

Introduction to the Issue: “Third Spaces, Borders, and the Cries for Liberation”

“The cave of making can be a dark and desperate place. From time to time, the darkness is dispelled by flashes that dazzle the obscurity.”¹

— Homi Bhabha, Preface to *Communicating in the Third Space*

“As a deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?” — Psalm 42:1–2

Bhabha’s notion of the “third space” is especially apt for this issue, where marginal voices continue to speak from the historical shadows of empire, colonialism, and the contemporary abuse of religious power. As themes of domination, resilience, and survival emerge, exemplified by the *beatas* who drew strength from Scripture, Bhabha’s “third space” becomes a conceptual aid for exploring liminal sites of negotiation, hybridity, and transformation. These are spaces where identities are not fixed but performed, where cultures meet not to merge but to enter into dialogue, and where the dispossessed find agency through acts of re-reading, re-telling, and re-living. These sites, as illuminated by Bhabha, are not neutral ground but dynamic arenas of enunciation, identification, and negotiation, often shaped by asymmetrical power relations.

The longing expressed in Psalm 42, “As a deer pants for streams of water,” evokes a profound yearning for connection and sustenance. In Co’s paper, this yearning resonates with the community of *beatas* who, despite colonial and ecclesiastical restrictions and lacking direct access to the Bible, creatively embraced scriptural fragments through liturgy, homilies, prayers, and sacraments to enrich their inner and communal lives. Their desire for *shalom* and their inventive appropriation of spiritual nourishment, even in the

¹ Homi Bhabha, “Preface: In the Cave of Making, Thoughts on Third Space,” in *Communicating in the Third Space*, ed. Karin Ikas and Gerhard Wagner (NY: Routledge, 2009), 10–15.

absence of formal access, exemplify a subtle form of resistance, one that testifies to the enduring human spirit's capacity to find meaning and solace amidst imposed borders.

The concept of borders, both literal and metaphorical, runs throughout the contributions in this issue. Dy-Liacco's paper on "self-hating Jews," for instance, challenges the Israeli narrative that frames Jewish opposition to the state as antisemitism, revealing how dominant discourse attempts to control identity and dissent by creating an "enemy within." This directly relates to Bhabha's "third space" as a site where dominant naming frameworks are disrupted. Similarly, Foley's paper grapples with the possibility of decolonized Roman Catholic homilizing in the U.S., underscoring the struggle against entrenched colonial structures within religious discourse and practice. Referencing Bhabha's analogy of a choir, this reflects the "precarious tension involved in holding the thought, or the note, in common, vibrating beyond the control of any one voice." These tensions underscore the challenges and necessity of creating spaces for genuine dialogue and transformation. Lazing and colleagues shed light on the clergy sexual abuse (CSA) crisis by distinguishing between static and dynamic transparency. While static transparency focuses on information disclosure and legal compliance, dynamic transparency emphasizes a fluid, multidimensional, communicative, and dialogical approach that prioritizes the needs of victims and survivors. This shift resonates with Bhabha's idea of a dialogical site where mastery or sovereignty is relinquished. Dynamic transparency, in centering the personal and symbolic, seeks to dethrone entrenched power structures by fostering genuine communication and prioritizing survivors' voices above all else. Finally, Asiones and colleagues explore Pope Francis's World Communications Day Messages, identifying essential competencies for enhancing intercultural communication: embracing a faith-based perspective, cultivating empathetic listening, and communicating truthfully and charitably in a multicultural context. These practices—open dialogue, active listening, and respectful disagreement—are essential for nurturing a "culture of encounter" that resists prejudice and promotes mutual understanding. This aligns with the

transformative potential of the third space, where, as Bhabha muses, a word or symbol loses its power to dominate when it becomes open to multiple meanings. It is in these moments of communicative vulnerability and sincere engagement that the possibility of liberation and empowerment truly arises.

In our contemporary world, where the legacies of empire and coloniality manifest in new forms, from violence and migration to the disruptions of digital technology, the "third space" becomes increasingly vital. These tumultuous realities often mirror historical power imbalances, pushing individuals and communities into "in-between" spaces. In such zones, dominant norms are challenged, and new forms of resistance and agency can emerge. Understanding and renegotiating power, as well as fostering critical intercultural communication, become urgent tasks in these third spaces. It is here that alternative pathways to dignity and well-being may be discerned, where dominant narratives are questioned, and where a "living flux of meaning" begins to take shape.²

In closing, this issue holds out the hope that liberation and empowerment in these "third spaces" can be enabled through humanity's communicative power. This power lies in our capacity for inclusion, storytelling, and honoring the "deep minds" of others, where the "depth of being" emerges through metaphor and liberative symbols, in short, through sacramental communication. As we navigate these crucial third spaces, we are reminded of the enduring promise in Psalm 126:5–6, *"Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them."*

May these labors of faith and scholarship spread flashes that dazzle the obscurity.

Alvenio Mozol

² Christopher Richard Baker, *The Hybrid Church in the City: Third Space Thinking* (VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 22–35.

Contents
MST Review vol. 27, no. 1 (2025)

Research Articles

The Deeply Jewish Roots of the so-called.....1
Self-Hating Jew
Veronica Chiari A. Dy-Liacco

Is a Decolonialized Roman Catholic Homily in25
the U.S. Possible?: Beyond Postcolonial Preaching
Edward Foley

Scriptural Echoes and Allusions in the 172658
Constitutions and Rules of the Beatas de la
Compañía de Jesus
Maria Anicia B. Co

Two Dimensions of Transparency in the.....104
Digital Age: Material and Spiritual Aspects in
Addressing Clergy Sexual Abuse
Henry Brang Mai Lazing, Hans Geybels,
and Hans Zollner

Understanding Pope Francis' World.....141
Communications Day Messages for Intercultural
Communication Competencies in a Digital,
Globalized World: A Quantitative Study
Noel Asiones, Eulalia Tome,
Ulysses John Parado, Orlando Cantillon,
and Tran, Thi Pham Hoang Gia

The Deeply Jewish Roots of the so-called Self-Hating Jew

Veronica Chiari A. Dy-Liacco

Abstract: This paper examines the Israeli narrative that anti-Zionism is antisemitism, where Jewish groups who oppose the Israeli state and its policies (both written and unwritten) concerning Palestinians are labeled as self-hating Jews. This narrative does not stand up to historical scrutiny. Judaism is far from the single unified tradition that the epithet "self-hating Jew" seems to imply. There are Jewish groups who oppose the Zionist endeavor based on their traditional theological interpretations of the Biblical and Rabbinic texts, such as the Tanakh, Talmud, and Mishnah. For example, the orthodox Jewish group, the *Neturei Karta*, claims that the exile and suffering of the Jewish people is part of God's plan that has not been finished yet nor truly realized in any Jewish state. Yet they remain faithful Jews with traditional and, indeed, possibly ancient roots.

Keywords: Antisemitism • Zionism • Self-hating Jew • Anti-Zionism is Antisemitism

Introduction

The epithet "self-hating Jew" for Jews who oppose the state of Israel's written and unwritten ethnic policies makes it appear, at least to the naïve public mind, that the opposition that these Jews hold is a form of antisemitism.¹ The current Gaza war and the Israeli state's efforts to control the narrative about it have especially brought this epithet into the public forum.

Yet there are traditional groups of Jews currently at the receiving end of the epithet "self-hating Jew" that are

¹ Yoni Mozeson offers a religious perspective on the pathology of the self-hating Jew in "The Psychological Origins of the Self-Hating Jew," *The Times of Israel*, August 22, 2023, <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/the-psychological-origins-of-the-self-hating-jew/>.

far older than the state of Israel and whose opposition to the ethnic policies of the state and even to the state itself is rooted in their traditional beliefs. Their stance can adequately be described as pro-diaspora, or one which gives ultimate primacy to the spirituality of *galuth* or exile. As a result, rather than actively seeking the establishment of a Zionist state, these Jewish groups emphasize the faithful observance of the *mitzvot* whilst among the Gentiles in their exilic communities worldwide, waiting for the divine hand to bring about the end of exile.

For these traditional groups, as for Judaism in general, religious life revolves around the observance of divine commands. However, Jewish groups differ widely in their respective interpretations of the holy books, and how they may observe the law in the way that is pleasing to God. Indeed, even from the 2nd temple period, Judaism was richly diverse and was not a monolithic system. The destruction of the 2nd Temple and subsequent 2nd exile opened Judaism to even more diversity, especially in its interpretation of how to continue upholding fidelity to the covenant in light of these national disasters. This diversity of Jewish thought and interpretation persists in the numerous Jewish movements of today.

The Origin of the Label “Self-Hating Jew”

The public equation of anti-Zionism with antisemitism occurring in the wake of the current Gaza war makes it appear that Judaism and support of Zionism really are inseparable. When Jews do oppose Zionism, they are labeled self-hating Jews by supporters of the Israeli state. The label has been applied, for example, even before the Gaza war to Jewish academic and critic of the state of Israel Norman Finkelstein. In the wake of the Gaza war, Finkelstein has become

internet famous, featured in many YouTube videos where he gives his views on the Israeli state and its treatment of Palestinians. Sarah Werrin, an apologist for the state of Israel, even has a YouTube video titled, "Norman Finkelstein: King of Self-Hating Jews."²

Yet the label “self-hating Jew” was originally neither exclusionary nor an epithet. Paul Reitter, author of *On the Origins of Jewish Self-Hatred*, says that it is “so badly misrepresented today.”³ He cites author Mick Finlay, who observes that the use of the term has been appropriated for Zionist identity politics that “winds up promoting 'normative definitions of Jewish identity.'”⁴ In this usage, it is meant to exclude those Jewish voices who disagree with the Zionist agenda or policies and to delegitimize their Jewish heritage and religious identification.

Prior to this narrow political appropriation, Reitter sees that in Theodor Lessing’s *Der jüdische Selbsthaß*⁵ (*Jewish Self-Hate*), the work that popularized the term, it referred to the pervasive Jewish existential dilemma.⁶ Reitter reads Lessing as positing that Jewish “self-hate” is a pervasive mindset among the Jewry of his time, but one which could potentially be the source of salvation not just of the Jewish people but of the world that surrounds them. Reitter says, “because of the special status of the Jews’ self-hatred, Lessing reasons, the Jews are uniquely

² Sarah Werrin, “Norman Finkelstein: King of Self-Hating Jews,” J-TV: Jewish Ideas. Global Relevance., March 7, 2024, video, 11:38, https://youtu.be/OMpINCe35rY?si=_dD1Bh9irolgCBhA.

³ Paul Reitter, *On the Origins of Jewish Self-Hatred* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012).

⁴ Ibid., 14, with a quote from Mick Finlay, “Pathologizing Dissent: Zionism, Identity Politics, and the ‘Self-Hating Jew,’” *British Journal of Social Psychology* 44 (2005): 202.

⁵ Theodor Lessing, *Der jüdische Selbsthaß* (Berlin: Zionistischer Buecher-Bund [Juedischer Verlag], 1930).

⁶ See *ibid.*, 37.

well positioned to save the world—to lead the world out of and away from self-hatred, and into a better future.”⁷ It is a quintessentially Jewish notion of salvation that lies firmly within the world and within the scope of history.

Reitter sees that Lessing is indebted to an earlier work by Kuh, who wrote *Juden und Deutsche* (*Jews and Germans*).⁸ Kuh, says Reitter, sees the existential dilemma of the self-hating Jew “as both a [point of] reflection and an agent of change.”⁹ Reading Kuh, Reitter says that the admonishment to fellow Jews is to “choose their self-hatred” as “the best way open to them, far better than Zionism and assimilationism, both of which, according to Kuh, would lead Jews further into the disaster of nationalism.”¹⁰

Reitter's overview of the origins of the term suggests that, as originally conceptualized by German pre-war intellectuals, it was not coined to establish a normative definition of Jewish identity. Rather, as Reitter proposes, Jewish self-hatred was presented as a point of Jewish self-reflection and somehow a point of healing or salvation as well. In other words, it was not meant to indicate the existence of a boundary of some kind for Jewish identity. Rather, it provided the view for a critical but positive self-reflection, one that articulated a potential version or interpretation of the messianic promise.¹¹

⁷ Ibid., 38.

⁸ Anton Kuh, *Juden und Deutsche* (Berlin: Erich Reiss, 1921).

⁹ Ibid., 39.

¹⁰ Ibid., 40.

¹¹ See *ibid.*

Voices Critical of the Israeli State within Judaism

Yet the label "self-hating Jew" has been appropriated to apply as an epithet for Jews who voice intense criticism of the state of Israel, especially in the wake of the current Gaza war. However, these same Jews who are critical of Israel themselves denounce the equivalency between their anti-Israel stance and antisemitism. For example, members of Jewish Voice for Peace cry out in their protests, "Not in our name," to demand an end to the destruction in Gaza,¹² and an end to the US funding of Israel.¹³

Atalia Omer writes that members of these Jewish activist groups are motivated by "their Jewish identity and values, not in spite of them." In her interviews with Jewish peace activists, she discovers that

their journeys toward activism began because their understanding of Jewish values was inconsistent with what Israel was doing in the name of Jews' safety. It was also a journey of 'unlearning' or critique – challenging narratives that emphasize the concept of Jewish return to Israel or that downplay Palestinian displacement. They were tapping into Jewish tradition in new ways.¹⁴

¹² Noah Hurowitz, "Not in Their Name: Jewish Voice for Peace doesn't just oppose the war; it challenges the link between Jewish identity and support for Israel," *Intelligencer*, November 27, 2023, <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2023/11/why-jewish-voice-for-peace-is-against-israels-war-in-gaza.html>.

¹³ Alaa Elassar, "'Not in our name': Jewish peace activists across the US call for immediate ceasefire and justice for Palestinians," *CNN* online, October 23, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/23/us/jewish-palestinian-protest-israel-gaza>.

¹⁴ Atalia Omer, "For many American Jews protesting for Palestinians, activism is a journey rooted in their Jewish values," *The Conversation: Academic rigour, journalistic flair*, May 21, 2024, <https://theconversation.com/for-many-american-jews-protesting-for->

Evidently, possession of the promised land is not the primary factor for Jewish identity for these Jews, who rather base their identity on their interpretation of and adherence to the sacred texts.¹⁵

The Diversity of the Jewish Faith

The Jewish faith is, in fact, a rich tradition of diverse interpretations of sacred texts and traditions. The standard source for Bible scholars when citing the diversity of Jewish religious groups or factions in the 1st century CE is Flavius Josephus and his narratives of the *Jewish Antiquities* and *The Jewish War*. As George W. E. Nickelsburg notes, Josephus describes for his readers, the “beliefs, practices, and influence of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes; and he refers, as well, to a fourth philosophy and to the Zealots and the Sicarii.”¹⁶ Nickelsburg further notes that the picture of pluralism within Judaism has grown even wider since the discovery of the Qumran scrolls. He states, “[T]he Qumran corpus as a whole reveals a religious sociology in Judaism that was much more complex than Josephus’s Pharisee-Sadducee-Essene triad.”¹⁷

This plurality of the socio-religious landscape that makes up Judaism exploded after their second exile from the Palestinian lands, a plurality that kept pace, as it

palestinians-activism-is-a-journey-rooted-in-their-jewish-values-229228.

¹⁵ For a description of the “discursive tradition” as an element of Judaism in general, see esp. Michael L. Satlow, “Defining Judaism: Accounting for ‘Religions’ in the Study of Religion,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 74, no. 4 (Dec. 2006): 849-852, 837-860, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4139954>.

¹⁶ George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Ancient Judaism and Christian Origins: Diversity, Continuity, and Transformation* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2003), 160.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 161.

were, with the dispersal of the people: a few Jewish groups remained within Jerusalem or its outskirts; some remained in the lands of their exile, in Babylon and in Alexandria; some relocated further north into the regions of Eastern Europe where the religious Jewry became even more diversified. This historical diversity and its continuation into the present day are viewed with concern by some Jewish thinkers, but others see it as a blessing.¹⁸

Reuven Kimelman, for one, writes in his article from 1987 about the pluralism that has always been present within Judaism and the subsequent conflicts that arose in light of their conflicting interpretations of the sacred sources.¹⁹ He traces the conflicts between the Shammaites and the Hillelites of the 2nd Temple Judaism, which was notorious for its violence from the Shammaite side against the Hillelite, which carried over to European Judaism, reflected in their legal (but thankfully non-violent) disputes on the *halakhic* observance. From there, in Germany, there arose reformed Judaism, and in Poland arose the mystical Hasidic Judaism, arising from the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov. Kimelman is positive about these differences within Judaism. He opts for acceptance of their diversity, and at the same time cautions against universalizing any particular “truths” asserted by any of these groups, for in his view, any historically grounded instances of Judaism are limited in nature.²⁰

¹⁸ See the quote from Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, *Olat HaRayah*, Vol. I (Jerusalem, 1939), 330; quoted by Reuven Kimelman, in “Judaism and Pluralism,” *Modern Judaism*, 7 no. 2 (May, 1987): 141, 131-150, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1396236>.

¹⁹ The overview of modern diversity within Judaism that follows is taken from Kimelman, “Judaism and Pluralism.”

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 143. However, others do caution against a relativist direction for Jewish religious thought. So Satlow attempts to lay out

Religious Differences within Judaism on the Zionist Occupation of Palestine

Central to Judaism is the perceived covenant relationship between the Jewish people and the one true God. It is what makes them the chosen people of God who are commanded to love and honor God through the observance of God's holy commandments (the *mitzvot*). As the people of the Law they are called and set apart by God to be a holy nation: "Now, therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites" (Ex 19:5-6 NRSV). For Kimelman, as seen in the preceding section, how Jews have interpreted what faithfulness to this covenant means in daily life is at the root of Jewish diversity and attendant disagreements.

When it comes to the Jewish understanding of the need to physically occupy the land of Israel, the interpretation can significantly diverge, where certain groups believe that effort must be made to physically occupy the land of Israel, and other groups believe that such an effort is not permissible. The point of this paper is that this diversity of views, disagreements and all, is firmly within the bounds of historical Judaism.

Occupation as a Realized Eschatology

For Aviezer Ravitsky, the difference between these two sides on the need to physically occupy the land of Israel lies not in one side abandoning their roots and the other side keeping them, but in their respective differing understandings of historical reality. Ravitsky asks,

the commonalities within Jewish diversity in his useful article, "Defining Judaism."

What is the meaning of the Zionist revival? Is it simply a rebellion - abandonment of Tora and Covenant, with the mundane replacing the spiritual, and the national claiming to take the place of the religious? Or is it, perhaps, first and foremost, a return and a reforged link with our origins, a this-[worldly] national return (*shivah*) leading ultimately to a spiritual-religious return (*teshuva*)?²¹

Ravitsky thus articulates the religious view that occupation is the beginning of the hoped-for redemption of the Jewish people, as happening within historical time, before the actual redemption and the coming of the Messiah.²² He takes the historical instance of the Kingdom of Israel from the Books of the Judges and Kings as a model for the present occupation, in that it was far from the ideal of the holy nation, yet was open to criticism, as seen from the recorded pronouncements of the prophets from that period.²³

²¹ Aviezer Ravitsky, "Redemption and Covenant: Religious Zionism of Another Kind," in Shubert Spero and Yitzchak Pessin, eds., *Religious Zionism: After 40 Years of Statehood* (Jerusalem: Mesilot, 1989), 74.

²² See in *ibid.*, 80. To say that this is the religious view of Zionism does not mean that it is the only view. For instance, within Judaism of the Hellenistic period, there were many views as regards the coming eschaton, ranging from the spiritual and other-worldly fulfillment to the firmly historical realization. For a brief account of these, see Nickelsburg, *Ancient Judaism and Christian Origins: Diversity, Continuity, and Transformation*, 70-71.

Ravitsky gives a more detailed account of the Jewish view that the eschaton will be fulfilled outside of time and history, in an age-to-come in Chapter 1 of his *Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, Michael Swirsky and Jonathan Chipman, trans. Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism, William Scott Green, ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), esp. 17, 10-39.

²³ See again *ibid.* I would like to add that the Tanakh similarly records the outcome, where the prophetic pronouncements tragically fell on deaf ears (except for Jonah, who preached outside the two kingdoms).

Ravitsky emphasizes that this religious argument for Zionism is based on the covenantal relationship between God and the chosen people, where action is needed on the part of the chosen people in order for them to obtain the covenantal promises. In his words, “[The covenant] accentuates rather, the factors of [opportunity], uncertainty and human freedom. Duty precedes redemption, and conditions it.”²⁴ Thus, in line with this, inaction is “presumptuousness *vis-à-vis* the Almighty.”²⁵

The *Neturei Karta* and Other Groups Critical of the State of Israel

According to Rabbi Elhanan Beck of the *Neturei Karta*, God did not choose the race, but the religion: the chosen people are the ones who follow the Torah.²⁶ The Torah is the eternal reality, while the occupation of the land is part of an ever-changing history and now belongs to the past. This history culminates only at a divinely appointed time; Rabbi Beck asserts, “it is God’s will that we [the Jewish people] remain in exile. [...] Jews are sworn to stay in exile until the coming of the messiah.”²⁷

²⁴ Ibid., 81.

²⁵ Ibid. Although, Nickelsburg observes that this is far from a settled matter within the Jewish debates surrounding the coming of the last days. He states, “Thus there is fundamental disagreement as to whether militant action or pacifism effects divine judgment. Does one see the hand of God in zealous action for the Torah, or does one anticipate it from no human quarter?” (Nickelsburg, *Ancient Judaism and Christian Origins: Diversity, Continuity, and Transformation*, 71).

²⁶ See Ashfaaq Carim, “Rabbi Elhanan Beck on Israel, Zionism, Judaism, and ‘red cows,’” *Unapologetic* produced by Middle East Eye, April 17, 2024, podcast embedded as YouTube video, 1:37:31, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/video/unapologetic-podcast-rabbi-elhanan-beck-israel-zionism-judaism-and-red-cows>.

²⁷ Carim, “Rabbi Elhanan Beck”. Rabbi Beck here refers to the oaths mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud, which Ravitsky terms as

He elaborates that ownership of the land was forfeited when historical Israel failed to uphold its end of the covenant. Therefore, the exile is the present ongoing state of faithful Judaism; it is not tied to the physical location of Israel. Thus, taking the promised land by military force is to be considered a form of rebellion against God's holy will. If a restoration should take place, then it will be through divine intervention. It is not up to the faithful to determine how, when, and by whom the restoration should come about. He states that the exile is in no need of fixing. In his view, Zionism does not trust in God, but is "100% mistrust in God."²⁸

The *Neturei Karta* take the name of their group from the Jerusalem Talmud, the passage in Chagigah 1:7, which Rabbi Norman Lamm translates as "Guardians of the City".²⁹ The phrase is embedded within the story about how three sages come to a town, and they request from the townsfolk, "Show us your *Neturei Karta*":

Thereupon, they produced police (*Sentorei Karta* — sentries of the city). No, said the Rabbis, these are destroyers of the city. Who, then, are the *Neturei Karta*? They are the teachers and scribes, for without them a city is fated to destruction. *Neturei Karta*, therefore, are teachers of Torah by virtue of whom,

the three oaths: "[T]hat Israel not ascend the wall' from the exile, 'that they not rebel against the nations of the world,' and that 'they not force the End' (Cant. R. 2:7; BT Ketubbot 111a)" (*Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, 22).

²⁸ Carim, "Rabbi Elhanan Beck". See also Ravitsky's discussion of the historical tension between upholding the three oaths and *aliyah*, or Jewish immigration to the promised land, and its historical metamorphosis, in his *Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, 24-25.

²⁹ Norman Lamm, "The Ideology of the *Neturei Karta*: According to the Satmarer version," *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought* 12, no. 2 (Fall 1971): 38, 38-53, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23257379>.

despite their small number, the rest of the population survives.³⁰

Thus, the *Neturei Karta* root their stance on the centrality of Torah and against all uses of violence, especially in relation to the occupation of the land, in their long-standing interpretation of Jewish tradition. Whereas in the case of the Jewish Voice for Peace and similarly minded Jews that oppose Israeli policies, they have had to make difficult re-interpretations of the narratives that they have learned from their contemporary Jewish faith in relation to the state of Israel, yet still claim their Jewishness.³¹

The Impact of the US Bill that Equates Criticism of the State of Israel and its Policies with Antisemitism

The concrete move underway to equate criticism of the state of Israel or its policies with antisemitism, seen in the US Bill on the issue, may have the effect of establishing in the public mind the idea that there is only one kind of Judaism. Martin Pengelly, writing for *The Guardian*, reports that the bill passed the voting stage with representatives from both sides of the US parties supporting it, which passed with 320 votes in favor and 91 against.³² He reports that Mike Lawler, the bill's

³⁰ Lamm, 38. The Hebrew and English text of *Chagigah* 1:7 is accessible from the *Jerusalem Talmud Online* (relevant portion on the *neturei karta* can be found at 1:7:3), https://www.sefaria.org/Jerusalem_Talmud_Chagigah.1.7.3?lang=bi.

³¹ See again Omer, "For many American Jews protesting for Palestinians".

³² Martin Pengelly, "US House votes to pass antisemitism bill in response to campus protests," *The Guardian*, May 1, 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/may/01/house-antisemitism-bill-university-protest?CMP=share_btn_url.

author, claims the bill will “provide for the consideration of a definition of antisemitism set forth by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance for the enforcement of federal anti-discrimination laws concerning education programs or activities, and for other purposes.”³³

Pengelly reports on the critical response to the bill from the Foundation for Middle East Peace (FMEP). “This new definition – known today as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s ‘working definition of antisemitism’, is explicitly politicised, refocusing the term to encompass not only hatred of Jews, but also hostility toward and criticism of the modern state of Israel.”³⁴ Thus, it has the potential to discredit criticism of the Israeli state and its policies in particular where they impinge upon the rights of ethnic Palestinians. It raises questions on how people may freely and legitimately express humanitarian concerns for these Palestinians.

Indeed, this US government-led institutionalization of this definition of antisemitism comes as a response to student-led protests against the Gaza war on the campuses of American universities and colleges. American universities and colleges have traditionally been seen as places of open discussion, where students express their concerns over the morality of US policies, especially those in foreign countries. Student-led protests were notably seen against the US war in Vietnam and against economic ties with what was then apartheid South Africa.

³³ Pengelly, “US House votes”.

³⁴ Pengelly, “US House votes”.

The Complex Relationship of Modern Judaism to the State of Israel

In 1985, Gershon Greenberg presented a compilation of reactions from Jewish orthodox immigrants to America from the turn of the 20th century regarding the possibility of returning from exile to a modern state of Israel. He presented both the "Zionist" and "Non/anti-Zionist" reactions. He observed that there is no common ground between the two camps. Some, like Shalom Israelson and Baruch Meir Klein, believed that nationalism must be subordinated to a spiritual revival based on the Torah.³⁵ In other words, a spiritual revival must precede the return to Israel so that the Lord can see and bring them back himself. The return cannot be done by force. On the other hand, others, such as Chaim Hirschensohn and Shimon Yitzchak ("Rashi") Finkelstein, believed that the return to the land would strengthen observance of the Torah and that remaining in exile is dangerous to Jewish identity.³⁶

More recently, Aviezer Ravitzky discusses this complex relationship in his book, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*. He explains that the default mode of Judaism since the 2nd exile is one of an exilic faith and spirituality. Redemption means for them a defeat of their oppressors and a return to the promised land. The redemption comes definitively through the agency of the promised Messiah. He asserts that this was the messianic faith for most Jews for many generations

³⁵ Gershon Greenberg, "Separation and Reconciliation—American Orthodoxy and the Concept of Zion," *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* 9, no. 2, Division C: Jewish Thought and Literature (1985): 128, 125-132, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23529223>.

³⁶ Greenberg, 126 and 130.

in the exile.³⁷ What makes it a complex issue is that one may argue that the exile no longer constitutes a historical reality since 1948, the year of Israel's declaration of independence as a state.

He believes that the resolution to this ensuing division in historical viewpoints lies in encouraging a direction for Judaism away from the classical paradigm of exile and redemption:

Can Jewish religious thought now acknowledge an intermediate or hybrid model that is neither exile nor redemption? Can it accommodate a notion of Jewish historical existence that straddles these two poles without clearly belonging to either? If not, where within that framework is the present historical return to be placed? Can a Jewish people once more sovereign in the Holy Land still be said to be in exile? On the other hand, can we speak of a redemption or even a "beginning of redemption" of this people that is not founded on the Torah and religious repentance and not the result of supernatural intervention? Alternatively, can the return to Zion and the recovery of Jewish independence be conceived in terms that deviate completely from the classical conceptual framework?³⁸

The answers to these questions that he poses can only come from the practitioners of the Jewish faith. Ravitsky suggests an evolution within Judaism in their self-understanding after the fact of the historical re-establishment of the Israeli state.

³⁷ Aviezer Ravitsky, *Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, 21.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

The Spirituality of the Exile

Here, a closer look can now be taken at the spirituality of exile, or *galuth*, which has gained primacy for the *Neturei Karta* as the expression of their covenant fidelity. It is not exclusive to them; as Greenberg shows in his 1985 study, both camps on the question of exile and return to the land agree that “the hardships of *Galuth* benefit the nation like a purifying fire.”³⁹ This spirituality developed from the Jewish experiences of forced eviction and exile from the Promised Land and in the dispersal that followed. In their sojourns among the foreign nations, they were without a temple for their sacrificial offerings. In exile, the temple became an interiorized offering of oneself to God, specifically, the sacrifice of their broken and contrite hearts (cf. Psalm 51:17). This spirituality carries over to modern-day Jewish prayers, such as “The Prayer of Unity”, which is prayed on the vigil of the Day of Atonement:

We are thy people and thy sheep, who delight to obey thy will.
 But how shall we serve, since our hand hath no power, and
 our sanctuary is burnt with fire?
 How shall we serve without sacrifice and meat offering? for
 we are not yet come unto our rest,
 Neither is there water to wash away defilement; lo we are
 upon unpurified ground.
 But I rejoice at thy word, and I am come according to thy
 bidding.
 For it is written, I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, or
 thy burnt-offerings.
 Concerning your sacrifices and your burnt-offerings I
 commanded not your fathers.
 What have I asked, and what have I sought of thee but to fear
 me?
 To serve with joy and a good heart? Behold, to hearken is
 better than sacrifice,
 And a broken heart than pure offering.

³⁹ Greenberg, 130.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. In sacrifice and meat-offering thou delightest not; sin offering and burnt-offering thou hast not asked.

I will build an altar of the broken fragments of my heart, and will break my spirit within me.

The haughty heart I will humble; yea, the haughtiness of mine eyes, and I will rend my heart for the sake of the Lord.

My broken spirit, that is thy sacrifice. Let it be acceptable upon thine altar!⁴⁰

Rabbi Schechter, after citing this prayer from *Service of the Synagogue*, continues to describe the depth of feeling that congregants undergo as they pray “The Prayer of Unity,” going from despair at the first lines that describe their efforts to remain faithful in exile, to the “highest degree of joy and cheerfulness [...] that the heart is the real altar and the service of the heart the real sacrifice”.⁴¹ Recognizing that Jewish self-understanding has evolved over the centuries of exile, the question of interest here is: how far back does this spirituality extend?

Possibly Ancient Roots of the Spirituality of Exile

The spirituality of exile may have begun during the time of the first exile in 597 BCE, when synagogues first emerged. Steven Fine argues that the verse in Ezekiel 11:16 may be pointing to the existence of the synagogues, especially in the Septuagint version dating from the 3rd century BCE, which reads in part, “*kaì ésomai autois eis*

⁴⁰ Herbert M. Adler, *Service of the Synagogue: A New Edition of the Festival Prayers with an English Translation in Prose and Verse*. 8th ed. (London: George Routledge & Sons Limited, 1908), 40-41.

⁴¹ Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, 1961 (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 159.

hagíasma mikròn".⁴² Where the words, "little sanctuary" are taken to refer to the synagogues that the Jewish people established while in Babylonian exile. The earliest evidence of an exilic synagogue dates back to the 3rd century BCE, and it was located in Egypt.⁴³

Fine calls attention to a midrash from a Genizah manuscript that dates from ca. 200-400 CE which indicates that "the synagogues have become what the Temple had been for the Israelites, the place where perpetual sacrifices and offerings take place so as to atone for their sins. Except that, in the synagogues, 'their prayers are in place of the perpetual sacrifices and offerings.'"⁴⁴ The Amoraic sages of roughly the same period taught that prayers provide the same effects as the former sacrificial offerings in the Temple, which granted expiation for sins committed.⁴⁵ The Jewish prayer books preserve the *Mussaf* sacrifices, or the additional sacrifices as prescribed for the Sabbaths (cf. Num 28:9-10), the New Moon Festivals (cf. Num 28:11-15), the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16), and *Rosh Hashanah* (Lev 23:23-32), in the form of prayers and offerings of incense.⁴⁶ For the *Succoth*, the festival which commemorates the tents that the Israelites set up in the desert while journeying to the Promised Land, the *Mussaf* prayer reads:

[H]e [The Lord] hath not made us like the nations of other lands, and hath not placed us like other families of the earth, that he hath not given unto us a portion as unto them, nor a lot as unto all their

⁴² Stephen Fine, *This Holy Place: On the Sanctity of the Synagogue during the Greco-Roman Period*. 1997 (Wipf and Stock, 2016), 81.

⁴³ Fine, 25.

⁴⁴ Fine, 81.

⁴⁵ Fine, 86.

⁴⁶ See Adler, 148-151.

multitude; for we bend the knee and prostrate ourselves and make acknowledgment before the supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be he, who stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, the abode of whose glory is in the heavens above, and the dwelling of whose majesty is upon the loftiest heights. He is our God, there is none else: in truth he is our King, there is none beside him, as it is written in his Law, [k]now therefore this day, and lay it to thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above and upon the earth beneath, there is none else.⁴⁷

The prayer emphasizes that they are not allotted a portion of land as other nations of the multitudes have, because they worship none other than the one true God, and not the idols of these nations, and that the Lord God is Lord of all the earth. The experiences of the Jewish people throughout their history are evident in the development of synagogue prayers, which contain at their core the ancient prayers that date back to the Temples, and some significant lines that may have been added later.⁴⁸

It is possible that Fine's thesis found expression in the artwork of a 1,600 year-old synagogue. John W. Welch argues that the mosaic remains of the Sepphoris synagogue, dating from ca. the 5th century CE and situated in the region of West Galilee, follow the floor plan of the former Temple as preserved in the book of Leviticus.⁴⁹ Welch suggests that the floor mosaic, with its

⁴⁷ Adler, 150.

⁴⁸ Herbert M. Adler, *The Jewish Prayer-book: An Outline of its History* (Las Vegas: University of California Libraries, 2024), 5-6; originally published, 1922.

⁴⁹ See John W. Welch, "Experiencing the Presence of the Lord: The Temple Program of Leviticus," *The Temple on Mount Zion October 25 2014*, edited by S. D. Ricks and D. W. Parry, 2016, The Interpreter Foundation (December 14, 2023): 291-292, 271-305.

depiction of the sacrifice of Isaac, represents the idea that the post-temple worshippers are taking the place of the Temple sacrifice and that their self-offering provides the same effects.⁵⁰ See Welch's interpretation in his article, "Experiencing the Presence of the Lord: The Temple Program of Leviticus."

<https://interpreterfoundation.org/reprint-experiencing-the-presence-of-the-lord-the-temple-program-of-leviticus/>. Welch's understanding of the Temple's plan is based on Mary Douglas's reading of Leviticus. See esp. 277-280.

⁵⁰ Welch (292-296) provides the description of the entire synagogue mosaic, with pictures and a line drawing. His work is the source for the short description that follows. We limit our consideration to the portion of the mosaic where the Holy of Holies was situated in the Temple, which is indicated as Rows 6 and 7 in Welch.

Row 6 depicts the holiest place in the Temple, the Holy of Holies. The first panel of Row 6 shows two men, the servants of Abraham, waiting at the foot of Moriah. Welch reminds the reader that the temple mount is traditionally identified with Mount Moriah. Little remains of the 2nd panel of Row 6, but in the bottom left corner, there is a depiction of two pairs of slippers. These belong to Abraham and Isaac who have ascended the mountain, barefoot. In the middle of the panel, only a hand with a knife remains. The knife is vertical, as if ready to plunge downward to cut into the sacrificial offering. Also on the left side, there is a depiction of a ram in the brambles. Row 7 has very little of the original mosaic left. Welch sees here the mosaic depiction of the three angel-messengers who promise a son to Abraham and Sarah.

Based on the descriptions of Welch (296), we find in the place of the Holy of Holies, the place where the high priest offered the sacrifice of atonement on *yom kippur*, a depiction of Isaac's near-sacrifice on Mount Moriah (see Gen. 22:1-9). Abraham then is the high priest who enters the Holy of Holies alone but with the sacrificial offering. Isaac represents the promised people, the descendants of Abraham promised by God that will number the stars and the sand. The people of the promise now make the sacrificial offering of their very selves in their time of exile. Alongside of their self-sacrificial offering, there is a promise of a blessing, as depicted in the mosaic of Row 7. The Jewish people are, in this way, simultaneously a people of exile (*galuth*) and a people of the promise (*havtachah*).

Conclusion

In summary, Judaism is a tradition comprising many diverse strands that date back to the 2nd Temple period and have evolved and branched out over time. The orthodox Judaism of today that opposes Zionism is part of that diverse tradition and has its own long and possibly ancient history. The present-day political narrative that seeks to exclude them from the public perception of what is valid Judaism with the epithet “self-hating Jew” does not correspond to historical reality.

The public should strive to distinguish between reality and claims with a political agenda. “Self-hating Jew,” when used as an epithet in the current context, works to divide people by creating a false impression of what is or is not acceptable. This study suggests that we should be open to examining claims that are used to divide people and influence public opinion.

About the Author

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24 • Jewishness of the Self-Hating Jew

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Is a Decolonialized Roman Catholic Homily in the U.S. Possible?: Beyond Postcolonial Preaching

Edward Foley

Abstract: This paper juxtaposes decolonial thinking with contemporary Roman Catholic homilizing. The fundamental question that undergirds this exploration is whether a decolonialized Roman Catholic homily is even possible in the U.S. Since more preachers and theologians are familiar with postcolonial theory rather than decolonial thinking, the first step in this exploration is to define postcolonial practice and theory – as much as that is possible – and illustrate how it has been employed in recent theorizing about preaching as well as highlight some of its limits. After a necessary autobiographical excursus to locate the author in this discussion, we then turn to an exploration of the nature of decoloniality and a consideration of the nature of Roman Catholic homilizing. Finally, we will propose four specific homiletic lenses and strategies that could contribute to a more decolonialized path to Roman Catholic Homiletics. At the same time, there is a recognition that, given Roman Catholic canon law about homilizing, authentic decolonialized preaching in this context is virtually impossible.

Keywords: Decolonialized Preaching • Postcolonial Theory • Homiletics

Introduction

Postcolonial is a sprawling category that emerged in the second half of the 20th century. While not explicitly claiming that moniker, the field first surfaced through the genre of literary fiction. Novels such as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* helped pave the way for this unique approach in the late 1950's.¹ The emergence of

¹ One of the first widely available editions of this book is: Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959) online at https://www.centralschool.edu.vu/uploads/1/1/4/4/114402701/things-fall-apart.pdf?trk=article-ssr-frontend-pulse_little-text-block; another important early work in postcolonial fiction is Tayeb Sālih, *Mawsim*

postcolonial theorizing soon followed. Some root the origins of such theory in Frantz Fanon's 1961 *Les Damnés de la Terre*² while others elect Edward Said's 1978 *Orientalism* as the originator of this theory.³ Other canonical figures in the emergence of postcolonial theorizing are Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak⁴ and Homi Bhabha.⁵ The 1989 publication *The Empire Writes Back* consolidated much of postcolonial thought of the time and was enormously influential to its growing influence in various academies.⁶

The intersection between postcolonial theory and theology first occurred through biblical criticism: a logical entrée point given the origins of the postcolonial movement in literary explorations. An early review of the field by Lazare Rukundwa suggests that the turn to postcolonial biblical interpretation was part of a cautious path undertaken by some biblical scholars to explore "a political hermeneutical avenue."⁷ This road traversed post-structural theory, postmodern theory, and feminist readings already in the early to mid-1990's. In the middle of that decade, Rasiah Sugirtharajah – who had

al-Hijrah ilâ al-Shamâl (Season of Migration to the North). Beirut, 1966/2015. The English version is online at <https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/510517>.

² Frantz Fanon, *Les Damnés de la Terre* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1961); first published in English as *Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963).

³ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

⁴ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1988).

⁵ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

⁶ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* (London: Routledge, 1989).

⁷ Lazare S. Rukundwa, "Postcolonial Theory as a Hermeneutical Tool for Biblical Reading," *HTS Theological Studies*, 64, no.1 (2008) 339-351.

previously published on the need for interpreting the bible from the perspective of “the third world”⁸ – was arguing that, distinctive from “anti-colonial” readings of the bible, postcolonial readings are different in multiple ways. These include 1) not being locked into the colonial paradigm where colonialists set the ground rules, 2) it concedes the complexity of contact between the invader and invaded, and 3) it goes beyond the binary notions of colonized and colonizer and lays weighty emphasis on critical exchanges and mutual transformation.⁹

Biblical exegesis is a critical tool for many preachers – especially those whose tradition presumes or dictates that preaching must be rooted in biblical texts. Thus, for many Christians, particularly those who hold for a *sola scriptura* foundation of faith and worship,¹⁰ preaching is deeply linked with biblical preaching. It is not surprising, therefore, that the growing prominence of many leading exegetes and preachers who themselves represented some subaltern group or were advocates for them (sometimes their students) nurtured an interest in sermonizing in a post-colonial mode. A notable pioneer here is the Cuban American biblical scholar Fernando

⁸ Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah, *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991); also his “Textual Cleansing: A Move from the Colonial to the Postcolonial Version,” *Semeia* 76 (1996): 7-19.

⁹ Ibid., “A Brief Memorandum on Postcolonialism and Biblical Studies,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*. 21, no. 73 (1999), 3-5.

¹⁰ See the rich discussion of this concept in Hans Burger, et al., *Sola Scriptura: Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Scripture, Authority, and Hermeneutics*. Volume 32 of *Studies in Reformed Theology*. Leiden: Brill, 2018. As will be discussed below, Roman Catholic preaching as dogmatically defined is neither “biblical” in the strict sense, nor even confined to the appointed lectionary readings of the day.

Sevogia¹¹ who directed the doctoral work of the influential Botswanan feminist theologian Musa W. Dube Shomanah.¹²

As preaching is first an event which eventually birthed homiletic theory, the history of postcolonial preaching – while possible to sample – is an elusive history yet to be written. The theoretical reflections on postcolonial preaching are a little easier to trace but still ambiguous. Preaching is considered by many to be a theological act,¹³ an integral part of worship,¹⁴ and intimately related to other pastoral practices.¹⁵ Thus, while explicit reflections on preaching in postcolonial mode are more recent, there are earlier writings implicitly linked to such preaching. Besides the previously noted works of biblical criticism through a postcolonial lens, these include works in historical theology,¹⁶ postcolonial theologizing,¹⁷ considerations of

¹¹ Fernando F. Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000).

¹² Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2000).

¹³ See, for example, Ronald J. Allen, *Thinking Theologically: The Preacher as Theologian* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).

¹⁴ See my “The Homily,” in *A Handbook for Catholic Preaching*, ed. Edward Foley (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2016), 156–165.

¹⁵ See, for example, Theo Pleizier, “The Soul in Preaching,” *Religions* 15, no.4 (2024) <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/15/4/446>

¹⁶ An early example is Joel W. Martin “Indians, Contact, and Colonialism in the Deep South: Themes for a Postcolonial History of American Religion,” in *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, ed. Thomas A. Tweed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 149–180.

¹⁷ Pioneering examples include Mario Aguilar, “Postcolonial African Theology in Kabasele Lumbala,” *Theological Studies* 63, no.2 (May 2002) 302–23; Susan Abraham, “The Caress of the Doer of the Word,” *Philosophy and Theology* 16, no.1 (2004): 115–129, as well as her “Karl Rahner’s Theology of Freedom in a Postcolonial Context,” *Harvard Theological Review* 97, no.1 (2004); Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, Mayra Rivera, “Introduction: Alien/nation,

worship through postcolonial frames¹⁸ and related ministerial disciplines such as pastoral theology, and pastoral care and counseling refracted through this refreshing optic.¹⁹

Liberation, and the Postcolonial Underground,” in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press (2004), pp. 1–19; Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005); Emmanuel Lartey, *Postcolonializing God* (London: SCM Press, 2006); Edward P Antonio, ed., *Inculturation and Postcolonial Discourse in African Theology*. New York: Peter Lang, 2006); Susan Abraham, *Identity, Ethics, and Nonviolence in Postcolonial Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2007); Héctor E. López-Sierra, “Towards a Spanish-speaking Caribbean, Postcolonial, Macro-ecumenical, and Trans-pastoral Practical Theological Method,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 17, no.2 (2007) 57-81.

¹⁸ Early examples include: George Olusola Ajibade, “New Wine in Old Cups: Postcolonial Performance of Christian Music in Yorùbá Land,” *Studies in World Christianity* 13, no.2 (2007) 105-126; Michael Jagessar and Stephen Burns. “Liturgical Studies and Christian Worship: The Postcolonial Challenge,” *Black Theology: An International Journal* 5, no.1 (2007) 39–62; Emmanuel Lartey, “Postcolonial African Practical Theology: Rituals of Remembrance, Cleansing, Healing, and Re-connection,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 21, no.2 (2011): 1–16.

¹⁹ For example, Tapiwa N. Mucherera, *Meet Me at the Palaver: Narrative Pastoral Counselling in Postcolonial Contexts* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2010); Melinda McGarrah Sharp, *Misunderstanding Stories: Toward a Postcolonial Pastoral Theology* (Eugene Or: Pickwick, 2013); M. Fulgence Nyengele, “Cultivating Ubuntu: An African postcolonial pastoral theological engagement with positive psychology,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 24, no.2 (2014) 4-1-4–35 doi: 10.1179/jpt.2014.24.2.00; H.-K. Heidi Park, “Toward a pastoral theological phenomenology: Constructing a reflexive and relational phenomenological method from a postcolonial perspective,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology*, 24, no.1 (2014) 3-1-3–21. doi: 10.1179/jpt.2014.24.1.003; Melinda McGarrah Sharp, *Creating Resistances: Pastoral Care in a Postcolonial World* (Leiden: Brill: 2019); Emmanuel Lartey and Hellen Moon, ed., *Postcolonial Images of Spiritual Care: Challenges of Care in a Neoliberal Age* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2020).

Postcolonial preaching and its limits

Christian preaching originated as an event. It was only after a significant gestation period that this ubiquitous early church praxis eventually gave birth to intentional theologies of preaching. The historical foundation for this assertion lies in the fact that preaching by the followers of Jesus – who himself brought about a revolution in perceiving God’s reign through his preaching – existed even before the evolution of the New Testament²⁰ and both fueled and paralleled the emergence of that body of writings as well as Christianity itself. On the other hand, the first explicit Christian theology of preaching is attributed to St. Augustine (d. 430),²¹ in particular his *De Doctrina Christiana*.²²

Theologies of preaching – which especially blossomed in the 16th century in the West²³ – are not a dispensable addendum to this central ministerial act. As David Tracy has pointedly recognized: all praxis is theory laden.²⁴ Thus, it is incumbent upon preachers as reflective

²⁰ See vãnThanh Nguyễn, “Preaching in the New Testament,” in *Handbook for Catholic Preaching*, ed. Edward Foley (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2016), 41-50.

²¹ The first scholarly work on Augustine’s theology of preaching appears to be the dissertation by David Randolph, “Augustine’s Theology of Preaching,” Ph.D. dissertation (Boston University, 1962).

²² Especially book 4; though the “*Christianus orator*” could be understood some places in this chapter as “teacher,” Augustine explicitly references *praedicatio* over a dozen times: https://www.augustinus.it/latino/dottrina_cristiana/index2.htm

²³ See the fine overview of this period in Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church, Vol. 4: The Age of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); I am grateful to colleague Craig Satterlee for this reference.

²⁴ David Tracy, “The Foundations of Practical Theology,” *Practical Theology*, ed. Don Browning (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 61.

practitioners to excavate and evaluate the often unspoken presuppositions and latent theories foundation to our preaching. Part of that process is juxtaposing our preferred praxis and theories of preaching with other models in a dialogue of mutual critique. Such is essential so that our preaching does not become marooned in the rut of an unexamined word.

Postcolonial theory is establishing itself as a powerful and provocative dialogue partner with contemporary theologies of worship and its preaching. In the fall of 2014, for example, Boston University's Center for Practical Theology hosted a consultation on "Preaching and Postcolonial Theology," subsequently published in the online journal *Homiletic*.²⁵ More specifically, Sarah Travis argues that a postcolonial approach to preaching contributes to deconstructing the "empires" which perdure today in a variety of social and religious modes.²⁶ It alternately introduces ambivalence and ambiguity: fundamentally important when pondering the mystery of God.²⁷ Decolonized preaching opens a third space – an imaginary that is essential for ensuring that the meaning of symbols and culture can be reappropriated, translated, and read anew.²⁸ Travis imaginatively juxtaposes this third space with that foundational triplex of Christian belief: the Trinity. Her employment of social Trinitarian theologies introduces a discourse that contradicts that of colonialism while nurturing more respectful and life-giving relationship within and beyond the church.

Puerto Rican theologian Pablo Jiménez pushes in the same direction as Travis, but with more of an edge. Characterizing postcolonial preaching as befriending the

²⁵ <https://www.homiletic.net/index.php/homiletic/issue/view/200>

²⁶ Sarah Travis, *Decolonizing Preaching: The Pulpit as Postcolonial Space* (Eugene, Or: Pickwick, 2014), p. 5 *et passim*.

²⁷ Travis, pp. 128-9 *et passim*.

²⁸ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 37.

troublemaker Jesus, he believes postcolonial preachers must “unmask and deconstruct the colonial ideology that keeps the subaltern groups bound in silence.”²⁹ This exercise by its very nature is conflictual, which Jiménez believes is an unavoidable element of this process.

Practical theologian HyeRan Kim-Cragg³⁰ believes that postcolonial perspectives can help recognize and interrupt colonizing discourse. Notably her approach, different from others, is itself a postcolonial experiment. “Ripple” is the evocative metaphor that permeates this work: historically apt for a work written in a period of heightened liquidity³¹ that rejects linear thinking,³² and underscores the relationality and interdependence³³ between the six ripples she highlights.³⁴ Her repeated deployment of the image of rehearsal (e.g., postcolonial preaching is a rehearsal of spatial plurality) as a metaphor for disrupting the dominant narratives that

²⁹ See his “The Troublemaker’s Friend: From Text to Sermon in a Postcolonial Context,” *Apuntes* 34, no.3 (2014), 85.

³⁰ HyeRan Kim-Cragg, *Postcolonial Preaching: Creating a ripple effect* (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2021).

³¹ The Polish sociologist-philosopher Zygmunt Bauman famously deemed the new millennium a time of *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000); a decade earlier, anticipating the work of some postmodern theorists, he underscore the ambiguity of the age in his *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

³² See a balanced overview of linearity by Christopher Hutton, “From Acoustic Space to the Global Village: Linearity and the Western Intellectual Imagination,” in *Rethinking Humanity after Western Universalism/Penser l’humanité après l’universalisme occidental*, ed. Markus Missling and Jonas Tinius, 75-90 (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2023); online at <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/76894/1/9783110798494.pdf#page=88>

³³ This is an aspect she previously explored in her *Interdependence: A Postcolonial Feminist Practical Theology* (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock, 2018).

³⁴ Employing RIPPLE as an acronym, these are: Rehearsal, Imagination, Place, Pattern, Language, and Exegesis.

continue to wash over us is quite dynamic. Rehearsal here is not simply a repetition of salvation history or scriptural texts but rather is an apocalyptic exercise that casts us into an arc towards the “Kin-dom” of God. She believes it is incumbent that every preacher in the 21st century needs to be a postcolonial preacher, especially because the Christian churches have so often been complicit with colonialism.³⁵

Without in anyway diminishing the contributions of postcolonial thought to contemporary homiletics, every framework has its limitations and alone is inadequate for framing the mystery of holy revelation and God’s Word. It is not surprising, therefore, that many who promote postcolonial theory in service of theology and ministry also recognize its challenges and limitations.³⁶ Early in her publishing on the topic, postcolonial theologian Susan Abraham noted that:

Postcolonial theory is ... famously opaque and difficult to read, because it weaves together multiple strands of Western theoretical perspectives economic, political, cultural, philosophical, and literary in order to reconceive postcolonial spatialities and temporalities. The difficulty of reading postcolonial theory to glean approximations for interdisciplinary thought leads many either to read postcolonial theory selectively or to abandon it as unintelligible. Lastly, the self-reflexive imperative of postcolonial theory presents us with a field that does not possess any predictable, unified structure.³⁷

³⁵ Kim-Cragg, pp. 22, 106 and 118, respectively.

³⁶ An early critique is from Anne McClintock, “The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the term ‘Postcolonial,’” *Social Text* 31/32 (1992) 84-98.

³⁷ Susan Abraham, “What does Mumbai have to do with Rome? Postcolonial Perspectives on Globalization and Theology,” *Theological Studies* 69, no.2 (2008) 378.

Similarly, Sarah Travis, while promoting preaching in a postcolonial mode, recognizes that “the literature is as complex as the problems it seeks to address.”³⁸ She expatiates:

Postcolonial theory’s conceptual vocabulary is itself a site of continuing negotiation. Scholars from a range of social locations debate the meanings of key terms, resulting in ever-evolving and somewhat unstable definitions. Given the nature and purpose of postcolonial debate, it is unwise, if not impossible, to grant absolute authority to any particular or narrow definition. This multidimensionality allows for creativity and variety of opinion, yet it often results in prose that is almost incomprehensible. Postcolonial theory in general is not particularly useful for busy preachers who do not have the time or the inclination to participate in what is essentially an endless debate unless the theory is distilled and interpreted.³⁹

An autobiographical excursus

As a Caucasian male cleric, raised in the Midwest who was privileged with a quality education and economic security, my first ministerial assignment to the largest Roman Catholic Women’s college in the country was eye-opening. While exposed to liberal theologies in the early 1970’s, I was unprepared for the transcultural immersion that confronted me in 1975 at the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, Minnesota which proudly advertised itself as the school “Where every year is the year of the woman!”

Subsequent studies in Germany and France, where I never achieved real language fluency, were also humbling. My Danish *Doktor Vater* created a dissertation

³⁸ Travis, p. 72.

³⁹ Travis, p. 86.

topic that required me to move to Paris because, as he often said, “you Americans think the world revolves around you.” France under the socialist president François Mitterrand while Ronald Regan was president of the United States was not a comfortable place for this linguistically challenged student from mid-America. I confess to sewing a Canadian flag to my backpack and regularly admitting to being a Canadian student *qui parlait très mal Français*.

Upon my return to the States I accepted a position at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago where my cross-cultural education exploded. Every class was like a meeting of the United Nations: one seminar for our professional doctoral students was populated by 27 folk from 18 countries. I regularly taught worship practica for ordination candidates who spoke English as a third or fourth language. This was not only the equivalent of cultural shock therapy but also an intensive in granularity. One memorable seminar in practical theology included three Ghanaians. In a discussion about the interrelationship between theology and economics, one of this trinity began his presentation by baldly stating “In my country ...”; that was as far as he got. The other two compatriots immediately challenged his perspective as the privileged viewpoint of someone well heeled, well-educated and well positioned who had spent his whole life in the capitol city of Acra. The others were from marginalized rural areas, whose parents were farmers not diplomats, coming from not only a very different social and economic slice of the population, but were educated in an entirely distinctive linguistic terrain.

My deeply imbedded western philosophical and theological categories were soon exposed as inadequate for eliciting wisdom from my students who became my teachers. Wise colleagues tutored me in new frameworks

including: local theologies and hybridity from Robert Schreiter,⁴⁰ contextual theology from Stephen Bevans,⁴¹ feminist exegesis and the new cosmology from Dianne Bergant,⁴² global Christianity from Roger Schroeder,⁴³ Latino world views from Gary Riebe-Estrella,⁴⁴ and decoloniality from Michel Andraos.⁴⁵ Our celebrated graduate Susan Abraham introduced me to postcolonial thinking.

As a practical theologian I have alternately drawn upon the insights and methods from all of these, finding each helpful in addressing various issues and topics. More recently, the 2019 meeting of the International Academy of Practical Theology in São Leopoldo, Brazil on “(De)coloniality and Religious Practices,” prompted me to make a deeper dive into decoloniality and to read the praxis of worship and preaching through that optic.⁴⁶ This exploration is another step in my attempts to respect voices that have been marginalized in the liturgical arenas in my own Roman Catholic tradition and to throw another metaphorical stone into the

⁴⁰ See his *Constructing Local Theologies* published in my first year at CTU (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 1985); also, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and Local* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 1997).

⁴¹ Especially his *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 1992), the revised and expanded edition appearing in 2002.

⁴² See her distilled perspectives in *A New Heaven, a New Earth: Catholicity in an evolving Universe* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2016).

⁴³ His summative work here is *Christian Tradition in Global Perspective* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2021).

⁴⁴ See the work he edited with Timothy Matovina, *Horizons of the Sacred: Mexican Traditions in U.S. Catholicism* (Cornell University Press, 2002).

⁴⁵ Michel Andraos, ed., *The Church and Indigenous Peoples in the Americas: In between Reconciliation and Decolonization* (Eugene OR: Cascade Books, 2019).

⁴⁶ E.g., my “Liturgical Inculturation: Decolonization or Decolonialization? Examining *Misa ng Bayang Pilipino*,” *Asian Journal of Theology* 35, no.1 (2021) 83-99.

baptismal pool in order to discern what grace or malpractice it might reveal.

Decoloniality: A new homiletic ripple

Moments and movements are difficult to define. Decoloniality, alternately considered moment and movement is no exception.⁴⁷ One helpful step may be to distinguish as much as possible between the frameworks of coloniality-decoloniality from those of colonial-postcolonial. To begin with, leading figures in the field do not consider decoloniality a theory or mode of critical thought as much as it is “a way, option, standpoint, analytic, project, practice and praxis.”⁴⁸ Continuing in that mode, semiotician Walter Mignolo distinguishes decolonial *thinking* from postcolonial *theory* genealogically: the latter located in French post-structuralism, the former in “the dense history of planetary decolonial thinking.”⁴⁹ Britta Saal elucidates:

While postcolonial critique undertakes an extension of Foucault, Gramsci, Derrida, and Lacan, while it realizes the problem of Orientalism (Said) and finally departs in its reflections from the postcolonial situation in India, decolonial critique has its roots in Latin America. It is based on approaches by critics of

⁴⁷ Thinandavha Masha considers it an “epistemological and political movement”; see his “Unshackling the chains of coloniality: Reimagining decoloniality, Africanisation and Reformation for a non-racial South Africa, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74, no.3 (2018) 4920, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i3.4920>.

⁴⁸ Catherine Walsh and Walter Mignolo, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 4.

⁴⁹ Walter Mignolo, “Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option,” *Transmodernity* (Fall 2011): 44-65, here 45.

Eurocentrism like José Carlos Mariátegui, on dependency theory, and on liberation philosophy.⁵⁰

Sociologist Ramón Grosfoguel believes a key difference between the two pivots around the presence or absence of a colonial administration. Colonialism refers to situations “enforced by the presence of a colonial administration.” Coloniality, on the other hand, continues “in the present period in which colonial administrations have almost been eradicated from the capitalist world-system.”⁵¹

Sociologist Anibal Quijano critically positioned decoloniality epistemically to counter what he considered the coloniality of knowledge and subsequent epistemicides:⁵²

In the beginning colonialism was a product of a systematic repression The repression fell, above all, over the modes of knowing, of producing knowledge, of producing perspectives, images and systems of images, symbols, modes of signification.... It was followed by the imposition of the use of the ruler’s own patterns of

⁵⁰ Britta Saal, “How to Leave Modernity Behind: The Relationship Between Colonialism and Enlightenment, and the Possibility of Altermodern Decoloniality,” *Budhi: A Journal of Ideas and Culture* 17, no.1 (2013) 49-80, here 62.

⁵¹ Ramón Grosfoguel, “La Descolonización de la Economía y los Estudios Postcoloniales: Transmodernidad, pensamiento fronterizo y colonialidad global,” *Tabula Rasa* 48 (2006) 17-48; translated online as “Decolonizing Political Economy and Postcolonial Studies: Transmodernity, border thinking, and global coloniality,” <https://www.eurozine.com/transmodernity-border-thinking-and-global-coloniality/>

⁵² Ramón Grosfoguel explores this concept in his “The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities: Epistemic Racism/sexism and the Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century,” *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 11, no.1 (2013) 73-90.

expression, and of their beliefs and images with reference to the supernatural.⁵³

Thus, while coloniality is concerned with exploitation, it places particular emphasis on the production of subjectivities and knowledge. The antidote to the latter is the development of what is sometimes characterized as “border epistemologies.”⁵⁴

Parallel to Grosfoguel’s defining colonialism by political control of people, land or resources by “foreign” administration, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang emphasize that decolonization is not a metaphor. They reject “colonial equivocation” or “the vague equating of colonialisms that erase the sweeping scope of land as the basis of wealth, power, [and] law in settler nation-states.”⁵⁵ They challenge Frantz Fanon and others who believe that “decolonizing the mind is the first step ... toward overthrowing colonial regimes.”⁵⁶ While appreciating the contribution of critical consciousness, they believe frontloading critical consciousness building can waylay decolonization. “Until stolen land is relinquished, critical consciousness does not translate into action that disrupts settler colonialism.”⁵⁷

David Tracy notes that a current theological challenge is that useful traditional distinctions – such as feeling and thought, form and content, theory and

⁵³ Anibal Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” *Cultural Studies* 21 (2007) 169.

⁵⁴ Ramón Grosfoguel, “The Implications of Subaltern Epistemologies for Global Capitalism: Transmodernity, Border Thinking and Global Coloniality,” in *Critical Globalization Studies*, ed. Richard P. Appelbaum and William I. Robinson (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), 283-293.

⁵⁵ Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no.1 (2012) 18.

⁵⁶ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization,” 18.

⁵⁷ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization,” 18.

practice – have become “fatal separations.”⁵⁸ While I am not proposing a fatal separation between postcolonial and decolonial theory, a credible though not impervious distinction between the two is the latter’s epistemic emphasis on honoring boundary knowledge rather than the former’s historical focus on the recovery of control of physical or political resources. Thus, Mignolo has notably deemed decoloniality as a form of “epistemic disobedience”⁵⁹ and cognitive “delinking” from Eurocentric patterns of thought.⁶⁰ He goes on to advocate for what he labels “border gnosis,” i.e., a form of post-occidental, subaltern reasoning formed at the margins of Western modernity.⁶¹

Similarly, as his thought developed over the decades, Quijano came to consider the decolonial project as an “epistemological reconstitution” in the face of an enduring and pervasive coloniality of power.⁶² This reconstitution is framed within “the intellectual necessity of the idea of totality.” Quijano argues that the European Enlightenment produced a reductionistic vision of reality⁶³ in which only European culture is rational and universal; other cultures are not “subjects” of knowledge and culture but only “objects” of knowledge and culture and thus eliminated from an authentic social

⁵⁸ David Tracy, “Theological Table Talk: Traditions of Spiritual Practice and the Practice of Theology,” *Theology Today* 55, no. 2 (1998): 235-241.

⁵⁹ See note 48 above.

⁶⁰ Walter Mignolo, “DeLinking,” *Cultural Studies* 21, nos. 2-3 (2007) 449-514

⁶¹ These ideas are explored and expanded throughout his *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), but especially the first two chapters: “Border Thinking and the Colonial Difference” (49-90), and “Post-Occidental Reason” (91-126).

⁶² Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” 176.

⁶³ Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” 173.

totality.⁶⁴ In contrast, Quijano conceives of social existence as a multidimensional totality that maintains its integrity by constantly being contested – especially from the margins. This is in support of a planetary critical consciousness that promotes not universality but “pluri-versality.”⁶⁵

Given this epistemic even linguistic vector so prominent in decolonial thinking – some have even attempted to outline a “grammar of decolonial thinking”⁶⁶ – the decolonial lens may be more accessible for preachers steeped in the dynamics of rhetoric, grammar, and linguistics. Unlike Prof. Travis, I do not believe that it is incumbent upon every 21st century preacher to be a homilist in decolonial mode. On the other hand, the grammar of decoloniality seems a powerful means for addressing the continued and deepening realities of marginalization and oppression that plague the global village. It also holds the promising of opening up new horizons of the preaching of Jesus in the midst of both political and religious empires. It is that hunch that fuels this exploration.

Roman Catholic homilizing within a benevolent empire

A persistent theme in postcolonial theory is imperialism, often framed through the category of empire. While admitting, along with Travis, that “postcolonial theory’s conceptual vocabulary is itself a

⁶⁴ Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” 172.

⁶⁵ Mignolo, “Delinking,” 500.

⁶⁶ This is in partial response to Mignolo’s 2007 question “what is [decoloniality’s] grammar; see, Nick Shepherd, “The Grammar of Decoloniality,” in *Colonial and Decolonial Linguistics: Knowledges and Epistemes*, ed. Ana Deumert, Anne Storch and Nick Shepherd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 303-324.

site of continuing negotiation,”⁶⁷ Ronald Suny provides a working definition that suits our purposes. He explains that empire is “a particular form of domination or control between two units set apart in a hierarchical, inequitable relationship ... in which a metropole dominates a periphery to the disadvantage of the periphery.”⁶⁸

While it may seem odd for some to situate Roman Catholic homilizing within some kind of benevolent empire, it seems a justifiable exercise given the restrictions on this practice in Roman Catholicism. The homily is a very specific form of preaching in my tradition. Some of its characteristics⁶⁹ are:

- 1) It is a **liturgical event**, which not only occurs within the context of Eucharist or other official sacramental services but is theologically and canonically understood to be “of” and not simply “in” the liturgy;
- 2) Since the homily is itself a liturgical event and the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is that the liturgy is performed by Christ, head and members, then the **assembly with Christ are subjects and not “objects” of the homily**;
- 3) The canonical presumption is that, since the homily is a central liturgical act, it can **only be performed by the ordained** [deacon, priest or bishop] within worship.
- 4) The homily is **rooted in the lectionary**, a unique genre of ecclesial literature once rooted in the bible but at the same time not identical to the bible and thus

⁶⁷ See note 39 above.

⁶⁸ Ronald Grigor Suny, “The Empire Strikes Out Imperial Russia, ‘National’ Identity, and Theories of Empire,” in Ronald Grigor, and Suny Terry Martin (eds), *A State Of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 25.

⁶⁹ For a further exploration of these characteristics, see my “Homily,” 161-165.

requires what could be considered a “lectionary hermeneutic;”⁷⁰

- 5) While rooted in the lectionary it is **not confined to lectionary content**. As *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* clarified, the homily is derived from the “sacred text.” This is not a synonym for scripture. As explained in the first official interpretation of the *Constitution*, “A homily on the sacred text means an explanation, pertinent to the mystery celebrated and the special needs of the listeners, of some point in either the readings from sacred Scripture or in another text from the Order or Prayer of the Day’s Mass.”⁷¹
- 6) It is a **rhetorical event**, for just as the liturgy is not a book or text but an experience, so the homily is not merely words on a page but an event. While a prepared text is ordinarily helpful in this form of preaching, properly speaking the homily is not the text but a rhetorical performance. It is a verb, not a noun.

Thus, my definition of a Roman Catholic Homily as:

a ritual conversation between God and the liturgical assembly, that announces God's reign as revealed in Jesus Christ through the mediation of a preacher, who offers a credible and imaginative interpretation for Christian living, in dialogue with the lives of the faithful, that draws upon the whole of the liturgy—especially the lectionary texts—in the context of a particular community at a prescribed moment of their shared life.

All preaching, like all theology,⁷² is contextual. However, given the canonical directives for Roman

⁷⁰ See Dianne Bergant with Richard Fragomeni, *Preaching the New Lectionary*. Vol. 1: Year A. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001), vii et passim.

⁷¹ *Inter Oecumenici*, no. 54 online at <https://www.liturgia.it/content/instructiones/inter%20oecumenici.pdf>

⁷² See n. 41 above.

Catholic homilizing (e.g., only by ordained, rooted in an authorized lectionary and a prescribed liturgy, etc.) its decidedly glocal profile leans much more towards universality than pluri-versality. The exclusion of laity and women from the homiletic act renders preaching in a decolonial mode particularly daunting. As Maria Galindo pointedly asserts, “no se puede descolonizar sin depatriarcalizar.”⁷³ Even among clerics, ethnic representation continues to be dominated by those who identify as White/Non-Hispanic, who are yet a dwindling part of the U.S. Catholic population.⁷⁴ Conversely, the Hispanic/Latino population comprises a solid 40% of all US Roman Catholics – a number that jumps to 60% when considering folk under 18 years of age. Moreover, they comprise nearly 71% of the growth of the Roman Catholic Population in the U.S. since 1960.⁷⁵ Their representation among Roman Catholic clergy overall, however, is only about 8% although the ordination class of 2022 showed a slight percentage rise.⁷⁶

Embracing the kin-dom with holy subversion

It never occurred to me that acquiring a Ph.D. in largely western liturgics was becoming certified as an imperial ally. While a bit overstated, a large part of my personal and academic journey sketched above has been

⁷³ “There is no decolonization without depatriarchalization,” the title of her 2013 book (Bolivia: Mujeres Creando, 2013).

⁷⁴ See United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Report: U.S. Catholic Population by race/ethnicity,” available at <https://vencuentro.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2021-Catholics-National-Regional-and-Diocesan-.pdf>.

⁷⁵ Hosffman Ospino, “Analysis: Is the U.S. church’s Hispanic Catholic Hope Slipping Away?” at <https://catholicreview.org/analysis-is-the-u-s-churchs-hispanic-catholic-hope-slipping-away/>

⁷⁶ <https://www.usccb.org/resources/ordination%20class%202023%20final%20report.pdf>

unlearning, reinventing and evolving into a committed subversive.

Currently I am in my 15th year of regular presiding and preaching at a vibrant, socially active, justice inclined, LGBTQ+ welcoming and politically left leaning community with a substantial on-line outreach. That kind of extended pulpit exposure does have its drawbacks, especially when it comes to staying fresh and avoiding the ever present challenge of repeating oneself; homily preparation has never before taken so much time and effort. On the other hand, the upside of such a sustained homiletic presence is the opportunity to develop deep levels of mutual respect and trust with an assembly, which allows one to be more theologically provocative and socially critical while still being heard.

While by no stretch of the imagination could I be considered a decolonial preacher, I do strive to embrace a decolonial trajectory in my homilizing as much as possible while still attempting to maintain my ministerial integrity and authenticity. For me this entails a specific theological stance as well as particular strategies or grammars:

A Positive Theological Anthropology: While anthropology ponders what it means to be human, theological anthropology introduces God into that mix, asking: what does it mean to be human in the presence of God?⁷⁷ Among the lenses for assessing any theological anthropology is what might be called the “graced-depraved” or “Karl Rahner-John Calvin” spectrum: at its core it asks do human beings have an inner goodness that instinctively leads them to look to the light or, on the other extreme, are we infused with such pervasive

⁷⁷ A useful introduction to the breadth of this topic from a Roman Catholic perspective is Mary Ann Hinsdale and Stephen Okey, eds., *T & T Handbook of Theological anthropology* (New York: T & T Clark, 2023).

sinfulness that only divine intervention can even get us to look for the light? I contend that decolonializing preaching requires a theological anthropology that leans towards the graced/Rahnerian side of the spectrum. Anthropology itself emerged from the colonial expansion of Europe and clearly served imperial purposes with its consistent affirmation of European values with the parallel denigration of indigenous peoples and their ways.⁷⁸ Intentional preaching in a decolonial mode, however, requires the preacher to not only admit but deeply embrace the graced nature of humanity across the spectrum of races, ethnicities, languages, genders, economic status and the other constructed frameworks that so often divide “us” from “them.”⁷⁹

New Sources of Wisdom: A hoped for outcome of this more positive theological anthropology is new respect for sources of wisdom and inspiration outside of the Christian Bible and Christianity’s pluriform traditions. This means not only honoring the sacred texts of world religions – such as the Koran, Dharma, and Vedas, among many – but also the cultural wisdom revealed in the myths and storytelling, arts, and artifacts of indigenous as well as marginalized communities. Such is essential if the epistemic revolution of decoloniality is to breach the epistemic fortresses of Western thought and the Christian teachings that were tools of both colonization and colonialization.⁸⁰ In my U.S. context,

⁷⁸ A classic publication in this regard was Talal Asad, ed., *Anthropology & the Colonial Encounter* (New York: Humanities Press, 1973).

⁷⁹ Robert Sapolsky explains both the neurobiology to this phenomenon as well as its antidote in his *Behave: The Biology of Humans at our Best and Worst* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017).

⁸⁰ Missiologist Stephen Bevans summarizes, “The modern missionary era was in many ways the ‘religious arm’ of colonialism, whether Portuguese and Spanish colonialism in the sixteenth Century, or British, French, German, Belgian or American

this encompasses the music and other art forms often dismissed as “low brow”⁸¹ and cultural resources from ecopoetry⁸² to the cartoons of Charles Schultz⁸³ and even the opinions of deconverting Christians⁸⁴ and the writings of declared atheists and faiththeists.⁸⁵

Rethinking the Lowry “oops”: In one of the more celebrated method books on preaching in the late 20th century, Eugene Lowry proposed that a first critical move in effective preaching is upsetting the equilibrium of the listeners; he calls this the “oops!” step in preaching.⁸⁶ The purpose of this “oops!” is to trigger ambiguity in the listener’s minds, which entices them to engage with the preacher in resolving this ambiguity. This approach seems resonant with Mignolo’s and other’s understanding of decoloniality as an act of epistemic disobedience, cognitive delinking, and an invitation to

colonialism in the nineteenth,” “New Evangelical Vision and Mission,” *Divine Word Missionary Magazine* (2002).

⁸¹ Mentor Nathan Mitchell pointedly noted: “Secretly, many of us believe that God loves the poor, but hates their art. Surely, we suspect, God prefers Mozart to Randy Travis.” “Amen Corner,” *Worship* 70, no.3 (1996) 258.

⁸² An outstanding example is Juliana Spahr, *That Winter the Wolf Came* (Chico CA: Commune Editions, 2015).

⁸³ See Robert L. Short, *The Gospel according to Peanuts* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1965), whose 2000 anniversary edition included a new foreword by none other than celebrated Lutheran theologian Martin Marty; Short’s sequel was *The Parables of Peanuts* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

⁸⁴ For an overview of this phenomenon in Roman Catholicism see J. Patrick Hornbeck II, “Deconversion from Roman Catholicism: Mapping a Fertile Field,” *American Catholic Studies* 122, no.2 (2011): 1–29.

⁸⁵ I am very impressed with Alain de Botton, *Religion for Atheists: A Non-Believer’s Guide to the Uses of Religion* (New York: Pantheon, 2012); also, Chris Steadman, *Faiththeist: How an Atheist Found Common Ground with the Religious* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012).

⁸⁶ Eugene Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*, expanded edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 28 *et passim*.

move away from accepted patterns of thought and, instead, engage in border thinking. This is a particularly useful strategy for those of us whose preaching is lectionary or biblically rooted, consistently proclaiming familiar scriptural texts than many congregants presume they already know and understand. In the spirit of the Rabbi from Nazareth who consistently achieved a memorable “oops!” through parables of Samaritans and sinners, prodigals and persistent widows, preaching in decolonial mode can help our assemblies to not only recognize but also respect the wisdom of the marginalized and subaltern.

Simulating subaltern voices through Narrative: It is well established that narrative is an effective tool for communication in general and preaching in particular. Neuroscience is empirically documenting this fact by demonstrating how storytelling stimulates activity across various parts of the brain far more effectively than simple information.⁸⁷ Psychologist Keith Oatley compares storytelling to a flight simulator, allowing us vivid simulation of reality without all of the danger.⁸⁸ In the process Oatley argues that story listening and reading fiction can build empathy about the other, concluding that narrative can help us “improve our mental models of others and ourselves.”⁸⁹ Similarly,

⁸⁷ Relevant scientific references are reported in my “Preaching and Narrativity: The Contribution from Neuroscience,” in *Preaching as Spiritual Leadership: Guiding the Faithful as Mystic and Mystagogue*, ed. Michael Connors (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2021), 232-241.

⁸⁸ Raymond A. Mar, Keith Oatley and Jordan B. Peterson, “Exploring the Link Between Reading Fiction and Empathy: Ruling out Individual Differences and Examining Outcomes.” *Communications* 34, no.4 (2009): 407-428. <https://doi.org/10.1515/COMM.2009.025>

⁸⁹ Keith Oatley, *The Passionate Muse: Exploring Emotion in Stories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

philosopher Richard Kearney argues that an empathetic imagination is a *narrative imagination*. The failure of the narrative imagination, according to Kearney, makes possible genocides and atrocities. He concludes, “if we possess narrative sympathy—enabling us to see the world from the other’s point of view—we cannot kill. If we do not, we cannot love.”⁹⁰ Storytelling in decolonial mode may be one of the most effective ways for Roman Catholic clerics to decolonialize the pulpit to some degree. This requires, however, that we listen keenly to subaltern voices and communicate their stories with compassion and respect. An especially effective way of achieving this is through audiobooks. Listening to a preacher Barbara Brown Taylor’s very personal narration of her sacramental world,⁹¹ or McArthur Genius laureate Ocean Vuong’s epistolary novel about the traumatic life of a young gay Vietnamese refugee are alternately eye opening and startling. Through these and other voices ordinarily barred from most Roman Catholic sanctuaries, they allow the homilist to precisely achieve what neuroscientist Robert Sapolsky believes is the only effective response to human’s instinctive tendency to dichotomize between us and them: individuate, individuate, individuate.⁹²

Summary

This paper has attempted to juxtapose decolonial thinking – differentiated from postcolonial theory – with contemporary Roman Catholic homilizing. The funda-

⁹⁰ Richard Kearney, *On Stories* (London-New York: Routledge, 2002), 140.

⁹¹ Barbara Brown Taylor, *An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2009).

⁹² Robert Sapolsky, *Behave: The Biology of Humans at our Best and Worst* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 423.

mental question that undergirds this exploration is whether a decolonialized Roman Catholic homily is even possible in the U.S. While my first instinct was to respond with a definitive “no,” upon reflection that response seems unnuanced. First of all, there are some Roman Catholic Clergy who speak from a subaltern position: I have taught Dalit priests from India, undocumented clergy from Guatemala, and others whose life journey authenticates their subaltern credentials. On the other hand, these are ordinarily educated males. Furthermore, the fact that all women are canonically barred from homilizing in the Roman Catholic Church, the answer to that question has to be that decolonial homilizing in the U.S. is virtually non-existent.

Analogously, one could ask, “Will we ever experience the fulness of God’s reign in our lifetimes?” While both a socio-political and theological analysis of current global realities in my opinion evokes a resounding “no,” that does not mean that we should not strive towards such a goal. Similarly, while I do believe that in the current configuration of Roman Catholic polity an authentically decolonialized homiletics is virtually impossible, this does not mean, however, that it should not be a worthy goal. Such will require Roman Catholic clerics and those who aspired to that serious self-reflection about their instinctive modes of thinking, sources of wisdom, willingness to be subversively faithful, and learning as far as possible to give voice to subaltern narratives as much as possible. This will undoubtedly trigger pushback, public critique and even conflict. While such is not the goal, it seems the inevitable cost of decolonializing Roman Catholic pulpits positioned to feed all people with renewed dignity and unassailable respect.

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Scriptural Echoes and Allusions in the 1726 Constitutions and Rules of the Beatas de la Compañía de Jesus

Maria Anicia B. Co

Abstract: The 1726 Constitutions and Rules of the *Beatas de la Compañía de Jesus*, contain some words and turns of phrases that echo or allude to the Scriptures, particularly the New Testament. This does not mean that the *beatas* had a copy of the Scriptures. Considering that the *beatas* had no direct access to the Bible, the presence of the biblical allusions in the 1726 Constitutions attest to the appropriation of Scriptures through other means such as the liturgy and the homilies of the priests, the prayers, the sacraments and devotions and in particular the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. The Scriptural allusions also attest that their way of life had been based and influenced by the Scriptures. This paper will present the Scriptural echoes and allusions in the 1726 Constitutions and Rules, showing that the *beatas* were not deprived of the Word of God, even if they did not have direct access to the Bible. It will also illustrate examples of the use of intertextual method in the comparison of the Rules and the scriptures.

Keywords: Religious of the Virgin Mary • Beatas de la Compañía de Jesus • Mother Ignacia del Espiritu Santo • Scriptural Echoes and Allusions • Indirect Access to Scripture • Consecrated Life for Women

Introduction

The Religious of the Virgin Mary (RVM) is an apostolic institute of pontifical right founded in 1684 by Mother Ignacia del Espiritu Santo (1663-1748), a Chinese-yndia (native) mestiza from Binondo, Manila.¹

¹ The definitive approbation of the Constitutions of the Religious of the Virgin Mary was given on January 12, 1948. It was only at the end of the Spanish colonial rule that the *Beaterio* founded by Mother Ignacia was able to undertake the process of recognition by the Holy See as a congregation, beginning with the canonical and diocesan

The constitutions and rules which Mother Ignacia submitted to the Archdiocese of Manila came to be known as the 1726 Constitutions and Rules.² This was provisionally approved on July 3, 1732.³ The 1726 Constitutions and Rules is the earliest extant document of the Religious of the Virgin Mary.⁴ It bears witness to the existence of the *Beaterio de la Compañía de Jesús* and the vision of Mother Ignacia and her companion *beatas* to dedicate their whole life to the service of God as religious women. These rules define the nature and way of life of Mother Ignacia and her foundational community.

The year 2026 will mark the 300 years of the writing of the 1726 Rules. This is a milestone in the development of the Religious of the Virgin Mary. The spiritual legacy of Mother Ignacia's 1726 Rules remains a guiding force

erection on July 31, 1906, followed by the Decree of Praise on March 17, 1907 and the Decree of Approbation on March 24, 1931.

² *Constituciones y Reglas de las Beatas Yndias Doncellas que sirven a Dios Nuestro Señor en este Beaterio de Manila debajo de la Direccion Espiritual de los Reverendos Padres de la Compañía de Jesus*, 1726; *Rules and Constitutions of 1726*, English translation printed in 1974; *1726 Constitutions of the Beaterio de la Compañía de Jesus*, Spanish-English diglot edition, with revised English translation, 2019. In this paper, the 1726 Spanish text will be referred to as *1726 Constituciones* and the English translation as *1726 Rules*.

³ *Decreto: aprobacion de la Constituciones sumitidas por M. Ignacia del Espiritu Santo al Venerable Dean de la Cathedral, sede vacante*, Don Manuel Antonio de Ocio y Ocampo, 3 de Julio, 1732. The temporary approbation was given by the dean of the Cathedral Chapter because it was *sede vacante*. There was no archbishop from July 25, 1721 (when Archbishop Francisco de la Cuesta ended his term) until the arrival and installation of the next archbishop, Carlos Bermudez de Castro (1678-1729) on August 15, 1728. He had a short term for he died on November 13, 1729. The next archbishop, Juan Angel Rodriguez (1687-1742), arrived in Manila on January 26, 1737 although he was appointed in 1731.

⁴ In 1964 the RVM congregation was able to acquire copies of the 1726 Constitutions from the *Archivo General de Indias* in Seville and the *Biblioteca Razon y Fe* of the Jesuits in Madrid.

in the understanding of the charism and spirituality of the RVM congregation.

The *1726 Rules* is significant not only because it contains the vision of Mother Ignacia for the community of native women she founded. It is also a witness to the life of women and their spirituality in the 17th to 18th centuries. In the words of Kathryn Santner, “The constitutions give us a window into the lives of Manila’s women and girls of all ethnic backgrounds, revealing the conditions of their lived existences, religious preoccupations, and education.”⁵ The *1726 Rules* serve as a primary source for the spiritual life of native consecrated women in the 17th to 18th centuries in the Philippines.

It also leads us to understand the use of Scripture during the time of Mother Ignacia. Although Mother Ignacia and her community, like any lay person during her time, did not possess or had no direct access to the written Bible, the *1726 Rules* contains formulations that echo and allude to Scripture texts. These Scriptural echoes and allusions can be explained as a result of their exposure to the Word of God through other means, such as sermons during the Mass, catechetical instruction in the parish, the spiritual direction of the Jesuit Fathers during their retreats, prayers and devotions, and other church celebrations.⁶ These Rules present a clear testimony to the evangelizing efforts of the missionaries, especially the Jesuits, to preach the Gospel.

⁵ K. Santner, “12. Constitutions and Rules of the Beatas Indias (1726),” in *The Spanish Pacific, 1521-1815: A Reader of Primary Sources*, edited by C. Lee and R. Padrón (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 189-204, p. 190.

⁶ The sermons of Fr. Francisco Blancas de San Jose, OP are examples of sermons that conveyed the content of Scripture texts to the congregation. See Jose Mario C. Francisco, SJ, ed., *Sermones of Francisco Blancas de San Jose OP (1614)* (Pulong: Sources for Philippine Studies, Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 1994).

The first part of this paper, which deals with the historical context of the *1726 Rules*, provides a brief account of the beginning of Christianity in the Philippines, the use of Scripture by the missionaries, and the emergence and growth of the *Beaterio de la Compañía de Jesus*. The discussion covers the historical period from the 16th to the 19th century of Spanish colonial rule in the Philippines. The second part offers a brief analysis of the provisions of the *1726 Rules* that refer to Scripture texts which might have influenced the formulation of the said provisions. The methodology used in this paper is a text-oriented intertextual analysis. This will be explained in the pertinent section. The conclusion of this paper will give a synthesis of the insights that can be drawn from the analysis of Scriptural echoes and allusions in the *1726 Rules*.

The Historical Context of the *1726 Rules*

The Beginning of Christianity in the Philippines

The first European attempt to colonize the Philippines happened in 1521 with the arrival of the Portuguese explorer, Ferdinand Magellan, who met an early death in the hands of native warriors in Mactan. Colonization and Christianization of the Philippines is said to have formally begun with the coming of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi in 1565. The Augustinian missionaries came with Legazpi. The Franciscans arrived in 1578, followed by the Jesuits in 1581, the Dominicans in 1587 and the Augustinian Recollects in 1606.⁷

In the propagation of the faith, the missionaries who belonged to different orders had their way of

⁷ John Schumacher, *Readings in Philippine Church History* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila, 1979), 17-18.

evangelizing. However, some common patterns of evangelization could be observed. They engaged themselves in giving catechism (pre-baptismal and post-baptismal), preaching, and administering the sacraments. Also part of their evangelizing work was the building of churches.⁸

The content of the *Doctrina Christiana*⁹ may indicate the first instructions given to the natives by the evangelizers. These were the prayers, particularly the *Pater Noster*, *Ave Maria*, the *Credo*, and the *Salve Regina*, which the people were encouraged and instructed to memorize. The people were also taught the fourteen articles of faith, the ten commandments, the five commandments of the church, and the seven sacraments. The evangelizers further instructed them to avoid sin, especially the seven capital sins, and to do good by performing the fourteen works of mercy (seven corporal and seven spiritual works of mercy). The evangelizers used a catechism method of instruction with question and answer on what it means to be a Christian.¹⁰

The missionaries also introduced liturgical practices, processions, and fiestas where dances, theatres, plays and Moro-moro shows were featured. They found these helpful in gathering the natives together into towns for more effective preaching and catechism. By 1580s this

⁸ Schumacher, *Readings*, 39-54; Quintin M. Garcia, "By the Sword or ... by the Cross," *Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinas* 39, no. 435 (January-February 1965):18-32, esp. 25-30; Pablo Fernandez, OP, "Dominican Apostolate in the Philippines," *Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinas* 39, no. 435 (January-February 1965):147-185.

⁹ *Doctrina Christiana en lengua española ytagala corregida por los Religiosos de los ordines*. Impresa con licencia en S. Gabriel de la orden de S. Domingo en Manila 1593.

¹⁰ The question and answer portion in the *Doctrina Christiana* comes after the penitential prayer "I Confess" or *Confiteor*.

process of *reducción* was seriously implemented.¹¹ Some manifestations of the faith of the converted nations were putting up little altars in their homes and having crosses in their homes and in strategic places, in the fields and along the roads. These were of course encouraged by the missionaries. Among the devotions propagated by the missionaries and which became popular among the natives were the praying of the rosary, the reading of the Passion of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the *Misa de Aguinaldo* before Christmas. The first passion stories used by the missionaries were literal translations from the Spanish *Pasiones*. Later, there would be passion stories written in local languages incorporated with indigenous elements.

Scriptures in the Evangelization of the Philippines

In the accounts of the history of the evangelization of the Philippines by Catholic missionaries, much is said about the instruction in Christian doctrine and the use of catechism but very little is said about the use of Scriptures in preaching and teaching.¹² This does not

¹¹ Schumacher, *Readings*, 39. *Reducción* is the process of gathering together the scattered settlements of Indios into villages or towns to make possible lasting evangelization. Ibid., 409.

¹² See for example, Schumacher, *Readings*, 12-192; Susan Russell, "Christianity in the Philippines." *Department of Anthropology*, University of Illinois, USA, available on <http://www.seasite.niu.edu/crossroads/russell/christianity.htm> (1999), does not include the use of the Scriptures among the reasons for the successful conversion of the natives by the Spanish missionaries; Nicholas P. Cushner, "Early Jesuit missionary methods in the Philippines" *The Americas* 15, no. 4 (1959):361-379, which mentions preaching as a missionary method and its content but has no reference to the gospel or the Bible. See also Garcia, "By the Sword or ... by the Cross," 18-30; Horacio de la Costa, "The Jesuits in the Philippines (1581-1900)," *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* 39, no. 435

mean that the missionaries did not use the Bible in their missionary activities. Among the rare books in the UST archives are the polyglot Bible published by Plantin (1569-1573), the Bible in Latin, edited by F. Ioannes Hentenius (1587), and the New Testament in Greek and Latin (1599) and commentaries on the Bible.¹³ John Schumacher acknowledged that the Spanish missionaries failed “to provide the vernacular Bible,” but “the *pasyon* did bring the Scriptures to the masses of

(January-February 1965):115-135; Fides A. del Castillo, "Christianization of the Philippines: Revisiting the Contributions of Baroque Churches and Religious Art," *Mission Studies* 32, no. 1 (2015): 47-65; Felipe Salvosa II, "The Philippines: Arsenal of Faith, Deposit of Christianity in the East," <https://500yoc.com/history/>, accessed October 14, 2021.

¹³ *Biblia Sacra*, ed. Benedict Arias Montano. Antwerp: Christopher Plantin, 1569-1573 (8 vols.); *Biblia sacra*, ed. F. Ioannes Hentenius, Venice : Hieronymus Polus, 1587; *Novum Testamentum Graece, cum Vulgata Interpretatione Latina*. Heidelberg: *Ex Officina Commeliniana*, 1599. *Biblia Sacra*, printed by Plantin, is a polyglot Bible in five languages. The first four volumes contain the Old Testament. The left page has two columns with the Hebrew original and the Latin translation, the right page has same text in Greek with its own Latin translation. Underneath these columns there is an Aramaic version on the left-hand page and a Latin translation of this on the right-hand side. The last volume is the New Testament in Greek and Syriac each with a Latin translation, and a translation of the Syriac into Hebrew. Volume 6 is the complete Bible in Hebrew and Greek as well as an interlinear version that has the Latin translation printed between the lines. The last two volumes contain dictionaries (Hebrew-Latin, Greek-Latin, Syriac-Aramaic, grammar rules, list of names, etc.).

Among the commentaries found in the UST archives are Carthusianus Dionysius, *Commentaria in Sacris Scripturis*, 1532-1585 (5 vols.); *In Quatuor Evangelistas Enarrationes*, 1532; *Enarrationes in Quatuor Prophetas Maiores*, 1567; Aquinas, Thomas, Sanctus, *In Epistolas Sancti Pauli Commentaria*, 1541; Aurelius Agustinus, *Expositio in Epistolas divi Pauli ex Operibus Sancti*, 1534; Guillaud, Claudius, *In sacrosanctum Iesu Christi Evangelium Secundum Joannem Enarrationes*, 1556.

Filipinos, even illiterates, in a substantive way.”¹⁴ He is referring to the Tagalog *Pasyon* written by Gaspar Aquino de Belen that was first published in 1704.

Schumacher also pointed out the contribution of the missionaries to the human and sociocultural development of the Filipinos, particularly in the field of written literature in the vernacular. The missionaries “produced not only the first religious books, but also the dictionaries, grammars, and other aids to learning the vernaculars.”¹⁵ Schumacher does not mention the Tagalog translation of the Bible although the reading he cited included the names of Fray Miguel de Talavera who is said to have “translated a large part of the Sacred Scripture and books of the holy Fathers” and Fray Diego de la Asuncion who “translated the Bible into Tagalog and composed a grammar, a dictionary, and a collection of sermons.”¹⁶ According to Fr. Pastrana, OFM, the books translated and published by Fray Diego de la Asuncion in the 17th century were the book of Genesis and the four Gospels.¹⁷

The Spanish conquest, colonization and Christianization of the Philippines happened during the period of the Protestant Reformation(1517-1521)¹⁸ and Catholic reform, represented by the Council of Trent (1545-1563).¹⁹ Recent scholarship has challenged the

¹⁴ Schumacher, *Readings*, 179.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 177.

¹⁶ *Los Religiosos Españoles de Filipinas* (Apostolado de la Prensa, no. 82, Madrid, October 1898), 47-50, cited in Schumacher, *Readings*, 177 and 392.

¹⁷ Apolinar Pastrana, “The Franciscans and the Evangelization of the Philippines.” *Boletin Ecclesiastico de Filipinas* 39, n. 435 (January-February 1965):100.

¹⁸ Reformation was the schism in Western Christianity initiated by Martin Luther (1483–1546), John Calvin (1509-1564), Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531), and other early Protestant Reformers.

¹⁹ The Council of Trent was held in three distinct periods: 1545-1547, 1551-1552, 1562-1563. It was a “Catholic solution to the

view that the Council of Trent promulgated a ban against Bible reading in the vernacular. In the late medieval and early modern Church in Europe, the positions on Bible reading in the vernacular were regionally diversified. Measures against vernacular Bible editions were implemented in Spain. The strict prohibition of vernacular Bibles was probably issued by the Inquisition of 1492 with the consent of Ferdinand and Isabella.²⁰

A distinction has to be made between what the Council of Trent decrees and the developments after Trent. The Council did not prohibit Bible reading in the vernacular but left the decision regarding vernacular Bibles to the local authorities according to their own local

challenges raised by the necessities of its own time.” Wim François-Violet Soen, “450 Years Later. Louvain’s Contribution to the Ongoing Historiography on the Council of Trent,” in *The Council of Trent: Reform and Controversy in Europe and Beyond (1545–1700)*, Vol. 1. Between Trent, Rome and Wittenberg, edited by Wim François and Violet Soen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlage, 2018), 8.

²⁰ As the Bible was used by the Albigensians and Waldensians in their disputes with the Church, the response of the hierarchy in the Synod of Toulouse (1229) was to forbid the laity to have in their possessions any of the books of the Bible except the Psalter and such other portions as are contained in the Breviary or the Hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Synod of Tarragona (1234) ordered all vernacular versions to be brought to the bishop to be burned. The Synod of Tarragona in 1317 under Archbishop Ximenes prohibited the possession of theological books in the vernacular by the Beghards, Beguines, and tertiaries of the Franciscans. The Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella (1474-1516) prohibited the translation of the Bible into the vernacular or the possession of such translations. The Inquisitor-General de Valdes published in 1551 the index of Louvain of 1550, which prohibits Bibles (New and Old Testaments) in the Spanish or other vernacular. The restrictive Bible policy was continued during the reign of Emperor Charles V (king of Spain 1516-1556; Holy Roman Emperor and Archduke of Austria 1519-1556). This prohibition was abolished in 1778. See Els Agten and Wim François, “The Council of Trent and Vernacular Bible Reading: What Happened in the Build-Up to and during the Fourth Session?” In *The Council of Trent*, edited by François and Soen (2018), 101-130.

traditions.²¹ However, in 1564 the *Tridentine Index of Forbidden Books* was published by Pope Pius IV (1559-1565). This catalogue, prepared by a committee of prelates at the Council, contained rules of book censorship. The Fourth Rule opposed the free reading and interpretation of the Bible but allowed the laity to read the vernacular Bibles provided that they were deemed capable and had obtained written permission from the local bishop or inquisitor, and that the translation was made by a Catholic author.²² According to John O'Malley, the view that "the Council forbade the printing, selling and reading of the Bible in the vernacular" was among the "myths that no amount of scholarship has up to this point been able fully to dispel."²³ It is also far from true that the Catholic Church maintained a general ban on the reading of the vernacular Bible by the illiterate laity. But this idea has

²¹ Agten and François, "The Council of Trent and Vernacular Bible Reading," 126.

²² Ibid. Pope Leo XIII, Apostolic Constitution *Officiorem ac Munerum* (25 January 1897) reorganized the legislation on the censorship and prohibition of books and reformed the Index. What concerns Sacred Scripture is found in the third classes of books mentioned in this Bull. The limit of prohibition on all editions and versions of Scripture is the approval by competent ecclesiastical authorities. Paragraphs 5, 6 and 8 allow to those occupied with theological or Biblical studies the use of versions and editions published by non-Catholics provided they do not attack Catholic dogmas either in the preface or the annotations. Paragraph 7 prohibit all vernacular versions, even those prepared by Catholic authors, if they are not approved by the Apostolic See or not supplied with annotations taken from the works of the Holy Fathers and learned Catholic writers and accompanied by an episcopal approbation. The punishment of excommunication inflicted upon printers and authors not submitting their works for ecclesiastical censorship was abolished by Pope Pius IX in the Bull *Apostolicae Sedes* (12 October 1899).

²³ John O'Malley, "What Happened and Did Not Happen at the Council of Trent," in *The Council of Trent*, edited by François and Soen (2018), 49-68.

proliferated in both popular and scholarly circles for centuries.

The developments, nonetheless, after the Council of Trent that led to stricter measures in terms of vernacular Bible reading in Spain and its dominions affected the Philippine scene. The post-Tridentine Church emphasis on the veneration of saints, Marian devotions and Eucharistic adorations and the resurgence of art, piety and theology that characterized the Baroque age in Europe (1550-1750) also influenced the early Catholic missionaries' method of evangelization.²⁴ Spanish and Italian theologians like Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), Domingo de Soto (1494-1560), Francisco Suarez (1548-1617), Melchior Cano (1509?-1560) and others contributed to further systematization of theology. The evangelization methods of the early Catholic missionaries to the Philippines focused on the preaching of the Christian message but did not include the circulation of the Bible among the Filipino Catholics.²⁵

²⁴ Horacio de la Costa, SJ, "The Priest in Philippine Life and Society: A Historical View," *The Filipino Clergy: Historical Studies and Future Perspectives*. Loyola Papers 12. August 1979, 4-10.

²⁵ The criticism against the evangelizing methods of the Catholic missionaries in the Philippines was apparently based on what was considered the principle of Protestant missions. "The first principle of Protestant missions has been that Christians should have the Bible in their hands in their own language at the earliest possible date." Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Baltimore: Pelican, 1964), 209. Recent scholarship has now inquired into the notion of "Bible" in the late Middle Ages and early Modern era. A broader understanding of "Bible" during that period would include separate books (e.g. the Gospels), collections containing Epistle and Gospel reading for the Mass, Psalters, History Bibles containing merely narrative material of the Bible, supplemented with extra-biblical or apocryphal material, Bible-based material like Gospel Harmonies, Lives of Jesus, which contain texts close to the canonical Scriptures but are a re-telling of the stories in the canonical texts or explanations of the canonical texts. Wim François, "Vernacular Bible Reading in

However, the preaching of the priests, doctrinal teaching, participation in the sacraments, the music and the drama of the *Pasyon*, and religious images enabled the people to learn the Christian message and hear stories from the Bible particularly the story of Jesus Christ.²⁶

Writing about the Jesuits in the Philippines, Robert Green mentioned the tools of their evangelization as “the Bible, catechisms and priestly vestments.”²⁷ So far, this is the only account which mentions the Bible in relation to the evangelizing work of Catholic missionaries. When they arrived in 1581, the Jesuits ministered to indigenous Tagalogs and Cebuanos under the authority of the friars. They also ministered to Chinese, Japanese and enslaved African converts of Spanish civil authorities in and around Manila.²⁸ The Jesuits were known to engage the Bible in their formation and training. Although the Jesuits in the Spanish Pacific might not have written biblical commentaries, they must have regularly appealed to the Bible, citing it or alluding to it.²⁹

The work of evangelization had begun before Domingo de Salazar, OP arrived in the Philippines and became the first Manila bishop in 1581. Bishop Salazar summoned the first Manila Synod of 1582 to address the need for coordination and unity in the methods of

Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe: The “Catholic” Position Revisited,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 104, no. 1 (2018):26.

²⁶ See fn. 10 above; also Del Castillo, “Christianization,” 13-14, citing Glenn Martinez, “Paete Holy Week Procession” (Retrieved from <http://traveleronfoot.wordpress.com/2009/04/11/paete-holy-week-procession/>). See also Francisco, *Sermones*.

²⁷ Robert L. Green, *Masters of Idolatry: Catholic Colonialism, Jesuit Conversionary Thought, and Indigenous Religious Traditions in the Spanish Pacific World, 1568—1672* (Santa Barbara: University of California, 2011), 113. As the title of his book suggests, the author was not necessarily pro-Jesuit.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 99.

evangelization. One of the significant decisions of this Synod was that the Filipinos should be evangelized in their own languages.³⁰ This was at variance with royal decrees throughout the Spanish regimes.

In the 19th century, copies of the Bible and the New Testament circulated in the Philippines.³¹ During this period also, Manrique Alonzo Lallave's translation of the Gospel of Luke in Pangasinan was brought to the Filipinos in 1887. This work came to be recognized as the first Scripture in the vernacular in the Philippines.³² Apparently, the Gospel of Luke in Pangasinan was the first book of the Bible that was freely circulated among the Filipinos when the Spanish colonial rule in the Philippines ended in 1898 and the Americans took over. Emilio Jacinto ((1875-1899), who wrote "*Maling Pananampalataya*" was said to have based his thoughts on his reading of works on French revolution, anti-catholic materials and the Bible.³³ Through the

³⁰ John N. Schumacher, SJ, "The Manila Synodal Tradition: A Brief History," *Philippine Studies* 27, no. 3 (Third Quarter 1979):308.

³¹ According to Valentino Sityo, in 1838 and 1853 the British and Foreign Society (BFBS) sent two shipments of 1,050 Spanish Bibles and 100 New Testaments to Manila. See T. Valentino Sityo, *Several Streams, One Spring. United Church of Christ in the Philippines*. Vol. 1. *Heritage and Origins* (1898-1948) (Quezon City: United Church of Christ, 1992), 10.

³² Manrique Alonzo Lallave was a former Catholic priest. He was removed from his position because of his preaching. He returned to Spain and became a Protestant by joining the Spanish Christian Church in 1872. With Felipe P. Castells, a young Protestant pastor, he came back to the Philippines in 1889. Schumacher and Pastrana mentioned the Tagalog translation work of Fray Diego de la Asuncion, which would be earlier than the Lallave's translation; see p. 4 above, fn.12 and 13. Besides noting that it was a translation of the book of Genesis and the Gospels in the 17th century, Pastrana did not include other details related to their publication and circulation.

³³ John N. Schumacher, "The Civil and Religious Ethic of Emilio Jacinto," *Landas* 9 (1995) 39-52 adds details of Jacinto's use of the Bible on p. 50, footnote 28: "All quotations are from the Gospel of Luke.

Aglipayans the Bible was widely distributed in the Philippines.³⁴

Only in the wake of Vatican II were the laity allowed and encouraged to read the Bible. Fifty years after Vatican II we can say that the lay faithful have shown interest in the Bible. Biblical studies are not anymore restricted to priests and seminarians or candidates for the priesthood. Formation programs for sisters and lay include biblical studies.

What is clear from this section is that in the early Catholic evangelization of the Philippines, direct Bible reading was not promoted—largely due to the missionaries' chosen methods, which emphasized catechism, sacramental life, and devotional practices, as well as colonial and ecclesial restrictions. Nevertheless, the biblical message reached the people through the *Pasyon*, liturgy, and religious instruction. Missionaries also fostered vernacular literacy, and some translated parts of the Bible. Vernacular Scriptures began

Since no translation of the Bible into Tagalog during the Spanish regime is known, and the translations are somewhat free, it is to be supposed that Jacinto himself translated into Tagalog from a Spanish Bible (or just possibly Latin, since he may well have studied Latin at the Colegio de San Juan de Letran and or in the University of Santo Tomas. In fact, according to the list furnished by Pio Valenzuela, in the little library shared by himself, Bonifacio and Jacinto, there was a Bible, though he does not specify its language.”

³⁴ James A. Robertson, “The Aglipay Schism in the Philippine Islands,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 4/3 (Oct. 1918): 315-344, esp. 328. Gregorio Aglipay (1860-1940), a former Catholic priest became the head of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*. It was Isabelo de los Reyes who worked towards the formation of the first national church in 1902 and offered to Aglipay to be its bishop. Excommunicated in 1899, Aglipay severed his ties with the Catholic Church and accepted Reyes' offer. In 1903 he was appointed the supreme bishop of the Philippine Independent Church by the bishops of the dioceses of Manila, Cavite, Nueva Ecija, Isabela province, Cagayan, Pangasinan, and Abra province. Followers of Aglipay through the church were known as Aglipayans.

circulating more widely in the late 19th century, especially after Spanish rule, with Protestant missionaries playing a key role in making the Bible more accessible. Few historical accounts mention Catholic missionaries' direct use of Scripture in their evangelizing efforts. Following Vatican II, the Church actively encouraged lay access to the Bible and promoted deeper scriptural formation among clergy, religious, and laity.

The Beginnings and Growth of the *Beaterio de la Compañía de Jesús*

The story of the *beaterio* founded by Mother Ignacia del Espiritu Santo was included in the account of Pedro Murillo Velarde, SJ in connection with the work of Fr. Paul Klein, a Bohemian, whose hispanized name was Pablo Clain.³⁵ Ignacia, the daughter of Jusepe Iuco, a Chinese from Amoy, and Maria Jeronima, a native (*yndia*), was baptized on March 4, 1663 in the Holy Kings of Parian Church.³⁶ In 1684 when she was 21 years old, her parents wanted her to marry but she was contemplating to join the group of Dominican tertiaries gathered in the house of Antonia Esguerra, a Spanish widow. To prepare herself with a general confession, she went to Fr. Pablo Clain who advised her to make the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. After the retreat she made her decision to “remain in the service of the Divine

³⁵ Pedro Murillo Velarde, *Historia de la Provincia de Philipinas de la Compañía de Jesús*, segunda parte (Manila: Imprenta de la Compañía de Jesús, por Don Nicolas de la Cruz Bagay, 1749), Libro IV, Cap. XVII, 809-810.

³⁶ *Libro de bautizos de los Santos reyes de Parian, Siglo XVII (1626-1700)*, tomo 20, folio 239. This document belongs at present to the Dominican Archives, Philippine Province (DAPP), San Juan Metro Manila. When S. Maria Rita Ferraris, RVM first saw the book in 1959, it was still in the possession of the Dominicans at Sto. Domingo, Manila.

Majesty” and to earn her living “by the sweat of her brow,” even though her parents could support her. After asking permission from her parents, she left her house bringing only a needle and a pair of scissors. She probably stayed in the house where she had her retreat and spent her time in prayer, penance and good works. Shortly afterwards, other women desired to join her. They grew in number from three, to nine to thirty-three, to fifty. There was a time when Mother Ignacia had to temporarily stop admitting more people because the house was small. Later, when a larger house was built, the admission was resumed.

Because these women were living at the back of the Jesuit College of Manila, frequenting the Church of St. Ignatius to attend Mass, receive communion and go to confession, and had the Jesuit Fathers as their spiritual guides and directors, Ignacia and her companion became known as the *Beatas de la Compañía de Jesús*.

Mother Ignacia endured the difficulties and trials of beginning a religious community. It was clear to Mother Ignacia that she wanted to form a community of religious women dedicated to the service of God. When they started growing in number, they felt the need to formulate rules to govern their community life. With the help of their spiritual fathers, they drafted the rules that defined the goal and way of life of their community. In 1726 Mother Ignacia submitted the community’s Constitutions and Rules to the Archdiocese of Manila. This legacy of Mother Ignacia and her foundational community became known as the *1726 Constituciones y Reglas* or the *1726 Rules*.

When the 1726 Rules were written, the community of Mother Ignacia had been living together for forty-two (42) years. It would be difficult to imagine that the rules were formulated only after such a long time. Most probably at the beginning of their life together when they were few in

number, they were like a charismatic community, finding their way led by Mother Ignacia and according to the guidance of the Spirit. Gradually, they formed simple rules to guide them in their community life and apostolate. These rules evolved through the years as Mother Ignacia and her companion *beatas* lived them. The 1726 Rules is the earliest document of the *Beaterio de la Compañía de Jesús*. This is the legacy of Mother Ignacia and her foundational community to succeeding generations of *beatas*, should it be God's will that this *beaterio* continue to exist. It took another twenty-two years for the significance of the 1726 Rules to be manifest. On September 10, 1748, Mother Ignacia died and finally attained what 1726 Rules stated as their goal - "a good death and the glory of heaven" (1.1).

When Mother Ignacia died, she had lived eleven years as an ordinary *beata* although she was still recognized as the foundress of the community. Madre Dominga del Rosario was the Rectora who succeeded her when she resigned in 1737. Murillo Velarde saw this act of Mother Ignacia as a sign of great humility. She did not allow herself "to be overcome by that desire to command which like a cancer...corrupts everything from the cedar to the hyssop."³⁷ Mother Ignacia must have discerned "that God wanted her to give up her position as Superior so that a new leadership could emerge and take shape. By hindsight, it could be considered as a wise, prudent and practical decision."³⁸ She was about seventy-four years old when she asked to be relieved of her responsibility as Rectora. Although some would say she was still strong, she did not want to continue as Superior until her death. She wanted to die as she began her life in the *beaterio*, a hidden and humble *beata*. By not letting her community

³⁷ Schumacher, *Readings*, 168.

³⁸ M. Anicia Co, *A Lamp to our Path* (Quezon City: Mother Ignacia Center for Spirituality, 1998), 22.

wait for her death before electing a new superior, she was able to guide the community in a fairly smooth transition to a new leadership. Her death did not disturb the affairs of the community. The spirit of Mother Ignacia and her vision of the *beaterio* community enshrined in the 1726 Rules would guide the beatas in the following years.

Mother Ignacia died hoping that something good would come from the process initiated by Archbishop Pedro de la Santissima Trinidad Martinez de Arizala who petitioned the King for civil protection on behalf of their *beaterio*. If this would be approved by King Ferdinand IV, the *beaterio* could receive a royal grant that would help them maintain the *beaterio*. It took seven years before the Archbishop received the king's answer. The royal decree of November 25, 1755 granted royal protection to the *beaterio* on condition that it would not become a convent or a foundation, "but only a house of retreat exempt from cloister ... said women and other persons living with them in the house of retreat are not to be molested in the practice of their pious exercises."³⁹ When the Archbishop died, the King found an opportune time to follow up the implementation of his order. In 1756 the King directed the Governor-General in Manila, Don Pedro Manuel de Arandía to submit a report on the statutes of the *Beaterio*. Upon examination of the 1726 Rules approved in 1732, the King ordered the deletion of the provisions that characterize the *beaterio* as a religious community. He specified that the *beaterio* follow the conditions defined by the decree of Royal Protection of 1755 and that it should be placed directly under the governor-general and exempt from the intervention of the Archbishop.

Thus, the King's order posed a challenge to the identity of the *Beaterio*. The Decree of Royal Protection assured the existence and safety of the *beaterio* but at the

³⁹ M. Selga, *Protección Civil a favor de Beaterio de la Compañía* 1748 (Manila: San Juan Press, 1948), 13-14.

same time it questioned the very nature of the *beaterio* as a community of religious women. The response of the *beatas* was to mark with asterisks the numbers in the 1726 Rules that were objected to by the King but they did not delete them. They continued to live according to the 1726 Rules. To satisfy the King, they submitted a copy of the Constitutions and Rules in 1795 with the title page bearing the note “*expurgado segun el edicto de 1747*” (expunged according to the edict of 1747) although the 1795 Rules were exactly the same as the 1726 Rules except for the provisions with asterisks.

The next challenge faced by the *beatas* was the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1768. The *beatas* lost their spiritual guides but somehow they received help and support from the Archbishop of Manila, some churchmen and other benefactors. They contributed to the support of the *beaterio* and its retreat works. The *beatas* were able to survive the dark years.

The return of the Jesuits in 1850 and the establishment of their Mindanao mission paved the way for the coming of the *beatas* to Mindanao. Upon the request of the Jesuits, three *beatas* from the *Beaterio de la Compañía* became the first *beaterio* missionaries to Mindanao in 1875. They were sent to take care of the girls in Tamontaka.

The revolution against Spain in 1896 would bring the *beatas* from Mindanao to Manila. When the revolutionaries came to Mindanao, the Jesuits in Butuan suffered ill-treatment and were imprisoned. The *beatas* also suffered with them. They were searched and put into house arrest. The Superior of the Jesuit mission in Mindanao evacuated Tamontaca with the *Beatas*, the children from the orphanage and other families. When they reached Zamboanga, they distributed the children to Christian families. The *beatas* joined the Zamboanga

community of *beatas* and together with the Jesuits they sailed to Manila on April 20, 1899.

When they came to Manila, upon the request of the Superior of the Jesuit mission, the Archbishop gave the *beatas* permission to occupy the *beaterio* in Intramuros. The *beaterio* in Intramuros was turned into a hospital when the Manila *beatas* evacuated to Bulacan. When they returned to Intramuros, they were surprised to find the *beatas* from Mindanao. This reunion would finally lead to the re-organization of the *Beaterio* and the transition to becoming a congregation.

The *Beaterio* survived two hundred eighteen years from the foundation in 1684 to the convocation of the first general chapter in 1902. The *1726 Rules* would be crucial in the process of becoming a congregation.

Scriptural Echoes and Allusions in the *1726 Rules*

This section examines the text of the *1726 Rules* of the *Beatas de la Compañía*, particularly Chapters 1 and 2, to bring to light their scriptural bases and inspiration.

The *1726 Rules* contains six Chapters. I. Concerning the Spiritual Formation of the Beatas Which All Should Follow. II. Spiritual Advices that should be observed by those who strive for perfection and are engaged in the Service of God. III. On the Distribution of Time. Chapter IV. On the Form of Government This House Should Have. Chapter V. On the Method of Electing the Rectora and other Officers. VI. On the Method of Admitting “Beatas” and Girls “Recogidas.”⁴⁰ Only the first two chapters that

⁴⁰ The *1726 Rules* has a total of 139 provisions (Chapter 1 – 49; Chapter II – 26; Chapter III – 17; Chapter IV – 17; Chapter V – 14; Chapter VI – 16). It also contains the *escrito* or signed declaration of Mother Ignacia, giving information about the beginning and growth of the *beaterio* and asking for the continuance of the spiritual direction of the Jesuit Fathers.

deal with the spiritual and communal life of the *beatas* will be the focus of our analysis.

In Chapters 1 and 2 of the *1726 Rules*, there are expressions and turns of phrases that remind the reader of some Scripture texts. These may be called echoes of Scripture texts or allusions. This study will use the definition of allusion and echo by Christopher Beetham. Allusion is “a literary device intentionally employed by an author to point a reader back to a single identifiable source, of which one or more components must be remembered and brought forward into the new context in order for the alluding text to be understood fully.”⁴¹ An allusion differs from a quotation in that a quotation is more explicit. An echo is less explicit than an allusion. An echo is “a subtle, literary mode of reference that is not intended for public recognition yet derives from a specific predecessor. An author’s wording may echo the precursor consciously or unconsciously and/or contextually or non-contextually.”⁴²

The study of allusions and echoes calls to mind the idea of intertextuality. The term “intertextuality,” used in literary criticism and biblical studies, focuses on the relationships of texts, the manifold linkages among texts or the connections of texts to phrases or expressions from the cultural systems in which the texts exist.⁴³ Julia Kristeva was the first to use the term intertextuality to refer to “the systemic relationship and processes that govern the dynamic affiliation of texts with one

⁴¹ Christopher Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians* (Biblical Interpretation Series, 96. Leiden: Brill, 2008), 20.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴³ B.D. Sommer, “Exegesis, Allusion and Intertextuality in the Hebrew Bible: A Response to Lyle Eslinger,” *Vetus Testamentum* 46, no. Fasc. 4 (1996): 486.

another.”⁴⁴ Intertextuality has to do with the act of cultural production and reproduction. The intertextual procedure would consider the text within the text of society and history which includes the procedure’s own place and the place of the reader in history.⁴⁵ Doosuk Kim picks up the idea of Jesús Martínez A. María, on the fundamental notion of intertextuality as two-fold: “a text can’t exist as a self-sufficient whole, and it does not function as a closed system.”⁴⁶ “A text is not merely a cluster of language but a configuration of multiple factors such as culture, society, community, and other texts. A text itself contains the world around the text.”⁴⁷ S. Moyise recognizes the value of the term as “a covering term for all the possible relations that can be established between texts.”⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Julia Kristeva, *Σημειωτική* (Paris: Seuil, 1969). Adolphe Haberer, “Intertextuality in Theory and Practice,” *Literatūra* 49, no. 5 (2007): 56-57, clarifies that Julia Kristeva coined the term intertextuality in her introduction to the work of Mikhail Bakhtin in France. She was the first to use the term in print. Doosuk Kim, “Intertextuality and New Testament Studies,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 20, no. 3 (2022): 239, attributes the coinage of the term to Julia Kristeva and “her colleagues of the *Tel Quel* group in Paris, including Jacques Derrida, Philippe Sollers, and Roland Barthes.” See also Nöelle McAfee, *Julia Kristeva* (Routledge Critical Thinkers; New York, NY: Routledge, 2004).

⁴⁵ G. Aichele-G. Philips, “Introduction: Exegesis, Eisegesis, Intergesis,” *Semeia* 69/70 (1995):11. It is to be noted that intertextuality originated within literary and narrative criticism before it entered into biblical studies. Cf. D. Kim, “Intertextuality and New Testament Studies,” 238.

⁴⁶ Jesús Martínez A. María, “Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept,” *Atlantis* 18: 268; cited by D. Kim, “Intertextuality and New Testament Studies,” 239.

⁴⁷ D. Kim, “Intertextuality and New Testament Studies,” 239; María, “Intertextuality,” 272.

⁴⁸ S. Moyise, “Intertextuality and the Study of the Old Testament in the New Testament,” in S. Moyise (ed.), *The Old Testament in the New Testament. Essays in Honour of J.L. North* (JSNTSup, 189; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 15. For Moyise, the term

Intertextual investigation may be source-oriented, text-oriented or receptor-oriented.⁴⁹ Robert Miola offers seven types of intertextuality grouped in three categories: 1. Direct textual interactions, 2. Literary traditions, 3. Reader-driven intertextuality.⁵⁰

Direct textual interactions include revision, translation, quotation and sources. In revision, a later text modifies an earlier one, either by the same author or another, through conscious changes. Translation carries a text into another language, often adapting cultural and linguistic elements. Quotation is a direct reproduction of an earlier text, either explicitly marked or woven into the new work. Sources refer to a text borrowing plot, characters, ideas, or style from an earlier work.

Under the category of literary traditions are conventions and configurations and genres. Conventions and configurations refer to the influence of established literary conventions, such as stock characters or dramatic structures, on new works; genres refer to a text's interaction with broader literary genres that shape its themes and styles. Paralogues, which belong to the reader-driven intertextuality, are texts that illuminate meanings in other works, often through cultural or ideological connections rather than direct textual borrowing.

The intertextual study of the 1726 Rules in this paper is source- and text-oriented. The intertextual

covers traditional source criticism, Jewish midrash, typology and 'inner biblical exegesis'.

⁴⁹ J. Voelz, "Elements of Intertextuality," *Semeia* 69/70 (1995):162. For a discussion of the three types of intertextuality, see M.A. Co, "Reading the Isaiah Quotation in Luke 4:18-19 Intertextually," in *Announcing A Year of Favor of the Lord*. Proceedings of the First Annual Convention. CBAP. Tagaytay City, July 28-30, 2000, 33-45.

⁵⁰ R.S. Miola, *Seven Types of Intertextuality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

relationship of the 1726 Rules and Scriptures may be close to category 1 of Miola's categories but it really does not belong to that category. Their intertextual relationship is more indirect than direct. Thus, even if Miola's types of intertextuality seem comprehensive, there are other types of intertextuality that are not accounted for. We can also mention the reader- or hearer-oriented intertextuality.⁵¹

The influence of Scripture on the essay of Emilio Jacinto, as noted above, is quite evident and may be cited as an example.⁵² Reading his *Ang Maling Pagsasam-palataya*⁵³ one can readily recognize the Scripture references, although the content is Jacinto's exposé of Christians and the church of his day. He refers to the teachings and words of Jesus to stress the failure of Christ's followers to live up to his teachings. The following words and expressions appear in his writing: "alagad ni Kristo" (disciple or follower of Christ), "daan ng katotohanan" (the way or path of truth). He quotes the words of Jesus: "Kayo'y magmahalan" (love one another), "Ang nagpapakalaki ay hahamakin at pupurihin ang nagpapakaliit" (literally, "The one who makes themselves great will be despised, and the one who makes themselves small will be praised"). Jacinto does not mention the Scripture references but one familiar with the Bible will recall that the first quotation comes from the Gospel of John (13:34) and the second from Mt 23:12 "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted" with parallels

⁵¹ Haberer, "Intertextuality in Theory and Practice," 66, refers to the need to distinguish the intertextual effect "from the type of scholarly research which aims at elucidating all sources, tracing all allusions, finding all references."

⁵² See p. 8 above and fn. 33.

⁵³ Emilio Jacinto, "Liwanag at Dilim," in *Almario, Panitikan ng Rebolusyon* (1896).

in Lk 14:11; 18:14. There are other parts in Jacinto's essay that show the intentional use of Scripture to lay bare the deep contradictions between the teachings of Christ and the lived reality of the church. By invoking the very words of Jesus, Jacinto strengthens the force of his exposé, confronting believers with the stark gap between faith and practice.

Quotation, allusion and echoes are “approximate markers on the spectrum of intertextual linkage, moving from the most to the least explicit form of reference.”⁵⁴ If there are really echoes or allusions to the Scriptures, how did they get incorporated in the *1726 Rules*? There were books in the *Beaterio* but there was no Bible.⁵⁵ The Rules were written without the Bible on hand. If ever they had access to portions of the Bible, say a book or a Scripture passage, there is no way for us to determine. Neither do we have any information on which version of the Bible was being used by the Jesuits, other priests and missionaries during the time of Mother Ignacia.

Spanish was the original language of the *1726 Rules*. There were several drafts of the English translation but the first English translation that was printed for the whole membership of the RVM Congregation was that of 1974.⁵⁶ The first step in this analysis is to consider the *1726 Rules* in English and determine if there are any linguistic or thematic links with any Scripture texts using the NABRE or NRSV. The second step is to consider the Spanish text and compare it with a 17th –

⁵⁴ R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scriptures in the Gospels* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016).

⁵⁵ The inventory of books in the *Beaterio* in the visitation report of 1748 and 1753 showed the titles of 29 books in Spanish and 8 books in Tagalog. No Bible was included in the list.

⁵⁶ The first English translation of the *1726 Constituciones y Reglas* was the revised constitutions approved by the first general congregation in 1902 which was written in English and expanded to include provisions that would respond to their present situation.

18th c. Spanish version of the Bible. For this study, the Reina-Valera Antigua version⁵⁷ will be used. For the survey of allusions in the *1726 Rules* the English text is used because it is easier to detect the allusion to Scriptures using the English Bible with which we are familiar.

Provisions in the 1726 Rules that Suggest the influence of Scripture

A total of thirty-two (32) provisions of the *1726 Rules* (22 from Chapter 1 and 10 from Chapter 2) contain scriptural echoes or allusions. The chart below gives the list of these thirty-two provisions. Only the words or expression that somehow echo or allude to the Scriptures are presented. For easy reference, this study will use the number of the provision as listed below. A particular provision may have two or more expressions that evoke biblical thought or language, for example, no. 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 16, 19, 22, 24, 30. Sometimes an expression may point to more than one Scripture text.

	1726 Rules	Probable Scriptural Allusions or References
	Chapter 1	
1	I.1 “serve God, our Lord, with all their hearts”	<u>Mk 12:30</u> “love the Lord your God with all your heart” (cf. Dt 6:5) <u>Dt 11:13</u> “to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul Mt 4:10, cf. Dt 6:13

⁵⁷ The Reina-Valera Antigua was translated and published in 1569 by Casiodoro de Reina and later revised and published by Cipriano de Valera in 1602. <https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/Reina-Valera-Antigua-RVA-Biblia/>.

84 • Scriptural Echoes and Allusions

	1726 Rules	Probable Scriptural Allusions or References
2	I.2 keep your heart pure	Mt 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart Ps 24:4; 73:1; 1 Tim 1:5; 2 Tim 2:22; 1 Pe 1:22
3	I.3 our Lord Jesus, our Savior	Lk 2:11; Mt 1:21; 2 Tim 1:10; Tit 1:4 Christ Jesus our Savior; 3:6; 2 Pe 2:20 the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
4	I.5 charity, humility	Col 3:12 humility; 3:14 love; Eph 4:2; 1 Tim 4:12
5	I.6 not to aspire towards empty self-esteem...to fix her eyes upon Jesus Christ, who chose to suffer humiliations and contempt for us	Phil 2:1-8 (2:3-4); Rom 12:16 Heb 12:2 while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus Rom 15:3 For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, "The insults of those who insult you fall upon me. Mk 9:12; Lk 23:11 1 Pe 2:23
6	I.8 mutual love and union of wills... by their love they show they belong to Jesus (<i>mas por la charidad Jesus conoce a las ovejas de surebaño</i> , lit. by charity Jesus recognizes the sheep of his flock)	Phil 2:2 by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing; Jn 10:3-4.14-16.26-27; 13:35; Rom 12:10 love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Rom 15:5 to think in harmony[b] with one another, in keeping with Christ Jesus, 6 that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.; 1 Thess 3:12; Rom 12:1-2.10; Col 1:10 2 Cor 7:1 perfection of holiness 1 Pe 3:8 Finally, all of you, be of one mind, sympathetic,

	1726 Rules	Probable Scriptural Allusions or References
		loving toward one another, compassionate, humble.
7	I.9 humility (see I.5)	James 3:13-14
8	I.10 bring back an erring sister	1 Jn 5:16; James 5:16.19-20
9	I.13 Jesus carried his cross out of His love for us	Jn 19:16-17; Heb 12:2; 1 Pe 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed
10	I.14 persevering in the divine service	Rom 2:7 eternal life to those who seek glory, honor, and immortality through perse- verance in good works; Lk 8:15; James 5:11 Indeed we call blessed those who have persevered
11	I.16 faithful in the observance of the divine commandments	Dt 30:16.19-20; Dt 6:17
12	I.22 labor of their hands...place confidence in the providence of the merciful and compassionate God	1 Thess 2:9; 3:11; Mt 6:25-34; Lk 12:22-31; 1 Cor 4:12; 2 Cor 1:3; Eph 2:4-7; Ps 136
13	I.23 no one should have her private property	Acts 4:32-34; 2:44-45
14	I.29 prayer is the food of the soul...to resist the temptations of the devil	Mk 14:38; Mt 26:41; Lk 22:40; 1 Thess 5:16; James 1:12; Ps 54:6; 107:9
15	I.30 true life ... eternal blessedness	Jn 14:6; 3:16; Mt 5:3-12
16	I.37 works to be offered to God...seeking God's glory... wrath of justice	1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:17; Jn 8:50; 2 Pe 2:9; 3:7
17	I.38 loving God...most loving Father	Jn 3:16; 15:9-10
18	I.39 love for Jesus... love poverty	Mk 10:21; Lk 18:22; 2 Cor 4:14; 1 Pe 1:8

86 • Scriptural Echoes and Allusions

	1726 Rules	Probable Scriptural Allusions or References
19	I.41 purity of heart (see I.2)...idle and unbecoming words to be avoided	Titus 3:2; Col 3:7-9; 4:6
20	I.42 Jesus obeyed His enemies	Mk 14-15; Mt 26-27; Lk 22-23; Mt 5:43-48; Lk 6:27-36
21	I.44 Jesus Christ, being sinless had suffered much ignominy	Heb 4:15; 1 Pe 2:22-24
22	I.49 glory of God (see I.37) salvation of souls	Jn 17:4 1 Pe 1:9, James 1:21
	Chapter II	
23	II.4 light and darkness, flesh and spirit, following Christ and rejecting Him	Jn 1:4-5; 3:6; 13:20; 15:23; Lk 10:16 Jn 6:63; Gal 5:16-24; Rom 8:1-39
24	II.5 bear faults...forgive... charity... child of God	Col 3:12-15; Rom 15:1; Gal 6:2; Rom 8:16; Eph 4:1-3; 5:1-2; 1 Jn 3:2;
25	II.6 peacemakers are called children of God	Mt 5:9; Rom 12:19; Col 3:12-16
26	II.7 peace and concord with all	1 Cor 14:33; 2 Cor 13:11; Rom 14:19
27	II.8 tongue that foment arguments	Eph 4:29; James 3:2-10; Mt 12:36-37; Prov 15:1; Ps 34:13
28	II.9 fruits of worldliness	Gal 5:19-21; James 1:19-20; Eph 4:17-24
29	II.10 sympathize with the failures of others... (see II.5)	Rom 15:1 We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves; 2 Cor 1:3-4; Rom 12:15; 1 Pe 3:8; Mt 18:33
30	II.11 charity and perfection	Eph 5:2; 1 Cor 13:4-7; Gal 5:13; Mt 5:48; Lk 6:36
31	II.12 partiality	James 2:1ff; 1 Tim 5:21; Rom 2:11; Acts 10:34-35; 1 Pet 1:17; Dt 1:17; 16:19
32	II.16 do good to others...[not] neglecting self	1 Cor 9:27

From the list given above, nos. 6 and 25 are clear allusions (Rule I.8 to Jn 10; Rule II.6 to Mt 5:9). The linguistic and thematic links are unmistakable. Nos. 5, 9, 21 may be called *global* allusions, considering that they refer to the suffering of the Lord Jesus and not to particular texts of the Bible. The list above also shows the most alluded book of the Bible in the *1726 Rules*, for example, the letters of Paul, the Pastoral Letters and the Catholic letters.

Analysis of Selected Provisions of the *1726 Rules*

Only five cases will be analyzed in this paper, namely, nos. 2, 5, 6, 12, 25. Nos. 2, 6 and 25 will be treated together. The analysis will use the Spanish text of the 1726 Rules, respecting the spelling and phrasing of the original document. This will be compared with the Spanish Bible Reina Valera Antigua edition. The purpose of comparison is only to show the possible extent of similarity and difference.

Nos. 2, 6 and 25

These numbers are chosen because of the presence of expression that alludes to a known Scripture text, particularly no. 6 - Rule I.8 and no. 25 – Rule II.6. No. 2 –Rule I.2 will be treated here in connection with no. 25.

No. 6 – Rule I.8 “In order to please God all should have mutual love and affectionate union of their wills because discord is a great obstacle to attain perfection. Moreover, by charity Jesus recognizes the sheep of his flock. (2019)

Rule I.8 presents the goal which is to please God and the means, “to have mutual love and affectionate union of wills.” The motives are given; the first refers to the negative effect of discord and the second to the value of charity.

*I.8 Para àgradar àDios todas tengan
un àmor mutuo, y Cariñosa union
desus Voluntades; pues ladiscordia
es ungran estorbo para alcanzar
la perfeccion. Mas porla Charidad
Jesus conoce àlas ovejas desu rebaño.*

This Rule contains several expressions that may allude to Scriptures, such as “mutual love,” “union of wills,” “perfection,” and “sheep of his flock.” Among these, the last expression “sheep of his flock” clearly evokes the Shepherd Discourse in the Gospel of John. The statement “By charity Jesus knows the sheep of his flock” is not a citation from Scripture, but the expression “sheep of his flock” *las ovejas de su rebaño* unmistakably refers to Jn 10.

No	1726 <i>Constituciones y Reglas</i>	<i>Biblia Español</i> (RVA)
6	I.8 <i>Para àgradar ... Mas porla Charidad Jesus conoce àlas ovejas desu rebaño.</i>	Juan 10 1-El que no entra por la puerta en el corral de las ovejas 2-4.7-8.12-13 ovejas 11 Yo soy el buen pastor: el buen pastor su vida da por las ovejas. 14 Yo soy el buen pastor; y <u>conozco mis ovejas</u> , y las mías me conocen. 15 Como el Padre me conoce, y yo conozco al Padre; y pongo mi vida por las ovejas.

		16 <i>También tengo otras ovejas que no son de este redil; aquéllas también me conviene traer, y oirán mi voz; y habrá un rebaño, y un pastor.</i> 17 <i>Por eso me ama el Padre, porque yo pongo mi vida, para volverla á tomar.</i>
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The word *ovejas* appears several times in Jn 10. In Jn 10:14 Jesus says “*conozco mis ovejas, y las mías me conocen*,” “I know my sheep and my sheep know me,” and in Jn 10:16 Jesus says, “*y habrá un rebaño, y un pastor*,” “there will be one flock and one shepherd.” In Jn 10:17 Jesus refers to the Father’s love for him and his laying down his life. Rule I.8 combines the idea of Jesus’ knowledge of his sheep with the sheep belonging to his flock and with charity. The combination of these ideas brings a new utterance but is closely related to Jn 10:14.

The phrase “sheep of his flock” may also allude to Ps 100:3 “the sheep of his pasture” (NRSV), “the flock he shepherds” (NABRE), “*ovejas de su prado*” (RVA). The RVA uses *prado* instead of *rebaño*. Thus, the expression in Rule I.8 would be closer to Jn 10 rather than Ps 100.

The 1974 English translation of Rule I.8 is “Moreover, by their love they show that they belong to Jesus.” This translation does convey an allusion to Jn 10. However, the NIRV rendering of Ps 100:3 has “we are the sheep belonging to his flock.” There is a similarity of thought between the 1726 Rules (1974) and NIRV Ps 100:3. The *1726 Rules* (2019) gives a literal translation to bring out the allusion: “In order to please God all should have mutual love and affectionate union of their wills because discord is a great obstacle to attain perfection. Moreover, by charity Jesus recognizes the sheep of his flock.”

No. 25 - Rule II.6 The peacemakers are called children of God; these are the ones who live united among themselves with genuine charity, mutually bear their faults, and strive to correct with meekness not to avenge their offense but to avoid that of God's.

This Rule contains several expressions that allude to biblical texts: peacemakers, children of God, union of genuine charity, mutually bearing with one another's shortcomings. The first sentence is a clear allusion to the beatitude in Mt 5:9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

II.6 Hijos deDios son llamados los paci_
ficos; estos son losque viven entre
si Unidos converdadera charidad
sufren mutuamente sus Culpas,
ylas procuran corregir conmance
dumbre, nopara vengar su ofenza
sino para evitarla de Dios.

No	1726 <i>Constituciones y Reglas</i>	<i>Biblia Español</i> (RVA)
25	II.6 <i>Hijos deDios son llamados los pacificos</i>	Mateo 5:9 <i>Bienaventurados los pacificadores: porque ellos serán llamados hijos de Dios.</i> (RVA)

Rule II.6 uses the word "*pacificos*" which means peaceful. RVA has *pacificadores*. The Latin Vulgate has "*Beati pacifici: quoniam filii Dei vocabuntur.*" The Latin singular for *pacifici* is *pacificator*. The word "*pacificos*" appear in the *Ejercicios Spirituales de San Ignacio*, n. 278. The idea being communicated is the same but there is a different word used in the Rule. The close similarity between the expression of the Rule and the biblical text shows that Rule II.6 is an allusion to Mt 5:9. There is a change in the syntax and form. Mt 5:9 is a "blessed" saying containing a statement or proclamation and the

reason or motive. Rule II.6 is still a saying but does not reproduce the formulation of Mt 5:9. The idea is simply and directly stated.

No. 2 – Rule I.2 In all places and at all times; they should live in the presence of God our Lord; and in order to facilitate the exercise of this actual presence, they should keep their heart pure, separating themselves from all that could hamper it. (1974)

The English text has the expression “keep their heart pure.” One can recall the expression “pure of heart” in the Beatitude in Mt 5:8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (NRSV).

*I.2 Entodo lugar, y tiempo tengan àDios
Nuestro Señor presentte; y para facili_
tarse el exercicio deesta actual presen
cia, guarden su Interior con mucha_
pureza, àpartandose detodo loque pudie
re estobarla.*

No	1726 <i>Constituciones y Reglas</i>	<i>Biblia Español (RVA)</i>
2	1.2 <i>guarden su Interior con mucha_pureza</i>	Mt 5:8 <i>Bienaventurados los de limpio corazón: porque ellos verán á Dios.</i> James 4:8 <i>purificad los corazones</i> 1 Tim 1:5 <i>Pues el fin del mandamiento es la caridad nacida de corazón limpio, y de buena conciencia, y de fe no fingida</i> 2 Tim 2:22 <i>con los que invocan al Señor de puro corazón</i> 1 Pe 1:22 <i>maos unos á otros</i>

		<i>entrañablemente de corazón puro</i> Ps 24:4 <i>El limpio de manos, y puro de Corazón</i> Ps 73:1 <i>bueno es Dios á Israel, A los limpios de corazón.</i>
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The allusion in the English text of Rule I.2 is clearer because of the expression “pure of heart.” However, the Spanish text uses *interior* instead of *corazon*. Other biblical texts that refer to purity or cleanness of heart are James 4:8, 2 Tim 2:22, 1 Pe 1:22 and Ps 24:4. The Spanish text of this Rule and Mt 5:8 lack linguistic similarity. The relation of purity of heart and seeing God in Mt 5:8 may be compared with the relationship of interior purity with experiencing the presence of God. In Mk 7:19-21 Jesus clarifies that what comes from the outside does not make a person unclean. It is “from within people, from their hearts,” that evil thoughts, unchastity, theft and murder come. This is a text that may be related to Rule I.2. However, the biblical allusion in the Spanish text is not evident.

No. 5 – Rule I.6.

No one should aspire towards empty self-esteem of being prudent, wise and eloquent in speech, so that others may honor and praise her. It would be better for her to fix her eyes on Jesus Christ, who chose humiliations and contempt for us.

*I.6 Ninguna procure la Vana esti-
macion, dePrudente sabia, y eloquen-
te enel hablar, paraque las otras la
honrren, y àlaben; antesbien pongan
los ojos en JesuChristo, que escogió*

las humillaciones, y desprecios pornosotros.

Rule I.6 contains the following expressions that evoke some biblical expressions: “empty self-esteem,” “that others may honor and praise her,” “fix her eyes on Jesus Christ,” and “humiliations and contempt for us.” Not aspiring for empty self-esteem may lead us to think of Philippians 2:1-11.

No	1726 <i>Constituciones y Reglas</i>	<i>Biblia Español (RVA)</i>
5	<i>Ninguna procure la Vana estimacion,</i>	Filipenses 2:3 <i>Nada hagáis por contienda ó por vanagloria</i>
	<i>paraque las otras la honrren, y àlaben</i>	Mateo 6:2 <i>Cuando pues haces limosna, no hagas tocar trompeta delante de ti, como hacen los hipócritas en las sinagogas y en las plazas, para ser estimados de los hombres: de cierto os digo, que ya tienen su recompensa.</i>
	<i>antesbien pongan los ojos en JesuChristo que escogió las humillaciones, y desprecios pornosotros.</i>	Heb 12:2 <i>Puestos los ojos en al autor y consumidor de la fe, en Jesús; el cual, habiéndole sido propuesto gozo, sufrió la cruz, menospreciando la vergüenza, y sentóse á la diestra del trono de Dios.</i> Isa 53:8; Acts 8:33 1 Pe 2:21; 3:18

There is a correspondence in thought and language between Rule 1:6 and Phil 2:3 “Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory.” *Vana estimacion* in Rule I.6 corresponds to *vanagloria* in Fil 2:3. The counsel not to do things for the sake of being honored or praised may be related to what we find in Mt 6:2 where Jesus teaches to give alms but not for show, “*para ser estimados de los hombres*”. In 1 Thess 2:6 Paul tells the Thessalonians

that he did not seek praise from human beings. Jn 5:41.44 contrast praise from human beings and praise from God. What is said in Rom 12:16 is also related to the counsel in this Rule: “do not be wise in your own estimation” “*No sedís sabios en vuestra opinión.*” The last part of Rule I.6 has a clear allusion to Heb 12:2. The mention of Jesus’ humiliation may evoke Isaiah 53:8; Acts 8:33. The idea of Christ suffering for us is found in 1 Pe 2:21; 3:18. Rule I.6 contains many biblical allusions.

No. 12 – Rule I.22

Their ordinary support should come from the labor of their hands and occasionally they shall avail themselves of the services of a prudent and reliable man who will ask alms in their favor in towns for the love of God. They should place their confidence in the providence of the merciful and compassionate God.

*I. 22 Su Ordinario sustento salga
del trabaxo desus manos; mass
dequando enquando seserviran
de algun hombre prudente, y an_
ciano que ensufavor vaia àlos_
Pueblos apedir algunas limos
nas por amor deDios; tengan su_
confianza puesta en Dios, rico en
Misericordias conlos que confian
enSu providencia liberal, y misericordiosa.*

The first and last part of Rule I.22 that refer to the labor of one’s hands and trusting in God’s providence may have been inspired by Scripture texts. The advice to sustain one’s self by the labor of one’s hands may be based on Mother Ignacia’s own decision to support herself. She counseled her sisters to the same ideal of working to

sustain the community. This advice might not necessarily allude to Scripture, however, 1 Cor 4:12 where Paul talks about himself and his companions working with his own hands can be a support to the advice in this rule.

No	1726 <i>Constituciones y Reglas</i>	<i>Biblia Español (RVA)</i>
12	<i>Su Ordinario sustento salga del trabaxo desus manos;</i>	1 Corintios 4:12 Y trabajamos, obrando con nuestras manos:
	<i>tengan su confianza puesta en Dios, <u>rico en Misericordias</u> conlos que confían enSu providencia liberal, y misericordiosa.</i>	Efesios 2:5 Empero Dios, que es rico en misericordia, por su mucho amor con que nos amó Nehemias 9:17 Tú empero, eres Dios de perdones, clemente y piadoso, tardo para la ira, y de mucha misericordia, que no los dejaste. Ps 78:7 A fin de que pongan en Dios su confianza, Y no se olviden de las obras de Dios

The great mercy of God is presented in a lot of texts and in different ways in the Bible. The mercy of God is often associated with God's faithfulness and love (Dt 7:9.12; Ex 34:6). The expression "*rico en misericordia*" in Rule 1:22 is found in Eph 2:5. This is a clear instance of allusion. Putting one's trust in the God is also a biblical idea (Ps 40:4; 78:7; Isa 30:15; Jer 17:7). Jesus' teaching on confident dependence on God who knows our needs is found in Mt 6:25-34 and Lk 12:22-34. "*Su providencia liberal y misericordiosa*" captures the sense of these texts. There are certainly biblical allusions in Rule 1.22.

What is interesting about this Rule is that it brings us back to the original inspiration of Mother Ignacia when she made her decision after her retreat. She resolved to "remain at the service of the Divine Majesty"

and to earn her living “by the sweat of her brow.” The first sentence of Rule 1.22 expresses this decision. The *beatas* in the community would have to support their community by the labor of their hands. The last sentence of this Rule talks about the generous and merciful providence of God. This expresses Mother Ignacia’s confidence from the very start of her adventure in forming a religious community of native women that she had nothing to fear for God in his mercy would lead, guide and provide for her. Her trust in God’s providence is shown by her action of leaving the safety, security and comfort of her home. She left her home and her parents bringing with her only “a needle and a pair of scissors” as Murillo Velarde beautifully described. Rule I.22 counsels the *beatas* to be open to the help and support of others but also to be prudent in this regard. Thus, Mother Ignacia exemplifies in her community the Filipino saying “*Nasa Dios ang awa, nasa tao ang gawa*” (In God is mercy, work is for humans). For Mother Ignacia, the counsel to her companions is “*Tayo ay gumawa at ipaubaya ang lahat sa Diyos ng awa*” (“Let us work and leave the rest to God’s mercy”).

The analysis shows the influence of biblical thought and expressions in the *1726 Rules*, particularly in the sections that deal with the spiritual and communal life of the *beaterio*. The rules were written not with the Bible at hand but based on what Mother Ignacia and her companions remembered from the teachings drawn from the Bible, particularly the Gospels and the letters. The provisions analyzed and presented in this essay are limited to five (I.2, 1.6, 1.8, 1.22, II.6) of the thirty-five identified texts that contain biblical allusions and echoes. Below is a summary of the Scripture allusions in these Rules and the corresponding themes.

1726 RULES	SCRIPTURE TEXTS	THEME
I.2 In all places and at all times; they should live in the presence of God our Lord; and in order to facilitate the exercise of this actual presence, they should keep their heart pure, separating themselves from all that could hamper it.	Mt 5:8 – “Blessed are the pure in heart...” Ps 24:4; 73:1 – Purity as a condition for seeing/ knowing God 1 Tim 1:5 – Love from a pure heart 2 Tim 2:22 – Pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with a pure heart	Purity of heart and intentions Being always in God’s presence
I.6 No one should aspire towards empty self-esteem of being prudent, wise and eloquent in speech, so that others may honor and praise her. It would be better for her to fix her eyes on Jesus Christ, who chose humiliations and contempt for us.	Phil 2:1–8 – Christ’s humility and self-emptying Heb 12:2 – Jesus as the pioneer and perfecter of faith Rom 15:3 – Christ did not please Himself Mk 9:12; Lk 23:11 – Christ’s suffering and humiliation	Humility, self-emptying, focus on Jesus Christ and imitation of him
I.8 In order to please God all should have mutual love and affectionate union of their wills because discord is a great obstacle to attain perfection. Moreover, by charity Jesus recognizes the sheep of his flock. (2019)	Phil 2:2 – Be of one mind and heart Jn 10:3–4,14–16,26–27; 13:35 – Jesus as the shepherd; disciples known by their love Rom 15:5 – Unity and harmony 1 Thess 3:9 – Joy in mutual love 1 Pt 3:8 – Sympathy, love, compassion	Unity, sisterly love and shared identity in Christ.
I.22 Their ordinary support should come from the labor of their hands and	1 Thess 2:9; 3:11 – Labor and concern for the community	Providence, trust, and grateful

1726 RULES	SCRIPTURE TEXTS	THEME
occasionally they shall avail themselves of the services of a prudent and reliable man who will ask alms in their favor in towns for the love of God. They should place their confidence in the providence of the merciful and compassionate God.	Mt 6:25–34; Lk 12:22–31 – Trust in divine providence 2 Cor 1:3 – God of all consolation Eph 2:4–7 – God’s mercy and grace Ps 136 – God’s steadfast love	confidence in God
II.6 The peacemakers are called children of God; these are the ones who live united among themselves with genuine charity, mutually bear their faults, and strive to correct with meekness not to avenge their offense but to avoid that of God’s.	Mt 5:9 – “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.”	Peacemaking as the characteristic identity of the Children of God

The emphases of each Rule are indicated in the chart below:

1726 Rules	Focus/Emphasis
I.2	Interior purity, not just external behavior, as foundational to love, faith, and communion with God and others; moral integrity, right intention, and a single-hearted desire for God.
I.6	Imitation of Jesus Christ’s humility and kenosis (self-emptying); following the spiritual path of union with Christ, sharing in His sufferings, and renouncing self-centeredness.
I.8	Communion and community, built on Christ-centered relationships; mutual understanding.

	compassionate listening and unity rooted in the shared love for Christ.
I.22	Deep trust in God's care, dispelling anxiety over material needs; confidence in divine mercy, spirit of thanksgiving for God's enduring love
II.6	Active role of peacemakers in community and in the world; peace-building linked with and founded on one's spiritual identity as God's children, affirming peace as a Christian vocation

In summary, the provisions of the 1726 Rules studied and analyzed here reflect a strong relational spirituality. Inner disposition, outward action, and community life are integrated in imitation of Christ. The emphases, interior transformation (purity of heart), Christ-like humility and service, communal unity and fraternal love, trust in God's providence and care, peacemaking as a Christian vocation, are relevant today for living our Christian faith as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ.

Synthesis and Conclusion

Mother Ignacia's knowledge of the Bible was mediated through Fr. Paul Klein, other Jesuit spiritual directors and the priests who celebrated the Mass during their time. This would be true also for her companions. Without having a Bible, they incorporated in the Rules words and expressions coming from Scriptures which they had learned and lived through the years. These came to them through listening to the conferences given in the retreats and the preaching during the Mass, as well as through reflection, prayer, and meditations during their retreat, especially the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. The scriptural allusions in the 1726 Rules might also have come from other sources, like the spiritual books in the *Beaterio* that were explanations or reflections on the Scriptures.

This study shows that although the *beatas* did not have direct access to the Bible, they were not deprived of the Word of God and its influence on their lives. As this can be said of the *Beatas de la Compañía de Jesús* of Mother Ignacia del Espíritu Santo, this could also be said of her contemporary Filipino Catholics who were earnest about knowing and living their faith. They too benefited from the Word of God presented to them by the missionaries through teaching, preaching, the liturgy and the sacraments and other means by which the faith is nourished, sustained and challenged to grow.

This study therefore provides evidence for the use of Scripture by the missionaries in their evangelizing efforts. They were able to do so through various means even if the lay faithful were not given access to direct reading of the Bible. Despite certain colonial and ecclesiastical restrictions, the missionaries succeeded in promoting the Word of God through various means. This reality should not be overlooked in the history of mission undertaken by Catholic missionaries in the Philippines.

The 1726 Rules, as noted above, represent a primary source for the study of the spiritual and religious life of women in the 17th century. This study complements K. Santner's brief study on the 1726 Rules which is included in the book *The Spanish Pacific 1521-1815*. This work is relevant to the discussion on the shaping of the Spanish Pacific and may be compared with similar literature in the 18th century.

The methodology in this study may be used by other religious congregations to uncover the Scriptural inspiration and underpinnings in the works of their founders or foundresses. The intertextual investigation of this study can be a pedagogical tool for critical thinking. The study provides an intertextual resource that can stimulate critical observations. It is an example of a process of moving from observation of apparent

intertextuality to making conceptual connections, recognizing historical echoes and parallels in contemporary realities. Intertextual study can also be used in Bible studies to see the connections of the Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament and the connections between the Scriptures and contemporary situations and realities.

“Establishing textual relations is an integral part of human communication as evidenced by a variety of social practices and discursive” and can be a potent pedagogical tool.⁵⁸ Intertextuality is an act of remembering. It is a process that makes us conscious of something that we know but perhaps cannot fully remember; but when we do remember, we experience the delight of the memory of literature, hidden in texts, revealed in intertexts and in their particular world and culture that addresses us today in our own particular contexts and cultures.

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⁵⁸ Ranamukalage Chandrasoma and Lalith Ananda, “Intertextualizing Interactive Texts for Critical Thinking: A South Korean EFL Experience,” *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies* 15, no. 2 (2018): 115-140.

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Two Dimensions of Transparency in the Digital Age: Material and Spiritual Aspects in Addressing Clergy Sexual Abuse

Henry Brang Mai Lazing, Hans Geybels, and Hans Zollner

Abstract: In addressing the clergy sexual abuse (CSA) crisis, transparency has become a major theme. From the perspective of media studies, and particularly through dialogue with the ideas of Canadian media thinker Marshall McLuhan, this research identifies two dimensions of transparency: static and dynamic. Static transparency emphasizes information disclosure, legal standards, policies, and procedures, adopting a zero-tolerance and straightforward approach to combating corruption. This dimension can be seen as fundamentally representing the structural aspect of transparency. Conversely, dynamic transparency embodies more the spiritual character of transparency. It is fluid, multidimensional, communicative, and dialogical. Rather than focusing on systems and structures, it prioritizes the personal element, conveys symbolic meanings, and considers contextual and proportional factors. While both dimensions of transparency can be useful in addressing CSA, they also have drawbacks. This research concludes that the effectiveness of applying the two dimensions of transparency in addressing CSA depends on the extent to which the needs of victims and survivors are prioritized.

Keywords: Catholic Church • Clergy Sex Abuse • Digital Media • Marshall McLuhan • Safeguarding • Transparency

Introduction

Transparency practices have emerged as a critical theme in addressing clergy sex abuse (CSA). Currently, two main groups of scholars have explored the topic of transparency in relation to CSA. The first group understands transparency in this context in terms of structural and procedural reforms in the Church; this includes e.g. the publication of the names of alleged perpetrators, establishing reporting channels, having external review boards, collaborating with civil

authorities, disclosing the handling process, enhancing bishops' accountability, and increasing lay participation in investigative bodies.¹ The second group sees transparency primarily in the perspective of the spiritual mission of the Church. For them, the Church should implement a transparency practice not because of the external influence from secular society, but because the Church must accomplish her mission, which may not always be understandable to the secular society.² It

¹ See Diane L. Barr, "Transparency vs. Privacy? Civil and Canonical Issues Regarding Releasing Lists of 'Credibly Accused' Clerics," *CLSA Proceedings* 83 (2022): 44-46; Patrick M. O'Brien, "Transparency as a means to rebuild trust within the Church: a case study in how Catholic dioceses and eparchies in the United States have responded to the clergy sex abuse crisis," *Church, Culture and Communication* 5, no.3 (2020): 479-480, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23753234.2020.1827962>; Sunny Kalapurackal, "An Ethical Analysis of Transparency and Accountability in Church Administration," *Asian Horizons* 14, no.2 (2020): 348-349; Francesco Cesareo, Special Report of the National Review Board to the Body of Bishops on the Sexual Abuse Crisis in the Church (report delivered to the body of the US bishops at the USCCB's Fall General Assembly in Baltimore, November 13, 2018); Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuses, Final Report Recommendations (Canberra: the Australian Government, 2017), 51, <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/recommendations>; Cardinal Reinhard Marx, "Transparency as a Community of Believers" (A speech delivered at the International Conference of Presidents of Bishops' Conferences "On the Protection of Minors in the Church," Vatican, 23 February 2019).

² Michael J. Mazza, "Bona Fama in an Age of 'Transparency': Publishing Lists of 'Credibly Accused' Clerics," *The Jurist: Studies in Church Law and Ministry* 78, no. 2 (2022): 457, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jur.2022.0020>; Cristian Mendoza and Carl Beekman, "Transparency Culture & Ecclesial Responsibility: Reflections on Institutional Communications," *Communication, Society and Media* 1, no.1 (2018): 3, <https://doi.org/10.22158/csm.v1n1p1>; Cristian Mendoza Ovando, "What kind of transparency for the Church? Proposing operational transparency for processes, solutions and decisions in the Catholic

seems that secular society tends to call for the first kind of transparency by demanding structural reform of the Church, while paying little attention to the spiritual and missionary aspect of the Church. There is rather limited scientific literature on transparency in addressing cases of CSA. While some work has been done in the study of transparency in the context of CSA, there remains more work to be done to bring more attention and competency to the matter.

In the digital age, media studies can provide a fresh insight into the concept of transparency in addressing CSA.³ Despite the negative portrayal of the Church in the general media, it is not particularly useful for the Church to hide its identity; instead, the Church should have the courage to be transparent and to demonstrate its continued relevance in contemporary society.⁴ Thus, this research will explore the notion of transparency from the perspective of media studies, establishing a theoretical

Church,” *Church, Communication and Culture* 5, no.2 (2020): 215-219, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23753234.2020.1767508>.

³ Revelation of CSA cases on digital platforms can have a great impact on the Church. See Massimo Faggioli and Mary Catherine O'Reilly-Gindhart, “A New Wave in the Modern History of the Abuse Crisis in the Catholic Church: Literature Overview, 2018–2020,” *Theological Studies* 82, no. 1 (March 2021): 167, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040563921995848>; Katherine W. Bogen, Michelle Haikalis, Richard J. Meza Lopez, Gabriela López, and Lindsay M. Orchowski, “It Happens in #ChurchToo: Twitter Discourse Regarding Sexual Victimization Within Religious Communities,” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 37, no. 3-4 (2022): 5 and 9, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520922365>; Bishop-Accountability.org, “Bishops Investigated under Vos Estis Lux Mundi,” accessed September 9, 2023, <https://www.bishop-accountability.org/bishops-investigated-under-vos-estis-lux-mundi-2/>.

⁴ Hans Geybels, “A Long History of Trial-and-Error,” in *Faith and Media: Analysis of Faith and Media: Representation and Communication*, ed. Sara Mels & Michel Walrave Hans Geybels (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2009), 20 and 22.

foundation for its implications in addressing CSA. In doing so, this research aims to contribute to enhancing the understanding also in contemporary society by proposing how the Church should employ the two dimensions of transparency in addressing CSA.

This research employs a literature review methodology. First, it will establish a theoretical foundation for the concept of transparency from both secular and Catholic perspectives. Secular sources encompass relevant literature from the fields of Governance and Administration, Marketing and Business Ethics, Political Science, and Law while Catholic sources include Catholic Social Teaching and the virtue ethics of Thomas Aquinas. In this stage, we will present the two dimensions of transparency: static and dynamic. Secondly, the two dimensions of transparency will be explored from the perspective of media studies. Particularly, the research will illustrate how the ideas of Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan illuminate the distinction between these two dimensions of transparency. Thirdly, the article continues to investigate how the two dimensions of transparency can be effectively applied in addressing CSA cases. To achieve this, the study explores patterns that represent the characteristics of these two dimensions of transparency within relevant literature on CSA. By examining these patterns, this research will identify both, the necessity and the potential drawbacks of each dimension of transparency in addressing CSA cases. Finally, the research provides a conclusion.

Theoretical foundation of transparency

There are two kinds of transparency: static transparency and dynamic transparency. Based on scientific sources, this research identifies the following

characteristics of static transparency. This first kind of transparency places an emphasis on a legal approach.⁵ As such, the purpose of static transparency is to counter corruption or wrongdoing. Based on fixed rules and regulations (i.e., the legal approach), transparency supports comprehensibility, meaning that through transparency, people easily get to know problems and develop ways to solve them.⁶ To accomplish this, transparency requires data, facts, and information.⁷ In this regard, static transparency can be defined as “the right to obtain official information.”⁸ As such, static transparency follows a material and instrumental approach and works at the level of data and facts accessed through media instruments.⁹ In addition, static transparency can be considered as a minimum requirement for justice as it counters wrongdoings or injustice done to someone.¹⁰ To accomplish this, a

⁵ See Christopher Hood, “Transparency in Historical Perspective,” in *Transparency: The Key to Better Governance?* ed. Christopher Hood and David Heald (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 5.

⁶ See Torbjörn Larsson, “How Open Can a Government Be? The Swedish Experience,” in *Openness and Transparency in the European Union*, ed. Veerle Deckmyn and Ian Thomson (Maastricht, Netherlands: European Institute of Public Administration, 1998), 40.

⁷ See Patrick Birkinshaw, “Freedom of Information and Openness: Fundamental Human Rights?” *Administrative Law Review* 58, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 189-190, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40712007>.

⁸ Paraskevas Nikiforos Diamandouros, “Transparency, Accountability, and Democracy in the EU” (lecture given at the School of Advanced International Studies of the Johns Hopkins University, Bologna, Italy, October 17, 2006), <https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/export-pdf/en/349>.

⁹ See Paddy Corry, “Openness is about more than Transparency,” October 29, 2018, <https://medium.com/serious-scrum/openness-is-about-more-than-transparency-a69c00ce0958>.

¹⁰ See Archon Fung, Mary Graham, and David Weil, *Full Disclosure: Perils and Promises of Transparency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), xii.

reasonable measure of accountability must be provided for the public.¹¹ Yet, this does not necessarily entail disclosing everything.¹² It is significant to note that the most prevalent element of the first kind of transparency is the provision and disclosure of information. The meaning of static transparency centers around information disclosure.

Regarding the second kind of transparency, João César das Neves and Antonino Vaccaro/Alejo José G. Sison draw on two Catholic sources—Catholic Social Teaching and the virtue ethics of Thomas Aquinas—to interpret it. This second kind of transparency seen through the lens of Catholic sources does not just mean information disclosure at the request of the public. Transparency understood in the field of business ethics is different from that of a Thomistic perspective: the former emphasizes information access, while the latter focuses on a more dialogical and holistic approach based on the virtue of truth.¹³ Transparency interpreted through the virtue of truth, in the light of Thomistic thought, is more comprehensive and holistic because there are three ethical considerations for truthfulness, which refer respectively to “the object,” “the intention,” and “the circumstances.”¹⁴ Thus, it is more dimensional

¹¹ See Anamarija Musa, Domagoj Bebić, and Petra Đurman, “Transparency and Openness in Local Governance: A Case of Croatian Cities,” *Harvatska I Komparativna Javna Uprava* 15, no. 2 (2015): 420, <https://doi.org/10.31297/hkju>.

¹² See Jane Mansbridge, “A ‘Selection Model’ of Political Representation,” *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 17, no.4 (2009): 386, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9760.2009.00337.x>.

¹³ João César das Neves and Antonino Vaccaro, “Corporate Transparency: A Perspective from Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 113 (2013): 641, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1682-6>.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 621-624; for his source, see also St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II q. 18, and CCC (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*) #1755.

and considers different perspectives to solve problems. In addition, through the virtues of prudence and justice, Thomistic thought offers how to maintain a balance between two radical poles: complete secrecy and unrestricted disclosure ; the virtue of prudence goes beyond mere rule-based transparency, while the virtue of justice ensures that information disclosure is proportionate to what justice requires.¹⁵ Moreover, in the light of Catholic Social Teaching, this second kind of transparency does not seek any economic profit through information disclosure.¹⁶ Transparency interpreted through Catholic Social Teaching emphasizes the respect for the dignity of the human person, envisages solutions and problems from multi-dimensional approaches, and engages in a dialogical interaction.¹⁷ Given its foundation in a religious context (i.e., the Catholic tradition), this type of transparency is guided by religious and spiritual principles. Table 1.1 shows the conceptualization between static transparency and dynamic transparency.

¹⁵ Ibid., 644-645.

¹⁶ See Antonino Vaccaro and Alejo José G. Sison, "Transparency in Business: The Perspective of Catholic Social Teaching and the 'Caritas in Veritate.'" *Journal of Business Ethics* 100 (2011): 20-24, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-011-1184-3>; Benedict XVI, "Caritas In Veritate: Encyclical Letter on Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth," June 29, 2009, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html; Antonino Vaccaro and Alejo José G. Sison, "Transparency in Business," 24-25.

¹⁷ See João César das Neves and Antonino Vaccaro, "Corporate Transparency," 644-645; Antonino Vaccaro and Alejo José G. Sison, "Transparency in Business," 20-24.

Table 1.1

Conceptualization between Static Transparency and Dynamic Transparency		
No.	Static Transparency	Dynamic Transparency
1.	Centers on legal standards	Centers on the dignity of a human person
2.	Linear approach (fixed rules and regulations)	Dialogical approach (listening, responsiveness, two-way communication, participation)
3.	Comprehensibility (easy to understand because of fixed regulations, more related to simplicity)	Seeing (trying to understand a situation from different perspectives, more related to complexity)
4.	Provision and Disclosure of Information	Human Interaction
5.	Reason alone	Reason alongside Spirituality and Religion
6.	Minimum requirement for justice (e.g., to combat corruption)	Beyond justice (e.g., seeing the demand of transparency in proportion to the value of the dignity of all persons involved)

The two dimensions of transparency from the perspective of media studies

To gain a comprehensive understanding of static transparency, we can examine its characteristics within the context of digital media through the lens of related concepts such as accountability, trust, freedom of speech, power, and authenticity. In this regard, we will focus on information disclosure, the most significant characteristic of static transparency, to interpret static transparency through these related terms. In the context of the digital online media, information disclosure can encourage the proper use of free expression,¹⁸ guarantee accountability,¹⁹ preserve a balance of power,²⁰ establish

¹⁸ Using the internet technology, people can raise their voice against injustice. See Qiongyou Pu and Stephen J. Scanlan, "COMMUNICATING INJUSTICE?: Framing and Online Protest Against Chinese Government Land Expropriation," *Information, Communication & Society* 15, no. 4 (2012): 572–90, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118x.2012.665937>.

¹⁹ The Fifth Estate, which means the role of ordinary media users, can hold a government accountable for their action. See William H. Dutton and Elizabeth Dubois, "The Fifth Estate: a rising force of pluralistic accountability," in *Handbook of Digital Politics*, ed. Stephen Coleman and Deen Freelon (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015), 53.

²⁰ The internet has the potential to foster a power equilibrium between entrenched governmental authority and grassroots movements. See Christian Fuchs, "Anonymous: Hacktivism and Contemporary Politics," in *Social Media, Politics and the State: Protests, Revolutions, Riots, Crime and Policing in the Age of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube*, ed. Daniel Trottier and Christian Fuchs (New York: Routledge, 2015), 89.

trust,²¹ and cultivate authenticity.²² However, in such context, information disclosure, the most significant property of static transparency, has been proven to cause privacy breaches,²³ obstruct accountability,²⁴ increase distrust,²⁵ trigger power abuse,²⁶ give rise to the abuse of

²¹ People have trust in the government if they are satisfied with the information provided on the government's website. See Eric W. Welch, Charles C. Hinnant, and M. Jae Moon, "Linking Citizen Satisfaction with E-Government and Trust in Government," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 15, no.3 (July 2005): 387, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3525668>.

²² According to Charles Taylor, relationships with others play a crucial role in forming one's authenticity. See Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 43-53. In this regard, in the digital age, in contrast to professionalism, an amateur vlogger's authentic performance can be recognized by the audience. It means the role of the audience plays a crucial role in establishing an amateur vlogger's authenticity. See Meredith Salisbury and Jefferson D. Pooley, "The #nofilter Self: The Contest for Authenticity among Social Networking Sites, 2002-2016," *Social Sciences* 6, no.1 (2017): 3, <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci6010010>.

²³ See Richard Spinello, "The Right to Privacy in the Age of Digital Technology," in *Privacy in a Digital, Networked World: Technologies, Implications and Solutions*, eds. Sherali Zeadally and Mohamad Badra (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2015), 293.

²⁴ A lack of proper gatekeeping can undermine accountability practices on digital platforms. See Bhanu Bhakta Acharya, "Media Accountability on Digital Platforms: The Role of Audience," *Amity Journal of Media & Communication Studies* 5, no. 1-2 (2015): 86-87.

²⁵ A news media's disclosure of errors in their Internet reports cannot remedy their users' trust because users have a very high expectation of the truthfulness of online news media. See Michael Karlsson, Christer Clerwall, and Lars Nord, "Do Not Stand Corrected: Transparency and Users' Attitudes to Inaccurate News and Corrections in Online Journalism," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 94, no. 1 (03, 2017): 148-167. doi:<http://dx.doi.org.kuleuven.ezproxy.kuleuven.be/10.1177/1077699016654680>.

²⁶ If those who are in a position of higher power use technology and focus only on information disclosure to monitor or put others under surveillance, they will become authoritarian dictators. In this regard, we need to pay "attention to more fluid workings of power,"

free expression,²⁷ and deviate from the fundamental concept of authenticity.²⁸ This paradoxical condition of static transparency requires another dimension of transparency so that a holistic and value-oriented transparency is reached, i.e. is dynamic transparency.

This second dimension of transparency has specific characteristics when examined through the lens of digital media. It considers contextual and proportional factors. According to empirical research, depending on a country's contextual factors, a government's or company's accountability and transparency can be enhanced not merely by means of digital technology but also by human interaction and dialogue.²⁹ However, in the digital age,

which can be brought about by the logic of “*regularizing control*,” according to which emphasis is placed on the “conditions and subjectivities produced by transparency” and transparency can be practiced in a more “communicative and discursive” way. See Mikkel Flyverbom, Lars Thøger Christensen, and Hans Krause Hansen, “The Transparency–Power Nexus: Observational and Regularizing Control,” *Management Communication Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (2015): 387 and 392, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318915593116>.

²⁷ Freedom of expression should be limited for several reasons, including the protection of individuals' reputations and privacy, and the prevention of offensive speech that could incite violence. See András Koltay, *New Media and Freedom of Expression: Rethinking the Constitutional Foundations of the Public Sphere* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2019), 29-43, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781509916511.ch-001>.

²⁸ According to Charles Taylor, authenticity means not only the realization of one's own humanity but also incorporating outside influences on the individual. See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 475; Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 41. However, in the digital age, the meaning of authenticity can vary depending on the definitions used by different social media platforms: for Facebook, authenticity means using “real names”; for Twitter, making “real-time updates.” See Meredith Salisbury and Jefferson D. Pooley, “The #nofilter Self,” 9-17.

²⁹ See Wilson Wong, and Eric Welch, “Does E-Government Promote Accountability? A Comparative Analysis of Website

there is “a tension” between the promotion of transparency and the concern for privacy.³⁰ This shows that information disclosure does not always guarantee the well-being of society and indicates the necessity of the principle of proportionality, highlighting the importance of dynamic transparency. Moreover, it is almost impossible to achieve an ideal state of transparency.³¹ For instance, Facebook’s business model depends on revealing their users’ information, and their transparency ideal is confronted with suspicion.³² In this regard, we should view transparency not as an end in itself, but as an ongoing process.³³ Holistic transparency, an ideal which is difficult to achieve, should be understood in symbolic or metaphorical terms, it should be regarded as something that strengthens safety, reliability, and respectful human relationships, and as an

Openness and Government Accountability,” *Governance (Oxford)* 17, no. 2 (2004): 278, 279, and 283, <https://doi-org.kuleuven.ezproxy.kuleuven.be/10.1111/j.1468-0491.2004.00246.x>.

³⁰ See Mikkel Flyverbom, *The Digital Prism: Transparency and Managed Visibilities in a Datafied World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 6.

³¹ Karl-Heinz Nassmacher, ‘Monitoring, control and enforcement of political finance regulation,’ in *Funding of Political Parties and Election Campaigns: Handbook Series*, ed. R. Austin and M. Tjernstrom (Stockholm: IDEA, 2003), 139; Jan Teurlings, and Markus Stauff, “Introduction: The Transparency Issue,” *Cultural Studies, Critical Methodologies* 14, no. 1 (2014): 4, <https://doi-org.kuleuven.ezproxy.kuleuven.be/10.1177%2F1532708613519184>.

³² See José Marichal, *Facebook Democracy: The Architecture of Disclosure and the Threat to Public Life* (London: Routledge, 2012), 7; Frederik Stjernfelt & Anne Mette Lauritzen, *Your Post Has Been Removed: Tech Giants and Freedom of Speech* (København, Denmark: Springer, 2020), 59–60.

³³ Hans Krause Hansen, Lars Thøger Christensen, and Mikkel Flyverbom, “Introduction: Logics of transparency in late modernity: Paradoxes, mediation and governance,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 18, no.2 (2015): 121, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1368431014555254>

ideal toward which the Church and society at large should always strive.³⁴ Viewing transparency as a symbol necessitates the second dimension referred to as dynamic transparency.

McLuhan and the two dimensions of transparency

Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980) was a Canadian media theorist. Although his ideas were initially unwelcomed by scholars and cultural icons,³⁵ they have gained significant relevance in the digital media age.³⁶ In this research, we will see how his ideas can be used as interpretive tools to distinguish the two dimensions of transparency in the context of the digital media.

McLuhan's idea of "figure" and "ground" can explicate the two dimensions. He writes, "Communication theory for any *figure* requires the inclusion of the *ground* for that figure and the study of the interplay between the *figure* and its *ground*."³⁷ According to his theory, while the

³⁴ Individuals convey meanings through the digital environment, which can be perceived as a symbolic realm. See Manuel Castells, *Communication Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), Xix; In this regard, achieving the ideal of transparency in the digital age, an aspiration since the Enlightenment, remains difficult; therefore, it is better to view the ideal of transparency in a more symbolic manner. See Lars Thøger Christensen and Joep Cornelissen, "Organizational Transparency as Myth and Metaphor," *European Journal of Social Theory* 18, no. 2 (2015): 132-49. <https://doi-org.kuleuven.ezproxy.kuleuven.be/10.1177%2F1368431014555256>.

³⁵ Paul Levinson, *Digital McLuhan: A Guide to the Information Millennium* (London: Routledge, 1999), 3.

³⁶ See Paul Levinson, *McLuhan in an Age of Social Media* (n.p.: Connected Editions, 2016), 1; Janine Marchessault, *Marshall McLuhan: Cosmic Media*, xv.

³⁷ Marshall McLuhan, *Letters of Marshall McLuhan*, selected and edited by Matie Molinaro, Corinne McLuhan, and William Teye (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), 467.

medium is the ground and invisible to human eyes, the content is visible.³⁸ The figure, which is the content, is only visible in relation to the ground, which is the medium. Applied to the topic of this paper, the disclosure of information, a characteristic of static transparency, should be balanced with other opposing values such as privacy, secrecy, and confidentiality. On a continuum between full disclosure and complete secrecy, transparency becomes the visible figure with secrecy as the invisible ground. In this way, we manage the dynamics of transparency through the principle of proportionality.³⁹ In light of McLuhan's "figure" and "ground" theory, we can conceive of the degrees of the two dimensions of transparency.

McLuhan's four laws of media⁴⁰ can help to understand the relation between the two dimensions of transparency. McLuhan argued that whenever a new medium is introduced, it produces four effects. First, the new medium enhances an existing one, according to his first law of media. For example, the internet enhances our physical communication. Through the internet, we can communicate with each other across geographical boundaries. According to the second principle, new advancements cause old media to become obsolete or outdated. The old medium becomes no longer useful. For example, with the rise of online communication through the internet, people are increasingly ignoring postal letters. However, the third principle states that outdated

³⁸ See Robert K. Logan, "Figure/Ground: Cracking the Medium Code," *E-Compós* 14, no.3 (2014), 2, <https://doi.org/10.30962/ec.709>.

³⁹ See Mikkel Flyverbom, *The Digital Prism*, 18; Clare Birchall, "Introduction to 'Secrecy and Transparency,'" *Theory, Culture & Society* 28, no. 7-8 (2011): 12, <https://doi-org.kuleuven.ezproxy.kuleuven.be/10.1177%2F0263276411427744>

⁴⁰ See Marshall McLuhan and Eric McLuhan, *Laws of Media: The New Science* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 98, 99, and 129.

media are transformed or retrieved into new forms. For example, older forms of in-person interactions become face-to-face online communication. The fourth principle states that when a new medium reaches its extreme form, it can reverse into its opposite. For example, the internet which in theory connects the whole world becomes a (siloe) “global village”, as coined by McLuhan. These four principles of media should be understood as general patterns in the development of media.⁴¹

These four principles can serve as a navigational tool to analyse the implications of the two dimensions of transparency. Transparency can enhance the fight against corruption by disclosing wrongdoings. However, when it obscures or pushes back contextual and proportional considerations, it can take on the form of totalitarianism in the advancement of surveillance technology.⁴² Thus, the benefit is reversed, transparency becoming an excuse for invading another’s personal privacy. Transparency can be either medicine or poison.⁴³ Information disclosure does not always guarantee wellbeing and, thus, this necessitates another dimension of transparency. In this way, McLuhan’s laws of media can help to understand better the respective importance of the two dimensions of transparency.

After exploring the two dimensions of transparency from the perspective of media studies, we can summarize them as follows. Static transparency can be regarded as

⁴¹ Robert K. Logan, *Understanding New Media: Extending Marshall McLuhan* (New York: Peter Lang, 2016), 453.

⁴² If a government focuses solely on monitoring the activities of its citizens without respecting their privacy, it risks transforming into a dictatorship. See Clare Birchall, “Introduction to ‘Secrecy and Transparency,’” 12 and 15.

⁴³ Yehezkel Dror, “Transparency and Openness of Quality Democracy,” in *Openness and Transparency in Governance: Challenges and Opportunities*, ed. Michael Kelly (Bratislava: NISPAcee, 2000), 62.

the material aspect of transparency, while dynamic transparency represents its spiritual aspect. The most significant characteristic of static transparency is the provision and disclosure of information. In addition, static transparency emphasizes legal standards, policies, and procedures, adopting a zero-sum and straightforward approach to combating corruption. It operates based on facts, information, and data. Given these characteristics, we can conclude that static transparency is fundamentally a material aspect of transparency. On the other hand, dynamic transparency embodies the spiritual character of transparency. It is fluid, multidimensional, communicative, and dialogical. Rather than focusing on systems and structures, it prioritizes the human element. It conveys symbolic meanings and considers contextual and proportional factors.

Overemphasizing a single dimension of transparency will not provide the complete picture of reality. As we have seen, information disclosure, a characteristic of static transparency, does not always guarantee the expected outcome. By applying the principle of proportionality, the value of privacy needs to be considered in relation to transparency. On the other hand, taking the dialogical approach of dynamic transparency, there is a risk that – in the name of spirituality (e.g. forgiveness, mercy) – sometimes the attitude towards offenders becomes too lenient. In such a situation, a more stringent form of transparency is needed. Applying legal standards and policy guidelines aims at achieving justice by taking the straightforward approach of static transparency. In the following section, we will examine the necessity and drawbacks of the two dimensions of transparency in addressing CSA.

The two dimensions of transparency in addressing CSA

Having identified the characteristics of the two dimensions of transparency, we will now explore their patterns in relevant literature on CSA to determine the necessity and drawbacks of each dimension in addressing CSA. First, it will be demonstrated why the characteristics of static transparency are necessary, supporting the appropriate use of the material aspect of transparency. Secondly, this study will highlight the potential drawbacks of static transparency, identifying the misuse of the material aspect of transparency. Thirdly, it will be examined why the characteristics of dynamic transparency are necessary, endorsing the spiritual aspect of transparency. Fourthly, the drawbacks of dynamic transparency will be pointed out, indicating the misuse of the spiritual aspect of transparency.

The necessity of static transparency: proper use of material aspect

During the 2019 Vatican summit on the protection of minors, in his speech *Transparency as a community of believers*, Cardinal Reinhard Marx explained why procedures, policies, administrations, and legal standards are necessary for the mission of the Church.⁴⁴ Based on *Lumen Gentium* (nos.1 and 8), he continued, “...the actions of the Church in this world cannot be strictly and solely spiritual. Neglecting the worldly aspects of the Church and its own laws, does not do justice to the reality of the Church.”⁴⁵ Administrative

⁴⁴ See Reinhard Marx, “Transparency as a community of believers.”

⁴⁵ Ibid.

procedures and policies are required because the Church encompasses both spiritual and material dimensions. These procedures and policies represent static transparency, which is the material aspect of transparency in addressing cases of CSA.

Due to the revelation of abuses in the 1980s and 1990s, bishops in the USA realized the need to establish safeguarding policies against abuse.⁴⁶ The revelation of these cases was a significant force driving bishops to take necessary measures. More significantly, the publication of CSA cases in the *Boston Globe* helped people understand that the issue was not just about “a few sinful clerics.”⁴⁷ This publication can be seen as an enlightening factor, helping people overcome the wrongful excuses given in the name of spirituality. Thus, we can say that information disclosure, a characteristic of static transparency, can help church leaders understand and acknowledge the magnitude of the abuse crisis.

Similarly, Poland provides a noteworthy example of the disclosure of CSA cases on digital platforms, which had a profound impact on Polish bishops, leading them to acknowledge the seriousness of CSA in the local context. On May 11, 2019, on the YouTube digital platform, the Sekielski brothers released the documentary *Tell No One*, which included stories of sexual abuses by clergy members, and cover-ups and denials of some of these abuses by Church authorities.⁴⁸ Within a short time, this documentary had reached more than 20 million

⁴⁶ Patrick M. O’Brien, “Transparency as a means to rebuild trust within the Church,” 459.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 460.

⁴⁸ Paulina Guzik, “An Unfinished Story of Conversion: Clerical Sexual Abuse in Poland: A Communications Case Study on Betrayal, Healing and Trust Recovery,” *Church, communication and culture* 5, no. 3 (2020): 435, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23753234.2020.1827963>.

viewers.⁴⁹ Shortly after the release of the documentary, the Polish Bishops' Conference "was forced to publicly admit, for the first time, that there is an ongoing crisis."⁵⁰ More importantly, because of the online publication of *Tell No One*, people came to realize the urgency of "protecting minors and taking care of victims of sexual abuse by the clergy."⁵¹ In this case, the disclosure of information, a characteristic of static transparency, has served as a driving force for church leaders to acknowledge the reality of the crisis and for people to recognize the urgency of protecting minors.

In the context of Australia, an empirical study published in 2015 revealed that the Church has two faces in responding to CSA cases: while it appears to comply with the public law, it denies responsibility to report to civil authorities.⁵² The Church seems indecisive and hesitant in addressing the problem. Thus, the paper proposes updating legal standards and reviewing the mandatory reporting system to effectively safeguard the wellbeing of children.⁵³ This research demonstrates the urgency of updating legal standards and reporting systems when expressions of spiritual power, appears to be an instrument enabling abuses. Counter-reactions through legal standards and procedural reforms may emerge whenever spiritual power enables abuse. In other words, the material aspect of transparency can become

⁴⁹ See Sekielski, "Tell No One," May 11, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrUvQ3W3nV4>.

⁵⁰ Paulina Guzik, "An Unfinished Story of Conversion," 418.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 440.

⁵² Michael Andre Guerzoni and Hannah Graham, "Catholic Church Responses to Clergy-Child Sexual Abuse and Mandatory Reporting Exemptions in Victoria, Australia: A Discursive Critique," *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* 4, no.4 (2015): 69, <https://doi.org/10.5204/ijcjsd.v4i4.205>.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

most relevant in response to seemingly unreasonable spiritual practices.

Drawbacks of static transparency: misuse of the material aspect

Cardinal Reinhard Marx also warns that administrative procedures and policies can be misused when these procedures and policies become ends in themselves, forgetting the higher goal of serving people.⁵⁴ Some church leaders have used their ecclesiastical power to cover up abuse cases. Susan Mulheron, Chancellor for Canonical Affairs in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, points out examples of the misuse of ecclesiastical power at the expense of CSA victims, such as the inability to enforce canonical punishment for abusers, undue protection of the reputation of individuals and institutions, and maintaining secrecy.⁵⁵ When canonical procedures and policies fail to serve the victims, they become merely tools to protect the institution's reputation. Similarly, Hans Zollner points out that survivors of abuse can be marginalized by the institutional church when it becomes self-protective rather than supportive; this can occur through the Church's bureaucratic administration, legal procedures, and delayed processes.⁵⁶ Legal standards, procedures, and policies are characteristics of static transparency, representing the material aspect of transparency.

⁵⁴ Reinhard Marx, "Transparency as a community of believers,"

⁵⁵ Susan Mulheron, "An Overview of Issues, Challenges, and Canon Law," in *Clerical Sexual Misconduct: An Interdisciplinary Analysis*, ed. Jane F. Adolphe and Ronald J. Rychlak (Providence, Rhode Island: Cluny Media, 2020), 159.

⁵⁶ Hans Zollner, "Safeguarding Minors: Challenges and Perspectives," in *Safeguarding: Reflecting on Child Abuse, Theology and Care*, eds. Karlijn Demasure, Katharina A. Fuchs, and Hans Zollner (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 225.

Misusing the material aspect of transparency can occur when legal standards and procedures become ends in themselves, rather than means to protect victims and survivors.

In her analysis of the contexts of the US and Ireland regarding codes of conduct for Church personnel, Angela Senander, Professor of Theology, observes that the Catholic Church in the US has learned from corporate business models to establish a culture of accountability and transparency in the wake of the CSA crisis; in contrast, the Church in Ireland emphasizes values in its safeguarding policy and is less legalistic.⁵⁷ In this regard, she cautions that merely copying these codes of conduct from business models could overlook the importance of the Church's mission and lead Church leaders to "complacency" in addressing the abuse crisis.⁵⁸ In other words, Church leaders might develop a sense of self-satisfaction, believing that simply having codes of conduct and legal standards in place is sufficient. Therefore, Senander proposes codes of conduct based on Gospel values, particularly the meaning of mindfulness inspired by Christian tradition, to combat complacency.⁵⁹ Similarly, Douglas Hugh Russell et al. observe that even though safeguarding policies, guidelines, and procedural standards have been established in the Catholic Church, it is unclear how capable church leaders are of implementing these policies and guidelines.⁶⁰ It seems

⁵⁷ Angela Senander, "Beyond Scandal: Creating a Culture of Accountability in the Catholic Church," *Journal of Business Ethics* 146 (2017): 860-863, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3217-4>.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 862 and 864.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 866.

⁶⁰ Douglas Hugh Russell, Daryl John Higgins, Lottie Harris, Angela Rinaldi, Marcus Pound, and Hans Zollner, "The safeguarding capability of adults in Catholic Church ministries: A global perspective," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 153 (2024): 3-4, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2024.106801>.

necessary to state that merely having procedural standards and codes of conduct does not guarantee the strong commitment and willingness of Church leaders to implement them, let alone their effective implementation. Standards and codes represent the material aspect of transparency, referred to as static transparency in this research. Without the strong commitment and willingness of Church leaders, these codes and standards will remain ineffective in protecting minors and vulnerable adults. Neglecting one's responsibility to implement procedures and policies is a lack of attending to the material aspect of transparency.

Necessity for dynamic transparency: proper use of the spiritual aspect

To repair broken trust, besides implementing structural reforms and establishing norms, there is also need for a spiritual conversion of heart. In Poland, people's trust in the Catholic Church has decreased due to the recent crisis of clergy sex abuse cases. To regain trust in this context, Paulina Guzik lists five recommendations: initiating proper investigations, holding wrongdoers accountable, seeking justice for victims, making genuine reforms, and practicing transparency.⁶¹ All these measures represent the characteristics of static transparency. In addition to these characteristics, Guzik emphasizes the importance of transformation, particularly the conversion of hearts, as an integral part of the process. The scholar claims, "But again, the starting point should be the conversion of heart and mind to put victims first and fulfill their duties of being good pastors, with the same priorities as

⁶¹ Paulina Guzik, "An Unfinished Story of Conversion," 446-448.

Jesus.”⁶² As discussed above, the religious and spiritual aspect is considered a characteristic of dynamic transparency in this research. We cannot neglect the importance of this spiritual aspect in our mission to safeguard minors and vulnerable adults.

Chile also provides another example of the proper application of the spiritual aspect of transparency. In the context of Chile, regarding Pope Francis’ handling of the case involving Bishop Juan Barros and the cover-up, Austen Ivereigh, claims that the pope himself was ensnared by the complex mechanisms of protocols and norms, making him unable to see Barros’ cover-up crime.⁶³ Later, according to Ivereigh, the Pope recognized two important points: (1) acts of abuse and cover-ups are not only “sins” but also “crimes,” and (2) establishing “judicial mechanisms” is insufficient without understanding that the problem is rooted in “the heart of faith.”⁶⁴ Thus, the biographer claims, “Legal and institutional reform was necessary but inadequate. Only prayer and fasting, and a process of conversion, could purify the Church.”⁶⁵

As shown above, Senander proposes “mindfulness” to overcome the attitude of “complacency,” which can arise from the self-satisfaction of merely having codes of conduct. In particular, the scholar draws insights from Pope Francis’ application of Ignatian spirituality to combat complacency.⁶⁶ By adopting Ignatian spirituality as a method of mindfulness, one can continuously evaluate and reflect on whether established codes of

⁶² Ibid., 448.

⁶³ Austen Ivereigh, *Wounded Shepherd: Pope Francis and His Struggle to Convert the Catholic Church* (Henry Holt and Company, 2019), 106.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 107.

⁶⁶ Angela Senander, “Beyond Scandal,” 865-866.

conduct, safeguarding policies, and legal standards are being properly implemented. This approach helps us to remain vigilant and proactive, rather than becoming inactive and complacent with the mere existence of codes of conduct and procedural standards. The act of reflection, or mindfulness, can be regarded as a characteristic of dynamic transparency, as it fosters a more robust and in-depth understanding of procedures and policies, helping to overcome complacency. In this way, we can properly make use of the spiritual aspect of transparency.

Drawbacks of dynamic transparency: misuse of the spiritual aspect

One drawback of using dynamic transparency to address the crisis of abuse cases is its potential misuse within the balance between the obligation for disclosure and the need for privacy. Due to the overemphasis of confidentiality, privacy, or secrecy, this delicate balance can be upset, resulting in cover up of abuse cases. Specifically, in dealing with clergy sex abuse cases, the Catholic Church maintained the practice of neglectfulness, hiding, secrecy, and cover up for a very long time, until Pope John Paul II made a first public apology in 1998.⁶⁷ Pope Francis cut down this disproportionate use of secrecy by eliminating the application of the norm of papal secrecy when it comes to cases of CSA.⁶⁸ Considering the proportionality between

⁶⁷ Faisal Rashid and Ian Barron, "The Roman Catholic Church: A Centuries Old History of Awareness of Clerical Child Sexual Abuse (from the First to the 19th Century)," *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse* 27, no. 7 (July 24, 2018): 790, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538712.2018.1491916>.

⁶⁸ See Giovanni Tridente, "Hans Zollner: 'The Holy See is committed to the safety of minors,'" November 28, 2020, <https://omnesmag.com/en/newsroom/interview-zollner-abuses/>.

disclosure and secrecy is regarded a characteristic of dynamic transparency in this research. Misusing this principle of proportionality can be seen as the misuse of the spiritual aspect of transparency because it involves exploiting religious practices of secrecy to cover up abuses.

In addition, an undue spirit of fraternal concern for perpetrators can lead to covering up abuse cases. This happens when Church leaders and faithful are too lenient or place unreasonable and unjustified emphasis on mercy or forgiveness for perpetrators. Rather than seeking justice for victims, church leaders might mishandle abuse cases by simply transferring perpetrators from one place to another, misinterpreting fraternal concern for the latter as a proper spiritual practice. In this regard, Zollner highlights the danger of misinterpreting “mercy” for perpetrators, which can stem from “a culture of cheap forgiveness” and dangerously promote the “relativization of the harm caused.”⁶⁹ As discussed earlier, a dialogical approach is considered a characteristic of dynamic transparency. However, placing undue emphasis on this dialogical approach can be viewed as a misuse of the spiritual aspect of transparency because it neglects the justice owed to victims, focusing excessively on the spiritual care for perpetrators.

Perceiving the abuse crisis as a contextual factor can be a drawback of dynamic transparency. Sometimes, the issue is viewed as being relevant only to the Western

⁶⁹ Hans Zollner SJ, “The Child at the Center: What Can Theology Say in the Face of the Scandals of Abuse?” *Theological Studies* 80, no. 3 (2019): 695, 699-700, <https://doi-org.kuleuven.e-bronnen.be/10.1177/0040563919856867>.

context.⁷⁰ Reflecting on the crisis of clergy abuses from the perspective of Asia, Cardinal Luis Antonio G. Tagle acknowledged, “When the crisis erupted in the Northern Hemisphere, there was a tendency to think the problem was mainly tied to Western cultures.”⁷¹ In the past, even Pope John Paul II understood it as “an American problem.”⁷² However, the abuse crisis is a global issue.⁷³ As discussed earlier, incorporating contextual factors into transparency practices is a key feature of dynamic transparency. Nonetheless, using these factors as a justification to overlook the abuse crisis within one’s own contexts can constitute a misuse of dynamic transparency.

Conclusion

Drawing inspiration from media studies, particularly the ideas of Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan, we can distinguish between two dimensions of transparency in addressing CSA cases. The first dimension, known as static transparency, focuses on the provision and disclosure of information. It adopts a

⁷⁰ See Hans Zollner, “Safeguarding Minors: Challenges and Perspectives,” 226; Shaji George Kochuthara, “Editorial: Crisis in the Church,” *Asian Horizons* 14, no. 2 (June 2020), 285.

⁷¹ Archbishop Luis Antonio G. Tagle, “Clergy Sexual Misconduct: Some Reflections from Asia,” in *Toward Healing and Renewal: The 2012 Symposium on the Sexual Abuse of Minors Held at the Pontifical Gregorian University*, ed. Charles J. Scicluna, Hans Zollner, and David John Ayotte (New York: Paulist Press, 2012), 80.

⁷² Jo Renee Formicola, *Papal Policies on Clerical Sexual Abuse: God Weeps* (New York: Peter Lang), 39.

⁷³ See María-Paz López, “Church communication highlights 2018,” *Church, Communication and Culture* 4, no.1 (2019): 15, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23753234.2019.1565924>; Massimo Faggioli and Mary Catherine O’Reilly-Gindhart, “A New Wave in the Modern History of the Abuse Crisis in the Catholic Church: Literature Overview, 2018–2020,” 160.

straightforward approach to combating corruption, operating at the level of data and facts from a material and instrumentalist perspective. This form of transparency emphasizes tangible elements such as legal procedures, policies, and structural reforms, and thus can be regarded as the material aspect of transparency. On the other hand, there is a second dimension of transparency, which can be regarded as its dynamic aspect. This dimension is fluid, multidimensional, communicative, reflective, spiritual, and dialogical. Beyond mere information disclosure, it considers contextual and proportional factors in its application. Instead of focusing on structures and systems, it prioritizes the personal element, conveying symbolic meanings in our pursuit of the ideal of transparency.

Characteristics of static transparency, such as legal procedures and administrative processes, are necessary in addressing CSA because the Church has both spiritual and material dimensions. Information disclosure, a key feature of static transparency, can enlighten church leaders and individuals to overcome wrongful excuses made in the name of spirituality, acknowledge the magnitude of the abuse crisis, and recognize the urgency of protecting victims. Whenever spiritual power appears to enable abuses, counter-reactions through legal standards and procedural reforms, which are characteristics of static transparency, may emerge. In this way, the material aspect of transparency is essential in addressing CSA. However, this material aspect of transparency can be misused when policies, procedures, and standards become ends in themselves, forgetting to serve the victims and survivors and instead are used primarily to protect institutions. Additionally, church leaders may become complacent without a strong commitment to implementing these policies and procedures.

In a similar vein, characteristics of dynamic transparency, such as spiritual conversion of hearts, the practice of reflection and mindfulness, and reaching out to those most in need are essential in addressing CSA cases. Through these practices, intentions of institutions and individuals are purified to protect victims and to be transparent with them in processes and relationships. That will help to develop a more robust and in-depth understanding of procedures and policies, helping us to overcome complacency. In other words, the spiritual aspect of transparency is essential to complement the material aspect of transparency. However, on the other side, certain possible pitfalls of dynamic transparency, such as an undue focus on dialogue and an overemphasis on contextual and proportional factors, can lead to a cover-up of abuses, neglecting the needs of the victims and obfuscating the truth.

The benchmark for effectively applying the two dimensions of transparency in addressing CSA cases is prioritizing the needs and rightful expectations of victims and survivors. When one focuses on this, characteristics of static transparency such as legal standards, safeguarding policies, and administrative procedures become meaningful. In this context, the material aspect of transparency is essential for protecting minors and vulnerable adults. Similarly, by adopting practices such as reflection, mindfulness, and conversion of heart, it can be ensured that dynamic transparency also becomes crucial for their protection. This approach promotes the proper use of the spiritual aspect of transparency.

Conversely, the two dimensions of transparency can become tools that enable abuse if the needs of victims and survivors are not considered as they should. Thus, the benchmark is how much the Church prioritizes victims and survivors when applying these two dimensions in addressing CSA.

For further research, the two dimensions of transparency should be more thoroughly elaborated in the context of the synodality project. The culture of transparency aligns perfectly with the objectives of synodality. A report titled *A Synodal Church in Mission: Synthesis Report*, issued by the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (October 4-29, 2023, Vatican City), under the section “The Bishop in Ecclesial Communion,” states, “Integral to a synodal Church is ensuring a culture of transparency and respect for the procedures established for the protection of minors and vulnerable people. It is necessary to develop further structures dedicated to the prevention of abuse.”⁷⁴ This report promotes the synodality project and emphasizes the importance of transparency in terms of structural reforms. This understanding of transparency aligns more with the characteristics and patterns of static transparency. Moreover, the report acknowledges the difficulty a bishop might face in reconciling his two opposing roles as a “father” and a “judge” in applying transparency to address the abuse crisis.⁷⁵ These roles can be seen as representing the two dimensions of transparency. As a judge, a bishop must adopt a straightforward approach to addressing abuses, reflecting the characteristic of static transparency. Conversely, as a father, a bishop may encounter challenges in mediating between a clergy abuser and a victimized faithful, indicating the dynamic aspect of transparency. Future research should investigate how

⁷⁴ XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *A Synodal Church in Mission: Synthesis Report* (Vatican: General Secretariat of the Synod, 2023), <https://www.synod.va/en/the-synodal-process/phase-2-the-discernment-of-the-pastors/the-first-sessionofthe-XVI-assembly.html>.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

these two dimensions of transparency can be understood within the framework of the synodality project.

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Understanding Pope Francis' World Communications Day Messages for Intercultural Communication Competencies in a Digital, Globalized World: A Quantitative Study

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Abstract: This study examines the significance of Pope Francis' World Communications Day Messages in enhancing the intercultural communication competencies of various stakeholders in the information and communications fields, including journalists, media professionals, opinion editors, educators, pastors, pastoral workers, and the general public. Through a quantitative and conceptual content analysis of his World Communications Day texts ($N=11$) released from January 2014 to January 2024, we identified three core competencies: embracing a faith-based perspective of reality, cultivating empathetic listening, and communicating truthful information and content with charity in a multicultural context. The findings highlight the critical role of Pope Francis' messages in fostering these competencies. Moreover, they provide actionable insights and clear guidance for their intended audiences, offering practical strategies for engaging in constructive forms of communication, such as open dialogue, active listening, and respectful disagreement, which counteract prejudice, encourage a culture of encounter, and promote positive interactions.

Keywords: Church, • Content Analysis • Information and Communication Technologies • Intercultural Communication Competencies • Pope Francis

Context and Background of the Study

The unprecedented rise of modern information and communications technologies (ICTs) has made digital interactions almost inevitable alongside globalization. It made the world smaller, bringing a divided world and its people closer together and transforming it into a global village, as the Canadian media scholar Marshall

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McLuhan once predicted.¹ It transcends diverse cultural backgrounds and fosters more significant engagement with mass media technology than its traditional counterparts, the printing press in 1450, the radio in the 1890s, and television in the early 1920s.² This digital progression has taken communication, information access, and virtual group formation to a new level. Social media fundamentally alters public discourse and cultural norms, making it more challenging to decipher factual truth. They have changed the world like never before, and thus, understanding their impact is vital for navigating the contemporary epoch.³ Moreover, as the most popular and pervasive application of ICT, combining communication with entertainment, social media has also changed how people interact and communicate, whether chatting on a website, using video calls, or participating in online role-playing games.⁴ Social media is a term used to describe the interaction between groups or individuals in which they produce, share, and sometimes exchange ideas, images, videos,

¹ Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *War and Peace in the Global Village* (Berkeley, CA: Gingko Press, 2001), 45.

² Jack Lule, *Globalization and Media: Global Village of Babel* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2021), 2-4; Roger Silverstone and Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Routledge, 2004).

³ Kylie Jarrett et al., "Dialogues on Digital Society." *Dialogues on Digital Society* (2024): 29768640231216824; Veronica Müllerová and Jaroslav Franc, "What is Changing in Papal Communication with the Rise of Social Media?" *Church, Communication and Culture* 8, no. 2 (2023): 205-226; Michelle Martini, "The Catholic Church and the Media: A Text Mining Analysis of Vatican Documents from 1967 to 2020," *Journal of Media and Religion* 21, no. 3 (2022), 155-173.

⁴ Donald J. Leu, "Toward a Theory of New Literacies Emerging from the Internet and Other Information and Communication Technologies," in *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading*, 5th ed., Robert B. Ruddell and Norman J. Unrau, eds. (Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2004), 1570-1613.

and many more over the internet and in virtual communities.⁵

The book “The Digital Divide: Perspectives on Social Media Era” by Bauerlein delves into pressing issues spawned by digital social media platforms like Twitter, Meta (aka Facebook), Instagram, and TikTok, which kindle debates over their impacts on cultures, education, health, business, politics, information access, and societal progress.⁶ On one side of this range of views are the critics who argue that online interactions degrade social manners, diminish reading cultures, and harm, especially the youth through non-stop digital exposure.⁷ In its January 2024 report, the World Economic Forum revealed that 490 global experts identified misinformation and disinformation as the primary short-term risks for the next two years.⁸ They emphasized the urgent need for cooperation on international issues, given the unstable global order marked by polarizing narratives and insecurity, and suggested that new approaches are essential for addressing these risks. On the opposite side

⁵ Narasimha B. Rao & V. Kalyani, “A Study on Positive and Negative Effects of Social Media on Society,” *Journal of Science & Technology (JST)* 7, no. 10 (2022): 46-54.

⁶ Mark Bauerlein, *The Digital Divide: Arguments for and Against Facebook, Google, Texting, and the Age of Social Networking* (London: Penguin, 2011).

⁷ Rao and Kalyani, “A Study on Positive and Negative Effects of Social Media”; Shabnoor Siddiqui, and Tajinder Singh, “Social Media: Its Impact with Positive and Negative Aspects,” *International Journal of Computer Applications Technology and Research* 5, no. 2 (2016): 71–75; Vishranti Raut & Prafulla Patil, “Use of Social Media in Education: Positive and Negative Impact on the Students,” *International Journal on Recent and Innovation Trends in Computing and Communication* 4, no. 1 (2016): 281-285.

⁸ World Economic Forum, *Global Risks 2024: Disinformation Tops Global Risks 2024 as Environmental Threats Intensify*, accessed September 8, 2024 @ <https://www.weforum.org/press/2024/01/global-risks-report-2024-press-release/>

of the communication divide are the optimists who believe these digital innovations are a force for good and represent optimistic strides in education and human development. Their studies highlight the value of social media platforms for professionals, as they provide opportunities for developing marketing skills, identifying business opportunities, and facilitating more efficient networking.⁹ There is an ongoing controversy about the contradictory impact of digital platforms on youth, noting that these tools foster social connectivity and isolation. They can improve the capacity to create and foster online communities but also engender feelings of exclusion and isolation. The digital landscape is flooded with misinformation and disinformation, which can quickly gain traction and spread, especially on social media, influencing public opinions and behaviors.

Controversy or not, the global media have brought both opportunities and challenges to communication and broader international relations. These include navigating potential misunderstandings due to cultural differences, sensitivity in addressing diverse audiences, and the risk of unintentional offense when communicating across cultures. Lule, examining how global media, which refers to international news outlets and social platforms with a broad reach, shapes cultural perceptions and intercultural communication, argued that the worldwide press plays a crucial role in interpreting and influencing human relations.¹⁰ He provides detailed examples of how global media shapes cultural perceptions and influences intercultural communication. For instance, he articu-

⁹ Rao and Kalyani, "A Study on Positive and Negative Effects of Social Media"; Kelley A. Allen et al., "Social Media Use and Social Connectedness in Adolescents: The Positives and the Potential Pitfalls," *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist* 31, no. 1 (2014): 18-31.

¹⁰ Lule, *Globalization and Media*, 10.

lates a scenario in which the international community is depicted as disunited, its trajectory shaped by ongoing conflicts, with the media playing a pivotal role in the struggle to influence the perceptions and emotions of the general public.

Significance of the Study

Given the ambiguous and complex social media landscape, it is crucial to recognize the significance of fostering intercultural communication competence (ICC) among groups and individuals. Wiseman defined ICC as “the knowledge, motivation, and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures.”¹¹ Byram observed that this ability involves understanding, respecting, and appropriately responding to the cultural differences and similarities that influence communication.¹² Indicators are used to determine their multidimensional elements, which include cognitive (knowledge about different cultures), affective (openness, empathy, and cultural sensitivity), and behavioral (verbal and non-verbal communication skills, including adapting behavior and language to fit cultural contexts) components. One must have intercultural knowledge, attitude, talent, and awareness to gain ICC.¹³ Moreover, Koester and Lustig contend that public discourses of positive exemplars – or individuals widely perceived as competent in intercultural encounters and relationships,

¹¹ R. L. Wiseman, *Intercultural Communication Competence*. As cited in W. B. Gudykunst & B. Mody (Eds.), *Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication*, 2nd ed, pp. 207-224, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002).

¹² Michael Byram, “Assessing Intercultural Competence in Language Teaching,” *Sprogforum* 18, no.6 (2000): 8-13.

¹³ Mary Jane Collier – “Intercultural Communication Competence: Continuing Challenges and Critical Directions,” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 48 (2015): 9-11.

such as successful diplomats or international business leaders – would be a welcome and valuable addition to the ICC literature.¹⁴ These positive exemplars can serve as role models, demonstrating principles and practices of intercultural communication and providing inspiration and motivation to engage more competently and confidently in such interactions. They can work to understand, direct, and improve globalization and media, thereby counteracting powerful actors who shape these forces for their purposes.¹⁵ By studying them, ICC researchers and practitioners can give valuable insights into effective communication strategies, foster a more optimistic view of intercultural interactions, and develop practical training and educational programs for workers in the information and communication sectors.

In this context, there is no reason to doubt Pope Francis meets Koester's standards. According to the Pew Research Center, 80% of Catholics worldwide view him favorably.¹⁶ As one author puts it, "Francis enjoys an approval rating that any other world leader would envy."¹⁷ He is one of the most followed world leaders on social media. Far more non-Catholics than Catholics visit his Twitter account.¹⁸ Dubbed the "people's Pope," he has electrified the world with his message of mercy and

¹⁴ Jolene Koester & Myron W. Lustig, "Intercultural Communication Competence: Theory, Measurement, and Application," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 48 (2015): 20-21.

¹⁵ Lule, *Globalization, and media*, 8.

¹⁶ Pew Research Center "Majority of U.S. Catholics Express Favorable View of Pope Francis" (2024), accessed May 27, 2024 @ <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2024/04/12/majority-of-u-s-catholics-express-favorable-view-of-pope-francis>

¹⁷ Chris Lowney, *Pope Francis: Why he Leads the Way he Leads* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2013).

¹⁸ Juan Narbona, "Digital Leadership, Twitter, and Pope Francis," *Church, Communication and Culture* 1, no. 1: (2016): 90-109.

humility, energizing the church and appealing to people of every faith.¹⁹ His unassuming and open nature underscores the importance of intercultural communication in fostering mutual understanding, compassion, and peace in a world marked by diversity and polarization.

Since 2014, his annual World Communications Day (WCD) Messages have expressed his vision for empowering individuals with the skills to effectively communicate on complex, emerging global issues using modern communication tools. His focus on the “culture of encounter” aims to bridge cultural gaps and promote empathy, inclusivity, mutual respect, and collaboration amidst the multifaceted challenges of today’s communication landscape.

Given his perceived liberal reformist agenda and enhanced pastoral approach to the church’s issues, there is no question that Francis has been a lightning rod for controversy.²⁰ Despite the vast power of his position as leader of one of the world’s most formidable religions, Francis’ WCD messages are not taken at face value. There are questions and even doubts about their orthodoxy. At the top of the list is how his messages could be more realistic and attentive to the complexity of the current digital media landscape. Will they be a hopelessly inadequate response to the complex issues in highly technological and digital societies? Will Francis pay more attention to the political, ideological, social, and economic

¹⁹ Robert Draper, *Do Not Ask What Good We Do: Inside the US House of Representatives* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012), 1.

²⁰ Ross Douthat, *To Change the Church: Pope Francis and the Future of Catholicism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018); Kelly A. Allen et al., “Social Media Use and Social Connectedness in Adolescents: The Positives and the Potential Pitfalls,” *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist* 31, no. 1 (2014): 18-31; Robert Kaiser Blair, *Inside the Jesuits: Pope Francis is Changing the Church and the World* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).

agendas that have materialized in digital media? To put it mildly, his critics feel that the emphasis on mercy and dialogue overlooks the aggressive tactics often seen in the press and does not adequately address the politics of technological development. Finally, the critics note a discrepancy between the calls for improved media communication and the actual practices of the Vatican's media outlets.

In summary, critics of Francis argue that his approach needs to be more practical and straightforward and should address the challenges and issues in digital media. However, there seems to be an oversight in understanding how his views on ICTs have evolved and changed. This study seeks to bridge this gap by deeply diving into Francis' eleven WCD messages published between 2014 and 2024. Toward this aim, the present study explores and deconstructs them by identifying their most prevalent concepts and significance in addressing social media's potential opportunities and challenges in a multicultural world. Furthermore, it engages with the critiques of these discourses and evaluates their contribution to enhancing ICC.

Statement of the Problem

Three questions guided the study:

- What are the most prevalent concepts in Francis' WCD messages from 2014 to 2024?
- How has his understanding of these concepts progressed over time?
- How do these concepts address intercultural communication opportunities and challenges within the church and beyond?

Methodology

The present study employs a content analysis method to systematically code, categorize, and interpret the most prevalent concepts within Francis' WCD messages. Content analysis serves as a research instrument for identifying the occurrence of specific words, themes, or concepts across a designated qualitative data corpus.²¹ This methodological approach facilitates a dual-process analysis, wherein textual data is qualitatively examined and quantified concurrently.²² Elo and Kyngäs explain that content analysis' core objective is conceptualizing phenomena under observation.²³

This analytical tool is essential in research domains where studies addressing the phenomenon are lacking, thus necessitating the derivation of coded categories directly from the textual data, a process underscored by Hsiuh and Shannon.²⁴ In preliminary research within areas characterized by scant information, content analysis emerges as a pertinent mechanism for delineating prevalent themes discerned within the dataset.²⁵ Furthermore, this study selected conceptual content over relational analysis. A specific concept is examined in conceptual analysis, and its presence is quantified and counted. The primary objective is to

²¹ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1990), 45

²² Simon C. Kitto et al., "Quality in Qualitative Research," *Medical Journal of Australia* 188, no. 4 (2008): 243-246.

²³ Satu Elo & Helvi Kyngäs, "The Qualitative Content Analysis Process," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 62, no. 1 (2008): 107-115.

²⁴ Hsiu- Fang Hsieh & Sarah E. Shannon, "Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis," *Qualitative Health Research* 15, no. 9 (2005): 1277-1288.

²⁵ Kim Holmberg, "Co-in Linking to a Municipal Webspace: A Webometric and Content Analysis," *Scientometrics* 83, no. 3 (2010): 851-862.

assess their frequency within the dataset because they may serve as a proxy for significance.²⁶

Unit of Analysis

The analysis corpus comprises the eleven WCD messages of Francis from 2014 to 2024, published in multiple languages online by the Vatican's Dicastery for Communications.²⁷ The Dicastery for Communication, which has been bringing together all the Vatican's media platforms since 2015, has the highest budget of any Vatican organization.²⁸ The choice of the Vatican's Dicastery for Communications as the source of the WCD messages is based on its credibility and authority in the communication field, ensuring the data's reliability and relevance. They are papal opening statements for WCD, a yearly worldwide celebration organized by the Dicastery for Communication that focuses on using media for evangelization.²⁹ These messages are directly relevant to the research objective of exploring themes and significance in an intercultural and digital world. Issued annually, they address global audiences and focus on modern ICTs, aligning with the study's aim to analyze their prevalent themes and their significance for ICC. As a leading international figure, Francis can provide

²⁶ Mojtaba Vaismoradi et al., "Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis: Implications for Conducting a Qualitative Descriptive Study," *Nursing & Health Sciences* 15, no. 3 (2013): 398-405.

²⁷ Pope Francis. World Communications Day. Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana, accessed @ <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/communication.html>

²⁸ Andrea Tornielli, "*Humanae vitae* y el último sondeo secreto de Pablo VI," *Vatican Insider* (La Stampa), July 10, 2018, accessed September 28, 2022 @ <https://www.lastampa.it/vatican-insider/en/2018/07/11/news/humanae-vitae-paul-vi-s-secret-survey-1.34030850/>

²⁹ Martini, "The Catholic Church and the Media," 155-173.

authoritative and potentially influential perspectives in these messages, making them rich sources for understanding the opportunities and challenges facing intercultural communications today. These discourses' thematic depth and global relevance can offer targeted insights into the evolving nature of communication across cultures, justifying their selection as the primary texts for this content analysis. Table 1 shows the descriptive data for the WCD messages.

Table 1. Descriptive Data for Francis' WCD Messages from 2014-2024 (N:11)

Year	Theme	Year	Competencies
58 th	Artificial Intelligence and the Wisdom of the Heart	2024	Adopt a spiritual way of viewing reality.
57 th	Speaking with the heart	2023	Communicate the truth in charity.
56 th	Listening with the ear of the heart	2022	Listen with the heart.
55 th	"Come and See"	2021	See reality for ourselves, spend time with people, and listen to their stories.
54 th	"You may tell your children and grandchildren."	2020	Make one's own the truth contained in good stories.
53 rd	"We are members of one another."	2019	Invest in relationships and affirm the interpersonal nature of our humanity.
52 nd	"The truth will set you free."	2018	Speak the truth in charity.
51 st	"Fear not, for I am with you."	2017	Encourage open, creative, purposeful communication.
50 th	Communication and Mercy:	2016	Communicate with mercy.
49 th	The Family: A Privileged Place of Encounter.	2015	Model the family as a setting for learning authentic communication.
48 th	Communication at the Service of an Authentic Culture of Encounter	2014	Promote effective communication toward closeness and unity.

Data Collection

We have included all eleven WCD messages delivered by Francis from 2014 to 2024. This corpus of texts was compiled by and sourced from the official Dicastery of Communications via the Vatican website, ensuring the authenticity and integrity of the documents for academic examination and analysis.

Data Analysis

To analyze the conceptual trends and patterns in the dataset, along with their prevalence, progression, and significance, we implemented a four-step process based on Elo and Kyngäs.³⁰ Our methodical approach ensures the analysis is systematic, transparent, and replicable.

Firstly, during the preparation phase, we accessed and retrieved the WCD messages delivered annually by Francis between January 2014 and January 2024 from the official Vatican website. Next, we immersed ourselves in the dataset to understand and review its content and context. We chose to take an inductive, data-driven approach to uncover patterns, themes, and categories within the dataset without imposing our predetermined expectations. This approach allowed us to remain open to new and unexpected themes emerging from the dataset, ensuring that our findings are grounded in the content rather than influenced by preconceived notions. Next, we conducted open coding and made initial notes during our readings, labeling concepts in the margins to describe various aspects of the dataset. Next, we quantified and analyzed the dataset's prevalence, progression, and significance of specific themes using a software tool. We then developed general descriptions of the research topic through the three questions raised by the study. Finally, we discussed the outcomes and insights derived from the posed research questions alongside an examination of the current literature. This facilitated the drawing of cogent conclusions and the proposition of directions for future research endeavors.

³⁰ Satu Elo & Helvi Kyngäs, "The Qualitative Content Analysis Process," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 62.1 (2008): 107-115.

Ethics Statement

The study used the Ethical Guidelines that the Association of Internet Researchers outlined.³¹ It involved the collection of publicly available documents from the Internet that were explicitly designated for public use. Researchers analyzed without any economic or political affiliations to the individual under study. No personally identifiable information was gathered or retained during the process. As a result, the publication of this study poses minimal risk to the individual being observed.

Results

With a pastoral end in view, the WCD is an annual religious event conducted by popes to address the current opportunities and challenges in communication and media from a Catholic perspective. Its messages have crystallized as guidance to communicators, journalists, media professionals, and the general public on how to use social communications ethically and effectively. Right from its beginning, Christianity is a religion of communication and believes in a God who communicates with his creatures in many ways.³² Social communications concern the church so much that it merited a separate decree at its Second Vatican Council (Vatican II), the *Inter Mirifica* (On the Means of Social Communication), highlighting communication media's

³¹ Franzke, Aline Shakti, Anja Bechmann, Michael Zimmer, Charles Ess, and the Association of Internet Researchers, *Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines 3.0* (2020), <https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf>

³² Franz-Josef Eilers, "Church and Social Communication," *Faith and Media: Analysis of Faith and Media: Representation and Communication* 17 (2009): 39.

significance and immense potential for shaping culture. It is safe to say that this is where Francis is coming from.

The first WCD was celebrated on May 7, 1967, shortly after the conclusion of Vatican II. Like a double-edged sword, after surveying the granular developments in social communication across time, Paul VI and subsequent popes have taken cognizance of the beneficial opportunities presented by communication media in enhancing human existence with values like truth, beauty, and goodness, as well as the potential challenges, including the dissemination of less virtuous values such as misinformation/disinformation, and the imposition of conflicting and false information on the public's minds and hearts, such as hate speech or propaganda.³³ As stressed by scholars in the field of Digital Religion, the Vatican had an overall positive and sometimes even enthusiastic relationship with emerging communication technologies, generally depicted as practical tools to evangelize and foster the Catholic agenda.³⁴

While the WCD messages may not constitute infallible teachings on faith and morals, they are considered essential and authoritative coordinates of the pope's thoughts on social communications based on reason aided by faith. The messages are typically published on January 24, the feast day of Saint Francis de Sales, the patron saint of writers and journalists. Like his predecessors, Francis' WCD messages may hold significant pastoral value within and beyond the church. As his church's primary communicator today, they reflect his approach to engaging with modern ICTs, fostering dialogue, and promoting values in the material and

³³ Ernest Henau, "Church and Media. Two Worlds?" in *Faith and Media: Analysis of Faith and Media: Representation and Communication*, ed. Hans Geybels, Sara Mels, and Michel Walrave, 53-69. (Bruxelles: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2009).

³⁴ Martini, "The Catholic Church and the Media," 157.

digital environment. In particular, members of the church worldwide may view them as scriptural and rational guidance on navigating the challenges and opportunities of social communication tools and methods. However, given the diversity within the church, which includes cultural, social, and economic contexts, their reception and pastoral applications may vary among individuals and ecclesial communities, both regional and local. We now turn to the ten most prevalent concepts within the dataset.

The most prevalent concepts in Francis’ WCD Messages

The descriptive statistics analysis identifies the ten most prevalent themes in the dataset, notably “Listening” (0.25%), "Communication" (0.22%), “Heart” (0.13%), “Truth” (0.09%), "Charity" (0.08%), "Encounter" (0.06%), "Openness" (0.05%), "Media" (0.04%), "Dialogue" (0.04%), and "Hope" (0.02%). Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the ten most prevalent themes within the dataset.

Table 2. Descriptive Data for the Ten Most Prevalent Concepts

Concepts	Frequency	Percentage
Listening	175	0.25
Communication	150	0.22
Heart	87	0.13
Truth	62	0.09
Charity	60	0.08
Encounter	41	0.06
Openness	38	0.05
Media	33	0.04
Dialogue	30	0.04
Hope	17	0.02
Total	693/20367	1.00

Built upon a foundation of Gospel narratives and metaphors that embody core Christian principles and framed in a faith-based understanding of humans as created in God's image and as beings-in-relation, Francis contends that communication holds a spiritual significance as part of God's plan and as an essential means of fostering a sense of community (2018:1). Such a stance is a manifest illustration of his view that human existence is fundamentally communal and communicative, articulating the essence of individuals as inherently interdependent and oriented towards the collective good.

By our being created in the image and likeness of God, who is communion and communication-of-Self, we carry forever in our hearts the longing for living in communion, for belonging to a community. "Nothing is as specific to our nature as entering into a relationship one with another, needing one another," says Saint Basil (2019:13).

In this faith-based perspective, Francis emphasizes the pivotal role of communication in fostering a 'culture of encounter' that promotes cooperation rather than conflict. Against the potential abuse and misuse of modern ICTs, he advocates for a more genuine and compassionate communication paradigm, enhancing the quality of human interactions and, by extension, societal cohesion. Further enriching this discourse, the reflections of various pontiffs and scholarly sources are invoked to delineate both the promising prospects and the intricate challenges modern ICTs present.

Within the ambit of this academic inquiry, an exhaustive analysis of the dataset yielded ten concepts that emerged as significantly recurrent. This section arranges and briefly explains each idea based on its prevalence to describe its significance and implications for the objectives and questions raised by the study. The

ensuing descriptions can provide a nuanced and unitized understanding of the latent dynamics at play, hoping to contribute substantively to the body of knowledge within the ICT literature.

First, the highest prevalence of listening in Francis' WCD messages points to his view that all communication and dialogue begin with attentive listening. Citing scriptures on creation and referencing the sense of hearing as the one favored by God among the senses, he argues that it is key to breaking down the walls that divide people and building authentic relationships. Arguing that refusing to listen can lead to aggression towards the other, he challenged individuals and communities to prioritize listening as a crucial element of meaningful and effective communication.

Listening is the first indispensable ingredient of dialogue and good communication. Communication only takes place if listening has taken place (2022:14).

Second, Francis emphasizes the role of communication in bridging divides and bringing people closer together, and it must be at the service of an authentic culture of encounter. Explaining communication in terms of the parable of the Good Samaritan, he points out that physical and digital communications should foster neighborliness. Effective communication is viewed as a means to share truth, foster relationships, and promote societal peace and justice.

Good communication helps us grow closer, know one another better, and ultimately, grow in unity (2014:2).

Related to the above, Francis offers the family as the model of genuine communication and the setting where individual members first understand the spiritual aspect of communication, particularly in Christianity, which is

infused with love - the love God gives them and that they share with others.

The family is an environment in which we learn to communicate in an experience of closeness, a setting where communication occurs, a “communicating community” (2015:12).

Third, the “heart” represents authenticity and integrity in communication and is closely associated with charity and compassion. Francis writes that, in the Bible, the “heart” is seen as the place of freedom and decision-making and is the inward place of the human encounter with the transcendent. In the context of the benefits and risks of social media and artificial intelligence, he asserts that communication should come from the heart, reflecting sincerity, honesty, and a genuine desire to connect with others. He asked workers in the field of communication to become more aware of their responsibilities and more discerning participants in communication by promoting greater equality, correct information, and a greater awareness of the epochal change that the world is experiencing.

It is the heart that spurred us to go, see, and listen, and it is the heart that moves us towards an open and welcoming way of communicating once we have practiced listening, which demands waiting and patience (2023:1).

Fourth, in the age of untruth, Francis highlights the crucial role of truth in building a genuine culture of encounter, fighting misinformation/disinformation, and fostering commitment to human solidarity and compassion. With the aid of social media technology, discerning the truth and the facts becomes more complex in the face of misleading information and outright

disinformation campaigns. Francis emphasizes that honesty in communication is critical to forming genuine connections and warns against the dire consequences and harms of untruths, fake news, falsehoods, cyberbullying, and disinformation. Stressing the importance of truthful journalism and the responsibility of journalists to report accurately, Francis urged journalists to commit to the truth and careful discernment in order to combat fake news and its negative consequences.

Our primary task is to uphold the truth with love (cf. *Eph* 4:15). Only words spoken with love and accompanied by meekness and mercy can touch our sinful hearts (2016:6).

Fifth, Francis frequently underscores the importance of charity or love, not just as an act of altruism and helping behavior but as a fundamental attitude that should permeate all forms of communication. Charity in communication means expressing mercy, compassion, and respect towards others. It involves listening actively, being empathetic, and ensuring that the dignity of every person is respected and upheld.

Love, by its nature, is communication; it leads to openness and sharing. If our hearts and actions are inspired by charity and divine love, then our communication will be touched by God's power (2016:1).

In Francis' WCD messages, authentic encounter plays a central role and is portrayed as the ultimate goal of communications. He calls for genuine human encounters where individuals engage with each other with openness and respect. Such encounters are opportunities for mutual growth, understanding, and reconciliation. In this sense, constructive forms of

communication should serve as a tool for fostering a culture of authentic encounters.

The walls that divide us, whether physical, cultural, or ideological, can be broken down only if we are prepared to listen and learn from one another. We need to resolve our differences through dialogue that helps us grow in understanding and mutual respect. A culture of encounter demands that we be ready to give and receive (2014:2).

At the heart of Francis' message is openness in communication. This involves expressing our perspectives and being receptive to others' viewpoints and experiences. This commitment to transparency fosters meaningful conversations and the sharing of innovative ideas and is crucial for overcoming prejudices, promoting inclusivity, and building a more cohesive society.

To dialogue means to believe that the "other" has something worthwhile to say and to entertain their point of view and perspective. Engaging in dialogue does not mean renouncing our ideas and traditions but claiming they are valid or absolute (2014:9).

Francis' WCD messages also pushed for the importance of 'dialogue' as a powerful tool for facilitating genuine interactions, advancing peace, honoring diversity, promoting mutual learning, pursuing truth, and fostering positive communication between people from diverse cultures. His vision for communication is realized through dialogue to foster understanding, build relationships, and promote peace. By listening with the heart, individuals can see each other as persons rather than objects or adversaries, fostering a sense of optimism and encouragement.

Today's great challenge is learning how to talk to one another, not simply how to generate and consume information. The latter is a tendency that our important and influential modern communications media can encourage. Information is essential, but more is needed. All too often, things get simplified, different positions and viewpoints, such as political ideologies or cultural beliefs, are pitted against one another, and people are invited to take sides rather than see things as a whole (2015:11).

Ninth, for better or worse, Francis highlights the modern ICTs' influential role in shaping public opinion and culture that can help and hinder communication within and between families. In the age of social networks, he calls for responsible and ethical media use, urging media professionals to focus on truth, promote positive values, and contribute to the common good. He also highlights the potential of modern communication devices and platforms to connect people and spread beauty, goodness, and truth in communication instead of propagating lies and falsehoods.

Media can help us grow closer, know one another better, and ultimately, grow in unity. Media can help us feel closer to one another, creating a sense of unity in the human family. This unity can, in turn, inspire solidarity and serious efforts to ensure a more dignified life for all, motivating the audience to commit to these important goals (2014:2).

Tenth, hope is also a central theme, with Francis urging communicators to inspire and uplift others. In times of crisis or despair, discourses of hope can provide comfort and encouragement. Hopeful communication fosters resilience and helps individuals and communities look forward to a better future.

Hope in the seed of God's Kingdom and the mystery of Easter should also shape how we communicate. This confidence enables us to conduct our work in all the different ways that communication takes place nowadays, with the conviction that it is possible to recognize and highlight the good news in every story and each person's face (2017:11).

These ten concepts or themes collectively address the challenges and opportunities of today's digital and material world, promoting values essential for building a more just, compassionate, and connected society. Together, they constitute Francis' perspective on ICC that centers on three competencies: embracing a spiritual mindset of reality, which involves understanding the spiritual implications of our digital interactions; cultivating empathetic listening, which encourages active and compassionate listening in digital conversations; and communicating truthful information and content with kindness in the age of fake news, deep fakes, and artificial intelligence. We now turn to the progression of Francis' WCD messages across time.

The Progression of Francis WCD Messages

This study section also traces the progression of Francis' WCD messages, underlining the importance of his approach to human communication in the wake of a rapidly changing world and a fragmented media landscape. Tracking how these discourses have shifted helps identify both opportunities and challenges besetting digital communications and understanding the changes that are taking place in a global information age. Each message mirrors the attempts to respond to the evolving communication culture and landscape, seeking to draw a clear distinction between the potential opportunities and threats of the Internet, modern social

media, and what he called “machine learning,” or artificial intelligence. We now turn to our five key observations.

First, there is a pronounced shift from the generic all-things-to-all-people or one-size-fits-all approach by adding new layers of specificity to the confluence of issues shaping the communication sector and its users worldwide, such as disinformation in the form of fake news, cyberbullying, infodemic, eavesdropping, cognitive pollution, and echo chambers. The shift from motherhood statements to specifics suggests recognizing the potential strength of the WCD messages. It establishes them as in touch with the ambivalent impact of ICTs on society, mirroring Francis' theoretical and pastoral understanding of their potential opportunities and hidden dangers.

Today's media environment is so pervasive as to be indistinguishable from the sphere of everyday life. The Net is a resource of our time. It is a source of knowledge and relationships that were once unthinkable. However, regarding the profound transformations technology has brought on the production, distribution, and use of content, many experts also highlight the risks that threaten the search for and sharing of authentic information on a global scale (2019:2).

Secondly, within the “globalization of indifference framework,” there is a challenge for all people of goodwill to rediscover the power of communication woven with compassion. Convinced that communication should convey God's mercy, tenderness, and forgiveness to all, Francis asked communicators to mend fractured relationships and reinstate peace and harmony within familial units and broader communities through their words and gestures. The discourses aim to create a new kind of speech and dialogue in a complex, multiethnic,

pluralistic, multireligious, and multicultural society (2024:9).

Third, there is advocacy for truth and ethics, but it is always against the backdrop of the church's evangelizing task. In response to the growing issue of fake news, cyberbullying, disinformation, misinformation on the net, and artificial intelligence, his discourses from the later years focus on truth, ethical journalism, and the social responsibility of communicators. By repeatedly addressing topics like fake news and the importance of truthful journalism, these discourses promote ethical standards in communication, urging individuals and media to adhere to truth and integrity. They encourage communicators to build social harmony, bridge divides, and foster mutual respect and understanding.

Fourth, there is a focus on personal and authentic encounters in the material and digital spheres of communication. Francis has been increasingly pressing netizens for personal encounters, listening, and storytelling, highlighting the human aspect of communication. Alluding to the family as a model and setting of authentic and respectful communication, these themes illustrate the importance of dialogue and understanding in communication, aligning with Francis' broader emphasis on building bridges and fostering community.

Fifth, there is an emphasis on inclusivity and respect for each other. The latest themes, such as 'Communication and Mercy: A Fruitful Encounter' and 'The Truth Will Set You Free: Fake News and Journalism for Peace,' reflect a growing concern for inclusivity and respect for diversity in communication, promoting a culture that values all voices. They underscore the media's significant role in shaping public opinion and fostering a culture of peace and understanding. They advocate for communication that builds relationships,

promotes understanding, and respects the dignity of every person.

All these highlight the degree to which Francis has calibrated his WCD messages to the changing times and emerging contexts. They provide insights into his theoretical concerns and pastoral priorities over the years, reflecting his approach and response to the issues and challenges of modern-day ICTs. More specifically, they support those in the communications field in navigating and engaging with them effectively and ethically. It is essential to acknowledge that the potential influence or impact of the messages is uncertain. While evidence suggests they could significantly affect communication, we argue that they are overly focused on the communicator's personal or moral disposition. At the same time, as his critics claimed, little has been said and done to address the structural barriers and challenges that can also shape both the opportunities and challenges people face in the digital age. These structural factors include globalization, technological infrastructure, platform algorithms, legal and regulatory frameworks, access to economic resources, media ownership and concentration, educational systems, cultural norms, and expectations. In many ways, all this underlines the urgency for Francis to do more than merely issue message after message. His synodal approach to being and doing church is a step towards implementing all ten most significant themes in his WCD messages. Amid the resistance and criticisms of his critics and doubters, Francis' steady decision to invert the pyramidal and clerical structures of the church speaks volumes about his focus on delivering his belief in a culture of dialogue and encounter.³⁵

³⁵ Gemma Aboy et al., "The Synodal Process in the Dock: A Thematic Analysis of Grey Literature," *Scientia: The International Journal on the Liberal Arts* 13, no. 1 (2024): 85-101.

The Significance of WCD Messages for Communication

Francis is acutely aware of the all-encompassing nature of today's ICTs, which seamlessly integrate into people's daily lives. He also recognizes their dual nature. On one hand, they have become a vital tool in our era, providing unprecedented access to information and the ability to form once-unimaginable connections. On the other hand, as ICTs have revolutionized how content is created, shared, and consumed, he also highlights the dangers they pose to the genuine quest and exchange of information worldwide. While they undoubtedly present opportunities for knowledge acquisition, ICTs have also become a platform for misinformation and deliberate manipulation of facts and social interactions, often aimed at discrediting others. In this ambivalent digital context, we now explore the potential of Francis' WCD messages on global communication and rediscover the vast potential of modern ICTs, urging caution and awareness of the potential risks and the need for vigilance in navigating this complex digital landscape.

Francis consistently advocates for genuine and transparent communication. Based on the positive use of language, he encourages the faithful to engage in conversations that reflect honesty, empathy, and respect, fostering trust and understanding within and beyond the church community.

It is not enough to be a passerby on the digital highways; "connected," connections need to grow into actual encounters. We cannot live apart, closed in on ourselves. We need to love and to be loved. We need tenderness. These qualities are for face-to-face and digital encounters, reminding us to bring empathy and understanding to our online interactions.

One of the recurring themes in his messages is the idea of creating a “culture of encounter.” As Francis explains, this concept involves reaching out to others, especially those on the peripheries, which refers to the marginalized or on the fringes of society, to engage in meaningful dialogue. It is about breaking down barriers, stepping out of our comfort zones, and genuinely meeting others where they are. Francis stresses that communication should bridge divides and foster a genuine culture of meeting others.

Communication at the service of an authentic culture of encounter focuses on building bridges between people through genuine dialogue and engagement (2014:2).

Francis admits to the immense potential of digital media for spreading the Gospel and connecting people worldwide. This recognition of the power of digital platforms to share the message of love and compassion should inspire those who would take their faith seriously. However, he also highlights the risks associated with digital communication, such as misinformation/disinformation, cyberbullying, which is the use of digital communication to bully others, and the spread of hate speech, which is the use of digital platforms to promote violence or discrimination. He calls for responsible and ethical use of digital platforms to build community and spread positive messages, instilling a sense of hope and inspiration in our digital endeavors.

Since the internet first became available, the church has always sought to promote its use in the service of the encounter between persons and solidarity among all (2019:1).

Francis often addresses the issue of fake news and misinformation in his messages. He urges journalists, who play a crucial role in providing and verifying information, to be vigilant against spreading falsehoods that can harm individuals and communities.

I want to invite everyone to promote a journalism of peace, a form of truthful media that opposes falsehoods, rhetorical slogans, and sensational headlines. This is journalism created by people for people, one that is at the service of all, especially those – and they are the majority in our world – who have no voice. It is about using the power of the media to bring about positive change, to give a voice to the voiceless, and to promote understanding and empathy (2018:15).

Francis emphasizes the importance of respectful dialogue, particularly in disagreements. He encourages open and respectful exchanges that can lead to mutual understanding and growth within the church and broader societal contexts. When used thoughtfully, communication can build bridges, enable encounters and inclusion, and thus enrich society. It is truly inspiring when people carefully select their words and actions to avoid misunderstandings, heal wounded memories, and build peace and harmony. When used with care, words can build bridges between individuals and within families, social groups, and people.

Francis sees communication as a vital tool for evangelization. He urges the faithful to embrace modern means of communication to share Christ's message and witness to their faith in ways that are accessible and engaging to contemporary audiences. This call equips them with the tools they need to spread the word of God effectively.

We have a pressing need in the church for communication that kindles hearts, which is a balm on wounds and that shines light on the journey of our brothers and sisters (2023:8).

Francis highlights the importance of communication in promoting social justice, urging communicators to amplify the voices of the marginalized and oppressed. In light of the rapid advancements in ICTs, he advocates for

authentic human interaction, stressing that these tools should enhance rather than replace meaningful face-to-face relationships. He encourages the use of media to raise awareness of social issues, fostering and mobilizing collective action for the common good, particularly when those in positions of power have abused or misused their authority.

Discussion

This study aimed to analyze Francis' eleven WCD messages, identify their most prevalent concepts, trace their evolution, and explain their significance to intercultural communication opportunities and challenges triggered by the ICTs. This section will discuss the outcomes and insights from the current study and connect them to current literature. This will help draw cogent conclusions and propose directions for future research endeavors.

One significant insight from this study was about the content of Francis' WCD messages in a way that substantially aligns with and confirms previous WCD messages of his immediate predecessors, John Paul II and Benedict XVI, who also addressed the role of ICTs numerous times during their papacy, recognizing both their potential for good and their potential risks. Influenced by their personalities, life experiences, changing sociocultural situations, and those they were exposed to, the three popes seek to shed light on the church's relationship with the forces of globalization and mediatization to stay relevant and effective in its evangelizing task in a multicultural world. Cumulatively, their discourses communicate the ethical dimension of using ICTs and their role as the new public sphere for spreading the Gospels, promoting truth, and

fostering authentic interactions between individuals and groups.

On the one hand, John Paul II (WCD 2005; 2002) likewise spoke about how media could foster mutual understanding and dialogue between cultures but warned of the dangers of media manipulation and spreading misinformation. On the other hand, Benedict XVI emphasized the need for discernment in how Catholics interact with new technologies, ensuring that digital tools communicate Christian values and serve the common good (WCD, 2010; 2005). Francis' WCD messages reflect his predecessors' fundamental themes while representing contextual adjustments.

Drawing from his predecessors' previous discussions on WCD messages, Francis aims to present a theological and pastoral approach to communication rooted in his religious beliefs. He refers to this approach as the “right lens needed to see the true, good, and beautiful in others and the world” (2017:8), inviting his audience to adopt his faith-based perspective of reality. This perspective involves understanding the world and developing ICCs in today's material and digital realms. It encompasses empathetic listening and disseminating truthful information and content with kindness in mass media, digital platforms, and social media.

The second insight was that a clear pattern emerged when we conducted a frequency and distribution count of the words used in the WCD messages. Although they project the overriding theoretical and practical interests of Francis, it also appears that the most prevalent concepts in the WCD messages may be broadly relevant and valuable whether or not one shares his religious beliefs, whether one is a devout Catholic or a secular humanist, and whether one is a journalist or a blogger.

Although they are not spoken ex-cathedra, Francis has made his messages accessible and relatable to his

intended audience, with characteristically sober and scripted speech. The insight aligns with previous research and highlights a key challenge facing the church today: effectively communicating the essential elements of faith in an appealing and relevant way, as described by Benedict XVI.³⁶ Other studies identified similar needs to animate the ideas and practices in today's fast-paced, complex environments. Dillon emphasized the importance of the church finding a balance between tradition and change to stay relevant in a culturally diverse world.³⁷ She suggested that the church should seek new ways to connect with the experiences of secularized lay Catholics, particularly in the Western world, by embracing new language, doctrinal thinking, and institutional practices. Moreover, Francis prioritizes a communication style that emphasizes the process of passing on the message (*tradition*), tailored to be more relevant to modern audiences, rather than focusing solely on the content being transmitted (*tradita*).³⁸

The WCD's theological insights aim to respond to the urgent needs and issues in social media and how they connect to the day-to-day life of the people. They are not a theology found in academic journals or conferences, but rather arise from real-life situations. It is a contextual theology to help the church address new challenges and

³⁶ Benedict XVI, "New Technologies, New Relationships. Promoting a Culture of Respect, Dialogue, and Friendship," accessed online: http://www.TheVatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/communications/documents/hf_benxvi_mes_20090124_43rd-world-communications-day_en.html (2009): 25-27.

³⁷ Michele Dillon, *Postsecular Catholicism: Relevance and Renewal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

³⁸ Holand T. Sanks, "A Church that can and cannot Change: The Dynamics of Tradition," *Theological Studies* 76, no. 2 (2015): 298-310; Catherine E. Clifford, "Pope Francis's Call for the Conversion of the Church in Our Time," in *Conversion and Church* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2016), 147-177.

adapt to ICTs and social media throughout the next century.³⁹ Faggioli argues that it is crucial to align the fast-paced nature of the modern information environment with the enduring values of the Catholic institutional culture and the ongoing development of Catholicism as a social and cultural entity.⁴⁰ Additionally, Mullerova noted that not only the terminology but also the approach of the popes as ecclesiastical authorities towards the community is evolving in parallel with changes within the community itself.⁴¹

Related to the above, the WCD messages typically center around a central theme or teaching, drawing from Scripture, Tradition, and other reputable sources to balance continuity and change in theological reflections that are fundamentally kerygmatic.⁴² Francis often incorporates everyday images, stories, and analogies to illustrate the essential values of Christianity. These discourses are known for their accessibility, use of personal anecdotes, and emphasis on compassion, mercy, and the joy of the Gospel. The language is formal yet approachable, crafted to resonate with a diverse audience, rich in symbolism, and addresses contemporary issues in digital societies, such as the spread of fake news, disinformation, and cyberbullying. This aligns with Mullerova's position that not only is there a change

³⁹ John L. Allen, *The Francis Miracle: Inside the Transformation of the Pope and the Church* (New York: Time Home Entertainment, 2015).

⁴⁰ Massimo Faggioli, *The Liminal Papacy of Pope Francis: Moving Toward Global Catholicity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2020), 45.

⁴¹ Müllerová and Franc, "What is Changing in Papal Communication with the Rise of Social Media?"

⁴² Walter Kasper, *Pope Francis' Revolution of Tenderness and Love: Theological and Pastoral Perspectives* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2015).

in how the popes address the Catholic community, but there is also a change in thinking in society and culture.⁴³

The third pivotal discovery in the analysis was the manifestation of Francis' leadership style through his WCD messages, which distinctly embody his compassionate, humble, and reformist approach.⁴⁴ Beyond his words and deeds, Francis is depicted as a humble, broad-minded, and wise observer of current events and prevailing attitudes and approaches. These communications consistently advocate for interaction predicated on authentic human connectivity and empathy. Francis emphasizes the importance of engaging with others on a personal level, as opposed to relying on shallow and fleeting digital exchanges, thereby reinforcing the value of genuine human relationships in the digital age (WCD, 2022:1; 2021:1). This emphasis on face-to-face relationships, compassion, and empathy reveals his pastoral care and a desire to bridge divides, showing his warm, down-to-earth personality.⁴⁵

In his evolving WCD messages, one thing remained consistent throughout. Francis kept stressing the need for dialogue over conflict, transparency, and integrity in communication. He urges communicators to give voice to the voiceless and counter negativity with hope amid a toxic digital environment. His leadership style reflects a commitment to social justice, compassion for the marginalized, and embracing modern challenges while promoting dignity and respect in communication. The humble and compassionate image that Francis projects can resonate well in the digital world, where audiences

⁴³ Müllerová and Franc, "What is Changing in Papal Communication with the Rise of Social Media?"

⁴⁴ Pope Francis & Austen Ivereigh, *Let us Dream: The Path to a Better Future* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2022).

⁴⁵ Francis and Ivereigh, *Let us Dream*.

have become less cerebral and more visual, more responsive to the communicators' deportment or bearing than to the intellectual adequacy of their arguments.⁴⁶ Thus, an idea shared by an image can have a far more significant impact than text. Napolitano emphasizes the physical in-between state of Francis' persona by describing him as a "criollo pope" who can "use both intimacy and distance through media."⁴⁷ Francis stressed the significance of keeping church doors open to the digital world, allowing people from all social classes to access it, and enabling the Gospel to reach everyone.

According to Martini, the Catholic Church and the media are portrayed as practical tools for evangelization and promoting the Catholic agenda.⁴⁸ Francis encouraged individuals to confidently embrace the digital realm, emphasizing the church's active involvement in communication to engage with people and facilitate their encounter with Christ. This aligns with previous findings that the church needs to enter the digital space to become active creators of online religious communities or, instead, co-creators of this new culture.⁴⁹ This is particularly urgent as the media has become a primary

⁴⁶ Randy David, "How TikTok is Shaping Politics," *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (2024), accessed April 27, 2024 @: <https://opinion.inquirer.net/176828/how-tiktok-is-shaping-politics#ixzz8oUyMlfan>; Yiyi Li and Ying Xie, "Is a Picture Worth a Thousand Words? An Empirical Study of Image Content and Social Media Engagement," *Journal of Marketing Research* 57, no. 1 (2020): 1-19.

⁴⁷ Valentina Napolitano, "Francis, a Criollo Pope," *Religion and Society* 10, no. 1 (2019): 63-80.

⁴⁸ Martini, "The Catholic Church and the Media," 167.

⁴⁹ Benedict XVI, Pope, *New Technologies, New Relationships. Promoting a Culture of Respect, Dialogue, and Friendship*, accessed online: http://www.TheVatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/communications/documents/hf_benxvi_mes_20090124_43rd-world-communications-day_en.html (2009).

source of spiritual information and experience.⁵⁰ Francis sees it as an exciting challenge and urges the church to approach it with renewed energy and creativity as it strives to share the beauty of God with others.

Francis' WCD messages have attempted to address nuanced, pastoral, and increasingly critical ways the opportunities and challenges posed by the ICT vis-à-vis the need to enhance communicators' ICC. First, the competency to embrace a faith-based perspective of reality will help journalists report with integrity, educators analyze pluralistic realities ethically, pastors understand diverse cultures, and the general public appreciate shared values of justice and peace. Second, the competency to learn empathetic listening will help improve coverage of sensitive issues, like migration and human trafficking. It will encourage educators to adopt respectful dialogue, deepen the pastoral presence of pastors, and nurture the general public's understanding in a polarized world. Third, the competency to speak truth in charity, particularly in situations of conflicts, will protect journalists from built-in prejudices and biases, foster nuance for educators, encourage compassionate communications for pastors, and promote responsible sharing for the general public. These three core competencies can create a framework for intercultural communications that weaves spiritual depth, emotional intelligence, and ethical responsibility. They can empower communicators to forge relationships across cultural divides and contribute to a more empathetic and truthful discourse in the public sphere. These are the competencies Francis communicated, lived, and practiced during his magisterial and pastoral life. He

⁵⁰ Stig Hjarvard, "The Mediatization of Religion: Theorizing Religion, Media, and Social Change," *Culture and Religion* 12, no. 02 (2011): 119-135.

spoke from the heart.”⁵¹ Because of this ability to speak from the heart, Oldenburg saw him as a practitioner of rhetoric *par excellence*.⁵²

Limitations of the Study

This study has a few admitted limitations. Even so, it remains essential to acknowledge the inherent constraints characterizing this study, particularly our self-imposed restrictions concerning the corpus of discourses subjected to our content analysis due to limitations of time and resources. The potential for our subjective interpretations to have swayed the analysis must be addressed; this concern was mitigated through our use of the member-checking process and the critical friend methodology. Additionally, the discourses we analyzed were shaped by contemporaneous events and issues prevailing during their delivery. Efforts were made to contextualize each message within its broader socio-political and cultural milieu to decipher the situational determinants influencing their content and style.

Despite the limitations above, this study systematically explored the relevance and applicability of the discourses delivered by Francis for individuals navigating their quest for direction, purpose, and meaning within a globalized and digitalized world. This exploration surfaced the theoretical and practical needs fulfilled by Francis' WCD messages, addressing the existential dilemmas of those who work in communications amidst rapid cultural and technological changes.

⁵¹ Christopher J. Oldenburg, *The Rhetoric of Pope Francis: Critical Mercy and Conversion for the Twenty-first Century* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), xiv.

⁵² Oldenburg, xvi.

Conclusion

The study is based on a conceptual content analysis of Francis' WCD messages from 2013 to 2024 to shed light on the challenges and opportunities posed by the rapid rise of ICTs in a globalized and digitalized landscape. It is divided into three phases. The first phase involved analyzing the texts to identify and quantify the most prevalent concepts or terms. The second phase included an in-depth study of the evolution of these concepts, along with the selection and categorization of their correlates. This analysis offered three insights into the evolution and general structure of Francis' WCD messages about ICTs, contributing to a deeper understanding of the intersection between religious faith, communication, and ICTs in the modern world. These efforts reflect the church's ongoing commitment to shaping the impact of ICTs in these turbulent times.

Francis' skillful use of rhetorical stratagems, encompassing the employment of metaphors, narrative storytelling, and appeals to emotion, meticulously deconstructs the efficacy of his methodology in articulating faith-oriented perspectives. This analysis unpacks his ability to engage with a broad spectrum of demographic groups, including participants within the communicative process and individuals external to religious or secular institutions. It offers the essential dispositions to acquire ICCs.

Finally, the messages emanating from Francis' WCD communicative efforts provide a robust framework for cultivating ICC skills underpinned by the foundational principles of respect, empathy, truthfulness, and charity. These principles are indispensable for the realization of effective and cohesive intercultural dialogues.

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