindi naramdaman sa loob. Para sa atin kasi mahalaga yung nararamdaman natin. Hangga’t hindi natin nararamdaman, hindi pa talaga tumatalab, hindi pa pumapasok sa loob, nananatili sa labas.

Kaya hanggang ngayon nananatili ang tinatawag ni Jaime Bulatao, S.J., na “split-level” Christianity<sup>15</sup> sa ating bansa. Kaya tinawag na “split-level” sapagkat may dalawang lebel – ibabaw at ilalim. Sa ibabaw, maraming Filipino ang anyong Kristiyano, pero sa ilalim ay nananatiling ‘pagano.’ Nagbigay si Bulatao ng isang ilustrasyon. Binigyan daw ng isang gifted na parrot ang isang madre superior. Tuwang-

<sup>10</sup>Sinipi ni Bienvenido Lumbera, *Tagalog Poetry, 1570-1898: Tradition and Influences in Its Development* (Quezon City, Metro Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1986), 110.

<sup>11</sup>Lumbea, 110.

<sup>12</sup>Jose M. De Mesa, “Buhay Karanasan Aral at Turo: A Filipino Hermeneutics of Experience,” *East Asian Pastoral Review* 32 (1995): 258.

<sup>13</sup>De Mesa, 259. Holistic ang ating pagtingin. Kapag sinabi nating, “pakiramdam ko ito ang dapat gawin,” hindi lamang ito tumutukoy sa feeling natin kundi kung ano ang napagpasyahan na natin sa ating isipan.

<sup>14</sup>Rebecca Cacho, “Faith as Dialectical Interplay of Affection and Cognition in Newman and ‘Pandama’ of Filipino Christians,” *Asian Horizons* 7, no. 3 (2013): 595–96.

<sup>15</sup>Jaime C Bulatao, “Split-Level Christianity,” in *Phenomena and Their Interpretation: Landmark Essays, 1957-1989* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1992), 22–31.

tuwa siya at ipinagmalaki ang parrot sa mga kasamang madre. “Tingnan niyo,” ang sabi niya, “kung ano ang mangyayari kapag hihilain ko ang kanang paa ng parrot.” Hinila niya ang kanang paa at ang parrot, mata’y nakatingin sa ibaba, ay nag-recite ng “Our Father.” Saulado niya ang buong panalangin! “Tingnan niyo naman ang mangyayari kapag ang kaliwang paa niya ang hihilahin ko.” Hinila niya. Ni-recite ng parrot ang buong Hail Mary. Mahusay! Pero ano kaya ang mangyayari kapag hinila nang sabay ang kanan at kaliwang paa ng parrot? Ito ang tanong ng isang madre sa sarili. Hindi nakapagpigil sa sarili at hinila nang sabay ang dalawang paa ng parrot. Nagulat ang parrot at ang sabi: “Putres, madadapa ako!”<sup>16</sup>

### Panay Ingles

Bagama’t saulado ang dasal, lumabas din ang natural. Ganyan marahil ang katotohanan sa pagka-Kristiyano ng mga Filipino. Isa sa dahilan kung bakit nagkaganito ay dahil sa halip na isa-kultura ang Kristiyanismo, nanatiling dayuhan ito. Makikita natin ito hanggang ngayon. Tingnan niyo ang ating mga seminaryo at ang pagtuturo ng teolohiya maging sa ating mga Katolikong unibersidad. Ang wika ay panay Ingles. Ang mga aklat at artikulong binabasa at pinapabasa sa mga estudyante panay Ingles. Pati ang medium of instruction ay Ingles.<sup>17</sup> Kaya may punto ang sinabi ng social anthropologist na si Melba Maggay, “I don’t want to go to theological school because I don’t want to be colonized twice.”<sup>18</sup>

Isa sa mga dahilan kaya hindi natin napagyayaman ang teolohiya sa ating bayan ay dahil hindi natin ginagamit ang ating sariling wika. Ayon sa German philosopher na si Hans-Georg Gadamer, “language is ... is the reservoir of tradition and the medium in and through which we exist and perceive our world.”<sup>19</sup> Nagsulat si Gadamer sa kanyang sariling wika. Isinalin lamang sa Ingles ang kanyang mga isinulat. Ang mga highly influential na aklat gaya ng *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* ni Paulo Freire at *Theology of Liberation* ni Gustavo Gutierrez ay hindi isinulat sa Ingles kundi sa wika ng mga sumulat (halimbawa, sa kaso ni Gutierrez, sa Espanyol). Dahil umusbong mula sa kanilang sariling kultura at konteksto at dahil nagsulat sila sa kanilang sariling wika, mas naging natural ang kanilang pagteteolohiya. May lalim at yaman ang mga ito na maaaring pakinabangan ng ibang mga bansa. Hindi sila gaya-gaya, sila ang

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<sup>16</sup>Bulatao, 22.

<sup>17</sup>Tinanong ko ang aming coordinator sa isang theology department kung pwede akong magturo ng teolohiya gamit ang Filipino, hindi raw pwede. Nang tinanong ko kung bakit hindi pwede, ang sagot ay kasi hindi pa nakakakuha ng Filipino 1 at 2 ang mga estudyante. Filipino lahat ng estudyante sa klase ko, pero hindi ako pwedeng magturo sa Filipino! Only in the Philippines!

<sup>18</sup>Sinambit ni Melba Maggay ito sa okasyon ng Asia Theological Association theological forum (Hulyo 31-Agosto 2, 2018). Siyempre hindi naman lahat ng seminaryo ay ganito. Meron na ring mga nagbago. Pero karamihan pa rin ay nananatiling western sa approach sa pagte-teolohiya at pag-aaral ng Biblia.

<sup>19</sup>Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics : Translated and Edited by David E. Linge.*, ed. David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 29.

ginagaya. Ngayon may Korean translation na rin ang *Theology of Liberation* ni Gustavo Gutierrez.

Kailan kaya darating ang panahon na tayo naman ang isasalin mula sa ating sariling wika patungong Ingles, German, at Korean?<sup>20</sup> Sa ngayon, malayong mangyari pa ito dahil ang kakaunting Filipino biblikal iskolar at teologo na nagsusulat ay hindi nagsusulat sa Pangasinan o Ilokano o Tagalog o Bisaya, kundi sa Ingles. Kahit ang aklat na tumutukoy sa pag-angat ng mga teolohiyang Filipino – *The Rise of Filipino Theology* – ay isinulat sa Ingles!<sup>21</sup> Kahit unang naisalin ang Biblia sa Pangasinan, wala akong alam na isinulat na aklat sa teolohiya o biblikal na sanaysay na akademiko sa Pangasinan. Sana meron, at please let me know kung may alam kayo.

Ang sabi ng ating pambansang bayaning si Jose Rizal: “Bawat bansa ay may sariling paraan ng pagsasalita kung paanong bawat isa ay may sariling paraan ng pagdama [note: binanggit dito ang “pagdama”], ... Wika ang paraan ng pag-iisip ng isang bayan.”<sup>22</sup> Samakatwid, kung panay Ingles lamang ang ating ginagamit, hindi natin pinapayaman ang sariling atin, kundi ang ibang bayan (swerte naman ng mga Amerikano’t British, laging ginagamit ang wika nila). Gaya ng sinabi ni Ramirez: “Kung ating pinapalagay na ang wika ay nakaugat sa ating buhay, ang pagsasalita sa Kastila at Ingles ay pagpapalaganap ng buhay ng mga Kastila o ng mga Amerikano – buhay-banyaga, buhay-kanluranin.”<sup>23</sup>

Naaalala ko ang isang panayam ko sa isang Amerikano sa isang pagtitipon na may kinalaman sa mga aklat. Isa sa mga nabanggit na aklat ay ang best-selling book na *Purpose-Driven Life* ni Rick Warren. Best seller ito sa Filipinas. Sa katunayan, isang publishing house ang nakapagtayo ng isang buong building mula sa kinita sa pinagbentahan ng aklat na ito. Hindi ko na maalala kung paano napunta sa aklat ni Warren ang usapan namin ng Amerikano. Pero hindi ko malilimutan ang sinabi niya sa akin: “You don’t need an American to know what your purpose in life is.” Ang mabilis na sagot ko: “Of course!” Pero nang napag-isipan ko’ng mabuti pagkatapos ng aming pag-uusap, nalungkot ako kasi hanggang ngayon nakadepende pa rin tayo, kahit matapos ang 500 taon mula nang dumating sa atin ang Kristiyanismo, sa mga dayuhan. Kaya nga kailangan pang isang Amerikano ang magturo sa atin kung ano nga ba ang “purpose” ng buhay natin. Sa larangan ng pagteteolohiya, nagsisimula pa lamang tayo. Pahayag ng yumaong Filipinong teologong si Ka Jose De Mesa: “wala pang kaugaliang teolohiko ang Filipinas na masasabi na ‘sariling atin.’ Nagsisimula

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<sup>20</sup>Sa larangan ng kasaysayan, mabuti at may naisalin na mula Filipino tungong Espanyol – ang akda ni Zeus Salazar na “Pantayong Pananaw bilang Diskursong Pangkabisasnan.” Ito ay isinalin ng Espanyol na propesor ng Universidad de Alicante na si Isaac Donoso bilang “Pantayong Pananaw Como Discurso Civilizacional” (nailimbag po ito sa isang dyornal sa Espanya, ang *Revista Filipina* 2:2 [2015]: 5-22).

<sup>21</sup>Dindo Rei M. Tesoro and Joselito Alviar Jose, *The Rise of Filipino Theology* (Pasay City: Paulines, 2004).

<sup>22</sup>José Rizal, *The Subversive (El Filibusterismo)*, trans. Leon Ma. Guerrero, [1st American ed.] (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), 50. Sinipi sa Alejo, *Tao Po! Tuloy: Isang Landas Ng Pag-Unawa Sa Loob Ng Tao*, 123.

<sup>23</sup>Ramirez, “Kaalangang Kulandong,” 44.

pa lamang tayo at marami pang gagawin upang maitaguyod nang masinsinan ang pagbubuo ng teolohiyang Pilipino.”<sup>24</sup>

Pero kung tutuusin mas malapit ang ating kultura sa Biblia kaysa sa mga taga-Kanluran. May pagkahawig ang ating kasaysayan sa karanasan ng mga Israelita.<sup>25</sup> Tulad natin, ang mga Israelita rin ay napasailalim sa mga dayuhang mananakop tulad ng Babilonia, Assyria, Persia, at Roma. Kaya malalim ang kanilang pandama sa kahirapan. Nauunawaan nila ang karanasan ng mga inalipin at pinagsamantalahan ng ibang bayan. Ito ang dahilan kaya mas marami pang mga hibik sa aklat ng *Mga Awit* kaysa mga pagpupuri. Ito’y gaya rin ng ating mga awitin na madamdamin at puno ng pagdadalamhati.<sup>26</sup> Kahit sa ating mga kontemporaryong OPM, marami sa mga ito ay “hugot songs” na tagos sa buto ang hapdi dahil “hinuhugot papalabas” mula sa “kaloob-looban” ng damdamin.<sup>27</sup> Ilan sa mga awitin natin ay puno ng dalamhati.

### Ang Lalim ng Dalamhati

Sa Ingles ay simple lang ang salitang dalamhati – “grief.” Kapag nahahatsing ang isang Amerikano, napapa “good grief!” siya. Pero malalim ang salitang dalamhati. Hindi natin kailanman ginagamit ang salitang dalamhati sa paghatsing o pag-ubo.

Ang salitang “dalamhati” ay binubuo ng dalawang salita – “dalam” (ilalim) at “hati” (atay). Sa pag-aaral na ginawa ng Filipino linguist na si Consuelo Paz, ipinakita niya na ang dalawang salitang ito ay ginagamit sa iba’t ibang wika sa Filipinas.<sup>28</sup> Sa mga cognate na binanggit ni Paz mula sa mga iba’t ibang wika sa ating bansa, ang kahulugan ng “\*dálem” ay “lalim, ilalim.”<sup>29</sup> Unang-una dito ang Pangasinan. Kapag sinabi naming “dalem,” ibig sabihin nun, ilalim. Sa Tagalog naman ang dalam ay dilim. At hindi malayo ang dalawa dahil ang dalamhati ay isang “matinding lungkot,”<sup>30</sup> malalim, napakadilim. Sa Ilokano ang dalem ay atay. Ito ang kahulugan ng salitang “hati.”

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<sup>24</sup>José M. de Mesa, *Mabathalang Pag-aaral*, Academica Filipina Digital (Manila: Vee Press and DLSU, 2010), 10.

<sup>25</sup>Noriel C. Capulong, *Reading and Hearing: The Old Testament in Philippine Context* (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Pub., 2003).

<sup>26</sup>Buenaventura S. Medina, *The Primal Passion: Tagalog Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Manila: Centro Escolar University, Research and Development Center, 1976), 6. Ayon kay Medina, “Poetry evidently was the language of the early Tagalogs. And the quality of emotion that dominated folklore—poetry and prose, and then the deviative ritualistic theatre—defined its primary virtue: an agony that is a celebration of the Tagalog predilection for suffering.” “The poetic idiom that was and still is half of a pained cry and half of an ecstatic song.”

<sup>27</sup>Salamat kay Mark Joseph Pascual Santos sa pagbanggit nito sa akin nang binasa niya ang akdang ito bago ma-publish. Malaking tulong ang kanyang iba pang komento.

<sup>28</sup>Consuelo J Paz, “Bukal ng Emosyon,” in *Ginhawa, Kapalaran, Dalamhati: Essays on Well-Being, Opportunity/Destiny, and Anguish*, ed. Consuelo J Paz (Diliman, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2008), 148–49.

<sup>29</sup>Tingnan ang Paz, “Bukal ng Emosyon,” 148–49.

<sup>30</sup>Paz, 148.

Ang “hati,” ayon sa pag-aaral ni Consuelo Paz, ay nangangahulugan ng “atay.” “Sa halos lahat ng mga wikang binanggit, ‘atay’ ang ibig sabihin ng mga cognate” maliban sa ilang wika.<sup>31</sup> Sa Tausug, maraming salitang ginagamit ang atay: “atay-itung”—maitim na puso, masamang intensyon; “atay-puti” walang kasalanan, sincere; taas-atay mayabang, matapobre; way-atay walang utang na loob.”

Ang dalawang salitang ito – “dalem” at “atay” – kapag pinagsama, ay “nagpapahiwatig ng matinding emosyon o pakiramdam na nagresulta ng kalungkutan o malungkot na eksperyens.”<sup>32</sup> Ang dalamhati ay “nararamdaman sa kaloob-looban o kailalim-laliman ng sarili—sa atay.”<sup>33</sup> Sa kanyang pag-aaral patungkol sa “language of mourning and depression,” nadiskubre ni Luciano Santiago, M.D., na ang salitang “dalamhati” ang pangunahin sa anim na Tagalog na salita na ginagamit ng mga pasyente niyang dumadaan sa depresyon.<sup>34</sup> Isa sa mga salitang ginagamit sa depression sa Ingles ay “depths.”<sup>35</sup>

Sa Tagalog, yung mga dumadaan sa malalaking problema ay sinasabing “may malalim na pinagdaraan.” Kasama ang lalim sa pang-unawa natin sa ating pagkatao. Ang “pagkataong Pilipino,” ayon kay Covar ay maaaring itulad sa isang banga – may labas, loob, at lalim.<sup>36</sup> Paliwanag ni Alejo patungkol sa lalim ng loob: “Ang lalim ay yaong pagkahulog ng pagdanas mula sa ibabaw pababa, patungo sa nakatago, liblib, hindi makita o matanaw sa pagyuko.”<sup>37</sup> Kung sa dagat, ang “kalaliman” ang pinakamahirap maabot. “Doon ay may isang uri ng kadiliman, loob na loob kaya nga nakapangangamba.”<sup>38</sup> Kung sa lawak, “maaari tayong maligaw; sa lalim, maaari tayong malunod.”<sup>39</sup> Kaya ang daing ng salmista:

1. “O Diyos, Iligtas mo, iahon sa tubig sa pagkalubog kong abot na sa leeg” (Mga Awit 69:1, MBB).
2. “Mula sa kalaliman, O PANGINOON, ako sa iyo’y dumaing!” (Mga Awit 130:1, ABB).

Ang dalamhati ay nararanasan sa pinakamalalim na bahagi ng ating loob. Pero sa kalaliman din ng ating loob, doon natin natatagpuan ang Panginoon. Sa mga panahong bagsak na bagsak na tayo, lubog na lubog na, doon natin nararanasan ang pagsagip

<sup>31</sup>Paz, 150.

<sup>32</sup>Paz, 150.

<sup>33</sup>Paz, 150.

<sup>34</sup>Luciano Santiago, “The Language of Mourning and Depression in Filipino and Its Indonesian and Malayan Cognates: Transcultural, Sociological, Historical, Artistic and Therapeutic Significance,” *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 21, no. 3 (1993): 277–78. Kasama sa anim ang hapis, hinaggis o haggis, lumbay, panglaw, pighati.

<sup>35</sup>William Styron, *Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness* (New York: Random House, 1990).

<sup>36</sup>Prospero R. Covar, “Kaalalang Bayang Dalumat ng Pagkataong Pilipino,” in *Mga Babasahin Sa Sikolinggwistikang Filipino*, ed. Lilia F Antonio, Anatalia G Ramos, and Albano-Aura Abiera (Quezon City, Philippines: C & E Publishing, Inc., 2011), 137.

<sup>37</sup>Alejo, *Tao Po! Tuloy: Isang Landas Ng Pag-Unawa Sa Loob Ng Tao*, 71.

<sup>38</sup>Alejo, 71.

<sup>39</sup>Alejo, 71.

ng ating Panginoon. Gaya ng pahayag ng salmista: “kung si Yahweh ay di pumanig sa atin ... maaaring kami noo’y natangay na niyong agos, naanod sa karagata’t tuluy-tuloy na nalunod” (Mga Awit 124:1, 4). Ang Awit 124 ay isang Awit ng Pasasalamat ng bayan. Isa itong awit ng pagdiriwang. Sa pagdiriwang at pasasalamat inaalala natin ang ating mga malalalim na pinagdaanan. Kaya may luwalhati dahil may dalamhati.

### Dalamhati at luwalhati

Kung ang dalamhati ay nangangahulugan ng malalim na kalungkutan, ang luwalhati ay nangangahulugan ng “lubos na kasayahan, kaligayahan.”<sup>40</sup> Ito ay tumutukoy sa isang “sukdulang kaligayahan”; gayon na lamang ang kaligayahang ito kaya’t nasasabing ito’y “langit.”<sup>41</sup> Sa Pangasinan, ang luwalhati ay liket: “Agaylay liket ko!” (O anong saya ko!).

Magkaugnay ang dalamhati at luwalhati. Kaya malalim ang kalungkutan (dalamhati) dahil minsan may naranasang abot langit na kasiyahan (luwalhati). Gaya rin ng sinabi ng makatang Lebanese-American na si Kahlil Gibran:<sup>42</sup>

*Your joy is your sorrow unmasked.*

*And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears.*

*And how else can it be?*

*The deeper that sorrow carves into your being,  
the more joy you can contain.*

Sa kanyang mahusay na analisis ng tema ng dalamhati sa Ilokano epikong Lam-Ang, ipinakita ni MCM Santamaria na ang dalamhati ay nararanasan sa panahon ng pagkabigo. Nagkakaroon lamang ng kahulugan ang dalamhati dahil sa naunang karanasan ng tagumpay. “Grief happens at the time of loss. However, grief could only acquire meaning or resonance through its earlier expression, pursuit and gain.”<sup>43</sup> Kaya may dalamhati, dahil may luwalhati. Kaya may luwalhati, dahil may dalamhati.

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<sup>40</sup>Paz, “Bukal Ng Emosyon,” 150.

<sup>41</sup>Virgilio S. Almario, *Pambansang Diksiyonaryo Sa Filipino* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2021).

<sup>42</sup>Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet* (New York: Knopf, 1952), 36–37.

<sup>43</sup>Matthew Santamaria, “Lam-Ang: A Study of the Theme of Grief in Three Texts,” in *Ginhawa, Kapalaran, Dalamhati: Essays on Well-Being, Opportunity/Destiny, and Anguish*, ed. Consuelo J. Paz (Diliman, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2008), 171.

## Dalamhati at Luwalhati sa Aklat ng Mga Awit

Isa sa mga interesanteng katangian ng mga hibik sa Biblia, partikular sa Aklat ng *Mga Awit*, ay ang biglaang pagbabago mula sa hibik tungong pagpupuri, mula dalamhati tungong luwalhati.<sup>44</sup>

- a. Isang halimbawa ay ang Awit 13:

Nagsimula ang Awit 13 sa pagdadalamhati  
 “Hanggang kailan, Yahweh, ako’y iyong lilimutin?  
 Gaano katagal kang magtatago sa akin?  
 Gaano katagal pa itong hapdi ng damdamin  
 at ang lungkot sa puso kong gabi’t araw titiisin?  
 Kaaway ko’y hanggang kailan magwawagi sa akin?”  
 (vv. 1-2)

- b. Nagwakas sa himig ng kagalakan at pagpupuri:

“Nananalig ako sa pag-ibig mong wagas,  
 magagalak ako dahil ako’y ililigtas.  
 O Yahweh, ika’y aking aawitan,  
 dahil sa iyong masaganang kabutihan.” (vv. 5-6)

Sa Awit 30 ay makikita rin natin ang biglaang pagbabago mula pagdadalamhati tungong pagpupuri.

- c. pagdadalamhati:

Sa iyo, Yahweh, ako’y nanawagan,  
 nagsumamo na ako ay tulongan:  
 “Anong halaga pa kung ako’y mamamatay?  
 Anong pakinabang kung malibing sa hukay?

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<sup>44</sup>Hindi lubos na magkapareho ang dalamhati at lament at ganun din ang luwalhati at praise. Ang dalamhati ay isang malalim na kalungkutan samantalang ang lament ay isang teknikal na term para sa uri ng mga Awit (type of psalms). Pero isa sa mga pangunahing “subjects” ng lament ay ang kahirapan sa sarili, sa tao, sa Diyos. Ito ay ayon kay Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, trans. Keith R Crim and Richard N Soulen (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1981), 169–70. Ang dalamhati ay pwede nating sabihing ang pangunahing subject ng lament. Ang lament ay siya ring pamamaraan ng pagpapahayag ng kahirapang nararanasan. Ang maganda sa salitang dalamhati, dito rin nagmumula ang paraan ng kapahayagan ng kahirapan. Ang dalamhati ay ipinagdadalamhati.

Makakapagpuri ba ang mga walang buhay?  
Maipapahayag ba nila ang iyong katapatan?  
Pakinggan mo ako, Yahweh, at kahabagan,  
O Yahweh, ako po sana’y tulungan!” (vv. 8-10)

4. pagpupuri:

“Pinawi mo itong aking kalungkutan, pinalitan mo  
ng sayaw ng kagalakan!  
Pagluluksa ko ay iyong inalis,  
kaligayahan ang iyong ipinalit.

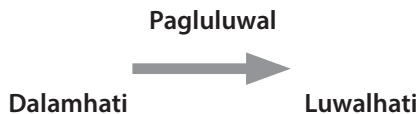
Aawit sa iyo ng papuri at hindi ako tatahimik,  
O Yahweh, aking Diyos, pasasalamat ko’y walang patid.” (vv. 11-12)

### Mula Dalamhati Tungong Luwalhati

Ang tanong na pinag-ukulan ng maraming pag-aaral ay paano nagiging pagpupuri ang dalamhati? Maraming kasagutan na ang iminungkahi.<sup>45</sup> Ang biglaang pagbabago mula pagdadalamhati tungong pagpupuri sa aklat ng Mga Awit ay naging bahagi ng aking pag-aaral para sa aking doktoral na disertasyon.<sup>46</sup> Hindi ko tuwirang sinagot ang tanong kung ano ang naging sanhi ng pagbabago mula dalamhati tungong luwalhati dahil hindi ito ang focus ng aking disertasyon. Hindi ko rin makita ang kasagutan noon dahil Ingles ang salitang ginamit ko sa aking pagsusulat. Pero ngayon, matapos ang aking pag-aaral gamit ang ating sariling wika, aking napagtanto na makakatulong dito nang malaki ang ating pinag-aaralang dalamhati at luwalhati.

Kung papakiramdaman nating mabuti ang sinasabi ng ating wika, malalaman natin ang sagot sa kung paano nagiging pagpupuri ang dalamhati. Gaya ng dalamhati, ang luwalhati ay “galing din sa kalooban ng sarili.”<sup>47</sup> Ang dalamhati at luwalhati ay parehong nasa loob. Ang pagkakaiba ay ang luwalhati ay hindi nananatili sa loob. Ang luwalhati ay “iniluluwal mula sa kalooban, sa hati/atay.”<sup>48</sup>

Upang ang dalamhati ay maging luwalhati, kinakailangan itong iluwal:



<sup>45</sup>Villanueva, *The Uncertainty of a Hearing*, 4–27.

<sup>46</sup>Nailathala ang aking disertasyon at pinamagatang “*The Uncertainty of a Hearing: A Study of the Sudden Change of Mood in the Psalms of Lament* (Villanueva).

<sup>47</sup>Paz, “Bukal Ng Emosyon,” 150.

<sup>48</sup>Paz, 150.



karamay, kaagapay hindi lamang sa panahon ng kagalakan kundi lalo na sa matinding kalungkutan, dalamhati. At hindi nananatiling personal ang pagdadalamhati sa hibik sa Biblia; kasama ang komunidad sa pagdadalamhati (tingnan halimbawa: Mga Awit 44, 89).

Isa sa mga dahilan kung bakit nakayanan ng mga mananampalatayang Israelita sa Lumang Tipan ang napakarami nilang kasawian ay dahil marunong silang magdalamhati sa presensya ng Diyos kasama ang buong komunidad. Oo marunong silang magdiwang. Sa katunayan, bago pa mauso ang “praise and worship” na uri ng pagsamba, ginagawa na nila yun. Kumpleto sila ng lahat ng mga instrumento (basahin ang Awit 150).

Pero marunong din silang magdalamhati. Paliwanag ng biblikal iskolar na si Hermann Gunkel:

One does not always sing praises and give thanks; there is also a time to grieve and lament. Alongside the happy festivals of rejoicing in the community stand the days of lamentation. When crop failure, pestilence, and danger from the enemy afflicted the people, such a day of lamentation was observed. On such occasions all the people would assemble at the sanctuary, tear their clothes, fast, weep, lament, and sound the trumpet.<sup>52</sup>

### **Kakulangan sa pagdadalamhati**

Ang isang problema sa ngayon, kulang tayo sa pagdadalamhati.<sup>53</sup> Negatibo ang tingin natin sa dalamhati. Kahit na namatayan na, rejoicing pa rin. Lagi kong nakikita sa social media na kino-quote yung sinabi ni Job sa tuwing may namamatay: “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21, ESV). Noong lockdown ang pinakasikat na verse sa mga online devotions na nadaluhan ko ay ang Filipinos 4:4 – “rejoice in the Lord always.” Ginawang literal ang “always.”

Noong Marso sa taong ito ay nagsalita ako sa isang national conference ng isang Christian organization. Kalulusob pa lamang ng Russia sa Ukraine noon. Grabe. Para bang hindi pa sapat ang mga paghihirap natin sa pandemya, dinagdagan pa ng giyera. Pero sa gitna ng lahat ng mga hirap at saklap ng pinagdaraan ng maraming tao sa mundo, ang unang-unang inawit sa national conference ay yung kanta ni Matt Redman na 10,000 Reasons. Ganito ang sabi ng chorus:

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<sup>52</sup>Hermann Gunkel, *The Psalms: A Form-Critical Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 13.

<sup>53</sup>Ang tinutukoy ko sa “tayo” ay ang mga ebangheliko o protestanteng Kristiyano. Tinalakay ko ang kakulangan natin sa pagdadalamhati sa aklat na *It's OK to Be NOT OK: The Message of the Lament Psalms* (Manila: OMF Literature, 2012).

Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
 O my soul, worship His holy Name.  
 Sing like never before, O my soul.  
 I'll worship Your holy Name.

Dumalo rin ako sa pagtitipon ng mga theological educators sa Asia. Sa dami-dami ng pwedeng ipakanta, isa lamang ang ipinaawit sa isa sa mga worship times – ang “10,000 Reasons.” Dito natin makikita na ang kakulangan sa lament ay hindi lang matatagpuan sa ating konteksto. Hindi ang kulturang Pilipino ang may suliranin. Ito po ay kumakatawan sa pangkalahatang kultura ng mga Krisiyano, na kung saan may malaking pagkakahiwalay sa realidad ng mundo.<sup>54</sup> Nakausap ko ang isa sa mga dumalo mula sa Sri Lanka. Sobrang hirap daw ang kalalagayan nila doon. Wala nang makain ang marami, masuwerte ka pag nakakakain ka pa sa isang araw. Paano tayo makakaawit ng “Bless the Lord, O my soul” at susundan pa ng “Sing like never before”? Hindi ko maintindihan! Sa totoo lang.

Lagi rin nating naririnig, “God is good, all the time!”<sup>55</sup> Oo, tama naman yun. Pero wala bang lugar para magdalamhati ang mga Kristiyano? Sa lahat ba ng panahon ay ang tugon dapat pagpupuri? Hindi ba mismo ang ating Panginoon nagdalamhati? Sumigaw siya ng “Diyos ko, Diyos ko, bakit mo ako pinabayaan?” (Matt 27:46). Ito ay mula sa hibik sa Mga Awit 22:1. Hindi nag-“rejoice always” si Jesus. Nag-lament din siya. Mismong si Apostol Pablo na nagsabing “rejoice always” ay nagsabi rin na “makitangis sa mga tumatangis” (Rom 12:15).

#### Pagdadalamhati ang Tugon sa Kasawian

Sa Biblia, ang tugon sa pagkawala ng buhay ay pagtangis o akis sa Pangasinan. Si Job, pagkatapos niyang sabihin ang sikat na linyang, “the Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away,” nagdalamhati siya nang matindi sa Job 3. Sinumpa niya ang araw ng kanyang pagkasilang (Job 3:1). At ang mga sumunod na maraming kabanata sa kanyang aklat ay punung-puno ng pagdadalamhati. Bakit yung chapter 1 lang ng aklat ng Job ang kino-quote natin? Mismong ang ating Panginoon ay tumangis ayon sa pinakamaikling verse sa buong Biblia – Juan 11:35 – “tumangis si Jesus.”

<sup>54</sup>Nagpapasalamat ako kay Honorina Lacquian sa pagbabahagi sa aking ng mahalagang puntong ito.

<sup>55</sup>Naalala ko yung ginawa ng head ng pinakamalaking baptist denomination sa ibang bansa. Habang marami sa kanyang mga kababayan ay hirap na hirap humanap ng oxygen tank para sa naghihingalong mahal sa buhay (naranasan ko ito nang ma-covid ang aking buong pamilya matapos mamatay ang aking ama sa covid), nag-post siya ng isang video na kung saan siya at kasama ng kanyang music team ay kumakanta na “God is good, all the time.”

Dito makakatulong ang ating wika. Marami tayong salita sa Tagalog para sa English word na lament:

- I. pagdadalamhati
- II. pagtaghoy
- III. pagdaing
- IV. paghibik
- V. pagtangis
- VI. paghikbi
- VII. paghimutok

Ibig sabihin nito, napakarami nating pamamaraan ng pagpapahayag, pagdama, at pagkaunawa ng lament. Ang problema, dahil panay Ingles lang ang gamit natin, nauwi tayo sa lamenting. Pero kung titingnan natin ang ating mga iba't-ibang salita patungkol sa lament, lalong lumalabas ang lalim ng ating pandama at pang-unawa sa hirap at sakit na pinagdaraan natin. Ang mga salitang ito ay nagpapahayag ng matinding kahirapan o sakit.

Ang **pagtaghoy** ay galing sa ugat na salitang “taghoy,” na ang ibig sabihin ay malakas na sigaw dahil sa matinding hirap o sakit. Ito ang salitang ginamit sa Noli Me Tangere upang ilarawan ang pagdadalamhati ni Sisa sa pagkawala ng mga anak niyang sina Crispin at Basilio.

Ang **pagdaing** ay nagpapahiwatig ng matinding kahirapan. Kaya dumadaing dahil may iniindang matinding sakit.

Ang **pagtangis** ay tanda ng pagdadalamhati, halimbawa sa yumaong mahal sa buhay. Samantlang ang **himutok** ay “sigaw ng kabiguan, kasawian, or matinding kalungkutan.”<sup>56</sup>

Ang **paghikbi** ay isa ring pag-iyak na mas matindi halos hindi ka na makahinga. Ito ay impit na iyak. Hindi to pabulahaw bagkus ito ay ang pag-iyak na paloob kaya masakit sa dibdib. Para kang nakalunok ng sinigwelas at bumara sa pagitan ng mga butas ng lalamunan at ng hingahan.<sup>57</sup>

Lahat ng mga salitang ito na nabanggit ay nagsasabi na may matinding suliranin. Mahalaga ang pagdadalamhati, pagdaing, pagtaghoy, pagtangis, paghimutok, at paghikbi dahil ipinapakita ng mga ito na merong matinding problema. Gaya ng sinabi ng Walter Brueggemann, ang lament ay nagsasabi na “Things are not right in the

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<sup>56</sup>Almario, *Pambansang Diksiyonaryo sa Filipino*, s. v. “Himutok”.

<sup>57</sup>Ito ang personal na paglalarawan ni Lacquian sa hibik.

present arrangement.”<sup>58</sup> Mahalaga ito dahil ang anumang uri ng kagalingan – personal man yan o panlipunan – ay nagsisimula sa pagkilala na mayroon tayong sakit o problema. Ang unang hakbang sa kagalingan ay ang pag-amin na meron tayong sakit. Kahit na gaano pa kagagaling ang mga doktor kung hindi natin aaminin na meron tayong sakit, wala ring mangyayari. Gaya ng sabi ni Judith Newman sa kanyang aklat na *Trauma and Recovery*, hindi makakaranas ng kagalingan ang taong dumaan sa trauma kung hindi siya makapagdalamhati: “To the extent that the patient is unable to grieve, she is cut off from a part of herself and robbed of an important part of her healing.”<sup>59</sup>

Sa dalamhati, nahihwalay tayo hindi lamang sa mahalagang bahagi ng ating sarili kundi maging sa ating kapwa. Sa pagdadalamhati, muli tayong bumabalik sa ating sarili at sa ating kapwa. Sa ating pagdadalamhati nagiging bukas tayo sa pagdadalamhati ng iba. The more we are in touch with our own pain, the more we feel the pain of others.

### Ang Pagdadalamhati ay Tanda ng Pagiging Mabuti

Hindi lang tayo nagdadalamhati para sa ating sarili, kundi para sa iba. Ang sabi ni Jesus, “Pinagpala ang mga nagdadalamhati, sapagkat aaliwin sila ng Diyos” (Matt. 5:4). Hindi binanggit dito kung ano ang dahilan ng pagdadalamhati. Pero sa konteksto, maaaring ito ay bunsod ng kahirapan. Sa naunang talata ang sabi ay “Pinagpala ang mga taong walang inaasahan kundi ang Diyos” (v. 3). Kadalasan ang mga mahihirap ay wala nang ibang maaasahan. Pero ang pagdadalamhati ay maaari ding tumukoy sa mga kahirapang daranasin natin dahil sa ating pagsunod sa ating Panginoon, kasama na rito ang mga pag-uusig (Matt 5:11).<sup>60</sup>

Halimbawa, yung pag-uusig na daranasin natin kapag nilalabanan natin ang mga kasinungalingan. Sabi ni Pablo ang tunay na may pag-ibig ay yaong nasusuklam sa masama: “Kasuklaman ninyo ang masama at pakaibigin ang mabuti” (Rom 12:9). Wika ng salmista: “Aking kinapopootan at kinasusuklaman ang kasinungalingan” (Awit 119:163). Dagdag pa niya: “Parang agos na ng batis ang daloy ng aking luha, dahilan sa mga taong sa utos mo’y sumisira” (Awit 119:136). Kung may nakikita na tayong

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<sup>58</sup>Walter Brueggemann, “The Costly Loss of Lament,” in *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, ed. Patrick D Miller (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 105. Tinalakay ko ang three seasons of life at ang application nito sa atin sa aking aklat. Federico G Villanueva, *It’s OK to Be Not OK: Preaching the Lament Psalms*. (Carlisle: Langham Creative Projects, 2017).

<sup>59</sup>Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 188. Binigyan niya ng diin na kinakailangang ipagdadalamhati natin ang lahat ng ating kabiguan upang maranasan ang kagalingan: “Only through mourning everything that she has lost can the patient discover her indestructible inner life.”

<sup>60</sup>Dahil si Jesus na ating sinusunod ay siyang daan, katotohanan, at ang buhay, malamang na makakaranas tayo ng mga pag-uusig. Bilang tagasunod ni Kristo na siyang katotohanan, pinapahalagahan natin ang katotohanan at kinamumuhian ang kasinungalingan. Galit ang Diyos sa mga sinungaling. Sa impiyerno ang punta nila (Pah 21:8). Tinawag ni Jesus ang diyablo na “ama ng kasinungalingan” (Jn 8:44).

masamang ginagawa, kung nakikita na nating lantaran na ang mga kasinungalingan at hindi man lang tayo naapektuhan, bagkus ay natutuwa pa tayo, malaki ang problema sa ating Kristiyanismo. Katulad lamang tayo ng parrot na binanggit ko sa simula.

Ang gayahin natin ay ang may-akda ng Awit 10. Nagdalamhati siya nang makita ang mga mayayabang na masasama na pinapaslang at pinagsasamantalahan ang mga “walang kamalay-malay” (v. 8). Ang mga masasama ay parang mga malulupit na hayop:

*Para silang leon na nasa taguan,  
mga kawawang dukha’y inaabangan,  
hinuhuli ang mga ito sa kanilang bitag,  
at pagkatapos ay kinakaladkad.  
Dahan-dahan silang gumagapang,  
upang biktimahin ang mga mahihina. (vv. 9-10)*

Gayon na lamang ang kanyang pagmamalasakit sa mga mahihirap na humibik siya sa Diyos ng ganito: “Bakit napakalayo mo, Lord, kung kelan kami may problema, saka ka naman nagtatago?” (Awit 10:1, PV). Nagtampo siya kay Lord dahil siya lang ang takbuan ng mga inaapi kapag nahihirapan (Awit 9:9). Pero pakiramdam niya nagtatago lamang ang Panginoon kaya’t di niya napigilang magtanong siya sa Diyos ng “Bakit?”

Isinulat ang Awit 9-10 mula sa karanasan ng mga dukha.<sup>61</sup> May sampung mga salita para sa mga dukha sa salitang Hebreo sa Aklat ng Mga Awit. Anim sa mga ito ay matatagpuan sa Awit 10.<sup>62</sup> Ang aklat ng mga Awit ay binuo ng mga tinatawag ng eskriba. Kabilang sila sa mga elite. Sila ang katumbas ng mga may PhD o doctorate sa panahon natin, mga intelektuwal, mga marurunong at bihasa sa kaalaman. Mataas ang kanilang kalalagayan sa lipunan. Di tulad ng mga mahihirap, meron silang kakayanan upang ipagtanggol ang kanilang sarili. Subalit pinili nilang makiisa sa mga mabababa. Nagsalita sila mula sa ibaba. Kanilang dinala ang kalalagayan ng mga aba. At gamit ang kaloob na karunungan tinanggap nila, lumikha sila ng mga salmang tumutuligsa sa mga mapagsamantala upang mabigyang-tinig ang daing at dalamhati ng mga api’t ulila.

Marami sa atin dito ay nag-aaral ng teolohiya. Merong mga nakatapos na ng doctoral studies. May PhD, ThD, at iba’t iba pang D. Pero para saan ba lahat ng ito?

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<sup>61</sup>Ang Awit 9-10 ay iisang awit. Ito ay kinatha gamit ang Hebreong alpabeto. Mula Awit 9, nagsimula sa letrang “Aleph” (katumbas ng “A”) at nagwakas sa huling talata ng Awit 10 sa letrang “Tau” (katumbas ng “Z”).

<sup>62</sup>Federico G. Villanueva, “‘Break the Arm of the Wicked!’ Understanding the Imprecations in Psalm 9/10,” in *Scripture and Service: Essays in Honor of Joseph Too Shao*, ed. Samson L. Uytanlet (Valenzuela City: Biblical Seminary of the Philippines, 2019), 171–72.

Para saan ba ang pag-aaral ng theology? Hindi ba't upang tulad ng salmista ay gamitin natin ito para sa mga mabababa? At higit sa lahat ay sundan ang misyon ni Kristo na naparito upang “palayain ang mga inaapi” (Luk 4:18, MBB).

Sana’y maging gayon din ang bawat nagpapakabihasa sa Biblia, teolohiya! Isang mapagpalang ika-70 anniversary po sa inyong lahat!

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## RESPONSE #1

### Dalamhati at Luwalhati sa Kulturang Filipino at Bible

*Armando M. Canoy*

Nagpapasalamat tayo sa Panginoon para sa theological symposium na ito. Nagpapasalamat tayo sa mga members ng Theological Symposium Committee at gayun din din sa ating tampok na presenter Dr. Rico Villanueva. Nagpapasalamat din tayo sa bawat isang dumalo at sa opportunity na maging responder sa tampok na presentation. Purihin ang Diyos.

Masarap makakita ng kakampi para sa isang advocacy na iyong ipinaglalaman. Napakalinaw ang paggamit ni Dr. Villanueva sa ating sariling wika upang maging daluyan ng maayos na pagbibigay kahulugan at unawa sa paksang dalamhati at luwalhati. Mainam na gamitin ang sariling wika para sa marami pang theological terms sa kapakinabangan ng pag-unlad ng teolohiyang Filipino. Bagamat mahaba ang diskusyon dito, kulang-kulang na limang pahina upang bigyang diin ang paggamit ng ating wika sa pag-unawa sa ating paksa, hindi ko ito ibinibilang na pag-aaksaya ng oras, papel at tinta kundi natutuwa ako sapagkat pwede pala talagang mapagyaman ang teolohiya sa Pilipinas. Nakakaluwalhati sa isip at pakiramdam na ang aking anim na Assuming Book series ay isinulat sa halos 80% conversational Filipino at 15% Tagalog-English at mga 5% dalisay na English. Nagbigay ito ng resolusyon at inspirasyon sa inyong lingkod na magpatuloy sa ganitong uri ng pagsulat kung ganito pala ang isa sa dahilan para mapagyaman natin ang teolohiya sa ating bayan. Hindi na baleng maliit ang kita, basta malaki ang dulong puntirya- ang maiangat ang antas ng yaman ng teolohiyang Pinoy.

Ang paggamit ng ating wika ay walang dudang nag-iwan ng impression sa akin lalo na sa kakaibang paghataw ni Dr. Villanueva sa salitang dalamhati at luwalhati. Mapapaindak ka sa tuwa dahil pwedeng- pwedeng maibalik ang tunay nating pagkakakilanlan sa pamamagitan ng ating sariling wika. At saka, biblical naman talaga ang paggamit ng wika bilang pagkakakilanlan. Halimbawa, gaya ng mga survivors na Ephraimites sa giyera nito sa mga Gileadites sa Book of Judges chapter 12. Para ma-identify na isang Gileadites ang tatawid sa Jordan mula sa lupain ng Ephraim ay kailangang bigkasin ang salitang “*SHIBBOLETH*” with “h” at patay kang bata ka, kapag *SIBBOLETH* without “h” ang iyong nabigkas. Marami ang ipinagkanulo ng kanilang dila...Hindi lang din biblical eto kundi cultural- gaya ng mga Capampangan na inaalís ang “H” sa salitang una ang “H” at dinadagdagan ng “H” ang salitang nagmumula sa “A.” Naging natural na ito sa kanilang pagbigkas. Halimbawa ay “(h) Andy na ako...(H)abulin kita.”

Ang layunin ng pagtugon na ito ay upang ipahayag ang mga praktikal na hakbang para mailuwal ng isang nagdadalamhati kung maaari ang alinman sa isa o higit pa sa 12 sugat ng puso na makatang inihayag ni Francisco Balagtas. Ang nasabing layunin ay batay sa pahayag ng tampok na presentor na “ang problema sa mga Cristiano ay hindi ito marunong magdalamhati.” Hindi ko batid kung sadyang totoo ba ito dahil sa ikalawang pahina ay may nabanggit doon na “matimbang ang pandama para sa Filipino.” Kung sakaling ang pag-angkin na “matimbang ang pandama” ay ganap at pangkalahatan, bakit nga ba tayo hindi marunong magdalamhati?

Sa article na “Masama Bang Umiyak ang Lalaki?” na nalathala sa Philippine Star noong June 14, 2018 sa column na Para Malibang, tinalakay dito na “Ang pag-iyak ay ginagawa ng lahat dahil ito ay normal at parte ng buhay. Pero kung ang lalaki ang umiiyak, madalas ay iba na ang standard. Iniuugnay agad sa pagiging mahina, tinutuksong binabae o jokla. Kaya ang projection na inaasta ng mga lalaki ay dapat astig at hindi rin ipinapakita ang kanilang emosyon.” Hindi kaya isa ito sa mga dahilan kung bakit hindi nagdadalamhati ang mga Christian lalo na ang mga kalalakihan? Sinalamin ko ito sa aking sarili. Marahil nga ay totoo. Para itong balaraw na tumarak sa aking dibdib dahil para ngang hindi ko natatandaan na talagang nagdalamhati ako sa pagpanaw ng aking tatay. Ang alam ko na nananatiling sariwa pa sa aking alaala ay, sa panahon ng burol ng aking ama, nanangis lamang ako ng ilalabas na siya sa bahay para ilibing- pero iyon ay biglaang iyak na malakas ngunit maiksi na nauwi sa mahinang hibik, iyak, at impit na pahayag ng pangungulila. Tuwing maaalala ko ito, iniisip ko na lamang ang magaganda kong karanasan kasama ang aking tatay noong siya ay nabubuhay pa at gayundin ang aking resolusyon sa patuloy na pagsuporta at pag-alalay sa nabiyudang nanay. Marahil ay ganito ko nailuluwal ang aking pagdadalamhati.

Ang ipinag-aalala ko ay kung majority ang bilang ng hindi marunong magdalamhati, hindi nakapagtatakanang marami rin ang bilang ng posibleng makaranas ng depression. Marahil nga, after all, ang ibang bagay ay nakakaranas din nito, gaya ng tropical depression, o kaya ay depressed road. Hindi nga lamang sila kandidato upang magkaroon ng mental health problem subalit ang uri ng kanilang depresyon ay nakapangwawasak din. Nakakalungkot palang isipin na ang hindi pagiging marunong sa pagdadalamhati ay maaaaring mauwi sa pagkawasak sa sarili at maging sa nakapaligid din sa atin.

Sa unang basa, marahil ay hindi ganap ang unawa ng responder sa mga pahayag na “kapag may dalamhati ay dahil may luwalhati, at kaya may luwalhati ay dahil may dalamhati.” Sa unang tingin ay parang naging “dahilan” ang isang “epekto.” “Kaya may dalamhati, dahil may luwalhati” – kung may dalamhati, maaari namang mauwi sa luwalhati, ngunit tila hindi ganap na dahilan na ang pagkakaroon ng dalamhati ay dahil sa may luwalhati. Hindi бага maraming dalamhati ang nauwi sa kasawian at magkaminsan, maging ang nagdadalamhating ang pangalan ay Luwalhati ay hindi nakakasilay ng tunay na kaluwalhatian?

Gayunman, maliwanag ang kapahayagan sa proseso kung paano nagiging luwalhati ang isang dalamhati. Ito ay sa pamamagitan ng pagluluwal nito. Ang ganda

ng pagkakasalaysay ng prosesong ito. Naisip ko na mahalaga ang kontribusyon nito sa pastoral ministry. Lalo na, may mga pastor na parang bato ang mga puso pagdating sa pagdadalamhati: na para bang ayaw ipakita sa kongregasyon na mahina sila, nalulungkot din, nadedepress, at parang pinagsakluban ng langit ang kalooban. Dahil sa hindi pagdaan sa grieving process, maraming bagahe ang sumasalansan sa kalooban na nagiging resulta ng kaabahan ng pisikal na kalusugan, kaisipan, at maging sa spiritual na larangan. Madalas naisasantabi rin ang panahon ng pagdadalamhati dahil sa may mga panahon na mas pinagtutuunan ang pagbibigay ng mga Bible verses na out of context para sa isang nagdadalamhati.

Kung hindi tayo marunong magdalamhati sa presensya ng Diyos bilang isang komunidad, marahil ay kinakailangang simulan ito sa komunidad ng seminaryo, patungo sa mga iglesya. Kinakailangang isama marahil sa programa ng mga pagsamba ang mga panahon sa pagdadalamhati- gaya ng kapag may pambansang kalamidad, kapatiran na nasawi, nasunugan, nabigo sa gawain, etc. Marahil ay may mga ready-made na Scripture tungkol sa pagdadalamhati at baka sa pamamagitan ng pagbasa ng talata sa awit patungkol sa dalamhati at pananalangin na mailuwal ng mga nagdadalamhati ang kanilang loob sa Diyos ay matulungan sila sa unti-unting pagluluwal nito tungo sa luwalhati. Ang worship leader ay kinakailangan sigurong magsaayos ng mga awiting nagpapatungkol sa proseso ng dalamhati sa panahon na dumadanas ng dalamhati ang marami sa katawan ni Cristo; ang mensahe ng pastor para sa panahon ng pagdadalamhati ay swak na swak dapat sa topic ng pagdadalamhati at hindi laging Malakias 3:10. Ang mangunguna sa corporate prayer ay dapat may sapat na unawa para sa mga ipapanalanging nagdadalamhati pati na rin para sa ipinagdadalamhati.

Sa pinunto ng presentor na hindi siya makaawit ng “bless the Lord o my soul” dahil sa andaming hirap na hirap, lalong tumibay ang aking pananaw na kinakailangang maging sensitibo ang ating mga worship leader sa kanilang pangunguna sa pagsamba. Minsan ay nakarinig pa ako sa isang worship leader, o higit pa, na sa kanyang paanyaya sa mga kapatiran na umawit at sumamba sa Diyos, kanyang nabanggit na “iwanan muna ang mga problema at sumamba sa Diyos.” Ito ay isang maling teolohiya sa paanyaya sa pagsamba dahil kaya nga sumimba ang mga tao ay dahil din sa marami silang problema na hinahanapan nila ng kahit konting luwalhati sa loob ng iglesya. Marahil ay dapat turuan ang mga worship leader na parang hindi nakakaranas ng pagdadalamhati na sa halip ang sabihin ay “dalhin natin sa Diyos ang ating mga problema sa ating pag-awit at pagsamba.” Sa gayon, maaaring makatulong ang inihandang programa para mailuwal ng isang mananampalataya ang kanyang mga dalamhati.

Kapag ang pagdadalamhati ay naisantabi ng iglesya, nagiging malalim ang mga sugat ng mga nagdadalamhati at malamang mauwi sa production ng Tupperware ang mga fellowship- nag-uumapaw sa kaplastikan dahil hindi nailuluwal ang pagdadalamhati. Kunwari masaya, pinipilit maging masaya subalit lungkot na lungkot ang puso kahit ang inihandang programa ay parang Sunday Pinasaya. Hindi kayang itago ng pancit at juice ang kadalambahatian. Sa halip na mailuwal ang dalamhati, nauuwi

tuloy sa abortion. Multiple abortion ang ginagawa ng mga iglesya at ministrong walang pakialam sa nagdadalamhating miyembro nito at hindi tumutulong upang mailuwal ang dalamhati tungo sa luwalhati.

Maaari din kaya na ang mga denominasyon ay magtakda ng sarili nitong National Day of Mourning at isa-isahin ang mga isyung dapat ipagdalamhati ng mga ito- una na sa kaloob-looban ng organisasyon, mga miyembrong simbahan, mga pastol na nagpapastol-pastolan, at mga tupang parang kambing ang pag-uugali? Maaari din isama ang mga isyung nagdudulot mismo ng dalamhati kay Cristo gaya ng hindi pagtulong sa mahihirap, pagbatikos sa kabaklaan, sa kulay, sa lahi, at mga kasalanang siya mismong dahilan ng pagkapako ni Jesus.

Pwede rin kaya na magkaroon ng pagsasanay sa mga kapastoran at lider tungkol sa pagtulong sa mga miyembro na magdalamhati ng tama at gawin itong panuntunan sa pagtulong sa mga gusto namang makaranas ng luwalhati ngunit walang kasanayan kung paano ito gawin? Hindi marahil tama na sabihan na lamang na “kaya mo yan, God will help you. You can do all things through Christ.” Hindi ako eksperto sa pagbalangkas ng mga hakbang sa pagluluwal ng dalamhati tungo sa luwalhati subalit naniniwala ako na kailangan natin ng Filipinong version ng “Pagtulong sa Mga Nagdadalamhati.” Para itong curriculum na therapeutic ang end result. Iniiwan ko ito sa mga eksperto sa bukirin ng pastoral counseling sakaling nais natin na gawin ito.

Panghuli, nakakaluwalhati din sa pakiramdam na ang pagtangis natin o pagdadalamhati laban sa kasamaan sa ating kultura at lipunan ay isang tanda ng pagiging mabuting Cristiano. Maaari kayang idagdag na hindi lamang dapat manatili sa pagdadalamhati kundi sangkapan nawa ito ng gawang mabuti? Hindi kaya matapos tangisan ang walang habas na illegal logging ay sumulat din at mag-lobby ang Cristiano sa mga pulitikong sakop ang pangangalaga sa kapaligiran na hulihin at parusahan ang mga gumagawa ng ating ikinadadalamhati--- pagbaha, landslide, flash floods at iba pang sakunang dulot ng pamumutol ng punong deklarado namang hindi dapat kahuyin! Dahil naniniwala ang responder na ang luwalhati ay higit ding nararamdaman sa aspeto ng tagumpay. Dalawang messages ko sa Messenger ni City Mayor Magalong ang nakita kong sinolusyunan. Una ay ang pagkakaroon ng tatlong linya ng sasakyan sa corner ng Magsaysay at Bonifacio- isa pakaliwa sa SLU, isa pakanan sa Session at isa direktso sa Centermall. Dati ay dalawa lang ito. Pangalawa ay ang mga street signs na halos hindi na makita doon din sa Bonifacio St. Ito ay noong before pandemic na hinahatid ko ang aking anak sa SLU.

Bilang responder at pangulo ng seminaryo, bilang isang pamayanang hindi manhid sa mga nangyayaring kabuktutan sa ating paligid, sisikapin natin ang paglalaan ng pananalangin pastoral sa bawat pagsamba sa ating chapel services. Magiging mas sensitibo tayo sa mga balita at sa pakikidalamhati at pagtugon sa mga isyung dapat dalamhatian. Hindi nangangahulugan na ang mga seminarista ay magma-martsa sa Session Road upang ipanawagan ang mga isyung ito kundi mag-ma-martsa ang bawat isa sa trono at presensya ng Diyos upang ang kaluwalhatian ay maranasan ng sarili at ng bayan.

Ang UBC Manila ay dumanas ng madugong division sa buhay nito bilang isang iglesya dahil sa hindi napakagandang karanasan sa petsang May 5. Nang malaman ko ito sa kanilang kasaysayan, itinalaga namin ang Mayo a cinco bilang araw ng pag-aayuno at pag-alala sa isang mapait na karanasan na nagdulot ng dalamhati sa marami. Sa gayon, ang pananalangin at fasting ay nakatuon sa layuning huwag ng maulit muli ang masamang bangungot na ito sa iglesya.

Kaya naman, sa taunang pagdiriwang ng PBTS ng anibersaryo tuwing July 15, idedeklara naman natin ang July 16 bilang pagdadalamhati sa mga bansang dumaranas ng kahirapan dulot ng mga natural na kalamidad gaya ng earthquake na naganap noong July 16, 1990. Maaaring gawin ang pananalangin sa bawat klase sa araw na ito nang may sapat na impormasyon sa mga dapat ipagdalamhati. Sa gayon, hindi lang kaluwalhatian ang hangad natin sa buhay seminaryo kundi ang pagtulong na mailuwal ang dalamhati ng ibang tao. Gagawin natin itong makabuluhan, walang palya, at sinasadya---baka sakaling sa pamamagitan nito, matuto na tayong magdalamhati. Sabi nga ng ating tampok na presentor, “hindi tayo marunong magdalamhati.” Samakatuwid, aking ipinapalagay na puwede nating itong matutuhan.

Purihin ang Diyos na nakikidalamhati sa atin. Sa kanya ang kaluwalhatian, magpakailanman!

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## RESPONSE #2

### Malayo Pa Ang Umaga

*Michael Janapin*

Marhay na aga sa indong gabos na uragon na yaon ngunyan digdi. Maraming salamat po sa ating panauhing pandangal sa pagtitipong ito. Lubos ang aming kagalakan sa inyong pagpapaunlak sa aming imbitasyon na kayo'y pumarito at makipagtalastasan patungkol sa isang isyu na relevant at significant sa pangkalahatang churches dito sa Pilipinas.

Una sa lahat ang ating tagapagsalita at punong presenter ay bihasa at batikan sa larangan ng teolohiya. Kaya naman, isang ganap na karangalan ang maatasang magbasa ng kanyang sulatin, at magbigay ng angkop na tugon dito, bagamat may kaakibat na mabigat na responsibilidad ang pagbibigay tugon na ito.

Ikalawa, ang paksa natin ngayon ay mayroon ding kabigatan. Ano nga ba ang alam ko personally sa dalahamhati? Kaya ko nga ba talagang ipaliwanag kung ano ang luwalhati? Kagaya ng karamihang Filipino, I have my own shares of grief and suffering. Ako po ay lumaki sa angkang anak-pawis, sa sektor ng mga manggagawa. Naranasan ko pong ma-look down ng mga kaklase at kapitbahay dahil sa antas ng aming pamumuhay: isang kahig, isang tuka. Nasa bingit kami ng poverty line. Kaya naman, sa larangan ng pagdadalamhati, pighati, at walang katapusang dalita, pwede kong sabihin na ידעתי הדברים (*yada'ti hadevarim*): I “know” these things.

Yun lang, parang di ko pa ata nararanasan ever ang luwalhati. O masyado lang mataas ang aking mga expectations? Kaya nung binabasa ko na ang isinulat ng ating butihing dalubhasa sa teolohiya, naging alerto po ako sa mga bagay na makakapagpalawig pa sa aking personal na pananaw patungkol sa paksang dalamhati at luwalhati. At pagkatapos kong basahin at pagnilay-nilayan ang angkop na kasagutan sa kanyang papel, napagdesisyunan kong i-entitle ang aking response na: MALAYO PA ANG UMAGA.

Ito po ay hango sa komposisyon ni Ka Rey Valera,<sup>1</sup> isang pinoy na makata na ang appeal ay pang-masa. Ang awitin pong ito ay muling sumikat dahil sa isa pang hapong soap opera na pinamagatang “Ula,” na pinagaganapan ni Judy Ann Santos noong 1988.

I would like to respond to Dr. Villanueva’s paper in sections. At first, I was contemplating on arranging it thematically: the good, the bad, and the ugly. But then, after reading it, I feel like some categories might be left blank. Overall, the paper

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<sup>1</sup>For more information on the artist, please see his biographical sketch here, IMDB, “Rey Valera,” Biography, accessed <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1311586/bio/>

falls into the first category: the good. And there are portions that could be labeled as: “not-so-bad,” and still the other concepts could fall into the: “nice-try-but-no-thank-you” category. Nothing is really bad nor ugly. In fact, I was so pleased reading this paper. Instead of a dense and boring paper, Dr. Villanueva’s is quite the opposite. After printing it the first time and seeing that it was 16 pages long, my initial reaction was OMG. This gave me assurance that Dr. Villanueva’s paper is thorough and well researched and that in turn, it demands a thorough response as well.

So, I hardened my will and set my mind to a grueling task of reading it. But to my surprise, it wasn’t a bad experience at all. In fact, I was so pleased reading this paper. Just reading about a parroting choice expletives in my own heart language made my day.

### **Outline of the Paper**

Dr. Villanueva’s paper is organized in this way:

First, he talked about the importance of language and its role in doing theology.

Second, he worked on developing a “contextually” sensitive way of developing an understanding of grief/lament and glory.

And finally, utilizing what we have in our language and culture, he presented an understanding of the concepts that can be understood well in our context that is faithful to the biblical picture of lament and glory.

In my response, I will be utilizing my own understanding as a Filipino and as a teacher of Biblical Hebrew and the Old Testament.

### **Language and Doing Theology**

The first section is the springboard to the entire paper. It discussed the importance of language in doing theology. More so, the use of one’s own language in developing a contextually sensitive theology that is relevant and yet still faithful to the Bible. I agree wholeheartedly with the author’s lament that this is a need for us today. And he explained in his paper why he thinks this is the case. It is indeed lamentable that after centuries of Christian presence in the Philippines, the gospel is still yet to take hold in the hearts of individual Filipinos in particular, and the society in general. His observation why this may be true is due to the failure of translating the gospel at its deepest level: cultural translation. He used the words, “hindi naisa-kultura ang mensahe sa Filipino.”

Dr. Villanueva asserts that language is the window that we can use to peek into the inner workings of a culture. He has painstakingly built up a solid array of arguments that supports this theory. The impression I got from his arguments is that, this lamentable reason for not being able to Filipinize the gospel is that we are not

using our own language in doing theology. We are still tied up to the West, in terms of theological expressions, by using the English language.

Thus, he proposes the utilization of our own language in doing theology for Filipinos. I agree with him in these assessments. In fact, I tell my students that their jobs as theologians is to find culturally sensitive and relevant expressions of the gospel in their own contexts. I also have challenged our Theology professors to make “Contextual Theology” and “Doing Asian Theology” as the main courses in their department to address this need.

Although I would humbly disagree with his assertion that “ang problema, panay tayo Ingles.” This is true up to a point and only while holding certain assumptions in mind. However, translating the gospel into the vernacular is not enough. As the band Extreme sang during the 90s: It is “*more than words.*”

As much as I love the Filipino languages, and as much as I wanted to do theology in those languages, I don’t want to demonize the English language. I would like to offer that: It is still very much possible to do Filipino/Asian theology using the English language. Of course, nothing beats expressing the truths about God in our own language. However, making this as the ultimate metric of true contextualization is fanciful at best. I have read books written in the English language, but Asian at heart. *Water Buffalo Theology* by Kosuke Koyama immediately comes to mind. Ka Jose de Mesa has also produced books written in English and yet the concepts he explored are very much localized.

As a side note: I find it amusing to read in Dr. Villanueva’s paper Melba Maggay’s comment about not going to theological schools because she does not want to be colonized twice. Maybe she has not yet heard of ATS or PBTS who are bent on doing Filipino/Asian theology. As both members of the ATESEA, our seminaries are evaluated in terms of providing contextually-sensitive and Independent-from-the-West-in-terms-of-Finances-and-Influence theological education in our local/regional spheres.

Indeed, there is a lack of theological expressions in our own language and it is a noble cause to address this issue and make efforts to rectify it. However, I am proposing that the transformation of the deep structures within our culture should be our ultimate goal. Yes, this can be achieved by utilizing the heart language. NGEM, itadta ket there is a great lack in this area. What we have are ideas expressed in another language that needed experts to make it palatable and consumable by the common people. It is highly desirable if these expressions are rooted in our culture and easily accessible by all. But we are not there yet. But we are striving forward to get there.

The next section of the paper is an excellent example of doing theology in the vernacular. I really appreciate reading biblical concepts in my heart language. And I really find his exposition and translation of the concept into our Filipino culture. Yun lang, meron lamang akong kaunting agam-agam sa obserbasyon na ginawa niya sa papel na ito. Ito ay ang claim niya na hindi tayo marunong magdalamatni. Paano ito nasabi ng ating tagapagsalita?

Ikinumpara niya na sa Bibliya ay may proseso o progression from grief to glory,

from lament to praise. Pagkatapos ay inobserbahan niya ang ating kultura na kung saan ay direktong agad tayo sa praise. Dahil dito, ang naging konklusyon ay di naman talaga tayo marunong magdalahati.

Nais ko ngayon ibalik ang katanungang, talaga nga bang hindi? Para kasing na-deconstruct<sup>2</sup> ni Dr. Villanueva ang kanyang sariling argumento nung sinaliksik niya ang ating wika patungkol sa pagdadalahamhati at ginamit niya itong patunay na nasa “deep structure of our culture” (sarili kong mga salita) ay matatagpuan ang konsepto ng dahilani. Kung totoo nga na di tayo marunong magdalahati, paano nangyari na sandamakmak at sangkatutak ang nailistang salita para sa konseptong ito?

Marahil ang gustong patukuyan ng ating tagapagsalita ay, hindi tayo dumadaan sa tamang proseso ng pagdadalahamhati. Kung ganyan naman, kaninong konsepto ba ng pagdalahamhati ang gagamitin nating batayan o sukatan para malaman kung tayo nga ay marunong magdalahamhati o hindi? Hindi ba’t ang ating mga teksto sa sikolohiya ay nanggaling din sa kanluran? Hindi kaya na ang kanluraning proseso ng pagdalahamhati ang ating ginagamit na batayan?

Paano nga ba magdalahamhati ang mga Pinoy? Mayroon akong isang proposal. Tayong mga Pilipino, dulot ng daang taong pagkakasakop ng mga dayuhan, ay natutong magdalahamhati in our own way: either individually or as a group. Para sa akin, isang virtue ang nadevelop natin as a nation whenever we face dire circumstances. Naturingan na tayong resilient sa mga trahedyang. Sanay na, wika nga nila. Saan ka makakakita ng mga taong binaha, binagyo, nilindol, ninakawan, ay nakukuha pa ring mag-selfie at ngumiti. Kung papakinggan natin ang Kanluraning pananaw, sasabihin nila na tayo ay in denial or at its worst, dapat nasa mental hospital. In denial nga ba? Ang isa pang maaring paliwanag dito ay nakapag develop na tayo ng sarili nating coping mechanism sa gitna ng matinding hinagpis at pasakit. Ano naman ang mali sa coping mechanism? Hindi ba’t yan ay defense mechanism ng ating kaisipan para manatili ang ating katinuan?

May isa lamang akong dagdag sa paggamit ng aklat ng Salmo sa papel na ito. Napakaganda kasi ng diskusyon patungkol sa gamit ng Salmo sa pagsamba ng mga Israelita kay Yahweh. Ayon sa ating tagapagsalita, ay makakakita ka ng malaking pagbabago sa tono ng mga salmo. Mula sa hinagpis, nagpalit ito kaagad ng pagpupuri. Maliban sa iilang mga salmo, ang overall movement of the Psalms is from grief to rejoicing; lament to praise. Ibig bagang sabihin ay habang nagpapatuloy ka mula unang salmo hanggang sa ika-isandaan at limampu, mapapansin mo na ang pagtungo sa pagpupuri ay ang kanyang natural progression. At sa lahat ng ito, mapapansin mo na kahit nasaan ka sa “seasons of life”<sup>3</sup> (ayon kay Brueggemann), ang focus ng

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<sup>2</sup>For an in-depth discussion on deconstructionism, please see this article at Britannica, s. v. “deconstruction,” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/deconstruction>.

<sup>3</sup>Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2002), 8. Ang punto ni Brueggemann dito sa kanyang discussion ng seasons of life ay binabalot ng Psalms of orientation, psalms of disorientation, and psalm of new orientation. Ang season of life in the psalms of orientation ay ang panahon kung saan tayo ay nasa maayos na kalagayan kung saan tayo ay punong-puno ng pasasalamat. Sabi pa nya, ito ay ang variety ng “joy, delight, goodness, coherence and reliability

mga mananampalataya ay na kay Yahweh lamang. Ito ay isang back-and-forth swing mula sa Sheol patungong Shalom. Anong klaseng conjunction ba ang naikabit natin sa “Dalamhati AT Luwalhati”? Di ba ang salitang “at”? Sa isipan natin, ito ba ay magkasabay na nararanasan o magkahiwalay? Maari kayang ito ay sabay maranasan? Na sa gitna ng ating pagdadalahamhati, ay may kaakibat na din na luwalhati? O ang luwalhati ay mararanasan lamang matapos na “mai-luwal” ang hati? Kung dating nasa “dalam”, ang hati, ang pagka-luwal naman ng hati ay ang natural consequence nito? Ang kompartmentalisasyon ba ay Asian or Western? Ano ba ang Asian framework? Differentiation or Integration?

Sa Hebrew bible, ang *VAV* ay napaka versatile. Pwede siyang conjunctive, disjunctive, shows progression, consequence, and concurrence. So, ang gamit ng conjunction na ito ay pwedeng sa proseso ng pagdadalam ng ating hati, sa presensya ng Diyos ito ay nailuluwal na din.

### Bitin

Finally, nabitin ako sa papel. Nag-enjoy ako sa talakayan ng dalamhati. Nabitin ako sa diskusyon ng luwalhati. Maaaring ito ay parating pa lamang. Gaya nga ng sabi ni Kuya Rey:

Malayo pa ang umaga.  
 Kahit sa dilim, naghihintay pa rin.  
 Umaasang, bukas ay may liwanag sa aking buhay,  
 umaga ko'y aking hinihintay.  
 Sadya kayang ang buhay sa mundo  
 Ay kay pait, walang kasing lupit  
 Kailan kaya ako'y 'di na luluha?  
 At ang aking pangarap ay unti-unting matutupad  
 Malayo pa ang umaga  
 'Di matanaw ang pag-asa  
 Hanggang kailan matitiis ang paghihirap ko?

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of God, God's creation, and God's governing law.” (8) kasunod daw ng season of life sa psalm of disorientation kung saan andoon ang anguished seasons of hurt, alienation, suffering, and death. These evokes rage, resentment, self-pity, and hatred. Ang huli ay ang psalm of new orientation kung saan nag-uumpaw ang mga bagong kaloob ng Dios, ang may kagalakang naghahati sa kawalang pag-asa; kung saan bumubulaga ang liwanag sa gitna ng pusikit na kadiliman. (8) Para kay Brueggemann, ito ang sorpresa ng Magandang Balita. Ang Dios ang naglilipat sa atin sa bagong kaganapan. Ginagawa nyang bago ang lahat, “fresh intrusion”. Ang pagbabagong ito ay transformational at hindi developmental: kaya nga hindi sya masyadong halata o agaw-pansin. Ito ay malumanay at natural. Mula sa mga pasakit at mga pagkakataong hindi inaakala doon nagaganap ang pagbabago. May bago at may luma, may pagbabago at may binabago, pinipilit nating yakapin ang luma at nananaghiling manatili doon ngunit ang paanyaya ng Salmo ay ang “decisive moves of faith.” (9)

At sa dilim hinahanap ang pag-asa na walang landas  
Kailan ba darating ang bukas para sa 'kin?  
Malayo pa ang umaga...

Pero sana lumapit na.

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# **RHETORIC OF REMEMBRANCE IN JOB 29–30: A Reflection of Job’s Anthropomorphic Concept of God as a Means to Assuage Pain**

*Myra G. Patrocinio*

## **Introduction**

The Covid-19 pandemic brought about a new era in history where humanity began to rethink their existence and immortality. The dramatic loss of lives and the social and economic disruptions definitely affected the way the world looks at life and death. The closure of several places of worship and work brought about unprecedented poverty physically and spiritually. The post-Covid world will never be the same again. People from different walks of life turned to social media such as TikTok, Facebook, Instagram and the likes as means to assuage their pains and combat anxiety and uncertainty as a result of the pandemic. Despite these survival strategies, studies show that several people are still on the brink of emotional and spiritual breakdown. This kind of struggle is also depicted in the Bible, especially in the book of Job.

The story of Job in the Bible is one of the most sought-after narratives because of its real depiction of human life and loss, and the protagonist’s ability and will to survive amidst pains and grief. This paper seeks to establish Job’s anthropomorphic understanding of God through his recollection of his past as primary means to alleviate his pain in times of sufferings. More often than not, one’s knowledge of God as experienced in the past, becomes a strong factor that propels one’s theological and practical responses to a present situation of pain and suffering rather than the temporary pleasures the world has to offer. Job’s remembrance of God’s past works in his life enables him to survive his predicaments and ordeals. This essay acknowledges the contribution of socio-scientific theories and psychological interventions in responding to psycho-social anxiety and threats but it will not be discussed here as I will only focus on the theological contribution and significance of Job’s life and experience to argue that one’s understanding of God is a primary factor and means to overcome pain.

## **The Literary Framework of Job 29–30**

Job 29–30 is part of Job’s final discourses and complaints against God (Job 27: 1–31:40) with a hymn of wisdom interlude in Job 28; followed by a prose section (Job 32: 1–5) that introduces Elihu’s rebuke against Job and his three friends (Job 32: 6– 37: 24); and the “out of heavy windstorm” (הַסְעָרָה) [מִן־הַסְעָרָה] discourses

of God to Job and judgment to his friends (Job 38: 1–41: 34).<sup>1</sup> Job's final speech can be divided into two cycles signified by the introductory statement, מְשַׁלּוֹ שֵׁאת אִיּוֹב וַיִּסֵּר (Job continued to pronounce his judicial speech and said...) [Job 27: 1; 29: 1]). My translation of מְשַׁלּוֹ is an elaborated interpretation, but Norman C. Habel suggests that the term could refer to a formal address or testimony before a public assembly, which also supports my preferred translation.<sup>2</sup> The possibility of this interpretation and translation is possible since the term could have various meanings such as "formal speech," "proverb," "saying," or "parable."

The first cycle begins in chapter 27 wherein Job holds fast to his integrity followed by the enigmatic wisdom hymn in chapter 28. The second cycle is in chapters 29–31 that deals with Job's memory of the past, his present ordeal, and his claim for his character's credibility. The second cycle is the main concern of my essay, especially chapters 29–30. In chapter 29, Job's remembrance of his past is shrouded with metaphorical descriptions of and allusions to conventions and descriptions of human achievements and privileges that are not often shared to many. But in the chapter that follows, we see an intensely sorrowful human being who lost not only his possessions and power but his integrity in the eyes of his community. The recollection of the past in comparison with Job's present circumstance is an act of vexation expressed by a rhetorical claim and affirmation of ethos necessary for Job to overcome his present ordeal.

P. W. Skehan asserts that the contents and elements of chapters 29–31 already appeared in the previous discourses of the book especially in Job's introductory speech in chapter 3 and in the cycle of discourses between him and his friends in chapters 4–14.<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, Wharton considers these chapters as a repetition and elaboration of chapters 1 and 2 as observed by the narrator, but this time it is coming from the point of view of Job himself.<sup>4</sup> N. Habel disagrees with the traditional idea that chapter

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<sup>1</sup>Translations are my own rendering unless mentioned otherwise. Other versions are consulted if deemed necessary for a more appropriate and accurate translation.

<sup>2</sup>Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary* (Old Testament Library Series; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1985), 404. For a recent scholarly work on significant issues on the book of Job stemming from its literary structure to its historical and canonical placement and features, see Manfred Oeming and Konrad Schmid, *Job's Journey: Stations of Suffering* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015). For a comprehensive commentary based on an in-depth textual analysis, provenance, and historical reception of the book, see C. L. Seow, *Job 1–21: Interpretation and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013). For a thorough investigation on the notion and meaning of death, Dan Mathewson, *Death and Survival in the Book of Job: Desymbolization and Traumatic Experience* (Library of Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament Studies 5; ed. Claudia V. Camp and Andrew Mein; New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2006); For other themes and motif in the book of Job, Christopher Hays, "There Is Hope for a Tree: Job's Hope for the Afterlife in the Light of Egyptian Tree Imagery," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 77, no. 1 (January 2015): 42–68; F. Rachel Magdalene, "Job's Wife as Hero: A Feminist-forensic Reading of the Book of Job," *Biblical Interpretation* 14, no. 3 (June 2006): 209–258; and Daniel J. Estes, "Job 28 in Its Literary Context," *JESOT* 2, no. 2 (2013): 151–164.

<sup>3</sup>Patrick W. Skehan, "Job's Final Plea (Job 29–31) and the Lord's Reply (Job 38–41)," *Biblica* 45, no. 1 (1964 1964): 51. His study focuses on the structure of the chapters and its relationship with God's discourses in the later chapters. He also observes the parallel tripartite structures of Job's concluding remarks with God's response. Thus, he concludes that chapters 29–31 are interpolated in order to serve the book's conclusion.

<sup>4</sup>James A. Wharton, *Job* (Westminster Commentary; Louisville, KY: WJKP, 1999), 118.

29–31 is a monologue but recognizes it as “a formal testimony” implied by the Hebrew word מִשְׁפָּט. In spite of these contradicting views, what we can see is a man struggling to survive against a quicksand. Instead of relying to the traditional wisdom and theological assertions of his three friends—Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, Job provokes God to act justly in reference to his own act of justice in administering people in the past. Job’s view of God in this sense is defined in reference to Job’s self-orientation and experience.

### Job’s Rhetoric of Remembrance in Chapter 29–30

Job’s final defense is introduced by the phrase וַיִּסַּף אִיּוֹב שְׂאֵת מִשְׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר (“Job continued to pronounce his judicial speech and said...” Job 27: 1; 29: 1). The *hiphil* form of יִסַּף implies continuity although it may also mean a repetition of a certain action especially if it is followed by an infinitive (שְׂאֵת אִיּוֹב וַיִּסַּף).<sup>5</sup> This structure is crucial in response to those who are arguing that there is a sudden gap between these chapters and chapter 28. In this kind of reading, chapters 29–31 serve as a bridge to chapter 28 and the discourse of God in chapters 38–41.<sup>6</sup> Job’s recollection of the past in comparison with his present situation is a rhetorical device, a revolutionary appeal to an unjust adversary that serves as his means of survival. Job’s self-presentation as one who acts justly (Job 29: 12–17) is an antithesis to God’s silence and deliberate act to convict him as a serious offender (Job 30: 11; 19–23). In light of this reading, Job

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<sup>5</sup>Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann Jakob Stamm, “יִסַּף,” *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon on the Old Testament (HALOT)* Vol. 1, Rev. ed. M.E.J. Richardson, trans. (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Academic, 1994), 1418.

<sup>6</sup>For a literary analysis and function of the chapter in light of Job’s discourses and the entire book, see Daniel J. Estes, “Job in Its Literary Context,” *Journal for the Evangelical Study of the Old Testament*, 2, no. 2 (2013): 151–164. Another scholar, A. Pelham argues for the authenticity of this chapter as coming from Job’s mouth. She further explains that Job’s “multiplicity of paths” to wisdom language is also supported by God’s use of “paths language” but in a “non–metaphorical” sense compared with Job’s metaphorical tendencies [Abigail Pelham, “Metaphorical Paths and the End of Wisdom in the Book of Job,” *Word & World* 31, no. 4 (September 2011): 381–388]. The exclusion of chapter 28 in the chosen literary unit is due to its significant theme and motif that deserves another form of research. S. Mitchell intentionally omitted chapter 28 in his own translation of the book of Job [*Into the Whirlwind: A Translation of the Book of Job* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979)]. While L. Perdue and S. Balentine suggest that the sayings could be also be attributed to Elihu or Zophar, respectively; for Elihu (Job 28: 32–37), see Perdue, *The Sword and Stylus*, 150; For Zophar (Job 28:12–13; 20–22; 11:7–12), Balentine, Job, 416]. But other scholars such as R. L. Alden and A. Pelham attribute the speech to Job and recognize its significant function to the entire message of the book of Job [Robert L. Alden, *Job* (vol. 11 of *New American Commentary*; Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1993), 269; Pelham, “Metaphorical Paths,” 387]. James A. Wharton states that it is difficult to produce a consensus as to who is the speaker in the chapter, but asserts that the chapter “invites the present-day reader of Job to step back from everything that has been said so far and reflect on the ultimate limits that stand athwart the age-old human urgency to know, to understand, to find the way to authentic Wisdom” [*Job* (Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville, KY: WJK Press, 1999), 114]. Amidst these differing views, the significance of Job 28 cannot be devalued for it presents, perhaps the most important theme in the entire book, wisdom and its hidden wonders and mysteries.

views God as an unjust master whose toleration of evil is trenchant and whose silence in his present suffering is irreconcilable.

In chapter 29, Job began his melancholic recollection by pointing out when God was watching over him (יְשׁוּבָה יְשׁוּבָה, Job 29: 2) and when God was his most intimate confidant (בְּסוּד אֱלֹהִים, Job 29:4). He was recalling the prime of his years when he could savor the taste of God's goodness and intimacy, similar with the notion of early autumn harvest.<sup>7</sup> He was also invoking the memory of the past when he could still enjoy the fruits of his own labor including the vivid reminiscences of his children and God's presence, which for him symbolized God's favor and blessings. The reminder of God's watchful eyes was a comfort and security for him in the past but in that prevailing condition he disdained it (Job 7: 8–12; 17–21; 10: 20). Job's knowledge of God was shortsighted that it was defined merely by the prosperity and the authority he once enjoyed. Nonetheless, by invoking this vivid memory, he was in a way trying to figure things out and understand his present circumstance.

After alluding to God's protection, providence, and prosperity, Job enumerated his moral and ethical accolades (29: 12–25) and authority in verses 6–11. In essence, Job views God in reference to himself, a characteristic he shares with most theists (including Christians). This notion bridges Job's rhetoric with God's response in the subsequent chapters. In verse 9, Job recounted when the שְׂרִים or the nobles of the city were silenced before his presence. This is expressed in the Hebrew idiom נָכַר יָשִׁמוּ לְפִיָּהֶם (lit. "they placed their hands upon their mouth"). The same expression is found in Job 21: 5 in referring to the action that Job is expecting from his friends. In verse 18, there is a sudden allusion to death. But this is not the death that is being echoed in chapter 3, wherein death means descending into *Sheol* where there is no hope. Part of the reckoning is the view that death is not a melancholic descent into the abyss of chaos and nothingness. In the past, Job looked at death as a fulfillment of life wherein he would die within the bounds of his household (nest, קֶן)<sup>8</sup> a thing to behold after spending days of felicity.<sup>9</sup>

The recollection of Job acting as a patriarch who was concerned with the needs and protection of his household interplayed with his rhetoric of remembrance, which may imply God's seeming forgetfulness to care for Job as a father. In this case, Job's self-presentation as a responsible judge in his village was a protest against God and a call for Him to exercise justice in his case. God in Job's understanding promoted order and justice within life and society, which was a contradiction to a silent God he encountered in his ordeal. This anthropomorphic view and representation of God in

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<sup>7</sup>The Hebrew root חָרַךְ in Aramaic and Akkadian means "young" or "to be early", which may denote the notion of early harvest rather than "winter" as some translations rendered [Koehler and Baumgartner, "חָרַךְ," *HALOT* 1:354].

<sup>8</sup>The term implies a secure dwelling as used in Exo. 25: 32; 37: 18. It may also refer to one's household as used in Deut. 32: 11 and Isa. 16:2 [John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 392]. This term is still the subject of many interpretations and debates today.

<sup>9</sup>Samuel E. Balentine, *Job* (Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary: Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2006), 440. He asserts that Job's appeal to memory of the past is "a yearning to return to them" denoted by the phrase מִיָּמֵי תַנְנִי (Job 29: 2, "O that..."). He considers the phrase as an important element in Job's rhetoric. He further claims that the use of strong and hyperbolic imagery to describe his past life conveys the extent of God's intimacy with him.

light of Job's character and life could have been a blasphemous assertion to traditional faith and dogma, but this was a survival strategy that Job used against the tirades of his three friends and the seeming injustice and hiddenness of God at that moment of torment.

### ***Rhetoric of Remembrance as an Appeal for Just Trial***

Chapters 29–30 can only make full sense if read together as a whole. Job's afflictions can only be depicted vividly if seen in light of chapter 29. James A. Wharton clearly elaborates the importance of these chapters in relation to the brokenness that Job himself felt within him as portrayed in his discourses.<sup>10</sup> A seeming tension between chapter 29 and 30 is building up regarding Job's character and moral integrity, but to remove the other would devalue the rhetorical situation that is being presented in Job's appeal. In chapter 30: 1–10, Job relegated himself to the abominable class of the society. C. Newsome considers this appeal of Job as deep agony caused by his unforeseen demise into the lowest rank of the society.<sup>11</sup> A graphic depiction of Job's tribulation was beyond imagination as he identified himself with people who were considered the "scum" of the society.<sup>12</sup> The identity of this group of people is still being disputed and Job's attitude towards them as part of his rhetoric is somewhat unlikely in comparison with chapter 29.<sup>13</sup> Job's condition as demonstrated in the Bible is interpreted by these scholars is incogitable. Crenshaw vividly describes Job's intense and extreme tribulation:

Job's physical suffering paled in comparison with his mental agony over this unfathomable face of God, which no longer smiles upon him but now contorts angrily before him. It seems to Job that this God actively destroys all hope, wearing it away like the slow erosion of rocks brought about by flowing water. Job perceives an element of unfairness in the natural order of things which grants sure expectation that a tree will put forth new growth after it has been cut down, provided sufficient water reaches the stump, but denies similar hope to humans. Memory of previous relationship with God evokes an astonishing declaration: God will remember me when it is too late, and he will long for his faithful servant . . . An eclipse of God took place at the precise moment of Job's pressing need for answers. Faced with silence from his former dialogue partner, and confronted with empty words from human substitutes, the distraught father adopted extreme measures of provocation. The bold charges against God aimed at a single point: to evoke

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<sup>10</sup>James A. Wharton, *Job* (Westminster Commentary; Louisville, KY: WJKP, 1999), 125.

<sup>11</sup>Carol A. Newsome, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imagination*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 193–194.

<sup>12</sup>Wharton, *Job*, 125.

<sup>13</sup>Matthewson, *Death and Survival*, 156. Matthewson considers these verses as symbolic of Job's notion of honor and shame wherein he finds ways to vindicate himself.

God's response at any cost. Confident that sinner dared not take a stand before God, Job aspired to personal vindication by overcoming divine silence.<sup>14</sup>

In the face of deep anguish and sorrow, Job was not only faced with daunting accusations of his friends. He was also besieged by a deafening silence from God. In chapter 29, Job re-imagined the once picturesque and felicitous relationship he had with God, but in chapter 30 none of that memory could be compared to the utter

darkness and brokenness of soul that Job experienced.<sup>15</sup> The motif of friendship shattered by friction and faction because of Job's case and condition, leading to feelings of isolation both from his own household and the entire community, reverberates in the book of Job and other wisdom books (Job 6: 14–15; 12: 4; 19: 13–19; 29: 4; Psalm 55: 12–14; 20–21; Sirach 37: 1–6). This communal impasse is one of the most prominent themes in the book of Job to describe his relationship with God and even with his three friends.

In Job 30: 16–20, Job painfully articulates his indescribable anguish by describing how his situation changed from the one described in the previous chapter.<sup>16</sup> In a similar line of thought, J. E. Hartley considers the chapters as “avowal of innocence” wherein Job was urging God to examine the integrity of his character.<sup>17</sup> In chapter 29: 7–25, the regality and integrity of Job's own justice and righteousness which portrays the heavenly scene in the prologue, when God described Job before the “hasatan” is portrayed in intense theatrical rhetoric.<sup>18</sup> These suggestions affirm Job's longing to be vindicated but I also would like to add that these chapters do not only reflect Job's moral and ethical integrity but herein also lies his hope and knowledge of who God is. Chapter 30 is an antithesis of chapter 29. The mode of the

<sup>14</sup>James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (Atlanta, GA: JK Press, 1981), 109, 119.

<sup>15</sup>Bernd Janowski, *Arguing with God: A Theological Anthropology of the Psalms* (Louisville, KY: WJK Press, 2013), 174–180. One of the prevailing themes in wisdom tradition is the notion of a friend becoming an enemy, which is now the best description of Job's situation.

<sup>16</sup>The phrase עָלַי תִּשָּׁפֵךְ נַפְשִׁי (‘‘my soul is poured out against me’’) in verse 16, painstakingly expressed Job's agony that went beyond his physical affliction and the losses that he experienced. The preposition עַל is commonly used rendered as ‘‘with, upon, to, towards, on account of, against’’ but in the context of this passage, the latter is the best translation used in a hostile sense [Koehler and Baumgartner, ‘‘עַל,’’ *HALOT* 1:826]. The description of Job's circumstance is one of pathos, wherein Job is arousing a sense of clemency from his audience. The hostile sense of the preposition עַל can be considered valid in view of the rhetorical situation of the text. Job's very own life is used as a bait to trap him into the abyss of injustice and equivocation. NRS, JPS and ESV translated the phrase as ‘‘And now my soul is poured out within me’’ that may indicate emotional and psychological pain. NIV and CJB both preferred the idea of a life that is fleeting--- ‘‘my life is ebbing away.’’ KJV rendered it as ‘‘And now my soul is poured out upon me.’’ Habel prefers ‘‘So now my life drains from me’’ [*The Book of Job*, 414]. The same sentiment is echoed in a Sumerian variation of Job motif whose main character is in anguish because he was forsaken and tormented by the silence of the god who begot him: ‘‘My god, you who are my father who begot me, [lift up] my face... how long will you leave me unguided?’’ [‘‘Man and His God,’’ translated by S. N. Kramer (*ANET*, 589–591). See also James B. Pritchard, ed, *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 352–357.

<sup>17</sup>C. Westermann, *The Structure of the Book of Job: A Form-Critical Analysis* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1981), 39

<sup>18</sup>J. E. Hartley, 400.

discourse from adulation of the past turned into a dirge of pain and anger. In this chapter, an interplay of memory of the past and his present ordeal is in juxtaposition as Job's response to his situation and a means to assuage his grief and despair. This survival approach of Job may be sacrilegious and unorthodox to many people, including Christians, but there is a high form of theology and practicality here that we need to see as readers and interpreters. Job's radical approach demonstrates the need for an Absolute Arbiter to judge and uphold his case.

In Job's arguments, there are seeming inconsistencies in his theological premises that can be explained in relation to his own experience. And as Bruce Zuckerman further asserts, "it is only in the Theophany, where God rejects Job's legal gambit, that the correspondences are restored to what they should be, with God once more in His proper place as the Master of the universe, beyond all questioning or comprehension by humanity."<sup>19</sup> Job's later encounter with the Powerful Creator in chapters 38 to 41 would lead him to repent in humble adoration; but prior to that conversion experience, Job's longing for vindication and knowledge of God is highly-framed within the finiteness of his own experience. On the other hand, in spite of the terrible anguish, Job was willing to own his transgressions publicly, despite the temptation to conceal as implied in the continuation of appeal in Job 31: 29–37 that climaxed his desire to stand in trial before the assembly, particularly before the silent God.<sup>20</sup> Regardless of the judgment of his three companions and his own self-justification and righteousness, we can still see Job's willingness to be judged by God himself.

### **Rhetoric of Remembrance as an Expression of Job's Concept of God**

There are notable anthropomorphic notions of God expressed in Job's rhetorical argumentation in chapters 29–30. In chapter 29, Job used metaphorical imagery of friendship and relationships. God was presented as אֹר (light) in verse 3 and סֹד (an intimate confidant) in verse 4. Alden acknowledges that the interpretation of the latter as an intimate friendship is not accepted by all, but he considers these imageries as symbolic of God's guidance and security.<sup>21</sup> Newsom claims that Job's appeal seen in a social level is no more than "a literary device, a fictive innovation of the author" in order to counteract social ostracism similar with the ritual of re-integrating a suppliant into the community as in the case of Job.<sup>22</sup> This is a possible interpretation based on social-scientific reading of the text that if followed without restraint may deny the theological meaning of the book of Job.

When Job remembers the glorious days of his life, the emphasis of relationship was explicit in his rhetoric. Newsom's interpretation of the social relevance of chapter

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<sup>19</sup>Wharton, *Job*, 122.

<sup>20</sup>Bruce Zuckerman, *Job the Silent: A Study in Historical Counterpoint*, (New York, NY: WJKP, 199), 147.

<sup>21</sup>Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 195.

<sup>22</sup>Robert L. Alden, *Job* (vol 11 of New America Commentary; Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1993), 280–281.

29–30 in Job’s context clarifies the importance of the relationship depicted in Job’s arguments. In fact, the languages that Job used in presenting his case was something that is intelligible to whomever he was directing the address or his formal appeal.<sup>23</sup> Job 29–30 can be divided into sections based on personal and communal relationships mentioned in his speech: (1) Job’s relationship with God, both as confidant and adversary (29: 2–6; 30: 19–23); (2) relationship with young men, the poor and the needy (29: 7–17); (3) relationship with the *צעיר* who are *כִּנְיָב* (“they are banished out of the midst of the community; [men] shouted after them like a thief, 29: 21–30: 11). These metaphorical and rhetorical images of relationship imply Job’s notion of God as an adversary.

B. Zuckerman points out that Job perceives God as an “opponent-at-law rather than the source and authority of Law.”<sup>24</sup> Job’s demand for God to justify his righteousness and his allusion to God who sees everything, including the ways of the wicked is a significant Joban epistemology. Job and his friends had their own preconceived understanding of God and ideals of life. The arguments of Job’s friends were fundamentally true and correct, but they also could not undermine the arguments of Job, which were consistent with God as he remembers Him and of the suffering that he experienced as a direct attack of God. But his knowledge of God was yet to be redefined in the revelation and words of God in chapters 38–41. In God’s revelation of Himself and rhetorical questions, Job had no other response but to say *עַל־כֵּן אָמַצְט* *וְנִחַמְתִּי עַל־עֵפֶר וְאָפֶר* (Job 42:6, “therefore, I spurn [my words] and repent in dust and ashes”).<sup>25</sup>

All throughout the course of Job’s argument and his persistent appeal to speak to God amidst all the judgment of his friends and the people of whom he spoke about in his last testimony, Job’s sense of understanding of God is interspersed. Alden states that Job is the only speaker in the book who had the courage to address God with all the complaints and seeming words of blasphemy.<sup>26</sup> Job’s address was one of honesty and frankness that a person could only express to someone dear and close to him or her. Job’s remembrance of blessings and intimacy with God and his accusation of injustice against a silent God reflect his relationship and notion of God. This

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<sup>23</sup>Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 196–197. However, she recognizes that there are no evidences supporting the idea that Job’s testimony is a common practice. Newsom further indicates that the appeal of Job can be vindicated by the restoration of his fortunes in the epilogue (Job 42:10–17) and does not necessitate the theophany of God [*The Book of Job*, 197–198]. But the rhetoric in the text would contradict this interpretation especially Job’s allusion to the notion of presenting a case before an assembly in a city gate (*שַׁעַר*), wherein ANE legal proceedings, conversation and important news are presented [J. D. Douglas, and M. C. Tenney, *Zondervan Illustrated Dictionary*, s. v. “gate”]. This allusion implies Job’s desire to be vindicated and be tried before the judge and the witnesses. Thus, the dramatic disclosure of God is called for in this sense. M. Oeming lists two importance of God’s theophany in relation to the arguments that Job presents: (1) the extent of God’s acts supersedes that of the horizon the humanity can comprehend; (2) humanity is not the center of the universe [“The Encounter with God,” in *Job’s Journey*, 80–81].

<sup>24</sup>Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 184.

<sup>25</sup>Bruce Zuckerman, *Job the Silent: A Study in Historical Counterpoint* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991), 147.

<sup>26</sup>LXX added *ἐμαυτόν* (myself); Targum has *עוֹרֵרִי* (wealth, riches). JPS added “my words” in its translation, while most translations relied on LXX by adding “myself”.

relationship and notion of God is profoundly described by Oeming in his interpretation of Job 42:7, which is God's commendation of Job at the epilogue section:

God does not praise a specific statement by Job (neither the patient sufferer of the beginning, the passionate rebel of the middle section, nor the individual who rebukes himself in the end). God does not justify a specific *teaching* about himself but rather the *direction of Job's speech*, his internal stance, his knowledge of the place to which and from which his thoughts proceed. God praises Job's speech as a speech to God. In contrast the friends are not scolded for what they have said, but for their attitude toward God. It is their distant stance toward God that incurs God's wrath: Job's friends are studious and earnest theologians. They use their full cognitive competence and produce impressive system of thought. Yet their full mistake lies in the foundation of their theology: "You have not spoken well to me, not toward me, not *in personal relation to me*. Instead [*sic*] you only spoke of me . . ." Job may speak against God and perhaps even make mistakes, but he speaks to God and thus receive God's praise.<sup>27</sup>

In the midst of suffering and ordeal, Job can only see the injustice of God and hear His deafening silence, but his arguments and his appeals reflect one's intimacy and honesty before God. This intimacy was imbued by his memory of God, his past relationship with Him. The honesty of his accusation against God and to God reflected his knowledge of the living God and His power to justify and to recreate what had been broken by the schemes of our true adversary.

The appeal in chapter 30 ended with musical imagery depicting Job's loss of words to the pain that he was experiencing. He described his suffering to a פנור ("a psalm" or "a lyre") that is turned to אבל ("mourning"), which has the idea of mourning for death. This metaphor denotes Job's inexpressible grief and torment, but in all these, he remained steadfast to appeal to God that he may speak to him. Amidst his torment, Job did not know what the narrator and the readers of his story knew. It was not because of his sin that he suffered. It was a test of faith. It was because God himself boasted of Job's righteousness to the true adversary in the story of Job.

The skeptics may raise their eyebrows to the conclusion but the story of Job reflects a story of relationship that is divinely unfathomable but profound. Christians may either question or exalt Job's self-righteousness and self-justification, but we could not deny that there are significant and relevant theological truths imbued in his discourses. There are also some practical lessons to gain that could alleviate one's pain and suffering. God's existence as seen in Job is another ground to develop a paradigm of survival for today and for the uncertain days ahead of us.

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<sup>27</sup>Alden, *Job*, 293.

## Conclusion and Reflections

Job's final appeal in chapter 29–30 exhibits the extent of his knowledge of God. The rhetorical persuasion and the imagery used in his speeches encapsulated the strong points that he tried to express. His remembrance of the past and knowledge of God as interspersed within his last appeal was a core motive behind his plea for justification that enabled him to steadfastly argue his case before his friends and before a silent God. The recollection of his celebrated past that was characterized by compassion, righteousness, and justice were not merely a self-presentation and aggrandizement of his moral purity and ethical integrity but an implicit and rooted affirmation of God and His character. Entrenched within Job's testimony and recollection was an implied yet conscious theological stance of his personal relationship with God. From his rhetorical usage of relational imagery to describe his early life, resonated an implied call for God to remember him as before and examine his present ordeal. Job's sheer pining to present his appeal to God and be examined by him, including his willingness to take responsibility if God would find him guilty, represented his honest and intimate connection with him.

From Job's experience we can see that the presence of people and friends, even theological knowledge and traditions, are not solely the means to survive catastrophic human struggles such as what we are experiencing in this post-pandemic era. It is clear that still the most valuable and solid ground and paradigm of survival in times of suffering and pains is one's personal encounter with the Sovereign Creator and God. One's former experience and understanding of God, no matter how limited and finite, could be one of the most firm and absolute supports that the people could stand on in this post-pandemic world. The inconceivable consequences of the pandemic to the world may require socioeconomic experts and psychological interventions but God's existence as seen in Job is another ground to develop a survival strategy for today and for the uncertain days ahead of us.

People from all walks of life are struggling daily to alleviate their pains and anxiety, but instead of surviving fully, several people are succumbing more and more to different forms of addictions and alienation. Hence, we can assert that all these methods of survival fall short of the desired outcome. As seen in the narrative of Job, a deeper sense and understanding of God's presence and how he deals with humanity and the entire created world matters. Our remembrance of God's previous works in our lives and the world, though often narrow and bound within our finiteness and experiences, is still the most solid ground for survival and meaning.

*Lord in my quest to know you may I not forget you; in my desire to freely talk about you, may I not fail to talk to you. Out of a thousand words that I wrote about you, may I have spoken to you . . .*

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# Establishing “Mordor” in God’s Creation: Natural Disasters, Barth’s “Lordless Powers,” and Filipino Indigenous Beliefs<sup>1</sup>

Francis Jr. S. Samdao

## Introduction

From power outages to strong winds, heavy rains, landslides, floods, and more, it is no exaggeration to say that the Philippines is plagued by yearly disasters. Filipina psychologist Violeta Villaroman-Bautista narrates the experience of a fifteen-year-old survivor of a landslide: “I felt it was the end of the world. I was crying, in shock—Saying let it not be the end of the world. I still have my dreams . . .”<sup>2</sup> A lot of complex factors contribute to these unfortunate events, and I do not claim to be an expert on the ecological condition of the country. Nonetheless, theology is a response to God’s triune communicative act<sup>3</sup> that necessitates an engagement with the ephemerality and finitude of this world. I bring Karl Barth (1886-1968) as an interlocutor as I reflect on natural disasters, particularly in my context in the Philippines.

In this essay, I argue that Barth’s concepts of “lordless powers” can contribute to Christian reflection and praxis concerning natural disasters and environmental care. In a country that suffers greatly from natural calamities, it is inevitable to conclude that these disasters are a bane of our existence. However, by bringing Barth’s “lordless powers” to bear, I challenge the concept that environmental disasters are absolutely “natural” evil. In this work, I use Mordor as a metaphor for humans’ destruction of nature in the name of progress, or to show how we “murder” the environment for the sake of “progress” seen in machines and other technology.<sup>4</sup> I use this metaphor to connote how we continue to desire sophisticated technology and machine advancement

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<sup>1</sup>I want to thank my superiors in the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance, Dr. Bruce Barron and Rei Crizaldo, for critiquing the earlier draft of this manuscript. I also prefer to use the first-person pronoun in this article to appreciate my situatedness in this manuscript. The claim of “full objectivity” in writing is a modern epistemology, which I do not embrace.

<sup>2</sup>Violeta Villaroman-Bautista, “Spirituality and Resilience in Disaster Situations: Sources of Life and Strength in Critical Times,” in *Walking with God: Christian Spirituality in the Asian Context*, ed. Charles R. Ringma and Karen Hollenbeck-Wuest (Manila: OMF Literature Inc., 2014), 168.

<sup>3</sup>See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 74-85.

<sup>4</sup>According to Michael N. Stanton, Mordor may have derived from the word “morthor,” which is “murder” in old English. That word is always associated with negative labels such as morbid or Modred in the Arthurian legend. Michael N. Stanton, *Hobbits, Elves, and Wizards: Exploring the Wonders and Worlds of J.R.R. Tolkien’s The Lord of the Rings* (New York: Palgrave, 2021), 20.

at the expense of natural habitat,<sup>5</sup> but I do not claim that human activity somehow causes typhoons and earthquakes. First, I will demonstrate that natural disasters are connected to the “lordless powers” within us. Second, I will then argue for a recovery of eco-theology that posits the world as sacred and nature as an integral part of our existence. Third, I will assert that drawing on the ancient wisdom of the Filipino worldview helps in the recovery of eco-theology.

Bringing Barth into this issue does not mean he is the point of reference. I have learned from him that engaging with the spirit of our time and the pressing issues of our cultures is possible because God, in his freedom, has given his “Yes” to humanity. And his full engagement with human beings is rooted in the election of Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup> I use Barth’s *The Christian Life*<sup>7</sup> to glance at his perspective of “lordless powers” while conversing with some Asian theologians and Filipino literature.

### Is “Natural” Evil a Bane of Humans’ Existence?

Natural disasters are ubiquitous in Asia, and “[s]ixty percent of the major natural disasters reported in the world occur in this region.”<sup>8</sup> From super typhoons to volcanic eruptions to earthquakes to tsunamis, these have caused enormous loss of life.<sup>9</sup> In 2004, the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami killed thousands of people in India, Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and other countries. In 2009, earthquakes occurred in Sichuan province; a year later, another earth tremor transpired in southern Qinghai in China.<sup>10</sup> This year, Turkey and Syria suffered deadly earthquakes.<sup>11</sup> The Philippines has had its share of such unfortunate events. On November 7-8, 2013, Yolanda (Haiyan internationally), one of the strongest typhoons, hit the country, especially the

<sup>5</sup>I do not claim that taking care of the environment opposes progress. Humanity’s well-being, however, should not only focus on consumerism and individualism but also on the welfare of the planet. See Rei Crizaldo, “Biblical and Theological Response: Our Beautiful Dwelling Place,” in *God’s Heart for Children: Practical Theology from Global Perspectives*, ed. Rosalind Tan, Nativity A. Petallar, and Lucy A. Hefford (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2022), 238.

<sup>6</sup>Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, volume II, part 2, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 33, 163. For an exhaustive account of Barth’s life, scholars draw on this indispensable writing: Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans., John Bowden (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1976), <https://archive.org/details/karlb Barthhislife0000busc/page/n9/mode/2up?view=theater>.

<sup>7</sup>Karl Barth, *The Christian Life* (London, UK: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017).

<sup>8</sup>Ian Davis and Satyendra P. Gupta, “Technical Background Paper,” *Disaster Mitigation in Asia and the Pacific* (Manila: Asian Development Bank, 1991), 25.

<sup>9</sup>Terence E. Fretheim, “The Bible, God, and Natural Disasters,” in *Why, O God: Disaster, Resiliency, and the People of God*, ed. Athena E. Gorospe, Charles Ringma, and Karen Hollenbeck-Wuest (Mandaluyong, Philippines: OMF Literature Inc., 2017), 9.

<sup>10</sup>Hyung-Won Lee, “Biblical Understanding of Natural Disasters and Applications for the Christian Ministry,” *Torch Trinity Journal* 14, no. 1 (2011): 38.

<sup>11</sup>UNHCR (The UN Refugee Agency)/ Asia Pacific, February 7, 2023, “UNHCR responds to deadly earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria,” <https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2023/2/63e225324/unhcr-responds-deadly-earthquakes-turkiye-syria.html>.

central Visayas, resulting in the death of thousands of people.<sup>12</sup> Yearly, at least twenty typhoons pass through the country.<sup>13</sup> With such a geographical condition, I suspect that Filipinos perceive natural disasters as part of their lives.

According to Filipino theologian Rodrigo Tano, nature is not self-ordered or autonomous from the Creator. Its sustenance is upheld by a sovereign God. Nonetheless, nature could be hostile and brutal to human beings.<sup>14</sup> Tano's explanation tells us that although God sustains creation, nature can be unfriendly to humanity. Although he did not elaborate on his assertion, one may learn from Rabbi Harold Kushner's observation that these catastrophes happen at random. For example, if there is a movement of tectonic plates, an earthquake happens. And when it occurs in an inhabited place, people are miserable.<sup>15</sup> Thus, taking life and destroying property is evil since these tragedies could hinder people from believing in God's omnipotence and omnipresence. But I do not mean that it is evil for people to question God.

Natural evil refers to disasters that are not caused by moral agents. These include hurricanes, typhoons, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, earthquakes, and other environmental disasters. Hugh Silvester divides natural evil into two groups: catastrophic events and human disabilities (including animal pain).<sup>16</sup> Generally, theologians and philosophers recognize two types of evil: moral and natural. On one hand, moral evil, such as crimes, social struggles, racism, and injustice, has human perpetrators. Glaring examples are the holocaust and the killing of thousands of Khmer people by Pol Pot in Cambodia. On the other hand, natural evil is not directly associated with human free will. For example, the free will defense cannot explain why tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, and typhoons kill innocent people. It cannot give a sufficient justification for how innocent children are born with disabilities. However, Norman Geisler categorizes evil into three kinds: metaphysical, moral, and physical. Moral evil relates to murder, theft, and other crimes. Metaphysical evil comprises

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<sup>12</sup>DJ Yap and Nikko Dizon, November 11, 2013, "Worst disaster to hit PH: Thousands feared dead amid looting," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/524763/worst-disaster-to-hit-ph>.

<sup>13</sup>GOVPH, 23, 2023, "Tropical Cyclone Information," <https://bagong.pagasa.dost.gov.ph/climate/tropical-cyclone-information>. See also Federico G. Villanueva, "My God, Why? Natural Disasters and Lament in the Philippine Context," in *Why, O God: Disaster, Resiliency, and the People of God* (Mandaluyong, Philippines: OMF Literature Inc., 2017), 87.

<sup>14</sup>Rodrigo Tano, *This Complicated and Risky Task: Selected Essays on Doing Contextual Theology from a Filipino Evangelical Perspective*, ed. Romel Regalado Bagares (Quezon City, Philippines: Central books, 2006), 30-31.

<sup>15</sup>Harold Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1989), 52. Christopher Southgate promotes another belief which is evolutionary theodicy. First, he affirms the goodness of creation, but it is not yet finished. Second, creation is in the process of evolution as God uses this process to beautify and diversify his handiwork. Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 16.

<sup>16</sup>Hugh Silvester, *Arguing with God: The Problem of Evil* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 29.

physical disabilities, especially inborn “diseases.” Physical evil is synonymous with natural evil.<sup>17</sup>

There is a theory that these natural disasters come from God to punish the wicked. This idea is closely related to the belief that ecological disaster exists due to the Fall. Since humanity’s first parents (Adam and Eve) have sinned against God, their progeny inherited sin and were thus inclined to rebel against their Creator.<sup>18</sup> In his article, “The Problem of Evil and Suffering,” Alfredo Saure, uses the term retributive or punitive. Though this is not his theological position, he mentions that this is one of the solutions evangelicals have presented. This punitive theory can be a disciplinarian perspective where one experiences suffering for correction. Therefore, environmental catastrophes are tools to rebuke human rebellion. Such is a common belief among Filipinos.<sup>19</sup> It can also be probationary, where one’s faith is tested through suffering and endurance. Or it may be perceived as revelational, substitutionary, and testimonial.<sup>20</sup>

Natural evil is no respecter of human status. The recurring tsunamis, earthquakes, super typhoons, and the like may imply that God has forgotten his creation. Centuries ago, Job, who was labeled righteous in the Old Testament, was not exempted from the sting of ecological calamities and other catastrophes. These unfortunate events led him to utter, “Do not condemn me, but tell me what charges you have against me. Does it please you to oppress me, to spurn the work of your hands, while you smile on the schemes of the wicked?” (Job 10:2-3). Conundrums such as the presence of “natural” evil and the existence of a good God are deemed incompatible.<sup>21</sup>

Although these catastrophes are seen as evil since they seem to exist as slayers of life, we should be careful to conclude rashly that these calamities are God’s undertakers.

<sup>17</sup>Norman Geisler, *Philosophy of Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 349.

<sup>18</sup>This posit that natural disaster is a direct result of sin (Genesis 3; Romans 8), and as a ramification, humans deserve death (Romans 5:12 and 6:23). While creation was created with no defect, the present perils and the untamed nature are punishment, which humans have brought to themselves. Donald Borchert, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006), 475.

<sup>19</sup>Alfredo G. Saure, “The Problem of Evil and Suffering,” *Philippine Journal of Religious Studies* 2, (1996): 73-74. Interestingly, even some Western evangelicals believe that natural disasters can serve as God’s punishment. See Tobin Grant, “Polling Evangelicals: God Causes Disasters, U.S. Should Help Victims,” *Christianity Today*, March 31, 2011, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2011/march/polling-evangelicals-god-causes-disasters-us-should-help.html>.

<sup>20</sup>See Saure, “The Problem of Evil and Suffering,” 73-74. The punitive theory also exists in some African Worldviews. For example, when lightning kills a person, that individual may have done wicked things. Supposed that person is a good human being, s/he may have done awful actions unknowingly, which causes evil spirits to retaliate. Silvester, *Arguing with God*, 4.

<sup>21</sup>The presence of evil that challenges the goodness and power of God engenders *theodicy*. That term pertains to the defense of God in the midst of the presence of evil. I do not attempt to rehash this discussion since there is a plethora of literature, particularly in the area of apologetics. I also believe that propositions are not enough to explain the ontology of God and understand the presence of environmental catastrophes. As Stanley Grenz opines, “We must make room for the concept of ‘mystery’—not as irrational complement to the rational but a reminder that the fundamental reality of God transcends human rationality.” Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 170.

We can rather see them as part of God's design that has gone wild due to the Fall,<sup>22</sup> and aggravated by "lordless powers," which we will discuss later. Though creation has gone wild, God has not left it on its own. For example, "The sea, which was a symbol of chaos in many cultures in ancient Near East, is not destroyed; it is born, and God has a very important role in its birth. God restrains the sea and gives it a place in the created order. Chaos is not eliminated, but confined."<sup>23</sup> Due to our selfishness and false assumption that we are the absolute powers over the environment, we generate disorder in the natural habitat. As Christopher Wright writes, "What's gone wrong? (Why is the world in such a mess?) Answer: Through rebellion and disobedience against our Creator God, we have generated the mess that we now see around us at every level of our lives, relationships and environment."<sup>24</sup> Our relationship with the animal kingdom and natural environment is in a mess. The COVID-19 pandemic is further evidence of this. I will explain this further when we get to the discussion of "lordless powers."

### **Ecological Disasters and "Lordless Powers"**

Christians cannot conclude that ecological disasters are the absolute product of the Fall because humans also have some share in destroying the natural environment. Our destruction of the natural habitat is manifested in our abuse of freedom. In our assertion that we are the masters of the universe, "lordless powers" are born. I add that we are establishing a "Mordor" in God's good creation because while we recognize global warming, the spread of deadly diseases, the depletion of the ozone layer, and others as serious problems, Filipino evangelicals are more focused on evangelism. Such is clear in the "escapist mentality wherein hope is pinned on abandoning earth and looking elsewhere to secure humanity's salvation."<sup>25</sup> Thus, Barth's view of "lordless powers" is relevant to this discussion. This concept is related to our alienation from the Creator—with the desire to live on our own, rebelling against God's authority, and becoming "lords" of our lives.

Concerning "lordless powers," Barth believes that our rebellion against God results in separation from the Creator and self-alienation. Originally, we belong to God and serve him as our Lord. But following our desires and relying on our powers resulted in denaturalizing our existence, disregarding our bond with others, and disrupting the natural balance of creation. Therefore, we are in love with our powers and abilities.<sup>26</sup> Barth thinks that unrighteousness and disorder destroy life and our fellowship with

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<sup>22</sup>I am referring to Genesis 3.

<sup>23</sup>Noli P. Mendoza, "The Voice from the Whirlwind: Creation, Disasters, and Character Transformation in Job 38-41," in *Why, O God: Disaster, Resiliency, and the People of God*, ed. Athena E. Gorospe, Charles Ringma, and Karen Hollenbeck-Wuest (Mandaluyong, Philippines: OMF Literature Inc., 2017), 59.

<sup>24</sup>Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 55.

<sup>25</sup>Crizaldo, "Biblical and Theological Response: Our Beautiful Dwelling Place," 239.

<sup>26</sup>Barth, *The Christian Life*, 299, 301.

other humans. Our rebellion against God has unleashed desires to idolize our abilities and exalt ourselves. But these desires rebound adversely on us.<sup>27</sup> The result of our desire to live autonomously apart from God's lordship leads us to serve ourselves instead of the Creator and our fellow humans. Thus, we do not merely continue to rebel against our God, but we fail to live for the sake of other creatures. However, our capacities and abilities become powers that do not serve and empower us; instead, they become "authorities" that provide false assumptions that we are in charge. In our belief that we are lords, we continue to destroy creation, other people, and even ourselves.<sup>28</sup> Enjoying the rapid pace of technological advancement without care for growing things (plants, trees, and living species) shows that we may be increasing our authority over creation, but such power leaves us hungry for more.<sup>29</sup> The "lordless powers" within us intensify the groaning of creation, and therefore "nature became frustrated in its purposes and can no longer be all it was created to be."<sup>30</sup>

Another name for Barth's concept of "lordless powers" is found in the New Testament: Mammon. While the origin of this term is vague and mythological, it pertains to things that people treat as "lords," such as money, material possessions, resources, and others.<sup>31</sup> This shows our tendency to make anything an idol when we intend to live as the point of reference for everything. When we try to reject God's lordship over our lives, put our identity with our resources, trust our capabilities, and rely on our connections with human authorities, they become "lordless powers." Such is evident in Barth's argument:

Who ensures or guarantees what resources are now in play? His own? Or, apart from him, the power of his resources, the means which is supposed to guarantee and secure his livelihood but which now confronts him with imperious claims in its tendency to become an end, the thing which has accrued to him or been created and won by him, but which now has its own weight, majesty, and worth, the great or little barns, with the great or little that is stored up in them for the future (Lk. 12:16ff.), which profoundly disturb him because they promise, but only promise, that he may be at rest and of good courage? Can he trust their promises? Does he really own what

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<sup>27</sup>Barth, *The Christian Life*, 301.

<sup>28</sup>Hannah Reichel, "The Political Theology of the Surveillance Society: Lordless Powers, Drones, and the Eye of God," in *Theo-Politics? Conversing with Barth in Western and Asian Contexts*, ed. Markus Höfner (London, UK: Lexington Books, 2022), 169-170. Our rebellion against God begets destruction as Barth comments: "[t]he lordship of these powers, which are all of them no more than exponents of the rebellion that separates man from God, is synonymous with the destruction and ruin of both the individual and society." Barth, *The Christian Life*, 327.

<sup>29</sup>Joseph Loconte, *A Hobbit, A Wardrobe, and A Great War: How J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis Rediscovered Faith, Friendship, and Heroism in the Cataclysm of 1914-1918* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2015), 7.

<sup>30</sup>Harry Alan Hahne, "The Whole Creation has been Groaning," Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University (2010): 21, <https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/106707.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup>Barth, *The Christian Life*, 311.

he has? . . . If his resources are to be faithful to him, to serve him and give him comfort, does he not have to be faithful to them and serve them? When he perceives this and acts accordingly, then in a very harmless form here or in greater measure there they acquire power over him. Mammon, the close relative of Leviathan, is born. It mounts its throne.<sup>32</sup>

By emancipating ourselves from God and trusting in our own powers, we live a "lordless life," which results in disorder in our world as seen in creation, politics, and other areas.<sup>33</sup> Barthian theologian Paul Dafydd Jones describes such a condition: "Barth acknowledges that there is a pantheon of hypostasized 'gods' that human beings have generated and sustain, and which corrupt our every thought, word, and deed."<sup>34</sup> Thus, our love for human autonomy has backfired against us.

I assert, then, that sin corrupts creation and is worsened by our actions ("lordless powers within us") due to our love of money, power, and possessions, disguised in the name of "progress." Our hunger for domination becomes the bane of creation's existence. For instance, in our desire to become sophisticated, we continue to establish "Mordor" in God's creation. One can see this in J.R.R. Tolkien's work as noted by Joseph Loconte: "Tolkien viewed the overreliance on technology, 'the Machine,' as a step toward dominating others. . . . Hence, the hateful realm of Mordor is sustained by its black engines and factories, which Sauron introduces as his forces invade the Shire."<sup>35</sup> Such is not far from reality. For example, climate change and other disasters are worsened by humans. In the Philippines, abusing natural resources such as forests diminishes our protection from strong rains, winds, and waves. Cutting trees and burning the mountains leaves us with no roots to keep the soil in place. As such, we experience flash floods and landslides during typhoons or monsoon rains.<sup>36</sup> When people used face masks during the pandemic, a study shows that 1.6 billion of these used masks were found in the ocean, killing marine life.<sup>37</sup>

Again, the disorder in our environment is our fault. We have released "powers" that are "lordless," and which may destroy us.<sup>38</sup> As we become sophisticated in terms of technology, we should "note the devastation of the countryside as freeways cut ruthlessly through arable land, pastures, and whole villages. We ask whether the speed that motorized man is allowed is not bought too dearly in view of its obvious hostility

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<sup>32</sup>Barth, *The Christian Life*, 311.

<sup>33</sup>Reichel, "The Political Theology of the Surveillance Society," 173-174.

<sup>34</sup>Paul Dafydd Jones, "Karl Barth's *The Christian Life and the Task of Political Theology*," in *Theo-Politics? Conversing with Barth in Western and Asian Contexts*, ed. Markus Höfner (London, UK: Lexington Books, 2022), 349.

<sup>35</sup>Loconte, *A Hobbit, A Wardrobe, and A Great War*, 7.

<sup>36</sup>William Holden Kathleen Nadeau Emma Porio, *Ecological Liberation Theology Faith-Based Approaches to Poverty and Climate Change in the Philippines* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 5.

<sup>37</sup>Bevan Hurly, July 30, 2021, "1.6 billion disposable masks entered the ocean in 2020 and will take 450 years to biodegrade," *Independent Asia Edition*, <https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/masks-ocean-covid-plastic-b1893830.html>.

<sup>38</sup>Barth, *The Christian Life*, 326.

to life.”<sup>39</sup> For emphasis’ sake, we become the bane of the environment’s existence—tantamount to establishing a “Mordor” in God’s good creation.

According to Pope Francis, it is imperative to understand that the earth is our common home, and since we are living at a critical moment in history where we see the devastation in the forests, mountains, rivers, and seas, we must address this issue now and not leave it to future generations.<sup>40</sup> Our failures as Filipino evangelicals to take seriously (in academia and in daily living) the challenge of climate change and our responsibility towards creation shows a theological deficit concerning eco-theology.<sup>41</sup> Since we know that creation is groaning due to the Fall and we continue to destroy nature due to the “lordless powers” inside us, the need to rethink how we perceive our relationship with the earth is imperative. Drawing on Asian thinkers and Barth’s belief that Christians in Asia may provide a solution to this dilemma, I assert the importance of believing that there are “wonders in this world.”<sup>42</sup>

### Re-enchanting the Universe: Recovering a Robust Eco-theology

Barth is right that Asians have something to contribute to this dilemma. In his own words, “A magical picture of the world? Might it be that our fellow Christians from the younger churches of Asia and Africa, who come with a fresher outlook in this regard, can help us here? We hope at least that they will not be too impressed by our view of the world and thus be afflicted by the eye disease from which we ourselves suffer in this matter.”<sup>43</sup> Perhaps Barth is correct for two reasons. First, many in the West have thought of the “magical” aspects of the world as fairy tales. Some have lost their connection to the sacredness of the earth. The world is no longer valued as sacred, and the earth is reduced to a tool for economic and technological progress.<sup>44</sup> Second, indigenous beliefs in Asia may help recover a robust eco-theology. It is worth noting that Barth may have failed to understand that “the magical picture of the world” is already embedded in the worldviews of the people in Asia and Africa.<sup>45</sup> For Asians, the line between natural and supernatural intersects. Asian worldviews maintain that the world is both for the living and the dead; natural and supernatural are one. This

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<sup>39</sup>Barth, *The Christian Life*, 325.

<sup>40</sup>Russell L. Meyer, “Time for leaders to make moral choice on climate change,” YALE Forum on Religion and Ecology (January 2, 2016), accessed December 21, 2022, <http://fore.yale.edu/news/item/time-for-leaders-to-make-moral-choice-on-climate-change/>.

<sup>41</sup>See Crizaldo, “Biblical and Theological Response: Our Beautiful Dwelling Place,” 38-40.

<sup>42</sup>The quotation above is borrowed from a Harfoot Hobbit, Elanor ‘Nori’ Brandyfoot, of the Amazon’s TV Series, “The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power.”

<sup>43</sup>Barth, *The Christian Life*, 307.

<sup>44</sup>Thomas Berry, “The World of Wonder,” in *Spiritual Ecology: The Cry of the Earth*, second edition, ed. Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee (Point Reyes, CA: The Golden Sufi Center, 2016), 22.

<sup>45</sup>See Melba Padilla Maggay, “A Religion of Guilt Encounters a Religion of Power: Missiological Implications and Consequences,” in *The Gospel in Culture: Contextualization Issues through Asian Eyes*, ed. Melba Padilla Maggay (Manila: OMF, 2013), 26-27.

belief remains strong in Filipino spirituality.<sup>46</sup> Thus, Western churches need to listen to the ancient wisdom of indigenous people from the Majority World.<sup>47</sup>

### Sacred World: The Earth is Part of "Us"

In Asia, where primal religions are pervasive,<sup>48</sup> we can recover some of our ancient beliefs. For example, reducing living creatures and the environment to mere products for the consumption of human beings is problematic to the ancient Filipino worldviews. The Filipinos' inclusion of "kalikasan" (nature) and other people as part of their "pagkatao" (personhood) is encapsulated in the word "kapwa" (the extension of the self to others).<sup>49</sup> This "kapwa" appears in the way people from different walks of life help victims of disasters by marshaling various resources (money, human resources, prayer, and others).<sup>50</sup> The "kapwa culture" is important in our discussion because when a person values her/his neighbors and serves as a sojourner to others, particularly the victims of catastrophic events, one does not focus on him/herself. Thus, such an action rejects the power of "lordless powers," like selfishness, destruction, and others. Moreover, "kapwa" includes the environment and animals because they are "kapwa nilalang" (fellow-creatures).

Filipino theologian Leonardo Mercado notes that the Cartesian system has demythologized nature's dynamic and mystic aspects. The power of mathematics and science in studying the natural world removes the deity and the supernatural from the scene.<sup>51</sup> I do not mean that science and mathematics are enemies of God. Yes, mathematics may confirm the amazing genius of the Creator, but romanticizing the power of science and mathematics is problematic. Anglican priest and author Myron Bradley Penner believes that "[m]odern consciousness, however, conceives

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<sup>46</sup>Melba Padilla Maggay, *A Clash of Cultures: Early American Protestant Missions and Filipino Religious Consciousness* (Manila: Anvil, 2011), xii.

<sup>47</sup>In India, particularly in the Khasi community, nature is perceived as sacred. Nature is God's creation and a Mother who nourishes humankind. Nature is a holy sanctuary where God resides and interacts with human beings. Such is also the same with the Filipino worldviews where rivers, mountains, trees, and the like are seen as sacred. One example is the Cordilleran worldview. See Francis Jr. S. Samdao, "What Has Cordilleran Spirituality to Do with Evangelicals?" *Asia Journal of Theology* 35, no. 2 (October 2021): 238-255, <https://ajt.atesea.net/index.php/ajt/article/view/13/18>.

<sup>48</sup>See Simon Chan, "Asian Christian Spirituality in Primal Religious Contexts," in *Walking with God: Christian Spirituality in the Asian Context*, ed. Charles R. Ringma and Karen Hollenbeck-Wuest (Manila: OMF Literature Inc., 2014), 32-52.

<sup>49</sup>Violeta and Lorenzo Bautista write that accompanying someone in need recognizes shared dignity, intrinsic value, and oneness. Violeta Villaroman-Bautista & Lorenzo C. Bautista, "Pagsama, Ginhawa, at Pananalig: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Among Disaster Survivors with Attention to Culture and Theodicy," in *Why, O God: Disaster, Resiliency, and the People of God*, ed. Athena E. Gorospe, Charles Ringma, and Karen Hollenbeck-Wuest (Mandaluyong, Philippines: OMF Literature Inc., 2017), 233.

<sup>50</sup>Violeta Villaroman-Bautista, "Urabayan: Bringing Wellness and Wholeness to Communities Under Crisis," in *The Church and Poverty in Asia*, ed. Lee Wanak (Mandaluyong City, Philippines: OMF Literature Inc., 2008), 197-198.

<sup>51</sup>Leonardo N. Mercado, *Filipino Thought* (Manila: Logos Publications, 2000), 119.

of the world as a machine, and it thinks of the human person (more or less) as a disembodied mind that is the free and unencumbered center of rational thought.”<sup>52</sup> This Cartesianism is quite different from the worldviews of the people in Asia. Once again, the cosmology of the primal religion of the indigenous people in the Philippines includes a realm full of spirits. The influence of unseen beings permeates the universe. These spirits may inhabit trees, clouds, rivers, and mountains; and use stones, fires, lands, and others if they want to.<sup>53</sup>

For a Filipino, it is part of the daily activities to be attuned to the melody of the different forces and even to the “inanimate” objects of the earth. It is crucial to be intimate with spiritual beings not primarily to beg for forgiveness but to strengthen the “loob” (authentic relational self) of a person.<sup>54</sup> All parts of nature (the natural world) are not considered static. They are “buhay” (alive). Therefore, they were given “bisa” (life force).<sup>55</sup> That is why “Before the Spanish and American colonizers came to the Philippines, the typical Filipino also respected creation. Before anybody cut a tree, he asked the permission of the tree guardian.”<sup>56</sup> Even now, when indigenous people (especially in the provinces) look at the mountains and seas, they see not only the waves and trees but understand that there are unseen beings who inhabit these places. This kind of worldview connotes the vital relationship of a Filipino towards unseen beings and nature. The natural world is not autonomous from the supernatural realm. Such an understanding of reality may also explain why many Filipino tribes in the country have no problem cohabiting with the dead. For example, caves are utilized as burial places, while at the same time available as dwelling spaces for the living.<sup>57</sup> In the primal religion of the Filipino, sickness, failed crops, misfortune, and calamities, occur due to the imbalance between the system of the supernatural and natural realms.<sup>58</sup>

For educated modern people, the existence of the supernatural is an illusion and a bedtime story for children because science cannot verify such belief. However, despite our immense use of technology and skepticism about the supernatural and

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<sup>52</sup>Myron Bradley Penner, *The End of Apologetics: Christian Witness in a Postmodern Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 30.

<sup>53</sup>Leonardo N. Mercado, *The Filipino Mind: Philippine Philosophical Studies II* (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994), 103-104.

<sup>54</sup>Maggay, “A Religion of Guilt Encounters a Religion of Power,” 35-37.

<sup>55</sup>F. Landa Jocano, *Filipino Worldview: Ethnography of Local Knowledge* (Manila: PUNLAD Research House, 2001), 24.

<sup>56</sup>Mercado, *Filipino Thought*, 123.

<sup>57</sup>Alfredo E. Evangelista, *Soul Boats: A Filipino Journey of Self-Discovery* (Manila: National Commission for Culture and Arts, 2001), 30. I have expounded on an aspect of Cordilleran spirituality to critique some modern views that penetrated the evangelical household. See Samdao, “What Has Cordilleran Spirituality to Do with Evangelicals?” 238–255.

<sup>58</sup>Maggay, “A Religion of Guilt Encounters a Religion of Power,” 37. To understand more about the spirituality of the indigenous people, see Leah Abayao, “Spirituality and the (Re) constructions of Indigenous Traditions,” in *Unsettling Discourses: The Theory and Practice of Indigenous Studies*, ed. Darius Letigio Martinez and Ma. Paula Luz Pamintuan-Riva (Baguio City, Philippines: Cordillera Studies Center, University of the Philippines Baguio, 2014), 127.

extraordinary, I find it interesting that many are still fascinated by fairy, fantasy, and adventure stories in books and movies. Also, the primal religion of the Filipino is not far from the world of the church fathers who perceived the universe as a place for the seen and the unseen beings. The premodern understanding of the universe was sacred, enchanted, and porous.<sup>59</sup> For example, in her description of the world of the church father Chrysostom, Samantha Miller writes, "The ancient world . . . was populated with spirits: some good, some evil, some indifferent or even ambiguous."<sup>60</sup> But this understanding of the world was changed when modern Enlightenment reduced the dynamic and animated world of premodern thought into a mathematical and cold planet. Modernism diminished the understanding of the world into the parameter of "natural laws" and put it under the mastery of reason and empirical observation.<sup>61</sup> It is a process of "disenchanting" the universe so to speak.

This negation of sacred or spiritual had been reinforced by modernity's<sup>62</sup> advancements and technology. There is also predatory capitalism that focuses on profit at the expense of our ecosystem and the condition of people.<sup>63</sup> We have arrived at a point where machines are already part of our daily lives. Our technology is superior compared to the machines of the Dwarves at the Lonely Mountain in Tolkien's Middle-earth. Decades ago, telephones were stationary in our homes; now they are not just inside our pockets but glued to our hands. Laptops and iPads are indispensable during business meetings, church retreats, school planning, and other conferences. But we are not yet done; Elon Musk is showing us the way to conquer planet Mars!<sup>64</sup> These developments are helpful, but they easily mislead us into the illusion that we are the masters of the universe.

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<sup>59</sup>James K. A. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 30.

<sup>60</sup>Samantha L. Miller, *Chrysostom's Devil: Demons, the Will, and Virtue in Patristic Soteriology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 1.

<sup>61</sup>James K. A. Smith, "Is There Room for Surprise in the Natural World? Naturalism, the Supernatural, and Pentecostal Spirituality," in *Science and the Spirit: A Pentecostal Engagement with the Sciences*, ed. James K. A. and Amos Yong (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010). 36; James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Relativism? Community, Contingency, and Creaturehood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 109.

<sup>62</sup>Modernity is a secular and cultural movement that rejects moral principles, religion, and God as vital components to understanding reality. It emphasizes the importance of reason (rationalism), the human five senses (empiricism), individual contribution (individualism), and cultural progress. The modern world, then, "seeks to become the master and possessor of nature by the application of a new science and its attendant technology." Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), xi.

<sup>63</sup>See Eleazar S. Fernandez, "Disciples of the Green Spirit: Eco-Justice Spirituality in the Critical Asian Context," *Asia Journal of Theology* 38, no. 1 (April 2024): 17-32, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54424/ajt.v38i1.126>.

<sup>64</sup>See Michael Sheetz, April 23, 2021, "Elon Musk wants SpaceX to reach Mars so humanity is not a 'single-planet species,'" CNBC, <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/04/23/elon-musk-aiming-for-mars-so-humanity-is-not-a-single-planet-species.html>.

Going back to the Filipino ancient worldviews, natives in the provinces believe that their daily lives are connected to the skies, the mountains, the seas, and natural phenomena. For instance, “takipsilim” (dusk), “dilig” (darkness), “umaga” (morning), “hapon” (afternoon), and “gabi” (night), are not merely transitions of time but are related to the appearances of spiritual beings, such as “lamang-lupa” (creatures of the earth), “tikbalang” (half-men and half-horses), and “mangkukulam” (sorcerers).<sup>65</sup> Primal religions of the country have a concept of general revelation. Their ancient worldviews upholds the importance of being in tune with the ecosystem—creating a “sacramental” perspective. “Sacramental” in the sense that the presence of God manifests in creation or nature can be a venue by which people can communicate to a deity.<sup>66</sup> Thus, since God created the world, nature should be perceived as an integral part in the world in which we inhabit. We are not the masters but stewards. Thus, respecting nature is imperative. Perhaps we should remove the extreme line of separation between the secular and the spiritual, the natural and the supernatural because God is moving within both of these “realms” since he created them. This implies that whatever Christians practice and do outside the four corners of the worship building are still connected to spirituality. In short, the daily and mundane activities are still spiritual.

Using Lewis’s Narnia, Alister McGrath critiques modernity’s assumption that humans can control nature: “Lewis’s portrayal of animal characters in Narnia is partly a protest against shallow assertions of humanity’s right to do what it pleases with nature.”<sup>67</sup> Such a belief is quite different from modernity’s view of “progress,” which promotes the industrialized abuse of nature and emphasizes technology at the expense of growing things. Using *The Lord of the Rings* as an example, our “lordless powers” make us like Saruman who became an evil wizard of Middle-earth, and “has a mind of metal and wheels; and he does not care for growing things, except as far as they serve him for the moment.”<sup>68</sup> In the Philippines, for example, we continue to destroy the Sierra Madre mountain range that protects us from natural disasters. Generally, there are two reasons for the deforestation of the Sierra Madre: selfish economic gain and the idea that we are the center of the universe entitled to “dominion” over creation.<sup>69</sup> Such action and belief come from our “lordless powers.”

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<sup>65</sup>Jocano, *Filipino Worldview*, 20-21.

<sup>66</sup>See C. R. Moss, *Nabaloi Law and Ritual* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1920), 273, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044041907890&view=1up&seq=14>.

<sup>67</sup>Alister McGrath, *C.S. Lewis: A Life* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2013), 276.

<sup>68</sup>J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), 473.

<sup>69</sup>Aldrin M. Peñamora, “Kapwa Ethics: Christ-Centered Ethics of Responsibility Towards the Earth, Our Neighbor,” in *Why, O God: Disaster, Resiliency, and the People of God*, ed. Athena E. Gorospe, Charles Ringma, and Karen Hollenbeck-Wuest (Mandaluyong, Philippines: OMF Literature Inc., 2017), 120.

## Taking Creation Seriously

It is also helpful for Christians to go beyond the assumption that all ecological disasters are consequences of the Fall. Concluding that all catastrophes are results of original sin may tempt us to disregard our human responsibilities to care for our environment. As I mentioned earlier, while sin has a role in the groaning of creation, humans' irresponsibility due to our "lordless powers" make creation cry more for its original design. But as it screeches, we suffer from the repercussions of our negligence and imprudence towards our nature.

From 2019 until the present, people at the lower echelon of our society have suffered much from COVID-19, typhoons, and earthquakes. Thus, Christians are challenged to participate in taking care of the earth. Filipina scholar Athena Gorospe is right to assert that "we must also consider how to prevent disasters, since the human cost of natural disasters is often exacerbated by our lack of care for the environment. For example, illegal logging results in flash floods; poor garbage collection and segregation, and the use of plastics leads to clogged sewers, which in turn further intensify flooding."<sup>70</sup> I am aware that such an argument or proposal is not new, but I hope to reiterate the reality that many Filipino evangelicals have focused much on "saving souls," while our forests and rivers are being abused and ravaged.<sup>71</sup> We should lament such irresponsibility. William Dyrness observes such a popular Christian concept where they live in macro and micro realms. The former relates to the public, while the latter refers to the private circle. Discipleship is focused on the private aspect while neglecting the importance of faith and practice in the public arena.<sup>72</sup> Awareness of the "lordless powers" within us and the result of sin is not enough. Christians' active participation is necessary. Strong typhoons have brought catastrophes, inflicted deaths, and damaged billions of pesos of properties in Asia. These calamities could serve as a challenge for Filipino evangelicals to take care of their environment; and for the national and local governments to continue striving for strategic planning and development. Moreover, since I mentioned the Filipino primal religion earlier, I propose that taking the environment seriously includes the recovery and respect of the beliefs of the indigenous people.

As Christians, part of our sanctification is having a renewed perspective on how we could take care of God's creation and turn our back on "lordless powers." Also, Christian spirituality takes the earth seriously and appreciates God's creation because Jesus Christ is making all things new through the Holy Spirit. Creation is not just a

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<sup>70</sup>Athena E. Gorospe, "Disaster, Resiliency, and the People of God," in *Why, O God: Disaster, Resiliency, and the People of God*, ed. Athena E. Gorospe, Charles Ringma, and Karen Hollenbeck-Wuest (Mandaluyong, Philippines: OMF Literature Inc., 2017), 5.

<sup>71</sup>I want to acknowledge the existence of WEA's Sustainability Center. This center encourages individual Christians and Evangelical churches for a broader engagement toward care for creation. See the World Evangelical Alliance Sustainability Center. <https://wea-sc.org/en/home>.

<sup>72</sup>William A. Dyrness, *Facts on the Ground: A Wisdom Theology of Culture* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2022), 11-12.

tool but crucial to God's revelation.<sup>73</sup> Harry Alan Hahne is right in arguing that "since God plans to redeem the damaged material creation (Romans 8:19, 21) and not simply dispose of it at the end of the age, God's redeemed children ought to show a strong concern for the care of nature."<sup>74</sup> While creation is groaning, eschatological perfection of the material world and liberation from sin will occur.

## Conclusion

In this essay, we discussed natural disasters and "lordless powers." And in our attempt to stay away from God and trust our strength, power, resources, and influences, we create "lordless powers" that do not serve us, instead distorting our desires. The repercussions are manifested in how we perceive, value, and handle God's creation. Thus, recovery of eco-theology by appreciating indigenous Filipino wisdom is helpful.

Although the culmination of God's creation is humanity (Genesis 1:26-27; Job 7:17; Psalm 8:4), our uniqueness does not give us a license to shatter the natural environment.<sup>75</sup> Our consumerist mentality feeds the "lordless powers" within us must be combated with the truth that creation can serve as God's pedagogical tool to teach us to appreciate his wisdom as the author of all.<sup>76</sup>

Also, I desire to challenge our human pride and mindset believing that with our technology, we are in control of our environment and are the captain of our ships. I also hope that I have pointed out to the readers the creativity of God. That is to say, the world is more than just a machine; it is dynamic and full of wonders. The world is sacramental in nature in the sense that it showcases the glory of God. The Psalmists capture this essence in these declarations:

<sup>1</sup> Lord, our Lord,  
 how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
 You have set your glory  
 in the heavens.

<sup>3</sup> When I consider your heavens,  
 the work of your fingers,

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<sup>73</sup>Gordon T. Smith, "Spirituality that Takes Creation Seriously," in *Walking with God: Christian Spirituality in the Asian Context*, ed. Charles R. Ringma and Karen Hollenbeck-Wuest (Manila: OMF Literature Inc., 2014), 102-103. Moreover, creation has life. Filipino scholar Athena Gorospe has discussed eco-theology on the lens of theology of life. See Athena Gorospe, "God's Story of Life: Themes for an Asian Creation Care Ethics," in *Asian Christian Ethics: Evangelical Perspectives*, ed. Aldrin M Peñamora and Bernard K. Wong (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2022), 191-295.

<sup>74</sup>Hahne, "The Whole Creation has been Groaning," 23. Reflecting on Romans 8: 19-23, Hahne writes, "The damage that the Fall caused to nature will be reversed and nature will be perfected, so that it shares in the glory of the resurrected children of God." Hahne, "The Whole Creation has been Groaning," 20.

<sup>75</sup>Kang Hack Lee, "Jonathan Edwards on Nature: An Example for Christian Ecospirituality," *Torch Trinity Journal* 14, no. 2 (November 30, 2021): 134.

<sup>76</sup>See Michael Jin Choi, "Creation in the Development of the Human Person according to Irenaeus," *Torch Trinity Journal* 14, no. 2 (November 30, 2021): 121.

the moon and the stars,  
which you have set in place,  
<sup>4</sup> what is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
human beings that you care for them?  
<sup>9</sup> Lord, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

(Psalm 8:1, 3-4, 9).

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# Locating Filipino Pastoral Care Perspectives: *Bahala Na*, Ecclesiastes, and Psychological Flexibility

Fritz Gerald M. Melodi

## Introduction

In this essay, I will engage three sources of knowledge, and attempt to reflect pastorally on the wisdom that they share. These three are: the Filipino expression, “*bahala na*”, psychological flexibility, and the wisdom literature of Ecclesiastes. I propose that by engaging *bahala na* as an indigenous resource for resilience, resourced by Scripture and empirical evidence, I argue that *bahala na* can be fertile source for relevant Filipino pastoral caring.

In terms of method, by integrating these three knowledge domains, I wish to affirm that truth is found in both the general revelation of God revealed in the human sciences and experience and the special revelation of God, as revealed in Holy Scriptures. Both these modes of revelation reveal in varying degrees, the truth of God’s being and creation, truly but partially or seen in a limited way due to human weaknesses. The Bible itself affirms this approach of generating knowledge from both nature and Scripture through the example of the Old Testament sages. The wise men of ancient Israel observed and reflected on human life, their vices and virtues, including divine revelation in Scripture. They then proceeded to distill from them, wisdom and healthy prescriptions for living.<sup>1</sup>

More formal theories of integrating the human sciences, experience, and theology also affirm the approach above. Christian theories of integrating and reading “extra-biblical” sources are not only warranted but necessary.<sup>2</sup> This is grounded in the theological view of God’s common grace and general revelation, and as shown, is even the epistemic approach of some biblical writers. However, as Christians one must be mindful that the Scripture and its very best interpretation are still the normative guides in arriving at conclusions. This same theoretical framework is assumed in this essay, by which, experience and the human sciences are absorbed in the Scriptural

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<sup>1</sup>John Coe and Todd W. Hall, “A Transformational Psychology Response to Christian Psychology” in *Psychology and Christianity: Five Views*, Eric L. Johnson, ed. (Downer Groves, Illinois: IVP Press, 2010), 192.

<sup>2</sup>John David Trentham, “Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Part 2): Engaging the Appropriating Models of Human Development”, *Christian Education Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (2019), 478-480, DOI: 10.1177/0739891319882699journals.sagepub.com/home/cej

rubric as “servants” that “clarify or explicate or confirm our best understandings” of the Christian faith.<sup>3</sup>

It is significant that Christian helping professionals and pastoral carers be serious students of culture. Uncritically importing psychological categories heavily formed in the West, without cultural sensitivity, may potentially erase and displace local traditions or misdiagnose locals due to “presumed psychological universals.”<sup>4</sup> By integrating cultural values, one practices a form of incarnational love in valuing people, by engaging them compassionately in their cultural thought-forms.

Therefore, in this essay, I will seek to develop pastoral insights that are Christian, Filipino, and are empirically sound. The usage of the term “Filipino” here does not presume a pure and novel cultural identity. Rather, “Filipino” here, refers to locale and community. With these objectives, an interdisciplinary and global approach is beneficial. This essay will largely form two parts: First, I will explore each knowledge domain separately; second, I will argue for their correlation by finding conceptual parallels from each. I will then proceed to propose sound Filipino pastoral insights that are contextually engaged, Scripturally rooted, and based on empirical evidence.

Filipino priest and psychologist Jaime Bulatao, attempting to develop a culturally-sensitive counseling approach, posits from research, that one feature of Filipino therapy is their ready acceptance of the way things are.<sup>5</sup> This “accepting” attitude is significantly encapsulated in the Filipino expression, “*bahala na!*” It is therefore fruitful to begin exploring *bahala na* as a pointer to possible insights for Filipino pastoral care.

### **Bahala Na as Confrontative Value**

“*Bahala na!*” can be heard among Filipino students anxiously reviewing before a critical exam. The same can be heard from a Filipino about to confess one’s love to a beloved. “*Bahala na!*” is also uttered by a Filipino picking up the parts of a burnt down house. The same is also uttered by a poor Filipino mother who embraces her children as her late husband’s coffin is lowered onto the ground. “*Bahala na*” is a linguistic staple among Filipinos faced with the harsh and uncontrollable realities of life. “*Bahala na*” has no direct translation in English. However, “*bahala na*” has been described as a Filipino attitude that expresses the notion, “whatever will be, will be” or “I leave everything to God”.

The notion of *bahala na* in popular Filipino usage has a morally ambivalent meaning. This ambivalence is rooted in how *bahala na* is used for certain situations. For instance, *bahala na* can be uttered by a farmer who gambles his earnings away,

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<sup>3</sup>Steven L. Porter, “Wesleyan Theological Methodology as a Theory of Integration”, *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (2004), 197, DOI: 10.1177/009164710403200304.

<sup>4</sup>Alvin Dueck and Kevin Reimer, *A Peaceable Psychology: Christian Therapy in a World of Many Cultures*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2009), 48.

<sup>5</sup>Elizabeth Protacio-Marcelino, “Towards Understanding Filipino Psychology”, *Women and Therapy* Vol. 9, No. 1-2, (2008), 124, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J015v09n01\\_07](http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J015v09n01_07).

not mindful of the future. In this negative usage of *bahala na*, it serves the purpose of condoning irresponsibility or a lack of preparation. However, it can also be used positively. For instance, it can be uttered by a single father, who is left to parent an infant when the wife leaves for work abroad. In this instance, *bahala na* is positively used as a courageous, even religious determination in the face of the uncontrollable and uncertain.<sup>6</sup>

The meaning of *bahala na* has been a matter of discussion in Filipino psychological literature. The study of Alfredo Lagmay on the Filipino experience of *bahala na* has provided a pioneering cultural insider's perspective on this cultural value. Responding to early Western studies on *bahala na* as mere fatalism and resignation, Lagmay has concluded that *bahala na* is not fatalistic resignation, but a form of Filipino "psychological ascendancy".<sup>7</sup> Using a qualitative thematic apperception analysis, Lagmay describes the features of *bahala na* as follows:

1. The one who utters *bahala na* stays committed to the problem. *Bahala na* therefore is not an avoidant nor escapist attitude.
2. The utterer recognizes one's "throwness into the future" and therefore creates the possibility of spontaneity, innovation, and flexibility.
3. The one who utters *bahala na* has learned to accept the situation, including one's deficiencies as he/she perceives it as of the moment, vis-à-vis the future.
4. This attitude creates a tolerance for mystery or ambiguity about the future.
5. *Bahala na* as an attitude carries with it a sense of trust in one's ability to face any contingency.<sup>8</sup>

Filipino Psychology pioneer Virgilio Enriquez, drawing from Lagmay's study, argues that early studies on *bahala na* has rendered this cultural value in a more negative light.<sup>9</sup> Enriquez however resists this outsider reading of *bahala na* as arising from a demeaning colonialist interpretation. The Filipino personality has been conceived by many Westerners as basically accommodative and servile. What Western researchers ignored however, is the confrontative dimension of the Filipino found in linguistic sources, in words such as *pakikibaka* (resistance), *lakas ng loob* (strength of will), and *bahala na*. Enriquez argues that *bahala na* is "risktaking (sic) in the face of the proverbial cloud of uncertainty and the possibility of failure."<sup>10</sup> It is clear, for Enriquez that *bahala na* functions in the Filipino as courage and confrontation. In constructing

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<sup>6</sup>Vitaliano Gorospe, SJ, "Christian Renewal of Filipino Values", *Philippine Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (1966): 218-219, Ateneo Journals Online.

<sup>7</sup>Alfredo Lagmay, "Bahala Na!", *Philippine Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 26, No. 1, (June 1993): 34, Philippine Social Science Council.

<sup>8</sup>Lagmay, "Bahala Na!", 33.

<sup>9</sup>Virgilio Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology: The Philippine Experience*, (Quezon City, Philippines: University of the Philippines Publishing, 1992), 88.

<sup>10</sup>Enriquez, *From Colonial*, 88.

his model of the Filipino personality, Enriquez places *bahala na* as a confrontative and creative behavior pattern that propels the Filipino into the unknown future.<sup>11</sup>

This conceptualization of *bahala na* is consistent with more recent empirical studies that seem to confirm the utilitarian ambivalence of *bahala na*, but overall leans towards a behavioral pattern of calculated risk-taking, many times with awareness of Divine providence.<sup>12</sup> The context of *bahala na* is often uttered during experiences where there are not enough options, or there is an overabundance of options, or all resources and efforts have been exhausted and therefore acceptance of the state of things ensues. From this acceptance however, emerges self-efficacy, hopefulness, and commitment towards action.

The awareness and reliance on the Divine is apparent in *bahala na*. The utterer shows dependence in the power of the Divine. While this may be construed negatively as fatalism and passivity, the phenomenology of *bahala na vis-à-vis* God, reveals calmness and resolve in the face of mystery, a reliance in God's superior knowledge and power, including tolerance of predetermined futures. *Bahala na vis-à-vis* God and belief in predetermination however, does not preclude belief in human action. The attitude is inclusive of rational deliberation of what is in the sphere of human control and what transcends it, as belonging to the will of the Divine.<sup>13</sup>

### **Psychological Flexibility: *To Accept is to Adapt***

A growing consensus on a fundamental component of health is psychological flexibility. Although definitions and emphases may vary, psychological flexibility refers to the adaptive ability of individuals to accept and adapt to present situations, without being defensive to one's thoughts and emotions or changing said situation.<sup>14</sup> Proponents of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) argue that conventional Western medical paradigms construe "healthy normality" as the absence or freedom from any physical or mental distress. This conception has led to the notion that all negative experiences need to be avoided. However, this overall paradigm is short-sighted. This paradigm has failed to acknowledge that somehow, suffering is a basic feature of human existence.<sup>15</sup> The psychiatric and psychological fields have been defined by this same medical approach, that focuses primarily on symptom reduction.

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<sup>11</sup>Enriquez, *From Colonial*, 93.

<sup>12</sup>Ma. Ligaya Manuel Menguito and Mendiola Teng-Calleja, "Bahala Na as Expression of the Filipino's Courage, Hope, Optimism, Self-Efficacy, and Search for the Sacred", *Philippine Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 43, No. 1, (2010): 22.

<sup>13</sup>Rolando M. Gripaldo, "Bahala Na: A Philosophical Analysis", in *Filipino Cultural Traits: Claro R. Ceniza Lectures*, Rolando M. Gripaldo, ed. (Washington DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2005) 208.

<sup>14</sup>James J. Lucas, and Kathleen A. Moore, "Psychological Flexibility: Positive Implications for Mental Health and Life Situation", *Health Promotion International*, No. 1, Vol. 0 (2019):1, doi: 10.1093/heapro/daz036.

<sup>15</sup>Steven Hayes, Kirk D. Strosahl, and Kelly G. Wilson, *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: The Process and Practice of Mindful Change, Second Edition*, (London: Guilford Press, 2012), 4.

There is a plethora of psychological diagnoses but for some ACT proponents, these so-called mental illnesses seem to lack clear warrant to be considered a “disease”.<sup>16</sup> ACT proponents contend that a change in approach is needed. First, there must be an acknowledgment that suffering in general is a basic feature of normal human existence.

For ACT proponents, one natural process that makes suffering “normal” is the human capacity for language. The capacity for words and symbols create internal states that can be difficult to disentangle from. Humans have internal dialogues that either limit or expand one’s horizons. Thus people with depression would have internal dialogues that often abide by very rigid self-imposed rules. Therefore, mental images and language are now *fused* with what is perceived as reality. Humans often fail to recognize that these are merely thoughts and not reality itself. ACT proponents call this process “cognitive fusion”.<sup>17</sup>

Another feature of human suffering from an ACT perspective is “experiential avoidance”. Avoidance is a result of the fusing processes highlighted above. Experiential avoidance happens when a person, led by one’s rigid mental monologues is then led to suppress, control, or eliminate stimuli that are perceived to cause distress. For ACT proponents, as one avoids and suppresses these experiences, paradoxically, the more one experiences said stimuli. One negative result of avoidance is that an individual’s life begins to shrink by avoiding certain situations, thoughts, and emotions.<sup>18</sup>

These processes of “cognitive fusion” and “experiential avoidance”, are components of psychological inflexibility. People can create entanglements with their own self-narratives. Individuals internalize these self-imposed rules with mastery, making it difficult to notice other possibilities that lay outside it. For instance, a person who dreads social interaction already thinks and imagines what a disaster it would be to join a co-worker’s birthday party, thus leading to avoid it. Although the situation has not yet occurred, a person can be so fused with his or her own thoughts that those same mental images are mistaken for reality. This cycle creates more inflexibility and more avoidance. Hayes and others describe this process in this way:

Unnecessary suffering occurs when verbal/ cognitive processes tend to narrow human repertoires in key areas through cognitive entanglement and experiential avoidance. When people over-identify, or “fuse,” with unworkable verbal rules, their behavioral repertoire becomes narrow, and they lose effective contact with the direct results of action. This response inhibits their ability to change course when existing strategies are not working.<sup>19</sup>

Psychological inflexibility has been shown to be correlated to forms of

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<sup>16</sup>Hayes, Strosahl, and Wilson, *Acceptance*, 9.

<sup>17</sup>Patricia A. Bach, and Daniel J. Moran, *ACT in Practice: Case Conceptualization in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*, (Oakland, California: New Harbinger Publications, 2008), 8.

<sup>18</sup>Hayes, Strosahl, and Wilson, *Acceptance*, 22.

<sup>19</sup>Hayes, Strosahl, and Wilson, *Acceptance*, 64.

psychopathology such as depression and anxiety disorders. Both these diagnoses feature an experience of a narrow sameness and stereotypical appraisal of their experiences. Depressed individuals see the world as all empty and unprofitable, unable to construe positive experiences. Those with anxiety disorders, experience the world with avoidance, creating a stereotyped assessment and response to a variety of situations.<sup>20</sup>

Growing in psychological flexibility hence is related to health and well-being. Psychological flexibility is the ability to be mindful of the present, aware of one's thoughts and emotions, accepting them first without judgment, and then to engage them with curiosity and to learn from these thoughts and emotions. Drawing from empirical evidence, Kashdan and Rottenberg argue that fostering psychological flexibility, involve:<sup>21</sup>

1. Executive functioning: This refers to the ability to focus one's cognitive resources towards mental versatility, awareness of what a context demands, and awareness of one's mental processes. Executive functioning includes the cognitive skill to tolerate distress, openness and receptiveness to internal and external realities and possibilities.
2. Achieving balance: Psychological flexibility involves creating a balance between paying attention to current surroundings, while "conserving mental energy" to discern other possibilities. This involves the ability of the mind to suspend, reassess and reconfigure stereotypes and biases in judging situations and persons.
3. Personality configurations: Personality traits matter in fostering psychological flexibility. Those with high neuroticism, or those who tend to focus on and experience negative thoughts and emotions seem to reduce one's capacity to be more mentally versatile. Meanwhile, the presence of positive emotions tend to correlate with greater openness to other experiences and perspectives. Naturally, people who score high in openness to experience tend to be curious, willing to experience both negative and positive emotions, and versatile with other views. People who scored high in self-control also tended to be psychologically flexible, noting their ability to resist urges, suspend impulses, and consciously direct cognitive processes, instead of being controlled by environmental factors.

The ACT model however adds one more component aside from the major components of acceptance, mindfulness, and openness: values. For ACT proponents, while acceptance, mindfulness, and openness can make one psychologically flexible, commitment to one's values makes for a meaningful and fulfilling life that guides one towards action. Whereas psychological inflexibility tends to inhibit action or produce

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<sup>20</sup>Todd B. Kashdan, and Jonathan Rottenberg, "Psychological Flexibility as a Fundamental Aspect of Health", *Clinical Psychology Review*, Vol. 30, (2010), 869, doi:10.1016/j.cpr.2010.03.001.

<sup>21</sup>Kashdan and Rottenberg, *Fundamental Aspect*, 870.

impulsive and unhealthy ones, ACT sees psychological flexibility as resulting in “committed action”, that is, a day-by-day commitment to act and behave purposefully, guided and informed by one’s values.<sup>22</sup>

After exploring both the Filipino psychology of *bahala na* and psychological flexibility as a psychological construct of adaptive behavior, I shall now turn to exploring the ancient wisdom of Ecclesiastes.

### **Ecclesiastes 3:1-14: A Time For Everything**

Ecclesiastes has been a puzzling book for many readers, even among Christians for its seeming pessimistic outlook in life. However, upon deeper reading, Ecclesiastes presents to us an honest meditation on the often harsh realities of life, then afterwards, proposes a joyful, wise way forward.

A probable date for the book is post-Exile, during the 5th century Persian period. The evidence for this dating is the presence of Persian loan words in the text.<sup>23</sup> This implies that the direct author of Ecclesiastes most probably was not King Solomon, despite what has commonly been assumed. The text seems to have two voices: a Narrator and a character introduced by the Narrator as “The Preacher” or *Qoheleth* in Hebrew (e.g. vv. 1:1-2). The writer has adapted the character and voice of Solomon as a literary device to frame one’s reflection on life. Solomon was said to have been both wise and rich, who enjoyed all manner of worldly pleasures and pursuits (cf. 2 Chron. 9:13-29; 1 Kgs 10:14-29; 11:3). Adapting Solomon’s experience as a person of worldly successes, Qoheleth wishes to examine the meaning of existence.

Gerhard Von Rad rightly discerns at least three major themes throughout the text, namely: 1) life is full of meaningless pursuits; 2) God predetermines many if not every event; 3) as creatures, human beings do not have a “God’s eye-view” to discern what happens in the world.<sup>24</sup> The presence of death and decay, and therefore “time”, are impartial realities of human existence. Therefore, both the moral and immoral, the honorable and the criminal, the rich and poor, godly and ungodly, both human and animal are all subjected to its effects. The presence of death and decay, render many, if not all pursuits of wealth, education, and sex as “meaningless” in the end. Humans are subjected to transience, impermanence, and coincidence which they have no control over, and are therefore subjected to a seemingly, meaningless rat-race. A response to this, which is a thread running throughout Ecclesiastes, is the wisdom to live life with acceptance, along with the capacity for enjoyment, which is a gift of God. The poem in Ecclesiastes 3:1-14 is placed within this thematic milieu.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-14 is one of the book’s more popular passages. The main thesis of the poem is on the first line: “There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every matter under heaven” (3:1). Qoheleth observes that humans cannot

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<sup>22</sup>Hayes, Strosahl, and Willson, *Acceptance*, 92-96.

<sup>23</sup>Choon-Leon Seow, *Ecclesiastes, Vol. 18C*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1997), 128.

<sup>24</sup>Gerhard Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1972), 227-228.

choose and determine what events happen to them. They are subjected to realities both happy and tragic: “there is a time for everything”. Thus, humans must be able to discern and accept which “time” or “season” they are in, so they can act appropriately. Von Rad writes:

Man can do nothing but yield to this fact, for it is certainly not susceptible of any alteration. If he has no alternative but to recognize this limitation as a given fact, he is not, however prevented from reflecting on it; he can go further and even attempt to derive some profit from it and to perceive in it some kind of mysterious order.<sup>25</sup>

For Qoheleth, it is therefore wise for humans to avoid denial and accept the event that they are in, in order to gain wisdom and healthily adapt. Life must be accepted as contingent to realities outside of one’s control. There is nothing absolute in life. The way to cope and respond wisely then must also involve some acceptance and flexibility over life’s contingencies.

Qoheleth then proceeds to list twenty-eight items, paired together as anti-theses to each other (vv.2-8). These 14 pairs is meant to describe the whole “gamut of human life and its activities”: birth and death, grief and celebration, love and hate, war and peace.<sup>26</sup> There seems to be no pattern to this list of experiences, except that the items are opposites of each other. The varieties of experiences listed by Qoheleth, depicting both hardship and pleasure are meant to describe their inevitability and proper timing. Here, Qoheleth accepts that life is not as ideal as one wants to imagine it to be. Qoheleth also recognizes the inscrutable divine activity and wisdom of God in ordering the world and God’s permission of times and seasons. Again, by listing them, one is encouraged to discern and accept what is the current occasion God has allowed and thus to flexibly ponder on a possible response.<sup>27</sup>

Qoheleth then proceeds to ask a rhetorical question: “What benefit *is there for the worker from that* in which he labors?” (v.9) The answer to this is in the negative. This means, for Qoheleth, no matter how hard a person works, the same person is still subject to the times and seasons of life that is beyond one’s control. God sovereignly determines and allows human beings, certain tasks to do and realities to experience. God has made every occasion “beautiful”, i.e. appropriate or proper in its own time and humans are merely subject to it (v.11). For Qoheleth, there is wisdom in accepting one’s limitations, in the midst of uncontrollable forces God has placed in Creation (vv. 10-11, 14). God has placed “eternity”, most probably an awareness of time, in the human soul, but does not fully know when these events arise and their full meaning in the grand scheme of things. Humans, as time-bounded creatures, also cannot hope to

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<sup>25</sup>Von Rad, *Wisdom*, 139.

<sup>26</sup>Craig G. Bartholomew and Ryan P. O’Dowd, *Old Testament Wisdom Literature: A Theological Introduction*, (Downer Groves, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2011), 215.

<sup>27</sup>Bartholomew and O’Dowd, *Old Testament*, 218.

alter the times and activity God has appointed in eternity, unbounded by time.<sup>28</sup>

Faced with the uncontrollable, Qoheleth proposes that the wise attitude to life, is the enjoyment of life, which is also a gift from God (v. 12-13). This is prompted in v. 12 by “I know...” which indicates one’s human response. Commentator Choon-Leon Seow writes, “all people can do in the face of the inscrutability of the universe is to live life fully in the present.”<sup>29</sup> For Qoheleth, humans cannot alter what God has permitted and determined in the world. Therefore, wisdom lies in a mindful light-heartedness. To live wisely amidst what we cannot control, is to develop the skill of relinquishing control and be present, to do the good that one can and to enjoy what good there is. This ability and experience of enjoyment is also the will and gift of God (v.13. cf. 2:24). Therefore, humans must wisely be flexible and accepting to what time they are in their life, since this is beyond their control. Life is hard. Rigidity makes life harder. The sooner one accepts one’s “season”, the sooner they are able to develop an appropriate response. For Qoheleth, primarily this means openness and perseverance to do the good, to look for the good, and to be present, to enjoy fully what is good.

## Pastoral Integration

After discussing these three sources of knowledge, I want to propose a constructive engagement among them. Out from this interface, first, I will identify the parallels between, *bahala na*, psychological flexibility, and Ecclesiastes. Second, I wish to identify pastoral care perspectives from these three knowledge domains.

### 1. Discerning Parallels

From the discussion above, I propose three common themes that *bahala na*, psychological flexibility, and Ecclesiastes 3:1-14 share:

- a. These three knowledge domains share the principle of recognizing and accepting one’s current state or limitations. According to the pioneering research by Lagmay, the psychological attitude behind *bahala na* is the basic acceptance of one’s situation. The Filipino utterer has reached the recognition that a situation can no longer be altered, one’s resources has been depleted, or all possible help can no longer be perceived.<sup>30</sup> This same theme of acceptance is also present in psychological flexibility and in Qoheleth. For ACT proponents, acceptance means the psychological skill to welcome emotions and thoughts without defensiveness. The very theoretical paradigm of ACT grounds it in the acceptance that human suffering is a basic reality, that needs

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<sup>28</sup>Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 172-173.

<sup>29</sup>Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 173.

<sup>30</sup>Lagmay, “Bahala Na!”, 32.

acceptance and not avoidance. For Qoheleth, this means the recognition and non-denial of what season of life one is currently in. Qoheleth's writings also intrinsically involves an acceptance that life is often an amalgam of both the tragic and the celebratory. Gaining wisdom first demands accepting reality. Accepting one's limitations is also thematically linked to the perception of determinism which both Qoheleth and *bahala na* as a Filipino attitude is heavily imbued with. Psychological flexibility does not explicitly articulate determinism as a philosophical foundation, but recognizes that resistance and avoidance creates more psychological suffering.

- b. Second, all three share an emphasis on being mindful of the present. The Filipino experience of uttering "*bahala na*" presupposes attentiveness to and non-denial of the present in order to calculate the risk of one's action. Likewise, psychological flexibility proposes that one ought to become attentive to one's present thoughts, emotions at the present moment without judgment, in order to reflect and learn from them. Being mindful of the present, including one's emotions and thoughts, have been shown to foster a self-awareness that disrupts and challenges depressive thought-processes.<sup>31</sup> Qoheleth likewise proposes that the only way one copes with life's uncontrollable realities is to be fully present, and not to worry about the past which can no longer be altered, or the future, which cannot be known. Everything will have its own season. This moment may be a time to dance, and tomorrow a time to mourn. Thus, Qoheleth counsels his readers to be fully present and enjoy life, which is also God's will for human creatures.
- c. Third, all three foster a sense of hopeful action. As noted above, contrary to more prejudiced readings of *bahala na* as passive resignation to one's fate, *bahala na* is a confrontative value, allowing the Filipino to be launched into an ambiguous future. By saying *bahala na*, the Filipino mentally calculates the risks, is open to extemporaneous and creative options, accepts one's situation, as beyond human control, and therefore takes a hopeful risk or gamble at life. For religious Filipinos, this is often done with a deep sense of faith in God's providence. Psychological flexibility likewise fosters "committed action" that are congruent to one's deeply held values. It is a daily commitment to act in more purposive ways that arise from a more flexible and disentangled cognitive process. For Qoheleth, as stated above, after reflecting on the realities of life as fleeting, contingent, and possibly deterministic, Qoheleth does not fall into suicidal despair. Rather, Qoheleth concludes that life can be lived with joy, light-heartedness, and gratitude.

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<sup>31</sup>Laura R. Silberstein, et. al., "Mindfulness, Psychological Flexibility, and Emotional Schemas", *International Journal of Cognitive Therapy*, Vol. 5, No. 4, (2012): 408, 415, <https://doi.org/10.1521/ijct.2012.5.4.406>.

## 2. Filipino Pastoral Care Perspectives

Having discerned their agreements, I shall now turn to proposing contextual pastoral care perspectives. In this section, I will sketch some pastoral insights drawn from the study above. I will constructively engage Filipino thought along with Christian sources and empirical findings in developing these pastoral insights. The intention is not to describe techniques in detail, but to suggest an overview of pastoral caring principles. I propose three pastoral themes that emerge from this study: 1) Cultivating *pagdama* (“feeling”); 2) cultivating *pananampalataya* (“faith”); 3) cultivating *kaligayahan* (“joy” or “happiness”).

- a. Cultivating *Pagdama* (“*Hindi Pag-Walang Bahala*”): In Filipino, *pagdama* is to literally “feel”, “sense” or “perceive”. It is a Filipino way of knowing and interacting with the world and one’s self through one’s senses, not only with the intellect but also of feeling and emotion.<sup>32</sup> For Enriquez, *pagdama* in Filipino psychology involves both an internal and external movement. It is both to feel for and be sensitive towards (external) others and also, to *damdam*, that is, to feel one’s own emotions (internal).<sup>33</sup> From the study above, *pagdama* is thus important in caring for others and ourselves. For Qoheleth, one needs to rightly perceive (*pakiramdaman*) one’s season in life, in order to act with flexibility (external: *paki-dama*). Psychological flexibility also suggests that emotions and thoughts ought to be welcomed and felt (internal: *damdam*) as a means to adapt and cope. The Filipino notion of *bahala na*, likewise presupposes a feeling of one’s external and internal world in order to calculate the risks of one’s situation, and then to develop determination (“*lakas ng loob*”) to face the risk. Here, I suggest three pastoral care principles under *pagdama*: *i. empathy*; *ii. reflection*; *iii. advocacy*.
  - i. Empathy: A basic disposition in pastoral caring is the skill of empathy. To empathize in Filipino thought is to do *pakikiramdam* (feel) with one’s *kapwa* (“others”). Thus, to empathize is to step into a person’s world, including one’s thoughts, emotions, background, and motivation, while bracketing one’s own bias and judgment. This is done in order to understand a person’s thought and behavior, and not to lose objectivity in a client or parishioner.<sup>34</sup> Like Qoheleth, one must respect and recognize the time and season of life a person is in, especially the people we are tasked to care for, since all people go through tragedy and pain. Therefore, to empathize is to listen, deferring any judgment or prescription but allowing a person to first be understood and be authentic.

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<sup>32</sup>José de Mesa, *José de Mesa: A Theological Reader*, (Manila: De La Salle University Publishing House, 2016), 490.

<sup>33</sup>Enriquez, *From Colonial*, 79.

<sup>34</sup>Elisabeth Sbanotto, Heather Davieduk GIngrich, and Fred C. Gingrich, *Skills for Effective Counseling: Faith Based Integration*, (Downer Groves, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2016), chap. 7, epub.

- ii. Reflection: To “reflect” here is to observe (*pagmamasid*) one’s inner world without judgment. Like the proponents of ACT, along with practices of mindfulness, in order for one to become aware and disempower certain critical-self talk as mere thoughts and not reality, one must be able to welcome and acknowledge these mental images, self-imposed rules, and internal monologues. This can be done through mindfulness exercises, such as slow breathing or through observing one’s thoughts, emotions, making room for them as they come and go without judgment.<sup>35</sup> The teachings of Qoheleth imply that we ought to be fully present in the moment, aware of our thoughts, emotions, and our bodies.<sup>36</sup>
  - iii. Advocacy: Pastorally caring for others, not only means caring for their inner worlds, but also to participate in advocating for social injustices that are detrimental to people’s well-being and flourishing. Howard Clinebell’s notion of holistic pastoral care involves “working against dominant cultural discourses that support unjust power arrangements in our world.”<sup>37</sup> Therefore, pastoral care also involves *pakikisangkot* (participation), *pakikiisa* (solidarity), and *pakikibaka* (resistance). Integral to Filipino psychology is their capacity to be conscious of and be in cooperative struggle against exploitation of the *kapwa-tao* (fellow-human).<sup>38</sup> Advocacy is therefore a fruit of *pagdama*, to “feel” my fellow human’s oppression.
- b. Cultivating *Panamampalataya* (“*Bahala Na Ang Diyos*”): Filipinos have been shown to be a deeply religious cultural group.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, religion is a constant facet of life, both in private and in public. It is therefore vital that any therapeutic intervention among Filipinos be open to the presence of religiosity. The expression *bahala na*, although not linguistically rooted in “Bathala” (pre-Hispanic Filipino deity) has been shown to contain in it, faith in God’s providence. *Bahala na* can even be construed as “ordinary theology” among Filipinos, not produced by professional theologians in academia, but a theological confession by ordinary Filipino, especially the overseas Filipino worker (OFW) who daily risks the challenges of life.<sup>40</sup> *Bahala na*, can therefore be seen as confession of faith, a form

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<sup>35</sup>Jason B. Luoma, Steven C. Hayes, Robyn D. Walser, *Learning ACT: An Acceptance & Commitment Therapy Skills Training Manual for Therapists, Second Edition*, (Oakland, California: New Harbinger Publications, 2017), chap. 4, epub.

<sup>36</sup>Bartholomew and O’Dowd, *Old Testament*, 227.

<sup>37</sup>Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care & Counseling: Resources for Ministry of Healing and Growth*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2011), chap. 2, epub.

<sup>38</sup>Enriquez, *From Colonial*, 90.

<sup>39</sup>Ricardo G. Abad, “Filipino Religiosity: Some International Comparisons,” *Philippine Studies* 43, no. 2 (1995): 211, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42634069>.

<sup>40</sup>Rowan Lopez Rebutillo, “BAHALA NA: In Search of an ‘Ordinary Theology’ for the Filipino Diaspora,” *International Journal of Practical Theology*, No. 22, Vol. 2, (2018): 241, <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijpt-2016-0041>.

of risk-taking capacitated by either a latent or explicit faith. This aspect of risk-taking is encapsulated in the Filipino word for “faith”—*pananampalataya*. The word *pananampalataya* even contains in it the meaning of “*taya*”, i.e. literally, to “gamble” or take the risk. Faith is therefore a matter of leaping into the unknown with confidence in God’s wisdom. Thus, it is significant that pastoral care involves religious practices such as prayer, as an expression of *pananampalataya*.

- i. Contemplative Prayer (*Banal na Pagninilay-nilay*): Recently, the rise of meditation and mindfulness exercises in clinical practice has fostered the integration of the ancient Christian tradition of contemplative prayer as a therapeutic task. Integrated within clinical mindfulness approaches is the Christian practice of contemplative prayer of becoming aware of the God’s life-giving presence. Christian contemplative practices were not developed as stress-relieving strategies, although they may have been a by-product. Rather, contemplative prayer has long been practiced in the history of the church as a way of experiencing greater union with God in Christ. Contemplation is a spiritual discipline to become fully awake to God’s presence in daily life.<sup>41</sup> Recently, contemplative practices have been integrated with mindfulness approaches, as ways to help people in psychoemotional suffering.<sup>42</sup> For instance, Gregg Blanton use Thomas Keating’s “centering prayer” in his “contemplative-oriented approach”, along with “*lectio divina* (“spiritual reading”) in counseling.<sup>43</sup> Filipino counselor, Rolf Nolasco encapsulates this clinically-integrated contemplation in this way:

“The theory of change that undergirds this process is that the contemplative and mindful presence the counselor exhibits release [to the client] to become more aware and accepting, with compassion and non-judgment, of her own subjective and interior life. This creates the distance necessary for her to explore the myriad options available to her as she becomes more fully present and available to her own experience.”<sup>44</sup>

Both Nolasco and Blanton’s therapeutic contemplative practice attempts to be receptive to God’s compassionate presence through a non-judgmental and welcoming attitude to one’s thoughts, memories, and feelings.

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<sup>41</sup>Rolf R. Nolasco, Jr. *The Contemplative Counselor: A Way of Being*, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2011), 35.

<sup>42</sup>Robyn D. Walser, “Developing Awareness: Being Present and Self-as-Context”, in *ACT for Clergy and Pastoral Counselors: Using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy to Bridge Psychological and Spiritual Care*, Jason A. Nieuwsma, Robyn D. Walser, Steven C. Hayes, eds. (Oakland, California: New Harbinger Publications, 2016), 70.

<sup>43</sup>P. Gregg Blanton, *Contemplation and Counseling: An Integrative Model for Practitioners*, (Downer Groves, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2019), 35, 38.

<sup>44</sup>Nolasco, *The Contemplative*, 30.,

Evidence for the psychological benefit of contemplative prayer has been demonstrated in a recent longitudinal study among seminarians. In the study, meditative, colloquial, and liturgical (ritual) prayer has been shown to diminish experiential avoidance, which has been shown to foster unhealthy mental states. The researchers posit that these prayer types “help to remain engaged with the present moment in the face of adversity.”<sup>45</sup> Thus, practicing contemplative or meditative prayer over time, fosters psychospiritual resources that help a person downregulate anxiety and depression symptoms and grow in virtue and resilience. Through these contemplative and meditative practices, a person learns to accept a difficult situation (not deny or avoid it), and creatively engage it, while being aware of God’s abiding presence and providence.

- c. Cultivating *Kaligayahan* (“*Bahala Kayo Diyan*”): Qoheleth counsels his readers that enjoyment and light-heartedness is the wise way one responds and accepts the realities of life. This parallels with the sage advice from Proverbs 17:22 that observes how a “cheerful heart” is like good medicine to one’s being. This ancient wisdom is also confirmed by medical evidence which demonstrates how humor and laughter are physically beneficial as they release endorphins—brain chemicals that create feelings of pleasure and happiness, which in turn eases stress.<sup>46</sup> Studies show that humor as therapeutic intervention relieves symptoms of depression and anxiety.<sup>47</sup> One caveat to humor is its potential use as a form of denial or as a way to escape reality. What this signals is perhaps a person’s unreadiness to come to terms with reality. However, even this humorous escapism can be considered as way to *initially* relieve anxiety and is perhaps a necessary step towards acceptance. When confronted with an unalterable crisis, humorous escapism may even be desirable and healthier compared to hopelessness and despair.

This propensity for the humorous has also been documented among Filipinos as a way of coping and interaction. For instance, Enriquez theorized that *biro* (“jokes”) in Filipino psychology are a way of easing tension in Filipino interaction or for establishing rapport (*pakikibagay*).<sup>48</sup> Humor is not limited only to building rapport, but is an expression of resilience.

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<sup>45</sup>Gabriel B. Lowe, David C. Wang, Eu Gene Chine, “Experiential Avoidance Mediates the Relationship between Prayer Type and Mental Health Before and Through the COVID-19 Pandemic”, *Religions*, 13, 652 (2022), 17, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13070652>.

<sup>46</sup>Northwestern Medicine, “Healing through Humor”, accessed May 12, 2023, <https://www.nm.org/healthbeat/healthy-tips/emotional-health/healing-through-humor>.

<sup>47</sup>Ramesh Narula, et. al., “Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Reduction in Medical Education: Humor as Intervention”, *Online Journal of Health and Allied Sciences*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2011), 1, <http://www.ojhas.org/issue37/2011-1-7.htm>.

<sup>48</sup>Enriquez, *From Colonial*, 78.

- i. Humor as Resiliency: A running theme in this essay is the therapeutic and wise value of acceptance, of non-denial of reality, found in Qoheleth, *bahala na* attitude, and psychological flexibility. This finds agreement in the research on humor, as it functions as a means to deal with and accept what is real and suppressed, but in a way that diffuses anxiety and tense emotion. It is a release of relief about a subject matter that would otherwise have been hidden away or unacknowledged due to shame or the high tension it induces. Maria Rhodora Ancheta, studying Filipino humor-culture observes that Filipinos laugh as a way of releasing “pent-up feelings of powerlessness, otherwise unexpressed.”<sup>49</sup> Humor, functions as a way to build commonality, towards recognizing what is painful and uncontrollable. Therefore, to laugh (*halakhak*) is a means by which the Filipino adapts and negotiates one’s survival in difficult situations. Ancheta observes that “humor, is in fact, a Filipino weapon”, “a way to reclaim a space of power born of awareness”, “as a strategy to foreground the ways by which power could be recouped and reappropriated by its most ordinary citizens.”<sup>50</sup>

Cultural experience and mental health research seem to agree with Scriptural wisdom: to see and look for the humorous and light-hearted side is a healthy and helpful way to cope and survive. Hence, Qoheleth sees enjoyment and laughter as a grace of God in itself. To see the humorous is a way to accept reality, but likewise, to experience it as a grace from God. Laughter is thus a credible sign that divine grace is accepted.

## Conclusion<sup>51</sup>

What I sought to accomplish at the beginning is to develop Filipino pastoral insights that are Scriptural, empirically sound, and culturally engaged. The method I have utilized is the interface of the Filipino attitude of *bahala na*, psychological flexibility, and Qoheleth. I then proceeded by discerning their agreements, and sought conceptual parallels in Filipino thought, found in academic and ordinary circles, as categories for these Filipino pastorally caring insights. I then proposed, three themes, *pagdama*, *pananampalataya*, and *kaligayahan* as Filipino pastorally caring

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<sup>49</sup>Maria Rhodora Ancheta, “Halakhak: Defining the ‘National’ in the Humor of Philippine Popular Culture” *Thammasat Review*, Vol 14, No. 1 ((2015), 55. <https://sc01.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/tureview/article/view/40801>.

<sup>50</sup>Ancheta, “Halakhak”, 54-56.

<sup>51</sup>My very special thanks to partners in Christian soul-care, Dr. Bethel B. Webb, Dr. Irish T. Lopez, and Dr. David C. Wang for taking time to review an early draft of this essay. I have tried my best to incorporate their recommendations to further strengthen the essay. Any weaknesses however, are surely my own. I want to particularly acknowledge Dr. Wang’s positive feedback, whose own work and research in Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, experiential avoidance, and spiritual practices, have been serendipitously relevant to the many points of this essay.

perspectives that emerge from the interface of *bahala na*, psychological flexibility, and Qoheleth.

From this study, *bahala na* as a cultural expression, appears to be a fertile linguistic resource by which to proceed in studying indigenous resources for spiritual care and resilience. As a cultural attitude, it has broad agreements with both research-based and biblical resources for fostering care. Thus, the Filipino propensity for acceptance, many times grounded in God's providence, as the preliminary attitude for creative action (*bahala na!*), is revelatory of where Filipino resilience seems to originate and emerge.

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# **MUDDY FOOTPRINTS IN THE IVORY TOWER: Missiological Reflections on Language and Localized Theology**

*Robert H. Munson*

## **Introduction**

I was raised on a farm and would regularly come into the house with shoes muddied from the garden, field, stream, and swamp. I would have to immediately change to my indoor shoes. In the Philippines, it is common to require people to leave their shoes at the door and switch to indoor slippers. It is fairly universal for people to seek to ensure that dirt and mud of the outside stays outside. This is part of why the imagery of an ivory tower with muddy footprints grabs attention. The tower is a symbol of power, and ivory suggests both opulence and purity. Muddy footprints seem wrong—a desecration. However, this is not the case if the gates to the tower are open and the guards are welcoming all in.

Theology has often been seen as an exercise of trained specialists, carried out in hallowed halls in language and jargon far removed from the common people. But what if those barriers were removed? Would this be of benefit to the broader church? Would this be good for theological academia as well?

## **Background**

On October 10, 2022, a theological gathering was held at Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary entitled “Dalamhati at Luwalhati,” with Federico Villanueva as the lead presenter. The primary topic was the important role of lament in the Christian life, and this has served as the theme for the journal in which this article is contained.<sup>1</sup> Two other concerns, however, were brought up by the presenter. The first was the need for Filipinos theologizing within their local context. The second issue, not unrelated, was that Filipinos needed to do theological work in their heart language(s). Anecdotally, I can say that there seems to be a lack of Filipino theological writing and an even greater lack of theological works in local languages—at least in proportion to the population of Christians in the country. Nearly 90% of the population would describe themselves as Christian of some form or another. During the “Question and Answer” time at the aforementioned gathering, I asked a question of the speaker to the effect of,

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<sup>1</sup>The presentation by Dr. Villanueva is the first chapter of this book, with the formal responses to the paper following.

*"I do believe the use of local languages benefits developing a strong localized theology. Additionally, local theology is strengthened through dialogue with the global church--- challenging and being challenged by other theological perspectives. But having local theology in a local language hinders this dialogue. How does one find a balance that strengthens local theology?"<sup>2</sup>*

The presenter responded, as I remember it, that he agreed that there was a need for balance. However, with things so unbalanced in the Philippine context, having so little local theology in local languages, promoting local language in Filipino theology is part of the process to bring balance.

I don't believe I could come up with a better answer. That being said, upon further reflection, I would like to at least explore the question through the lens of theology of missions. Key issues of concern in Christian missions include culture, communication, and contextualization. All of these have bearing on localization of theology. I must note that some may feel it ironic that a foreigner is writing in English about the importance of Filipinos developing localized theology in local languages. I hope the ideas hold merit independent of the source.

### **The Process of Localization**

I will use a very simple framework that is tied to, curiously enough, the localization of video games. The steps are:

- Internationalization
- Translation
- Cultural Adaptation
- Quality Control<sup>3</sup>

While shown as a linear process, it is more accurate to show it as iterative with all sorts of feedback loops. However, ultimately, the process is to take a game that is embedded naturally in Culture A, and move it gradually through these steps to where it is at home in Culture B.

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<sup>2</sup>While most Filipino theological works have traditionally been by Roman Catholic theologians (most famously, Jose de Mesa), that is not to say that there are no Evangelical theologians in the Philippines who produce theological works informed by the Filipino context. Beyond some of the writers in this book, there are Evangelical theologians who specifically promote contextualized and applied theology, such as Rodrigo Tano, Timoteo Gener, and Melba Padilla Maggay.

<sup>3</sup>There are many different descriptions of the process. This is a simple one guided, in part, by an article: Daria Andronova, "Video Game Localization: Make Your Game Shine Globally," August 19, 2022, online at <https://www.smartcat.com/blog/game-localization/>. The process shown in this article had six steps rather than four. However, the two additional steps, "Marketing" and "Setting up the localization workflow," I felt did not need to be emphasized here.

Imagine a game that is made by Chinese developers for a Chinese audience. Now imagine the company that owns the rights to the video game seeks to make it marketable for a different context such as the Philippines. The first step is **Internationalization**. This is the process of identifying what are the core elements of a video game, such as gameplay, that must not be damaged in the localization process. Some internationalization should occur from the very beginning of development. For example, the programming should be structured so that text and audio can be easily swapped out when configuring for a new language. Some internationalization will happen later as it becomes clear what can change and what cannot. If there is eating and drinking in the game, is it important to make the menu changeable for different cultures or not? In the life of the church a similar thing comes up with the Lord's Supper, as one example. Should the elements of the Lord's Supper be internationalized and then localized or should they be kept the same everywhere? Does it matter?

**Translation** is the most intuitive of these steps. Both the text printed on the screens and the audio files need to be translated so that the meaning is maintained. The goal is not a wooden literalism, but to carry the meaning and feel of the original. The translated text must be formatted to fit in the allotted space, and the audio files must be redone with a similar tone and emotive quality that generally fits the visuals. There are still questions. Does music need to be redone with translated lyrics? Or is it acceptable to subtitle the lyrics or even for the music to stay unchanged and untranslated? Does every road sign, grave marker, storefront name need to be translated? Is there a risk of overdoing translation to the point where it no longer "feels" like the original game?

**Cultural Adaptation** seeks to ensure that the game makes sense to an audience in the new culture. This is subtle. Humor and word play get lost in normal translation. Many visual cues may be lost as well. Conversations should not only be understandable—they should feel natural. Sometimes, conflicts or motivations that make sense in one culture may be confusing in another. Will these need to be explicated or left unexplained? Like in translation, there is a risk not only of underdoing this,<sup>4</sup> but overdoing it as well.<sup>5</sup> In our example, if the game is supposed to take place in a mythical world that is reminiscent of some of the kingdoms of Central Asia centuries

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<sup>4</sup>As an example, a few years ago, a Filipino movie came out named "Sukob." It was a horror movie whose plot was driven by the local belief that it is bad luck, even dangerous, if two siblings marry during the same year. The movie did explain this cultural belief for those who did not know it. In this sense, the movie was already, to some extent, internationalized. If the original form of the movie did not explain this, then translating would not be enough. Perhaps captioning on a black screen at the beginning of the film would be needed. Otherwise, translation of the dialogue would simply not be enough to make sense. *Sukob*, directed by Chito S. Roño, featuring Kris Aquino and Claudine Barretto (Star Cinema, 2006).

<sup>5</sup>One of the most well-known misfires in this was in the localization of the television show "Pokemon." The American release of the show was handled by "4 Kids Entertainment." In one episode, Brock is holding sushi in his hand, and is talking about how much he likes "rice balls." Brock's lines were changed to him explaining how much he likes jelly doughnuts. Many found this funny since it did not line up with the visuals, and most American viewers would have no problem with Brock liking sushi. Satoshi Tajiri, *Pokemon*, Nintendo Creatures Game Freak, 1996, The official Pokémon Website (portal-pokemon.com).

ago, adapting it to the Philippine setting should not involve moving the world of the game to tribes in pre-Magellanic Philippines. A successful cultural adaptation doesn't mean moving everything of the game into a new culture, but rather making it feel like the game was made by local designers for local users, rather than by foreign designers for foreign users.

**Quality Control** involves reviews and testing. The success of the effort to localize is in its game-play by players in the new setting and, eventually, sales figures. Of course, the process is continuous as new problems will be identified based on feedback from testers and actual end users. Ultimately, no matter how good the process may appear, if the potential users in the new market do not like playing the game, the process has failed.

### **Localization of Theology in the Early Church**

Consider bringing the example of localization for video games to the early decades of the church. Jesus of Nazareth established the church completely embedded in Judean culture—Judean in membership, language, and style. While I have heard the argument made that Jesus considered himself to be a Jewish prophet called to reform Judaism and never saw himself as having any cross-cultural or international purpose, it seems clear that Jesus was **internationalizing** the movement from the start. He saw himself as inaugurating the Kingdom of God—a movement not tied to nations or national boundaries, as a king who is not in competition with civil rulers (John 18:35-36). The worship of God would have no geographical center (John 4:19-24). Jesus trained his disciples to think in a new way about non-Jews—Roman soldiers, Canaanites, Samaritans, among others—far different from the views of typical Jewish adherents. He intentionally went into non-Jewish areas—Samaria, Phoenicia, Decapolis—and trained his disciples to minister to non-Jews. He taught his followers to focus on the core of the law (the Great Commandment) above the rabbinical innovations that had become part of the local religious culture. He probably preached in Aramaic, the language used by people well beyond the borders of Judea and Galilee. The call of Jesus shortly before his ascension to go into all the world is hardly a surprise ending. His message was already prepared to be adapted to and adopted by the world.

**Translation** of the message started from the very beginning of the church. The Pentecost event more than simply demonstrated the movement of the Holy Spirit, and the inauguration of the church. The sign occurred in Jerusalem on a day when the relatively monocultural city would be the most diverse. The sign itself was a gift of spontaneous translation—crossing the linguistic barriers of the crowd. As Patrick Johnstone stated, *“What was the Holy Spirit wanting to say? He was showing that ethnicity and language are both God-created and vital to God’s global plan. This Pentecost event was a challenge to the Church: use of local heart languages to*

*communicate the Gospel!*<sup>6</sup> At the same time trade or international languages were also valued in the early church. The four Gospels of the life of Jesus were all written in Greek, the most international language of the lands in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire.<sup>7</sup> The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, was the Bible of the 1<sup>st</sup> century church. Even more, the form of Greek used by the early church was more in line with the conversation of the people than that of the scholars.

**Cultural Adaptation** was a concern early on. In fact, the first major controversy was between two cultures in the Church of Jerusalem—the Greek-speaking and the Hebrew-speaking church members (Acts 6). Soon the church spread into Samaria, and into more diverse regions. This led to the first big theological issue of the church. Do those who are culturally Greek need to become culturally Jewish to be part of the church. The Jerusalem council (Acts 15) was established to address this vital concern. However, the answer was already made clear in the patterns established by Jesus, and works of the Holy Spirit. Jesus focused on principles that were not limited to culture and the Holy Spirit made it clear that the message of God and His favor was bound neither by language nor lineage.

**Quality Control** is seen in the church lived out. By the second century the church was not seen as linked to a single culture. Aristides described Christians as a separate people group—one that does not exist based on region, ethnicity, or culture. However, this people group comes from the other people groups listed.<sup>8</sup> The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus<sup>9</sup> describes Christians as living embedded in diverse cultures and in many ways indistinguishable from their neighbors. In other ways, however, they were wholly unique. This sort of counter-cultural stance has been a challenge over the centuries with Christian groups regularly trying to link Christianity to a specific culture or language.

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<sup>6</sup>Patrick Johnstone, “Affinity Blocs and People Clusters: An Approach Toward Strategic Insight and Mission Partnership” *Mission Frontiers*, 29:2 (Mar-Apr 2007), 8.

<sup>7</sup>Eusebius of Antioch stated that Matthew wrote a Gospel in Hebrew (Church History, 3:39). This was supported by Irenaeus and Origen. Since there is definitely a Jewish flavor to the gospel, it seems reasonable that it would be written in the Hebrew language. In evidence against this, however, the similarity in wording of so many passages in Greek with the Gospels of Mark and Luke, it is pretty clear the work was initially in Greek. Of course, it is possible that there is a completely lost Gospel by Matthew. Alternatively, one or more of the synoptics may be based, loosely or otherwise, from the Hebrew language gospel.

<sup>8</sup>*Apology of Aristides*. Apparently written in the early 2nd century. The work describes several peoples—Barbarians, Jews, Egyptians, Greeks, and Christians. The work was addressed to a Roman emperor, perhaps Hadrian, so presumably Aristides considered Romans to be a sixth group, but not want to speak negatively about them. “The Apology of Aristides the Philosopher: Translated from the Syriac,” *The Apology of Aristides: Texts and Studies 1 (1891); 35-51*. Translation from Syriac, transcribed by Roger Pearse, 2004 [https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/aristides\\_05\\_trans.htm](https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/aristides_05_trans.htm).

<sup>9</sup>Rick Brannan, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2011). Read Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus Chapter 5.

## Language and the Philippine Context

The Philippines is a land of many languages. There are over 100 languages in the Philippines. Most of them are from the Malayo-Polynesian language family. However, some regions do have Spanish creoles (“Chabacano”). There are also some languages that are tied to ethnicity rather than region, such as some Chinese languages that are spoken within sub-cultures.<sup>10</sup> English is used throughout the Philippines, but not commonly as a language of the home. More commonly, it is the language of education and certain professions.

The EGIDS (Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale)<sup>11</sup> was established to understand the relationship between language and culture change. In the Philippines there are two national languages—English and Pilipino. On the EGIDS, English is Level 0. That is, it is considered an International language—one of only a few languages that are used regularly for international discourse. Pilipino is Level 1, as a national language. Both are used for official use and for communication across regions. Pilipino is based heavily on Tagalog, such that the names are sometimes used interchangeably. Tagalog is one of several major regional languages. Other languages like Ilocano, Bicolano, and Cebuano are Provincial (Level 2) or Whole Community (Level 3). Many other languages vary in usage, including some that are primarily spoken only by elders (Level 8). When a language nears Level 8 or beyond, it is reaching a point where it is questionable whether the language has use except for linguists, anthropologists, and historians.

An obvious question is “Why would the church care about strengthening a local language? Isn’t the multiplicity of languages an impediment to overcome, not a gift to utilize?” Perhaps if language was only a tool to carry information from one person to another, that would be true; but that is not the case. Roman Jakobson describes six functions for language. Transfer of information, the referential function, is important, but only one of the functions. One of these is “emotive” for expressing emotion, and the language of spirituality is very much tied to the language of emotion. The language of one’s childhood and home tends to be most effective in expressing emotions. Another role is “phatic,” relating to belongingness. Language is used to bring people together and help establish the “we” versus “they.”<sup>12</sup> Noam Chomsky speaks of language as

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<sup>10</sup>Exact numbers are difficult since the line between language and dialect is not always clear-cut. Years ago Ethnologue had around 120 languages identified in the Philippines. Now the number is shown in the vicinity of 170. See David M. Eberhard, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig. “Republic of the Philippines,” *Ethnologue: Languages of the World: Twenty Sixth edition* (Dallas, TX: SIL Online), 2023, <https://www.ethnologue.com/country/PH>.

<sup>11</sup>EGIDS was developed for Ethnologue. For a quick review, see Ethnos Project, “Ethnologue Expanded Graded Intragenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS), accessed date June 2023, <https://www.ethnosproject.org/expanded-graded-intergenerational-disruption-scale/>. Additionally, one can refer to Robert H. Munson, *Cultural Anthropology and Christian Missions: Ministering to a Multicultural World*, 2023.

<sup>12</sup>Roman Jakobson spoke of six functions of language—referential, emotive, phatic, conative, poetic, and metalingual. Elmar Holenstein, *Roman Jakobson’s Approach to Language: Phenomenological*

creating social space.<sup>13</sup> Language, dialect, jargon, and accent speak to one's community and one's place in it.

On a functional level, a language might allow effective communication of facts, without much in terms of emotion or social belongingness. Such a language may function as a trade language or a pidgin—one not deeply embedded in the social fabric of a community but useful for communicating facts with outsiders. This is different from “heart languages,” the language of the household. Heart language has emotive strength and deeply rich interconnections inside the person and the community. The heart language is the language of emotions and spirituality. It establishes and maintains social bonds within the group.<sup>14</sup>

Christian theological writing has historically been done mostly in international or trade languages (such as Greek, Latin, German, or English). This is in line with a common trait worldwide where the language of the scholar is different from the language of the people. The language that connects more theologians together becomes the language of choice. It becomes the language of academia, the language of education, and the language of publishing and formal discourse. Such a language develops jargon, or technical language, to deal with academic topics. This jargon helps to narrowly define concepts that are not the concern of the typical local church or community. In fact, throughout the history of the church this cycle has perpetuated a language's use for theology and liturgy long after it had fallen out of favor (or even out of use) in common society. Latin, for example, was used long after the language ceased to be used in the home.<sup>15</sup> Is this a good thing or bad? If theological discussion is done in a language that is available to the seminarian alone, this takes theology away from the masses—and that can be a loss for the church. On the other hand, theology that is only comprehensible on one side of a river or a national border (because it utilizes a regional language) also has some inherent limitations.

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*Structuralism* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1976). Or consider Ruth Heckman, “Roman Jakobson’s Six Functions of Language.” Prezi, Jan 15, 2013, <https://prezi.com/aejmchywvlzn/roman-jakobsons-six-functions-of-language>.

<sup>13</sup>Wiktor Osiatynski, “Language and Culture” in *Contrasts: Soviet and American Thinkers Discuss the Future* (New York: MacMillan, 1984), 95-101, [https://chomsky.info/1984\\_](https://chomsky.info/1984_).

<sup>14</sup>In support of the importance of heart language—a friend of my wife and I was born and raised in Japan but had lived in the United States for decades. Many times she had heard the gospel message. She would say that she understands it (pointing to her head) but not here (placing her hand over her heart). One day, she was introduced to another friend of ours who was also born in Japan, had lived in the US for many years, and was a devout Christian. Minutes after meeting, our friend became a follower of Christ. She needed the message shared in her heart language.

<sup>15</sup>Christianity is not alone in this. Hebrew was used for theological work in Rabbinical Judaism long after it ceased to be a language of the people. In Islam, with a few exceptions, the language of theological discourse is Arabic, even in areas where it has ceased to be, or never was, the language of the people.

## Target and Audience of Theology

The language chosen for theology must consider at least two things—who is the target, and who is the audience? In the Bible, both target and audience were seen as important. In Acts 2, the gift of tongues (languages) had a target, the diverse language speakers in Jerusalem at Pentecost. However, this sign was done before a larger audience as well. The listening public thought that many of the Christians were speaking incoherently like drunkards. That is why Peter ended up speaking to this secondary audience in a language they were comfortable with (perhaps Aramaic) and explained what was going on. A similar thing comes up in the early church where Paul said that the gift of tongues should not be done without an interpreter. The gift was not simply done for the benefit of the primary target—the one who understood that language—but also for the greater audience. Ignoring one of the two audiences was not acceptable.<sup>16</sup>

Who is the target of theological works? Stanley Grenz and Roger Olson list five types of theology based on three groups of people in the church. The types are Folk, Lay, Ministerial, Professional, and Academic Theologies.<sup>17</sup> Folk and Lay theologies are for the same group, except that folk theology is the inadequate theology of unreflective laity, while lay theology is that of the theologically reflective. In like manner, Grenz and Olson see professional and academic theologies aimed at the same group—professional theologians. However, professional theology addresses matters that are relevant to the church, while academic theology does not. Therefore, one can see three target audiences—**laity, ministers, and professionals**—and two benchmarks for good theology: reflection and relevance. According to Judith Thompson, theological reflection is “*The habitual, conscious, methodical, and purposeful correlation of some of the insights and resources of the theological tradition with contemporary situation and practice, resulting in a continuous process of critical awareness, transformation, and action.*”<sup>18</sup> Failure to do this is a failure to be truly theological. For relevance, theology is supposed to bridge divine revelation and human need, especially the needs of the church. If theology is too abstract, or fails to inform regarding God’s revelation, it lacks relevance and becomes more of a “theistic philosophy” or idle speculation than theology. Such a theology speaks neither to the needs of the body of Christ, nor broader society.

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<sup>16</sup>There is considerable controversy today as to whether the gift of tongues (glossalalia) was of spontaneous translation or of non-linguistic ecstatic speech, as practiced today by many Christians. Obviously, this goes well beyond this paper, only noting that the text of the narrative, and its setting (particularly in Acts 2), appears to suggest spontaneous untrained translation. In like manner, the gift of interpretation would be spontaneous untrained translation. If this is mistaken, then I am not sure what if anything, spontaneous ecstatic speech would tell us regarding theology and language. Still from Genesis 11 until Revelation 7, it is clear that diversity of language is very much within God’s will.

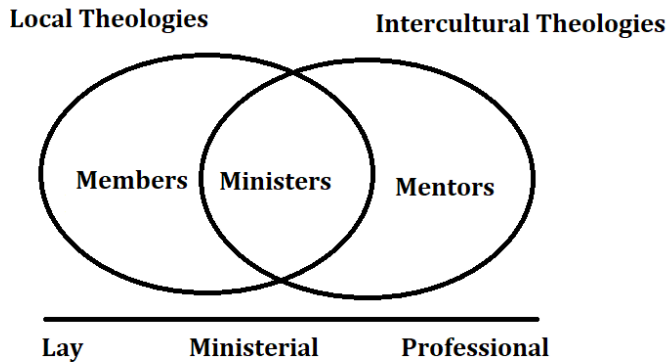
<sup>17</sup>Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *Who Needs Theology: An Invitation to the Study of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1996). ch. 2.

<sup>18</sup>Judith Thompson, *Theological Reflection* (London: SCM Press, 2008), 28.

This leaves three “good” theologies based on their primary target: **Lay Theology** (for laypeople), **Ministerial Theology** (for church and ministry leaders), and **Professional Theology** (professional theologians and educators). These, however, are overlapping groups. In fact, Grenz and Olson simplified targets further to theology for Lay Theologians and Professional Theologians. However, it seems reasonable to think that ministers (pastors, missionaries, and so forth) not only should have qualities of both groups, but should serve as a social bridge between those two groups. I would like to propose a simplified structure of two basic theologies as shown in Figure 1. Additionally, drawing from the conversation earlier, if Lay Theology targets laity, its potential audience is much broader—bridging geography and different roles in the church. The same can be said for Ministerial and Professional Theologies. The audience is bigger than the target. How does one ensure that theology reaches beyond one target in terms of geographic location or group in the church?

Local theologies are tied to local churches—members and ministers. Professional theologies can be thought of as intercultural theologies, as they are for professionals (theologians and theological educators) as well as ministers in multiple contexts. Intercultural does not mean supracultural (having cultural elements removed). Indeed, all theology is contextual, but some theology is developed to be presented to a diverse audience. Professional theologians interact within their profession across cultures sharing international language(s) and jargon. Church leaders, missionaries, pastoral counselors, and other ‘hands-on’ ministers serve as a bridge as they have a role both locally and cross-culturally. This is part of the reason for showing an overlap in Figure 1. Both forms of theology should be theologically reflective and ministerially relevant.

Figure 1



What languages are the best for these two types of theology? Local theologies ideally are in the languages of the people. Intercultural theologies ideally should be in a language (or at least translated into a language) that allows it access to those of other cultures. As noted previously, in addition to the target audience there is also a

broader audience. Jesus preached primarily to the “common people” but made no effort to wall himself off from those he was not specifically targeting. In fact, the challenges from the religious leaders became part of the learning process for his disciples such that many of these conversations made it into the gospel record. On at least one occasion, Jesus spoke separately and privately with a religious leader (John 3) who had questions based on the words of Jesus to the people. Paul, when speaking to the common people of Athens in the public market was overheard by philosophers who gave him an opportunity to talk about their concerns (Acts 17). Both Jesus and Paul had to be ready to speak not only to the laity (their primary targets), but also to professionals (who were potentially always part of the audience, whether intended or not).

Today, knowing who is one’s target as well as (potential) audience is more important than ever. As an example, there is a video online of a somewhat famous evangelical missionary who was speaking to an American audience in the late 1970s or early 1980s. He served as a missionary to a (then) recently reached tribal group in Southeast Asia.<sup>19</sup> The missionary was a gifted storyteller and knew what his targeted group of listeners would appreciate. However, four decades later, his talk has not aged well. At best, it sounds very ethnocentric. At worst, it could be interpreted as racist and insulting. Today, the video is available online worldwide, and members of that tribe now have access to the Internet. It is highly likely that members of this tribe have seen the video, and would thus be well aware of his views regarding their cleanliness and moral character. I assume that the missionary never thought of the presentation ever going beyond the target listeners to whom he spoke. He, perhaps, would have changed his presentation if he knew of his unintended audience.<sup>20</sup>

The example above points out the challenge of the unintended audience. However, robust theology does not come from “preaching to the choir,” and nuanced reflective thought does not come from sharing thoughts in an “echo chamber” chatroom. Thoughts that go unchallenged rarely are well-developed. This suggests that not only is the unintended audience valuable, but that no potential audience should be completely ignored. One’s words should be ready for scrutiny from many audiences.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>For those who want to view the video and decide for yourselves, watch Otto Koning, “The Pineapple Story,” YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nt23gnwjsU>.

<sup>20</sup>The story linked to the video, “The Pineapple Story” is built on the principle that the locals were thieves, and could only be stopped from doing this if they could be convinced that the pineapples were actually God’s rather than the missionary’s. However, the argument could be made that according to the tribe’s view of property, what is grown in the village is the property of the village, so the missionary was the thief, not the villagers. The argument could be made either way and would have made a worthwhile theological discussion.

<sup>21</sup>Almost too numerous to name, have been pastors who have put outrageous statements to their congregations or their online audiences, only to be shocked that their words were heard by a broader audience who took offense. Some preachers have apologized, while others have “doubled-down” saying that they were “just telling the truth.” However, commonly the issue wasn’t about truth but perception. What they said may have been ill-informed, lacking nuance, or open to misinterpretation. These deserve a heart-felt apology from the preacher. A reminder for preachers today is the example of Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19). His intended audience, after speaking to Hellenistic Jews and God-fearers in the synagogue,

If this is true, that the unintended (or at least the non-primary) audience is valuable to act as “iron sharpening iron” to improve one’s presentation and theology, what language is best? The best language is **still** the language preferred by the target audience, but language of the unintended audience cannot be ignored. Hesselgrave speaks of cultural distance as distorting communication between two people or two cultures. He describes seven dimensions that come together into causing cultural distance. One of those is linguistic distance. Others involve other aspects of culture including: Worldview, cognitive processes, behavioral patterns, social structures, media influence, and motivational resources.<sup>22</sup> While language is only one of these dimensions, it is the one that is most easily identified, and so most easily addressed.

Local theologies should use local languages, while intercultural (international) theological discourse should use international, or perhaps national languages. If, however, the other members of a non-primary audience are valued, as they should be, there needs to be a way that the theological spheres can speak to each other. One thing needed is translation between the languages. Translation is the linguistic bridge. Another, suggested by Figure 1, is that ministers (pastors, missionaries, etc.) should be that human bridge.<sup>23</sup> See Figure 2. They need to be familiar with and active with both theological spheres, and active in keeping discourse going between local and intercultural theological work.

## Good Versus Bad Theological Localization

When does good localization of theology become bad? Stephen Bevans compiled a list of several tentative tests for a local theology.<sup>24</sup> These are benchmarks to be evaluated as part of quality control. Two benchmarks have already been addressed. A local theology should be **theologically reflective**. One way reflection is demonstrated is that it opens itself up to critique from outside. Another is that it is **culturally relevant**. It does not exist as an abstract idea but is put to use in the local context.

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was typical Gentiles in the public market. However, he had the unintended audience of those involved in the business of the Artemis cult, as well as government officials. When brought to be charged and perhaps killed, the town clerk stepped in and noted that Paul, despite calling people to follow Jesus the Christ, never disparaged or blasphemed the local gods (including Artemis). Paul’s words were chosen with wisdom.

<sup>22</sup>David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 163-168.

<sup>23</sup>Barry Phillips, a missionary serving in Aurora Province, Philippines, has noted having to guide short-term lay missionaries to avoid using illustrations that are not adapted to the Aurora context, like owning and driving cars, using air conditioning, going to the movie theater. Recommended reading: Barry D. Phillips, *I Planted the Seed (and Wood Squashed It)* (Savannah, GA: GlobalWarmth, 2011).

<sup>24</sup>Stephen B. Bevans. *Essays in Contextual Theology* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2018), 53-58.

Figure 2



Bevans suggests that a local community of faith has certain relationships with a good localized theology. First, he suggests that the local theology should utilize simple language and is understood by the local community. This alone almost requires the local theology to be in the heart language of the people. Second, the local theology should be used by the community. This brings back the idea of relevance. If the theology is local but has no bearing on thoughts, actions, relationships, or identity of the community of faith, it is not a good local theology. Referencing local characteristics may make a theology sound local, but if it doesn't "scratch where it itches," it is likely little more than an interesting observation or illustration.<sup>25</sup>

Third, ideally the local theology should come from the people, as opposed to a single person. On a practical level this point recognizes the tendency of some people to control and manipulate by claiming unique revelation or a "better theology." While missionaries often fear syncretism, perhaps an even more likely problem is theological hijacking, where a charismatic individual arises in the community with a divergent message. Theologically speaking, recognizing that every believer has direct access to God (priesthood of the believer) and is illumined by the Spirit of God supports what Bevans calls, "The God of the Gathering."<sup>26</sup> God often speaks corporately rather than through a single individual. And even when God appears to speak through one individual, it is the responsibility of the community to test and evaluate (as a gathering of those guided by the Spirit with direct access to God). Further, if good theology is reflective, then developing organically through the interactions of local people led by God is more likely to produce good theology.

Fourth, the local community sharing the local theology should be willing to accept critique from the broader church. The catholicity of the body of Christ is critical here. The local church is part of something far bigger than its region, people

<sup>25</sup>Mike Arauz. "Difference Between Relevance and Resonance," <http://www.mikearauz.com/2009/02/difference-between-relevanceand.html>. Further discussion on this issue at Robert H. Munson, *Theo-Storying: Reflections on God, Narrative, and Culture* (Baguio City, Philippines: MM-Musings, 2019), ch. 4.

<sup>26</sup>Bevans gets the term, "God of the Gathering" from Mary Benet McKinney, *Shared Wisdom: A Process for Group Decision Making* (Valencia, CA: Tabor, 1987).

group, or denomination. The fifth benchmark is a willingness to challenge the rest of the church as well. The goal is a dialectic. That is, it is a debate without conflict, both sides sharing the same goal—to discover what is good and true. If one has theology that is built on conversations within the community, and honed through conversations outside of the community, the theology is built on a healthy amount of reflection and is likely to be more robust and, I believe, more harmonious with the mind of God.

### **Theological Conversation as Dialectic<sup>27</sup>**

Considering the last paragraph, good theology comes from a “friendly conflict” between the theologies that are contextual and inter-contextual. This can be described as a dialectic, or utilization of the dialectical method. It utilizes a conflict or debate between two opposing viewpoints. However, it differs considerably from typical debate. Firstly, the goals of debate and dialectics are different. In debate the goal is to win, while in dialectics the goal is (hopefully) to discover truth. In a debate between viewpoints “A” and “C” the ideal ending is an agreement that one wins and the other loses. In dialectics, the presumption is that neither side has full grasp of truth, so the ideal result is “B,” a synthesis of “A” and “C” (or perhaps two groups still holding to their positions, but each modified through the interaction). Secondly, debate uses a broader arsenal of tools to win the argument. Debate places more value on emotional arguments (“pulling at the heartstrings”) and rhetorical skills than does dialectics. Dialectics values these as long as they are used not to manipulate or confuse, but to lead to truth and mutual understanding.<sup>28</sup> This is not implying that emotions are unimportant, but their role is to support rather than obscure values and meaning.

Debate versus Dialectics can be seen as relating to Interreligious Dialogue (IRD). Conversations between proponents of two different Christian theologies is (or should be) far different from conversations between adherents to two different religions. Still, the strategies involved in IRD should make sense between two Christian perspectives as well. In IRD, three strategies generally considered are didactic, dialectic, and dialogic.<sup>29</sup> Didactic strategies are those that focus on one side teaching the other side. As such, the presumption of each side is they have the truth and must impart their truth to the other side. Implied in this is that the other side has nothing to offer back. Preaching, lecturing, and debate all fall into this category since the focus is on changing the other side while remaining essentially unchanged. Emphasis is given to differences between the two positions, while similarities are often glossed over.

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<sup>27</sup>I want to make it clear that I am not seeking to use the term here in terms according to its formal roots in Greek philosophy. The term is here used in a broader sense of two sides joining together to seek truth and mutual understanding through verbal discourse.

<sup>28</sup>I will make no attempt here to explore the question of whether emotions explore a form of truth. It is, however, worth exploration.

<sup>29</sup>More discussion of this is in Robert H. Munson, *Dialogue in Diversity: Christians in Conversation with a Multi-faith World*, Rev. A. (Baguio City, Philippines: MM-Musings, 2019), ch. 11.

Dialogic strategies, at the other extreme, are those that focus excessively on belongingness or social connectedness. It is in some ways the opposite of didactic strategies in that it seeks to avoid conflict. Emphasis is placed on the similarities of the groups (“common ground”), while differences are given little attention. While the ideal of the didactic strategies is that one admits defeat and joins the other side, in dialogic the ideal is that the two groups have little effect on each other. Beliefs tend to be relativized.

Dialectic strategies are a mix of the two previous strategies. Dialectics values both the similarities and differences between the two groups. As such, much of the activity involves mutual learning and clarification of views. One might be reminded of the interaction between the Apostle Peter and the Roman centurion, Cornelius.<sup>30</sup> While one may assume a disciple of Peter would have nothing to learn from a Gentile, the truth is that both of them learned and gained from the interaction. It could be argued that what Peter learned was no more than what he already had been told by Jesus or by a vision previously. However, God used Cornelius to drive that point home. The openness of both Peter and Cornelius to learn from each other meant that both were humble enough to recognize that they had something important to learn from God, through the other person.

Dialectic strategies should apply to interactions between local theologies, and the theologies of the broader church as well. Both sides should, first of all, enter into conversation. Both should enter with respect, and an openness not only to share but also to gain insight. At the same time, the presumption is not that both would leave with the same beliefs. The ideal is unity with diversity. One may be reminded of Revelation 7:9 with different languages and ethnicities (and one must presume different theologies) joined together in their diversity, but with common identity and common purpose (as demonstrated by having the same clothes and common object of worship).

### **Muddy Footprints in Ivory Towers**

Local theologies should come from the people, and should be in the language of the local people. Interaction between theologies in the broader church will, of a necessity, occur in international and national languages. There is benefit in mutual critique, occurring in a process of dialectics. This requires a continuous process of translation between these two realms of theology.

If local theologies are theologies of the people and of the land, then the theologies of professionals are somewhat distanced from these. This realm of the professionals is sometimes jokingly perhaps, and sometimes disparagingly, called the “Ivory Tower.” Ideally, the professionals, the residents of the Ivory Tower, should interact with the church at the grassroots level. Still, it is likely that cultural distance will create barriers difficult to completely break down. As such, there should be people who

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<sup>30</sup>Read about this in Acts Chapter 10. Try to look at it from the standpoint of two people with different beliefs, that God brought together to learn something important from each other.

regularly interact with both the theologies of the land and people, and the theologies of professional theologians and academia. The Ivory Tower should be full of muddy footprints. Most of these footprints would be from the ministers (especially local pastors and other local leaders) who interact at the grassroots level with the land and people.

### **Implications for Local Leaders and Language**

Although this paper is ostensibly about the use of local languages and the localization of theology, the clearest implications relate to the theological importance of local leaders, such as pastors and missionaries, who serve in a local context. In localization, these people are needed in every step of the process. Missionaries, especially, need to internationalize theology—helping the community understand that the theology of the missionary is not beyond challenge. As such, missionaries need to focus less on indoctrination and more on developing lay theologians. Missionaries can also be involved in translation and cultural adaptation, but locals need to take a greater role in this. Missionaries will never be as in tune with the culture and language as local ministers.

Following the suggestion of Bevans, local religious leaders should not be creating localized theologies, or at least not alone. Rather they should help give a voice, in the native language, to the theology that comes from the local priesthood of believers. Additionally, these local religious leaders need to act as a bridge to the larger theological landscape in the body of Christ, maintaining a dialectic with the professional sphere of theology as well as other local theologies. This places a lot of importance and burden on local religious leaders. They help maintain both the unity and diversity of the church, and need to embrace a role as translators in terms of theological conversation. This translation is not just between languages but also between the jargon of the professionals and that of the people. Clearly not all local religious leaders can embrace this role. Not all have the theological acumen. Not all have the multilingual and multicultural skills. There needs, however, to be some who embrace this role.

### **Final Thought**

The theological symposium that inspired this chapter actually was an example of this interaction between the Professional, Ministerial, and Lay realms of theology. The theological gathering was held at an international, English language seminary, and was led by theologians educated in international English language schools. However, the presentation, and most of the discussion was done in Pilipino. The local churches were invited to both listen and discuss the topics, again mostly in Pilipino. Many of those who participated were local ministers and laity who sought to learn and discuss the topics shared. The participants were encouraged to increase these activities in part through writing and publishing in local languages.

The seminary where the event was held may not fit the general image of an ivory tower, and none of the guests from the community had muddy shoes. Still, the interaction between professional theologians, local ministers, and local church members in a local/national language with the goal of increasing such events certainly is a step in the right direction.

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# Banaag na Ang Umaga Pagtawid mula sa Dalamhati Patungong Luwalhati Ng Pagteteolohiyang Filipino

By Honorina Lacquian

Ang akdang ito ay isang pagsasara sa usaping inikutan ng mga naisulat na sanaysay. Inaako kong hamon kung paano papalapitin ang umaga para sa ating pagteteolohiya bilang mga Pilipino. Layon ng akdang ito na ipakita sa mga mambabasa na tayo ay mga teologo. At maari na nating simulan ang gawaing ito sa simpleng pamaraan. Ang panalangin ko nawa ay madama ng mambabasa ang puso ng sulating ito.<sup>1</sup> Simulan natin ang kwento sa kung saan natin ipinapalagay ang ating sarili.

## Malayo pa Ang Umaga

Nabanggit ni Michael Janapin sa kanyang sanaysay ang awit ni Rey Valera na “Malayo pa ang Umaga”<sup>2</sup> at para kay Janapin ito ang kalalagayan ng luwalhati kumpara sa ating karanasan sa dalamhati. Dito ko sisimulan ang kwento ng kaisipan natin ukol sa pagteteolohiya sa ating bansa. Sa aking paglalagum sa mga pagmamasid at pagsusuri ng adhikaing makapagteolohiya sa wikang Pilipino masasabi nating malayo pa nga ang umaga. Ito ay kasing-layo ng pagtawid natin mula sa dalamhati patungong luwalhati sa maraming aspeto ng ating pagiging Pilipinong nakapaloob sa grupong Baptists.

Marami pa rin talaga sa atin ang nag-iisip na ang gawaing pang teolohiya ay para lamang sa mga dalubhasa. Ito ay pangsimbahan lamang at walang kinalaman sa ating pang-araw-araw na buhay. Bukod pa doon, ay piling tao lamang ang talagang pwedeng mag teolohiya. Kailangan mataas ang narating na antas ng pag-aaral at dapat lamang na maituturing syang paham sa usapang pilosopiya. Sa katunayan, marami ang naniniwalang dapat talagang ipinasakamay na natin ito sa mga dalubhasa ng

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<sup>1</sup>Malaki ang pasasalamat ko sa mga taong tumulong sa akin upang maging maayos ang akdang ito. Isa dito si Fritz Melodi, ThD na nagbigay ng kanyang mga mungkahi tungkol sa nilalaman nitong pang-teolohiya. Di ko rin makakalimutan ang tulong ng aking kapatid Virginia Laudencio, D. Ed. sa pagsasaalang-alang ng wikang Pilipino. Nabanggit nya na mas madaling maunawaan kung ang paraan ng pagkasulat ay “conversational”.

<sup>2</sup>Rey Valera, “Malayo Pa Ang Umaga,” Journal News online, March 26, 023, <https://journalnews.com.ph/malayo-pa-ang-umaga-kanta-ni-rey-para-sa-pinas/>. Ang awiting ito pala ay sumasalamin ng pag-asang hinihintay ni Valera para sa bansang Pilipinas. Jan Milo Severo, “Rey Valera Bares Real Political Meaning Behind “Malayo Pa ang Umaga” Philippine Star, Set 15, 2021, <https://www.philstar.com/music/2021/09/15/2127375/re-y-valera-bares-real-political-meaning-behind-malayo-pa-ang-umaga>. Sa akdang ito, ginamit ko naman ang koro ng awit upang maging gabay sa pagsulat dahil ito ay sumasalamin naman sa ating pagteteolohiya.

kanluraning bansa. At dahil gawa nila ito, ay maari na lamang nating ulitin at gayahin kung nasaan man tayo.

Ang kaisipang nabuo ang theology para sa lahat ng tao, ng oras, at ng kaisipan ay bumabalik sa panahong 1800s pa at paatras. Ito ay ang panahon na ang unang adhikain ng mga teologo ay aralin at buuin ang isang tama at lubos (Absolute) na interpretasyon ng Bibliya na magiging akma sa lahat ng henerasyon at sa lahat ng kultura. Ito ay niyakap na pamana ng mga dakilang protestanteng scholastics at mga dalubhasa galing sa Princeton. Tinagurian ito ni Stanley Grenz na *Concordance Model of Theology*. Sa modelong ito ang Bibliya ay maaring maunawaan objectively at maaring ilagum sa modernong konseptong makikipagsabayan sa mga kaalamang pang-agham. Pinagsikapan makabuo ng angkop na teolohiya na makapagpapalainaw sa katotohanan ng Salita ng Dios sa buong lupon (set) ng kaalamang pangsandaigdigang magiging katanggap-tanggap at angkop upang palayain ang teolohiya mula sa kontekstong kultural at upang makabuo ng mga pahayag na hindi sakop ng oras, panahon, at may kalayaan mula sa impluwensya ng kultura.<sup>3</sup>

Sabi nga ni Fischer Humphreys, ang theology ay ang pag-iisip tungkol sa Dios.<sup>4</sup> Kasama sa pag-iisip na ito ang mundo na nakatago at ang kabuuan ng kaisipan at katuruang pinanghahawakan ng mga Kristiano sa loob ng mahigit dalawang libong taon. Nakapaloob din dito ang mga personal na pag-amin at pag-angkin sa pananampalataya.<sup>5</sup> Para kay Ka Jose De Mesa, ang pag-aaral ng teolohiyang Pilipino ay maaring tawaging Mabathalang Pag-aaral.<sup>6</sup> Hindi ko man ito madaliang yayakapin sa sulating ito, ngunit, ito ay isang pag-anyaya na kahit manawari ay ating mabigyang-pansin. Kaya hwag magtaka kung minsan ay mabasa ninyo ang mabathalang usapan sa lugar kung saan teolohiya ang napag-uusapan. Gagamitin ang 2 salitang ito bilang isa lamang sa kabuuan ng sanaysay na ito. Wala pa tayong tiyak na salita para sa teolohiya, ibig sabihin banyaga pa ito sa atin, hindi pa ito lubusang maliwanag para sa atin.

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<sup>3</sup>Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdsman, 1994), 5. Ang salitang “concordance” ay tumutukoy sa pamamaraan kung saan lahat ng kakayahan ng tao ay pinagsasama sama upang magampanan ang walang-katapusang tungkulin na matagpuan ang katotohanan. Tingnan din ang sulat ni Joris Geldhof, “Pro Veritate: A Case for a Method of Concordance in Theology” JSTOR, 2009, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.2008.00239.x>. Sa pangkalahatan, ang Concordance Model ay hindi lamang sa theology ginagamit kundi sa paghahanap sa katotohanan gamit ang deductive causations, kung saan ang mga nabubuonng kaalaman ay nasusubukan at napagmamatyagan base sa sukatan ng agham (empirical data). Rebecca L. Schiff, “Concordance Theory: A Response to Recent Criticism, Armed Forces and Society, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Winter 1996), <https://doi.org/10.1177/095327X9602300209>. (277-283).

<sup>4</sup>Fisher Humphreys, *Thinking About God: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (New Orleans: Insight Press, 1974), 7.

<sup>5</sup>John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1966), 1-2.

<sup>6</sup>Jose De Mesa, *Mabathalang Pag-aaral: Ang Pagteteolohiya ng Pilipino* (Manila: Vee Press, 2010), 15. Si Bathala ang sinaunang kaisipan natin na magbibigay banaag sa karanasang may Makapangyarihang Manlilikha na nagtatakda ng ating kahihinatnan. Kaya nga’t ang “bahala na” ay isang nakaikit na kamalayan sa Filipino spirituality. P. Paredes Day, Bahala Na: A Personal Renewal of Filipino Spiritual Practice” (Last update October 2009), <http://www.babaylan.com/bahalameditation.html>.

## Kahit sa Dilim Naghihintay Pa Rin

May dalawang direksyon ang mabathalang pag-aaral: isang mula sa itaas (from above) at teolohiya mula sa ibaba (from below).<sup>7</sup> Ang mabathalang pag-aaral na mula sa itaas ay ang paggamit ng katuruan ng Biblia. Ito ay ang masusing pag-aaral at pagtalakay sa mga katuruan ng Biblia na kailangan natin maalaman. Ang pagteteolohiya naman mula sa ibaba ay nakatutok sa kalagayan ng tao at kung paanong masasagot ng Salita ng Dios ang kasalukuyang pangangailangan ng tao. Sa aking palagay sa Mabathalang Pag-aaral, kadalasan ay sinisimulan ang pagsilip sa kultura bago ang pagbabalik sa Salita ng Dios.<sup>8</sup> Ito ay sa kadahilanang, binibigyang palagay na napag-aralan na ng masinsinan ang maraming kaalaman hinggil sa katuruang Judeo-Kristiyano. Kaya nga at ang mga sumusunod kong adhikain ay kung ano at paano tingnan ang kultura upang maiangkop ang paraan ng pagteteolohiya.

Ang gawaing mag-teolohiya ay para sa lahat. Di ba marapat lamang na maging kaaya-aya at katanggap-tanggap ito para sa lahat? Maganda ang pamaraan (*methodology*) ni Paul Tillich na *correlation method* kung saan pinagtatapat nya sa relasyong *divine-human* kung saan namamayani ang pagkakaunawang ang Maykapal ang sagot sa mga katanungan ng tao. Ang teolohiya ay bumubuo ng mga tanong na kaakibat ng buhay ng tao, at mula sa mga tanong din naming ito ang teologo ay nagbabalangkang ng sagot sa mga katanungan kaakibat ng banal na pagpapakilala sa Dios. Ang ating mga sagot ay sya namang gabay din natin upang mapagtuunan ang mga tanong na nakapaloob sa katauhan ng ating pagkatao.<sup>9</sup> Para naman kay De Mesa, ang 2 poste (pole) ng teolohiyang ito ay maaring tumugon sa panukalang “pananampalatayang Judeo-Kristiyano at ang ating pangkasalukuyang karanasan.” Ang mabathalang pag-aaral ay dapat na nagsasaalang-alang ng pananampalatayang Judeo-Kristiyano at ang kahalagahan nito sa pangkasalukuyang karanasan ng tao.<sup>10</sup>

Isa ring pamaraan paano mauunawaan ang tinuran na ito ni Tillich ay ang pagtukoy sa kung ano ang ating pinakamataas na pinagkakaabalahan (*ultimate concern*) na nagiging sanhi ng pagkawala ng ating pagiging “ako.” Maaring ang ating pinakamalaking pinagkaabalahan ay ang pinakamalaking takot na bumabalot sa ating henerasyon at mula dito ay tatapatan natin ang takot na ito ng mensahe ng katuruan ng Biblia na magpapalawak ng pag-asa at pananampalataya sa Maykapal. Sa teolohiya, naitataas ang katotohanang ang Maykapal lamang ang tanging tugon sa ating mga pag-aagam-agam sa buhay.<sup>11</sup>

Kung bibigyan natin ng isang halimbawa ang mga posteng ito na tinutukoy

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<sup>7</sup>Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology* (MI: Baker Books, 1996), 35-68.

<sup>8</sup>Sang-ayon sa pagtuturo ni Ka Jose De Mesa, hindi mahalaga kung saan magsisimula sa pag-aaral ang isang theologian. Kung mula man ito sa itaas o sa ibaba ay hindi na mahalaga. Para sa kanya, mas makakabuti pa nga kung galing sa itaas dahil sa makatwid bagay talagang inaaral natin ng una ang kung ano ang iniaaral ng Kasulatan. Jose De Mesa, lecture in Gospel and Culture, June 30, 2014.

<sup>9</sup>Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (University of Chicago Press, 1973), 59-61.

<sup>10</sup>De Mesa, *Jose De Mesa*, 297.

<sup>11</sup>Tillich, *Systematic Theology* vol 2, 14.

sa teolohiya ay maaari nating tingnan ang karanasan ng pagdadalamhati. Mula sa correlation ni Tillich, maari nating itanong, bakit tayo nagdadalamhati. Ang paghugot ng sagot sa tanong na ito ay magiging possible kung tatanawin natin ang turo ng salita ng Dios tungkol sa dalamhati. Kung iisa-isahin natin lahat ng mga lingkod ng Dios ay dumaan sa matinding dalamhati. Iba't-ibang anyo ng pighati at pagdurusa ang kanilang napagdaanan ngunit makikita natin na may dahilan ang mga dalamhating ito. Maging ang anak ng Dios ay nagdalamhati. May magandang dulot din para sa atin ang dalamhati. Wala tayong kaligtasan kung hindi naghirap si Jesus sa krus ng Kalbaryo. Walang pagkabuhay na maguli kung hindi sya namatay at inilibing. Sa dalamhati na pinagdaanan ng mga alagad ni Jesus, doon sila nabuhayan ng pag-asa. Tayo rin ay maaring mabuhay na maguli katulad ni Jesus. Yan din ang pinagmulan ng bagong pag-asa at tapang para sa mga alagad. Kaakibat ng dalamhati ang luwalhati. Sa bandang dulo o maging sa gitna ng pagdadalamhati ay meron nga namang luwalhati.

### Umaasang Bukas ay may Umaga

Ang pagsasaalang-alang sa ating karanasan sa pagteteolohiya ay ang paglilinaw ng katanungang bumabagabag sa buhay ng tao. Sa ating tanong nakasalalay ang linaw ng kasagutan. Kung paano natin nauunawaan ang pangangailangan ng tao ay ganoon din naman ito masasagot mula sa pahayag ng Dios sa kanyang pagpapakilala sa kanyang sarili ayon sa Mabuting Balita mula sa pagkapanganak, pagkatao, kamatayan, muling pagkabuhay, at pagbabalik sa langit ng kanyang anak na si Jesu Cristo.

Isa sa naging bunga ng ganitong pag-iisip ni Tillich ay ang *dynamic* na pamamaraan ng pagmumuni-muni sa ating pananampalataya. May mungkahing hakbang si Lucretia Yaghjian sa pagmumuni-muni natin sa ating pananampalataya. Ito ay: (1) ang pagkilala sa tanong na naggagaling sa ating karanasan; (2) paglalarawan ng karanasan sa pamamagitan ng pagsulat upang makita ang pinaka buod ng tanong na naggagaling sa karanasan; (3) pag-ugnayin ang karanasan at ang katanungan sa kaugalian, salaysay, at mga sagisag ng Kristiyanismo; at (4) ang pinakahuli ay ang pagbuo o paglikha ng mga bagong pagmumuni-muni mula sa karanasang galing sa pagsusulat na ito.<sup>12</sup>

Kailan nga ba tayo nagmumuni-muni? Nagmumuni-muni tayo kahit anong oras at kahit nasaan tayo. Hindi lang naman sa oras ng pag-aaral nangyayari ito. Minsan kahit sa pangkaraniwang pagkukwentuhan ay nagkakaroon tayo ng pagkakataon magmuni-muni. Kadalasan ito ay nagaganap kapag dumaranas tayo ng pagsubok o matinding dagok ng buhay. Sa mga pagkakataong tayo ay nasa gitna ng dalamhati ay nakakapag-isip tayo ng malalim at napagtutuunan natin ng pansin ang ating mga nakagawiang pamaraan ng pananampalataya at natututo tayong magtanong, tama ba ito? Bakit taliwas sa dinaranas ko ngayon ang tinuturo ng aming sambahan o denominasyon? Sa gitna ng pighati nag-iisip tayo at nagtatanong at sa mga pagtatanong na ito ay

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<sup>12</sup>Lucretia Yaghjian, *Writing Theology Well: A Rhetoric for Theological and Biblical Writers* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc., 2006), 20-21.

hinahanap natin ang kaugnayan ng ating karanasan sa pinakaugat ng ating pagiging Kristiyano. Mula sa mga pag-uugnay na ito ay nakakabuo tayo ng bagong mga kaisipan at bunga ng pagmumuni-muni.<sup>13</sup>

Kapag natutunan na nating tingnan ang sarili nating karanasan, doon natin mapagtatanto ang mga katanungang bumabalot sa ating pananampalataya bilang Kristiyanong Pilipino. Totoo naman na nakikilala natin ang Dios sa pamaraan ng pag-aaral ngunit kung ang ating alam sa pananampalataya ay walang talabang relasyon sa ating karanasan, mananatili itong banyaga sa atin. Kung aangkinin natin ang katanungan at tayo mismo ang hahanap ng kasagutan mula sa Bibliya ay mas liliwanag ang ating padating na umaga.

### Sa Aking Buhay Umaga Ko’y Aking Hinihintay

Sa talaban ng pananampalataya at karanasan, di natin maiaalis ang kahalagahan ng wika at ang nabubuong kaisipan mula sa ating karanasan. Pumapasok sa kaisipan natin ang mga salita at ito ay bumubuo ng imahe o mga larawan sa ating isip at ang mga imaheng ito ay mas nabubuong kaisipan kung atin itong maisasawika. Anumang bagay na nais nating maunawaan ay dumadaan sa wika. Sinabi din ni De Mesa na may kinalaman ang wika sa karanasan at kung papaano nagkakaroon ng tanging anyo ang karanasan ay dahil din sa wika. Kaakibat ng kultura ang wika at diwa sa pag-unawa sa ating pananampalataya.<sup>14</sup> Para kay Gordon Kaufmann anumang kaisipan natin ay dumadaan sa ating utak sa pamamagitan ng mga larawan at mga imahe.<sup>15</sup> Habang nag-iisip tayo ay animo may pelikulang pinapanood ang ating pangloob na mga mata. Kaya nga’t kapag sinabing “inuminan” agad na papasok sa isip natin ang baso o tasa. Ang mabubuong imahe sa ating isipan ay nakabase rin sa ating mga naipong karanasan. Sa makatuwid kung taga ibang lugar ang nag-iisip ng bagay na gagamitin para uminom ay maaring kakaiba ito kesa sa ating iniisip. Maaring ito ay isang bote, baso, makinis na bao, o kaya’y kutsaron. Ang nauusong inuman ngayon ay basong-papel o basong-plastic. Nguni’t ang aking mag-ama ay nakikiuso sa mga kabataang laging may dala-dalang *tumblers or jug* na 2 litrong tubig ang kayang ilaman.

Ang gawaing pagteteolohiya ay hindi mabubuo kung hindi natin gagamitin ang ating imahinasyon. Nang aking tingnan ang saling wika ng imagination, isa sa nakalistang kataga doon ay ang guni-guni. Hindi ko ito piniling gamitin dahil sa aking palagay ang guni-guni ay tumutukoy din sa kalikutan ng ating isip na maaring iakma

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<sup>13</sup>Howard W. Stone and James O Duke, *How to Think Theologically*, third edition (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2016), 15-18. Sa unang kabanata ng aklat na ito ay ipinaliwanag ng mga may akda ang tungkol sa embedded theology na mga teolohiya na nakaugat na sa ating nakaugalian at ang mga ito ay dumadaan sa matinding pagmumuni-muni kapag dumadaan tayo sa pagsubok o krisis. Manapat ang mga ito naman ay nagiging paksa sating mabathalang usapan at nagiging *deliberative theology*. Sa prosesong ito ang embedded theology ay nagbabagong anyo ayon sa kung paano ito nasuri ayon sa ating karanasan.

<sup>14</sup>De Mesa, *Jose De Mesa*, 295.

<sup>15</sup>Gordon Kaufmann, *Theological Imagination: Constructing the Image of God* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1981), 22.

sa bungang-tulog kahit gising o maari rin naming nakakakita ng mga kung anu-anong wala naman talaga sa tunay na buhay. Ito ang ginagamit na sasakyan ng mga nilalang na hindi naman totoo o hindi kabahagi ng tunay na mundong ating ginagalawan. Sa ngayon hihiramin ko muna ang katuruan ni Yaghjian na *theological imagination* bilang pamaraan ng pagsasawika ng anumang kaisipan natin hinggil sa Maykapal at sa mundong kanyang ginagalawan. Kasama na dito ang ating pag-iisip, pagtatanong, pangangarap, paglikha, pagbibigay-kahulugan, pagbubuo, pagpuna, pagsasawika, at pagsusulat ng mga *conceptual language* ng pagteteolohiya.<sup>16</sup>

Ang *theological imagination* ay nabubuo mula sa ating mga karanasan, pagsasanay pangkaisipan, at pagsasaalang-alang ng ating kalalagayan at kapanahunan (context). Sabi ni Sallie McFague, walang mabubuo sa ating isipan tungkol sa Dios kung hindi ito dumaan sa ating karanasan, kaisipan, o kaalaman. Kaya nga lang dahil sa ating pagmumuni-muni, nagkakaroon tayo ng makabagong pananaw tungkol sa mga karanasan nating ito. Para kay McFague ang mga salitang gamit natin para ilarawan ang Dios ay hindi dapat na-*absolutize* sapagkat ang *religious language* ay hindi lang naiimpluwensyahan ng oras at lunan sa kasaysayan, kundi kasama na rin dito ang uri ng ating pagkatao, lahi, kasarian, kasarínlan, napag-aralan, pamilyang pinagmulan, mga pinagkakaabalahan, mga pagtatangi, at mga agam-agam.<sup>17</sup>

Sa ating pagbabasa ng Bibliya, doon natin nakikilala ang Maykapal. Naroon sa mga pahina ng kasaysayan ang mga gawa at katangian nya. Naroon din ang pagpapakilala nya ng kanyang sarili habang nakikipagniig siya sa mga tauhan ng kwento. Nababasa natin doon kung paanong inilalarawan ang Dios. Hindi ito nalalayo sa ating mga karanasan. Nauunawaan natin ang Dios sa paggamit ng mga manunulat ng mga salitang naghahalintulad sa kanya sa iba pang maaari nating isipin. Gumagamit ang mga manunulat ng mga paglalarawan tulad ng *metaphors*, *analogies*, at *symbols*.<sup>18</sup>

Paano nga isasalarawan ang Maykapal na hindi naman natin nakikita? Idinadaan natin ito sa pakiramdam. Ginagamitan natin ng mga salitang naghahalintulad. Ang awit ni David, “Si Yahweh ang aking Pastol, hindi ako magkukulang; pinapahimlay nya ako sa luntiang pastulan, at inakay nya sa tahimik na batisan” (Mga Awit 23:1-2). Alam nating hindi pastol ng mga tupa ang ating Maykapal ngunit dahil sa iyon ang kayang malirip ng isip ni David ayon sa kanyang karanasan, manapat naihalintulad niya ang kanyang Panginoon sa isang Pastol. Kung paanong nag-aalaga ang pastol sa kanyang mga tupa ay ganoon din inaalagaan ng Dios ang kanyang mga minamahal. Ang ganitong pamaraan ng paghahalintulad ay gumagamit ng metaphors. Nasa salita na mismo ang kalaliman ng paghahalintulad. Hindi na kailangan pang banggitin na “ang Dios ay tulad ng pastol.” Hindi na kailangan ang salitang “pagtutulad”.

Isa pang ginagamit na wika sa *theological imagination* ay ang pagkakatulad (*analogies*). Dito ay ginagamit ang ‘pagtutulad’ sa layon ng pagsasalarawan kung ano ang bagay o tao. Sa Jeremias 23:29 nakasulat, “**Parang** bato ang aking salita

<sup>16</sup>Yaghjian, *Writing Theology Well*, 202.

<sup>17</sup>Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 3.

<sup>18</sup>Yaghjian, *Writing Theology Well*, 205.

at **katulad** ng martilyo na dumudrog sa malaking bato.” Ang mga salitang parang at katulad ay mga salitang nakakatulong upang lalo nating makilala ang hindi natin nakikitang Dios. Ang kapangyarihan ng kanyang salita ay nagpapahiwatig ng kanyang taglay na lakas. Gagamit at gagamit tayo ng paghahalintulad mula sa ating karanasan para mas maunawaan natin ang bagay na hindi naman natin talaga nakikita at direktang nararanasan.

Ang mga sagisag (*symbols*) ay atin ding ginagamit sa teolohiya. Katulad kung paanong ang *Ark of the Covenant* ay kumakatawan sa pagkanaroon ng Dios sa kanilang piling. Maging ang ulap sa araw na kumukulambong sa kanila upang sila man ay hindi masunog sa init ng araw at ang haligi ng apoy naman sa gabi upang hindi sila mangapa sa kadiliman ay nagpapatunay na kasama nila ang Dios. Higit pa sa pagsama ng Dios, ang mga sagisag na ito ay nagpapakilala rin ng kanyang mga katangian at kakanyahan. Maging ang kataga na tumutukoy sa isang bagay ay maituturing na sagisag din. Ang salitang “Dios” ay sagisag na nagtuturo sa atin na may katangi-tanging Maykapal. Sa aking tinuran, magkaiba ba ang Dios at Maykapal? Ang dalawang salitang ito ay sumasagisag sa isang *entity* na higit pa sa kaya nating isalarawan. Maaaring ang Dios ay tumutukoy sa tagapaglikha na dala ng mga Kastila samantalang ang Maykapal ay katutubo para sa atin. Kaya nagtatanong din ako minsan, pwede kayang si Bathala at si Yahweh ay iisa lamang? Si Bathala ay nasa kaisipang Pilipino at si Yahweh ay nasa kaisipang Judeo. Siempre, mas kumpleto ang kwento kung sino si Yahweh dahil sa Biblia, samantalang si Bathala ay nananahan sa ating nalimutang nakaraan.

Sa mga pagtutulad at paghahalintulad ay nakikita natin ang kahalagahan ng wika. Dahil kung gagamitin natin ang wikang Pilipino ay baka mas maaliwalas nga ang ating tatahaking landas sa pagteteolohiya. Kailangang magkaakibat ang pag-iisip, pagsasalita, at maging ang pagsusulat upang maiakma natin ang theological imagination na ating gagamitin sa pagpapaliwanag ng ating pananampalataya. Kung hindi ay mananatili tayong nangangapa sa pusikit na kadiliman ng pagkawala.

### **At sa Dilim Hinahanap ang Pag-Asa na Walang Landas**

Binigyang diin ni Villanueva ang kahalagahan ng paggamit ng sariling wika sa pag-unawa sa bibliya at sa teolohiya. Nabanggit ni Villanueva sa kanyang salaysay ang kalaliman ng pag-unawa ng puso sa mga damdaming nakapaloob sa dalamhati at sa pag-aaral ng salitang ito sa ating kasarinlan.<sup>19</sup> Para sa mga Hebreo ang salitang lev ay tumutukoy sa pagdama at pag-iisip. Minsan ang iniisip ko para sa mga Hebreo, nag-iisip ang puso nila o kaya naman nasa isip nila ang kanilang pandama. Hindi sila maaring paghiwalayin. Sa palagay ko, para sa mga Pilipino na nasanay gumamit ng Inglis bilang pangunahing wika sa sambahan, nagiging magkahiwalay ang puso at isipan. Kailangan bigyan ng dagdag na pansin upang ang mga kaisipan ay makarating sa puso at nang ito ay maramdaman naman. Sa aking palagay nanantiling dayuhan ang ating pananampalataya dahil hindi pa natin naipapahayag ang nauunawaan ng isip

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<sup>19</sup>Federico Villanueva, “Dalamhati at Luwalhati” na nasa unang mga pahina ng journal na ito.

gamit ang salitang humahagod sa ating damdamin at naisasalarawan kaakibat ng ating mga karanasan.

Ang landas ng pagteteolohiya ay dapat nating tahakin. Ang sabi ni R. C. Sproul, ang bawat Kristiyano ay isang teologo. Dahil lahat tayo ay dapat nag-iisip, nagmumuni-muni, at nag-sasaalang-alang ng ating pananampalataya. Kasama dito ang pag-aayos ng ating paniniwala at mga nakagawian, mga gawain, at mga pagtuturo at pagsamba.<sup>20</sup> Yun din nga ang sinabi naman ni Grenz na may 5 uri ng *theologians*. Pero tatlo sa mga uring ito ang dapat nating pakalinangin sa ating mga sambahan: ito ay ang *lay*, *ministerial*, at *professional*. Pinakamahalagang sangkap ng pagteteolohiya na makikita sa 3 uring ito ay ang kakayahang magmuni-muni gamit ang ating kasarinlan, wika, at mga paniniwalang hindi na kailangang ipaliwanag pa (*worldview*).<sup>21</sup> Tayo ngang pangkaraniwang Kristiyano ay nakikilahok sa pagteteolohiya kapag marubdob nating iniaangkop ang ating pananampalataya sa ating karanasan, kapag pinagtutuunan natin ng pansin ang nakabubuti at nakasasama sa atin, at kapag sinusukat natin ang ating mga limitasyon sa ating pakikibaka, tayo ay nagt-teolohiya rin.<sup>22</sup> Pwede naman palang magteteolohiya ang bawat Kristiyanong Pilipino. Bakit di natin gawin?

Ang hamon ni De Mesa sa kanyang mga mambabasa ay yakapin ng bawat Pilipinong Kristiyano ang pangangatwiran, karapatan, at pagpupunyaging matuklasan natin ang tanging uri ng pagteteolohiya sa pangkasalukuyang panahon at sa kung nasaan tayong lugar. Para kay De Mesa kaakibat ng pagteteolohiya ang pag-aaral na kumakatawan sa pagtuon, pagninilay, pagsisiyasat, pagsusuri, at pag-uugnay sa buhay at mga karanasan (sa Dios).<sup>23</sup> Ang teolohiya para kay De Mesa ay hindi lang mabathalang kaalaman dahil kasama rin dito ang pakikilahok sa Mabathalang Usapan.

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<sup>20</sup>Teaching Resources International, "Every Christian is a Theologian by R. C. Sproul," (December 30, 2009) <https://teachingresources.org/2009/12/30/every-christian-is-a-theologian>.

<sup>21</sup>Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *Who Needs Theology? An Invitation to the Study of God* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 29-32. Dalawang extremes ang inihiwasan nina Grenz at Olson na pagbuhusan natin ng pansin: kung gagamitan natin ng spectrum, sa bandang kaliwa naroon ang folk theology at sa dulong kanan nama'y ang academic theology. Ang folk theology, ayon sa kanila, ay naglalarawan sa pagteteolohiya na kulang sa pagmumuni-muni. Tinanggap lamang ng tagasunod ang anumang ituro at ipasa sa kanya na kaalaman at katuruan ng Biblia. Hindi sila natutong magtanong o ilagay ang sarili nilang karanasan sa mga katuruang tinanggap nila. Para kay Grenz at Olson, ang folk theology ay dapat na umangat at hindi manatili kung nasaan ito. Dahil maari itong maging dahilan upang ang mananampalataya ay madaling anurin ng mga katuruang magliligaw sa kanila. Sa kabilang banda naman, ang academic theology ay taliwas sa folk theology dahil ito naman ay masyadong speculative at nakasandal sa pilosopiya. Ang nakakabagabag kina Grenz at Olson ay ang posibilidad na ang pagteteolohiya ay humiwalay sa pagsamba o pagiging kabahagi ng church lalo't higit ang malayo ito sa pamantayan ng pamumuhay bilang mananampalataya. Para sa 2 manunulat na ito, kahit na tayo ay nasa pagtuturo ng teolohiya, manatiling ministerial at nakadikit pa rin tayo sa kinabibilangan nating pamilya ng mananampalataya sa isang locality. Nais din nila na hindi nahihwalay ang pananampalataya sa pamamaraan ng pamumuhay. Grenz and Olson, *Who Needs Theology*, 27 at 33.

<sup>22</sup>John Trokan, "Models of Theological Reflection: Theory and Praxis" *Journal of Catholic Education* Vol 1, Issue 2 (December 1997), 145-146. <https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1032&context=ce>.

<sup>23</sup>Jose De Mesa, Jose De Mesa: *A Theological Reader* (Manila: De La Salle University Publishing House, 2016), 294.

Kailangan nating makipagtalastasan at makipagtalamtam sa mga katulad natin na may pagnanais na makabuo ng pagteteolohiyang Pinoy.

Ilang porsyento nga ba ng ating mga pastor ang gumagawa ng sermon gamit ang Bibliyang salin sa Pilipino, namamahagi ng Mabuting Balita sa wikang Pilipino, at nakakapanalangin ng tuluy-tuloy sa wikang Pilipino. Kahit ako ay nahihirapang gawin ang mga ito dahil sa pangkalahatan ang paraan ng pagkatuto at pagsasabuhay ng pananampalataya ay nag-ugat sa Kanluraning kaisipan, wika, at kasanayan. Kapag ganito ang layunin ng ating teolohiya ay lalabas na parang walang sapat na kakayahan ang Pilipino para ipahayag ang kanyang pananampalataya ayon sa kanyang kasarinan at karanasan. Marahil ang pinakamalaking dahilan ay ang paniniwalang ang teolohiya ay mauunawaan lamang kung tayo ay gagamit ng *Philosophy* na magiging daluyan ng mga ideya at kaunawaan. Kulang nga talaga ang wikang Pilipino upang yakapin ang Kanluraning pilosopiya.<sup>24</sup> Ngunit ang tunay na paanyaya naman ng philosophy ay ang paglikha ng mga kaisipang nakakayang ipahayag ng wika. Maaring ang hamon ay kung paano tayo makalilikha ng mga bagong katagang maglalagom sa kaisipang nais nating ipahayag. Matagal pa ba yan?

### **Kailan Ba Darating ang Bukas Para sa Akin**

Isa sa dahilan ng paghamon na gamitin ang ating sariling wika at karanasan ay upang makita ang ating pananampalataya sa ating buhay. Naalala ko noong bumisita kami sa Indonesia, masayang-masaya kaming inanyayahan ng isang pamilyang Kristiyano doon. Si Medy ay isang empleyado sa gobyerno at isa daw sa ikinalulungkot nya ay mahirap kasama sa trabaho ang mga hindi Kristiyano dahil lubog sila sa graft and corruption.<sup>25</sup> Sabi nya siguro sa Pilipinas ay mas mabuti ang ating kalagayan dahil mas maraming Kristiyano sa ating bansa. Iniisip nya na ang mga Kristiyano ang makapagtatama sa kalalagayang ito ng kanyang bansa. Nakahihiya mang aminin, pero hindi tayo nalalayo sa Indonesia pagdating sa graft and corruption.<sup>26</sup> Dapat sana'y nababago ng ating pananampalataya ang ating mga buhay bilang mamamayan at mababago rin dapat ang ating bansa.

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<sup>24</sup>Minsan naiisip natin na kahit ang Pilosopiya na karaniwang kaakbay ng mabathalang pag-aaral ay imposibleng adhikain para sa isang Filipino. Para kay Quito ang wikang Filipino ay kulang at hindi sapat para ibalangkas ang isang makahulugang kaisipan o philosophy. Emerita S. Quito, *Lectures on Comparative Philosophy* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1979), 29.

<sup>25</sup>United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes, "Indonesia: Anti Corruption," 2023, <https://www.unodc.org/indonesia/en/issues/anti-corruption.html>.

<sup>26</sup>Ang Pilipinas daw ay nasa rank 117 na may score na 33 sa corruption Index samantalang ang Indonesia ay Rank 96 sa score na 38. Ito ay base sa pag-aaral sa 180 na bansa. Ang score na 100 ay nagsasaad na malinis mula sa corruption ang bansa at ang 0 naman ay napakataas ng level ng corruption sa bansa. Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index," 2021, [https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021?gclid=Cj0KCQjwO-kBhDIARIsAL6L0rdlT9RmxtfCbmbpxkpspn0bn6\\_k-sfvPrLT9KN84EFiqtxE9I8TbBlaAt88EALw\\_wcB](https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021?gclid=Cj0KCQjwO-kBhDIARIsAL6L0rdlT9RmxtfCbmbpxkpspn0bn6_k-sfvPrLT9KN84EFiqtxE9I8TbBlaAt88EALw_wcB)

Tunay nga naman na ang Mabuting Balita ay angat sa lahat ng kultura at kung titingnan ang sinabi ni Richard Niebuhr,<sup>27</sup> isang kaugnayan ng evangelio sa kultura ay ang baguhin ang anyo nito (*transform*). Kaya nga at maaari nating sabihin na maraming kultura ang nagbago ng anyo nang pumasok ang gawaing pagmimisyon at ang nakakalungkot nga lamang ay ang malaking porsiento ng pagbabagong anyong ito ay ang pagyakap sa kulturang kanluranin at hindi ang kulturang malaya na dulot ng Magandang Balita at personal na kaugnayan sa Dios.

Sa usaping binabago ng Kristiyanismo ang buhay ng tao matagal nang napapansin na ito ay kabalintunaan sa ating karanasan. Si Jaime Bulatao ang nagsulat ng isang aklat tungkol sa *split-level Christianity* na namamayani sa bansang Pilipinas. Ilang siglo na nga bang naririto ang Kristiyanismo sa Pilipinas ngunit sa kanyang pagmamatyag ay hindi pa rin nagbabago ang mga mananampalataya. Napansin nya na mayroon pa ring malaking pagitan ang pamaraan ng pamumuhay kumpara sa ating niyayakap na pananampalataya. Para sa kanya namamahay sa iisang tao ang 2 o mahigit pang *thought and behavior system* na hindi naman magkatugma sa isa't-isa.<sup>28</sup> Ilang dekada na ba nang isulat ito ni Bulatao pero kitang-kita pa rin natin na magkalayo ang ating pananampalataya at ang ating karanasan. Hindi pa rin tayo binabago ng mabuting balita ni Kristo dahil ito ay banyaga pa rin sa atin. Nanatiling nasa isip lamang. Hanggang ngayon ay nababanggit pa rin maging ng mga banyagang manunulat ang ganitong suliranin sa mga bansang nasakop ng mga kanluraning kultura at pananampalataya. Hindi tayo nag-iisa.

Maging ang mananalasaysay na si K. M. Panikkar ay nagsabing banyaga para sa mga Indiano ang Kristiyanismo dahil sa ito ay naibahagi sa kulturang kanluranin mula sa Amerikano at taga-Europa. Sa loob ng maraming panahon nanatiling banyaga sa kanilang kultura at tradisyon ang pananampalatayang naibahagi sa kanila.<sup>29</sup>

Sa totoo lang, ang mensahe ng mabuting balita ay kumakatawan sa kabuuang pananaw sa mundo o mga paniniwalang tinanggap ng walang paliwanag dahil ito ay kinagisnan na (worldview). Ilang taon ba talaga ang kailangang gugulin ng isang tao bago tuluyang maunawaan ng isip, maisapuso, at maisabuhay ang kapangyarihan ng mabuting balita na baguhin ang buhay ng isang tao? Ganito kahirap ang dinanas ng mga misyonero sa kanilang pagdadala ng mabuting balita sa bansang masyadong matatag ang kultura, nakagawian, at mga pananampalataya. Para sa kanila ang pagiging Kristiyano ay paghiwalay sa kinagisnang nakagawian. Ang mga Burmese ay hindi agad yumakap sa mensahe ng mga misyonero sa paniniwalang kapag tinanggap nila si Jesus sa buhay nila ay hindi na sila mananatiling Burmese. Itatakwil sila ng sarili nilang kultura or maaring itakwil din nila ang kanilang kultura.<sup>30</sup> Marami pa

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<sup>27</sup>Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishers, 1951). Sinabi ni Niebuhr na may limang kaugnayan si Cristo sa kultura: (1) *Christ against culture*; (2) *Christ of Culture*; (3) *Christ above culture*; (4) *Christ and culture in paradox*; (5) *Christ, the transformer of culture*.

<sup>28</sup>Jaime Bulatao, *Split Level Christianity* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila Press, 1966), 2.

<sup>29</sup>K. M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance: A Survey of the Vasco Da Gamma Epoch of Asian History, 1498-1945* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953), 454.

<sup>30</sup>Ang mga Burmese ay naniniwalang isa silang tunay na Burmese kung sila ay Buddhist. Ang

ring bansa ang tulad nila, ganito rin ang karanasan ni William Carey sa India<sup>31</sup> at si Mateo Ricci sa China. Kaya nga't upang maging karapat-dapat minabuti ni Ricci na magmukhang Chino: ginamit nya ang kasuotan ng mga Confucian scholar, namuhay syang tulad ng isang Buddhist monk, at naging kagalang-galang sa larangan ng agham, kasaysayan, at panitikang Chino.<sup>32</sup>

## Hangang Kailan Matitiis ang Paghihirap Ko

Sinoman ang may nais na maging paham sa teolohiya ay kailangang maging paham sa Salita ng Dios sa isang banda at sa kabilang banda naman ay dapat maalam sya sa katotohanan ng kanyang pang-araw-araw na karanasan. Bilang mga Kristiyano, dapat ay maalam tayo sa salita ng Dios. Minsan iniisip ko na mabuting nababasa natin ang buong Bibliya sa loob ng isang taon. Bukod pa sa kasanayan sa paggawa ng *exegesis* at sumusunod sa *cycle* ng *hermeneutics*. Ang teolohiya ay nangangailangan din ng karunungan sa pagbabasa ng ating mga karanasan. Sa pang-unawa ko sa sinulat ni Kevin Vanhoozer sa *Everyday Theology* binigyang diin nya na mahalagang maalaman natin kung paano magbasa ng ating kultura. Para sa kanya ang mga *theologians* ay dapat na nakapag-iisip sang ayon sa *hermeneutics of culture*. Dito nagbigay si Vanhoozer ng kapamaraan (*methodology*) kung paano magsimulang humakbang ang isang *everyday theologian*.<sup>33</sup>

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mga hindi Buddhists ay maituturing na second-class-citizens. Kaya hanggang ngayon malaki pa rin ang bahagdan ng Buddhists sa bansang Myanmar. Theolodre Lim and Dengthuama, "An Overview of Christian Missions in Myanmar," April 2016, <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/1884/4197>.

<sup>31</sup>Mahigit 7 taon ang ginugol ni Carey upang makapagdala ng isang convert sa Kristiyanismo. Pinag-aralang mabuti ni Carey ang kultura, panitikan, wika, at pananampalataya ng mga Indiano bago naging magaan ang kanyang gawaing pagmimisyon. *Missionary Biographies*, "William Carey: A Baptist Page," Wholesome Words Home, 2023, <https://www.wholesomewords.org/missions/bcarey15.html>

<sup>32</sup>Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries: His Pace in the History of Culture* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1985), 223.

<sup>33</sup>Kevin VanHoozer, J. Anderson Charles, and Michael Slesman, ed. *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 230. Ang **unang hakbang** ay ang pagkuha ng isang *cultural text or trend*. Ito ay madaling mapag-aralan sapagkat ito ay mas madaling makita. Karaniwan ito sa mga pelikula, programa sa television, mga awitin, mga sining, at iba pa. Kung gagawa ng paghahambing sa uso o *trend* noong mga nakaraang taon ng kasalukuyan ay madaling makikita ang hinahanap na *pattern* ng pagbabago. Ang **pangalawang hakbang** ay "*putting a foot forward: the world of*" kung saan ang theologian ay nagmamasiid sa mga uso na magpapakita ng mga detalye sa pamamagitan ng pag-unawa sa tunay na uso. Ito ay ginagawa sa pamamagitan ng paglahok at pagkalap ng mga datos mula sa pagtatanong-tanong (*interviews*). Ang **ikatlong hakbang** ay "*putting it in perspective: the world behind*." Sa puntong ito ng *hermeneutical process* ay nagsusuri ng mga pangkasaysayan, at *social forces, biographical details, the genre*, at iba pa; sa makatuwid ay tinitingnan nito ang mga kadahilan at mga nakakaimpluwensya ng isang gawain. Dapat nating alamin kung sino nga ba ang mga taong kasali sa pagbalangkas ng bagong trend na ito. Ang **pang-apat na hakbang** ay "*putting together: the world in front*." Ito ay ang paghahanap ng *root metaphor* or imahe na makapagbubuklod at maglalagum ng lahat ng napag-alaman. At ang **huling hakbang** ay ang pagtanaw kung ano ang sinasabi ng Salita ng Dios. Dito masasalamin ang pananampalataya natin na ang Mabuting Balita ay totoong kaganapan. *Ibid.*, 231-238.

Paano nga ba basahin ang kultura? Sinubukan ko minsan na basahin ang hudyat ng kultura ng mga kabataan dito sa Baguio. Pinalakad ko ang aking mga kamag-aaral at pinangalap ng kasalukuyang temperatura ng kalagayan nila. Nagsipunta sila sa mall at nagtanung-tanong (pamaraang ethnograpiya). Pinaalam ko sa aking mga kamag-aaral kung ano ang bumubuo ng mga kwento ng mga kabataan dito sa Baguio. Kung maari ay matanaw man lang nila ang kanilang mga paboritong bayani, mga banal na bagay, banal na lugar, at ano ang pinagmumulan ng kanilang pinakamatinding pag-aalala (*ultimate concern focusing on greatest fear*). Napag-alaman ko mula sa impormasyong nakalap ng mga seminarians na ang mga kabataang ito ay madalas na nagtitipon-tipon sa mall upang magkasama-sama. Nakakalimutan nila ang kanilang mga problema kapag narito sila, nakatanaw sa malayo, umiinom ng kape, nagtatawanan, at nagku-kwentuhan hawak ang kanilang cellphones. Para sa kanila hindi nila kayang tumagal sa buong maghapon kung wala ang kanilang mga cellphones. *Bad trip* kung walang wifi kasi *feeling alone* sila. Kailangan nila ito upang maki-*connect* sa mga kaibigan nila.

Isa sa *ultimate concerns* diumano ng mga kabataang yan ay ang *expectations* ng mga magulang nila. Kinakatakutan nila ang pagbasak sa kanilang mga klase sa kolehiyo. Masyadong mataas ang mga pangarap ng kanilang mga magulang para sa kanila at ito ay nagbibigay sa kanila ng *pressures*. Masyadong mataas din ang halaga ng mga pangarap na ito. Alam nilang maraming isinasakripisyo ang kanilang mga magulang para sa kanila. Ngunit ang takot na ito ay nagpapamanhid din sa kanila. Nahihirapan sila at ang nagiging lugar para maging sila ay sila ay ang mall at ang mga taong pakiramdam nila ay walang batayan upang sila ay maging katanggap-tanggap sa kanila. Tuwang-tuwa ang aking mga kasama sa klase nang malaman nila na para sa mga kabataang ito, malabis nilang kinagiliwan ang pelikulang *Twilight*.<sup>34</sup> Nabanggit ng ilan sa kanila na talagang pinanood nila sa sinehan ang saga na ito. Gustong-gusto nila ang pakiramdam ng *“accepting love”* na nakita nila kay Bella at Edward. Hinahanap ng grupo ng mga kabataang ito ang uri ng pag-ibig na tatanggapin at yayakapin sila kahit maging sino man sila. Iniiwasan at kinatatakutan nila ang *expectations* maging ng kanilang mga magulang.<sup>35</sup>

Noong matapos ang COVID-19 lockdowns, muli na namang lumabas ang aking klase upang mag-interview ng mga kabataan at dahil marami sa kanila ay gamers, sinubukan nilang makipaglaro sa kanila at doon ay nakipagkwentuhan. Napag-alaman ng aking mga kasamang learners, na ang gamers ay nakakabuo ng mundong gusto nilang galawan sa kanilang paglalaro. Doon ay nakakabuo sila ng bagong character at nagkakaroon sila ng super powers habang nanalo sila ng mga levels ng games. Nagkaron sila ng mundo na kakaiba sa kanilang kinalalagyan sa kasalukuyan. Ito ang powers ng online gaming. Nakakalayo sila sa kanilang magulong situation habang sila ay naglalaro at nabibigyan sila ng bagong lakas habang sila ay nananalo sa

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<sup>34</sup>*The Twilight Saga*, based on the series of novels by Stephanie Meyer, directed by Catherine Hardwicke (1), Chris Witz (2), David Slade (3), and Bill Condon (4-5), featuring Kristen Stewart, Robert Pattinson, and Taylor Lautner (Summit Entertainment, 2008-2012).

<sup>35</sup>Ang mga impormasyon ay halaw sa asignaturang ipinasa sa klase ng *Theology and Culture*, 2015.

mga kalaban. Nakakatagpo din sila ng mga kaibigan at kakampi. Sabay-sabay silang nakakabuo ng bagong community of gamers na may strong willfulness na manalo. Tulungan at alalayan sa isa't isa. Magkakaiba mang lahi at magkakaiba ng wika, sa gaming ay nagkakaisa sila. Nagkakampihan at nagpapalakasan.<sup>36</sup>

Matapos naming mapagnilay-nilayan at pag-usapan sa klase ang mga sagot ng mga kabataan, tiningnan namin kung ano nga ba ang tanong sa buhay ng mga kabataang ito na kayang sagutin ng Magandang Balita na dumating si Jesus para sa kanila. Isa lang ang nakita nilang Jesus na kailangan na kailangan ng mga kabataan, ito ang Jesus na kaibigan, kakampi, kasama—kaibigang nagmamahal sa lahat ng panahon, walang iwanan, hindi sila ibibitin sa ere, hindi sila itatakwil, tatanggapin ka maging sinoman sila, kasama sa lungkot at saya, kausap oras-oras, nagsasabihan ng tapatan, at wala silang pwedeng gawin na makapagpapalayo sa kanila at sa kanya. Bilang magkakakaibigan nag-aaway-away din ang mga kabataang ito, pero ayaw nila ang nilalaglag sila. Si Jesus na kaibigan ay hindi nang-lalaglag. Ibinigay nya ang kanyang buhay sa krus upang magkaroon tayo ng ugnayan sa kanya bilang kaibigang tunay (Jn 15:13).

Para sa mga kamag-aaral ko, ang mga kabataan ay naghahanap ng kaibigan at kakampi, si Jesus ang “kaibigang handang ibigay ang kanyang buhay para sa kaibigan” (Juan 15:13). Sa pagharap nila sa tunay na mundo, si Jesus ang “daan, ang katotohanan, at ang buhay...” Sya ang sumasalamin ng kung sino at ano sila sa harap ng ating Maykapal at sa loob ng mundong kanyang nilikha. Si Jesus ang Dios na nag-aaya sa lahat na pumasok sa kanyang kaharian kung saan tanggap niya kung sino man sila at kung hindi man sila katanggap-tanggap ay ginagawa nya silang katanggap-tanggap. Binigay nya ang kanyang sariling buhay para sa lalapit at mananampalataya sa kanya. Binabago nya ang buhay ng sinumang susunod sa kanya at binabago rin nya ang pananaw sa mundo ng mga nagtitiwala sa kanya dahil mula sa magandang kalooban ng Dios ay ginagawa nyang bago ang lahat (2 Cor 5:17). Ang kanilang pagkakilala kay Jesus ay magdadala sa kanila sa Bagong Umaga.

### **Darating Din ang Bukas Para sa Akin Malapit na ang Umaga**

Dito sa akdang ito, nasimulan nating tingnan ang kinalalagyan ng kultura at wika sa pagteteolohiya. Malayo pa nga ba ang umaga? Sinimulan nating tingnan ang correlation method ni Tillich. Dito natin tiningnan ang 2 poste ng pagteteolohiya. Narito ang talaban ng tanong na naglalarawan ng pinakamataas na agam-agam ng tao at mula naman sa Bibliya natin hinahanap ang sagot sa mga tanong na ito. Halos pareho lang naman na ang Bibliya ang pinagmumulan ng kaalaman ngunit ang naiba lamang ay nauunang alamin ang kalagayan ng tao para maiakma ang katuruan na kailangan pagtuunan ng pansin at direktang makakatulong sa ikakaginhawa ng nagdadalamhati.

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<sup>36</sup>Gospel and Culture Class, 2nd semester, 2022.

Sinundan natin ang pamaraan ng pagsusulat ng ating pagmumuni-muni ayon kay Yaghjian kung saan nagbigay sya ng 4 na hakbang. Ang pinakahuli dito ay ang pagbubuo ng bagong pagmumuni-muni sa bagong karanasan. Para sa mga gamers, si Jesus ay kaibigan at kakampi. Ito man ay matatagpuan sa Bibliya at kasama rin sa mga itinuro ni Jesus tungkol sa kanyang sarili. Sa kasaysayan at tradisyong Kristiyano ang mga pagninilay na ito ay makikita ring nagamit ng mga ibang teologo. At para sa ating mga kabataan sa panahong ito, ang bagong pagmumuni-muni ay makakatulong sa kanila. Para sa mga guro at pastor, ang pagninilay na ito ay magiging bahagi rin ng pagtuturo upang madaling maakay ang mga kabataan sa pananampalataya kay Jesus.

Alam kong kulang pa ang aking pagmumuni-muni. Marami pang dapat isama at isaalang-alang sa talakayang ito. Sinabi ni Trokan na ang pinakamahalagang trabaho ng isang guro sa teolohiya ay magsilbing komadrona upang maisilang ang mga katotohanan na sakop ng mabathalang pag-aaral.<sup>37</sup> Hindi ko man lubusang maisagawa ang makatulong sa pagsilang ng teolohiyang Pilipino ay kahit paano naman ay may isang hakbang na nasimulan. Sinabi nga ni Lao Tzu, na "ang paglalakbay ng milya-milyang layo ay nagsisimula sa isang hakbang."<sup>38</sup>

Marahil marami pa sa atin ang hindi pa nakakaalam na marami na ring Pilipino ang nagsisipagsulat ng teolohiya sa sarili nating wika. May mga pagsusumikap na rin na makabuo ng teolohiyang sumisipa o nais harapin ang suliranin o sakit ng ating lipunan. Kailangan nating linangin ang sarili nating kakanyahan sa pagbabalangkas ng ating pananampalataya upang sa gayon ay magkaroon na ng tuldok ang ilang dekadang pagtatanong ni Bulatao tungkol sa kapangyarihan ng mabuting balita na magpapabago sa ating mga buhay. Hiraya manawari ay maibsan ang kinamatayan na niyang lungkot sa natanaw pa nyang "split-level Christianity" na talamak sa ating bansa noon. Ito ang pinakamalaking dalamhati na kailangan pa rin nating harapin sa ngayon.

Sa aking palagay kung ang ating pagkakilala sa Maykapal ay tagos sa puso at kumikilos sa bawat himaymay ng dumadaloy na dugo sa ating ugat, ay maaaring matanaw na nga natin ang umagang ating minimithi sa larangan ng pagteteolohiya. Darating din ang bukas para sa atin. Darating din ang luwalhating minimithi. Ngayon pa lamang ay atin nang banggitin ang pagbibigay luwalhati sa ating Maykapal sa mga bagay na maaari nyang gawin sa pamamagitan ng kanyang mga gawa sa ating buhay sa larangan ng pagteteolohiya. Purihin Sya.

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<sup>37</sup>Trokan, "Models of Theological Reflections," 146.

<sup>38</sup>Nagagamit ang kasabihang ito sa maraming kaparaanan: sa negosyo, sa pangkalusugang kadahilanan, mga proyekto, at iba pa. Ito ay isang kasabihang Chino na nakakonekta kay Lao Tzu, Literary Devices, <https://literarydevices.net/a-journey-of-a-thousand-miles-begins-with-a-single-step/>

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