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THE IGLESIA FILIPINA INDEPENDIENTE: BEING CHURCH 'PRO DEO ET PATRIA'

Contributions to the Theology, History and Spirituality of the
Iglesia Filipina Independiente in their Ecumenical Context
by Eleuterio J. Revollido, Mariefe Ibarra Revollido,
Joris Vercammen and Peter-Ben Smit



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Edited by Ineke Smit and Peter-Ben Smit

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Cover image: Coat of arms of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente

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Preface

Peter-Ben Smit

This new volume in the *Seminariereeks*, the series of books and edited volumes published under the auspices of the Old Catholic Seminary (Utrecht, the Netherlands), is the result of the award of the Andreas Rinkel Prize to the Rev. Dr. Eleuterio J. Revollido, rector of Aglipay Central Theological Seminary (ACTS) of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente. He received this distinction on September 21, 2019, accompanied by his wife, Mariefe Ibarra Revollido, herself also a theologian and a faculty member at ACTS. Besides the public lecture given by Dr. Revollido on the occasion of the prize ceremony, which took place in the context of the formal and festive opening of the academic year at the Old Catholic Seminary, this volume also contains the contributions to a symposium that was held a few days earlier, on September 17: ‘Catholic beyond colonialism’. This focused on the significance of the relationship between the Iglesia Filipina Independiente and the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht in their common aim to develop forms of catholic theology that go beyond colonial relationships. Both gatherings were well attended by participants from within as well as from widely beyond the Old Catholic Church, and included a delegation from the Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines. The prize ceremony was hosted by the Cathedral of SS. Mary and Anna in Haarlem; the symposium was hosted by the community of the Cathedral of St. Gertrud in Utrecht, whose generosity is gratefully acknowledged here.

This volume contains, after the *laudatio* (conferment address) pronounced at the award ceremony, first the public lecture by Dr. Revollido already mentioned, entitled ‘The Search for Visible Unity: The 1903-1912 Dialogue Between Bishop Eduard Herzog, Bishop Charles Henry Brent and Supreme Bishop Gregorio and Its Lessons to the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) – Old Catholic Churches’ (OCC) Concordat Relations for Today’. Because many of the original sources are quoted, this paper gives a unique insight into the emerging relationships between the Iglesia Filipina Independiente and the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht, and the roles that the Episcopal bishop and ecumenical pioneer Charles Henry Brent played in this. In his analysis of the exchanges in the first decades of the 20th century, Revollido also shows how dimensions of these first contacts between the churches can – and should! – continue to be of importance in the relationships between these churches today. (Note: ‘concordat’ is in theology a common term for formalized ecumenical relationships).

This is followed by four contributions as they were presented at the September 17 symposium. The first is a paper by Dr. Revollido, entitled '117 Years of Revolution: The History and Ministry of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente'. It provides a well-documented survey of key dimensions of the founding period of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente and the formation of its theological and spiritual DNA, as it were, and offers an insightful orientation for those who are new to the subject, and new and original observations for those who are acquainted with it already. This is immediately followed by a paper by Mariefe Ibarra Revollido, lecturer at Aglipay Central Theological Seminary, who discusses the topic of her ongoing research project: the revolutionary Mariology of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, in particular as it is embodied in the Birhen sa Balintawak, the first indigenous representation of Mary and Jesus in the Philippines, and directly related to the Philippine war for independence in the late 19th century, and focusing particularly on its significance for an empowering spirituality today. In doing so, she revisits and recontextualizes in contemporary culture some theological insights of the IFI's first leading bishop ('Obispo Maximo'), Gregorio Aglipay, after whom the IFI is often called 'Aglipayan'. Next, a reflection on the relationship between the IFI and the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht is offered by Peter-Ben Smit, who presents an exploratory inventory of specific dimensions of theology and church life where Old Catholic theology has been or could be challenged fruitfully through engagement with the IFI. The concluding reflection at the symposium, presented by the Most Rev. Dr. Joris Vercammen, Archbishop of Utrecht, also concludes the volume. Throughout his episcopate, Vercammen has been not only an important catalyst for the relationship between the IFI and the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands, but also for that between the IFI and the Union of Utrecht of Old Catholic Churches as a whole. In his reflections Vercammen underlines how important the IFI has been for ecumenical efforts aimed at developing a common understanding and praxis of catholicity in the context of a globalized world. With this he takes up a topic that had occupied him during most of his episcopate, not in the last place in the context of the World Council of Churches' ongoing 'Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace'.

All contributions were originally designed for oral delivery and this character has been maintained, because it communicates something of the atmosphere of the occasions on which they were presented. For the same reason, we have left a few short identical passages in the two papers by Terry Revollido; these were different lectures, given on different occasions.

Finally, an important dimension of both the prize ceremony and the symposium was the involvement and support of St. Paul's Mission, the body that has been commissioned by the Old Catholic episcopate to further interna-

tional diaconal and missionary cooperation. As announced at the award ceremony on September 21, 2019, this organization had received an anonymous gift, to be used for scholarships at Aglipay Central Theological Seminary. The gift was of such generous dimensions (EUR 15,000) that its interest will cover a scholarship for the foreseeable future. Appropriately, the seminary decided to name this the Andreas Rinkel Scholarship. Thus, the prize ceremony went beyond honoring past achievements and contributed to ensuring theological education in the future. The editors of this volume join the recipients of this gift in thanking the anonymous donor for this generous contribution to the education of a future generation of theologians and priests.

and the fact that the... (The text is extremely faint and largely illegible. It appears to be a dense, multi-paragraph document, possibly a historical record or a formal report. The content is obscured by low contrast and poor resolution.)

Conferment Address (*Laudatio*)

Peter-Ben Smit

The academic prizes conferred by the Old Catholic Seminary are intended to award those who have 'done excellent academic theological research in the history, doctrine or praxis of the Old Catholic Church, or who have contributed equivalent achievements that are of special significance for this church'. The jury of the prize, consisting of the Rev. Dr. Mattijs Ploeger, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Dirk Jan Schoon, the Rev. Prof. Angela Berlis, Prof. Jan Hallebeek, Mr. Jérôme van de Water and myself, has nominated the Very Rev. Dr. Eleuterio J. Revollido for the Andreas Rinkel Prize 2019. The prize is awarded for his outstanding achievements as a researcher in the field of church history and as a theological educator, whose work is of particular importance to theology as practiced in the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands and, beyond that, in the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht.

A leading theologian of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Dr. Revollido has been the Rector of Aglipay Central Theological Seminary (ACTS), Urdeneta City (Pangasinan, Philippines), since 1995. Although just before he arrived a typhoon had ravaged the institution, he has been able, together with the seminary's faculty, today represented by Ms. Mariefe Ibarra Revollido (also Dr. Revollido's spouse), to rebuild and build up the seminary in terms of infrastructure, faculty, educational and research facilities, and, of course, student body. Both the faculty and the student body have in the course of these years grown in quality, quantity and diversity. The seminary was able to secure support for scholarships and faculty development grants, as well as support for its infrastructural development from a range of sources including Old Catholic organizations such as the Dutch Mission St. Paul, the *Diakonie* of the Old Catholic Church in Germany, and the Swiss *Partner Sein*. While offering an unaccredited undergraduate degree in the 1990s, the seminary's M.Div. program is currently in the process of acquiring accreditation by the Association for Theological Education in Southeast Asia (ATESEA), which speaks to the development of ACTS under Revollido's rectorate.

The seminary, now accommodating up to 64 students simultaneously, also serves as a conference center, an ecumenical hub, and as a place for continuing education, not last in Clinical Pastoral Education. In the course of these developments Father Terry, as he is commonly known, resisted calls to the episcopate and regularly had to go into hiding both at home and abroad because he was targeted by extrajudicial death squads for political reasons. In spite of all this he also managed to complete his doctorate at one of the most prestig-

ious universities in the Philippines, the University of Santo Tomas (Manila), in 2009. Part of his research was conducted in cooperation with the then Department for Old Catholic Theology in Bern, Switzerland, where Dr. Revollido found a temporary asylum in early 2007. His thesis, *The Interplay of Nationalism and Ecumenism in the Ministry of the Nine Supreme Bishops of the IFI: 1902–2002* is a standard work for the historiography of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente.

While the Old Catholic Church features prominently in this thesis, shedding light on the global ecumenical efforts of someone like Dr. Eduard Herzog (1842-1924), the first bishop of the Old Catholic (*Christkatholische*) Church of Switzerland, Revollido's contribution to Old Catholic theology stretches much further than this. I highlight two roles here in particular. First, today's laureate has played a role in virtually all theological exchanges between the Union of Utrecht and the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, either in the background as a consultant, or as a keynote speaker and resource person. A prominent example is his leading role in the theological consultation on 'Catholicity and Globalization,' which between 2006 and 2008 brought together for conversations theologians from the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, the Episcopal Church (USA), the Church of Sweden, the Roman Catholic Church, the World Council of Churches, and the Union of Utrecht, followed up with a further round of talks in 2016. These gatherings helped to break new ground in theology, also for the Old Catholics involved (for me personally it was a very valuable learning process!). Second, the 'Alberto Ramento visiting professorship' has been a project supported by the International Bishops' Conference of the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht since 2013. It involves the annual deployment of Old Catholic theologians at the seminaries of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente for which Dr. Revollido has served as the academic coordinator in the Philippines (and a gracious host) since its inception. Old Catholic theologians participating in it have been both formed and informed by it, and it has often changed their perspective on theology and theological education. Also, beyond this formal program Aglipay Central Theological Seminary has welcomed many Old Catholic theologians in the course of the past 20 years. In this ministry of theological hospitality Mariefe Ibarra Revollido has also played a key role, both in terms of facilitation and in terms of theological input.

By fulfilling all of these roles and by providing an outspoken witness for the calling, theology, spirituality and struggles of his church, 'Father Terry' has to many in the Union of Utrecht (and beyond) become the embodiment of what the IFI stands for. This in itself is also a contribution to theology, which is, always, also personal. In fact, his service to church and academia can well be seen as an instantiation of the productive interplay between spiritual vocation

and academic inquisitiveness, which is an important hallmark of sound theology.

Finally, that the award of the Andreas Rinkel prize takes place on September 21 is, in a way, symbolic. For some, September 21 is primarily the feast of St. Matthew, the Evangelist; for Filipinos it is the day on which in 1972 president Ferdinand Marcos proclaimed martial law, which was lifted only in 1984 with Marcos's being exiled on February 24. This period coincides with the years in which today's laureate was formed as a priest, a process that led him to engage actively and critically, in word and deed, with the social and political situation in his country. Such engagement took place not despite being a priest, but because of being a priest in a church that understands the struggle for the dignity of all people to be a God-given vocation (the motto of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente 'Pro Deo et Patria' is to be understood in this sense).¹ As I already alluded to above, the prize paid for this was often high: a heavy strain on the seminary community and relatives, frequently also involving the loss of not only family members but also of colleagues and mentors (notably Obispo Maximo Alberto Ramento in 2016) and frequent personal threats, which led to Revollido's forced exile or periods of hiding out in undisclosed locations in the Philippines. All of this is an integral part of the excellent theological research and achievements of special significance for the Old Catholic Church, which are today recognized through the awarding of the Andreas Rinkel Prize to the Rev. Dr. Eleuterio J. Revollido. This, as the citation on the accompanying certificate reads, is given to him

for his contributions to the historical and ecumenical theology in the tradition of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, as well as to the theological exchange between the Iglesia Filipina Independiente and the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht, in particular through the Alberto Ramento Visiting Professorship. Building up Aglipay Central Theological Seminary as a key centre of theological formation and ecumenical hospitality, he has contributed significantly to the development of the theology and social witness of his own tradition while enriching and challenging the Old Catholic theological discourse.

¹ See, e.g., the account in Eleuterio J. Revollido, *The Interplay of Nationalism and Ecumenism in the Ministry of the Nine Supreme Bishops of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) 1902 – 2002*, SThD dissertation; University of St. Thomas, Manila, 2009. This sentiment is also present among contemporary youth members of the IFI, on which see Yvan Ysmael Yonaha, Pro Deo et Patria: Reflexive Spirituality and the Youth of Iglesia Filipina Independiente, *Philippine Sociological Review* 64 (2016), 139-164.

The Search for Visible Unity: Lessons for the Concordat in the 1903-1912 Dialogue between Bishops Eduard Herzog, Charles Henry Brent, and Gregorio Aglipay

Eleuterio J. Revollido

Introduction

It is a great privilege to be part of this year's academic activities of the Old Catholic Seminary in cooperation with the University of Utrecht. I would like to give my utmost gratitude to the organizer of the Andreas Rinkel Prize, to the jury, and the theological faculty of the Seminary. I would like to express my personal gratitude to Prof. Peter-Ben Smit, who first informed and enlightened me about the Rinkel Prize, and to Archbishop Joris Vercammen, representing the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht. This is another historic event in the name of Archbishop Andreas Rinkel, the head of the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht who during his leadership signed the Concordat of Full Communion with the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) 54 years ago tomorrow, September 22, 1965. It is also a privilege and honor to receive this year's Rinkel Prize and being the first non-European to obtain this Prize. Thank you very much for this, another valuable expression of our visible unity as Concordat partners.

The agreement signed in 1965 ended the long years of searching for visible unity that traced its foundation back to previous agreements entered into by the two churches, namely, the Bonn Agreement of 1931 (OCC and the Anglican Church), the membership of both churches in the World Council of Churches (IFI 1958 and OCC 1948), and the Concordat of Full Communion between the IFI and the Episcopal Church in the USA in 1961. Today, let me substantiate further the 54-year Concordat relations by presenting an account of the earlier encounters and series of engagements starting in 1903, or 62 years prior to the 1965 agreement. This paper is an attempt to tell you about the beginning of the relationship between the IFI and the OCC from 1903-1912, their desire for visible unity amid disagreements, and the important lessons that can be learned from their dialogue.

The main characters in the dialogue are bishop Eduard Herzog (1841-1924) of the Old Catholic Church of Switzerland, bishop Gregorio Aglipay (1860-1940), the first Supreme Bishop of the IFI, and bishop Charles Henry Brent, the first Missionary Bishop to the Philippines of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA (PECUSA).

The Philippine Context

Let us first briefly examine the Philippine context, to put into proper perspective the dialogue between the three bishops.

It should be noted that the Philippines were colonized by Spain for more than 300 years (1565-1898), and for 50 years under the American colonial government (1898-1946). This period in Philippine history is best described in the book written by Melba Maggay. She says:

The Spanish friars brought with them the idea of Christendom, of a territory where the cross rules, enforced and safeguards by the sword. The Spanish *conquista*, with its fusion of church and state authority, educated Filipinos into the sense that to be outside the church of the friar is also to be outside the 'hearing of the bells,' outside that space where community has been organized into both a political and salvific unit.

Within this purview, the Filipinos who rebelled against colonial rule were, if they were *ilustrados*, seen as heretics infected by the liberalism of Europe, or, if they were peasants, *tulisanes* and *remontados* whose faith was deemed as *colorum*, or outside the pale of orthodox religion.

By the time the Americans came at the turn of the century, the people had been leashed to the mediatorial powers of the Spanish friar. At the same time, the experience of abuse and the winds of change sweeping the country intensified discontent over friocracy. The critical mass was forming, ripe for the sowing of a post-Enlightenment religion, with a strong bias towards a reasoned faith, egalitarianism and the primacy of the individual conscience over the dictates of an external clerical authority.²

Supreme Bishop Gregorio Aglipay

It is in the above context that we can find the important role played by Father Gregorio Aglipay during the Revolution against Spain (1896-1898) and the war against America (1898-1902). He was a Roman Catholic priest and an example of a person who embraced liberalism, reasoned faith, and egalitarianism. His personality was described by a notable historian, William Henry Scott, in this passage:

An outstanding theology student, zealous priest, *Katipunero* (an organization that called for an armed revolution for an independent and sovereign Philippines), Military Vicar General of Philippine Revolu-

² Melba P. Maggay, *The Clash of Cultures: Early American Protestant Missions and Filipino Religious Consciousness*, Manila 2011, xv-xvi.

tionary government of 1898, the only priest in the first Philippine Congress, a Guerilla Padre (against the Americans), excommunicated by the Vatican, and later on became the first Supreme Bishop of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente.³



Father Gregorio Aglipay (it.wikipedia.org)

The Birth of the IFI

Bishop Aglipay led the IFI that was proclaimed on August 3, 1902 by the first federation of labor union in the Philippines, the *Union Obrera Democratica* (UOD). Its birth has been vividly defined by Old Catholic theologians:

³ William Henry Scott, *Aglipay before Aglipayanism*, Quezon City, 1987.

The *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* came into being as the first and up to now the only church of catholic liberation that was formed out of a people's yearning for dignity, freedom and recognition.⁴

The 'yearning for dignity and freedom' being the hallmark of the IFI struggle may have been best described by the newspaper *La Democracia* on October 26, 1902 in its commentary after Father Aglipay accepted the leadership of the new Filipino church:

The die is cast! Padre Aglipay has crossed the Rubicon of intransigency and absolutism, with the decision and energy of a Roman Captain. It has been a blow, a death blow to Catholic unity in the Philippines. The spark will cause a blaze. And what is the cause of this religious secession? In appearance it is the matter of hierarchy. In reality, it is the assertion of the dignity of the people, the last consequence of the revolution, which in order to be complete requires religious liberty.⁵

It is from this perspective that Filipino historian Teodoro Agoncillo, in his book *The History of Filipino People*, claimed that 'the only living and tangible result of the Revolution is the Filipino Church or the Philippine Independent Church'.⁶

International Recognition, and Dialogue for Visible Unity between Herzog and Aglipay

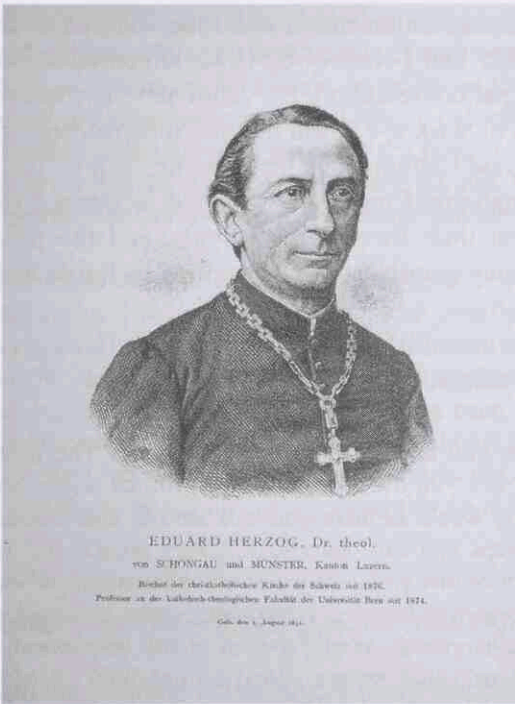
The yearning for 'recognition' of the IFI, on the other hand, came not just from many prominent heroes of the Philippine Revolution, but interestingly even from personalities coming from the international level. It was realized through bishop Eduard Herzog.

Eduard Herzog (1841-1924) was the first bishop of the Old Catholic Church of Switzerland and was consecrated in 1873 by the Bishop of Germany. Prior to this, he was a former professor of Bible exegesis and Hebrew language in 1868 at the theological seminary in Lucerne. He was excommunicated by the Vatican after he participated in the Old Catholics' Congress in Cologne in 1872.

⁴ Franz Segbers and Peter-Ben Smit, *Catholicity in Times of Globalization: Remembering Alberto Ramento, Martyred Bishop of Workers and Peasants*, Lucerne 2011, 22.

⁵ *La Democracia*, October 26, 1902, quoted in Sister Mary Dorita Clifford, B.M.V. 'Iglesia Filipina Independiente: The Revolutionary Church', in Gerald Anderson (ed.), *Studies in Philippine Church History*, Ithaca and London 1969, 242-243.

⁶ Teodoro Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, Quezon City 1977, 265.



Robert Herzog (Wikimedia Commons)

In 1903, bishop Herzog also had a history as the first bishop from Europe to give recognition to the birth of the IFI. In just fifteen months after the IFI proclamation, bishop Herzog sent a letter to bishop Aglipay dated December 1, saying:

Dear Lord and Brother. I have read with very satisfaction your article in 'The Independent' of 29 October 1903. May God be with your Lordship and your Church. You don't know perhaps that there are in Switzerland, Germany, Holland, Austria similar catholic national churches as you have organized so happily in your Islands. We hold the catholic faith ... sacraments ... constitution but we are independent from the Pope. It seems to me that those national churches should be in brotherly union to show the world that it is possible to be catholic everywhere without being submitted to Rome. As a sign of my brotherly feelings I send you the list of my clergy.⁷

⁷ Bishop Eduard Herzog, Berne, Switzerland, to Bishop Gregorio Aglipay, Manila, LS, December 1, 1903, transcript in the IFI Archives, St. Andrew's Theological Seminary, Quezon City.

Bishop Herzog's initial communication was followed by two more letters, dated December 12, 1903 and February 8, 1904, which contained some queries about the IFI Episcopal consecration. He ventilated his concern by saying that 'we are very anxious to show the world that our independence from Rome does not hinder us to be good Catholics'. In his letter he even invited bishop Aglipay to attend their International Congress to be held in Berne.⁸ He also informed bishop Aglipay about their theological schools, and the possibility to 'send some students or young priests of good manners to finish their studies at our school...'⁹

The first letter from bishop Aglipay to bishop Herzog is dated February 26, 1904, with these words:

I am glad that you have read my poor article in 'The Independent'. I have already sent you a collection of our official organ, and we shall send you every week. In there you will see our constitution, doctrine, etc., etc. Perhaps you can understand ??very good?? the Spanish language. The notice that you gave me of one international Congress in the near summer, and to which all the independent churches are invited, gave me great happiness. Would to God, it will be realized, and so, we show to the world that we are united by one only tie of the faith in J.C.O.L. [Jesus Christ Our Lord].¹⁰

As a consequence of their communication, bishop Herzog introduced bishop Aglipay to the Old Catholic Episcopal Conference, which on September 1, 1904, wrote him an official letter saying:

⁸ Bishop Eduard Herzog, Berne, Switzerland, to Bishop Gregorio Aglipay, Manila, LS, December 12, 1903, transcript in the IFI Archives, St. Andrew's Theological Seminary, Quezon City.

⁹ Herzog to Aglipay, February 8, 1904.

¹⁰ Bishop Gregorio Aglipay, Manila to bishop Eduard Herzog, Berne, Switzerland, LS, February 26, 1904, (photocopy), transcript in the ACTS Archives, Urdaneta City. The letters by Aglipay and Herzog from 1903 -1912 were obtained by the author from Rev. Prof. Urs von Arx, Old Catholic Church Department of Theology, University of Bern, Switzerland.

As our fellow-bishop, Eduard Herzog, informs us, you are in possession of the Creed addressed by us to the Catholic Church on the 24th of November 1889, as well as the agreements by which on the same day we have regulated our ecclesiastical relations among one another. You will see from the above, that although we reject the false doctrines, the pretensions to power and the abuses of the papacy, we strictly adhere to the Catholic doctrine, the Constitution of the Church and the Liturgy...

Without wishing to derogate from the independence of your Church, or to forestall your own judgment as to that which benefits your Church, we beg to call your attention above all to our adhering to the Apostolic Succession. We therefore are of the opinion that a Church can only be considered a Catholic Church, if its bishops have been consecrated by other Catholic bishops. If the bishops of your Church should hitherto not have received the Catholic consecration, we would address to you the urgent entreaty to be mindful of supplying this want.¹¹

The Constant Support of Bishop Herzog for Aglipay in Dialogue with Bishop Brent

The commitment to the Catholic belief was of prime importance to bishop Herzog, as could be seen in his frequent letters to bishop Aglipay. His insistence to Aglipay 'to show the world that our independence from Rome does not hinder us to be good Catholics'. could be explained by two important reasons: First, Herzog affirmed the Old Catholic motto, 'Let us hold the truth which has been believed everywhere, always, by all. For that is truly and in the strictest sense Catholic'. The second reason could be the warning he was receiving from bishop Charles Henry Brent of the PECUSA about the state of affairs of the IFI and Brent's biased opinion of bishop Aglipay.

The Rt. Rev. Charles Henry Brent was the first bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA (PECUSA) assigned to the Philippine Missionary District. He arrived in the Philippines on August 24, 1902 on the same boat with the head of the Philippine colonial government, Governor William Howard Taft. Bishop Edward Malecdan, a church historian of the Episcopal Church in the Philippines (ECP) described bishop Brent on this account:

Because he (Brent) shared in the imperialistic spirit of the turn-of-the-century Americans and came as a chaplain of his own people, Brent naturally allied himself with the colonial government. He was the friend

¹¹ The Old Catholic Episcopal Conference, Switzerland, to Bishop Gregorio Aglipay, Manila, LS, September 1904, transcript in the IFI Archives, St. Andrew's Theological Seminary, Quezon City.

of the colonial military Generals, Governors and his advice was sought for by the American Presidents including McKinley, Roosevelt and Taft.¹²

While letters were being exchanged between the three bishops there were three vital issues that bishop Aglipay and the whole IFI were confronting during the years 1902 to 1906 and that bishop Herzog and bishop Brent were fully aware of, namely, (1) the impending return of IFI-occupied properties to the Roman Catholic Church, (2) the legitimacy of bishop Aglipay's consecration to the episcopacy, and (3) the personal attack on Aglipay because of his nationalist and pro-Philippine independence stand. What is interesting in these engagements is the continuous support given by bishop Herzog to Aglipay and the IFI. Let us look at some of the conversations that transpired between them.



Charles Henry Brent
(commons.wikimedia.org)

First there was the threat from the Roman Catholic hierarchy to repossess the church buildings and other properties occupied by the IFI. This uncertain atmosphere within the IFI concerned bishop Herzog himself, as he explained to bishop Brent in his letter dated July 24, 1904:

The papist newspaper announced that the independent movement is on the point of being suppressed. I would be infinitely sorry to hear of such an ending to the efforts of the poor Filipinos. But if the American courts drive them away from the churches in order to restore the church buildings to the Roman Church, it would be difficult for the young and weak church to remain in existence. We in Switzerland would also be in a sorry plight if the cantonal governments were to follow the example of the ultramontane governments which regard us as apostates without any

¹² Edward Malecdan, 'A Review of Philippine Episcopal Church History with a Critical Eye, 1986,' (photocopy), Special Collections, ACTS Archives, Urdaneta City, 2.

right to exist or to own church property. I hope very sincerely that the United States do not adopt the canon law of the papist Church. It seems to me a duty to render assistance to the poor Filipinos who are seeking to free themselves from the yoke of Rome and to establish a better order in the ecclesiastical and moral sphere.¹³

The full appreciation of the plea made by bishop Herzog to bishop Brent may be seen in Brent's letter to his fellow Episcopalian some years later. On March 6, 1906, bishop Brent mentioned that he received a peppered letter from bishop Eduard Herzog of the Old Catholic Church of Switzerland, who at that time advised him not to take action against the cause of the IFI. Brent said in his letter:

Bishop Herzog says that if there are five good men in the Aglipay movement there are enough for us to cooperate with them; that is perfectly true, but if there are five good men in the Roman Catholic Church there are enough to cooperate with them. Thus far, I have not been able to find five good men in the Aglipay followers.¹⁴

Second, there was the issue of legitimate episcopal orders. On July 31, 1904 bishop Herzog replied to bishop Brent's information on what he calls 'Aglipay's movement':

I have read your account of the situation. I am particularly shocked to learn that Senor Aglipay has not received Episcopal orders. I was afraid that was the case. Certain bits of information that I had received had raised doubts in my mind before, but the success of Aglipay's movement seemed to me a proof that the people regarded him as a real Catholic bishop.¹⁵

Third, there was the personal attack by bishop Brent against Aglipay on the latter's anti-American and pro-Filipino positions, an attack that bishop Herzog tried to comprehend. In his August 16, 1904 letter Herzog continued to try and understand bishop Aglipay's predicament and was convinced that he was still worth supporting. He said to bishop Brent:

¹³ Herzog to Brent, July 31, 1904. Brent Papers; original in French, quoted in Achutegui and Bernad, *Philippine Studies*, 577.

¹⁴ Achutegui and Bernad, *Religious Revolution in the Philippines*, vol. 1, Quezon City 1960, 375.

¹⁵ In: Brent Papers, quoted from Achutegui and Bernad, *Philippine Studies* (July 1960), 578.

I understand perfectly that Senor Aglipay, who from his youth has been reared in such a milieu, is not a Christian gentleman who has had the advantage of being born into a good Oxford family. But I still think that the movement which he heads deserves support and encouragement. Liberty is a good mistress; but the education of a nation cannot be accomplished in a few years. Only the Roman Church would gain if the movement were to fail.¹⁶

On his side bishop Brent continued his vilification of bishop Aglipay and his followers. Having an 'imperialistic spirit of the turn-of-the-century Americans and [coming] as a chaplain of his own people' to suppress the clamor for independence of the Filipino people, he wrote to General Allen on October 12, 1904:

I am afraid the man [sc. Aglipay] is too slippery to do anything with....I feel that unless some force comes into the leaven and guide the Aglipay movement, it will fall prey to the clever political schemer who has eyes to perceive opportunity and ability to seize it. It must receive an inspiration, or else, it will soon become a positive power detrimental to the cause of righteousness and order. It must be better far that the whole disaffected mass should be reabsorbed into the Roman Communion than it should continue its present course.¹⁷

With the same degree of distrust, bishop Brent on July 23, 1913 even wrote to the Secretary of War, Mr. Lindley M. Garrison, about the religio-political participation of bishop Aglipay in the affairs of the country:

It has to do with the man Aglipay who has been an influence for evil in the life of the Filipinos ever since the American occupation, and, doubtless, for some time prior to them.... he posed as a religious leader, but when I faced him he admitted that his motive was political before it was religious... His whole history is a history of trickery. Had it not been for the power of the Roman Catholic Church, Aglipay today would have been one of the commanding figures in the Philippine Islands.¹⁸

¹⁶ Achutegui and Bernad, *Philippine Studies*, 578-579.

¹⁷ Edward Malecdan, 'What is Concordat?: A Historical Background and Its Development, 1986, ' 3, (photocopy), Special Collections, ACTS Library, Urdueta City, 3. This lecture was delivered by Bishop Edward Malecdan to the faculty and students of SATS on the Silver Anniversary of the Concordat between the IFI and the PECUSA, September 22, 1986.

¹⁸ Achutegui and Bernad, *Religious Revolution in the Philippines*, 408-409

Bishop Aglipay in Search of Legitimate Episcopal Consecration, or to Guard the Filipino Interest?

The first decade of the IFI under the leadership of bishop Aglipay was characterized by opportunities and threats: the political maneuvering perpetrated by the colonial government against Aglipay; the invitation from the Old Catholic Episcopal Conference to receive the gift of Apostolic Succession; the religious and organizational demands from the established IFI dioceses composed of more than a million members that joined the newly founded Filipino church; the calculated offensive coming from the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy; and the great suspicion on the part of bishop Brent and his vilification of Aglipay. These were vital ingredients that suppressed the growth of the young church and ended any possible cooperation with churches overseas.

With the many issues at hand, let us focus on one important aspect of episcopal consecration being offered by the Old Catholic Episcopal Conference in 1904. Was bishop Aglipay's reasoning valid, i.e., of giving more weight to attending to the legitimate rights of the Filipinos and the interest of newly established IFI parishes that were under attack, rather than traveling to Switzerland and gain legitimization of his episcopal consecration ?

The validity of Aglipay's decision not to prioritize a doctrinal problem over the practical life and organizational interest of the new Filipino church was confirmed in his letter to bishop Herzog of February 25, 1905. He attached a copy of *The Manila Cablenews* containing an article entitled 'Difficulties Face the New Delegate. Determined Struggle Between the Vatican and Religious Orders Over Disposition of Money. Mgr. Agius now Negotiating'. Aglipay's letter explained:

My disappointment is very great in not having been able to be present at the Congress of the Bishops of the Independent Catholics in Olten. I hoped to be able to go and up to the last minute I had it in mind but one thing after another of importance came up and prevented my leaving especially at this time when we are not fully organized or settled.

You have undoubtedly noticed that the new papal delegate Aglius has publicly declared that he would 'terminate the Aglipay schism etc'. As you will see by the included outline, he is here now trying to save some of the \$7,250,000 gold paid to the friars for lands and which the friars will not give to the pope.

Please carefully study the enclosed newspaper report of Mgr. Aglius and tell me your opinion of the grounds why the friars and the pope claim to hold the money paid to them and from this argument can you see that the Filipino people have any rights to that money?

I feel that as always in past Church history the despotic papal power respects no other rights than their own assumed power to claim everything.

There was the hope of what profit I could get by meeting with the brother Bishops who are working for the same reformation in Europe, but I can only rejoice that you have a successful and favorable Congress. Please extend my respect and offer my service to all the Bishops who were there.¹⁹

We find that here bishop Aglipay sacrifices the personal profit of receiving the gift of Apostolic Succession from the Old Catholic bishops. On the other hand, he gave primacy to the crucial fight for the rights and interest of the Filipinos being trampled by the Vatican in cahoots with the White House.

Honesty and Openness, Friendship and Orthodoxy, and the End of the Dialogue

The communication between Aglipay and Herzog continued until 1912. Bishop Aglipay even dedicated to bishop Herzog the IFI Catechesis of 1912, saying, 'a copy of my humble work CATECHESIS that condenses the fundamental doctrines of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente'.²⁰ He sent a copy of the unitarian-

¹⁹ Bishop Gregorio Aglipay, Manila to Bishop Edward Herzog, Berne, Switzerland, LS, February 25, 1905, (photocopy), transcript in the ACTS Archives, Urdaneta City.

²⁰ Aglipay to Herzog, August 2, 1912, (photocopy), transcript in the ACTS Archives, Urdaneta City.

leaning Catechesis with the honest intention to justify his liberal brand of Christianity, and this sincerity was to show to bishop Herzog that the depth of their friendship was larger than the doctrinal issue of apostolic succession.

The end of the dialogue between bishop Herzog and Supreme Bishop Aglipay is quite unexplained. One possible reason could be the clash of doctrinal opinions that reached its peak between them in relation to the 1912 Catechesis. This may be attested in a quite rude letter by bishop Aglipay on October 30, 1912 as a response to the queries by bishop Herzog regarding the Catechesis. Bishop Aglipay replied:

I am answering your kind letter of September 16, feeling in my soul that you cannot liberate yourself of the very evident mistakes because of your rooted biblical education with your 44 years of professorship...The religious freedom that the Americans have brought to us has put us all at once at the head of MODERNIST or SCIENTIFIC religious movement...If you want a quiet and useful discussion, you show our mistakes, and if you with your 44 years of professorship succeed, then we will modify without pride our teachings, as Cicero said, 'It is of anyone to do mistakes, but it is only stupid the one that remain in the mistake knowing it.... I have opened my heart to you, my dear brother, and I assure you that the previous words are said within the most friendly trust.'²¹

A few decades later the Episcopal Church's bishop in the Philippines, Norman Binsted, commented that bishop Aglipay was 'impatient' and, further said that, 'it remained for Bishop Aglipay's successor to follow up these early contacts in a calmer atmosphere and bring them to a successful conclusion'.²² Bishop Whittemore, another Episcopalian, shared almost the same opinion, saying that maybe 'the Bishop hesitated, giving various excuses and the moment passed'.²³

But history tells us that though the 'moment passed' and as a 'calmer atmosphere' arrives, no one can deny the precious seeds planted by bishop Aglipay and bishop Herzog in the hearts of the IFI and the Old Catholic faithful that brought us where we are now. The successors to the historic dialogue from 1903-1912 diligently watered the seeds until their 'successful conclusion'. This

²¹ Aglipay to Herzog, October 30, 1912, (photocopy), transcript in the ACTS Archives, Urdaneta City.

²² Norman Binsted, 'The Iglesia Filipina Independiente, in Apolonio Rancho (ed.), *Doctrine and Constitutional Rules, Various Articles and Chronology of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, 1996'. TMs (photocopy). Special Collections, ACTS Archives, Urdaneta City, 60.

²³ Lewis Bliss Whittemore, *Struggle for Freedom: The Philippine Independent Church*, Greenwich 1961, 137.

'successful conclusion' in a 'calmer atmosphere' was graciously given to us by the persons we remember today in the signing of the Concordat of Full Communion on September 22, 1965, Archbishop Andreas Rinkel and Supreme Bishop Isabelo de los Reyes, Jr.

The Lessons in Today's Concordat relations

What lessons can we learn from the dialogue between bishop Herzog and Supreme Bishop Aglipay as we celebrate the 54th anniversary of the signing of the Concordat of Full Communion in 1965?

Sharing Information to Understand the Context

Understanding one's context is a vital key to appreciation and stimulation of interest. However, it can only be possible if openness and significant information are shared in a more personal basis and with sincerity. It was on this basic tenet of partnership that the foundational relationship between bishop Herzog and bishop Aglipay was built.

Herzog introduced the Old Catholic Churches saying:

You don't know perhaps that there are in Switzerland, Germany, Holland, Austria similar catholic national churches as you have organized so happily in your Islands. We hold the catholic faith... sacraments... constitution but we are independent from the Pope.

Aglipay was also invited to visit Switzerland, and the Old Catholic bishop offered their schools to IFI aspirants to priesthood. Aglipay said in response:

I have already sent you a collection of our official organ, and we shall send you every week. In there you will see our constitution, doctrine, etc.

Although obtaining information and understanding context today is not much of a problem because of our digitalized technology, it has become more and more impersonal and lacking the human touch. We have to remember that the agreement signed in 1965 was preceded by a long silence, as if the two churches suffered from 20 years of amnesia because there was no sharing of information and understanding of context. The Concordat only gained flesh and blood in 1985 through an accidental meeting of church leaders in one of the World Council of Churches' meetings in Amsterdam.

Giving Importance to People, Their Rights and Independence

Concordat relationships are not about authority, hierarchy, signed documents and meetings, but first and foremost an agreement of churches, and therefore a partnership of people, the Church, being the people of God. This is one thing that we can appreciate in the dialogue between Herzog and Aglipay, in which they placed the importance of people, their rights and independence in the center of their discussion and consideration.

As to bishop Herzog, he embraced his relationship with the Filipino people in his ministry by responding to the anti-IFI comment of bishop Brent saying, 'It seems to me a duty to render assistance to the poor Filipinos who are seeking to free themselves from the yoke of Rome, and to establish a better order in the ecclesiastical and moral sphere'. Along the same line, bishop Aglipay prioritized the need to be in the heart of the struggle of the Filipino people rather than elevating his individual personality in the invitation to receive the gift of apostolic succession in Switzerland in 1904.

Therefore, for Concordat relationships to be relevant it is necessary to embrace the desire of the people in support of their God-given rights to live and for the 'fullness of life'. It means that the Concordat should go beyond doctrine-centered discussion towards a life-centered ministry to people, especially the marginalized in society.

Rooting Out the Faith and Healing the Wounds

One of the fundamental elements of any Concordat relationship is the dimension that it should be rooted in the origins of Christianity. It has to look back to the inspiration that can only be found in the Scriptures, the early Fathers, and the whole history of the Church. This ecumenism of rooting out the origins of faith was fundamental in the perspectives of bishop Herzog and the Old Catholic bishops. In their 1904 letter to bishop Aglipay, they emphasized that

... although we reject the false doctrines, the pretensions to power and the abuses of the papacy, we strictly adhere to the Catholic doctrine, the Constitution of the Church and the Liturgy.²⁴

This is one of those areas that were not remedied in the course of the historic engagements between Herzog and Aglipay, because of the chaotic situation of attending to people's lives and rights rather than fixing doctrinal perspectives. But this is a lesson that was taken seriously by the successors of bishop Aglipay, who believed that a Concordat relationship means healing the wounds of decades of division in the Church. It is in itself an opportunity for the re-examination of relationships by rooting out broken connections between people

²⁴ Marsha L. Dutton, ed., *Globalization and Catholicity: Ecumenical Conversations on God's Abundance and the People's Need*, Bern 2010, 82.

with the belief that relationships reside at the foundation of Christian faith to God and witness to neighbor and environment. It is an agreement seeking to build bridges by accepting responsibility in these relationships through the rooting out of values that promote healings.

Trusting Partnership

If bishop Herzog and bishop Aglipay easily found trust and an open relationship with each other, it was simply because of their common experience of being excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church. This painful and humiliating experience that both of them suffered solidified their belief in God. For Herzog it was the affirmation of the motto 'Let us hold the truth which has been believed everywhere, always, by all. For that is truly and in the strictest sense Catholic'.

Bishop Aglipay, on the other hand, trusted bishop Herzog and with open heart dedicated to him the IFI Catechism of 1912, although this had strong unitarian leanings. He received criticism from bishop Herzog and after sending his peppered response, Aglipay said in full honesty, 'I have opened my heart to you, my dear brother, and I assure you that the previous words are said within the most friendly trust'.

A Concordat relationship means trusting your partner. It should be marked by openness and good communication, for the lack of it could mean an end to any relationship. Although humility and honesty are implied in such a task, openness and trust are core components in the pursuit of genuine dialogue. This is where the art of listening is so important, and the ability to respond with open mind and heart is an imperative.

With these four lessons in today's Concordat anniversary, let us thank God for the life of bishop Eduard Herzog and Supreme Bishop Gregorio Aglipay, who in their ministry laid for us the foundation of our life-giving relationships. Let us give thanks also for the leadership of Archbishop Andreas Rinkel and Supreme Bishop Isabelo de los Reyes, Jr. in watering the seeds planted by bishop Eduard Herzog and Supreme Bishop Gregorio Aglipay.
Mabuhay Concordat!

117 Years Of Revolution: The History and Ministry of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente

Eleuterio J. Revollido

Introduction

To understand the history of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI), one needs to have knowledge of Philippine history. This is so because IFI history is part and parcel of the struggle of the Filipino people for freedom and independence. Thus, to put into proper perspective the establishment of the Filipino church it is important to briefly examine the context of its birth.

The Philippines were a Spanish colony for more than 300 years (1565 - 1898), and for 50 years were under American colonial government (1898 - 1946). This period in Philippine history has been best described in the historical narrative written by Melba Maggay in her book *The Clash of Cultures: Early American Protestant Missions and Filipino Religious Consciousness*:

The Spanish friars brought with them the idea of Christendom, of a territory where the cross rules, enforces and safeguards by the sword. The Spanish *conquista*, with its fusion of church and state authority, educated Filipinos into the sense that to be outside the church of the friar is also to be outside the 'hearing of the bells,' outside that space where community has been organized into both a political and salvific unit.

Within this purview, the Filipinos who rebelled against colonial rule were, if they were *ilustrados*, seen as heretics infected by the liberalism of Europe, or, if they were peasants, *tulisanes* and *remontados* whose faith was deemed as *colorum*, or outside the pale of orthodox religion.

By the time the Americans came at the turn of the century, the people had been leashed to the mediatorial powers of the Spanish friars. At the same time, the experience of abuse and the winds of change sweeping the country intensified discontent over friocracy. The critical mass was forming, ripe for the sowing of a post-Enlightenment religion, with a strong bias towards a reasoned faith, egalitarianism and the primacy of the individual conscience over the dictates of an external clerical authority.¹

The history of the IFI emerges from the above context, and the church traces its self-image to the Philippine Revolution that embraced 'reasoned faith, egalitarianism and the primacy of the individual conscience over the dictates of an

¹ Melba P. Maggay, *The Clash of Cultures: Early American Protestant Missions and Filipino Religious Consciousness*, Manila 2011, xv-xvi.

external clerical authority'. Being a child of the Revolution, the IFI to a large extent was part and product of a protracted struggle for socio-political and religious independence of the country, until its formal establishment during the American colonial regime. This is the reason why a Filipino nationalist historian, Teodoro Agoncillo, boasted in his book *History of the Filipino People* that 'The only living and tangible result of the Revolution is the Filipino Church or the Philippine Independent Church'.²

Leading Figures

Furthermore, it is also the above context where we can find the important role played by the leading figures in the founding of the IFI, who in their lives embraced liberalism, reasoned faith, and egalitarianism amid marginalization from Spanish colonial rule and later on from American imperialism.

Father Gregorio Aglipay (1860-1940)

In the book by William Henry Scott entitled *Aglipay before Aglipayanism*, Father Gregorio Aglipay is described with the following characterization:

An outstanding theology student, zealous priest, *Katipunero* (an organization that called for an armed revolution for an independent and sovereign Philippines), Military Vicar General of Philippine Revolutionary government of 1898, the only priest in the first Philippine Congress, a Guerilla Padre (against the Americans), Excommunicated by the Vatican, and later on became the first Supreme Bishop of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente.³

Many always referred to him as the founder of the IFI, being its first Supreme Bishop, but he corrected this in one of his interviews. He said:

The Filipino people is my witness that I am not the author of the Filipino Independent Church, neither did I intervene in its preparation. I was sleeping in Ezepeleta Street when I was awakened and told that in a meeting at the Centro de Bellas Artes in Manila, August 3, 1902, the Filipino people proclaimed the new church... The Philippine Independent Church was founded by the people of our country. It was a product of their initiative, a product of their desire for liberty, religiously, politically and socially. I was only one of the instruments of its expression.⁴

² Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, Quezon City 1990, 232.

³ William Henry Scott, *Aglipay Before Aglipayanism* Quezon City 1987, 7.

⁴ Letter to Mgr. Guglielmo Piani dated February 17, 1932, *El Pueblo* February 24, 1932, and the *Herald Week Magazine*, September 27, 1933, quoted in William Henry Scott, *Aglipay Before Aglipayanism*, Quezon City 1987, 40-41.

Putting into proper perspective the founding of the IFI as a product of the Filipino people's desire, and giving credit to the people's commitment to liberty, Aglipay becomes a credible leader of the new Filipino church.

Isabelo de los Reyes, Sr. (1864-1938)

The paintings in the lobby of the oldest royal and pontifical university in Asia, the University of Santo Tomas (UST), show prominent alumni and distinguished Filipino patriots such as José Rizal, Apolinario Mabini, Juan Luna, Ponce and Isabelo de los Reyes, Sr. The inscription for Isabelo reads:

Isabelo de los Reyes, Sr., Vigan, I.S., July 7, 1864 – October 10, 1938, graduated law at UST, journalist, scholar-author, publisher, labor leader, nationalist and politico-social leader, author of books on history, folklore, politics and social problems. Despite imprisonment for involvement in the Philippine Revolution, he was later appointed to responsible positions in the Spanish government. Founder, labor movement and co-founder, Philippine Independent Church, served as senator of the Philippines.⁵

Isabelo de los Reyes, Sr., popularly called 'Don Belong', founded the first labor union in the Philippines, the *Union Obrera Democratica* (UOD), in February 1902. In his speech on this occasion he said: 'The first thing to be obtained is the guarantee of the fruits of the poor man's sweat, so much more sacred than the rich man's capital'.⁶



Isabelo de los Reyes, Sr.
(wikimedia commons)

⁵ The author received his doctoral degree from this university and is a proud alumnus of this school of revolutionary heroes.

⁶ William Henry Scott, *The Union Obrera Democratica*, Quezon City 1992, 26.

On August 3, 1902, in an UOD-led demonstration against the friars, Don Belong proclaimed the establishment of the IFI and named Father Gregorio Aglipay as its head. In 1903, he authored the Doctrines and Constitutional Rules of the IFI, and in 1906 composed the *Oficio Divino* (Divine Office) of the new church. In 2002, Roman Catholic liturgists acknowledged the work of Isabelo and called him the first Asian liturgist who incorporated the importance of assembly, joy, the role of culture, history, and the presence of liberty, equality and fraternity in his liturgy.⁷

Father Pedro Brillantes (1860-1905)

Brillantes was a Roman Catholic priest and vicar of Bacarra, Ilocos Norte, who joined Aglipay in the campaign for the Filipinization of the Catholic hierarchy. In January 1902 he led the clergy of Ilocos Norte in a declaration entitled 'Ultimatum of seventeen Ilocano Priests to the Apostolic Delegate appointing Aglipay as their Leader'. The ultimatum stated that:

We the undersigned priests will fight for the exclusive right of the Filipino clergy to occupy the position of archbishops and bishops in the Philippines. If this right is violated by the Apostolic Delegate, we will secede from the Roman Church and form an independent Filipino Church, teaching the same dogmas as the Roman [Church].⁸

Brillantes became a prominent leader of the new church and made history as the first priest consecrated to the episcopacy on October 19, 1902. He received consecration in his cathedral in Bacarra by twelve priests (the apostolic number), and justified himself saying:

According to my profession of faith, I am neither dependent or independent, but solely a Filipino, Catholic, Apostolic and divine, Therefore I shall be consecrated Bishop '*ritu divino et apostolico*,'; I shall recognize the Pope if the Pope recognizes me on condition that he sets aside his diplomacy and politics which oppress the Philippines.⁹

⁷ Moises B. Andrade and Edgar S. Yanga, *The Oficio Divino and the Liturgy Inculturation by Isabelo de los Reyes*, Quezon City 2002, 6.

⁸ Pedro de Achutegui and Miguel Bernad, *Religious Revolution in the Philippines*, vol. 4, Quezon City 1972, 121.

⁹ Ambrocio Manaligod, *The Ecclesiality of the Philippine Independent Church*, Quezon City 1988, 88.

It was on this same occasion that the so-called Bacarra Formula was formulated by the Ilocano clergy alleging their 'faith...but not in his diplomacy or his politics or his despotism' and swore to 'guard inviolate the Faith, the teaching of Tradition, the contents of Sacred Scripture, the Sacraments, the Liturgy, the veneration of the Saints and especially of the ever Blessed Virgin Mary'.¹⁰

The Founding and First Adherents

Bishop Aglipay led the IFI after it was proclaimed on August 3, 1902 by the *Union Obrera Democratica* (UOD). Its birth was vividly defined by Old Catholic theologians in their statement that,

The *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* came into being as the first and up to now the only church of catholic liberation that was formed out of a people's yearning for dignity, freedom and recognition.¹¹

The 'yearning for dignity and freedom' being the hallmark of the IFI struggle, was best described in the newspaper *La Democracia* on October 26, 1902, in its commentary after Father Aglipay accepted the leadership of the new Filipino church, saying:

The die is cast! Padre Aglipay has crossed the Rubicon of intransigency and absolutism, with the decision and energy of a Roman Captain. It has been a blow, a death blow to Catholic unity in the Philippines. The spark will cause a blaze. And what is the cause of this religious secession? In appearance it is the matter of hierarchy. In reality, it is the assertion of the dignity of the people, the last consequence of the revolution, which in order to be complete requires religious liberty.¹²

The statement above, giving a primary role to the Filipino people as the real founders of the IFI, could be backed by statistics, for instance the number of priests who joined this church in the beginning of the 20th century. The Jesuit historians Fathers De Achutegui and Bernad observed that only around fifty Catholic priests, mainly secular and concentrated in the diocese of Nueva Segovia, turned to the IFI out of the 825 Filipino Roman Catholic priests during that period. This statistical reality bolstered the claim that the founding of the

¹⁰ Manaligod, *Ecclesiality*, 87.

¹¹ Franz Segbers and Peter-Ben Smit, *Catholicity in Times of Globalization: Remembering Alberto Ramento, Martyred Bishop of Workers and Peasants*, Lucerne 2011, 22.

¹² *La Democracia*, October 26, 1902, quoted in Sister Mary Dorita Clifford, B.M.V. 'Iglesia Filipina Independiente: The Revolutionary Church', in: Anderson (ed.), *Studies in Philippine Church History*, 242-243.

IFI was not merely a religious affair if judged from the figure of a million and a half Filipinos who turned into IFI followers overnight in a population of seven million. The same authors commented further that the IFI 'was numerically large enough to constitute a major change in the religious picture...was in fact a major revolution, with important political and economic repercussions'.¹³

Looking at the earliest adherents of this church as described in *La IFI Revista Catolica* in an article entitled 'Primeras Adhesiones', we find enumerated the sixty residents of Navotas led by a woman named Saturnina Bunda, the members of the *Union Obrera Democratica*, some clergymen, seminarians and several individuals.¹⁴ Some millenarian groups were also mentioned who joined the IFI, such as the *Guardia de Honor* in Pangasinan and the *Sagrada Familia* of Ilocos Sur. Also to be noted are the nationalism and remarkable decisions made by the townspeople of Maragondon in Cavite and Lagonoy in Camarines Sur (south of capital Manila) in their adherence to the IFI as faith communities. This situation ushered in another valuable reform, allowing greater participation of the laity, as can be gleaned from the early organizational structure of the IFI giving laypersons representation in the decision-making bodies of the church.

The enthusiasm of people in joining the IFI, a new church firmly led by two leading nationalist figures of the revolution against Spain and the war against American colonial power (Aglipay and de los Reyes) was also received with suspicion by the detractors of the newly inaugurated church. Even from its early inception it was accused of being a mere facade for a movement to oust American sovereignty in the Philippines under the cloak of religion.

History records also declare that after a few years of conversion to the new church there came a drastic decline in IFI membership. It was caused not by the mellowing of nationalism, but could be interpreted rather as the identification of many people with the prestige and grandeur of the church edifices and the outward expressions of their religiosity that was given validation by the images inside the church building. It all started after the November 24, 1906 Supreme Court decision to return all disputed church buildings and other parish properties that were occupied by the IFI to the Roman Catholic Church. This decision served as a test to the early IFI adherents that in the words of Achutegui and Bernad, 'was catastrophic to the Philippine Independent Church'.¹⁵

¹³ Achutegui and Bernad, *Religious Revolution in the Philippines*, vol. 1, Quezon City 1960, 234.

¹⁴ *La Iglesia Filipina Independiente Revista Catolica*, 1903, TMs (photocopy), 2, Special Collections, ACTS Archives, Urdaneta City.

¹⁵ Achutegui and Bernad, *Religious Revolution*, vol.1, 346.

It was succeeded by an offensive condemnation of the IFI as the 'Synagogue of Anti-Christ' in the Manila Council of 1907,¹⁶ and the invitation to more religious orders from Europe to come to the country. This move on the part of the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy was viewed by some historians as 'the third wave of Catholic missionaries to the Philippines which consciously or unconsciously became an invisible but sturdy rampart of the Roman Catholic hierarchy against the onslaught of Protestantism, Aglipayanism, and Neo-Hispanism in the first two decades of the US colonization of the Philippines'.¹⁷

Religious Reform

From its foundation, the Iglesia Filipina Independiente categorizes itself as a 'nationalist church'. It is a church that stands firm for the dignity and rights of the Filipino clergy and presents itself as a church of, by, and for the Filipino people. It has to be clarified, however, that this nationalism is not an aggressive nationalism that seeks to conquer others, but one that seeks independence for a country and a church from foreign rule. The guide to such principles was embedded in the 1903 *Doctrinas y Reglas Constitucionales* (DRC) and the Six Fundamental Epistles that governed the IFI for 45 years. The religious reforms emanating from its radical constitution could be listed according to the following aspects: worship, governance, theology and ecumenical dialogue.

Worship

To express one's nationalism in a form of worship needs creativity, but to practice it in the context of intense American militarism and suppressed nationalism demands courage. Interestingly, both creativity and courage flourish in the life of the new church in its determination. The DCR states the object of the IFI:

to respond to the imperative need to restore the worship of the one true God in all its splendour and the purity of his most holy Word, which under the reign of obscurantism has been diluted and distorted in a most disheartening manner for any Christian of even moderate education.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Acta et res Concilii Provincialis Manilani I in Urbe Manila Celebrati Ann Domini MDCCCVII*, Rome 1910, 30.

¹⁷ Reginald Cruz, 'To Preserve the Faith: The Arrival of the Third Wave of Catholic Missionaries Within the Church-State Relations of the Insular Government (1900-1915)', in *MST Review* 3, no. 1 (1999), 22-23.

¹⁸ Apolonio M. Ranche, ed., *Doctrine and Constitutional Rules Important Documents, Various Articles and Chronology of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, 1996'. TMs (photocopy). Special Collections, ACTS Archives, Urdaneta City, 1.

There were several areas in church practices that could be considered radical in the beginning of the 20th century, areas in which the IFI had the courage to introduce changes intended to restore true worship. Crucial to this was the radical liturgical reform primarily emphasizing *the use of the vernacular* in the liturgy and in the dispensation of the sacrament. The DRC was clear when it stated that

It is impossible to pray with devotion if we address ourselves to God in a language we do not understand...We must therefore pray and preach in the language of the people whom we are addressing.¹⁹

The IFI propagated the *use of liturgical calendars* that remember the revolutionary heroes of the country side by side with the catalogue of saints. The intention was to strengthen not merely the religiosity of the members but their sense of nationhood by using the calendar for prophetic purposes to criticize American imperialism, and for the pastoral guidance of the people to serve the country.

The IFI also made a radical decision in the *canonization of Filipino saints*. On September 24, 1903, the 'Act of Canonization of the Great Martyrs of our country Dr. José Rizal, the priests Frs. José Burgos, Mariano Gomez and Jacinto Zamora'. One historian commented that

Patriotism therefore, appears to have been the main consideration for the canonization of Rizal and the three priests...patriotism is sacred and holy within the realm of the Independent Church; in itself it is a religious act.²⁰

This canonization inspired Bishop Aglipay to write the *Novenario*, dedicated to an indigenous Mary, depicting the mother of the struggling nation or the *Virgin of Balintawak*. It is an icon of the Virgin Mary in traditional Filipino dress with her Son attired as a revolutionary.²¹

We also find in the new church *newly composed nationalist prayers and songs* that reflect the aspirations of the time. The *Oficio Divino* (Divine Office), as the liturgical expression of the DRC and the Fundamental Epistles, was the prominent and stable source in this regard, authored by Isabelo de los Reyes, Sr. This 1906 liturgy emphasized the centrality of the assembly, the importance

¹⁹ Ranche (ed.), *Doctrine*, 6.

²⁰ *La Iglesia Filipina Independiente revista catolica*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (October 11, 1903), 2.

²¹ On which see in this volume: Mariefe I. Revollido, 'Mary and Empowerment: the Mother of (Birhen sa) Balintawak and the Spirituality of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente'.

of joy, the crucial role of culture, the decisive control of history and the fundamental presence of liberty, equality and fraternity that can be found only in the liturgical renewal in the latter part of the 20th century.²² Besides the prayers, the songs had converged to a common theme that depicted the struggle of the people, such as *kalayaan* (freedom), *pagsasarili* (independence) and *kaginhawahan* (prosperity). The most popular songs were composed in different regions, like the *Filipinas*, *Nadayag a Filipinas* in Ilocos, *Dayawon* of Iloilo, *Senor Sto. Nino* of Cebu and *Bathalang Maykapal* in the Tagalog areas.

Another aspect of worship was the creative and radical expression of nationalism in the use of *priestly vestments designed after the Philippine flag*. Nowadays, the display of the Philippine flag in the sanctuary is a common practice in the IFI and even in other Philippine churches, but in the first quarter of the century this observance was a subversive act in violation of the 1907 Flag Law.²³ Related to this is the *singing of the Philippine National Anthem*, which was banned by the American government during the colonial era. By doing so, the IFI turned the aspects of religious garb and songs into powerful symbols that expressed the Christian faith and nationalism woven into one.

Governance

As mentioned earlier, in electing and appointing its leaders the IFI ensured that the new church was governed by Filipinos from top to bottom, as exemplified by the consecration to the episcopacy of Bishop Pedro Brillantes and others to hold dioceses, and of the Filipino clergy as parish priests.²⁴ Besides, it was this church's valuable contribution to oppose the very hierarchical Philippine Catholic church polity by allowing the laity to participate in the decision-making bodies of the church. The DRC made an instruction that

... men's committee and the ladies commission of the Philippine Independent Church shall be consulted in all that pertains to the people and their customs, their assistance and the conduct of parishes and other subjects of lay character.²⁵

²² Moises B. Andrade and Edgar S. Yanga, *The Oficio Divino and the Liturgy Inculturation by Isabelo de los Reyes*, Quezon City 2002, 3.

²³ To suppress Filipino nationalism the American colonial government prohibited the display of the Philippine flag from 1907; this lasted until 1919. See Renato Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited*, vol.1, Quezon City 1975, 252.

²⁴ Father Pedro Brillantes was consecrated to the episcopacy by twelve priests on October 19, 1902. See Peter-Ben Smit, *Old Catholic and Philippine Independent Ecclesiologies in History: The Catholic Church in every Place*, Leiden 2011, 152-161. Also Ambrocio Manaligod, *Ecclesiality*, 86-89.

²⁵ Apolonio M. Rancho (ed.), *Doctrine and Constitutional Rules*, 16.

It encourages the solid organizing of people on the ground level, by introducing a variety of committees for the building up of the life of the church, composed of other social units within the church, saying that

... the members of each committee or ladies commission shall be the representatives and heads of a district, barrio, block, street or group of fifty to one hundred church members or families.²⁶

However, the most interesting aspect in the governance of the new church was its emphasis on the ethics expected from the leaders of the organized IFI faithful. The DRC made an instruction that

... the representative shall promote everything conducive to the moral and material well-being of those he represents. He shall see that they observe Christian conduct and customs, keep them from gambling, and prevent drunkenness, licentiousness, and other vices or ugly customs. He shall take interest in the education of the children and the youths... he shall be in charge of both receiving and expressing the desires of those he represents...²⁷

This guidance to the leadership of the new church portrays radical renewal, not just in organizational structure but more so in the formation of attitudes to ensure the moral ascendancy of its constituents.

In a more recent teaching of the IFI these ethical standards continue to be emphasized, as seen in the 1947 Articles of Religion. Article 12 says:

Holiness, altruism, obedience to God's commandments, and a zeal for His honor and glory are incumbent upon clergy and laity alike, therefore, all should be trained in a clean and disciplined life, not neglecting prayer, study, and the exercise of moral discipline.²⁸

Theology

One of the challenging controversies that the IFI had to face in its early years was its theology. Through the influence of Isabelo de los Reyes, Sr., the early

²⁶ Ranche (ed.), *Doctrine*, 17.

²⁷ Ranche (ed.), *Doctrine*, 17.

²⁸ Declaration of Faith and Articles of Religion' in: Josephine S. Dongail (ed.), *Incarinating our Heritage Consolidating our Faith, Strengthening our Response: The Iglesia Filipina Independiente's Touchstone on its Faith and Witness Mission*, Manila 2002, 60.

writings of Dr. José Rizal, and later American Unitarianism, Bishop Aglipay increasingly adopted aspects of modern religious criticism and philosophy of religion into his theology. His teachings regarding the Trinitarian doctrine talk of three 'attributes' rather than a trinity of persons, and the primacy of science rather than the infallibility of the Scriptures could have placed the new church in the area of unorthodox beliefs and practices.²⁹ But surprisingly, the IFI has continuously practiced the administration of the seven sacraments and the exercise of the three-fold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons at the same time.

It was argued, however, that the impact on the common IFI faithful of the controversial doctrinal positions of the early leaders, specifically that of bishop Aglipay and Don Belong, was minimal and limited only to the top leadership. It was explained later that the practices of the local churches down to the parishes show a continued adherence to Catholic beliefs and traditions.³⁰ This was later echoed by bishop Isabelo de los Reyes, Jr., the son of Don Belong, who later became the fifth Supreme Bishop. He says:

Deep in my soul I have always accepted the Apostolic and Catholic faith and I have done my best to preach it to my people. On the other hand, since my early childhood, I have entertained a deep hostility to the superstitions and commercialism...that characterized Roman Catholicism in the Philippines. And I have always believed that those nations that have a purified, reformed Christianity are the nations that have become truly great and civilized.³¹

The IFI leadership was criticized in its deviation from some basic doctrinal teachings, but its important theological contribution to what a church ought to be received very little attention. The Philippine colonial church starting from the 16th century defined and practiced being a church not as 'people' but as hierarchy, sacraments, and sacred places and persons.³² This is where the IFI differed from its very inception. The IFI in its 1903 DRC rediscovered its true meaning through its struggle for sovereignty and independence, by saying that

Our Church is Catholic, or Universal, because it considers *all men without distinction children of God*, and it bears the designation 'Philippine Independent' to *identify this association of free men* who, within the said universality, *admit servility to no one*.³³

²⁹ See P.-B.Smit, *Old Catholic and Philippine Independent Ecclesiologies*, 235-253.

³⁰ See Lewis Bliss Whittemore, *Struggle for Freedom*, Greenwich 1961, 141-151.

³¹ Whittemore, *Struggle*, 173.

³² See José Comblin, *People of God*, Maryknoll 2004, 1-4.

³³ Rancho (ed.), *Doctrine*, 4.

The IFI was first and foremost a movement of people, in which the concept of a 'nationalist church' that pertains to people and nation, not a hierarchy, could be considered IFI's main historical contribution to Philippine Church history. A 'nationalist church' stands for a Christian nation struggling for dignity, freedom and abundant life, characterized by the poor, deprived and oppressed Filipino people who as 'children of God' will never accept servitude. The IFI states that Christianity is about salvation, not just from sin but about being saved through baptism as adopted sons and daughters of God. They are the forgiven children of God and this forgiveness is the greatest gift from God, a divine gift that will last forever.

This theological perspective was later expounded in more recent IFI documents, particularly its 1976 Statement of Church Mission (#9 and 22), which says:

The IFI has the mission of revealing, unmasking and proclaiming the One and true God 'in whom we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17,28) in the hearts, minds, culture and life of the Filipino people. By this shall Filipinos know that He is God who created and redeemed the world, who blessed us with this country and with this Filipino Church and thus draw us unto Him.

[...]

In order to carry out and fulfil its task of evangelization, the IFI must seriously consider the joys, anxieties, aspirations, grievances and sufferings of humankind. It behoves the IFI to scrutinize the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel, so that she can respond (mission) to the questionings of humankind and make present the saving work of God by her charity, service and solidarity to the world, especially the poor, the oppressed and those in anyway afflicted.³⁴

Ecumenical Dialogue

The condemnation of the IFI as a 'synagogue of anti-Christ' and the accusation of being heretic by the Provincial Council of Manila in 1907 could not have happened if the Roman Catholic Church at that time had subscribed to the concept of church as the 'people of God' and not that of a hierarchical organization. By the same token, it ought not to happen if other Christian communities are also recognized as a people.

The IFI had started entering into dialogues with other churches as early as 1902. The possibility of dialogue could be traced again to the IFI concept of

³⁴ *Incarnating our Heritage*, 65, 67.

the church as 'children of God' or 'people of God,' which gives recognition to the value of others. It was exemplified by bishop Aglipay himself, who in the early part of 1902 had initiated a dialogue with Protestant missionaries, an act that earned him the title of 'a forerunner of ecumenical dialogue' in Philippine church history. Consistently giving value to cooperation, bishop Aglipay further engaged into serious discussions with bishop Eduard Herzog of the Old Catholic Church of Switzerland in 1903 and with bishop Charles Henry Brent, the first Episcopalian bishop assigned in the Philippines in 1904.³⁵

The 1947 IFI Articles of Religion clearly define the church's attitude towards other churches, declaring that 'opportunity is to be sought to closer cooperation with other branches of the Catholic Church, and cordial relations maintained with all who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour'.³⁶ This particular provision was precisely articulated by Supreme Bishop Ganno in 1987, saying that the IFI

... will continue to be God's instrument in the ecumenical enterprise. Unlike in the past, we will no longer be a passive participant in this calling nor will we withdraw from the crucible of God's call for unity. Our nationalist tradition requires us to be ecumenical. This tradition ensures our independence, identity and integrity as we participate in the ecumenical field. We will strengthen and improve existing relations. As we seek in the same manner, that we sought new ones that would widen our horizons.³⁷

At present the IFI is a member of the World Council of Churches (1958), founding member of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (1963), and in concordat relations with the Anglican/Episcopal Churches that started in 1961 (including Anglican Churches in Asia, such as the Anglican Church of Melanesia). It is also in concordat of full communion with the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht (1965), the Church of Sweden (1995), and in dialogue with the Mar Thoma Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

Conclusion

³⁵ See for a more detailed discussion in this volume, Eleuterio J. Revollido, 'The Search for Visible Unity: Lessons to the Concordat in the 1903-1912 Dialogue between Bishops Eduard Herzog, Charles Henry Brent, and Gregorio Aglipay'.

³⁶ IFI Articles, 61.

³⁷ 'Message to the SCB, Special Meeting, National Cathedral, June 30, 1987,' 3, Special Collections, ACTS Archives, Urdaneta City.

There are two important historical determinants that have shaped the IFI in its first one hundred years as a church: its nationalism and ecumenism. As already mentioned, this nationalism is not an aggressive nationalism that seeks to conquer others but one that seeks independence for a country and a church from foreign rule. It is a nationalism that seeks the aspiration and struggle of people motivated by love of their country towards the attainment of one nation that is truly sovereign and independent from foreign domination. It includes not just the struggle against foreign invaders to gain power, but also a principle to influence the way in which that power is exercised in a direction that most serves the interest of the majority of people. Being a 'nationalist church', then, stands for a Christian nation struggling for dignity, freedom and abundant life characterized by the poor, deprived and oppressed Filipino people who as 'children of God' will never accept servitude

On the other hand, the ecumenism of the IFI is grounded in the great mandate of 'loving your neighbor' as the bedrock of the Christian value system. It is a commitment to meaningful and effective participation, not just with other churches and faith communities, but also with the people's movement that actively advances the dignity of persons, especially the poor and oppressed in relation to the aspiration of the whole nation. This exercise of engaging with people further deepened the IFI's act of solidarity in order to gain knowledge by learning, working and sharing with others. It is an appeal to make ecumenism not a mere acquaintance between churches for recognition and the exercise of friendly relationships, but a call for a collective action of Christians in making the promise of abundant life possible for the people of God.

More than one hundred years ago, the IFI was received with suspicion by people who supported American imperialism and those that propagated capitalism as opposed to the egalitarian message embraced by the IFI. The church was vilified as nothing but a facade for a movement to end the American sovereignty in the Philippines under the cloak of religion.

Today, as this church is 'scrutinizing the signs of the times' and 'interpreting them in the light of the Gospel' in order to be able to respond to the questions of humankind,³⁸ it continues to suffer suspicion and vilification. The IFI continues to be 'red-tagged', and accused of supporting terrorist and communists by people who favor profit over stewardship, consumerism over

³⁸ Second Vatican Council, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: Gaudium et Spes* (https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html, accessed October 27, 2021), 4.

sustainability, competition over cooperation, and individualism over community.

But by the grace of God, the Iglesia Filipina Independiente believes that it has the capacity to survive as has been proven in history. In the words of from Bishop Whittimore, a historian from the Episcopal Church who is always an inspiration for the IFI:

These people (IFI) tasted the gall and bitterness of humiliation...But they did not give up, whether because of native courage or of something deeper...they felt, as no other group, identified with the Philippines and carried an ark of the covenant with them into the wilderness. That covenant was with the heroes of the past who had seen visions of a fairer Philippines – and had suffered. They could not see the future but they knew that something precious had been entrusted to them.³⁹

³⁹ Lewis Bliss Whittimore, *Struggle*, 35.

Mary and Empowerment: The Birhen sa Balintawak and the Spirituality of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente

Mariefe I. Revollido

Introduction

Filipinos love celebrations and festivities. The extraordinary display of different images, combined with pageantry, is always a magnificent and alluring spectacle for the public. This contribution reflects on the development of Filipino religious culture in the context of colonialism, and focuses on the first indigenous representation of Mary and Jesus, the Birhen sa Balintawak, in particular.

Thus, for the early Filipinos the presentation of prayers and liturgy as well as the solemn yet grandiose celebration of religious rituals naturally were a mystifying sight. For the Spaniards images as universal signs solved communication problems, and thus religious art became an efficient tool of colonization. The Catholic Church then introduced the idea of images and text to be distributed to the people, aided by the use of the printing press. The Spaniards also introduced ways of understanding God and the divine that were different from traditional Filipino beliefs, as well as teachings about the pitfalls of not obeying God, including the ideas of damnation and hell. There was even a tradition of giving images a fair, Caucasian complexion. This gave saints and colonial rulers a common cast and became influential in setting local standards of beauty. It can be seen even in the dark-skinned Nazarene and the Lady of Antipolo, who have unmistakably Caucasian features in their deep-set eyes and straight aquiline noses.

This paved the way for others in a progressive trend among colonized peoples of indigenizing Western religious images, and still others may be folk *santos*. This illustrates that it is inevitable for the culture and practices of the people to be incorporated in their religion. Perhaps this played a role in the secularization of art as well; through the integration of native beliefs and views, art became an outlet for early Filipinos, a way to record, even in the margins, their own past through the design of the images. At the same time, images of Mary in Philippine or Asian dress will help us understand 'changing identities, social, cultural and historical contexts, for the dress shows the wearer's identity and the traditional or national costume represents the tradition and uniqueness

of a culture or a country. Faith and devotion that is expressed through religious images form part of the culture and people's identity'.¹

Having welcomed the new religion into their lives and having adapted their culture to this new religion, it became natural for Filipinos to want to 'personalize' these images and religious icons and lend them their own interpretations and design, clothing, context, issues, and even in the features of the image or religious icon. It becomes evident, therefore, that by introducing a new god in the form of an image or icon, the Spaniards entered Philippine society and culture and have molded it until the present time.

The American period saw the beginnings of public monuments that offered tribute to the greatness of an individual or event, and the offshoot of a new spirit of nationalism which was expressed in the construction of monuments honoring national heroes. The Americans created monuments which were easier for people to venerate and so become like their masters. Such was the Americans' way of colonizing the early Filipinos.

In each colonial period the colonizers set out to shape a colony out of the Philippines. Although they had the same mission, the means to achieve subjugation differed from one colonizer to the next. However, what is important here is that both the Spaniards and the Americans had made use of symbols, images, statues, and monuments to fashion people and the colony. In creating these symbols for the consumption of the people, the colonizers believed that such an act would facilitate their 'mission to civilize'. This has helped to consciously or subconsciously shape peoples' thoughts and consciousness as Filipinos, the way they perceive their country and themselves as countrymen and women in the past, present and future.

Background

How do we make sense of the colonial images and symbols that we have inherited from the past? What are their effects, if any? As we continue to create images and symbols of our time, do we create with a deeper understanding of what we have and choose to represent now, and of what we have inherited from the past? Or do we just blindly create images and symbols, one after another? These images and symbols have served their purpose during the colonial period -- that is, the masters' purposes. Do postcolonial images serve the peoples' interests? Or has the hierarchy of power remained, merely shifting to new, internal masters?

¹ Yuria Furusawa, *Image and Identity: A Study on the Images of the Virgin Mary Clad in a Local Dress in the Philippines*, The Work of the 2011/2012 API Fellows, 88.

The postcolonial period has gone beyond the themes of Spanish and American colonial eras; new and different images and themes have been used. What kinds of images have arisen? These images supposedly celebrate freedom, underscoring the suffering that the people underwent instead of showing unbending nobility. Why is there a need to portray the people as such? Does this reflect anything about the Filipino culture – its propensity to glorifying sufferers and/or suffering, as well as a penchant for melodrama?

Reynaldo Ileto's seminal work, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* outlines how the 'Pasyon', the story of Jesus Christ's life and death, has influenced social movements in Philippine history, teasing out its effects on the Filipino psyche and the way Filipinos have strongly identified with the suffering Christ. The definition of suffering is best seen through its capability to inspire resistance. According to Ileto, the 'Pasyon' replaced the indigenous epics during pre-colonial times; however, it actually encouraged people to resist and revolt against the Spaniards. This image of a suffering Christ inspired peasant uprisings. Filipinos' notion of suffering may be seen negatively, but Ileto's work can shed some light on how it may be used as a form of resistance, the way it reflects people's fears and desires, and serves as tangible reality for Filipinos' conception of identity and nationhood.²

The congregations of the IFI must become participants in a theology that is uniquely IFI, thus shaping and creating their spirituality. People will generally then shape or create new and appropriate forms, for people not only enrich the content and perspectives of theology and their spirituality, but also diversify the forms and shapes of theology and spirituality.

Filipinos love telling stories, about the daily reality of life, their experiences with work, family, love and loss, sometimes even going as far as foretelling the intricacies of what may be one's destiny, religion, and politics. The stories go on until all topics are exhausted. Thus, we say, people make stories. This itself is a revolutionary concept, for it has always been held that it is 'story-tellers' who create stories; people only listen to them. The stories give them certain roles in life and places in society which they passively accept. Some stories lull them into conformity, others challenge them and arouse a new awareness. Whenever the latter happens, people begin to construct and reconstruct their own stories. For in telling new stories, or old stories in a new way, they rewrite and remake their own history.

In this sense stories do indeed make people. When people begin to tell their own stories of God acting in their daily lives and in the lives of their communities, they do so from their own perspectives and conviction. Then,

² Reynaldo Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910*, Quezon City 1979, 109.

faith becomes a living faith, a lived-out faith. It restores the dignity that belongs to those made in God's image.

The Birhen sa Balintawak: Revolution and Mariology

The image of the Birhen sa Balintawak is one of those 'stories' that have remained a historical and cultural identity reflecting nationalist heritage and spirituality as an expression of women's faith in God, and their love of the country and of serving the people. The image, seen as a cultural, nationalist image of salvation, liberation and freedom must remain alive in the memories, not only of those who first knew about it, but most importantly for the IFI members today and the next generation.

Being a woman with strong Filipino and Aglipayan roots but bearing the strong images of Western colonization is in itself a challenging life experience – this applies to many women in the IFI, including myself. The process of reclaiming one's identity through a history and heritage that lay buried underneath layers of teaching is an exciting process. The lives of all people are surrounded by images that they all accept and interpret according to their social and cultural identities. Images and symbols touch a very deep and significant area of human living. It is now accepted that symbols or images emerge out of the needs of individuals, groups, or societies, and having been created they function as the link between the spiritual and the physical.³

Mary, the Blessed Mother

Mary/Maria/Miriam/Miryam -- this name is still one of the most popular names of all time. It is a very ordinary name in the New Testament. How many Marys appear in the New Testament? Six! How many Marys do we find in the Hebrew Scriptures? Only one. Who is that? She is Miryam, the girl who rescued her little brother Moses from murder by Pharaoh, who wanted all Jewish boys dumped into the Nile.

The name Miryam may be understood to mean 'bitter waters', from the Hebrew word *mara* (bitterness) and *yam* (sea), thus, *mara* + *yam* = bitter sea.⁴

³ Mircea Eliade, *Theories and Symbolism*, *Symbolism, The Sacred and the Arts*, New York 1986, 2.

⁴ This is one possible etymology, see 'Miriam, meaning,'

<https://www.abarim-publications.com/Meaning/Miriam.html> (accessed October 27, 2021). Other translations suggest that more literally it means 'bitter sea' (*mara* = bitter; *yam* = sea). The English name 'Mary' is also the transliteration of the Greek name Maria or Mariam, which in turn is the transliteration of the Hebrew name Miriam. Some scholars derive the name Miriam from the Hebrew word *meri*, which means 'rebellion,'

In New Testament times, as is true in many parts of the world today, the Jews followed the custom of naming children after the circumstances of their birth. Why would someone name their daughter Mara-Yam in the days of the slavery in Egypt? The sea was a horribly bitter place for the Jewish people of the Hebrew Scriptures since it was into the waters that their hopes, their baby boys were thrown (Gen. 1,22-23). In the early days of the New Testament, too, times were hard and human life was considered cheap. Life under the rule of the Romans, and even more, life under the local governance of King Herod and his extended family could be very bitter.

So it is no wonder that numerous families would have named their daughters Mary or 'bitter waters'; times were bitter, and naming their daughters Mary was a witness to the suffering of their lives. Perhaps parents were filled with a dream that their daughter, too, like Miryam of the Hebrew Scriptures, would be a girl brave enough to walk into the Pharaoh's own household, as a courageous instrument and witness of God's redemption. For many Catholics, other Christians, and people who love the truth about Jesus, Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, is a woman who has always had a special place in history, both in civil history and in the history of salvation.

Re-reading the story of the Blessed Virgin Mary nowadays posits an image of an influential and well-known woman in the history of the Christian world, whom contemporary readers today can relate to and embrace. The presence of her iconic images, in paintings, sculptures, music, and poetry, is one reason why she continues to be an inspiration and an image of hope and resilience for both women and men in the world.

When searching for literature on how the Blessed Virgin Mary is being projected and seen in books, articles, and websites, I encountered an interesting article by a rather outspoken bishop. He suggests that the comic-book heroine Wonder Woman is a better role model for young women than the celebrated mother of Jesus.⁵ He argues that Wonder Woman is an icon of female empowerment and liberation that inspires young girls with self-confidence, and that the message of Mary that both the body and sexuality of women were evil. Women must be flesh and blood and must be portrayed as sweet, passive and docile, compliant, obedient, virginal and unreal, and these qualities, according to the bishop, does not empower women or even young women of today.⁶

obstinacy, or stubbornness'. See for a broader discussion Ursula Rapp, 'Mirjam,' *WiBiLex. Das wissenschaftliches Bibellexikon im Internet*, <https://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/stichwort/27817/> (accessed October 27, 2021).

⁵ John Shelby Spong, 'The Virgin Mary is No Wonder Woman,' <http://progressivechristianity.org/resources/the-virgin-mary-is-no-wonder-woman/> (accessed October 27, 2021).

⁶ Spong, 'Virgin'.



Is Wonder Woman a female ideal? (Wikimedia Commons)

In response to the bishop's remarks, one Christian author, Frederica Matthews Green writes: 'As a believer...I prefer a relationship with the Virgin Mary, whom I consider my own Mother in Christ and an historical figure. Plus, she doesn't advocate the Wonder Woman hot pants outfit - which fits only imaginary women!' She further insists that Wonder Woman and Mary must not be shown or in any way seen as rivals; she believes that both of them 'speak to a feminine battle against treachery and evil'.⁷

To further argue this fact, one only has to read the Gospel of Luke⁸ to be able to really see the true character of Mary, that of an intelligent, deeply thoughtful and courageous young woman with a passion for justice and a powerful faith in God. In his article the bishop points out that we seem to have sanitized our picture of the Virgin Mary.⁹ One is being encouraged to re-read

⁷ Spong, 'Virgin'.

⁸ Spong, 'Virgin'.

⁹ 'The Virgin Mary: The Original Wonder Woman,'

the Magnificat in the Gospel of Luke in order to see the real Mary behind the pictures on Christmas cards, or portraits of her in churches will not quite do her justice. The words in the Magnificat are more revolutionary than docile. As stated by Maria Pilar Aquino in her book *Our Cry for life*,¹⁰ the Magnificat was banned from public reading because of the subversive act that was being propagated and advocated. In the Magnificat she sings:

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty. (Luke 1,52-55; NRSV)

Mary in the Magnificat represents sacrifice and great courage, and she can be likened to a soldier accepting a dangerous mission of tremendous sacrifice and fortitude. Mary was also in a condition and situation that is believed to be a shameful one in her context; carrying a child before betrothal is a dangerous circumstance for a young woman to be in. Her culture was not a culture friendly to unwed mothers. We need to be aware of Mary's plight, where she faced rejection, banishment and even death, the loss of her betrothal, her family, and people, in order to appreciate her. All of these dire straits notwithstanding, the powers and principalities of the world trembled with terror at the child in her womb.

In her total abandonment to the will of God, Mary is an example to all of us and the greatest heroine of the Christian faith. Her greatness consists precisely in the fact that she always points away from herself to her Son Jesus Christ. Her greatest power is in being a vessel for the love of God in Christ, a power we also possess, albeit in a different way.

How do we know and describe Wonder Woman? Some of us may be a fan of the famous heroine. We may not fully agree with the bishop's stand that she is a great model for young girls and even grown women and men. However, her heroism comes not from the ways she is different from the Blessed Virgin Mary, but rather in the ways she is like her. Father Jonathan Mitchican wrote a blog post called 'Wonder Woman and the Power of Truth'.¹¹ In it he suggests that Wonder Woman is an icon of Christian discipleship. This is what he writes:

<http://thepropertyofjesus.blogspot.com/2014/12/the-virgin-mary-original-wonder-woman.html> (unknown author; accessed October 27, 2021).

¹⁰ 'The Virgin Mary'.

¹¹ Spong, 'Virgin'.

Wonder Woman is able to be a great hero because she has encountered and accepted the reality of her own flaws and sins. Though fashioned out of clay by a god, she is all too aware of her own imperfection and her inability to do good by her own power alone. She relies on the gods to give her grace and strength. She finds her heroism in repenting of the darkest and most uncharitable parts of herself and instead sacrificing herself for the sake of others. Unlike Superman, who is sometimes misconstrued as a Christ figure because of his god-like power, Wonder Woman realizes that despite her amazing abilities she has no real power but that which she has received by grace, not merely for her own wellbeing but for the sake of the world. Wonder Woman only ever understands herself when she is finally able to look away from herself and towards the needs of others. Would that all of us, male and female, young and old, could follow the same path towards holiness.¹²

The Filipino Devotion to Mary

Filipino Marian devotion can be largely traced to the Hispanic roots of Filipino Catholicism and the people's high esteem and respect for women, especially mothers – a trait cultivated by the Christian faith itself. Mary is a significant figure in both Christmas and Holy Week. The search for an inn by Mary and her husband, Joseph, is re-enacted during Christmas. Images of the Blessed Virgin are central attractions in Lenten processions. In the merry month of May the ever popular Flores de Mayo is held, where children daily offer flowers to the Blessed Mother. This festivity, however, together with the *Santacruzán* (the search for the Holy Cross), has practically degenerated into a pageant whose main purpose is social, namely to pay public tribute to female beauty more than anything else. Beyond doubt it is still the praying of the rosary that constitutes the most popular Marian devotion.

The Virgin Mary embodies the essence of the perfect woman and mother. Filipinos look up to her as a woman for all times, an exemplary model of womanhood for the modern Filipino woman, wife, and mother, especially now that the feminine role is being challenged with much ambiguity today. The Marian veneration in the country is attested by the presence of more than thirty Marian shrines, not including the numerous churches and chapels dedicated to the Mother of God.¹³ A Marian shrine is a holy place marking an apparition or other miracle ascribed to the Blessed Virgin Mary, or a site that is the center of a historically strong Marian devotion. Such *locales* are often the destination of pilgrimages. Throughout the country, visiting and venturing into a Marian pil-

¹² Spong, 'Virgin'.

¹³ Cecilia Manguerra Brainard, *Magnificat, Mama Mary's Pilgrim Sites*, Mandaluyong City 2012, 92.

grim site will attest to a Marian mystique deeply entrenched into Filipino customs and traditions. Indeed, the Blessed Virgin Mary, or Mama Mary, is somebody one can turn to in times of distress.

Kathleen Coyle points out that in the past it was believed that the symbol of Mary modified or at least balanced the exaggerated controlling tendencies in Christian theology that spoke of God in patriarchal as well as imperialistic and triumphalist metaphors.¹⁴ The symbol of Mary balances the patriarchal discourse present in various strands of Christian theology. The appropriation of Mary in patriarchal Christian tradition puts Mary on a pedestal and yet ensures the subordination of women to men. The Roman Catholic and world-renowned feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether notes that this kind of Mariology has a primary function in patriarchal theology, that is, 'to primarily reflect and express the ideology of the patriarchal feminine'.¹⁵ In this sense, Mary turns into a Virgin Mother and becomes a 'theological personification' of the subservient female who defeats the image of the inquisitive, autonomous and risk-taking Eve.¹⁶

The challenge of re-reading and re-interpreting Mary, especially from women's experiences and perspectives, is crucial if we are to cultivate a deep reflection on our faith in the midst of people's struggle for dignity and survival. Reclaiming the place of Mary in the Christian tradition is a commitment to the transformation of a broken world into wholeness – one where the values of justice, harmony, and peace are made into reality.

Actually, all women portrayed in the Scriptures played decisive roles during the thousands of years covered by the biblical narrative. What is particularly intriguing is that most of them outwit male authority in a patriarchal society and some even challenge it. Even more remarkable is the fact that these women, like Esther and Deborah, are never punished for their unconventional conduct. Most of them, except Jezebel, are rewarded for their boldness. Other women with strong characters defy male authority if it is unjust, or fails to answer their needs or those of their family or people. These women belong to a patriarchal society in which men hold all visible power, and their options are few and harsh. Given these circumstances, the women issue challenges and even take risks, and some are prepared to sacrifice their lives. These are women with whom many of their sex are able to identify.

Theology must critique the well-internalized and deeply entrenched, but no longer justifiable image given to women by church and society. In doing so

¹⁴ Kathleen Coyle, *Mary in the Christian Tradition*, Manila 1998, 100.

¹⁵ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*, Boston 1993, 150.

¹⁶ See Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, New York 1967, and Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, Boston ²1986.

it must examine the metaphors, symbols, models, and language that support these hierarchical, dualistic ways of expressing the relationship between God and the world, and between the people and the world. It is in this context that Marian theology tries to understand the symbolic power of changing the image of Mary from the early centuries of Christianity to people's own times, and its influence on the lives of women. Nietzsche has reminded us that 'what we call truth is worn-out metaphors, which have become powerless to affect senses'.¹⁷ Some of the traditional Marian metaphors, symbols and images are well worn out. Relating this to the Blessed Virgin, Radford Ruether contends that Mary cannot be an empowering and liberating symbol for women as long as she represents the complementary underside of this masculine domination. She becomes emancipating only when she is seen as a radical symbol of a new humanity, freed from hierarchical power relations with either God or with humanity. She represents 'the reconciled wholeness of women and men, nature and humans, creation and God, in the new heaven and the new earth'.¹⁸

Following these observations it becomes incumbent upon Christians in general, and theologians and women in particular, to present a critique against the silent and submissive images that have presented Mary as sweet and uncomplaining and do little to uplift marginalized and oppressed women; 'the battered, the tortured, the hungry, the silenced and the unfree'.¹⁹ Mary must be brought back again as a woman strong, empowered, and resourceful, a sister in faith who did not hesitate to proclaim God's concern for the oppressed. Retrieving the historical figure of Mary must be done in the context of the contemporary world. This is a world characterized by domination, injustice, inequality, and coercion of the weak by the strong. Unfortunately, the image of Mary that prevails today is far from the peasant girl-child Mary who rose above all odds and turned into a resilient woman, Mary the mother of Jesus. Most Christians today, especially the Filipino Marian devotees, prefer to look at a Mary who is detached from her Magnificat, one who is compassionate but docile. The Mary found in common iconography is far from the Mary that one meets in the Bible. This image of the 'patriarchal feminine' invented by church hierarchies gives rise to a theology that hides and suppresses the power of femaleness and nature.²⁰ The memory of her Magnificat is revolutionary. It is a dangerous memory because it challenges not only the 'mariological fantasy and cultural femininity',²¹ but also confronts corruptions and the greed of the pow-

¹⁷ Coyle, *Mary*, 100.

¹⁸ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *New Woman, New Earth*, New York 1975, 59.

¹⁹ Coyle, *Mary*.

²⁰ Radford Ruether, *New Woman*, 152.

²¹ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet*, London 1995, 187.

erful. Leonardo Boff stresses that 'Mary in particular, is a herald of liberation, singing the song of justice of the coming kingdom of God' (Luke 1,46-55).²²

How can devotion to Mary be integrated into the life of our people, so that it becomes a power for social transformation and empowerment? We can hardly today speak of genuine devotion to Mary unless, like her, we show that by our words, and live out our dissatisfaction with a social situation which condemns the majority to lives in degrading conditions of poverty and oppression. Marian devotion today will have to show itself also and especially in a social concern that goes beyond 'charity' to advocacy of justice and respect for human rights. Important as the rosary is as a symbol of Marian piety, the true devotee of Mary today should be recognized more by 'action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world'²³ which is an integral part of the preaching of the Good News.

Mary in the Devotion of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente

In the IFI's Article of Religion on the Blessed Virgin we read:

The Virgin Mary was chosen by God to be the Mother of Jesus Christ. As Jesus Christ is truly God and Mary is the Mother of Jesus Christ, she is the Mother of God in His human generation. She whom God honored is to be honored above all.²⁴

The Virgin Mary became a figure and image of veneration in the Christian community as early as the year 150 CE, and the cult of Mary has grown enormously through the centuries. Devotion to her has become central to the spirituality and art of the Catholic and Orthodox traditions. Her litany addresses her and celebrates her under a variety of names: Virgin, Mother, Madonna, Queen of Heaven, and Immaculate Mary.²⁵

The Filipinos' devotion and the images mentioned above were believed to have been introduced by the Spanish missionaries that came with the *conquistadores*. They offered salvation to the natives, who were deemed to be on the road to perdition, by showing the 'light of the cross and the affection of the

²² Quoted in Coyle, *Mary*, 100.

²³ Post-synodal statement of the 1971 Synod of Bishops, 'Justice in the World,' 6, <https://www.cctwincities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Justicia-in-Mundo.pdf> (accessed October 27, 2021).

²⁴ Incarnating Our Heritage and Response, Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Manila, 1993, 6 (IFI Article of Religion no. 14)

²⁵ Ivone Gebara and Maria Clara Bingemer, *Mary Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, Maryknoll, New York 1987, 135.

Virgin'.²⁶ Conquering new territories for the glory of the Spanish and Portuguese crowns was deemed parallel to the enterprise of salvation, and the invaders even considered Mary their protector. In this sense, the Mary of the Western tradition was made complicit in the violent colonial religious projects, the destruction of native cultures, and genocide conducted in the name of Christian truth.²⁷ In other colonized places in the world there is evidence that when the natives were converted to Christianity they could not totally abandon the archetypal mother goddess, the feminine image of the divine that they experienced in their indigenous spiritualities.²⁸ It is in Mary that what appears to be a longing to be in touch with the feminine images of the divine in different cultures seems to find fulfilment. Consequently, native converts to the colonial religion found in Mary an inspiration for waging resistance against colonial rule and patriarchy.

Since its birth the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) has continued the Catholic tradition of adorning its churches with images of saints, particularly the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The images are intended to magnify the teachings of the Church and serve as an inspiration and model for the faithful to follow their life examples. Accompanying these adornments are devotional prayers such as novenas. Most of these devotions are take-in teachings and doctrines of the church. Most of the dioceses of IFI continue to practice this tradition, following and often using devotional prayer books published by the Roman Catholic Church, especially devotional prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is true that the IFI is very Catholic in its tradition, but it is also important to note that the IFI has developed its own theology in the course of history, especially that of the people's struggle for independence and freedom.

The Aglipayans, as the church and its members were first known after the name of its first leader, Obispo Maximo Gregorio Aglipay (but now commonly known as the IFI), retain certain Roman rites to which the members have become accustomed over the centuries, such as the Mass, and the fiestas when colorful images are carried through the streets. But in content and construction of meaning they are radically different: the Aglipayan tradition is strongly rooted in Filipino history. In the early years, churches displayed painted icons and sculptured heads of Filipino revolutionary patriots and heroes alongside images of Christ. Gregorio Aglipay emphasized his ideas of a mixture of holiness and subversion, predicted the triumph of the oppressed and downtrodden, and envisioned their reign. The Aglipayan teachings are founded upon the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount and his last utterances on

²⁶ Gebra and Bingemer, *Mary*, 135.

²⁷ Gebra and Bingemer, *Mary*, 135.

²⁸ Gebra and Bingemer, *Mary*, 136.

the Cross. These are interpreted as a call for revolution against the Spanish colonizers.

By the frequent portrayal of the Blessed Virgin Mary in prayers, hymns, devotions, feasts, and arts in the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (Aglipayan Church), members bear witness to a deep love for the Mother of God that transcends its theological expression. They portray her as vital, strong and independent, as well as tender and compassionate. She has remained a religious symbol of enduring power in Christian imagination, yet she is an ambiguous symbol especially for women, for the passive virtues of submission, humility and docility have also been projected on to her.²⁹ In a society such as the Filipino, or almost any society in which maleness means and requires dominance, control of lesser beings, and competition for position, and in which the image of God was designed to validate and reinforce all this, women then are taught that it is acceptable to be of a lesser quality and dependent on others, and these passive virtues have been translated and co-opted into tools of cultural conformity. Mary was projected as such, to be emulated or as a role model or image for women.

The Birhen sa Balintawak: Further Discussion

The Birhen sa Balintawak has from her earliest emergence to her prominence today been one of the symbolic religious nationalist images of the struggle for freedom and independence in the Iglesia Filipina Independiente. This image and the devotion to the Birhen sa Balintawak is believed to have begun when Andres Bonifacio and Emilio Jacinto were staying at the home of Melchora Aquino, and one of them saw in a dream the Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus both clad in peasant's attire.

This story has been transmitted by the journalist, author and revolutionary Aurelio Tolentino, recounting how Andres Bonifacio, Emilio Jacinto, himself and others were asleep in Tandang Sora's house in Balintawak, and one of them dreamt of a beautiful woman leading by the hand a handsome child.³⁰ The woman looked exactly like the Virgin Mary in church statues except that she wore a native costume, the *balintawak*. The child was dressed in peasant garb, armed with a glittering *bolo* (a large knife, comparable to a machete), and shouting *Kalayaan* ('freedom'). The woman approached the dreamer to warn him about something.³¹

²⁹ As argued by Coyle, *Mary*.

³⁰ See for a concise consideration of this tradition and its sources Ileto, *Pasyon*, 106.

Tolentino's account was published in the journal *La Vanguardia*.

³¹ Ileto, *Pasyon*, 105.



The original statue of the Birhen sa Balawak in the church of Maria Clara in Manila (historical photo, public domain)

Roused from his sleep, he narrated his dream to his companions, who all concluded that the Virgin was warning them against proceeding to Manila that morning. They all decided to tarry a while longer in Balintawak. Later the news arrived that the Katipunan-infiltrated printing shop of the *Diario de Manila* had been raided by the *guardia civil*. Without the Virgin's warning, Tolentino suggests, Bonifacio would have been captured along with the others and executed, and the revolution delayed indefinitely.³²

The image is of the Blessed Virgin Mary dressed in the traditional *balintawak* (not just a place name, but also a traditional Filipino dress worn by women either as working clothes or during special celebrations), leading a handsome boy in peasant garb armed with a *bolo* like a Katipunero (a Filipino revolutionary fighter) who is ready for a battle. On the statue is an inscription, *Ama ko, sumilang nawa ang aming pagsasarili* ('May the birth of our independence come to fruition'). This is a unique image, because when contextualized within the period of Spanish colonialism and American imperialism it expresses subversion. The classical meek child Jesus is transformed into a militant lad, and Mary into *Inang Bayan* (Motherland).

³² Ileto, *Pasyon*, 105.

To those who cling to the traditional Catholic devotion, the image diverges from the traditional mold characterized by a European aristocratic appearance. The image rather emphasizes what is marginal in terms of race and status: indio (indigenous Filipino), peasant, or Katipunero (marginalized from the social circle or considered eccentric and unconventional in society during the Spanish and early American colonial periods). The image expresses the combined emotion inherent in the religious and nationalist ideals of *Pro Deo et Patria* (the IFI's motto): religion is reflected in the Blessed Virgin Mary, and 'country' in the Katipunero aspiration towards independence.³³

The Birhen sa Balintawak is dressed in Filipino dress, which symbolizes the Motherland, and her son in a Katipunan attire, a symbol of the rising generation of our youth, who are longing for independence and thus remind us of the sacrifices of our forefathers in attaining a Filipino Independent Church -- a church for the poor and the struggling masses, instilling in every Filipino a nationalism which develops in a person or a group of people. This happens not just through an experiential oppressive situation, but also through new learning and intellectual discernment in people, based on other nations' struggles with a vision for change and aspiration for freedom.

The images of the Birhen sa Balintawak and Mary as symbols of transformation and empowerment has reinforced the feminine image as a human being who has the courage to stand on her feet and take the first steps to freedom and equality, and does not want to be seen as nothing more than a soft and beautiful creature who needs to be protected, cherished, and gently cared for, one who does not have intellect, strength or character of her own.³⁴ Recovering the invaluable meaning of the IFI devotion to the Birhen sa Balintawak brings out the scriptural account of the revolutionary Mary that will also serve as a critique of the medieval Catholic symbolism projected onto the figure of Mary.

One of the early distinctive aspects of the Birhen sa Balintawak in her connection to the nationalist consciousness or native responsiveness of the

³³ Mario S. Varona, *Symbols in the Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, PhD thesis, University of the Philippines 2001, 203.

³⁴ However, there is a need to recognize that women need to be actively involved in decision-making positions, so that they can come out of the 'victimized' situations that impede their inherent potential for development. Today, statistics reveal that more and more conflict victims are women and children, which shows their vulnerability. Therefore, they need to become 'stakeholders' for peace and reconciliation in the family, nation, and even globally, by actively getting involved as agents of change towards a more humane world. Their innate qualities and experiences as women could inform the decisions that lead to peaceful outcomes.

Filipinos and the emerging IFI and her members, was the imagery or symbolism applied to the emerging *Inang Bayan* (Motherland), calling her sons and daughters to fight for national redemption and drive the colonizers and oppressors away. It was also an opportunity for the restoration of the high esteem for women that our foremothers had found articulated in the image of the Birhen sa Balintawak.

What is being symbolized in the story of the Birhen sa Balintawak is born of her pain and sorrow, reflecting the pain of an entire nation and its people, and the Church. Even the gift given, a dream, bears the bitterness of the moment and the experience of the people. It is seen as a divine gift of salvation and freedom from oppression. This is a symbol of the cry of the poor, women, children and those who struggle for justice, of the tears and sweat of the workers and farmers, and the hope for justice and liberation. The image of the Birhen sa Balintawak described in the dream is not selfish or small, vindictive or destructive, not even angry or enraged. She grieves, like a mother grieving for her child in pain and sorrow, but as she feels that gnawing pain deep inside her, a burning desire grows like big ball of fire, kindling that slumbering yearning for freedom.

The image of the Birhen sa Balintawak is also identified as a symbol of full liberation by which women can understand Christ's sacrifice and resurrection. Women have a mission to announce that Christ brought new life to humanity and that this was the whole point of His suffering. Suffering that is inflicted by the oppressor and is passively accepted does not lead to life; it is destructive and demonic, but suffering that is part of the struggle for God's reign, or results from the uncontrollable and mysterious conditions of humankind, is rooted in the paschal mystery,³⁵ evocative of the rhythm of pregnancy, delivery, and birth. This kind of suffering is familiar to women at all times, who participate in the pains of birth and the joys of the new creation. In effect, the Birhen sa Balintawak was one of the compelling forces that emerged, questioning the conventional passivity in which women had been imprisoned by centuries of church teachings. The Birhen sa Balintawak rather provided an egalitarian and rational view on women: they should be seen as equal partners in achieving the national ideal of independence.³⁶

The image of the Birhen sa Balintawak should encourage and empower women to come out and refute the earliest teachings about women's low status as something natural, with meekness, obedience, quiet caring, and service idealized as 'Christian virtues' for women but not for men. The Birhen sa Balintawak should be an image of empowerment, fearless in the midst of

³⁵ Aruna Gnanadson, *No Longer Silent*, Geneva 1993, 35.

³⁶ Mario S. Varona, *Symbols*, 203.

struggles and daring to challenge unjust and oppressive authority, but courageous and compassionate in her commitment to helping the poor and the marginalized.

The image of the Birhen sa Balintawak dressed in Filipino dress, which symbolizes the Motherland, and her son in a Katipunan attire, is seen not only as a symbol of the rising generation of our youth, who are longing for independence and survival. It is also seen as an image that depicts a close relationship of a mother and son, the dependency and importance of mother's love to her son, and how such a relationship is being nurtured and sustained. The Birhen sa Balintawak symbolizes a mother that preserves life, a courageous and empowered mother that protects her children's right to a dignified and humane life free from coercion, maltreatment, bullying, and all kinds of abuse and oppression.

The Birhen sa Balintawak has moved from history into the realm of the purest possible image of a redemptive figure, an empowered figure of Mary, a representative figure of people who are indeed enslaved, of women and children oppressed and marginalized, the suffering innocents, victims of abuse and extra-judicial killings.

The Birhen sa Balintawak must emerge and be re-interpreted in the lives of all IFI women and members, for their stories and our stories start with experiences of colonialism, discrimination, enslavement, oppression, and situations of great poverty, suffering and degradation. The struggle is not yet over, the image of the Birhen sa Balintawak must not be forgotten but must be re-kindled and re-lived in the hearts and minds of every IFI member. The image of the Birhen sa Balintawak is a symbol that points beyond itself to that longing for a better life which may not be fully attained, but may be sought without ceasing: *Pro Deo et Patria*.

To interpret the Birhen sa Balintawak today is challenging and at the same time inspiring. We live in an environment where the image and symbolism of the traditional Catholic Mary is highly regarded. Her influence in Filipino religiosity and devotion is deeply rooted in the Filipino consciousness. Still, the image of a Mary that is passive, meek, obedient, and pure remains in the hearts of all Filipino Marian devotees. Different from these kinds of Marian devotion, I propose propagating or re-awakening the IFI members' consciousness or awareness of the indigenous Mary, which I claim as an image of a Mary that is not passive and meek but active, courageous and strong, and truly Aglipayan in character, which will provide an alternative for Mariologies that promote submissiveness rather than empowerment. In fact, the Birhen sa Balintawak does not only offer a resource for thinking about the relationship between Mary and revolution. Beyond this, the 'Mother of Balintawak' also invites rethinking a broader range of issues pertaining to the societal role and

the self-perception of women in the Philippines today, who require reform in order to really achieve equality, such as freedom from discrimination, sexual abuse, and the sexual manipulation of women and girls in the virtual world in society in general. Also within the church, both in general and in the IFI in particular, the place and rights of women should be reconsidered in the light of the Birhen sa Balintawak: would devotion to her not imply a fully accepted place of women among the bishops of the church, for instance? This I think would need a 'revolution'. Women today still need an understanding of the role and relevance of the Birhen sa Balintawak, her uniqueness in the history of the IFI, and the social change that is taking place in society and in women's consciousness. If consciousness is part of the process, then we must come to terms with the fact that some IFI women are liberal in their political demands and popular devotion, and only few are radical in terms of what they really want for themselves. We need to develop an understanding of the connections between the individual woman's life and her understanding of political, religious and economic awareness in our society and the church.

The Birhen sa Balintawak should be adopted by women in her humble and nationalist beginnings as an image of a mother who is ready to work with her children, so as to get mothers and other women together and find ways to put their lives back together materially and morally, and discover that whatever you give to others you get back double in humanity and enthusiasm. It is important for women to discover that there is a perspective in which they are not inferior, and what they can do when they get together and empower each other in challenging times. In an environment that is aggressive physically and emotionally, and where frequently harsh words and chaos are found, with the odd smack to maintain a minimum of order, these women in their acts of solidarity can be sure that they love the children and the community and know that they are respected and loved. They can be the new image of the Birhen sa Balintawak, not the members of the group that wear blue ribbons and carry rosaries, but of the Birhen/Marys who have known life's hardships, the prostitute saints (such as this other Mary, of Magdalene), and the Marys of the Gospel who provided for Jesus' group (Luke 8,1-3)

The Aglipayan Spirituality of the IFI: Empowerment

The image of The Birhen sa Balintawak has a key role in the emergence of the IFI's spiritual discernment, and seeks to boost the IFI 'nationalist heritage' proceeding from a vision of faith articulated in the so-called Aglipayan spirituality. Indeed, this Aglipayan spirituality is apparently, in the common understanding of IFI members, the real core, the 'heart' of Aglipayan ministry and mission. The IFI notion of 'spiritual discernment' or 'spirituality' does not follow the

classic approach to discernment. Indeed, it deals with spiritual discernment in a context wider than the individual's search for the will of God, namely from its historical vocation as a living product of 1896 revolution, known by its nationalistic heritage:

Aglipayan Spirituality serves as a guide to relevant popular devotion of the Church i.e. the people – a devotion that is not futile and fruitless, unrelated to the people's situation and experiences. Aglipayan Spirituality may be considered as a persistent tradition of Devotional Spirituality that lives in the light of that relevant involvement and seeks to extend it; a Devotion that not only seeks to be in commune with God in His radiance and magnificence, confined to the four walls of the church, but is also rather a liberative, a devotion that is 'below' (meaning 'coming from the people's experience') that is prophetic and transformative.

Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.³⁷

Empowerment is a process. Through the process, an individual becomes an agent of change. More simply put, it is the 'can do' factor, going from 'I can't' to 'I can'.

The Aglipayan spirituality empowers us in our commitment to serve God and His people in the struggle for freedom, justice, peace and total human development; a commitment based on the critical and scientific analysis of the structures and systems that perpetuate the continuing destruction of life; a commitment nurtured through the immersion and solidarity with the basic masses. Hence, to love and serve requires personal witnessing.

The Aglipayan spirituality involves a conscious participation and involvement in the affairs of the world. Participation and involvement imply self-emptying, solidarity, and service which embodies the spirit of incarnation.

The Aglipayan spirituality of loving and being of service for others is not easy to achieve. As a paschal spirituality it crosses over from death to life. 'Life' here could mean awakening individuals to consciousness so that they can choose for themselves to have a meaningful existence. The IFI as a church continues to fight passionately for the rights and freedom of the masses, and

³⁷ Noel Dacuycuy, extracted from the lecture on Aglipayan Spirituality delivered in the Concurrent Field Education class, 2018.

believes that her work is geared towards humanization – our historical vocation.

The Aglipayan spirituality of love and service is common to other denominations. But what makes it so extraordinary is the participation and involvement of the people, an empowerment by which they see themselves as leaders and heroes, as an important factor in every aspect of communal life. It is a spirituality of the braves, who extend helping hands to people, merge with the people, and struggle together with and for them even in the midst of danger and martyrdom. The IFI believes this to be so, because we, the IFI, can see among the people the spirit of oneness strengthened by the desire to promote the Kingdom values of justice, peace, equality, and love. Such a union, therefore, entails power and authority, which propel the women and men of the IFI to move and participate. Truly, that Aglipayanism is marked by an active involvement and participation in every event of society. It is Aglipayan because of the authentic and brave involvement of people taking the lead in making major decisions and moves.

As Val Webb points out, 'Spirituality (for women) is not a different level of being, but rather feelings, doubts, physical pain, sexuality, all intertwined, sometimes chaotically, into a life'.³⁸ It is not a question of finding God in ourselves and our lives, but becoming conscious of God's ongoing activity and responding with love. It must challenge and go beyond solidarity with women suffering oppression and marginalization. It must challenge as well the unchecked growth of globalization that feeds on the poor, robbing them of their lands, exploiting their labor, and driving women and children to prostitution. It must work for debt relief and a more equitable distribution of the world's resources.

Conclusion

An awareness of the conditions of the Filipino people will be helpful and effective in achieving the right consciousness for the women and other members of the IFI community. Women are the first people to be inspired towards remembering and opening their Aglipayan roots and spirituality to the image or symbolism the Birhen sa Balintawak represents. It is a well-known fact that the IFI caters for the people from the margins and the oppressed. The church's historical experiences and solidarity with the Filipino poor are filled with hope, not despair. There is an enormous hope among the poor. The source of this hope is not so much their strength and competence but their exceptional religi-

³⁸ Quoted in Elizabeth Johnson, *The Strength of Her Witness: Jesus Christ in the Global Voices of Women*, Maryknoll 2016, 331.

osity. From the perspective of the daily struggle for food and public recognition, hope is seen as not only inspired with heavenly blessings but also with the expectation of a life of fullness on earth and of justice being exacted at the end amidst the struggle for life. The daily struggle to celebrate life and lead a joyful life is the inner strength of every Filipino, and even more of the poor, who are deprived of the basic necessities of life. This resilience is born out of the celebration of life. Filipinos celebrate life not just as a superficial exuberance (enthusiasm) of the moment but as a profound experience of God's blessing. Filipinos sing, dance, pray, and celebrate in both moments of joy and of struggle, in order to make sense of any situation -- especially situations of injustice and dehumanization.

At the root of celebration there is the deepest feeling of being with a kind, just and caring God no matter what the circumstances are. This is perhaps the context for the adoration and high regard of Mary. The Birhen sa Balintawak provides the caring context of the faith, as she who knows the needs of the poor, and who assures them that God cares without regard to status and wealth, and whose providence remains in the midst of suffering and defeat. Like their faith, what emerges in the Filipinos' sense of hope is the act of resistance to the socio-political powers that exclude them from having access to basic goods of life such as food, land, housing, and education. The Filipino people, men as well as women, are learning to fight, and fight they must. Filipinos are not passive; this is a misconception coming from a colonial and elitist consciousness. Passivity is a category imposed from the outside. When we began to reclaim the inner dynamism of Filipino culture, or cultures, it became clear that what is called passivity had better be called resistance. Faith seeking justice is therefore not the adding of something new to the local wisdom, but affirming what has been there all along. A rereading of national history, in particular folk religiosity, gives a better appreciation and offers the people a new spirit of empowerment of their identity, a sense of who they were in the past and how to look at the present.

The Filipino people, usually portrayed as passive and submissive subjects of colonialism, have become active, resistant and creative in channeling their clamor for liberation. Jesus and Mary, seen in their utter simplicity, became a powerful symbol of protest against the colonizers' presentation of themselves as possessing dignity worthy of emulation. As Meredith Jordan puts it:

'Be courageous enough to shed holy tears. Until all the world is awake, our holy tears will wash over our troubled spirits like a healing river flowing homeward to the heart of God'.³⁹

³⁹ Meredith Jordan, *Embracing The Mystery. The Sacred Unfolding in Ordinary People and Everyday Lives*, Philadelphia 2004.

Philippine Inspiration for Western Catholicism: The Importance and Impact of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente

Peter-Ben Smit

Introduction

What are ecumenical relationships good for, certainly those with more 'exotic' churches?¹ This question is both justified and somewhat misleading, the latter to the extent that it is intended as a *rhetorical* question. To begin with, ecumenical relationships should not be regarded as the exception to the rule of ecclesial division; rather, ecumenical relationships of communion should be regarded as the rule – so the question ought to be 'what are ecclesial divisions good for?'² This question deserves a decidedly negative answer, the added value of diversity among and within churches notwithstanding (this value is expressed aptly in the ecumenical slogan 'unity in [reconciled] diversity').³ Furthermore, the term 'exotic' betrays more about one's own positionality (and a possible lack of reflection on it) than it does about the character of other churches. Finally, it is also questionable to ask questions that focus on 'productivity' or 'gain' mainly: the church is not 'producing' something, and neither are global communions of communions of churches.⁴ Rather, they *are* some-

¹ This contribution further develops lines of thought that emerged out of the symposium 'Challenging Catholicism' of September 21, 2014, the proceedings of which were published in: Angela Berlis and Peter-Ben Smit (ed.), *Challenging Catholicism – Papers of the Challenging Catholicism Workshop of 21 September 2015*, thematic issue of the *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* (105 [2015]).

² Old Catholic theology finds its ecumenical inspiration in the early church's ideal of, structures for, and instruments of unity in the sense of 'communion', and is critical of an acceptance of the confessional (and unreconciled) situation of churches in the contemporary world. See Jan Visser, *Het ideaal van de 'Ecclesia primitiva' in het Jansenisme en het Oud-Katholicisme*, Amersfoort 1980. For a survey of Old Catholic ecumenism, see Urs von Arx, 'Old Catholic Ecumenical Tradition,' in: Sławomir Pawłowski SAC and Sławomir Jacek Żurek (eds.), *Lublin – City of Religious Agreement. Ecumenism in History, Theology, Culture*, Lublin 2017, 269-282, as well as Peter-Ben Smit, 'Oecumenische theologie en relaties,' in: idem (ed.), *De Oud-Katholieke Kerk van Nederland: Een inleiding*, Zoetermeer 2018) 159-176.

³ See, e.g., a contribution by the formula's originator: Harding Meyer, 'Einheit in versöhnter Verschiedenheit': Hintergrund und Sinn einer ökumenischen Formel,' *Kerygma und Dogma* 49 (2003), 293-306.

⁴ See for a fundamental critique of the church as a 'producing' entity Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbole et sacrement: une relecture sacramentelle de l'existence chrétienne*,

thing: signs of God's reconciling love that 'resignify' the world -- the church itself is both constituted by such signs and performs them.⁵

Given the above, the following exploration of the 'importance and impact' of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente regarding the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands (speaking for all churches of the Union of Utrecht would go widely beyond the scope of the present contribution), is not an apology for its usefulness but rather an exploratory investigation as to how the 'otherness' of the one church vis-à-vis the other can enhance both their performances as a church, i.e., as a living sign of God's grace in the world, by means of an exchange of charismata or 'gifts' made possible by the otherness of the ecclesial partner.⁶ The economy of the gift, not the economy of utility is leading.

In exploring this exchange of gifts I will focus on the role that the IFI and its theology have played, play, and can play in the future for the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands and its theology, rather than the other way around. The reason for this is that it is a good principle to speak for one's own tradition only, and not to presume to be able to speak for others as well, at least not as long as these others are able to speak for themselves.⁷ In doing so, I do not want to suggest that the interaction with the IFI is the only possible source of inspiration for Old Catholic theology, or that the IFI should be its primary

Paris 1987; the ecclesiology of thinkers such as Rowan Williams is also critical of the notion that the church should be 'good for something' (in the sense of being 'productive'), because it has the 'gift' as a point of departure. Cf. Mike Higon, 'Rowan Williams,' in: Paul Avis (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ecclesiology*, Oxford 2008), 505-523.

⁵ In the sense of Henri de Lubac's 'The Eucharist makes the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist'; see Henri de Lubac, *Méditation sur l'Église*, Paris ³1954, 113.

⁶ The idea of ecumenism as an exchange of gifts was expressed in a phrase by Pope John Paul II that has become widely adopted, found in his encyclical *Ut unum sint* (1995), par. 28: 'Dialogue is not simply an exchange of ideas. In some way it is always an 'exchange of gifts'. The document refers to *Lumen Gentium* 13 (November 21, 1964), which itself takes up elements from Paul VI's *Ecclesiam suam* (August 6, 1964). The dimension of reciprocity among ecumenical partners is stressed by John Paul II vis-à-vis these earlier documents (see esp. par. 29 of *Ut unum sint*). – The existence of otherness, coupled with an 'ethos of otherness' on the part of those 'others' who encounter each other is fundamental for communion (in the theologically qualified sense of the word); this is the key thesis of John Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, London 2006).

⁷ Those who cannot speak because of marginalization, trauma, or death of course need advocates. This also applies to voices from the past, on which see the account by Ulrich Luz, *Theologische Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2014. On historical forgetfulness, see Aleida Asmann, *Formen des Vergessens*, Göttingen 2016).

conversation partner,⁸ but will only observe that this interaction contains challenges that can serve as forms of inspiration. Also, this essay may give the impression that I am operating out of a basic assumption of a theological or a pastoral deficit on the part of the Old Catholic Church. This impression is a logical corollary to an approach that seeks to explore what a tradition, one I am part of myself, may learn. One part of this tradition, however, is precisely a dynamic understanding of the very concept of tradition,⁹ which is open to new insight and learning.¹⁰ Of course this attitude does not imply that what is there in this tradition at the moment is worthless or deficient, but it does mean that, as a matter of theological principle, the tradition is in need of further development.

Against this background I will address a number of issues that can be seen as emerging out of the life in communion between the two churches, as it was established in 1965.¹¹ These issues have to do with both the exploration of the global dimension of the church and the shaping of relationships in that context, and with the different emphases that the Old Catholic and IFI traditions developed in their (catholic) identities. In doing so I will mainly point to issues

⁸ In Western Christianity much of the same kind of inspiration could, for instance, be derived from the Anglo-Catholic movement in the Anglican tradition, especially in its socially activist form. See, for instance: Rowan Williams and Kenneth Leech (eds.) *Essays Catholic and Radical*, London 1983); John Shelton Reed, *Glorious Battle : The Cultural Politics of Victorian Anglo-Catholicism*, Nashville 1996); David Bunch and Angus Ritchie (eds.), *Prayer and Prophecy: The Essential Kenneth Leech*, New York 2009). See also the pertinent observations by Mattijs Ploeger, 'Goldener Käfig mit offener Tür. Seelsorgerliche, diakonische und missionarische Herausforderungen für die altkatholische Ekklesiologie,' *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 107 (2017), 74-89, 82. Anglican, also Anglo-Catholic, theology was an influence on the IFI, especially in the midst of the 20th century. On the emergence of this relationship, see, e.g., Peter-Ben Smit, 'The Road Towards Full Communion Between the Philippine Independent Church and The Episcopal Church,' *Anglican and Episcopal History* 84 (2015), 121-165.

⁹ As outlined in: Peter-Ben Smit, *Old Catholic Theology: An Introduction* (Leiden 2019), 29-35.56-59; see also idem, *Traditie als Missie. 125 Jaar Unie van Utrecht – 1275 jaar in de voetsporen van St. Willibrord*, Sliedrecht/Amersfoort 2015.

¹⁰ See for an exploration of the church as a 'learning organization,' e.g., Remco Robinson, 'Vloeibare kerk? De secularisatie voorbij?' in: Peter-Ben Smit and Rieneke Brand (eds.), *Kerk en geloof in een seculiere samenleving. Bijdragen uit de theologische nalatenschap van Remco Robinson*, Sliedrecht/Amersfoort 2020), 135-153, 143-146.

¹¹ On the meandering and discontinuous road leading towards the establishment of this communion, see Peter-Ben Smit and Wim H. de Boer, *In necessariis unitas. Hintergründe zu den ökumenischen Beziehungen zwischen der Iglesia Filipina Independiente, den Kirchen der Anglikanischen Gemeinschaft und den Altkatholischen Kirchen der Utrechter Union*, Frankfurt 2012.

that I think have become of importance, without being able to discuss each topic in detail. Nonetheless, I offer up what follows for further discussion and reflection, and as an indication of the fruitfulness of the relationship between the two traditions.

The Global Dimension of the Church

Old Catholics are well aware of the global dimension of the church – a better expression than ‘universal church,’ which is not commonly used in Old Catholic ecclesiology¹² – due to a range of ecumenical relationships,¹³ notably those with Anglicans (since the 1870s; communion: 1931); the Orthodox Churches (dialogue in various shapes and forms since the 1870s); the Roman Catholic Church (since the 1960s), and their involvement in the broader ecumenical movement since its inception. However, the intensified relationship with the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (contacts since the 1910s, communion in 1965), as it emerged in the 1980s on the basis of the 1965 establishment of communion, plays a distinct role.¹⁴ This has to do with the fact that this bond with the IFI is the most intensive relationship of communion of the Old Catholic Churches with a church outside the Western world.¹⁵ Of course, the Old Catholic Churches are also in communion with the Nippon Sei Ko Kai -- the Anglican Church of Japan – and any other church of the Anglican Communion, for that matter, but hardly any of these churches has reminded Old Catholics as strongly of the global dimension of the church as *a church in communion*. This is a healthy reminder for Old Catholics, who might otherwise become some-

¹² See for an exploration, e.g., International Roman-Catholic – Old Catholic Dialogue Commission, ‘Church and Ecclesial Communion,’ in: Thomas F. Bes, Lorelei F. Fuchs, John Gibaut, Jeffrey Gros and Despina Prassas (eds.), *Growth in Agreement IV: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 2004–2014* Vol. 1, Geneva, 2017, 533–567, esp. 539–540.

¹³ Surveys in Von Arx, ‘Tradition,’ and P.-B. Smit, ‘Theologie’.

¹⁴ On this history cf. Peter-Ben Smit, *Old Catholic and Philippine Independent Ecclesiologies in History. The Catholic Church in Every Place*, Leiden 2011.

¹⁵ In developing this relationship and becoming (more) aware of the global dimension of (the history of) Christianity, Old Catholic theology can find a resource in the project of a ‘polycentric’ history of Christianity, as developed by Klaus Koschorke and as reflected upon in: Adrian Hermann, Ciprian Burlacioiu, and Peter C. Phan (eds.), *The ‘Munich School of World Christianity’*, special issue of *Journal of World Christianity* 6 (2016). The role of the early Iglesia Filipina Independiente in the context of global Christianity has, for example, been explored by Adrian Hermann, see ‘The Early Periodicals of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (1903–1904) and the Emergence of a Transregional and Transcontinental Indigenous-Christian Public Sphere,’ *Philippine Studies* 61 (2014), 549–565.

what landlocked theologically and spiritually in (Western) Europe. It is hard to imagine a church outside the 'Global North' with which the Old Catholic Churches have developed such an intensive relationship and which, therefore, is such a strong sign of Christianity in the 'Global South' as the IFI. This relationship touches on liturgical topics (e.g., intercession, participation in episcopal consecrations, invitations to celebrate the sacraments in each other's communion, the commemoration of the bishop and martyr Alberto Ramento),¹⁶ diaconal aspects (a range of often diaconal projects of the IFI are supported through diaconal agencies of the Old Catholic Churches, which in turn receive inspiration from these projects), and the church's witness (exchange in theological education, the joint exploration of public theology in the context of a globalized world),¹⁷ thus encompassing all fundamental dimensions of the church's life as a communion: *leitourgia*, *martyria* and *diakonia*.¹⁸

Global and Globalized Injustice and the Western World's Implication in It

A second important influence of the communion with the Iglesia Filipina Independiente would be an increased awareness, not of the global dimension of

¹⁶ On him see, e.g., Franz Segbers and Peter-Ben Smit, *Catholicity in Times of Globalization. Remembering Alberto Ramento, Martyred Bishop of Workers and Peasants*, Luzern 2011.

¹⁷ See, for instance, the output of the consultation on Catholicity and Globalization: Marsha L. Dutton (with Emily K. Stuckey, ed.), *Globalization and Catholicity: Ecumenical Conversations on God's Abundance and the People's Need* supplementary volume to *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 100 (2010), 198-207, and the papers collected under the heading 'The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. An Ongoing Conversation on Catholicity and Globalization, Tagaytay/Philippines, 4-7 October 2016,' in: *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 107. For a contextualization of this project in the context of the WCC's 'Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace,' see Peter-Ben Smit, 'Imagining a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace: Catholicity and Contextuality,' *Ecumenical Review* 66 (2014), 214-225. What has *not* become a topic of much Old Catholic theological reflection, however, is the fact that also at the end of the nineteenth century the striving for national catholic churches was in fact a global phenomenon, with admittedly a range of sources of inspiration, strategies for establishment, and rates of survival, but a global development (and not primarily Western) nonetheless.

¹⁸ Following the ecclesiological blueprint offered by the preamble to the statute of the International Bishops' Conference, par. 3.3: 'Each local church is the Body of Christ in which the members, baptized and confirmed in the name of the Holy Trinity and united in the Eucharist, are called, authorized, and sanctified by the various gifts of the Holy Spirit to live a multifaceted common life in *martyria*, *leitourgia*, and *diakonia*'. In: Urs von Arx and Maja Weyermann (eds.), *Statut der Internationalen Altkatholischen Bischofskonferenz (IBK). Offizielle Ausgabe in fünf Sprachen Beiheft zu Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 91, Bern 2001, *ad loc.*

the church as such, but rather of cultural, political, social and economic dimensions of global interconnectedness in particular. Such global interdependence, usually organized in hierarchies of power and accordingly leading to situations of injustice, is not something that is experienced negatively all that much in the Netherlands, or at least not as directly, not as negatively, and not by such large segments of the population as it is the case in the Philippines. Communion with a church that does face a situation as in the Philippines, where the situation is different and the negative aspects of globalization are highly visible, also means that Old Catholics in Western Europe are made to reflect on the downside (and provenance) of their own wealth and wellbeing at the other side of the globe. A study project on *Catholicity and Globalization* (2006-2008; follow-up in 2016) explored this topic explicitly.¹⁹ However, a study project as such is ideally only the beginning, not the end of an increased awareness of living in a globalized world. Interaction with the Iglesia Filipina Independiente could be a catalyst for Old Catholic theology for continuing its discernment of what life in global communion in a globalized world might entail, and what the 'living out' of relationships of communion could imply.

The Confrontation with Colonial History and Postcolonial Contexts

Because, with the exception of a parish of the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands in Batavia (present-day Jakarta),²⁰ Old Catholic churches were by and large not particularly involved in colonial enterprises and for both historical and theological reasons did not entertain 'foreign missions,'²¹ coming to

¹⁹ See the publications mentioned above.

²⁰ For brief accounts see Fred Smit, 'Andreas Rinkel (1889-1979),' in: W.B. van der Velde, F. Smit, P.J. Maan, M.J.I.J.W. Roosjen en J. Visser (eds.), *Adjutorio Redemptoris. Dr. Andreas Rinkel, Aartsbisschop van Utrecht 1889-1979*, Amersfoort 1987, 3-197, 49-50.107-108; H.J.W. Verheij, *De Oud-Katholieke Kerk in Nederland tijdens de Duitse bezetting 1940-1945 en de Oud-Katholieke Parochie te Batavia tijdens de Japanse bezetting 1942-1945*. Amersfoort 1954, 30-32. The parish was founded in 1939 and did not survive the Second World War.

²¹ Although connections with missions abroad did play a very important role in the history of what is now the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands. See, e.g., Dick Schoon, 'Jacob Krijns (1673-1724). Correspondent voor de 'Missions Étrangères',' in: Lidwien van Buuren en Peter-Ben Smit (eds.), *Meester in kerk en recht. Vriendenbundel voor Jan Hallebeek bij zijn 25-jarig jubileum als docent kerkelijk recht*, Sliedrecht/Amersfoort 2013, 171-186; bishop Dominique-Marie Varlet (1678-1742), a member of the *Société des Missions étrangères de Paris*, who consecrated four (!) Archbishops of Utrecht in the 18th century (Cornelis Steenoven in 1724; Cornelius Johannes Barchman Wuytiers in 1725; Theodorus van der Croon in 1734; Petrus Jo-

terms with colonialism and post-colonialism has not been very high on the agenda of Old Catholic theology. Fields of study are usually energized by encounters with questions or issues that present themselves. So far, the questions of colonial history and of postcolonialism have apparently not presented themselves in such a manner that they have become major topics of research, with the exception of research on the Iglesia Filipina Independiente and then in particular in relation to postcolonial and neocolonial concerns.²²

Yet, coming to terms with the colonial past in all its complexities is a challenge that all (former) colonial powers face. For Old Catholics, the predominant partner in a postcolonial – and in many ways neocolonial – setting is the Iglesia Filipina Independiente. Becoming aware of the history of a church that came into existence in the context of a struggle for liberation from colonialism has been and continues to be healthy for the Old Catholic churches. Even if these churches do not trace their histories to origins that have to do with colonialism as directly as the IFI's history has, they are virtually all part of societies that do have a colonial past, in one way or another. The interaction with the IFI may be a resource for integrating an awareness of colonialism in Old Catholic theology as well.

Rethinking *Diakonia*

Another area in which the IFI, as one of the longest-standing diaconal and missionary partners of the Old Catholic Church, has been of significance is that of *diakonia*, of charity, of diaconal work. Because the entire paradigm within which diaconal cooperation between financially wealthier and financially less wealthy partners takes place is currently being revised, with ideas such as 'mission without money' and 'vulnerable mission' being considered,²³ Old

hannes Meindaerts in 1739) had also served as a missionary (bishop) in Louisiana, Quebec and Babylon in Persia.

²² Besides the work of the consultations on 'Catholicity and Globalization' mentioned above, it is especially the ethicist Franz Segbers who has pursued these topics consistently since the mid-1980s. For an early contribution see Franz Segbers, 'Die Philippinische Unabhängige Kirche. Ein Beitrag zum Verhältnis von Ekklesiologie und Befreiungspraxis der Kirchen,' *Okumenische Rundschau* 37 (1988), 352-362. A more recent contribution is: 'Globalisierung und die befreiende Katholizität der Kirchen,' *Materialdienst des Konfessionskundlichen Institutes Bensheim* 69 (2018), 27-32.

²³ See, e.g., Eleonora Hof, *Reimagining Mission in the Postcolonial Condition. A Theology of Vulnerability and Vocation at the Margins*, Zoetermeer 2016, as well as idem, 'Diaconal Service in the Postcolonial Condition,' *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 108 (2018), 110-128. On 'diaconia' in the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands, see Joris Vercammen, 'Diaconaat in de Oud-Katholieke Kerk van Nederland,' in: Hub Crijns et al., *Handboek Diaconiewetenschap*, Kampen 2004), 66-71; on the same in the

Catholic missionary and diaconal endeavors can well be reconsidered with an eye to the Iglesia Filipina Independiente: what sort of dependencies are in play, what sort of giving and helping takes place, is there a place for reciprocity, and are healthy relationships being established between donors and recipients – ideally in both directions? Within the Dutch St. Paul’s Mission, a long-time partner of the IFI, such reconsideration of how things are being done is taking place, and probably also in other missionary and diaconal agencies.²⁴ I do think, however, that there is still some road to travel, ideally together with theologians and other members of the IFI. These, I would submit, have also a wealth of experience when it comes to both helping people in need and of being helped when in need themselves – and with regard to the price of such a ministry as a way of being church.²⁵ That this might be a fruitful venture is also suggested by the Old Catholic International Bishops’ Conference’s response to the Faith and Order document *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, which was developed in dialogue with bishops (and other theologians) from the IFI and other churches.²⁶ There it is noted that

... [t]he document's emphasis on the *missio Dei* is challenging all our churches. Examples of such challenges are the following: Old Catholics are challenged to develop a broader sense and understanding of mission (proclaiming the gospel in a multicultural and multireligious society) and of the church as a moral/ethical communion.²⁷

Old Catholic Church of Switzerland, see Christoph Schuler, ‘Teilen verbindet. Urteilen trennt’. Diakonische Projekte in der Christkatholischen Kirche der Schweiz,’ *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 108 (2018), 129-135.

²⁴ See, e.g., Schuler, ‘Teilen’.

²⁵ A number of cases and diaconal projects could be discussed at this point. See for a consideration of theological principles, ecclesial ministry, and martyrdom (Fr. William Tadena; bishop Alberto Ramento): Eleuterio J. Revollido, ‘Our Struggle for Life in Its Fullness in the Context of Globalization: A Challenge to Our Catholicity’ and ‘Prophetic Voice, Eucharistic Vision, and Martyrdom in Transforming Globalization: An IFI Experience and Perspective,’ and also Obispo Maximo Godofredo J. David, ‘The Cost of Discipleship: A Homily,’ in: Dutton (ed.), *Globalization*, 18-27.184-197.243-245.

²⁶ To wit: the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar, the Old Catholic Mariavite Church and the Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church. See ‘Ausserordentliche Sitzung der Internationalen Altkatholischen Bischofskonferenz (IBK) in Utrecht, 14. bis 18. September 2014,’ *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 105 (2015), 72-76.

²⁷ ‘Sitzung’, 73.

Catholic Identity with Different Emphases

One other challenge for Old Catholic theology and identity has been the confrontation with a communion partner across the globe that was theologically and spiritually essentially identical – the definition of ‘being in communion’ in Old Catholic theology –,²⁸ yet strikingly different in some aspects of its practice and theology.²⁹ If approached in the spirit of an ‘exchange of gifts,’ as referred to above, this confrontation can be enriching, and may also aid the sometimes prevalent reflex in Western churches to assume that they will have to educate the partner in the ‘global South’ as to what proper catholic theology amounts to.³⁰ I will identify five areas in which I think Old Catholic theology

²⁸ See, e.g., par. 3.2. of the preamble to the Statute of the International Bishops’ Conference, which states about a catholic (local) church that ‘it is linked in unity and communion with other local churches, in which it recognizes its own essence’ (in: Von Arx and Weyermann [eds.], *Statut, ad loc.*)

²⁹ A larger comparison, albeit not with a focus on ecclesial practice but on ecclesiological self-understanding, is undertaken in: P.-B. Smit, *Ecclesiologicals, passim.*

³⁰ Regarding the IFI, this challenge is of importance particularly because this church was ‘colonized’ theologically by the Episcopal Church (USA) in the course of the (late) 1940s, through the 1960s, with a rediscovery of its distinct history and theological tradition only beginning again in the mid-1970s. One important player in this respect was the ‘National Priest Organization,’ which reflected on its own role in: National Priest Organization, *A Ade of Struggle and Service Towards a New Heaven and a New Earth: National Priest Organization: The Tenth Anniversary Celebration*, Quezon City [1988]). See also the account in: Eleuterio J. Revollido, *The Interplay of Nationalism and Ecumenism in the Ministry of the Nine Supreme Bishops of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) 1902 – 2002*, SThD dissertation; University of St. Thomas, Manila, 2009, as well as the statements by the IFI on its self-understanding and mission in: *Commemorative Bible. Centenary of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, Manila 2002, 355-412, especially the pivotal ‘Statement on Church Mission’ of 1976 (361-369). This self-understanding of the IFI was articulated firmly at its centenary celebration of 2002, with which the ‘Commemorative Bible’ is also connected; see for a reflection by the then *Obispo Maximo* Tomas A. Millamena, *The Iglesia Filipina Independiente and her Centenary*, Manila 2002, as well as the further documentation in: Iglesia Filipina Independiente, *Our Heritage, Our Journey, Our Legacy*, Manila 2005. In his analysis, Revollido (*Interplay*) points out that there is a fruitful tension between ecclesial nationalism and an (international) ecumenical outlook within the IFI: neither is made subordinate to the other, and ideally both contribute to the church’s witness that combines an awareness of being a church in and for a certain place and people with the vocation to contribute to a global Christian community, yet without the nationalism and nationalist advocacy turning into xenophobia and without allowing (international) ecumenical ties and forms of communion to infringe upon the autonomy (autocephaly) of the church. See also: Peter-Ben Smit, ‘National, Catholic and Ecumenical,’ *Philippiniana Sacra* 53 (2018), 303 – 322.

has learned from, or still has some potential to learn from the Iglesia Filipina Independiente.

First, the IFI challenges Old Catholic theology to reflect on the relationship between church and world. This has to do in particular with its specific understanding of what it means to be a 'national church' – i.e., a church of the people. In Old Catholic theology this usually means the church in a particular country, nothing more, nothing less. Current Old Catholic theology prefers the term 'local' church, which also refers to the church as a community in a given place.³¹ In the theological and spiritual tradition of the IFI, being a national church means being a church of and for the people; it includes an identification with the nation in the sense of a left-leaning, emancipatory nationalism that has the interests of the poor and marginalized in view and seeks to represent these. Against this background one may well ask whether the Old Catholic approach to being a 'national' or 'local' church (understood as a Eucharistic community) is too inward-looking. Certainly, misunderstandings are possible in this regard, for instance when a church behaves as if a Eucharistic ecclesiology means that the only ecclesial practice that matters is the celebration of the Eucharist as such, leaving society aside. By contrast, Old Catholic theologians such as Ploeger have placed emphasis on the 'centrifugal' character of the Eucharist,³² which resonates well with a general stress in liturgical theology on the relationship between church and world and even on the priestly role of the church in society, acting, liturgically and otherwise, on behalf of others.³³

This observation may have another corollary: as a 'church of the people' the IFI seeks to address and minister to people living in the margins of society. Practice naturally varies from parish to parish, but at the very least this is the mainstream position.³⁴ This, taken together with the large number of people working as farmers or in industrial or service jobs, means that a slightly differ-

³¹ See, e.g., the preamble to the Statute of the International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference, par. 3.1, where a local church is described as a 'fellowship and communion of people, which by the reconciliation in Jesus Christ and by the outpouring and the continuous work of the Holy Spirit is constituted as a unity in a given place around a bishop with the eucharist as its center'. (Von Arx and Weyermann [eds.], *Statut, ad loc.*), for a succinct discussion as to what this understanding of the local church *qua* Eucharistic community entails, see Mattijs Ploeger, 'Einführung in die Grundgedanken einer eucharistischen Ekklesiologie,' *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 105 (2015), 303-314.

³² As explored in Ploeger, 'Käfig'. See for an outline of an Old Catholic understanding of mission from the vantage point of the concept of 'tradition' also P.-B. Smit, *Traditie*.

³³ See, e.g., Samuel Wells and Sarah Coakley (eds.), *Praying for England. Priestly Presence in Contemporary Culture*, London 2008.

³⁴ As, e.g., evidenced in the documentation provided in Segbers and P.-B. Smit, *Ramento*, cf. also Revollido, *Interplay*, idem, 'Struggle,' and idem, 'Voice'.

ent segment of society is ministered to than in an average Old Catholic parish, where the more marginal segments of society do not tend to be strongly represented. Also, there is in most parishes no particular drive to minister to the marginal. Of course, Dutch social services may be a good explanation for this,³⁵ but might it not lead to a somewhat one-sided composition of parish life?

Second, interaction with the IFI can also provide Old Catholic theologians (and pastors) with an example that may speak to their own theological (and pastoral) imagination when it comes to filling the ecclesial basic dimensions of *leitourgia*, *martyria* and *diakonia* with life, wholly in agreement with Old Catholic ecclesiological blueprints that stress these three dimensions of the church's life as a *koinonia*.³⁶ In many parishes of the IFI (for instance the parish of the IFI's National Cathedral of the Holy Child in Manila, or the parish of the Divine Shepherd in Urdaneta City, which doubles as seminary chapel), but also in the training of future clergy, quite classical forms of pastoral care (regular celebrations of the Eucharist, both in the main parish church and at so-called 'outstations', celebration of other sacraments and occasional services, home and hospital visits, Bible study, youth ministry, often in the shape of a choir, etc.), coexist with outspoken forms of political advocacy and activism, such as participation in protests, advocacy alliances, and politically charged preaching, and concrete forms of diaconal assistance, such as the coordination and delivery of aid to victims of typhoons on a recurring basis: these disasters are wont to strike both the Greater Manila Area and Pangasinan (as well as other parts of the Philippines). Notably, all of this is often done with equal intensity and attention: liturgy is not commonly seen as a competitor for diaconal initiatives (or vice versa), and committed social witness is seen as the appropriate shape of the proclamation of the Gospel rather than its antithesis. What can be observed in IFI theology and in many of its parishes is that these things go together, and certainly are emphasized as belonging together: a catholic church of course celebrates a sacramental liturgy with everything that comes with it, to God's glory, but naturally the church is also on the side of the marginalized, precisely because she celebrates the Eucharist and recognizes God's glory in the Crucified One, and pastoral care is a logical and normal ingredient of each and every parish. Observing the synthesis and coherence of these dimensions of

³⁵ In fact, as for instance Herman Noordegraaf, 'Aid Under Protest?,' *Diaconia* 1 (2010, 47-61) stresses, at least in the context of Western Europe diaconal care offered by churches should always be coupled with a voice of protest, reminding the government of its responsibilities.

³⁶ As for instance stressed in the ecclesiological preamble to the statute of the International Bishops' Conference (published in: Von Arx and Weyermann [eds.], *Statut*); this is repeated variously in representative statements of Old Catholic theology.

being church in the theology and ecclesial life of the IFI can be an invitation to reflect on the same topic in Old Catholic contexts.

Third, Old Catholic theology can learn something regarding the precariousness of church and theology. The last time that Old Catholic clergy in the Netherlands were risking penalties and even their lives in the context of their ministry will have been more than 75 years ago, during the Second World War.³⁷ Although I would certainly not want to wish similar times again on our country and church (or any country or church, for that matter), or naively to romanticize martyrdom, I do want to submit that the witness of IFI martyrs such as Bishop Alberto Ramento (2006), Father William Tadena (2005), and many others who were killed because of their social witness, which they regarded as Gospel proclamation,³⁸ reminds us of the precarious nature of theology and the risks it may well involve in situations where impunity rules, such as in the Philippines.³⁹ As part of the experience of being in communion globally, this leads to an awareness that the Dutch situation may not be the most 'normal' situation in this respect, which is unfortunate, but nonetheless a fact. This also means that a Dutch perspective on the source of faith from a relatively safe and well-to-do situation may well need to be supplemented by a Filipino perspective, which is more likely to be attuned to realities such as violence and hunger, as they have been part of the Christian experience throughout the ages.⁴⁰

Fourth, the topic of gender, sexuality and the church is of interest. Both churches are much concerned with it, ranging from discussions about the ordination of women, the question of same-sex relationships, and as an emerging

³⁷ Although the history of this period still needs to be written; however, see F. Smit, 'Rinkel', 66-108, as well as Verheij, *Kerk*.

³⁸ See for an exploration of the threefold vocation of Filipino clergy in terms of being prophets, peacemakers and pastors Terry (Eleuterio J.) Revollido, 'Drievoudige roeping voor Filipijnse geestelijke leiders,' *TussenRuimte* 10:2 (2017), 4-8.

³⁹ See, e.g., *Situation of human rights in the Philippines. Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* of June 29, 2020

(<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/PH/Philippines-HRC44-AEV.pdf>), accessed Jan. 3, 2021). The summary states: 'In the present report, key patterns of ongoing violations are highlighted. While important human rights gains have been made, and challenges remain, an overarching focus on national security, countering terrorism and illegal drugs has resulted in numerous systematic human rights violations, including killings and arbitrary detention, persistent impunity and the vilification of dissent'.

⁴⁰ Paul Middleton (ed.), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Christian Martyrdom* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), provides a good survey.

topic questions concerning transgender and, more broadly, queer identities.⁴¹ In the field of the ordination of women, which is (relatively) well documented,⁴² both churches have begun to experience the ministry of women ordained to especially the priestly ministry since the late 1990s, after earlier experiences with female deacons and, in the case of the IFI, subsequent experience with a female bishop (Rt. Rev. Emily Dacucuy, ordained on May 5, 2019 for the Diocese of Batac). Comparison of the two churches, and certainly with regard to women bishops, the Old Catholic Church's learning from the IFI's experience can be valuable here – also in the sense of empowerment, as female clergy remain a minority in both churches. The separate topic of same-sex relationships can also provide an opportunity for Dutch Old Catholic theologians to 'receive gifts' from the Philippines. Much time and energy is being invested in this topic at the moment within Old Catholicism,⁴³ in the Netherlands in a context that tends to be (very) affirming regarding same-sex (and other 'queer') identities.⁴⁴ However, for thinking about gender, its construction, and theological discernment concerning it, the intercultural exchange with the IFI might be of relevance for Western European reflection on the topics of gender and sexuality for two reasons in particular.

⁴¹ See, e.g., Marco Derks, 'If I Be Shaven Then My Strength Will Go From Me': A Queer Reading of the Samson Narrative,' *Biblical Interpretation* 23 (2015), 553-573; Marco Derks, Karin Neutel and Peter-Ben Smit (eds.), *Mannelijkheid en religie*, thematic issue of: *Handelingen. Tijdschrift voor praktische theologie en religiewetenschap* 47:4 (2020).

⁴² As almost always, the resources of the Old Catholic churches permit Old Catholic scholars to publish much more on the subject than their IFI counterparts. See, e.g., Angela Berlis, 'Women's Ordination in the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht,' in: Ian Jones, Kirsty Thorpe and Janet Wootton (eds.), *Women and Ordination in the Christian Churches*, London 2008, 144-154; idem, *In One Spirit Celebrating the Gift of the Woman Priesthood: Experiences, Testimonies, Poems and Position Papers*, Manila 2007.

⁴³ See, e.g., publications such as Andreas Krebs and Matthias Ring (eds.), *Mit dem Segen der Kirche. Die Segnung gleichgeschlechtlicher Partnerschaften in der theologischen Diskussion* (Bonn: Alt-Katholischer Bistumsverlag, 2018), as well as Mattijs Ploeger, 'Die Segnung gleichgeschlechtlicher Partnerschaften und das Sakrament der Ehe (Einsegnung). Ein Beitrag zur aktuellen Diskussion in der altkatholischen Kirche und Theologie,' *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 108 (2018), 87-109; see also the extraordinary (and exploratory) session of the national synod of the Old Catholic Church of Switzerland of August 22, 2020, which was dedicated to the topic of the solemnization of same-sex marriages in this church.

⁴⁴ See on religion, homosexuality, and the Dutch public domain, e.g., Marco Derks, *Constructions of Homosexuality and Christian Religion in Contemporary Public Discourses in the Netherlands*, PhD thesis Utrecht University, 2019.

- (a) One reason for this is linguistic: Dutch is a language that has three grammatical genders: female, neuter, and male; Tagalog and Filipino (a standardized form of Tagalog and one of the Philippines' two official languages, the other being English), by contrast, are despite Spanish and Chinese influences by and large gender-neutral.⁴⁵ This also applies to most other languages spoken in the Philippines. As language forms the way one thinks about the world -- in this case in more (or less) gendered terms, in particular with reference to either three (male, female, neuter) or no genders -- an interesting conversation could be had about theologizing in either Dutch or English and Tagalog about gender.
- (b) A second reason is cultural: the phenomenon of the *bakla*, a term that is hard to translate but refers to men exhibiting 'feminine' (or rather: stereotypically feminine) behavior and sometimes also identifying as such (which means a proximity to transgender identities, albeit that sex adjustment is not always desired).⁴⁶ I cannot enter into an in-depth discussion here, but will point out that the Filipino experience with the *bakla* community is an experience that can increase sensitivity to a plurality of gender identities beyond 'cisgender' identities. Old Catholic theology, which needs to come to terms with for instance 'queer' identities, might be able to find a valuable conversation partner in the IFI and its experience with *bakla* persons.

Fifth and finally, I think that the education of clergy is an interesting issue. This takes place in ways that are different in two main respects. First, IFI seminarians usually have significant prior schooling in a different field, in particular because a college education is obligatory prior to entering seminary. This means that when they enter a seminary they will have been trained in a certain field and (commonly, yet certainly not always) will be in their early twenties. For theological education this has two consequences. First, such education, a course of three to four years, takes place against the background of prior training (of up to four years), which leads to a natural exchange between theological and these other and prior forms of training. Second, schooling takes place within 'classical' seminaries: students study, live and worship together on a daily basis, but are nevertheless in close touch with the world around them via internships in parishes and aid to the parish in which the seminary is located, in terms of youth and family ministry. This residential format of seminary educa-

⁴⁵ See, e.g., the discussion in: Nikolaus P. Himmelmann, 'Tagalog,' in: idem and Karl Alexander Adelaar (eds.), *The Austronesian Languages of Asia and Madagascar*, London 2005, 350–376.

⁴⁶ See for a discussion Bobby Benedicto, 'Desiring Sameness: Globalization, Agency, and the Filipino Gay Imaginary,' *Journal of Homosexuality* 55 (2008), 274–311, and the literature mentioned there.

tion has been common in the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands as well, but has been abandoned in the second half of the 1960s for what were good reasons at the time.⁴⁷ One may wonder, however, whether the formative aspects of living, studying, and praying together might not be worth retrieving. In any case, comparing educational experiences might be worthwhile, not just with regard to a residential system of formation but also with regard to other aspects, for instance the connection between theoretical and practical training. That Old Catholic theologians are willing to consider this, is evident from a comment made in 2014 by one of the scholars serving as Alberto Ramento visiting professor: the late Remco Robinson, who taught practical theology at the seminary of the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands.⁴⁸ Robinson stated, commenting on the intensive system of parish placements typical of IFI seminary education:

During the weekend, students have duties in the surrounding parishes. It is beautiful to observe how students acquire practical experience. A parish internship is no longer necessary then. It certainly is demanding, but it also ensures a good training. I would certainly be in for it...⁴⁹

Concluding Observations

When I reflect on the above examples I note that the communion relationship between the IFI and the Old Catholic Churches can be said to challenge Old Catholic theology in a constructive manner. It probably also has an impact on IFI theology, but it is not my place to comment on that; rather, I would return to what I highlighted at the outset of this contribution: if ecumenism is conceptualized as an exchange of gifts, it is an enriching enterprise, which in the end is expressive of the communication that is inherent in a life in communion. Apparently even churches that are geographical antipodes can walk together on a common pilgrimage.

⁴⁷ A topic that cannot be explored here in detail, but see the contributions by Visser and Glazemaker in: F. Smit, J. Visser and A.J. Glazemaker, *250 jaar Oud-Katholiek Seminarie : herdenkingsreden en -artikel bij de viering van het 250-jarig bestaan van het seminarie in 1975*, Amersfoort 1975.

⁴⁸ Following his untimely passing in 2018, a collection of his articles and essays was published posthumously: P.-B. Smit and Brand (eds.), *Kerk*.

⁴⁹ As cited in: College van Docenten van het Oud-Katholiek Seminarie, 'In memoriam Remco Robinson,' in: P.-B. Smit and Brand (eds.), *Kerk*, 15-16, 16: 'In het weekend hebben de studenten taken in de omringende parochies. Het is mooi om te zien hoe de studenten zo praktijkervaring opdoen. Stage is dan niet meer nodig. Het is streng, maar je wordt hier wel goed gevormd. Mij lijkt het wel wat...'

The IFI and the Union of Utrecht 'In Action'! Concluding Remarks at the Symposium 'Catholic Beyond Colonialism'

Joris Vercammen

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Terry Revollido and Mrs Mariefe Revollido for their excellent contributions, and even more for their generous and idealistic commitment to the theological thought of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente. Also for us, even more than their reflections it is their commitment that connects us to one another! Thank you very much! But I also want to thank professor Peter-Ben Smit for organizing this afternoon, and even more the jury, who honored Dr. Revollido with the Seminary Prize, which will be given to him next Saturday.

The reflection this afternoon has been intensive, therefore it is difficult to add something new to it. Invited to speak a concluding word, I would like to mention the common calling of both the IFI and the churches of the Union of Utrecht.

The very start of the relationship between the Iglesia Filipina Independiente and the Union of Utrecht must be situated in the early years of the inception of the IFI, being the 'catholic church' for the Filipinos. The following quote bears witness to it:

Dear Lord and Brother, I have read with satisfaction your article in 'The Independent' of 29 October 1903. May God be with your lordship and your church. You don't know perhaps that there are in Switzerland, Ger, many, Holland, Austria similar catholic national churches as you have organized so happily in your Islands. We hold catholic faith... sacraments... constitution but we are independent from the pope. I seems to me that those national churches should be in brotherly union to show the world that it is possible to be catholic everywhere without being submitted to Rome. As a sign of my brotherly feelings I send you the list of my clergy.¹

This quote, from a letter by the first bishop of the Old Catholic church of Switzerland, Eduard Herzog, shows the interest with which the developments in the

¹ Eleuterio J. Revollido, 'The ecclesiality and the episcopacy of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente: its continuing challenge to concordat churches in the era of Globalization', unpublished paper, 3.

genesis of the IFI were followed in Europe. At that time, all over the world there were emancipation movements fighting for space and freedom to bridge the gap between the Christian faith on the one hand and cultural and political developments on the other. Those developments were expressions of the growing awareness of people's self-confidence and the aspiration of people who were discovering themselves as 'full members' of the people of God.

The letter I quoted was written on December 1, 1903. It took another 62 years before the IFI and the Union of Utrecht entered into a concordat of full communion, on September 22, 1965. The concordat acknowledges that we share the same faith, as the two partners are a catholic church on the one side and a communion of catholic churches on the other. Being a small world communion of catholic churches, we are proud of our connection to the IFI. We need you in order to be more catholic, and perhaps we can offer you some support in cultivating your catholic identity. None of our churches can be catholic on its own, we need one another.

In his study *Old Catholic and Philippine Independent Ecclesiologies in History*, Peter-Ben Smit says that 'the IFI appears as an 'ecclesiological extrovert' as it develops its theology with reference to its identity as a national church and the nation in which it exists; and the Union of Utrecht appears as an 'ecclesiological introvert' as it develops its theology mainly through interaction and exchange with other churches in ecumenical dialogue'.² Both approaches need each other. An ecclesiology that is not rooted in a concrete cultural context denies the creativity of the Holy Spirit as expressed in it. It remains abstract and far removed from the reality of the people of God. On the other hand, an ecclesiology that would not take into account the developments in other cultures denies the fact that the Holy Spirit is not bound by our restrictions as human beings, but goes beyond all kinds of boundaries in order to create unity among all people.

Some of this was reflected in the theological project set up by both the IFI and the Union of Utrecht, with the participation of the Episcopal Church, the Church of Sweden, and the commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches. This project on 'Catholicity and Globalization' offered some of our theologians the opportunity to study the issue of globalization from a theological point of view. The combination of the two terms 'globalization' and 'catholicity' is challenging, because they mean the same, the former in modern English, the latter in ancient Greek; the former a term used in economics and politics, the latter in the context of ecclesiology.

² P.-B. Smit, *Old Catholic and Philippine Independent Ecclesiologies in History. The Catholic Church in every place*, Leiden 2012, 477.

Much reflection has been done on the issue of globalization. Ecumenical organizations and some churches have already published a lot of material about the dangers and opportunities of a global economy. Much has been said about the role of multinationals and their exclusive emphasis on profit, about international economic relationships and international politics, and/or about environmental issues and the development of poor countries. But there is a clear lack of in-depth theological reflection on these phenomena. This was the reason why we invited theologians to meet in order to organize a joint reflection on these important and sometimes life-threatening issues. They met three times during a three-year period. The results of their reflections were published in both academic form and as a small booklet for a larger audience. Those publications have received a warm welcome in various church circles involved in the same matters. When I presented the results to those responsible for the social issues within the World Council of Churches, everyone was very enthusiastic about the work that has been done.

It motivates us to continue in this way because we are the only ones within the ecumenical context who are studying those theological questions. Therefore, as a follow-up to the work that has been done already, we are proposing a new international conference on Globalization and Catholicity. It would be appropriate to focus now on the marks of the church, as professed in the Nicene Creed, in the context of globalization. What does it mean to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic church in a continually globalizing world? This further ecumenical reflection raises ecclesiological and related theological questions in the face of the challenges issued by the globalization of the economy. The aim of the conference could be to see how in the face of globalization the churches could discover a shared understanding of catholicity. It will make all of us witnesses to the catholicity of the church, which will be liberating and generating solidarity.

When I spoke about this project with other partners, including the WCC and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, they assured me of their readiness to collaborate. We will try to initiate this project as one of the initiatives handling the results of the tenth general assembly of the WCC, to be held in Karlsruhe in 2022. The theme of the assembly will be 'God of life, lead us to justice and peace', and the question of globalization and Catholicity fits in as it focusses on the church becoming an agent of unity among people.

And there is more to work on together. Within the Central Committee of the WCC we are trying to set up the collaboration both with the IFI and the Mar Thoma Church of India. Both churches are in full communion with the Anglican Communion, but are not members of it. Both churches are catholic in their own way, but do not have a larger community of churches to belong to. Actual-

ly we are in the same situation, except that we are a small Christian world communion of churches. It is precisely this situation that offers us the opportunity to invite those churches to collaborate with the Union of Utrecht of Old Catholic Churches in order to deepen the catholic identity we have in common. To undergird this process we have started a bilateral dialogue with the Mar Thoma Church, because until now we have not been not in full communion with them.

With the same goal of promoting collaboration among those catholic churches that are not part of the Roman Catholic or any other Communion, we invited some IFI bishops to meet with bishops of the Mar Thoma Church and the European Old Catholic Bishops for a study conference on ecclesiology. This conference, which took place in 2010, was needed in order to learn to know one another's realities and ecclesiological particularities. The participants were enthusiastic about the results. We have already had two follow-up meetings, in Utrecht in 2014 and in Vienna in 2018.

There would be still more to say about all kinds of collaboration between the IFI and our communion, i.e., the exchange of lecturers on which we are working, some of your social and ecclesiastical projects for which Partner-Sein and the Mission Saint Paul provide some financial means, the Filipino parish set up by the diocese of Haarlem in Amsterdam, responding to a demand of some dozens of people living in the Amsterdam area, the publication of the small booklet remembering Bishop Ramento, etc. There is still more to say, more to dream, and more to plan because our relationship still has to offer us much more than it has done until now.

Concluding this address, I want to witness to the fact that I experience our solidarity as a gift from God with which God is enriching our lives and our world. The desire to be more catholic has separated both of us from Rome, but none of our churches have had the ambition to be 'Rome-free' in the sense that this would be a central point in our self- understanding.³ We are called to show that being catholic is about living in solidarity, with our people, with our world, with history and tradition, with the whole of creation, as our God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is in solidarity with his world. As John says: may we all become one, as God is one.⁴

³ P.-B. Smit, *Independent Ecclesiologies*, 485.

⁴ John 17,11.

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Peter-Ben Smit (1979) studied theology and biblical studies in Amsterdam, Sheffield, Bern and New York. He is professor by special appointment of Ancient Catholic Church Structures at Utrecht University on behalf of the Old Catholic Seminary, as well as Dom Hélder Câmara Chair in Contextual Biblical Interpretation at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. He is a priest of the Diocese of Haarlem of the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands.

Joris Vercammen (1952) studied educational sciences (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, MA, 1975) and theology (Université Catholique de Louvain-la-neuve, MA 1981) and obtain a PhD in practical theology (Katholieke Theologische Universiteit, Utrecht, 1997). After ordination to the priesthood (1979) and ministry in the Diocese of Antwerp, transfer to the Old Catholic diocese of Utrecht in 1988. Ministry as parish priest (1988-2000), project manager on parish vitalisation (1990-1998) and professor of Practical Theology and rector at the Old Catholic Seminary (1996/1997-2000). Elected and consecrated Archbishop of Utrecht in 2000, serving as such until 2020.

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The Iglesia Filipina Independiente and the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht have been in contact with each other since the early twentieth century. In 1965 ecclesial communion could be established between the two churches, who are both also in communion with the Churches of the Anglican Communion and the Church of Sweden. However, only since the last decades of the twentieth century, and especially since the turn of the millennium, has a more intensive exchange of people and theological insights come about. The award of the Andreas Rinkel Prize to the Very Rev. D. Eleuterio J. Revollido in 2019 for his role in this exchange, and in enriching the Old Catholic theological discourse with insights from the tradition of the Iglesia Filipina, belongs in the context of this broader exchange. On the occasion of the prize ceremony Dr. Revollido delivered a public lecture, which is published in this volume together with the contributions to a symposium on the theology and history of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente and their significance for Old Catholic theology.

Besides Dr. Revollido's lecture, this collection consists of a further chapter on the history of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente by the same author, a chapter by Mariefe Ibarra Revollido on the Birhen sa Balintawak and female (and feminist) spirituality in the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, and reflections by emeritus Archbishop Dr. Joris Vercammen and Peter-Ben Smit. Together they offer a significant insight into the history and theology of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente that is now made accessible to a broader public.

