A Disciple for All Seasons

Toward a Theology of Performative Accompaniment in the Midst of Tears

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For mom and dad

who gave everything

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Introduction

Neat Title. What Does It Mean?

Riffing off an idiom – and incidentally the title of a play *A Man for All Seasons* (1960) based on the life of Sir Thomas More – "A Disciple for All Seasons" intends to suggest one's aptitude and propensity to accompany others regardless of where they are and in what state of life they are found. Accompaniment is the calling of disciples. It entails receiving the other and walking with them in solidarity that consists of vulnerability. The affectivity integral in accompaniment requires empathy that stems from real compassion. Journeying with the other is not performance in the theatrical sense of putting on a show, although much will be said about the affective training of actors that finds coherence with the spirit of accompaniment. Rather than calling it "performance," empathetic being is *performative* in its nature. This performativity is affective and conscientiously nurtures relationality with the other. Receiving the other in this affective performativity entails receiving their stories nonjudgmentally. It consists of an openness to learning about oneself through the narratives of the other. It means receiving the other's state of life, mind, body and soul with tenderness. In loving accompaniment, personal narratives are seen as they are – holy.

What's with the tears? Tears in the context of our discussion become a rich symbol representing real vulnerability and authentic emotionality. Christianity has a long history of spiritual figures who viewed tears as a gift from God. In this spirit, emotionality is sacred. Even where tears are not visible, one cannot assume that nothing of value is crying out from within. Pope Francis' concern for creation and the state of relationships between people compels him to articulate a theology of tears, which draws from a tradition animated by centuries of spiritual weepers. For Michael McClymond, holy tears among these weepers functioned as a kind of

"school for the affections" demonstrating a contrite spirit, as well as an aptitude for greater spiritual progress.[1] Sometimes referred to as the "gift of tears," this charismatic dimension denoted "fiery prayer" that accompanied *compunction* (Latin for compunction, or *penthos* in Greek). McClymond revisits the various meanings of such tears in Christian history comparing various theological perspectives propounded by key Christian figures. As it turns out, there are a lot of crying Johns. St. John Cassian reflects on tears of joy that compel one to cry aloud. St. John of Damascene considered holy tears comparable to the sanctifying potency of baptism. St. John Climacus preferred not to give such blanket status to spiritual weeping, as he believed tears can have varying meanings depending on the occasion.[2] The woman in Luke's gospel who washes Jesus' feet with her tears offers a powerful example of repentance that ignites love for "the one who is forgiven little, loves little" (Lk 7:47).

Suffice it to say, it is the very schooling of one's own emotions that enables the empathetic performativity entreated by the spirit of accompaniment.

The Motif of Seasons

For millions of years temperature and precipitation have given definition to climate zones wherein seasons are operative on planet Earth. For those living in North America there are four seasons – summer, autumn, winter, spring – whereas most countries in East or Southern Africa define seasons as "dry" or "wet." Those living around the Indian Ocean experience three: winter, summer, and monsoon. While Bangladesh might be treated as having three, the tradition of the

[1] Michael J. McClymond, "Holy Tears: A Neglected Aspect of Early Christian Spirituality in Contemporary Context," in *The Spirit, the Affections, and the Christian Tradition*, ed. Dale M. Coulter (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), 90.

[2] McClymond, 93.

people names six.[3] In fact, any planet with an atmosphere experiences seasons. The motif of seasons plays a significant part in Asian religions such as Buddhism, which incorporates its recurrent quality in the cycle of life, death, and reincarnation. In the Bible, Ecclesiastes is well known for proclaiming a litany of seasons for all manner of things, from feelings, to actions, to states of life. Psalms of thanksgiving in the psalter cry out in praise to God for the goodness of creation that sustains life; "You made the moon to mark the seasons, / the sun that knows the hour of its setting" (104:19).

Everyone in Vietnam knows that there are four seasons in the north (spring, summer, fall, winter), and only two in the south (rainy and dry). When Tony Bui, writer and director of the critically acclaimed movie *Ba Mùa* (1999), translated as *Three Seasons*, was asked how he got "three" in an interview with Charlie Rose, he said:

> … the third season for me sort of represents the season of hope. It's the season that is represent in the story between Kien An in the clip you just showed. And it's about song and poetry and music. [The movie is] basically three main stories. And each of the stories takes place within the textures and tones of a different season. And so, I used the basis of a season to launch the stories.[4]

Bui's humanizing vision and directorial prowess touched internationally. This was not another Vietnam War story. Bui's *Ba Mùa* directs our attention to the ordinary. The ordinary is the soil where hope blooms. And where hope flourishes, the result is harmony in creation. In movies as in this thesis, seasons set a mood for narratives of life.

In this thesis I intend to give a coherent account of accompaniment employing a similar method to Bui's mood setting through seasons. The inherent challenge of a systematics thesis that endeavors to draw coherent lines between the spirit of accompaniment and the import of

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[3] Ashley Hamer, "Why Bangladesh Has Six Seasons Instead Of Four," Discovery, August 1, 2019, https://www.discovery.com/science/why-bangladesh-has-six-seasons-instead-of-four.

[4] Charlie Rose, *Tony Bui - Charlie Rose*, 1999, https://charlierose.com/videos/650.

affectivity (set to the tune of seasons, no less) is encountered in the natural resistance against linear thinking by that which is cyclic in nature.

Structure and Outline

Each chapter consists of four parts: 1) A *natural element* (e.g., fire or water) pooling together Scripture, Tradition, and other traditions as is helpful, in order to draw out qualities about God and the Spirit's activity, 2) a *first century figure* from the Gospels to elucidate a holy narrative of accompaniment, 3) a *twenty-first century exemplar* of discipleship, and 4) a substantial exploration of a relevant *interdisciplinary lens* from the perspective of a corresponding authority. I use the word pooling intentionally to suggest that elements in a chapter aim to add to the resonance of present themes.

In the first chapter, the season of summer is associated with the element of fire and temperamentally fiery emotions. The impassioned Simon Peter is our first century figure, and the exemplary accompaniment comes in the form of Jesus. From washing his feet, to being betrayed three times by him, to breakfast and reconciliation on a beach, Jesus leads Peter ever forward to follow him with a love that will empower others in the same way one day. Love that accompanies, endures and guides. Much like the element of fire in the Bible, God is present and empowering. Our twenty-first century disciple in this chapter is Methodist pastor Hwa-Young Chong, who sheds light on the broken bodies of Korean comfort women sexually brutalized in the wake of World War II. Theological terms surrounding the body in Korean ring out with new meaning as the broken bodies of these women are compared to Jesus' body, broken for others. Just as rice is the symbolic staple of sustenance and communion in many Asian cultures, Jesus is seen as rice from heaven in the testament of these women's survival. The interdisciplinary lens in

the first chapter comes from the realm of theatre. Tired of performances lacking depth and a sense of connection, the Russian thespian pedagogue, Konstantin Stanislavski,[5] devoted himself to help actors prepare to deliver authentic performances. His teachings, often referred to as the *system* or *technique* in thespian speak, would become world-renowned. From an abundant collection of writings, three areas will be discussed with some detail to help identify parallels to qualities seen in good accompaniment: *faith and sense of truth*, the sense of *communion* in theatre, and *emotional memory*.

The element of water is associated with affectivity in the second chapter. A component of all life, it covers most of the earth's surface and even resides underground. Where it wells up from the ground, life follows. Water symbolizes the power to dwell, as in the *wu wei* of the Tao that does not resist, but persists to the lowest places. As leaves surrender to nature in autumn, so do humans surrender to sorrow in the face of loss. Mary Magdalene is both our first-century figure as well as a model of abiding accompaniment through the suffering, death, and new life of one deeply cherished. Mary Magdalene's tears are rich in their multivalent meaning simultaneously anticipating inconceivable new life just as they reveal to the world the sacredness of her relationship with Jesus. The theme of Holy Saturday becomes a focal point and is expounded upon in the work of Shelly Rambo, our contemporary disciple of chapter two. Rambo extracts a pneumatology from the traumatic middle represented between the preeminent events that are the death and resurrection of Christ. But what happens in-between, and who are its witnesses, especially when there is *no-thing* to witness? The remainder of the chapter discusses issues in the phenomenology of empathy as presented by Edith Stein, also known as St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. The course of Stein's life is remarkable in its intellectual achievements

[5] Stanislavski's first name is also transliterated "Constantin" depending on the translator.

despite the gender biases towards women at the time, as well as her martyrdom at the hands of Nazis. Plainly put, she talked the talk and walked the walk of a life devoted to studying empathy, and modeled it in her living even unto an untimely end.

Wonder is sown into the womb of winter in the third chapter. The setting of this season recalls the meeting of two relatives, Elizabeth and Mary of Nazareth. A bond of mutual understanding nurtures gladness and assurance in the goodness that lies ahead. Just as watering fertile soil gives life to seeds therein, Elizabeth's rejoicing with Mary magnifies her hope. How does this exemplary companionship remind bodily beings of the hallowed status of the earth from whence they were formed and to which they will return? In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis ties "the violence present in our hearts" to the "symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life."[6] His sincere concern for creation is evident in the undervalued theology of tears, where he urges the faithful to return to their sense of compassion for others. One becomes open to the world beyond oneself in reconnecting to the ocean of vulnerability signified within the gift of tears, be they shed in a spirit of repentance, in grief with others, or simply as an answer unto oneself in turmoil. Tears fundamentally speak of hope, even if too nascent to name as such in the moment. Peter Phan offers the lens of inculturation and lays bare a personal narrative that has equipped him to share critical insight regarding a culture of encountering the sacred traditions of others. In this way, the spirit of wonder is the antithesis of a the spirits of fear and suspicion.

In the final chapter, the season of spring suggests an image of harmony in creation. The element of wind is the animator of life and is also understood as the breath or Spirit of God. At

[6] Francis, "Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home," May 24, 2015, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html; n. 2.

the same time, it is a living Spirit that directs all of creation, willing what she wills. The subtle figure of the Beloved Disciple in John's Gospel invites a rich contemplation of a pathway of discipleship. Like Mary Magdalene, the Beloved one favored by Jesus not only *remains* with him but is able to identify Jesus risen, be it in an empty tomb or on the shore of Tiberias, where others like Peter are uncertain. Shifting gears towards a concerted engagement with the world today, Elizabeth Johnson offers her insight on the reality of deep incarnation. Along with this, the section gleans her observations on the relationship between order and chaos articulated in the role of chance that operates within a Spirit-guided process of evolution. The chapter concludes with a little levity as I offer some insight from the world of improv comedy, how time and time again I have been awed and humbled in the journey from dissonance to harmony that plays out on a stage completely unscripted.

Overall, each chapter of this thesis contributes to a theology of accompaniment that integrates the call of discipleship. If being a Christian disciple entails laying down one's life following the footsteps of Christ, then accompaniment is fundamentally a form of love that is other-oriented towards this end. In this way, it is inseparable from the stewardship of creation wherein all life emerges and evolves in God's vision of harmony.

Chapter 1

"Summer Scourge"
Accompanying Outrage: Imperfect Disciples Encountering Broken Bodies

🔥

> One night a moth flew into the candle, was caught, burned dry, and held. I must've been staring at the candle, or maybe I looked up when a shadow crossed my page; at any rate, I saw it all… / And then this moth essence, the spectacular skeleton, began to act as a wick. She kept burning. The wax rose in the moth's body from her soaking abdomen to her thorax to the jagged hole where her head should be, and widened into flame, a saffron yellow flame that rolled her to the ground like any immolating monk. That handle had two wicks, two flames of identical height, side-by-side. The moth's head was fire… / She burned for two hours without changing, without bending or leaning – only glowing within, like a building fire glimpsed through silhouetted walls, like a hollow saint, like a flame-faced Virgin gone to God, while I read by her light, kindled, while Rimbaud in Paris burned out his brains in a thousand poems, while night pooled wetly at my feet.[1]
>
> ~ Annie Dillard

1.1 Fire: Holy Presence and Empowerment

There is this peculiar account in Luke's Gospel when a few of the disciples ask Jesus if they could use fire for the sake of destruction. After Jesus and his companions were refused lodging, James and John ask in an almost nonchalant way, "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?" (9:54) Jesus of course rebukes them.[2] This is not what fire

[1] Annie Dillard, *The Annie Dillard Reader* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1995), 428–29. This excerpt is from *Holy the Firm*, which appears in its revised form in this compilation. The author describes in dreadful detail the fate of a certain moth, which catches fire in a candle, being caught in such a way that it is held by and magnifies the light of this candle by which the narrator is reading. The Catholic imagination here seems to suggest not only that one can notice such a giving that unfolds around us in creation, but quietly poses a harrowing image of self-giving.

[2] I had an Irish Jesuit academic advisor during philosophy studies who never missed a chance to retell how the only thing the Bible ever records Jesus ever making, despite being the son of a carpenter, was a whip (Jn 2:15). Also, in the backdrop of Israelite history are prophets who are moved to use fire imagery as warnings of divine

was meant to do. The Creator of fire, knowing how best to use it, desires our greater understanding of its fecundity.

Fire is fundamentally symbolic of the sacred. From the myth of Prometheus, to the Vestal Virgins of ancient Rome, to precautionary Hindu and Buddhist analogies, to beliefs of various Native tribes in the Americas, fire is of universal import and can consume and destroy if improperly handled. In Elizabeth Johnson's words, "Prized for its gifts of warmth and light but also, like wind and water, at times uncontrollably dangerous, fire symbolizes the presence of the divine in most of the world's religions."[3]

Traditionally, the biblical element of fire represented God's power, presence and sovereign dynamism. God and fire in the Old Testament were performatively intense. Michael Simone writes of God as a "devouring fire," and fire as symbolic of divine presence and agency in the ancient Hebrew world.[4] Recall the angelic messenger as a burning fire in a bush representing God's presence and stirring reverence (Exod 3:2-5); the column of fire that guided the Israelites toward the Red Sea (Exod 13:21); the general lack of hospitality in Sodom and Gomorrah meets a rain of "sulfur [and] fire from the Lord out of heaven" (Gen 19:24); the complaining Israelites were threatened with YHWH's burning fire that "devoured the edges of their camp" (Num 11:1-3).

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reckoning. Amos takes the cake here for the most fire invoked as a means of just retribution on behalf of God. See Amos 1-2.

[3] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 137.

[4] Michael R. Simone, *"Your God Is a Devouring Fire": Fire as a Motif of Divine Presence and Agency in the Hebrew Bible*, Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 57 (Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2019). Grateful to Professor Simone who writes in more detail on all the examples provided above. The image is utilized in Heb. 12:29.

In the present practice of Christianity, the bishop marks the foreheads of candidates with chrism oil saying, “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Following Jesus’ ascension, the Holy Spirit descends as promised in the form of tongues of flame above (Acts 2:3). Its realization here among other places, provide a scriptural foundation for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The Church today still struggles with the image of “unquenchable fire” when it comes to the teaching of hell.[5] Most contemporary theologians today stand with the pope on the framing of hell as a situation tied to one’s active agency. “Hell is not about fire and brimstone; it is about our freedom to say no to God, our freedom to reject love and choose loneliness. If you believe in freedom, you have to believe in hell.” This theological framing better describes the way one can refuse to relinquish control, and that only in turning back to God can one be released from the scourge of iniquity.

Just as the misuse and misunderstanding of fire can lead to much harm, it can also highlight the imperative to follow Jesus’ accompanying lead in hopes of using it well. Commonly in our Tradition, fire is spoken of as representing our various passions. Augustine confesses, “I developed a passion for stage plays, with the mirror they held up to my own miseries and the fuel they poured on my flame.”[6] Just the same, the love of God persists. This man’s journey would inevitably lead to a weeping conversion we know well: “I flung myself down somehow under a certain fig tree and no longer tried to check my tears, which poured forth from my eyes in a flood, *an acceptable sacrifice to Thee*.”[7]

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[5] See Mk 9:43; Mt 3:12; Lk 3:17; see CCC 1033-1037.

[6] Augustine, *Confessions*, ed. Michael P. Foley, trans. F. J. Sheed, 2nd ed (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co, 2006), 37.

[7] Augustine, 159.

Long before Augustine's arc of conversion, we read of a fiery disciple, Simon Peter, who would walk his own temperamental road of conversion, accompanied by his teacher. Peter is the character who often manifests outrage, yet is repeatedly guided by Jesus' kindling love that remains with him and leads him forth.

1.2 Simon Peter: Guiding Love for the Impassioned Disciple

The tears of Simon Peter are represented here by the feeling of moral outrage. Jesus shows us how to accompany this feeling through his relationship with Simon Peter. The trajectory in Jesus' relationship with Peter, describable in the arc beginning with "Follow me" (Mk 1:16-20; Mt 4:18-22) and also concluding "Follow me" (Jn 21:15-17), alludes to more than an ethic of simply doing what Jesus says. It is about watching Jesus, living like Jesus, and becoming love for others.

"You will never!"

Recall Peter's outrage when his master comes to wash his feet in the middle of the Last Supper in John's Gospel (available only in John's account). Peter is, once again, the primary supporting actor in a scene with Jesus. The other disciples appear to allow Jesus to wash their feet with no notable resistance (13:4-5). It is when Jesus arrives at Peter that he asks, "Master, are you going to wash my feet?" (13:6). Of course, the answer will be, "What I am doing you will not understand now, but you will understand later" (13:7). Peter pushes back in outrage – "You will never wash my feet!" – and is corrected by Jesus, who explains that this must be done in order for Peter to have an inheritance with him (13:8). G.H.C. MacGregor notes the significance of this episode being where it is, taking the place of the Institution of the Eucharist

as it does, in John's Gospel. "The result of the substitution is to stress the fact that the Sacrament can be effective only when the spirit of the Master possesses the disciples."[8] If Jesus does not wash us, we have no part with him, as it were.

Peter's outrage in this episode also stands in place with the scriptural narrative as an instantiation of indignation in others. Would-be disciples find an exemplary model in Jesus who persists with guidance. Love that sits and serves at the feet of the outraged does not seek to overpower with temperamental might, and yet, it becomes irresistible. Furthermore, such care is always communion-oriented.

The principle ethic explicit in John's Gospel is "Love one another; as I have loved you, so you also should love one another." (13:34). From an Indian feminist perspective, Rekha M. Chennattu points out how "the mutual love of the disciples is more than a mere emotional feeling of affection, and has something to do with a public, committed action in favor of God's choices."[9] Gail O'Day notes the deceptively simple command, is in reality often very challenging to live out; "Indeed, the history of the church and of individual communities of faith suggests that to love one another may be the most difficult thing Jesus could have asked."[10] Couched in a Johannine mindset, there is a contrast in the attitudinal framework of Jesus'

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[8] G. H. C. MacGregor, "The Eucharist in the Fourth Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 9, no. 2 (January 1963): 113, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688500001454. MacGregor poses the question "Why does John substitute for the Institution of the Lord's Supper with the incident of the feet-washing?" to which he speaks to in saying, "John, to a far greater extent than Paul, is conscious of the problem involved in the relation between symbol and reality, the sign and the thing signified." The point for the evangelist is to hedge against the tendencies of the time with "magic-sacramentalism" on one end, and purely materialistic, performative mindsets on the other; see MacGregor, 116-18.

[9] Rekha M. Chennattu, "Life in Abundance: Lohannine Ethics from an Indian Feminist Perspective," in *The Bible and Catholic Theological Ethics*, ed. Yiu Sing Lúcás Chan, James F. Keenan, and Ronaldo Zacharias, Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church Series (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2017), 175.

[10] Gail R. O'Day, "Gospel of John," in *Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, 3rd ed., twentieth anniversary ed (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 525.

commandment to that seen in the other Gospels; "The language of love is a different ethical language from the language of discipleship found in the Synoptic Gospels. It is language of fullness rather than language of emptying."[11]

Jesus' course of accompaniment of Simon Peter persists through his disciple's denials, beyond his own death, and unto a sea bank in resurrected form. Following the arrival of the hour when Peter denies Christ three times as predicted, the scene unfolds in John's Gospel with characters standing before the warmth of a charcoal fire. Only in Luke's account does Jesus turn to Peter after the third denial. This narrative offers the moment of realization, "… Peter remembered the words of the Lord, how he had said to him, 'Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times,'" to which he goes out and weeps bitterly (Lk 22:61-62). Jesus does not look to accuse, however; it is sin and personal neglect that informs consciences. The pain is sharp, but morally productive.

"You know I still love you"

After great remorse, Peter hurries to the tomb with the Beloved Disciple at the report of Mary Magdalene that the stone had been removed (Jn 20:1-3). Entering the tomb and not understanding what has happened, he returns home. At the Sea of Tiberias, where the Beloved Disciple identifies that it is their master, Simon Peter is met once again with the trustable warmth of love in a transformative encounter. The return to a charcoal pit, here on a shore (Jn 21:6), gives a subtle visual cue of the bookending to the denial-reconciliation arc for Peter.

After asking three times, with varying nuance, if his head disciple loves him, Peter thrice affirms his love, affirmations that are followed by the instruction to "Tend my sheep" (Jn 21:15-

[11] O'Day, 525–26.

19) also phrased differently each time. Michael Root reminds that Jesus' question asked three times "has from the earliest commentaries been recognized as a reminder of Peter's threefold denial."[12] Root notes in Peter's responses that a certain awareness has developed that can be seen in how he refers to Jesus' knowledge, rather than his own, "Yes, Lord, *you* know that I love you."[13] Here, Root examines the meaning of our Tradition with respect to the understanding of Peter's fallibility as a human being. This pertains to accompaniment whose life blood is the integral care of real lives that make up God's people:

> The Catholic theologian should take this recognition of this biblically attested fallibility not as an attack on Catholic teaching, but as an impetus to a more nuanced and complex picture of the authority of the church leadership that is real, but remains a participation in Christ's care of the flock that is always his.[14]

The path of discipleship vests each disciple, imperfect as they are, with the stole of stewardship amidst a "field hospital," as Pope Francis would put it, full of broken bodies that belong first and foremost to God, not to other humans.

1.3 Hwa-Young Chong: Bodies Broken, Bodies Made Whole

Hwa-Young Chong unearths the grace in the narrative of broken bodies of Korean comfort women around the time of World War II.[15] There were an estimated 200,000 comfort

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[12] Root Michael, "John 21: Peter, John, and Jesus On the Beach," in *The Gospel of John: Theological-Ecumenical Readings*, ed. Charles Raith II, 2017, 225, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=1500070.

[13] Michael, 225.

[14] Michael, 226.

[15] Hwa-Young Chong, *In Search of God's Power in Broken Bodies: A Theology of Maum*, New Approaches to Religion and Power (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

women forced into brothels to be raped and sexually abused by the Japanese military.[16] Throughout her book, Chong uses the term *maum* (몸), which is a robust Korean word meaning "body," but also includes the notion of mind and spirit in a non-dualistic way. "The noun *maum* comes from the verb *mau-u-da*, meaning 'gathering,' indicating that a body is a space in which different thoughts, emotions, memories, and visions are gathered and integrated into a unique self."[17] In this way, the word is capable of carrying deeper meaning in relationship to the person. "*Maum* points to the totality of being and becoming, encompassing the ever growing, weakening, and transforming realities of flesh, bones, womb, breasts, heart, spirit, mind intelligence, sexuality, and soul."[18] The term is capable of relating to and making meaning from Jesus' body that becomes brutally broken. Although the brokenness in *maum* carries a weighty connotation of defeat and complicity on the part of Korean society, when we raise up personal stories, these bodies "reveal power that flows from their brokenness."[19]

"*Jeong*," "*Ren,*" and "*Han*"

The theological idea of *maum* is connected to three other Korean terms that are rich in meaning for Chong. One is *jeong* (情), an expansive notion getting at the ubiquitous nature of love's binding power. Chong references Andrew Sung Park who explored this term in a

[16] Agnes Constante, "Who Are the 'comfort Women,' and Why Are U.S.-Based Memorials for Them Controversial?," NBC News, May 7, 2019, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/who-are-comfort-women-why-are-u-s-based-memorials-n997656.

[17] Chong, *In Search of God's Power in Broken Bodies*, 1.

[18] Chong, 1.

[19] Chong, 72.

theological context as a way of "understanding the heart of Korean people."[20] It entails "affectionate attachment," "the feeling of endearment," "the warmth of human-heartedness," and "compassionate attachment."[21] *Jeong* can be expressed as the power of love in a veritable sense, and provides a potent Christological perspective. Here, "God in Christ advocates for victims without being one. God is neither violent nor victimized, but from the center of God's heart, the loving power of *jeong* transforms oppressive structures and relationships."[22] This is a radical vision of solidarity that does not leave behind Jesus who suffers with the suffering, but on the contrary, liberates the force of Christ's Passion as an act of love.

The term *ren* in Korean gives expression to the Confucian concept of *ren* (仁) that is roughly translated as humanity or benevolence.[23] The Korean notion of *ren* is manifested in the power to act with compassion, that is, the power to suffer with human beings. It is a notion of power that is turned on its head, because it has little to do with might. The notion of *ren* takes the status quo understanding of power and recontextualizes it upon the grounds of compassion and defines it as "power-in-vulnerability.[24] "*Ren* recognizes the vulnerability of one's own self, and out of such vulnerability one is moved to reach out to others in need. By this definition, Jesus was a person of *ren*, sharing his *maum* with others in love, care, and compassion."[25] Elizabeth Johnson talks about the comprehensibility of God who suffers by drawing the root metaphor

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[20] Chong, 83.

[21] Andrew Sung Park, *Racial Conflict and Healing: An Asian-American Theological Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 110-111; as quoted in Chong, 83.

[22] Chong, 84.

[23] Chong, 92.

[24] Chong, 93.

[25] Chong, 93.

from humanity, wherein the Incarnation was fully embedded, that is a "personal reality that is constitutively relational."[26] It is from this perspective that one can "interpret divine suffering as Sophia-God's act of love freely overflowing in compassion."[27]

The use of the Korean term *han* (恨) in Chong's *maum* theology extrapolates the power to subvert. Again, in English there is no precise rendering of this cultural notion that expresses "the deepest feelings of pain, suffering, bitterness, resentment, emptiness, nothingness, victimization, and powerlessness."[28] The experience of *han* is not solely a matter of the heart; it is "embodied in people's lives as totality."[29] It is another Korean concept with an expansive scope, there is a fluidity about its manifest experiences. While it can be alluded to in a particular spatiotemporal way, the notion generally eludes definitive categorizations. However, there is something to be said in the term's resistance to being constrained by western classifications that lends to its inter-relational potential. Significantly, it does not have to remain a "disempowering" reality; in the Christological framework it can also galvanize a drive to life.[30] "*Han* can compel our hears to be compassionate, invites us to open our lives, and challenges us to hear and see the stories of others the way we have never done before."[31]

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[26] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, Third Edition, Third edition (New York: Herder & Herder, 2017), 265.

[27] Johnson, 265.

[28] Chong, *In Search of God's Power in Broken Bodies*, 27.

[29] Chong, 27.

[30] Chong, 29.

[31] Chong, 29.

"*Bap*" from Heaven

In the final chapter of her book, Chong discusses the potent idea of broken bodies that, in turn, break bread.[32] The idea brings us back to Jesus' and the inestimable value of table fellowship; we call to mind the image of Peter and Jesus on that morning at the shore. Chong notes how sharing meals remains a significant aspect of the post-resurrection narratives. If indeed we are to become what we eat, what powerful message of solidarity and communal renewal must be grappled with in gathering at the Eucharistic table?

Chong's explicates the usage of the word *Bap* (밥), or cooked rice, in common parlance entails an entire meal. It would be unusual to see a meal without *Bap*, just as it would be strange to serve *Bap* on its own. The basic qualities of this staple food reflect the communal ideals of the Korean people. *Bap* is a sticky rice that clings together whereas uncooked individual grains are easily separated from one another.[33] The word itself "evokes a sense of home for many Koreans," and when *Bap* is shared, those at table are "understood to be friends."[34] The metaphor of *Bap* in this section has strong parallels with Holy Communion in Christianity for Chong. "One cannot help noticing the similarity of the sacramental rice and the Eucharistic bread. Both rice and bread are fundamental for living, basic to the human *maum*."[35] Christ in the bread of life discourse within this context is *Bap* from heaven. Every *maum* needs *Bap* in order to survive. "The *maum* of Christ is where people of brokenness come together to share the *Bap* from Heaven."[36] Persons

[32] Chong, 105.

[33] Chong, 123.

[34] Chong, 123.

[35] Chong, 121.

[36] Chong, 125.

in their broken *maum* are healed and their dignity restored in the *maum* of Christ where people "come together to share *Bap* from heaven."[37]

> At the table of Holy Communion, broken bodies break bread to bring forth new life. The Spirit gives power to the community to transform victims into advocates, silence into voice, and hurt into healing. The presence of comfort women resisting the past and the continuous injustice done to them is a testimony to broken bodies bearing the power [to] resist, heal, and nourish.[38]

Lifting up the stories of broken *maum* of individuals, grace overflows. This teeming grace takes root in the expansive Korean notions of *jeong* (loving power), *ren* (power of compassion), and *han* (subversive power).[39] "The table fellowship is where such powers are rehearsed and practiced."[40] The key words to note are *rehearse* and *practice*.

1.4 Konstantin Stanislavski: The Spiritual Preparation of an Actor

The Immanent Russian Orthodox Spirituality in Stanislavksi's Writings

Konstantin Stanislavski believed that authentic performances emerge out of an authentic inner life that takes work to discover and time to cultivate. Although his teachings utilize terms like spirit, soul, faith, belief, truth, and communion, among others, they function with a particular intention in the theatrical sphere. It is not hard to see why Stanislavki's influential *system* has often been assumed to emerge out of a religiously Christian mindset. The mental framework of the *system* was originally meant for the integral training of an actor, that can offer insight to the accompanying disciple.

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[37] Chong, 125.

[38] Chong, 126.

[39] Chong, 127.

[40] Chong, 127.

Gabriela Curpan, in her article exploring the spiritual-religious undertones of Stanislavski's *system*, fleshes out the Christian Orthodox undergirding of Stanislavski's theatrical pedagogy.[41] Critical of Jean Benedetti's widely accepted translation of Stanislavski's writings,[42] Curpan had the profound sense that Stanislavski's ideas were "very spiritual in their teachings,"[43] yet somehow something felt lost in the English translation. She illuminates possible reasons as to why the aspect of religiosity seemed under-analyzed, lacking a certain explicitness in his otherwise meticulously detailed teachings.

In Curpan's investigation, the most likely reason is the stringent Russian communist censorship in the twentieth century. Curpan's own upbringing in the former communist-ruled Romania under the dictatorship of Nicolae Ceaușescu corroborates an experience of censorship that made it "second nature" for her to "[grasp] the meaning hidden between the lines" of Stanislavski's teachings. She continued in a sense of incredulity that the *system* could be deemed devoid of Orthodox influence. In her words, "I remember that, at the time, not being able to put the book aside, I was completely amazed, and constantly asked myself how it is possible that other readers, in general, cannot see how profoundly spiritual Stanislavski's ideas are."[44]

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[41] Gabriela Curpan is a trained actress from Romania who completed her Ph.D. at Goldsmiths, University in London. She is a Senior Lecturer in Acting at University of Wolverhampton. She has over twenty years of professional acting experience.

[42] Gabriela Curpan, "The Influence of Christian Orthodox Thought on Stanislavski's Theatrical Legacy," *Stanislavski Studies* 7, no. 2 (July 3, 2019): 201, https://doi.org/10.1080/20567790.2019.1644747.

[43] Curpan, 202.

[44] Curpan, 201. Curpan notes how in Jean Benedetti's translation of Stanislavski's core teachings, the words "soul" and "spiritual" were not used at all. This only incited her to persist more carefully following her apt instinct. In 2004, as a young thespian in training during my undergrad years at UC Irvine, I found my own experience of reading Stanislavksi's major work *An Actor Prepares*, translated by Elizabeth R. Hapgood, to mirror Curpan's experience in terms of the spiritual, and for me very Ignatian, undergirding in the way that Stanislavski would urge a rigorously discerning spirit from his students.

In the absence of clearer evidence connecting Stanislavski's teachings to Russian Orthodoxy, Curpan directs our attention to "[Stanislavski's] early strict religious upbringing and education [in] that he had in-depth knowledge of Orthodox theological thought."[45] Curpan presents Bella Merlin's observation, quoted here in its original phrasing: "A close partner to *inspiration*, *spirituality* crops up in Stanislavsky's work with astonishing regularity. Especially when we consider that he was writing in Soviet Russia at a time when anything esoteric was heavily suppressed."[46] Stanislavski was well in his forties and still an ardent practitioner of his Russian Orthodox faith when the Russian Revolution first broke in 1905. Curpan surmises how "constant and relentless use of such religiously connected ideas is too obvious to be viewed as a simple coincidence, and thus seems intentionally disregarded."[47]

Turning to his *technique*, a helpful way of understanding the relationality of Orthodoxy spirituality to Stanislavski's use of nominally Christian terms is found in the words of Russian Orthodox philosopher and historian Georgy Petrovich Fedotov, as paraphrased by Curpan: "… in its broadest sense, the term 'spirituality' [in the Orthodox framework] expounds the moral and intellectual qualities of people in their relation to themselves, to others, to nature and, ultimately, to God."[48] In this spirit, I examine three aspects of the *system* geared towards the preparation of embodying characters in performance, qualities that also can speak to affective discipleship.

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[45] Curpan, 209.

[46] Bella Merlin, *The Complete Stanislavsky Toolkit* (New York: Nick Hern Books, 2014)., ch. 1, Apple Books; the quote is represented in Curpan, "The Influence of Christian Orthodox Thought on Stanislavski's Theatrical Legacy," 209. Also, a note: The Apple Books digital version of Merlin's work capitalizes the words "inspiration" and "spirituality" among others, whereas here it is presented italicized.

[47] Curpan, "The Influence of Christian Orthodox Thought on Stanislavski's Theatrical Legacy," 209.

[48] Georgy Petrovich Fedotov, *A Treasure of Russian Spirituality*, 1; as quoted by Curpan, 209.

Faith and a Sense of Truth

Stanislavski wrote many of his teachings on theatre in a dialogical fashion. His pedagogy plays out in questions and answers between Tortsov, the instructor, and his students. The vignettes are based loosely on Stanislavski's personal experience in his own theatrical career.

The lesson on having *faith and a sense of truth* began with Tortsov watching his theatre students who were searching for their colleague Maria's purse one day.[49] Looking up and down the stage, they were unaware that their instructor was observing them. Tortsov caught their attention commending the authenticity of their actions. "You were entirely sincere in what you were doing. There was a sense of truthfulness about it all, and a feeling of believing in all physical objectives which you set yourselves."[50] This however, was not art. It was real life. For Stanislavski, this story snippet gets at belief and the sense of truth that an actor attempts to achieve in performance. Tortsov told them to put back the purse where they had found it and do it again. Being that they already knew where the purse was, it seemed to have rendered their searching pointless. In response, Tortsov remarked, "I saw neither objectives, activity nor truth, in what you did. And why? If what you were doing was actual fact, why were you not able to repeat it?"[51] Stanislavski highlights the critical challenge of performance: achieving *authenticity*. This quality is not simply a metaphysical reality for Stanislavski: his theory of acting revolves around its discovery and effective presentation. The audience is not drawn to falsity; they come to a show to be compelled by truth in the life of the performance. All the time and energy that an actor invests in exploring physicality, voice, motives, and contextual considerations contribute to

[49] Constantin Stanislavsky, *An Actor Prepares* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 139.

[50] Stanislavsky, 139.

[51] Stanislavsky, 139–40.

the interior work that makes possible a coherent, new and authentic reality. "Put life into all the imagined circumstances and actions until you have completely satisfied your *sense of truth*, and until you have awakened a *sense of faith* in the reality of your sensations."[52]

Again, while accompaniment is not performance in the sense of acting, its integral operation is not without the aspect of *performativity*. How truthful is one who calls themself "one who accompanies" when the other who is being accompanied cannot discern the authenticity of their so-called accompanying presence? What good is the willingness to accompany others that does not care to take into account the way one is perceived and how one is communicating oneself? Can lack of such care ever constitute a sincere spirit of accompaniment?

Turning to the big screen, in the outer space setting of *Gravity* (2013), directed by Alfonso Cuarón, the first-time astronaut Dr. Ryan Stone, played by Sandra Bullock, is accompanied by veteran spacewalker Matt Kowalski played by George Clooney. She is missioned to the Hubble Space Telescope to service it when things go awry. Space debris decimates their space shuttle, and sends them looking for another way to return to earth. As the situation worsens, Kowalski decides to sacrifice himself so Dr. Stone can pull her way to the International Space Station (ISS) where there may be hope to find another way back to earth. Something malfunctions inside the ISS forcing Dr. Stone into the remaining spacecraft called Soyuz. Dr. Stone is able to disengage from the ISS just as the killer debris returns and rips apart the space station. We are left with Dr. Stone in a claustrophobic space pod that she then learns is drained of fuel. Unable to reach Kowalski, she is the sole survivor of an aborted mission with little more than a rickety radio. The only living being she can connect to by radio is an Inuk from an Arctic region. Noted as one of the most poignant moments in the movie, the nearly incoherent

[52] Stanislavsky, 141.

exchange in the scene intensifies the sense of being alone. Dr. Stone hears a dog over the static with the Inuk. The sense of hopelessness lingers as a baby is heard crying over the intercom and the Inuk begins singing what sounds like a lullaby. Soon, Bullock's character is described to have gone through a "sort of catharsis during the conversation, howling like a dog, listening to a young child cry and, it would appear, letting go of her fear."[53] Tens of thousands of miles away, incomprehensible sounds of human caring envelop Dr. Stone in what she believes will be her last day alive.

Needless to say, Bullock the actress is not in space while filming any of these scenes. Thanks to movie magic the effects team does the bulk of the scene work in the backend, but the rest is left in the hands of an actor capable of preparing well. The significance of emotionality beyond the screen involves communicating well with others. A connection with the audience is the fruit of a process of exploring, discovering, and committing to living out the conviction of faith and a sense of truth in earnest like Bullock in her preparation to play Dr. Stone.

For Stanislavski, having this sort of belief is the soul of the performer's inner life. Be it Meryl Streep as Sister Aloysius who breaks down in tears at the end of *Doubt* (2008), or the late Heath Ledger and his unearthing embodiment of the Joker in *The Dark Knight* (2008), phenomenal moments in performance stem out of an authentic inner life in accordance to the *technique*. This inner life is cultivated by the actor in service of the story as laid out in a screenplay. Without faith, there can be no real connection with oneself, nor any object, nor any other human being. There is no sense of theatrical *communion* without faith and a sense of truth.

[53] Kase Wickman, "See Other Side Of Sandra Bullock's 'Gravity' Distress Call In Gorgeous Short Film," MTV News, November 20, 2013, http://www.mtv.com/news/1717808/gravity-short-film-spin-off-aningaaq/.

The Sense of Communion in Theatre

Communion takes on a new layer of meaning for Stanislavski in the theatrical sphere. This quality for an actor presumes an inner spirit in the things with which/whom one is communing.[54] The activity of this communion for Stanislavski is a deep spiritual mingling. "To give or to receive from an object something, even briefly, constitutes a moment of spiritual intercourse."[55] The metaphysics of such intermingling is not such that conditions must be met like items on a checklist before a connection is established, but rather, the idea that communion is the ever-present reality experienced in awareness. Stanislavski, through his character Tortsov, walks his students through a contemplative exploration of communion's omnipresence: "[Must someone] look at or talk with you to be in communication with you? Close your eyes and ears, be silent, and try to discover with whom you are in mental communication. Try to find one single second when you will *not* be in some contact with some object."[56]

Communion, in the Roman Catholic sense, evokes images of the faithful lined up and approaching the sanctuary to receive the Eucharist. Beyond this, the priest may have preached previously about communion, perhaps connecting it to the Pauline image of One Body united in Christ and broken for all. The image may then have carried on into meaningful anecdotes illustrating selfless love that reconciles or unites. But how does the Eucharist that draws us into communion *feel* if one were to describe its affective contours? Stanislavski's Orthodox-girded notion of theatrical *communion* adds illustrative vigor to the felt sense and what is going on under the affective hood of such a real sensation. Tortsov expounds on this sense of *communion*:

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[54] Stanislavsky, 209–40.

[55] Stanislavsky, 211–12.

[56] Stanislavsky, 209. Emphasis here is mine.

> You were trying to find out *how* and *of what* that object was made. You absorbed its form, its general aspect, and all sorts of details about it. You accepted these impressions, entered them in your memory, and proceeded to think about them. That means that you drew something from your object, and we actors look upon that as necessary. You are worried about the inanimate quality of your object. Any picture, stature, photograph of a friend, or object in a museum, is inanimate, yet it contains some part of the life of the artist who created it. Even a chandelier can, to a certain degree become an object of lively interest, if only because of our absorption in it."[57]

Stanislavski's sense of *communion* presumes a certain dignity of life in created things just as in individual human beings. Such a perspective corresponds to an attitude of respect for all things that is evoked by a natural world fundamentally created good.

There is a heartbreaking scene from *Cast Away* (2000), directed by Robert Zemeckis, that plays out in the middle of the ocean following a sea squall. Chuck Noland is a Type-A white-collar FedEx executive from Memphis, Tennessee played by Tom Hanks who becomes stranded on an unknown island in the middle of the Pacific after his cargo plane goes down in a storm. After four years of learning how to survive on his own he devises his escape by building a raft and combining junk that has washed up onshore and natural resources on the island. On the day he is ready to set sail, he affixes his companion "Wilson" to the raft, a volleyball named after the brand. Days following his successful departure, a storm wrecks the raft, and Wilson floats away leaving Chuck on a piece of timber alone. By this point in the movie, the audience is well-invested in the relationship between Chuck and Wilson. As for many, Chuck's wailing for his friend broke my heart, even at the age of 18.

How in the world would this scene between a man and a volleyball have captured the hearts of millions and then lead them to a felt sense of heartbreak if people didn't actually

[57] Stanislavsky, 211.

believe that there was a real connection going on?[58] Strong storytelling and acting once again drew in the masses and drew out utter emotional investment, a poignant moment that would carry on well after the movie ends.[59] How would this scene have worked at all had Hanks as Robert Zemeckis not integrated a sense of *communion* with this inanimate and bloodied volleyball? More to the point of this thesis, what does it mean for a disciple to come alive in an awareness of the air of communion that is imbued in others and in creation?

But this deliberate kind of empathetic sense that Stanislavski terms as *communion* that happens between two people, between a person and an object, music, lights, etc., presumes an immediate sense of communion with *oneself*. As audience members are drawn into Bullock's and Hanks's captivating performances, it may be forgotten that they are acting solo for the bulk of their respective movies. Actors practicing any form of the *system* are very at home with themselves. It doesn't mean that they do not go to lengths to explore very visceral emotions and experiences; rather, they are comfortable with their bodies. They are stewards of their bodies in a real sense, and strive towards excellence by achieving a kind of poise apt for physical-emotional engagement.

Stanislavski describes the sense of *self-communion* in this way: "When I have occasion to commune with my own feelings on the stage, in silence, I enjoy it. It is a state familiar to me off the stage, and I am quite at home in it."[60] Stanislavski's Orthodox sensibilities operate on the

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[58] Of the many drafts and redrafts of the script, there was a version that Wilson came alive for a scene. See Mike Reyes, "Cast Away: 15 Behind-The-Scenes Facts About The Tom Hanks Movie," CINEMABLEND, June 11, 2020, https://www.cinemablend.com/news/2547846/cast-away-behind-the-scenes-facts-about-the-tom-hanks-movie.

[59] The connection with Hanks' character felt so real that "Wilson" was chosen as Best Inanimate Object at the 6th Annual Broadcast Critics' Awards. The Wilson company till this day sells 20-25,000 "*Cast Away* balls" a year. See the twenty-year recap of Wilson's unlikely story here: Wilson, "The True Story of Wilson the Volleyball," December 3, 2020, https://www.wilson.com/en-us/blog/volleyball/behind-scenes/true-story-wilson-volleyball.

[60] Constantin Stanislavsky, *An Actor Prepares*, trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (New York: Routledge, 1989), 214.

metaphysics of a ubiquitous spirit, something like a *Geist* surrounding actors at all times. With this understanding, one sees how what is on the inside will naturally come to show forth in the scene; and for the disciple, it will show forth in the quality of witness they bear forth in accompaniment with others.[61]

The Import of Emotional Memory

In one of his lessons, Tortsov's student, Dasha, rehearses a scene from *Brand* where a child dies in her arms.[62] The character Dasha, as imagined by Stanislavski, recently had lost a child born out of wedlock. In the first run of the scene, Dasha was able to cry tears freely in the moment that the imaginary child died in her arms. However, it did not work the second time. It seems that the freshness of the memory had faded, and all that was left were mechanical movements. How then does a lead actress keep tragic moments like this fresh on Broadway night after night when eager patrons have paid top dollar to be moved by truthfulness in the moment? Stanislavski highlights this common challenge and helps the acting community to identify and grapple with this emotional reality. "It would be wonderful if we could achieve a permanent method of repeating successful emotional experiences. But feelings cannot be fixed. They run through your fingers like water. That is why, whether you like it or not, it is necessary to find more substantial means of affecting and establishing your emotions."[63]

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[61] Cf. Mt 23:26-28; "Blind Pharisee! Cleanse first the inside of the cup, so that the outside may also be clean."

[62] Stanislavsky, 164–66.

[63] Stanislavsky, 166. Hypothetical questions putting to praxis this inner emotional stirring might be, how does one stay alive within after a prolonged time tending to a beloved person who is withering away from a cruel disease like Alzheimer's?; how does this one stay present, engaged, and steady in their accompaniment of the beloved person's family made of loving human beings who unravel in outraged or exhaustion amidst it all?

Following Dasha's unsuccessful attempt at accessing emotionality, Tortsov discussed further how staying connected to emotionality requires something of a constant interior renewal at each iteration of the scene. Tortsov then unwittingly described to his students a scenario where Dasha herself may have lost a child in real life. He suggested that she could have then leveraged such a memory in her interaction with the imaginary child of the scene that would result in an even more beautiful blooming of life. The loss then of this second child would be utterly devastating in a new way. "He had barely finished speaking when Dasha began to sob over the stick of wood with twice as much feeling as even the very first time."[64] There is a metaphysics of spiritual abundance at work here. In Christian terms, overflowing grace meets the seeming obstacle of one's inner wall that blocks access to the limitless. Such a reality of plentitude is definitively modelled in divine relationality.

Triune Relationality and the Place of Affectivity

For St. Catherine of Siena spiritual weeping had everything to do with a triune relationship between God, others, and oneself. Tears were necessary as an initial stage of inner spiritual growth, but, in Catherine's case, tears were bound to and for others. Jessie Gutgsell observes:

> What is perhaps most remarkable and innovative about Catherine's typology is her emphasis on the importance of "the other" in the levels and types of tears. One's weeping shifts in character as a person realizes her place in the world in connection to God and her neighbor. Indeed, "the heart produces tears that are better connected to God as the individual becomes better connected to the love of the divine and the love of others."[65]

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[64] Stanislavsky, 167.

[65] Jessie Gutgsell, "The Gift of Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination of Western Medieval Christianity," *Anglican Theological Review* 97, no. 2 (April 1, 2015): 245–46; Heather Webb, "Lacrime Cordiali: Catherine of Siena on the Value of Tears," in *A Companion to Catherine of Siena*, ed. Carolyn Muessig, George Ferzoco, and Beverly Kienzle (Boston: Brill, 2012), 107, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004225428_006.

For Catherine, "perfect tears become a sign of a soul overflowing with divine presence and love of others" simultaneously establishing greater unity with God, an attitude of *compunctio*, and actualizing love of neighbor.[66] See all three integrated here in her prayer:

> You, oh! inestimable love, have manifested this to me, giving me a sweet and bitter medicine that I might wholly arise out of the infirmity of my ignorance and negligence, and have recourse to You with anxious and solicitous desire, knowing myself and Your goodness and the offenses which are committed against You by all sorts of people, so that I might shed a river of tears, drawn from the knowledge of Your infinite goodness, over my wretched self and over those who are dead in that they live miserably. Wherefore I do not wish, oh! Eternal Father, ineffable Fire of Love, that my heart should ever grow weary, or my eyes fail through tears, in desiring Your honor and the salvation of souls, but I beg of You, by Your grace, that they may be as two streams of water issuing from You, the Sea Pacific.[67]

Whereas in the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius the objective is framed in the salvation of the individual's soul, the understanding of tears for Catherine is integrally bound to the other as a medium through which one grows in deeper communion with God. Of course, Ignatius certainly would not deny the implied understanding that loving and serving others was a substantial means of praising, reverencing, and serving God. In a letter responding to a fellow Jesuit Nicholas Floris who was dissatisfied by his dry prayer periods and lack of tears, Ignatius responds:

> While some people may have tears because their nature is such that the affections in the higher parts of their souls easily overflow into the lower, or because God our Lord, seeing that it would be good for them, grants them to melt into tears, this still does not mean that they have greater charity or accomplish more than other persons who are without tears but have no less strong affections in the higher part of the soul, that is, a strong and efficacious willing (which is the proper act of charity) of God's service and the good of souls, just like that of persons who have abundant tears.[68]

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[66] Gutgsell, "The Gift of Tears," 246.

[67] Catherine of Siena, *The Dialog of Saint Catherine of Siena*, trans. Algar Thorold (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1994), 114, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/catherine/dialog. Notice again, water imagery used in relationship to vulnerable emotionality.

[68] Ignatius de Loyola, *Letters of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. William J. Young (Loyola Press, 1959), 449–50.

A principal truth for the actor under the tutelage of the *system* is to never aim to cry – or to express any emotion, for that matter – simply for its own sake in order to appear like a good actor, just as a religious individual would not ask for the gift of tears simply to give oneself an air of holiness. For Stanislavski, such a motivation is the antithesis of authenticity.

> *On the stage there cannot be, under any circumstances, action which is directed immediately at the arousing of a feeling for its own sake.* To ignore this rule results only in the most disgusting artificiality. *When you are choosing some bit of action leave feeling and spiritual content alone*. Never seek to be jealous, or to make love, or to suffer, for its own sake. *All such feelings are the result of something that has gone before. Of the thing that goes before you should think as hard as you can. As for the result, it will produce itself*."[69]

Such false passion that results in tears of this kind fall under the status of "crocodile tears." Of course, false tears themselves are a trope in literature, treated as a deceitful feature. Tom Lutz mentions the character of Desdemona from *Othello* who is accused of crying fake tears, although she is not.[70] Gary L. Ebersole mentions the conniving Richard in Act Three of Shakespeare's *King Henry VI* who is willing to cry "artificial tears" in his desire for the throne.[71] Suffice it to say, the lesson of crying tears with sincerity emerges from an authentic place. Stanislavski reminds actors, "Don't think about the feeling itself, but set your mind to work on what makes it grow, what the conditions were that brought about the experience."[72]

By way of another example, in the movie *Fences* (2016), the screen adaptation of a play written by August Wilson, the life of a family unravels during the pre-Civil Rights era. Troy and Rose Maxson are played by Denzel Washington and Viola Davis. Rose finds out that her

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[69] Stanislavsky, *An Actor Prepares*, 43. To be clear, as with all of the quotes used from *An Actor Prepares*, the italicized phrases are retained as translated by Elizabeth Hapgood.

[70] Tom Lutz, *Crying: The Natural and Cultural History of Tears*, 1st ed (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 57–58.

[71] Gary L. Ebersole, "The Function of Ritual Weeping Revisited: Affective Expression and Moral Discourse," *History of Religions* 39, no. 3 (2000): 230.

[72] Stanislavsky, *An Actor Prepares*, 201.

husband, Troy, has been cheating on her after 18 years of marriage and hurls a cathartic tirade at him:

> But I held on to you, Troy. I held you tighter. You was my husband. I owed you everything I had. Every part of me I could find to give you. And upstairs in that room . . . with the darkness falling in on me . . . I gave everything I had to try and erase the doubt that you wasn't the finest man in the world, and wherever you was going . . . I wanted to be there with you… You always talking about what you give . . . and what you don't have to give. But you take too. You take . . . and don't even know nobody's giving!

The scene intensifies and soon their teenage son, Cory, a senior in high school rushes out to join the commotion. He gets into a physical altercation with his dad knocking him into the fence.

A good actor doesn't "make herself cry" so much as she is deeply present in the moment, and has physiologically conditioned herself to be affectively disposed to vulnerable emotions that emerge. Hence, one's eyes "well up" with tears. This description coheres with the understanding of holy tears as gift. One cannot wring tears from the eyes like a wet towel and call it authentic. A mentality of poised discipleship under this light is not a passive activity, but rather a participatory sort of awareness that allows ready reception of what emerges within and beyond oneself. "What you are aware of you are in control of; what you are not aware of is in control of you," in Anthony de Mello's words.[73]

Outrage, violence, and aggression that lead to broken bodies call for abiding affectivity that characterizes integral accompaniment. Disciples today may well find refreshment in the preparatory lessons that have formed over a century of authentic actors; insights that speak more broadly to the qualities of sustained belief, bodily *communion*, and versatility in *emotional memory*. Such affective awareness – a lifelong commitment – can shed light on the road of Christian disciples destined for solidarity with others.

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[73] Anthony de Mello, *Awareness: The Perils and Opportunities of Reality*, ed. J. Francis Stroud (New York; London: Doubleday, 1992), 71.

Daughter of staunch Jewish upbringing, better known as Oscar-winning actress, Natalie Portman,[74] teaches her own masterclass in character study, and sums up the essential quality of active empathy in this way:

> Your job is to imagine someone else's life. That is what we do. We say, 'I wonder what that person feels and thinks.' And that's the experience in a movie theater. We're sharing this social experience with other people for two hours, caring about someone else's life. It's the act of empathy.[75]

Indeed, a life of discipleship is not acting in the theatrical sense, but to dismiss the import of the work of empathy situated in the realm of affectivity would impede the effectiveness of this form of loving witness. The call to discipleship is never without the need for affective integration. Such integration takes one's own history as its starting matter, asks apt questions about the situation of the other with whom engagement is desired, and follows the promptings of a moral imagination towards a life of empathy with the other.

[74] Natalie Portman won the Oscar for best actress for her lead role in *Black Swan* (2011).

[75] Casting Frontier, "Natalie Portman Teaches Acting in a New Online MasterClass," *Casting Frontier* (blog), April 29, 2019, https://castingfrontier.com/natalie-portman-teaches-acting-in-a-new-online-masterclass/.

Chapter 2

"Autumn Affect"
Accompanying Sorrow: An "Impossible" Form of Witness

> In the deeps are the violence and terror of which psychology has warned us. But if you ride these monsters deeper down, if you drop with them farther over the world's rim, you find what our sciences cannot locate or name, the substrate, the ocean or matrix or ether which buoys the rest, which gives goodness its power for good, and evil its power for evil, the unified field: our complex and inexplicable caring for each other, and for our life together here. This is given. It is not learned.[1]
>
> ~ Annie Dillard

2.1 Water: Divine Outpouring and Dwelling

Beyond being a symbol of new life, water is the biological basis of life itself. Covering three-quarters of the Earth and making up 70% of the human body, water cannot be found apart from the sustaining cycles of any ecosystem. The way that water flows from the eyes of *homo sapiens* to communicate emotion makes human primates unique.[2]

From the first day of creation, to the flood, to the parting of the Red Sea, on through to Jesus' time, aspects of Godself are frequently seen through the element of water. Jesus' ministerial narrative follows after his immersion in water at the hands of his cousin the Baptist. His first miracle was turning water into wine. He walked on water and beckoned Peter to do the

[1] Annie Dillard, *Teaching a Stone to Talk: Expeditions and Encounters*, 1st ed (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 94–95.

[2] Kim A. Bard, "Are Humans the Only Primates That Cry?," Scientific American, May 8, 2006, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/are-humans-the-only-prima/.

same. Water flowed from his eyes at the death of Lazarus, and from his side where he was pierced on the cross. God reveals the capacity of divine vulnerability in the shedding of tears. In Elizabeth Johnson's words, "Biblical use of water as metaphor for the presence of God's own Spirit often appears in connection with the action of outpouring."[3] This outpouring is creation-oriented. The nature of God's grace that intertwines with water is not only meant for human beings, but refreshes all the living. "Like a soaking ocean, a flowing fountain, an inexhaustible wellspring of sweet water, the life of the Spirit pervades the world," and "wherever this divine water flows, life is being refreshed."[4]

The philosophy of Taoism takes water as the most apt analogy of the *way*, the Tao. Reflecting on a body of water like an ocean, Taoists see "the way it would support objects and carry them effortlessly on its tide."[5] Huston Smith describes the Taoist as "one who understands the basic life force [and] knows that it will sustain one if one stops thrashing and flailing and trusts oneself to its support."[6] Water is the exemplary symbol of a core Taoist quality called *wu wei*, which can be translated as "pure effectiveness and creative quietude."[7] These concepts do not aim to describe something passive; on the contrary, the power seen in water derives from how it is perfectly poised. This potent philosophy is deeply embedded in the Chinese military

[3] Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*, 136. Johnson directs us to Isaiah 44:3-4 where God's care is promised in the pouring of water upon a thirsty land.

[4] Johnson, 137.

[5] Huston Smith, *The World's Religions*, 50th Anniversary Edition (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2010), 209.

[6] Smith, 209.

[7] Smith, 207.

treatise known as *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu.[8] Taoist practitioners understand that water is not something that one can control, but is something that one must observe and strive to embody.[9]

The way of the Tao when it comes to *doing* is in its *being*. When looking at a sea on a calm day, one would not be fooled as to think that it is harmless. Consider Moses and the Israelites on that salvific day when they escaped the hands of their captors and crossed through a parted sea. Consider Simon Peter who was pulled up out of the sea by his Master. Consider any number of accounts of seafaring missionaries who beseeched the powers that be for safe passage. Ask any survivor who was among those escaping the Vietnam War by boat.[10] But the one who embodies *wu wei* like water is not afraid of sinking or being tossed. This idea is not completely foreign to Scripture. What exactly allowed Jesus to sleep on the boat as the storm tossed it about (Mt 8:23-24)? It was not an ability capacity alien to humans and reserved only to the Son of God. After Jesus was woken up by his frantic disciples, he called them out for their lack of faith, implying in that particular moment that they indeed *should* have been calm.

Taoists note "the way water adapts itself to its surroundings and seeks the lowest places."[11] It does not resist. It peacefully succumbs.

> *The supreme good is like water,*
> *which nourishes all things without trying to.*
> *It is content with the low places that people disdain.*
> *Thus it is like the Tao.*[12]

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[8] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Ralph D. Sawyer and Mei-Chün Lee Sawyer, History and Warfare (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994).

[9] The famous Bruce Lee was known for espousing the mindset of being like water.

[10] My parents are counted among these refugees known as "boat people." For nine days they survived the sea and its wartime perils, including pirates.

[11] Smith, *The World's Religions*, 209.

[12] Lao-tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, trans. Stephen Mitchell, Pocket Edition (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992). This excerpt comes from the first stanza of the eighth saying. It is quoted by Smith, 210.

The integration of the spirit of *wu wei* is not achieved by sheer will of the individual. The mores of secular society place a premium on those who work the hardest to achieve what they want. It is a culture that validates white-knuckling one's way through life. The call to have faith is counter-cultural to these social inscriptions. For the Taoist practitioner, living out of a sense of faith can be seen in the learning to give oneself over to the current of *wu wei* that flows in and out, that dwells and wells, to the benefit of oneself and the surrounding life.

Wu wei can be seen in Mary Magdalene in the way that she flows with Jesus in accompaniment on his journey, and in the way that she dwells with him in the deep valley of his final hour. Water in the form of tears gives deepened meaning in the scene between Mary Magdalene and the risen Jesus, who appears to her after his death, burial and resurrection. Jesus receives Mary's sorrow and empowers her to go forth to share the good news that will change the world. Her tears lead to unprecedented witnessing just as they are indicative of a fiercely enduring relationship.

2.2 Mary Magdalene: The Apostle Who Stayed Till the End

An exemplary model of accompaniment is seen in Mary Magdalene who follows Jesus in his ministry, to the cross, and to the tomb. Finally, it is she who is blessed to go forth to proclaim that love is stronger than death. Much can be said about Mary Magdalene's abiding devotion to Jesus based upon her numerous mentions in the New Testament.

In the Gospel of Luke, Mary Magdalene first appears as a woman healed of "seven demons" (8:1-3), an account told in Mark's Gospel as well (16:9). Among others, she accompanies Jesus and assists him out of her own resources. After Jesus' arrest, she does not abandon her "rabbouni." She is present in all four Gospel accounts of his crucifixion; in Luke's account, she is found standing afar among the women who "followed him from Galilee" (23:49).

In all Gospel accounts Mary Magdalene is among the first to visit the tomb of Jesus (Mk 16:1-2, Mt 28:1, Lk 24:1, Jn 20:1); in John's version, she is alone. In all Gospel accounts she is among the first to behold accounts of Jesus resurrected (Mk 16:9, Mt 28:9-10, Lk 24:8-11, Jn 20:14-18). In Mark and John, she is the privileged first and only to whom Jesus appears; in Luke, two angels report to her and the other women what had happened, which leads them to being the first to announce "all these things to the eleven and to all the others." John's account offers the illuminating encounter of hope that follows hope's devastation just days earlier wrought in the gruesome death of Jesus.

Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene in John's Gospel in the most privileging way through a series of narrative beats that move from conversation to revelation to prophetic commissioning (20:11-18). Mary seems to have returned to the tomb after an initial report to the disciples about its entrance having been opened (20:11). On her first visit when it was still early and dark, she notices that the stone has been rolled away, but there was not yet a vision. She runs to tell Simon Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved, who in turn run to Jesus' burial ground (v. 3). Both disciples eventually entered the tomb, but only the Beloved Disciple believed (v. 8).[13] Mary is left weeping by herself outside the tomb after the disciples returned home.[14] She looks in the tomb and sees two angels who ask why she is crying. She responds that it would seem someone has taken the body of Jesus. At that point "she turned around and saw Jesus there, but did not

[13] As to the quality of belief at this point, it does not appear clear, because, as Francis J. Moloney notes, the phrasing "for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead" (v. 9) suggests that a fuller understanding has yet to come; see Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, Rev. ed., Sacra Pagina Series 4 (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2005), 523.

[14] Moloney notes how this is a little odd, narratively, because the Johannine author almost always narrates the movement of characters from one place to another. Mary Magdalene would have been included along with Simon Peter and the other disciple if she were to appear again, which may suggest that the segment with the male disciples was a later insertion "into what was originally a Mary Magdalene story." It certainly reads more naturally bridging from v. 1 to v. 11; see Moloney, 527.

know that it was Jesus" (v. 14). For the second time, Mary is asked why she is weeping, and whom is she looking for. Not quite dignifying this seeming-stranger with a direct answer, she asks for the body of Jesus to be returned if indeed this "gardener" has taken him. That is when Jesus calls out to her, "Mary!" According to the text she turned (again) and remarked, "Rabbouni." Jesus tells Mary not to hold onto him and to go tell his brothers. Thus, "Mary of Magdala went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord,' and what he told her (v.18). The world would never be the same.

The Empathetic Tears of Mary Magdalene

Kimberly C. Patton writes on the presumptive hope in tears.[15] "The tears of infants separated from parental love or milk are not a *metaphor* for [the] aching [wound of sin], this beseeching of God by the Christian penitent, for the tears of the penitent hurt just as much as those of the infant."[16] The pain of sorrow in general can be seen as a unitive experience between persons in their bodiliness. Operative in the notion of the presumptive hope in tears is that the heart is always crying out for God whether one is aware of it or not.[17] The urge to cry out for home when one has gone astray is a primal instinct. Even in the womb, a baby begins crying as they react and process stimuli in preparation for the world they have not yet entered.[18]

> In both cases, tears are instead a perfect *expression* of how deep such separation cuts, despite where the responsibility for it lies. And both are full of expectation, the psychological paralleling

[15] Kimberley C. Patton, "'Howl, Weep and Moan, and Bring It Back to God': Holy Tears in Eastern Christianity," in *Holy Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination*, ed. Kimberley C. Patton and John Stratton Hawley (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 255–73.

[16] Patton, 270.

[17] Cf. The Augustinian quote, "Our heart is restless until it rests in You, [God]."

[18] Chaunie Brusie, R.N., "Is It Possible for Babies to Cry While Still in the Womb?," Verywell Family, December 9, 2020, https://www.verywellfamily.com/do-babies-cry-in-the-womb-4155181.

> the theological necessity of *hope in weeping*. Even in their desperation at the fact of separation, tears embody the hope of reunion.[19]

Such a trajectory of separation and yearning, followed by unity has been ordained by nature and is observed early on.

A vision of life *par excellence* is bestowed upon Mary Magdalene following her tears of yearning at the tomb. Shelly Rambo says, "If Mary witnesses to something taking place, she is doing so through darkness, through her tears, and through her inability to see, hear, and name Jesus face to face. Repeatedly, her witness challenges what we traditionally understand as witness."[20] In terms of proximity, Mary remains closest to this site of horror. The mouth of the tomb symbolic of Holy Saturday terror when the world was robbed of hope even if only for an eternal spilt second. The despair of cosmic absence played to an audience of Mary and her tears. Exonerated from the status of penitent and carrying the sorrow of many, Mary bears witness in close proximity to the experience of the utter separation of God from humanity. The general experience of hopelessness derived from any form of broken heartedness is subsumed in this experience of Mary distanced from Jesus. Mary's tears simultaneously reveal the richness of earnest relationship just as they do the endurance of love that dwells in anticipation of hope's return. Diane Apostolos-Cappadona highlights the sacramentality in of the corporeal phenomena of tears:

> Tears are a mysterious and magical form of expressive bodily liquid. It is significant that they originate from the eye—the source of sight. The connection to the early Christian metaphor of Jesus Christ as the *illuminator*, the one who brings light (read 'sight') to those who are blind in spirit and in the eye, to the modality of *seeing* and the source of tears is startling.[21]

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[19] Patton, "Howl, Weep and Moan, and Bring It Back to God," 270.

[20] Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*, 1st ed (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 90.

[21] Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, "'Pray with Tears and Your Request Will Find a Hearing': On the Iconology of the Magdalene's Tears," in *Holy Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination*, ed. Kimberley C. Patton and John Stratton Hawley (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 222.

After such a vision, grace leads one forward irresistibly to sing of its goodness. It shall not be contained. The account of Mary Magdalene's visit to Jesus' tomb in John's Gospel presents to readers an extreme arc, beginning on one end with utter absence and leading to absolute presence over the course of several verses (Jn 20:11-18). The desire to extract an apt model of accompanying sorrow meets the happy challenge of dynamic abundance. Gazing upon this moment with the eyes of discipleship, one is rightfully humbled to find oneself on hallow ground, the fertile soil of transformation christened by human-divine relationship, and anointed by tears. Relationship renewed is given new eyes. Accompanying Mary's sorrow is a mutually enriching inquiry that begs attention to relationship, to particular persons.

A Sacred Relationship

The intimacy in relationship is integral in the accompanying of others. In the 2018 film portrayal of *Mary Magdalene* written by Helen Edmundson and Philippa Goslett,[22] Mary says to Jesus in a moving moment in the days leading to his hour, "I will be with you. I won't leave." The theme of Mary's abiding tenderness towards Jesus on their road of ministry is a central theme of the movie. As biblical films do, this one takes its own artistic liberties. What is significant about this film that garnered mixed reviews is that its creative direction leans much into the relationship between Mary and Jesus.[23] The richness of the film rests partly on a directorial vision that does not rely upon spectacle, which is the perennial desire for some when

[22] IMDb, "Mary Magdalene (2018) - IMDb," accessed April 21, 2021, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5360996/. The movie is directed by Garth Davis and stars Rooney Mara as Mary Magdalene.

[23] Christine Schenk, "In Magdalene Film, It's All about the Relationship," National Catholic Reporter, July 17, 2019, https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/simply-spirit/magdalene-film-its-all-about-relationship.

it comes to this genre of film. Certainly, some critics see vast potential in Mary's story and would have wanted to see more done to illuminate her,[24] while others appreciate the refreshingly human contextual imagining of a character who remains with Jesus as the Scripture tells.

Beyond the evangelists' accounts, the apocryphal Gospel of Mary recounts words from Simon Peter to Mary Magdalene, "Sister we know that the Savior loved you more than any other woman. Tell us the words of the Savior that you know, but which we haven't heard."[25] The chief disciple, Peter, acknowledges plainly how highly regarded Mary Magdalene is to their master. A moment's worth of humble honesty is seen in Peter's inquiry to Mary that rests upon her relationship with Jesus made sacred on her part by her devotion.

Mary Rose D'Angelo highlights the prophetic nature of Mary that is illuminated in her great commissioning by the risen Jesus. Mary then carries forth the good news, which, in her possession, makes her a visionary, just as the directive to *go forth* and proclaim Jesus' message makes her a prophet. This particular piece of news that is entrusted to her has limitlessly subversive potential. The proclamation that the reign of God is at hand would endure through time. Humankind and all of creation meets the face of hope in Jesus risen and God Incarnate, as Mary Magdalene proclaims, "I have seen the Lord" (Jn 20:18). Mary Rose D'Angelo says, "Envisioned as prophetic and apocalyptic, the reign-of-God movement readily accommodates a visionary Mary Magdalene."[26] The context of D'Angelo's work considers the possibility of Mary

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[24] Richard Brody, "'Mary Magdalene,' Reviewed: A Sludgy, Trivial Attempt at Revisionist Christian History," The New Yorker, April 16, 2019, https://www.newyorker.com/culture/the-front-row/mary-magdalene-reviewed-a-sludgy-trivial-attempt-at-revisionist-christian-history.

[25] Robert J. Miller, ed., "The Gospel of Mary," in *The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version*, Rev. and expanded ed (Sonoma, Calif: Polebridge Press, 1994), 357–66; 6:1-2.

[26] Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Reconstructing 'Real' Women from Gospel Literature," in *Women & Christian Origins*, ed. Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 125.

not only accompanying Jesus politely, and being helpful, but being completely engaged in ministry alongside Jesus.

The Dignity of Mary Magdalene

On June 10, 2016, Pope Francis had elevated the memorial of St. Mary Magdalene to a feast day.[27] The decree and article addressing the significance was entitled, "Apostolorum Apostola" ("Apostle of the Apostles"). It was a momentous occasion reclaiming a critical figure from the Gospels – indeed one intimately close to Jesus – just as it was another step towards recognizing the full dignity of women who continue to be underrepresented in the Church. Brittany E. Wilson recapitulates how "feminists—along with biblical scholars in general—today agree that Mary Magdalene has been much maligned over the years."[28] Despite the clear designation of "Magdalene" from Scripture, it has taken centuries to undo the sticky association of sexual connotation and reclaim her individuality for the masses. What comes along with this is the "elephant in the room" that is the entrenched religious suspicion of the body and all things sexual.

Despite decades of corrective scholarship, not to mention the lack of textual support to begin with for a sexualized Mary Magdalene, the stereotypical depictions of her continue to arise. In *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988) directed by Martin Scorsese Mary Magdalene is portrayed as tempting Jesus away from his sacrificial journey; in *The Passion of the Christ*

[27] Junno Arocho Esteves, "Pope Francis Raises Memorial of St. Mary Magdalene to a Feast Day," America Magazine, June 10, 2016, https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2016/06/10/pope-francis-raises-memorial-st-mary-magdalene-feast-day.

[28] Brittany E. Wilson, "Mary Magdalene and Her Interpreters," in *Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, 3rd ed., twentieth anniversary ed (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 534.

(2004) directed by Mel Gibson, one of the vignettes shows Mary conflated in the place of the woman whom the people were going to stone for having been caught in adultery; more recently, in *Risen* (2016) directed by Kevin Reynolds, Mary Magdalene is portrayed as a woman that many of the soldiers "knew."

In the "#MeToo" era, movies like *Promising Young Women* (2020) directed by Emerald Fennell, capture the mainstream for women today. A mirror is held up to reflect society's tendency in history to allow male-dominated arenas to ignore, dismiss, distort and overwrite the stories of women. And of course, complicity is the breeding ground of sinful structures, which in this case perpetuates male-dominated narratives.

The portrait of accompaniment that Mary Magdalene models is thoroughly engaged, fiercely abiding, and emotionally resilient even through Jesus' darkest hour, unto his grave, and even thereafter. One of the oldest "feelings," evolutionarily speaking, for humans – and indeed mammals and reptiles, too – is fear. It is the protective emotion out of which leads to the "fight or flight" instinct. While basic instincts tell the average person to run away at the scent of incoming danger, or cut off someone's ear when things look like things are getting out of hand,[29] commitment to relationship evokes a radically perpendicular response. Such commitment is evident in love that is willing to enter precarious situations in order to accompany others in suffering. Disciples cultivate the grace of fearless love through practicing this sort of commitment. The Spirit empowering this love excels at abiding, like the *wu wei* of water in the lowest of places.

Shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic took hold of the world, when it became clear to many that Easter would be celebrated apart from loved ones, Shelly Rambo wrote on the

[29] Referring to Simon Peter in Jn 18:10.

essentiality of looking for hope in faithful witness amidst the dark night of Holy Saturday, as represented in the figure of Mary Magdalene:

> The stumbling uncertainty of Mary's witness may seem like a weak vision of resurrection. Perhaps it seems this way because we have been duped by the winner narratives. The expanses of hell are our near and present realities. Witnesses gather on one end of the phone calling out to their loved ones in the wilderness of the ICU. There is no compass for this wilderness. If Easter faith is worth anything, it claims that love survives. Love survives, without all of its adornments. The miracle of Easter resurrection, coupled with that vision of Holy Saturday, is that witnesses run to the tombs—not because they know. They run because they refuse to be disconnected.[30]

2.3 Shelly Rambo – Love that Remains through Trauma

The Devastation of Trauma

What sort of outrageous spirit animates a love that not only meets those in places of great anguish, but that is compelled to abide there? Extrapolating a theology that remains even through trauma, Shelley Rambo talks about how the nature of this limitless love consists in its power to remain. It does not urge those under its care to simply move on. Rambo sets up the issue of trauma speaking in terms of categories that exceed our typical understanding:

> [Trauma] exceeds the human capacity to take in and process the external world. To think of this historically entails thinking about the ways in which events like genocide, mass natural disasters, wars, and foreign occupation of territories continue to shape and reshape communities and nations in the aftermath. [31]

Beyond the wounds inflicted upon individuals, the effects of trauma in this way are both disorienting and mis-orienting. It disorients in the way that it strips away possibilities of meaning-making, leaving persons paralyzed in their situation. Persons in contexts of suffering understandably do anything in their power to survive and protect themselves and their communities. The effects of mis-orientation are seen in new ideologies that form, which are

[30] Shelly Rambo, "The Hell of Holy Saturday," The Christian Century, April 7, 2020, https://www.christiancentury.org/blog-post/guest-post/hell-holy-saturday.

[31] Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 4.

based on the suggested reality of suffering that this world is a terribly unsafe place to live, and, at least during this indefinite period of anguish, the goodness of life is fundamentally held suspect. "Trauma is described as an encounter with death. This encounter is not, however, a literal death but a way of describing a radical event or events that shatter all that one knows about the world and all the familiar ways of operating within it.[32] Trauma takes advantage of the vulnerable nature of human beings and sets a course of inward spiraling, rather than outward, leading to an asymptotic collapse of the individual. Vision is narrowed. Gloom becomes gloomier. Loneliness fuels hopelessness, which returns the favor. Gravity becomes the enemy when one's ground becomes quicksand.

Leveraging an insight from Elie Wiesel, Rambo offers: "If the Greeks invented tragedy, the Romans the epistle, and the Renaissance the sonnet, our generation invented a new literature, that of testimony."[33] The deep wounds of international refugees, the unfathomable horror of moral evils like the Holocaust, or worldwide personal tragedies born from the pandemic; these are events rife with trauma. To be a witness of horror – to have lost a loved one to or have experienced firsthand gun violence, racial hate crimes, terminal illness, a child's death, sexual abuse – "is to stand in a place where the evidence of what took place is not fully available to you. It is an unwitnessable witness."[34] What has become available by way of communicating loss and processing pain is a new sort of literature: personal story, which is holy narrative incarnate in the

[32] Rambo, 4.

[33] Elie Wiesel et al., "The Holocaust as Literary Inspiration," in *Dimensions of the Holocaust* (Northwestern University Press, 1977), 9; as quoted in Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 23.

[34] Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 23.

particular. It is trauma that establishes the need to look at the "middle" space that is "the figurative site in which death and life are no longer bounded" in Rambo's words.[35]

"Nothing to See Here": The Paradoxical Middle and Its "Witnessless" Witnesses

This middle limbo-like space is a "perplexing place of survival" like an open wound "often overshadowed by the other two events," namely death and resurrection.[36] The hope in giving greater attention to this "largely untheologized site," for Rambo, is to get at a renewed articulation of a theology of healing and redemption beyond those which have been established between the grand events of death and resurrection.[37] It is out of this very space of turmoil that the articulation of the middle spirit emerges; it introduces "a theology of the Spirit birthed from the middle rather than one birthed from the resurrection event. The presence of the Spirit is more fragile and unrecognizable in the middle space."[38] This mysterious Spirit appears like a lifeline in the void of turmoil, to which bodies hold on for dear life.

In the abysmal space of Holy Saturday two witnesses of Jesus' final hour come into view: Mary Magdalene and the Beloved Disciple. For Rambo, the witness of Mary Magdalene and the Beloved Disciple privileges them in that they bear forth the Spirit that dwells silent in this middle space. It is particularly in the critical moments of unseeable grace around Jesus' death that substantiates their witness value. In the same spirit that Mary Magdalene was with Jesus each step of the way from Calvary to the Resurrection, the Beloved Disciple stood with Jesus' mother

[35] Rambo, 7.

[36] Rambo, 7.

[37] Rambo, 7, 11.

[38] Rambo, 13.

at the cross where they were given to one another, forming a new family by the words of Jesus (Jn 19:27). But what kind of witnessing do Mary Magdalene and the Beloved Disciple give if they, just like anyone else, would lose heart at the death of a dearly loved friend and teacher? How might the challenge of believing in life after death be imagined for these two witnesses who do not hail from a religious tradition that propounds a clear notion of bodily resurrection? Further, how could this belief be reasonable upheld when the Messiah, God's only Son, was brutally executed in front of them? In Rambo's view:

> What looks like failed witness is a new territory of witness in which the experience of death makes impossible any simple access to Jesus. Instead, what is glimpsed, in both the witness narratives of Mary Magdalene and the beloved disciple, is the displacement of attention from the figure of Jesus.[39]

In this section, Rambo references Hans Urs von Balthasar, who in *Heart of the World* wrote his first imaginative articulation of a witness standing near the cross.[40] Taking on the seeming point-of-view of one in the company of mourners as Jesus hangs crucified, he describes the sight of lightening amidst chaos.

> Was that lightening? Was the fruit on the Cross visible in the darkness for a flash as the sky was rent—motionless, stiff as death itself, with fixed, vacant eyes, pale as a maggot, probably already dead? That was indeed his body, but where is his soul? In what shoreless beaches, in what waterless depths of the sea, on the bottom of what dark flames does it drift about? Suddenly all of them standing around the gallows know it: he is gone. Immeasurable emptiness (not solitude) streams froth from the hanging body. Nothing but this fantastic emptiness is any longer at work here.[41]

In a series of questions that can be described as a something of a theological imagining out of the negative, Balthasar grapples with the chaos that is "beyond heaven and hell. Shapeless

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[39] Rambo, 97.

[40] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Heart of the World*, trans. Erasmo S. Leiva (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1979), 145–53.; as referenced in Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 97. Balthasar was deeply influenced by the physician, convert, and mystic Adrienne von Speyr who was an influence on his spiritual writings on the paschal mysteries.

[41] Balthasar, 149–50.

nothingness behind the bounds of creation."[42] The proclamation of God having "died on the Cross" is following a series of descriptors futilely grasping at eventless events made of images that have lost all color for Balthasar. What is it then? He describes a "glimmer" with no "content nor contour. A nameless thing, more solitary than God, it emerges out of pure emptiness."[43] He goes on,

> Perhaps it is water. But it does not flow. It is not water. It is thicker, more opaque, more viscous than water. It is also not blood, for blood is red, blood is alive… It is older than both, a chaotic drop. Slowly, slowly, unbelievably slowly the drop begins to quicken. We do not know whether this movement is infinite fatigue at death's extremity or the first beginning—of what? Quiet, quiet! Hold the breath of your thoughts! It's still much too early in the day to think of hope. The seed is still much too weak to start whispering about love.[44]

From this strenuous imaginative reflection, Rambo puts her finger on the very grappling itself. The wrestling is itself a testament to a counter-intuitive sense of seeing or witnessing. How could Mary Magdalene and the Beloved Disciple see the unseeable that is defined in Jesus' descent into hell? What sort of witnessing is this? What did they become in that very moment to the rest of the world by standing amidst the living with beholding eyes gazing up? How, did these eyes linger long enough, particularly in Mary's case, such that they would be gifted with sight to recognize life that would emerge on the other side? Rambo puts it this way:

> It is important here to state the obvious. If Mary and the beloved [disciple] are chief eyewitnesses to the events that are taking place, the reliability of their witness is in question. Yet, I suggest they reveal the ways in which witness is distinctively configured at the intersection of death and life. They are not simply witnessing an event of death but, rather, the reconfiguration of life in relationship to death.[45]

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[42] Balthasar, 150.

[43] Balthasar, 151.

[44] Balthasar, 151.

[45] Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 96.

It is based upon the *witnessless* witnessing of Mary Magdalene and the Beloved Disciple that Rambo draws out the "middle Spirit" that was bestowed on them in the handing over of *ruach* in Jesus' last breath: "When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit" (Jn 19:30). Rambo averts to how in their "entangled testimonies, focus is shifted from the content of their witness to the activity of witnessing itself."[46] They remained, and categorically became a form of witness privileged with the insurmountable middling work of the Spirit. "If they are read in terms of remaining, a unique pneumatology arises. I call this the 'middle Spirit.' This understanding of Spirit is not so clearly aligned with life. Instead, this Spirit occupies a more tenuous position between dead and life."[47] Mary and the Beloved are the receptive bodily conduits of Spirit, as breath, "witnesses in and to the abyss, the chaos between death and resurrection. Yet this breath is not isolated to the figure of Jesus. It is instanced in the curious and uncertain encounter of death handed over."[48] Such a pneumatology brings us dreadfully closer to the dirt, wherein it is too early to name hope, but it is a soil out of which none other than hope grows. Remaining here is an articulation of a "theology of the Spirit [that] equates this persistent witness with the concept of love."[49]

The Spirit Seen Anew in Love that Remains

Rambo offers a close reading of the image of the vine and the branches stating that "the stakes are high. If you *menein* in me, you will have life. If you do not *menein* in me, you will die,

[46] Rambo, 124.

[47] Rambo, 114.

[48] Rambo, 121.

[49] Rambo, 139.

just like the branch that is cut off from the vine."[50] Remaining in Christ is a matter of life and death, thus, love commands it. In John's Gospel, *menein* is spoken of in terms of the paraclete who is foundational witness of Jesus "without which the disciples could meet perilous ends."[51] The relationship with the Paraclete, however, transforms the disciples into witnesses themselves.[52] Rambo highlights that this "*menein* is inextricably tied to witnessing."[53] That is to say, Jesus' parting words were instructions directing his followers towards a deliberate kind of being and doing. To remain in Christ themselves, as well as to be conduits of love in their very remaining wherever the spirit leads them. Put pointedly, to witness is fundamentally not to abandon others.

The work of empathy in the witnessing modeled by Mary Magdalene and the Beloved Disciple goes without saying. This empathetic being has everything to do with the effective integration of affectivity in the disciple who accompanies those they love.

2.4 Edith Stein: A Life Given to Empathy

From Jewish Roots to Philosophy Scholar to Religious Martyr

Born a Jew, Edith Stein gave up on the religious practices of her upbringing during her teenage years. Stein eventually converted to Catholicism influenced largely by the works of Teresa of Ávila. After the promulgation of the Aryan certificate in 1933 she was forced to leave her teaching post at a Catholic institution in Speyer. Soon after in 1934, she was accepted into

[50] Rambo, 103.; Jn 15:1-5.

[51] Rambo, "The Hell of Holy Saturday," 103.

[52] John 15:26-27, as referenced by Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 103.

[53] Rambo, 104.

the Carmelite convent in Cologne, Germany where she became a Discalced Carmelite nun. Following the rise of the Nazi regime, she was transferred to the Carmelite convent in Echt, Netherlands in 1938. After the Nazi invasion of the Netherlands she was sentenced to Auschwitz where she died.

Among the voices that recognize the prophetic value of her sacrifice Alisdair MacIntyre talks about her consummate integrity in his biography on Stein.[54] Martin Heidegger is a point of reference in her timeline, as he was her contemporary and colleague. MacIntyre contrasts these two great thinkers if only to say that for those like Heidegger (and most intellectual giants for that matter), their public persona and personal ethics can be tough to assess, while in Stein's case they appear more transparent, to say the least. Stein, with a Jewish heart and Christian feet, walked the path of faith with integrity. The disparity is striking as one considers Heidegger, born a Christian – even entering the Jesuit novitiate in Tisis, Austria in 1909 – eventually abandoned the faith, becoming effectively a pagan in his writings on the gods. Meanwhile, the arc of Edith Stein's life led her from an observant Jewish family, to an atheistic young adulthood, then a Catholic conversion and entry into consecrated religious life, and finally to martyrdom. In MacIntyre's words, "Heidegger's path was thus in an opposite direction to Stein's. While she was moving closer to the Catholic Church, he was moving steadily away from it."[55]

Edith Stein was best known in the philosophical world for having studied under Edmund Husserl, the father of phenomenology. She is considered one of the first (if not the first) counted among the phenomenological turn to theology in the twentieth century. She was also Martin

[54] Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Edith Stein: A Philosophical Prologue, 1913-1922*, Sheed & Ward Book (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006).

[55] MacIntyre, 164.

Heidegger's contemporary. The two were the only ones, aside from Roman Ingarden, to obtain the position of personal assistant to organize Husserl's notes and lectures of internal time consciousness. Of course, Heidegger would come to be known as Husserl's most famous student. Although Stein and Husserl's strong professional relationship did not go without bumps along the way, Kathleen Haney notes how ultimately Husserl himself described Edith Stein as being his "best pupil"[56] and that Husserl "did not provide such a commendation to Heidegger, his disappointing second assistant."[57] One is left to wonder what Stein's impact might have been had she not been dealt the two-fold challenge of her time: the steep uphill climb for women in academia, and the rise of the Third Reich that eventually led to her execution.

A Philosopher of the Emotions: The Phenomenological Beginnings of Empathy

It seems reasonable to assume that Christian discipleship entails empathy, but what is empathy? The word itself comes from the German *Einfühlung* meaning "feeling into." The philosophical notion of empathy was in large part shaped by Moritz Geiger (1880-1937) and Theodor Lipps (1851-1914).[58] It was English psychologist Edward B. Titchener (1867-1927), a once student of Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920), attributed founder of modern psychology, who coined the English term "empathy" arguably in translating Lipp's work on *Einfühlung*.[59] It was

[56] Adelgundis Jaegerschmid, O.S.B., "Conversations with Edmund Husserl, 1931–1938," *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* 1 (July 1, 2001): 331–50.

[57] Kathleen M. Haney, ed., *Listening to Edith Stein: Wisdom for a New Century: A Collection of Essays*, 1st ed., Carmelite Studies 12 (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, Institute of Carmelite Studies, 2018), introduction, Kindle.

[58] Elisa Magri and Dermot Moran, eds., *Empathy, Sociality, and Personhood: Essays on Edith Stein's Phenomenological Investigations*, vol. 94, Contributions to Phenomenology (New York, NY: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2017), 4.

[59] Magri and Moran, 94:5.

Lipps' work in *Einfühlung* that drew the attention of Edmund Husserl, known to many as the father of phenomenology, and a close student of his, Edith Stein, who would delve deeply into the subject soon thereafter. Stein's work in this area would come to shed light on the rich interchange of intersubjectivity as it pertains to the emotional act of empathy. In terms of her contributions to empathy and the innerworkings of intentionality, Íngrid Vendrell Ferran joins others who would refer to Stein as a "philosopher of the emotions" and "whose claims are able to deal with the highly topical matters that still dominate current philosophy of mind."[60]

In the introduction of a volume investigating Stein's phenomenological perspective, Elisa Magri opens our conversation referencing Stephen Darwall: "Sympathy for a person is felt from the third-person perspective of one-caring, whereas empathy implies sharing the other's mental state from her standpoint. Thus, while empathy can be consistent with lack of concern with the other's state, sympathy is felt from the perspective of caring."[61] Psychologist Robert Shelton lays out a simple schema of accounting for pity, sympathy, empathy, and compassion, where each, in that order, builds upon the quality of the prior, thereby accruing in richness.[62] Pity is the acknowledgement of suffering in a given context. In sympathy, one takes on an affective position of caring about the suffering of another. Presuming these, empathy in Shelton's schema is the felt experience of the other's suffering, whereby we grant some qualitative derivation that centers around the subject who suffers. As it pertains to discipleship, compassion in this schema appears

[60] Íngrid Vendrell Ferran, "Intentionality, Value Disclosure, and Constitution: Stein's Model," in *Empathy, Sociality, and Personhood: Essays on Edith Stein's Phenomenological Investigations*, ed. Elisa Magri and Dermot Moran, vol. 94, Contributions to Phenomenology (New York, NY: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2017), 83.

[61] Magri and Moran, *Empathy, Sociality, and Personhood*, 94:5; Stephen Darwall, "Empathy, Sympathy, Care," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 89, no. 2/3 (1998): 261–82.

[62] Neel Burton, "Empathy vs. Sympathy," Psychology Today, May 22, 2015, https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/hide-and-seek/201505/empathy-vs-sympathy.

to capture more dynamically the desire to act in such a way as to relieve suffering. The spectrum is straightforward in that it suggests an idealized progression where the stages in succession assimilate the essence of the prior.

Phenomenologically speaking, it is important to note outright that the framework of empathy gets at the truth that "people can apprehend the emotions and feelings of another in empathy, and they can also join with the other in sympathy or in acts of caring and solicitude."[63] Edith Stein's work is revisited, then, to plumb its robust observations for the complexity in the emotional interchange of empathy. The issue describable by way of what one means when one speaks of empathy is discussed in this unique affective act. The problem "primarily concerns the interplay of affective and sensory capacities that is required on the part of the empathizer in order to grasp another's state."[64] What exactly is happening with and/or to the one acting empathetically?

Experientially, what is happening within when a young woman mourns with her spouse beside their prematurely born child who is struggling to survive in the neonatal intensive care unit? What is going on when a son breaks down in tears in the middle of a supermarket realizing the untold pangs of loneliness that his father is living through from the loss of his wife? What can we make of the empathetic situation behind tears shed in professional situations be they in the political, medical, religious, or any sphere wherein we might not expect to see such overflow of emotionality?

[63] Magri and Moran, *Empathy, Sociality, and Personhood*, 94:5.

[64] Magri and Moran, 94:5.

Stein's Contribution to a Phenomenology of Empathy

For Stein, empathy falls under perceptual intentionality, and is an act that is germane to the self-enrichment in the process. Empathy as we know it has primarily been studied under the lens of psychology, or presumed as simply an intuitive trait that one should just try to practice. The thinking behind Stein's phenomenology of empathy can be found in her significant work in this area.[65] Her elucidation begins by comparing the act of empathy to other acts. When one becomes aware of her friend's pain, what sort of awareness is this? For Stein, the question is not approached via deciphering a toneless voice, or distraught muscles on a friend's face, like a humanoid robot algorithmically collecting data.

Empathy is not the same as outer perception for Stein, but it does carry with it a certain primordial givenness. Stein shows that empathy is a unique act in itself, "a kind of act of perceiving [*eine Art erfahrender Akte*] *sui generis*."[66] It is more complex than outer perception, which is versed in perceiving spatio-temporal things given in a more straightforward way. But outer perception cannot perceive pain beyond what concrete physio-manifestation arises. Through empathy, however, one can share in the primordial experience of, for example, the joy of a friend without requiring qualitative equivalence. It is original for the person who is experiencing joy, and concurrently can be the source through which a different originality is had. Fredrick Svenaeus clarifies Stein's usage of this "special form of non-originality, which is peculiar to empathy, [as] 'con-original' ('*Konoriginarität*')."[67] Waltraut Stein translates her

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[65] Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy: The Collected Works of Edith Stein*, trans. Waltraut Stein, 3rd Revised Edition (Washington, D.C: ICS Publications, 1989).

[66] Stein, 11.

[67] Fredrik Svenaeus, "Edith Stein's Phenomenology of Sensual and Emotional Empathy," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 17, no. 4 (September 2018): 741–60, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-017-9544-9.

great-aunt's concept as "con-primordial," existing in an original way and somehow alongside the primordial experience presented by the other.[68] The category of memory (among others like expectation and fantasy) helps to elucidate this concept.[69] The experience of joy is original to oneself in a primordial way, whereas the content of one's memory of it is non-primordial, and yet is "primordial as a representational act now being carried out."[70]

For Stein, three stages or modalities of empathy are involved, "(1) the emergence of the experience, (2) the fulfilling explication, and (3) the comprehensive objectification of the explained experience."[71] The three modalities can operate on the levels of sensual empathy or emotional empathy. Though the latter is more robust and can comprise the former, the understanding of sensual empathy is analogously helpful to get to the emotional kind. The example of a hand is given for sensual empathy.[72] In a way of putting it, (1) one sees a person's hand laying upon a table, (2) one is projected into the hand so as to feel the pressure and sensation of this foreign hand, (3) then one's own hand feels a "sensation with" the foreign hand that is facilitated by the prior stages.

This basic example is only enough to get us started by way of analogy to illustrate empathy with foreign living bodies. However, beyond the sensual application, it is not straightforward. We cannot simply proceed by inference or through "association by similarity."[73]

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[68] Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 56.

[69] Stein, 8.

[70] Stein, 8.

[71] Stein, 10.

[72] Stein, 58.

[73] Stein, 59.

One cannot assume the precise experiences that stem from an act of empathy, but one can leverage what is familiar in oneself. The precise feeling of deep sorrow that wells up in tears for one individual, which then moves another individual to the point of tears indicates empathy in a general sense, but the precise reason giving rise to a felt sense of emotionality for one who is being empathetic understandably varies given a situation.[74] In this way, for Stein, the range of differing experiences between persons acting empathetically is accounted for within the realm of human experience, which naturally present in varying kinds of emotions with correspondingly varying intensities. Her phenomenological terms in this way make room for clearer articulation of particular moments when one is experiencing empathy. Certainly, general empathy is established, but the way that it plays out rests upon personal subjective terms.[75]

The Bilaterality of Empathy: *Einfühlung* versus *Mitsein*

A core attribute that differentiates Stein's *Einfühlung* and Heidegger's *Mitsein* (being-with) concerns authenticity. *Mitsein* is limiting in its structural conception in that it "does not open the possibility for another self to make itself manifest as other and as like me, nor does

[74] A celibate religious can cry with a non-religious friend who has lost a spouse, not having one herself, and not ever needing to have lost one in the past. The sting of loss in her friend's personal life is primordial (an experience authentically felt and given on its own terms), while the religious person derives the experience con-primordially. The feelings of one in the place of the religious person in this moment may be motivated by any manner of compelling reasons; "I feel for this person having surmounted so much, and yet, continues to face so many challenges," "I ache as it seems as though my friend is trapped in this impossible situation," "My heart is filled with joy as my friend told me that her baby was born healthy after such apprehension in the last months."

[75] For instance, there are the instances where, incidentally, the empathetic individual may become more emotionally overwhelmed than the one who is "supposed to be more affected" in presenting her emotional narrative – consider a person giving a vulnerable retreat talk for the 5th time, revealing personal vignettes that causes a certain retreatant to burst forth in tears, while the speaker, not unaffected, carries on with reasonable composure.

Mitsein make me constitute myself as an I who is another I for someone else."[76] By contrast, there is a two-way-ness to Stein's schema of *Einfühlung*, which appears to be more hermeneutically capable by way of intersubjectivity, barring inherent dilemmas for the moment. In this way, Stein's empathy "enables the I to constitute itself as one among many, and it also enables the I to test, confirm, and enrich its own perspective by that of the other."[77] Lebech points out a certain lack, or perhaps unopen-ness, in *Dasein*'s presentation of *Mitsein* that, although is able to "[co-see] the world with others," does not do so with attentiveness to the result of the coinciding imminent reality of fellow *others* who have the likewise capacity.[78] Coinciding *Mitsein* "are themselves *Dasein* and can correct my worldview by opening a space of objectivity."[79]

At stake is the capacity for one who engages with affective attentiveness to be changed, to reflect, to learn by way of the intersubjective nature of empathetic acts. To engage with the terms above consider the ministerial activity of going out to the streets to feed the hungry. Those new to such an activity may approach with a mindset that is over and above the other; i.e., "I am the one to serve you. Here is your sandwich. Now, I move on." While the desire to serve at all stems from benevolence inasmuch as it is sincere, such a ministerial act thus far has not established an environment where empathy can be had in a meaningful sense. Such empathy

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[76] Mette Lebech, "Edith Stein and Martin Heidegger: On the Meaning of Being," in *Listening to Edith Stein: Wisdom for a New Century: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Kathleen M. Haney, 1st ed., Carmelite Studies 12 (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, Institute of Carmelite Studies, 2018), ch. 10, Kindle.

[77] Lebech., ch. 10, Kindle.

[78] Lebech., ch. 10, Kindle.

[79] Lebech., ch. 10, Kindle.

requires relationality with the other, and an affective openness in oneself.[80] Consider though the hypothetical encounter that begins with, "Would you be interested in a sandwich?" and moving to the attendant sitting down next to this person on the street and asking, "How is your day going?"[81] The trajectory of a life steeped in empathy tends to lead to a decentering of the acting agent. Discipleship that does not iterate closer in relationality with the other that one hopes to *be with*, in a qualitative sense, is susceptible to skipping over the messy middle at the intersubjective juncture.

As it pertains to empathetic discipleship, it involves making room for the question: "How shall I allow the Spirit to touch me through this fellow child of God?" Where is the two-way-ness in the affective act of being with the other? Stein's exploration of empathy presents an account that is well aware of the influx of formative information for the self. The imperfect nature of the example hopes to get at Lebech's characterization of *Mitsein* as "semi-authentic" in its being with an other, and thereby, others.[82] It is markedly dissimilar from the *Einfühlung* in which we are striving to understand and embody. "[*Mitsein's*] air of inauthenticity makes it different from Stein's understanding of empathy as an act that is indispensable for the full constitution of the individual I and the person, one's own as well as that of the other, without

[80] The notion of Stanislavski's sense of *communion* with oneself tries to get at this.

[81] Indeed, there are many forms of ministries like this that seek to establish relationship with those on the margins, rather than approaching in a touch-and-go way. Labre Ministries at Loyola University of Chicago does just this; cultivating a program of encounter for students. Weekly, we would go out to the streets, offer food as an entry way to conversation, and for those who wanted to talk, we would sit and let our friends tell pour their hearts out to us. The group would return and reflect on moments together. It is common to hear reflections to the effect of, "I was not expecting to be the one to be served."

[82] Lebech, "Edith Stein and Martin Heidegger.", ch. 10, Kindle.

which authentic objectivity or science is impossible."[83] The importance of a certain understanding of bidirectionality at the empathetic interchange is key.

Ferran embeds Stein's model of empathy into Brentano's tradition of intentionality.[84] Brentano's system considers values "to be the objective correlates of affective acts."[85] The idea of locating Stein's model of the mind in such a system is to aptly accommodate a certain bidirectionality that preexists and will later undergird the elements involved in her discussion of empathetic acts. Values are presented in empathy and, as seen, they reveal more about the self. "Stein's axiological position should be understood as an original application of phenomenological research that runs in two directions."[86] Ferran makes clear that Stein takes a realist stance when it comes to values, but that these values must be studied in tandem with the experiencing subject.

Kathleen Haney discusses semiotics in Stein's sense of the mystical.[87] "Stein's early investigation of empathy makes clear that an encounter between any persons can only be partial. The I cannot fathom its depths completely and entirely, much less those of another or of the Other."[88] The issue therein that I have alluded to by way of the dual-directional capacity of Stein's schema of empathy presents considerations concerning the improbable prospect of an

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[83] Lebech., ch. 10, Kindle.

[84] Ferran, "Intentionality, Value Disclosure, and Constitution: Stein's Model," 67.

[85] Ferran, 79.

[86] Ferran, 82.

[87] Kathleen M. Haney, "Images of the Unseen: Stein's Semiotics of Mystical Theology," in *Listening to Edith Stein: Wisdom for a New Century: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Kathleen M. Haney, 1st ed., Carmelite Studies 12 (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, Institute of Carmelite Studies, 2018), ch. 6, Kindle.

[88] Haney, ch. 6, Kindle.

absolute grasp of the other, but introduces a seeming limitless range of possible self-understandings that can result in each *sui generis* act.

As it pertains to accompaniment, the work of empathy is clearly substantial. While this sort of work is not like any number of jobs that do not list empathy as a requirement, accompaniment enjoins one to show up for the other and to remain with them. It requires non-judgmental attentiveness, and the sort of attentiveness that does not place a time limit on when the other might "get over it" because it has committed to being in relationship with the other. This kind of being is an expression of abiding love; that is to say, it is a love that does not abandon the other. And significantly, such empathetic being engenders affective learning on the part of oneself in accompaniment of the other. Whether the situation is one of outrage, sorrow, or hope, the disciple that accompanies is one who is receptive to the spirit of wonder that is always laboring in relationships.

Chapter 3

"Winter Wonder"
Accompanying Hope: Kindling Grace in Others

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.
Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.[1]

~ Maya Angelou

[1] Excerpts from Maya Angelou's poem "Still I Rise"; Maya Angelou, *Maya Angelou: The Complete Poetry*, First edition (New York: Random House, 2015), 159–60.

3.1 Earth: The Hallowed Ground of God

When readers open the Bible, the story of creation does not begin with humans. It begins with a formless earth apart from the heavens (Gen 1:1-2). It is not until the third day when the waters are gathered into a basin called "sea" that the dry land called "earth" takes shape. It isn't until the sixth day that humans come along, formed out of the very dirt of the earth (2:5) in the likeness of God (1:26).[2] This soot represents the material of creation and all that is formed by it, from flora to fauna. The first human "Adam" comes from *adamah* (in Hebrew: אדמה), which means earth or ground. *Adam* (in Hebrew: אדם) means red, characterizing the reddishness common to the dirt around the Levant.[3] "The fashioning of humans from the soil is a well-attested motif in the ancient Near East."[4]

From elements of the creation story the custom arises then where foreheads are marked with ash at the beginning of Lent with the invocation: "Remember you are dust, and unto dust you shall return," which is appropriated from the last verse of God's diatribe towards the man in a damning punitive edict, as the first human beings are expelled from Eden.[5] The humbling pronouncement recalls that *humilis* – Latin for humble or lowly – has *humus* as its root, meaning ground or soil.

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[2] Technically, it is "our likeness." NABRE notes that "in the ancient Near East, and sometimes in the Bible, God was imagined as presiding over an assembly of heavenly beings who deliberated and decided about matters on earth." See Donald Senior, John J Collins, and Mary Ann Getty-Sullivan, eds., *The Catholic Study Bible: New American Bible Revised Edition*, 3rd ed., 2010, 12.

[3] The use of the masculine term *adam* generally refers to humankind in the Hebrew Bible, though *adamah* is a feminine form.

[4] Michael David Coogan and Cynthia R. Chapman, *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures*, Fourth edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 39.

[5] Cf. Genesis 3:19. An alternative is, "Repent and believe in the Gospel."

In the New Testament, dirt is a component in the healing of a man born blind in John's Gospel (9:1-12); "… he spat on the ground and made clay on his eyes, and said to him, 'Go wash in the Pool of Siloam' (which means sent). So he went and washed, and came back able to see" (9:6-7).[6] The older account of this same man in Mark's Gospel has Jesus attempting the healing actions twice before the man is able to see clearly (8:22-26). The Venerable Bede teaches how "[by] this miracle, Christ teaches us how great is the spiritual blindness of man, which only by degrees, and by successive stages, can come to the light of Divine knowledge."[7]

Just as the healing of blindness in John's Gospel is coupled by the increasing blindness of the Pharisees that leads to Jesus' death, the first murderer in biblical account allows spiritual blindness to lead him to taking the life of his only sibling, Abel. God confronts Cain with the words, "What have you done? Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground" (Gen 4:10). In time, the cries of Job will find refuge in Abel's story in the demand for redress, "O earth, do not cover by blood, / nor let my outcry come to rest!" (16:18).

Once more, here in the element of earth, the guidance of the Spirit is required. It is the divine hand that knows how to raise life from the earth, and how to restore wholeness to it. Isaiah promises the day will come when "God will wipe away the tears from all faces," and restore wholeness throughout the earth (25:8). At the bottom of the basin of tears, there is holy ground, such as that under which the unquenched bush held flame. Indeed, would that all of the earth be

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[6] Francis Moloney points out that the healing effected in this Gospel occurs through contact with Jesus, the Sent One, rather than the waters of Siloam; see Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 292.

[7] "Mark 8 Pulpit Commentary," accessed March 27, 2021, https://biblehub.com/commentaries/pulpit/mark/8.htm. Also, John Donahue and Daniel Harrington admit to a certain unusual quality that is the graduality of healing, as opposed to the one-fell-swoop nature that usually characterizes Jesus' restorative activity. Their interpretation ends on the note of "the experience of faith as a gradual process in which sometimes things look blurry and at other times we come to see clearly"; see John R Donahue and Daniel J Harrington, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Mark*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, vol. 2, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2002), 258, http://ezproxy.canterbury.ac.nz/login?url=https://muse.jhu.edu/book/46823.

seen as it was made: holy ground whereupon sandals are removed and disciples walk with awe and reverence to meet one another bearing forth hope from within.

3.2 Elizabeth of the Daughters of Aaron: Spirited Kinswomen Kindling Hope

Visited by a Fellow Woman of Spirit

What tears of hope are implicit throughout the events of the Visitation scene in Luke's Gospel? What holy glee emanates from this scene centered around Elizabeth and Mary of Nazareth and colored in by circumstances of most unusual pregnancies?

The story of Elizabeth is encapsulated in the first chapter of Luke telling of the mutual support between two relatives, and of the infancy narratives of her son and the son of her kinswoman, Mary of Nazareth. Mary comes to meet Elizabeth after receiving unprecedented news from the angel Gabriel. Elizabeth accompanies her relative in genuine gladness. Such joyful accompaniment takes shape through enactment of the feeling of sincere care for Mary.

What we know about Elizabeth is that she is "from the daughters of Aaron" (v. 5), and is "barren" and, like her husband Zechariah, she is advanced in years (v. 7). The gift of conception in her story is fundamentally seen as a way, if not the way, "to take away [her] disgrace before others" (v.25). It is important to note that at the time, centrality of having children for women was an expectation and function of deep socio-cultural norms of gender. "Barrenness canceled what was regarded as a woman's main function in life, the bearing of children—especially sons—to her husband."[8] In this context readers can share the joy that Elizabeth experiences as a real sense of gratitude in the fulfillment of a gender role that was rarely imagined otherwise at

[8] Jane D. Schaberg and Sharon H. Ringe, "Gospel of Luke," in *Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, 3rd ed., twentieth anniversary ed (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 502.

the time. Descriptors such as "the barren one" are designations in society that inscribe shame upon others; Mary hears about Elizabeth through the angel Gabriel who announces that her relative "has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her how was called barren" (v. 36). Elizabeth is only months away from delivering her child when Mary arrives at her house to greet her.

Elizabeth Johnson names early church writers who preached about Mary's journey to Elizabeth as modeling the way for the church. "Ambrose saw in Mary's hurried journey through the hill country of Judea an analogy to the church's stride across the hills of centuries."[9] Ambrose connects this to the good news-bearing servant of Isaiah (52:7). Mary's feet represent those of the church, exemplifying the spirit of the "messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation."[10] Irenaeus puts Mary in the seat of one who "[speaks] prophetically in the church's name" most emphatic in her proclamation, "My soul magnifies the Lord."[11]

The reunion of Elizabeth and Mary leads to their respective songs heralding the herald John, and his cousin the Messiah-to-be. Sensing Mary, the child in Elizabeth's womb "leaps" for joy (v. 44). Luke Timothy Johnson points out "how Elizabeth knows (and reveals to the reader as she speaks to Mary) dimensions of Mary's condition and Jesus' status previously undisclosed."[12] For L. T. Johnson, "The presumptive character of such dialogue also enables Luke to emphasize

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[9] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 259.; Ambrose, *De institutione virginis* 14.87, cited in this volume of Johnson.

[10] Johnson, 259.; Ambrose, *De institutione virginis* 14.87, cited in Johnson here.

[11] Johnson, 259.; Irenaues, *Adv. Haer.* 3.10.2-3; cited in Johnson here.

[12] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, Repr., Sacra Pagina Series 3 (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1991), 43.

how previously stated prophecies have been fulfilled, and future ones will be (1:41, 45)."[13] This feature of prior knowing accents the scene of the visitation, which begins in deep gladness and culminates in Elizabeth and Mary's songs acclaiming God's revolution is at hand. The sudden onset of the dialogue gives the impression that Mary and Elizabeth had somehow been in constant contact over the months, not unlike two close friends talking on the phone every day. The scene between these two suggests an almost effortless empathic connection, coloring in for us an atmosphere of trustable gladness. Joy-filled accompaniment is anchored to memories of empathetic hope conducive to engendering trust and vulnerability anew. Such an atmosphere is privileged.

Elizabeth Johnson underlines the "deep wisdom in this passage of one woman blessing another."[14] This holy model of honoring the other presumes a certain vulnerability. The greeting of Elizabeth "in a loud voice" to Mary proclaiming her blessedness goes much further than "good for you, Mary!" Jane Schaberg and Sharon Ringe comment how "At the scene of the visitation with Mary, Elizabeth, though not given the title, functions as a prophet. 'Filled with the Holy Spirit,' she praises Mary as 'blessed among women,' for her belief (1:42)."[15] In this way, Elizabeth too is a "woman of Spirit," as Mary is, as Elizabeth Johnson would assert.[16]

The deep wisdom that Johnson speaks of resonates loudly today in the "#MeToo" era when the toxicity of centuries of male-driven narratives has set off a just backlash in the consciousness of society. The film *Promising Young Woman* (2020) captures the *zeitgeist* of this

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[13] Johnson, 43.

[14] Johnson, *Truly Our Sister*, 261.

[15] Schaberg and Ringe, "Gospel of Luke," 502.

[16] Johnson, *Truly Our Sister*, 209.

era. Written and directed by Emerald Fennell, this is a fictional story based on too many accounts that make up its primary story beats, grounded deeply in the omnipresent reality of rape culture, which thrives upon sexist narratives. Further, the insidious nature of male-dominated societies can breed the impulse for women to compete against one another rather than to foster mutual support.[17]

Magnifying the Hope of a Kinswoman

Mary is privileged as chosen by God and stands as a representative amidst a chosen people. Doubly marginal in her gender and socio-economic class just like Elizabeth, Mary's song is an exultation of hope firmly grounded in the reality of the poor. As noted by Elizabeth Johnson, apart from being "the longest passage put on the lips of any female speaker in the New Testament, this is the most any woman gets to say."[18] Johnson also notes how Mary's song is in line with a "long tradition of female singers from Miriam with her tambourine (Exod. 15:2-21) to Deborah (Judg. 5:1-31), Hannah (1 Sam. 2:1-10), and Judith (Jdt. 16:1-17), who also sang dangerous songs of salvation."[19] Centuries of appropriation and application of Mary's prayer testify to its robustness.

[17] Though not Luke's intention, a passage like the one featuring Martha and Mary of Bethany (10:38-42) is often used to parse out the "better part," and by careless extension, the "superior woman." The same device does not yield the same remnant difficulty in the story of Cain and Abel as these characters enjoy the privilege of the dominant group, and the narrative is penned by men.

[18] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 263.

[19] Johnson, 263–64.

Two camps of thinkers fight over the meaning of the Magnificat. On the one side those like Dietrich Bonhoeffer see no sweet nostalgia here.[20] R. J. Raja paints Mary as a figure who represents that the God of Israel "will not stop short of subverting all satanic structures of oppression, inhuman establishments of inequality, and systems which generate slavery and non-freedom."[21] This is a cry for a revolution at hand. In the other camp are those like Raymond Brown who have strongly defended an interpretation of the "early church in Jerusalem [seeing] themselves as *anawim*," a status of being the poor ones, thereby linking them to temple piety.[22] Though Johnson offers a closer look revealing the weightier value of the former stance, she directs our attention more importantly to how germane this revolutionary song was (and still is) to a variety of experiences. Aptly, to the point of representing the full dignity of the marginalized sex, this song-cry reveals a faithful Jewish girl "in solidarity with other women who strive for life."[23]

Following her canticle, Mary leaves the scene after remaining with Elizabeth for three months (v. 56). What can be said of their time together? Johnson offers how women's reflection imagine Mary and Elizabeth "[charting] the changes taking place in their bodies and [affirming] the grace in their own and each other's lives."[24] Johnson puts it powerfully: "The support they

[20] Johnson, *Truly Our Sister*, 267.

[21] Johnson, 269.

[22] Johnson, 267.

[23] Johnson, 270.

[24] Johnson, 262.

share with each other enables them to mother the next generation of prophets, the Precursor and the Savior of the world."[25]

The narrative of the visitation scene is receptive to a hermeneutic of empathetic performativity as seen in Elizabeth rejoicing in Mariam's news. The event is phenomenologically *saturated* to leverage a term of Jean-Luc Marion.[26] In such an event, there is always more to see when we reflect on it. Disciples following in the footsteps of Elizabeth in glee-filled accompaniment of the hope in others not only act prophetically and enact the Spirit, but deepen communion in such authentic witness. Such communion presents the germane foundation of immense magnification of hope in the world. The account is of Elizabeth and Mary of Nazareth singing of God's abundance, rather than a rationed mindset of meager survival so often the norm of secular society. How does this holy narrative of hope challenge disciples today living in individualistic contexts?

3.3 Pope Francis: A Leader Who Serves with Tears

The Gift of Tears: Seeking Communion and Experiencing Compunction

Preaching praxis out of a theology of tears, Pope Francis urges the faithful to cry, to emotionally let it out. A month before the coronavirus was declared a pandemic Pope Francis offered a tears-themed homily based upon the beatitude that blesses those who mourn.[27] He put

[25] Johnson, 262.

[26] Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy 27 (New York, NY: Fordham Univ. Press, 2002).

[27] Pope Francis, "General Audience of 12 February 2020 | Francis," February 12, 2020, 12, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20200212_udienza-generale.html.

tears in two categories: weeping as a way to mourn loss, and shedding tears in the tradition of *compunctio*.

Compassion is seen in the act of seeking union with the other through one's weeping. "It is therefore a case of loving the other in such a way as to be bonded to him/her to the point of sharing their suffering."[28] Pope Francis notes the way that this is the difference between allowing the other to enter one's heart, as opposed to protecting it and remaining at a distance.

The scene of the Good Samaritan who approaches the one who suffers and acts with compassion is filled with emotions. The moral act itself, then, begins from a place within before the action can be seen. Our interdisciplinary lenses in the first two chapters have discussed at some lengths the inner workings of affectivity. The insights of Konstantin Stanislavski and Edith Stein stand on their own terms parallel to the Pope's urging that love requires those awakened to their own sense of compassion, i.e., "the need to reawaken those who do not know how to be moved by the suffering of others."[29]

Well into the pandemic, leveraging Psalm 1, the Pope reminded the world again of the import of weeping and the testimony of tears.[30] In this homily, Pope Francis describes in even more intimate terms the experience of hoping with one's tears through the plight of suffering on a level that world has not seen in recent decades. Such a gift wrangles pain into relational terms: "Everyone suffers in this world: whether they believe in God or reject Him. But in the Psalter,

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[28] Pope Francis, "General Audience of 12 February 2020 | Francis."

[29] Pope Francis.

[30] Pope Francis, "General Audience of 14 October 2020 | Francis," October 14, 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20201014_udienza-generale.html.

pain becomes a *relationship*, rapport: a cry for help waiting to intercept a listening ear."[31] Lament, soteriology, and relationality with God are closely linked. Catholic News Service and America Magazine framed it in this way: "The purpose of crying out to the Lord in prayer is not to get used to suffering, but to remember that God, and not humankind, is the only source of salvation and consolation, Pope Francis said."[32]

Highlighting the paradox of blessed mourning, Pope Francis talks about the second meaning of tears being one of "crying *for the sin*."[33] Tears of this kind are motivated by the recognition of sinning out of omission.[34] In the parable of the Good Samaritan it is presumed that whoever beat up the man and left him to die is guilty of wrongdoing, but the narrative places the weight of the sin on those who did nothing to help. In focusing solely on "not being like those mean people who beat others" one neglects the call of an informed conscience to rise to the occasion in order to act with mercy and accompany the suffering, an act that is very well within the power of the average person. Such a one who does not act with mercy, not only is not exempt from moral wrongdoing but reveals the calcification of emotionality that cultivates death. In being able to ask oneself both what propensities towards sin one may have in the negative *and* positive sense, is a gift according to Pope Francis, and is one that precedes the "weeping of repentance."[35]

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[31] Pope Francis.

[32] Junno Arocho Esteves, "Pope Francis: Prayer and Crying out to God Is Only Source of Salvation," America Magazine, October 14, 2020, https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2020/10/14/pope-francis-prayer-and-crying-out-god-only-source-salvation.

[33] Pope Francis, "General Audience of 12 February 2020 | Francis."

[34] Moral theologian James Keenan presses this point phrasing it as "sinning out of our strength" as opposed to the overemphasized aspect of sinning out of one's weakness; see James F. Keenan, *Moral Wisdom: Lessons and Texts from the Catholic Tradition*, Third edition (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 38.

[35] Pope Francis, "General Audience of 12 February 2020 | Francis."

The Value of Weeping for Pope Francis

In an exhortation to the General Audience in 2017, Pope Francis appeared to break from script to say, "Many times in our lives, tears sow hope. [Tears] are seeds of hope."[36] The raising of Mary Magdalene's memorial to a feast day as mentioned above highlights the value that Pope Francis puts on weeping through troubles. "'They are tears themselves which prepare us to see Jesus,' the Pope explained at a Mass he celebrated in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae."[37] Mary's tears preceded her vision of Jesus, her hope. In this spirit, tears often lead the way.

In 2015, a young girl in the Philippines asked Pope Francis why God allowed suffering. The Pope then set aside the speech he had prepared to deliver to the young people, and instead, responded from an affective place highlighting tears themselves. "Certain realities in life can only be seen through eyes cleansed by tears."[38] Shortly into the pandemic, Pope Francis said in a homily, "Today, facing a world that suffers so much, in which so many people suffer the consequences of this pandemic, I ask myself: 'Am I capable of crying as… Jesus is now? Does my heart resemble that of Jesus?"[39]

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[36] ROME REPORTS in English, *Pope Francis*.

[37] Pope Francis, "The Grace of Tears," April 2, 2013, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2013/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20130402_tears.html.

[38] Cindy Wooden, "Tears Often Are Only Correct Response to Suffering, Pope Tells Youths in Philippines," Georgia Bulletin, January 22, 2015, https://georgiabulletin.org/news/2015/01/tears-often-correct-response-suffering-pope-tells-youths-philippines/. In the same visit to these young people the Pope highlighted the historically gendered nature of crying. "Sometimes we're too 'machista' and don't allow room for the woman," he said. "But the woman is able to see things with a different eye than men. Women are able to pose questions that we men are not able to understand." The Pope would reference all the moments that Jesus cried, such as for his friend Lazarus (Jn 11:35), or the time when he was moved with compassion for the multitude without a shepherd (Mt 9:36).

[39] Courtney Mares, "Pope Francis Prays for Those Who Weep from Coronavirus Loneliness or Loss," CNA, March 29, 2020, https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/44026/pope-francis-prays-for-those-who-weep-from-coronavirus-loneliness-or-loss.

As the global threat emerged last year, the image that the Pope puts into play is one of Jesus' emotionality, elevating it as exemplary love amidst suffering. Pope Francis not only embodies a theology of spiritual weeping, he leads others to get in touch with the world and those in turmoil. He urges the faithful to allow their hearts to be moved. The Pope said, "I think of so many people crying: isolated people in quarantine, lonely elderly people, hospitalized people, people in therapy, parents who see that since there is no salary they will not be able to feed their children."[40]

For Bishop Kallistos Ware and Kimberley Christine Patton, Jesus' weeping is exemplary of human sorrow *qua* grace.[41] Accompaniment draws its power-to-be-with in God's laboring love and is watered by her tears. The disciple, like the *wu wei* of water, is willing and graciously gravitates to those low places to be in affective solidarity; to christen the dry land of suffering through holy waters of tearful being with hope in hand that those in communion may see the ground hallowed once more.

3.4 Peter Phan: Wisdom from Betwixt and Between

The Life of an "Accidental Theologian"

Peter C. Phan (Phêrô Phan Đình Cho) considers himself an "accidental theologian" for unusual circumstances that brought him up in his younger years.[42] He was among the

[40] Mares.

[41] Bishop Kallistos Ware, "'An Obscure Matter': The Mystery of Tears in Orthodox Spirituality," in *Holy Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination*, ed. Kimberley C. Patton and John Stratton Hawley (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 242; Kimberley C. Patton, "'Howl, Weep and Moan, and Bring It Back to God': Holy Tears in Eastern Christianity," in *Holy Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination*, ed. Kimberley C. Patton and John Stratton Hawley (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 260.

[42] Peter C. Phan, "Betwixt and Between: Doing Theology with Memory and Imagination," in *Journeys at the Margin: Toward an Autobiographical Theology in American-Asian Perspective*, ed. Peter C. Phan and Jung Young Lee (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1999), 116-33.

intellectually gifted who were selected to be given a French education at one of the remaining *collèges* following Vietnam's independence from France in 1954. Phan's story of his early education illustrates how he was effectively French-washed all the while never setting foot outside of Saigon. Phan was actually born in 1946, but his birth certificate was changed to 1943 so that he could sit for the *Brevet* examinations, a standard of testing the knowledge and skills at the end of middle school. From 1962 to 1965, he studied neo-scholastic philosophy in Latin at Don Bosco College in Hong Kong. Students were also required to speak Latin for the examinations. He found himself assuredly disagreeing with the core positions of Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche and Marx. Phan reflects on how entrenched he was in the Western imperialistic mindset that characterized the academic culture where he studied in Hong Kong. "Eastern philosophies and cultures were not deemed worthy of study because they were judged not to contain any truth which would not have already been known through Christian revelation."[43] From 1968 to 1972, he studied theology in Rome at the international Salesian Pontifical University, and again experienced the sense of being between worlds. He emigrated to the United States with his family as refugees in 1975. It never occurred in the least to him or his family that they would never see Vietnam again.

Phan was investigated by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) as well as by the Committee on Doctrine of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 2005 for the content of his book *Being Religious Interreligiously*.[44] John L. Allen Jr. recaps the observations made in nineteen points many of which concerned the salvific universality of Jesus

[43] Phan, 117.

[44] Peter C. Phan, *Being Religious Interreligiously: Asian Perspectives on Interfaith Dialogue* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2004).

Christ as well as that of the Church.[45] Naturally, the "other shoe" of the critique would concern the salvific status of non-Christian religions. After months of on-again off-again communication, the CDF dropped Phan's case. This is something of a monumental relinquishment on the part of the Holy Office in that remedial measures were taken up against Jacques Dupuis, SJ, and Roger Haight, SJ, before the onset of Phan's investigation. In his 2017 work *The Joy of Religious Pluralism*, Phan not only clarifies some positions from his 2004 work, but elaborates on the value of interreligious theology.[46] He includes the fascinating paper trail between him and the CDF in the appendix of this volume.

Phan, a native of Vietnam identifies as a U.S. American theologian. His theological work often discusses the value of inculturation and interreligious dialogue. The status of being "betwixt and between," in his words, has rooted him in the conviction of the fecundity of doing theology with a set of wings made of *memory* and *imagination*.[47] Such wings link "past and future, east and west, north and south, earth and heaven," and are indispensable, for "without memory, theology would be empty; without imagination, it would be blind."[48] With the qualifiers of migrant, mestizo, and marginalized written deep into his history, Phan considers solidarity with those who are suffering something of an anchor guiding the flight of a theology powered by memory and imagination.

Phan has authored and edited over 30 books, and has published over 300 essays. Currently, he holds the Ellacuria Chair of Catholic Social Thought at Georgetown University,

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[45] John L. Allen Jr., "Why Is Fr. Peter Phan under Investigation?," National Catholic Reporter, September 14, 2007, https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/all-things-catholic/why-fr-peter-phan-under-investigation.

[46] Peter C. Phan, *The Joy of Religious Pluralism: A Personal Journey* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017).

[47] Phan, "Betwixt and Between," 114–15.

[48] Phan, 115.

and holds three doctorates; one from the Salesian University in Rome in Theology (1978), one from the University of London in Philosophy (1986), and the third in Divinity from the University of London (2000).

A Critical Interreligious Approach, and the Work of Inculturation

For Phan, God-talk in multicultural and multi-religious Asia can begin by emphasizing three aspects within Christianity's understanding of God: 1) The God that takes the side of the poor, 2) the God of universal harmony, and 3) the all-inclusive God.[49] On these terms, respectful and fruitful exchange can occur between major traditions. Again, what Phan is suggesting is not some blasé adult show-and-tell of traditions; this would be both rudimentary in nature, and unproductive in practice. Real exchange results in mutual creditable enrichment; a certain describable expansion in understanding of one's own tradition in light of an 'other.' Indeed, this other, as in all 'others,' is God revealing yet more of Godself anew, in very Christian terms. An important aspect of Phan's spiritual metaphysics is that it requires special attention not to conflate all that we may describe as ineffable into one category. That is to say, different religious traditions yield different religious experiences. In other words, Hindu *moksha* is not simply another way of saying one has reached the beatific vision. Clearly, not many of us can speak directly to either of these perpetually terminal experiences. All that is to say that our stance as Christians ready for dialogue must be prefaced by openness for new spiritual worlds to be discovered. It must not shrink away in fear, nor react in hostility, because we have and continue to be sustained and renewed by Love that awaits us in the traditions of our neighbors who reside in our one neighborhood that is the human family.

[49] Phan, 120–27.

At stake for Phan is the symbiotic nature of Christianity. The call to religious pluralism for Phan is not simply a collection of differing traditions quaintly voicing their vision and identity statements and assuming that eternality renders out the same in the end either way. This situation describes a reductionistic equivocation which would mutually dilute the respective teachings of each tradition. One way in which the multi-religious environment of Phan's upbringing was different than the West is that in many parts of southeast Asia, the felt experience of religious devotion in general is more bodily. It is not to say that the West is qualitatively 'less religious,' but simply that, in contrast, Euro-centric Christianity can feel 'headier' than its sister communities in the East. It leads Phan to natural convictions such as that true dialogue allows for and admits to enrichment from the other. For instance, watching lay people meditating in perfect stillness for extended periods of time in a Buddhist temple can inspire Christian devotion by amplifying self-understanding through moments of active prayer and ritual. The deliberate contrasting of unlike practices does not afford room for mental othering.

To visit a Buddhist temple is to imagine holy ground, if not in the precise way of Moses before the burning bush, and to draw upon the repository of what a disciple indeed considers holy and to imagine one's way into what is generally considered "other" standing within one's own religion. But what emotional repository does the disciple draw from if not from their own affective memory of what is holy? How does one grapple in new spaces to feel out the traces and the shape of God who surely operates as different as features of one ethnicity to another?

The reminder that Phan's work presents is that interreligious dialogue does not mean compromising on the long standing teachings of the Church. What he brings to the table reinforces that the same Spirit of God which assures the longevity of all that is true persists

unthreatened by traditions that we deem different. All things have arisen out of one creation under the one Creator's purview. This is not a recommendation to enact a *carte blanche* spirit for then accompaniment is undiscerning. It is call however to rise above religious insecurity that is not of the Spirit. Since the time of the Israelites there has been a fear of mixing with people not one's own. This is not a uniquely Jewish or Christian phenomena, either.

One calls to mind the ritual of the mingling of water into wine as the gifts of the people are being prepared. The ordained minister prays quietly the words, "By the mingling of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity." This water is poured reverently and calls to mind a love that freely embraces that which it is poured into. Irrevocable mixtures constitute the very history of Christianity and attest to the spirit of ecclesiality that persists in the Spirit that guides its evolution. This Spirit comes alive in trusting empowerment of the faithful, and compels them to leave the comfort of familiar spaces to preach in tongues foreign to their own, in ways surprising to the world.

In the words of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, decades before he was made pope, "God's Spirit… is love; for this reason he brings about the recognition and creates unity in the acceptance of the otherness of the other: the many languages are mutually comprehensible."[50] Indeed, the Spirit operates in and through the faithful and is recognized in this way in its company. Speaking on the character of such company Ratzinger frames the nascent Church as one destined for ever-constant renewal. Naming it as an "obvious recipe" Ratzinger asserts:

> We must move—it is maintained—from the paternalistic Church to the community Church; no one must any longer remain a passive receiver of the gift of Christian existence. Rather, all should be active agents of it. The Church must no longer be fitted over us from above like a ready-made garment; no, we "make" the Church ourselves, and do so in constantly new ways.[51]

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[50] Joseph Ratzinger, *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today* (San Francisco [Calif.]: Ignatius Press, 1996), 43.

[51] Ratzinger, 137.

In this way, the Church proceeds by anything but a univocal imagination to leverage a term by William Lynch.[52] The univocal imagination sees one way in which all shapes must be forced through. Not only a poor way to proceed in literature, it is inept for life in the world that seeks constant renewal. Disciples called to accompany others are not automatons programmed with the content of living faith. Indeed, living faith requires the living. Following Christ in the accompaniment of others requires a Christian imagination in disciples. Such disciples engage with thinking minds, listening presence, compassionate hands, and discerning hearts. Ratzinger's words find a ready partner in Phan's insights of a spirit of inculturation:

> Inculturation is a process whereby the Christian faith is integrated into the culture of the people to whom the Good News is preached in such a way that *both* the faith is expressed in the elements of this culture and transforms it from within *and* the culture in turn enriches and transforms the previous expressions of the faith brought in from outside. Essential to inculturation is the *mutual* criticism and enrichment between the local culture and the Christian faith.[53]

The point of inculturation when it comes to Catholicism in Asia is more of a return to Asian roots in the way that Peter Phan frames the conversation. Jesus was born in Asia, even if the Palestinian territory wherein Bethlehem is found is known as the Middle East. Of course, in the strictest sense one cannot say precisely from what ethnicity Jesus came, especially if one considers genetic make-up that intertwines with the divine. One thing is for sure, the white-washing of Jesus over the centuries has not been helpful, especially when it can be argued that if Jesus had a skin color that it likely would not have been white. In 2001, using 3D modeling software, anthropologist Richard Neave provided BBC with a high-resolution image of what a Galilean man in the time of Jesus may have looked like utilizing a real skull from the region as a

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[52] William F. Lynch, *Christ and Apollo: The Dimensions of the Literary Imagination*, 3rd ed (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2003), 156.

[53] Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 131–32.

basis.[54] The brown-skinned virtual portrait of a man imagined to be in his thirties was used in BBC's documentary, "Son of God."

Phan's insight presumes the essential aspect of encounter. Are disciples willing to engage with respect and confidence in a faith that stands on its own terms, and grows symbiotically with others, i.e., manifests more clearly in its giving glory to God? Wisdom of the well-esteemed rabbi Gamaliel in Acts 5 who was "respected by all the people" (v. 34) provides supportive assurance to hedge against the all-too-ready skepticism towards beliefs "different" than one's own, "… if this endeavor or this activity is of human origin, it will destroy itself. But if it comes from God, you will not be able to destroy them; you may even find yourselves fighting against God" (5:38-39). The statement Gamaliel makes does not take as its authoritative reference point from the persons of John and Peter who are at the center of the commotion; Gamaliel takes into full account about the possibility of the Spirit of God at work. To name it outright, Gamaliel discerns and acts with both prudence and humility that yields to the possibility of God at work in ways not yet fully understood. This attitude is essential in hopes of meeting a world colored in by the breadth and depth of plurality, that strives for unity in the Spirit together. "The image of Pentecost presented in the Acts of the Apostles shows the interplay of plurality and unity and in this sense teaches us to perceive the distinctive character of the Holy Spirit as opposed to the spirit of the world."[55] Taking the words of this astute theologian on their own terms is to trust that the Spirit is not some fragile thing that must be protected at all costs by a select few. As if

[54] Joan Taylor, "What Did Jesus Really Look Like?," *BBC News*, December 24, 2015, sec. Magazine, https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-35120965.

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

the veracity of such a Spirit passed on from generation to generation of quite imperfect human beings could evaporate so readily.

The spirit of accompaniment finds vital enrichment in wisdom that have long sprouted from ethnic soil. The word "nước" in Vietnamese means both "water" and "country/land." This enriches the interpretation of a Vietnamese proverb that Phan shares, which is translated: "Come back and bathe in your own pond; clear or muddy, the home pond is always better," which, rather than being a narrow-minded nationalistic outcry, is fundamentally an encouragement for people to "trust their own resources, personal and national, and to make sure of them in their quest for understanding reality."[56] What hopeful flourishing awaits the witness who treads into the bounteous waters of a land and people not one's own with open heart?

[56] Phan, "Betwixt and Between," 131. Phan compares the proverb to one of Gustavo Gutierrez's well-known books *We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People* (2003).

Chapter 4
"Spring Spirit"
Accompanying Creation: From Dissonance to Harmony

My life flows on in endless song
Above earth's lamentation
I hear the sweet though far off hymn
That hails a new creation

Through all the tumult and the strife
I hear the music ringing
It finds an echo in my soul
How can I keep from singing?[1]

~ As sung by Audrey Assad

4.1 Wind: Breath of Life and Will of God

There's a humorous scene in the movie *The Weather Man* (2005) starring the outlandish Nicholas Cage who takes on the title role of David Spritz. One of the production staff is breaking down the weather forecast with Spritz before he goes on air.

PA: You should say, "We might see some snow... but it might shift south, miss us."
Spritz: I can say it, but I sort of wanna understand it. Why is it?
PA: Well, it's Canadian trade winds.
Spritz: Behind all of it?
PA: Yeah, this will get pushed by wind out of Canada.
Spritz: So what's it gonna do?
PA: I don't know. It's a guess. It's wind, man. Blows all over the place.

[1] The first verse of "How Can I Keep From Singing." Text and tune originally by Robert Lowry, 1860.

Unwittingly profound, the motif of wind signaling unpredictability comes up several times in the movie and at the end as well – "It's wind. It blows all over the place."

Back to the creation story, even before lands were formed and the waters arranged, there was one element named with the darkness over the primordial ocean and sweeping over the waters: *a mighty wind* (Gen 1:1-2), or *ruach*, meaning the "breath of God" or "spirit." After having formed the first *adam* out of the dirt of the earth, God "blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." The timeless and impossible-to-categorize Book of Job mentions a wind on terms more nefarious than the Big Bad Wolf; this great wind blows down the house of Job's oldest son killing all of Job's children (1:19). Of course, chapters later amid his own suffering, Job attests in faith, "So long as I still have life breath in me, the breath of God in my nostrils, my lips shall not speak falsehood, nor my tongue utter deceit!" (27:3-4). The promise of the messiah to come seen in *rauch* is prophesied by Isaiah who speaks of the shoot springing from the stump of Jesse, "The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understand," (11:1-2). Fulfillment comes in Matthew's Gospel after Jesus is baptized and emerges from the water, "… the heavens were opened [for him], and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove [and] coming upon him" (3:18). After telling Nicodemus that one must be born from above, Jesus says, "The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (3:8). And in all four Gospel accounts Jesus breathes his last and/or gives up the Spirit and dies,[2] which soon ushers in the era of the Spirit seen fully alive in the Book of Acts incarnate in followers and spreading the Good News. God's sovereign *ruach* that breathes life into all things intended the inherent goodness of creation, thus giving it

[2] Mk 15:50; Mt 27:37; Lk 23:46; Jn 19:30.

hallowed status for all times, and orienting human beings ever as its stewards. The ideals that human beings strive for in following Jesus who accompanies creation give witness to the fundamental goodness imbued in all things. What transformation takes hold of those who listen deeply to the Spirit in accompanying creation?

For one thing, such individuals abide, and are notably present when it matters most.

4.2 The Beloved Disciple: An Avatar for Accompaniment

The One Who Remains

No one is exactly sure of the identity of this Beloved Disciple who appears five times in John's Gospel (or six depending on the interpreter).[3] He appears for the first time as tensions are high during the Last Supper scene. Jesus has just announced that he will be betrayed by someone at the table. Simon Peter signals to the Beloved Disciple who leans over on Jesus' chest to ask who this person is (18:23-25). The Beloved Disciple is with Peter again in his second appearance, which precedes Peter's first denial of Jesus. The Beloved Disciple is known by the high priest and helps Peter gain access to the courtyard (18:15-16). In his third appearance, the Beloved Disciple is the only male follower present at the foot of the cross in company with Jesus' mother, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene (19:26-27). Here, in parallel statements, Jesus gives the Beloved Disciple to his mother and vice versa. The manifest presentation is as literal as it is symbolic. "As a result of the lifting up lifting up of Jesus on the cross the Beloved Disciple and the Mother become one," in Moloney's words.[4] In the disciple's fourth appearance, he is once again found with Peter rushing to the tomb upon receiving the

[3] 13:23-25; 18:15-16; 19:26-27; 20:2-8; and 21:7, 20-24.

[4] Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 503.

news from Mary Magdalene. He arrives first to the site of Jesus' burial and is presented as the one who believed after having entered the tomb (20:1-10). The two men return home. In his final scene, he is the one who tells Peter on the boat that, "It is the Lord," (21:7). Simon Peter and Jesus have their moment at breakfast on the shore, and he enters again when Peter asks, "Lord, what about him?" to which Jesus replies, "What if I want him to remain until I come? What concern is it of yours? You follow me" (21:21-22). The Johannine motif of a misunderstood messiah continues as there is need for clarification of the distinct calling of the Beloved Disciple in v. 23 that follows.

Referencing Raymond Brown, Patrick McCloskey presents three possibilities of the Beloved Disciple's identity: 1) He could have been the apostle John himself or another from the cohort, 2) the Beloved Disciple could be interpreted as the ideal disciple, or 3) he was a minor figure who turned out to play a very significant role in the Christian community.[5] While a blend of any combination of the above can be conceived, the semiotically versed Gospel of John allows much to be gleaned by way of the second interpretation.

Love as Living Witness

For Shelly Rambo, the Beloved Disciple is one of the two "witnessless" witnesses around the events of the cross and the tomb. The Gospel as it is written, often pairing off Peter and this disciple, sets up a stark contrast between models of discipleship. "The beloved upstages Peter," in Rambo's words, as it were, and will be "the one who will outlive Peter."[6] While Peter is

[5] Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 1st ed, The Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 368–71; as referenced by Pat McCloskey, "Who Was the 'Beloved Disciple'? | Franciscan Media," March 27, 2020, https://www.franciscanmedia.org/st-anthony-messenger/april-2020/who-was-the-beloved-disciple.

[6] Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 95.

presented as something of the impetuous leader of the group, the Beloved Disciple, when he enters the scene, is always somehow closer to Jesus. He leans into Jesus at the climax of discomfort during the Last Supper to ask what's going on. At Jesus' crucifixion, this disciple becomes one of the symbols in the establishment of a new family through the cross.[7] As an avatar of sorts for personal reflection, he can also be seen as an image of alliance with women in this scene, as well, standing attentively beside the women dearest to Jesus in the final hours of his life.

What sort of accompaniment is this that the Beloved Disciple presents to us if not one that is at once not removed from the narrative, attentively abiding, and daringly tactful in its devotion to a cherished relationship? Even until the end on the shore with resurrected Jesus, it is presumed that the Beloved Disciple already knows his place, as Jesus must spell out once again to Peter simply to heed his invitation. Rambo presents a compelling interpretation of discipleship in this final scene for the Beloved. While the NABRE will render the translation, "What concern is it of yours, [Peter]?" (21:22) – a statement that can come off like, "Why don't you mind your own business, Peter?" – Rambo leans more into an understanding found in translations like the RSV, NRSV, and NIV, that say, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, *what is that to you*?" For Rambo, the call to *remain* comes to the fore in this translation, and can be interpreted as Jesus beckoning Peter to look and learn from this fellow disciple. With respect to the kind of discipleship modeled by the Beloved Disciple, Rambo asserts, "Love is linked to remaining rather than to dying. Figured in the Beloved Disciple, the Gospel presents to us the new shape of love: witness."[8] Every individual who considers themself a follower of Jesus, claims the identity

[7] Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 504.

[8] Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 96.

of being beloved. Such a one accompanies the sheepfold by living with it, by seeing love Incarnate in it and around it, and by modeling the familial love between the Beloved Disciple and Jesus' mother, radical in its scope of care.

4.3 Elizabeth Johnson: Deep Incarnation and the Role of Chance[9]

Far-reaching Incarnation

In her work *Creation and the Cross*, "Deep Incarnation" for Elizabeth Johnson entails the full consideration what it meant and continues to mean for the Word to be made flesh as is told in the opening of John's Gospel.[10] At its foundation, we begin with creation made of "flesh," a symbolic term having its roots in the Christian Old Testament (*basar*) entailing the "the body, a soft meaty kind of stuff with tissue and fluid," but that signifies "the universal quality of being vulnerable, perishable, transitory."[11] Events in history have led to teachings that have come to put forth primarily a narrower, more suspicious, understanding of the flesh, which has had no little effect on the fundamental goodness of our bodies, not to mention the positive value of human sexuality.[12] For Johnson, the point on the scope of creation with respect to flesh is vital and takes its roots in the creation story – all things made good – and sealed in the Noahic covenant in the symbol of a rainbow.[13]

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[9] This section utilizes material from two of my response papers in Dr. Colleen Griffith's Seminar on the Theology of Elizabeth Johnson.

[10] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Creation and the Cross: The Mercy of God for a Planet in Peril* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2018).

[11] Johnson, 162.

[12] Johnson, 166.

[13] Johnson, 162.

The point extends to an examination of a deep cross and a deep resurrection. Brought to bear here is Johnson's theology of God's power identified as power-to-suffer-with, power-to-accompany, and power-as-solidarity. "God in Christ is with every field mouse caught and eaten by a hawk."[14] Abiding compassion is "silently present with creatures in their pain and dying" as "they remain connected to the God of life despite what is happening; in fact, in the depths of what is happening."[15]

The qualifier "deep" is taken to mean far-reaching, and while it is used by Johnson to include the scope of creation as God intends, who can say how far it goes? To tread in this truth is to admit the limits of language, and yet to persist. To honor the deepness of incarnation, cross and resurrection means recognizing that doing greater justice in its proclamation requires no less than a healthy and vibrant Christian imagination.

Chance within a Lawlike Framework

In *Ask the Beasts*, Elizabeth Johnson's discussion on the interplay of law and chance provides material to imagine fruitful dialogue with science.[16] As Johnson aptly says, "If all were chance, nature would dissolve in chaos; no new patterns would persist long enough to have an identity."[17] The fact that any scientific "Adam" or "Eve" today are able at all to look through a microscope or a space telescope, to see a thing and name it, is precisely due to the phenomena

[14] Johnson, 188.

[15] Johnson, 189.

[16] Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*, 169.

[17] Johnson, 171.

that it became a *thing* at all in the first place. The enterprise of discovery rests on *something*, and theology should ever only engage open-mindedly about it.

Johnson goes on to assert that the nature of chance "operating within a lawlike framework introduces novelty within a pattern that contains and directs it."[18] An "order" of some manner ushers the way, if that can be said in a modest sense. Scientifically impartial in her attitude, Johnson stands at the intersection of both camps in this statement even as faith takes a gentle lead. Less about content that need be swallowed whole, Johnson is building a bridge between faith and reason.

The thrust of the "chance" conversation is potent, and picks up the momentum that is gained from her chapter on "Free, Empowered Creation."[19] Johnson introduces the image of God-as-lover into the conversation. Again, Johnson is not shy. She poses a pointed question framing it in the most analogically amiable fashion: "Could it not be that since the Spirit's approach to human beings powerfully invites but never coerces human response, the best way to understand God's action in the evolution of the natural world is by analogy with how divine initiative relates to human freedom?"[20] The invitation to reflect on this analogy lands directly in the court of the disciple. If there is sharpness in this question, it is certainly double-edged. Here, the facticity and beauty of creaturely sovereignty is brought to bear before religion. Even taking faith as the analogy's animator, it is explicit that any viable claim of divine initiative operates within a theological framework that *never* forces human compliance. What lessons of accompaniment can be gleaned from such a compelling, yet non-forceful Spirit?

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[18] Johnson, 171.

[19] Johnson, 154.

[20] Johnson, 158.

4.4 Martin Ngo: The Spirit of Improv for a Life of Accompaniment

Decades' worth of sketches on *Saturday Night Live* enjoyed by millions week in and week out have long been staffed by talent hailing from improv comedy corporations like Second City.[21] Second City adopted its name from A. J. Liebling's caustic attribution of the city of Chicago decades ago in the *New Yorker*.[22] Thousands are trained yearly in what has developed into comprehensive performance and writing centers in multiple cities including Toronto and Los Angeles. From improv, to acting, to stand-up, to comedy writing, to particularized workshops to meet the needs of a diverse working world, they continue to help the world laugh and make lemonade out of lemons.[23]

My three years at the Second City Training Center (SCTC) in Chicago left a lasting impression on my formation as an individual and has helped me to discover more vividly the living spirit in my flesh. And let me attest at the risk of sounding obvious: it takes work! But it wasn't the kind of work that was dreadful and soul-sucking. It is the kind of creative work that one hungers for deep inside. While a good swath of my fellow student improvisers and actors were aiming for the stars – walking the footsteps of giants like Tina Fey, Steve Carell, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, and many others – I was looking to discover my voice and live the noble call of a starving actor. And while there is still so much to learn, improv joyfully changed my life,

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[21] Lauren Daley, "SNL Feeding Ground The Second City Heads to New Bedford," southcoasttoday.com, January 8, 2020, https://www.southcoasttoday.com/news/20200108/snl-feeding-ground-second-city-heads-to-new-bedford; The Second City, "Explore Second City's Deep 'SNL' Ties At Chicago's Newest Museum Experience," The Second City, October 23, 2017, https://www.secondcity.com/snl-the-experience-second-city-ties-chicago-museum-experience.

[22] Patrick T. Reardon, "A.J. Liebling's Classic 'Chicago: The Second City' Put Chicago in Its Place," chicagotribune.com, May 3, 2016, https://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/books/ct-prj-chicago-the-second-city-20160503-story.html.

[23] "Improv Classes Chicago - The Second City Chicago," accessed April 28, 2021, https://www.secondcity.com/courses/chicago/adult/.

integrated my faith, and has everything to do with discipleship and the spirit of accompaniment for me. Permit me to share some lessons that any graduating student of Second City's improv program walks away knowing in their flesh and bones.

The Spirit of Yes/And

Just as the spirit of Catholicism is one of both/and, the core tenets of improv rest upon the principle of "yes/and." The spirit of yes/and communicates a willingness to accept what is presented as gift without judgment and is magnified in the reciprocation of a gift that expands upon what is given. Not only is this important for the flow of improv, it strengthens trust between players, and pushes playing farther. In a scene, when one's partner opens with, "I suppose you will be eating the entire bowl." The spirit of "yes/and" first and foremost entails never rejecting the reality presented. The antithesis to yes/and-ing this moment would be to say something like, "There is no bowl. You're crazy." The improviser takes the suggestion and builds upon it. "Well, no one else here seems to like pickled yams," or whatever else comes to mind in the moment that may be an interesting world building decision. Which brings us to the next point.

Don't Prepare: Live in the Moment

Improvisers are trained to stay relaxed and in the moment. There is no "preparing" for improv performances in the sense of set scripts or characters to be played. There is preparation by way of vocal warm-ups and other team bonding exercises. The spirit of improv, in a way, runs perpendicular to the teachings of Stanislavski if not simply because the preparation of an actor of the *system* entails living, breathing, and even sleeping in the shoes of one's character, whereas

improv has no such constraint. In fact, Second City trainers have no shortage of ways to help people empty their minds and live in the moment.[24]

Veteran award-winning drama teacher from Stanford, Patricia Ryan Madson, who founded the Stanford Improvisors in 1991, lists as her sixth maxim when it comes to improvisation: *pay attention*. "The improvisor's lifeline is [their] attention. Those on stage often appear clever simply because they have been paying attention to what has been said and remember what most of the audience has forgotten. This is the real magic of the art of improv."[25]

Living in the moment is not playing for laughs or allowing oneself to be distracted by poor motives. Like a strong scent, insincere can be picked up by the audience. There was an exercise during class where the only instruction was to "respond in a counter-intuitive way." When a fellow scene partner began with, "Hey, listen, I slept with your girlfriend." I responded unthinkingly in an attitude of great relief, "Well thank God *somebody* has!" I did not expect that to come out, nor did I expect my cohort to erupt in laughter. Though the point about living in the moment supports another central lesson key to the life of a scene: relationship.

Focus on Relationship

The sense of communion between actors in a scripted play operates similarly for improvers on stage. Particular to improv, a silly scene between players that already lends itself to humor, becomes meaningful as well when it is built upon sincere circumstances of a relationship.

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[24] Even as numerous New Testament parables urge the value of preparation (there are many in Matthew's Gospel like the women with the oil lamps; 25:1-13), the stress is on staying awake, and keeping focus; the understanding must be complimented by teachings of the Spirit like those found also in Matthew's Gospel concerning times of persecution: "When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say" (10:19).

[25] Patricia Ryan Madson, *Improv Wisdom: Don't Prepare, Just Show Up*, 1st ed (New York: Bell Tower, 2005), 70.

It is the difference between watching two improvisers talking about the giant sandwich they are clearly making, versus watching a married couple making a sandwich while quibbling over what happens in the afterlife and where the family should be buried.[26]

Clearly, this is not supposed to sound simple to do. Accompanying others requires knowledge of the other and a spirit open to learning ceaselessly, allowing the other them to surprise one over and over again. It is nothing less than a patient abiding commitment through the ups, and especially, the downs.

Get. Back. Up.

Madson's tenth maxim is "make mistakes, please."[27] During the graduating show of our improv program in the summer of 2014, I bombed. Badly. I was no stranger to failure at that point in the journey, except this time, for whatever reason it felt so much more devastating. Poor decisions, fixated thinking, over-thinking; everything we learned went out the window. We all graduated; the team cheered behind stage after the end of the show in a flurry of hugs as the diplomas were handed out. Everyone at the show had a good time, except me. I had let fear thwart me, and make me feel like I was pulling people along. My team went across the street to Corcoran's to celebrate, but I sat apart and sulked. I went home and threw away my improv diploma. I believed the voice of defeat. I threw it all to the wind.

There is something that Second City alum Stephen Colbert said in an interview in 2015 that has stuck with me until today. Colbert was the youngest of 11 children. When he was 10, his

[26] This scenario emerged spontaneously out of a real exercise between myself and another improviser and it was quite hilarious, it turns out.

[27] Madson, 103.

father and the two brothers closest to him, Peter and Paul, died in a plane crash. The natural result was years of trauma. Colbert related this to the journey of learning that is full of failing and getting back up. The great comedian and talk show host went deep in an interview and offered a piece of advice that was given him by seasoned Second City director Jeff Michalski:

> 'You have to learn to love the bomb.' It took me a long time to really understand what that meant. It wasn't 'Don't worry, you'll get it next time.' It wasn't 'Laugh it off.' No, it means what it says. You gotta learn to love when you're failing.… The embracing of that, the discomfort of failing in front of an audience, leads you to penetrate through the fear that blinds you. Fear is the mind killer.

Weeks after that bitter night when I was sure improv was behind me, I returned to Second City. Many of my friends decided to go on and audition for the Conservatory, a program that took improv and acting to the next level. I went for it and I got in! More importantly though, I had gotten back up.

If I may transpose an obvious wisdom to journey of they who accompany others, one may decide to give up on the Spirit, but the Spirit *never* gives up on us. *Get. Back. Up.* It isn't about any one person and their personal agenda. The commitment to humble accompaniment entails a world of particular relationships, bottomless depths of enrichment, and grants grace in spades in communion with others. To leverage Rambo's insight above, the stakes are simply too high. *Remain* on the vine.

Conclusion

Fire, the perennial symbol of a God deeply present in all of creation, is ever the animating Spirit within every form of life. Per its nature, it can burn just as it can warm. It can destroy if misdirected, just as it can christen new life through the will of the Spirit. To imitate Christ is to learn from God how to channel passions purposefully towards holiness in accompanying others. The impassioned disciple Simon Peter meets the broken body of Jesus and learns what this means by a warm fire, just as Hwa-Young Chong tells the stories of the broken *maum* of Korean comfort women for all to glean from. Jesus reminds us how broken bread can break bread for others. Accompanying outrage in outrageous situations begins with attention to the broken, and to that which is broken in its contextual particularity. The call to act as disciples in varying contexts is enlivened in the preparation of an actor *a lá* the teachings of the orthodox-minded Konstantin Stanislavski. Discipleship is not a mere matter of lofty content, nor rote adherence to moral sayings. The living word requires the living, i.e., Christ Incarnate is experienced in those who engage with their whole selves. The integral self is a vulnerable and living space, ever a work in progress, where the disciple regularly revisits one's own beliefs, allowing the intimacy of memory to emerge and enrich, as she pulls and stretches towards a greater understanding of communion, of solidarity. Stanislavski's theatrical teachings on *faith and a sense of belief*, *communion,* and *emotional memory* supplement insights using familiar terms not unapplicable in a Christian context.

From Mary Magdalene to Shelly Rambo to Edith Stein, water connects the narrative for a disciple who joins Mary's side in her tears, who sits like the *wu wei* of water in the traumas of our time, and who lives with active empathy in the reality of a present that comes alive when tenderly steeped in two-way relationality with others. Entering into the chaos of others with a

spirit of accompaniment, disciples are baptized, as it were, in the dark of the middle space that bears forth an impossible sort of witness: those that bear the Spirit in their living bodies when all seems lost with no end in sight. Resurrected hope forever tells of the end indeed to come, when one is granted vision on the other side of the middle, breathing new life like one emerging above the waters following a deep dive to see love on the shore of a new world. As this witness continues forth, what was unspeakable anguish has vaporized to reveal indescribable hope; a love that remains. Such a vision brings the horizon of joyful eternality closer. It gives new flesh to bones. It commands the awakening of soulish bodies, drawing out a grace superior to invulnerability from evil; but rather, the trust of a Spirit indwelling and unafraid of Death having the last word. How Christian hope is defiantly undying in this way we will never know in the precisely human sense, but it is ever enough. The spark of Christian hope, like lightening in chaos, ever draws the disciple forward attempting to nurture time and again the yearning to be with the other, to share the gift of joy with neighbor.

Accompaniment gives attention to soil that births new life in spades. This reddish soil, the *adam* of *adamah*, the *humus* in *humilis*, calls to mind the clay of the potter who shapes and molds. The relationality between Creator and the created requires no less than process. Out of the ground, vessels of hope are formed. Two women reunite and mark an occasion of remarkable hope. They resonate with wonder as they have come to term on peculiar terms. Elizabeth offers warmth, zest, and support to Mary of Nazareth as accompaniment leads to magnifying the glory of God in bodies in expectation of revolutionary hope. What tears filled with hope found expression we could only imagine. Indeed, what tears are not infused with hope of some kind? The interpretively rich symbol of tears – be they from rage or sorrow – betray the soul's yearning for hope and bespeak of hope on respective terms. Hope emanates from tears like those shed by

George Floyd's family from his death to the conviction of Derek Chauvin, the cries of family members who could not accompany loved one's in their final moments in the hospital due to lockdown restrictions, the unheard weeping of countless ill and forgotten, oppressed and marginalized. Tears have infinite value in this way for Pope Francis who urges the faithful to ask for this gift, and not to shy away from weeping for one's own sins, and for others. Tears do not well out of hardened hearts, but those of flesh. Those who know how to cry in this way are brought closer to communion with others and God. It is in this spirit that makes a culture of encounter possible without which no dialogue and no inculturation would be possible. Peter Phan shares the fruits of doing theology with memory and imagination guided by solidarity with the suffering. His "accidental" status gives him a unique vantage point poised to build a bridge between Christianity of the West, and religions of the East. But patience and openness are essential. The creed of accompaniment would fall flat without a spirit that perseveres step by step, a process-oriented spirit admitting a lifelong journey of humility. Think of any hero or superhero movie from Karate Kid to Captain Marvel; the protagonist undergoes an exacerbating origin narrative to become what they become, as audience members look on in exuberant anticipation of the process. But walking-with is key. The faith journey admits no skipping steps. Hope arises out of the soil of the ordinary. This soil is made healthy by a composite fertilization of things that have gone before, and now lies here at the service of new life. Jesus in John's Gospel exclaims, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit."[1] In this way, the tomb is but another womb. One of great hope.

[1] John 12:24.

In Elizabeth Johnson's words, "The Spirit dwells in the world like a wind, blowing freely and affecting everything."[2] At once the breath of life as well as its very guide, the Spirit of God is in the wind, but is also not entirely comprised by it, as in the LORD's appearance to Elijah in the first Book of Kings where divinity was not found in any of the elements, but in a gentle whisper (19:11-13). In this way the will of God is ever sovereign and beckons to us in myriad ways in all of creation. Disciples such as the Beloved one of Jesus abide at the foot of the cross and become witness to new bonds forged in self-emptying love, an exemplary testament to the way life feeds life throughout creation. The unending cycle in the Spirit that Jesus handed over presses our Catholic imaginations into service as we open our eyes to the Deep Incarnation wherein humans see with non-anthropocentric eyes. Dissonance becomes harmony as all life is considered in our thoughts, our actions, and our sense of communion. To embrace such a circular mindset, as in the thought experiment Johnson suggested, is to let go of the pyramid-minded sense of a right to command and control the earth as humans will. The lessons of comedy improv speak to the fundamental tendency to control the things around us. Accompaniment bespeaks of the willingness to engage again and again, with a "yes/and" spirit; to show up and to live in the moment; to accept what is presented fundamentally as gift and to respond in a spirit of building up together. The chaos on the stage of life that seems suddenly to all "come together" is not magic. It is the art of walking with the other and tending creation together.

Towards the end of Elizabeth Johnson's book *Creation and the Cross* she invites the faithful to reimagine "us," that is to say, the place of humans in creation wherein God is deeply abiding. A theology of accompaniment operates in accordance to "the living God, gracious and merciful, always was, is, and will be accompanying the world with saving grace, including

[2] Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*, 135.

humans in their sinfulness, and humans and all creatures in their unique beauty, evolutionary struggle, and inevitable dying."[3] A disciple for all seasons is one who whose imagination is both moral and ripe to see the Spirit anew in and renewing all things in creation. Where love appears nowhere in sight, they who accompany remain.

* * *

Enliven our hearts this day and always,
so that, going forth into the world,
we may become better servants of your Word
and bearers of your love for all to see.

We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ,
who strengthens us in faith,
and in the power of the Holy Spirit,
who binds us together in love and harmony,
God, forever and ever. Amen.[4]

[3] Johnson, *Creation and the Cross*, 225.

[4] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Committee on Migration, *Encountering Christ in Harmony: A Pastoral Response to Our Asian and Pacific Island Brothers and Sisters*, 2018, 44. These are the last two stanzas of "Prayer to Encounter Christ in Harmony."

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