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People of God, People of the Nation Official Catholic Discourse on Nation and Nationalism

Official collective statements of Catholic bishops construct and promote the imaginary of the Philippines as “Catholic nation.” This conflation of the body Catholic and the body politic has served as the church’s platform for defending its interests in education against perceived nationalist threats and for engaging social issues. This article traces the genealogy of this discourse and uncovers its distorted account of the Filipino nation’s emergence and its deductive pastoral logic. Given the inevitable link between “the religious” and “the secular,” the imaginary is challenged today by the call for greater inclusivity and the impact of digital connectivity on community, whether religious or national.

KEYWORDS: CATHOLIC CHURCH · PHILIPPINE BISHOPS · NATIONALISM · CHURCH–NATION RELATIONS · IMAGINED COMMUNITIES

*Mother of our people, we rejoice in the name, Pueblo amante
de Maria, a people who love Mary, bayang sumisinta kay
Maria . . . we desire, the Church of the Lord in our land,
joined in heart and mind with all our people, isang bayang
Filipino, to unite ourselves with the consecration, which,
for love of us, your Son made himself to the Father . . .*

On 8 June 2013 Catholic bishops in the Philippines issued the “National Consecration” to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, from which the above excerpt comes (CBCP Episcopal Commission on Liturgy 2013, 35). These words as well as the prayer’s intent invite interrogation of the relation between the Catholic Church as religious community and the Filipino nation. This interrogation must be mindful of “the religion–globalization nexus” involving the role of religion/s in global society, the apparent resurgence of nationalisms despite the shifting ground beneath nation-states, and the pull toward forms of transnationalization (Woodhead et al. 2002).

Set against such a horizon, this article examines the collective statements—here broadly understood as “pastoral letters, statements, exhortations, appeals, special messages, and even norms” (Quitorio 1996, xvii)—of Philippine bishops on nationalism and the nation. Issued in the name of the collegial juridical body of bishops, these texts constitute the official discourse of the Catholic Church. Because these texts have neither comprehensive editions nor critical studies, primary materials for this article are drawn from the following anthologies: (a) *Pastoral Letters, 1945–1995 (PL)* (Quitorio 1996), (b) *CBCP On the Threshold of the Next Millennium (TNM)* (Quitorio 1999); and (c) the CBCP website.¹

The first section of this article introduces the critical frame for analyzing the substance and style of this official discourse as well as what could be identified as its underlying imaginary of “Catholic nation.” Borrowing from Benedict Anderson’s (1991, 6) masterful insight on nation “as an imagined political community,” the concept of “Catholic nation” underscores the imaginary nature of constructing any community and applies to both the national and the religious collective. This critical frame, which follows the lead of Talal Asad (1993), then explores the genealogy of imagining the Philippines both as Catholic and as Filipino.

Within this critical frame, the next two major sections provide a close reading of the bishops’ official discourse. Although the scope of this article excludes a discussion of Catholic and other responses, one can find indications of these voices in many of the official texts as well as in the accompanying commentary. The first section covers texts dated from 1945 to 1966 issued by the Catholic Welfare Organization (CWO), then the official collegial body of Philippine bishops before the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965); the second, those after the initial formation of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) in 1967.

One finds in these statements on nationalism and nation how the imaginary of the Philippines as “Catholic nation” was constructed and promoted. Before the widespread social upheaval in the world and the church in the 1960s, this imaginary served as the defense of the Catholic Church in the Philippines against perceived nationalist threats against its educational enterprise. Under the influence of the Second Vatican Council and given the prominent role of the Catholic Church in the overthrow of the Marcos authoritarian regime and the return to constitutional democracy, the bishops’ statements illustrate the imaginary of “Catholic nation” at work, especially in relation to social development.

The final section turns to the contemporary prospects of this imaginary. Further analysis uncovers presuppositions employed in creating the imaginary—a distorted account of the link between Catholicism and colonization as well as an inadequate deductive pastoral logic. Given Asad’s (2003, 200) insight that “the categories of ‘politics’ and ‘religion’ turn out to implicate each other” as seen in the continuing dynamic between “Catholic” and “nation” in the Philippine experience, official church discourse needs to recreate the imaginary of “Catholic nation” in the face of new challenges in today’s global world.

Genealogy of “Catholic Nation” as Critical Frame

The conflation of national and religious communities expressed in the imaginary of the Philippines as Catholic nation has occurred in other historical instances and appeared to be an ever-present impulse in Christianity given its origins as “a chosen people.” According to biblical scholar Denise Buell (2005, 3), “by conceptualizing race as both mutable and ‘real,’ early Christians could define Christianness as both a distinct category in contrast to other peoples [including Jews, Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, and others]

and also as inclusive, since it is a category formed out of individuals from a range of different races.” Thus Christians have construed themselves throughout history as a people chosen by divine providence—a biblical image popularized by the Second Vatican Council and echoed in many CWO and CBCP statements, as in a text quoting Pope Pius XII’s words: “A glance at the map of Southeast Asia and Oceania reveals strikingly the vital point on the earth’s globe in which Providence has placed this people, the field of life and action which it has assigned them in the community of nations” ([*PL* 17] Quitaro 1996, 336). However, when “the borders of baptism” coincide with those of nation or ethnicity (Budde 2011, 67–76) or when the church’s self-understanding allows accommodation to empire (Llewelyn 2010), such conflation of religion and nation could produce disastrous effects as in Catholic Spain under Francisco Franco and in Northern Ireland with its interwoven religious, national, and class conflicts.

Lisandro Claudio (2013, 27–57) finds this “conjuring of the Catholic body-politic” informing the Catholic perspective on the People Power Revolution (also known as EDSA I) institutionalized in the Shrine of Mary, Queen of Peace (popularly known as the EDSA Shrine) and operative in present-day national politics. Drawing from interviews and memoirs of church leaders and collaborators involved in the shrine, he parses its location and design in the light of the church’s reading of the People Power Revolution as the “flowering of the Filipino Catholic faith, the blossoming of Filipino heroism” (*ibid.*, 38)—a reading that ignores the return of “cacique democracy” (*ibid.*, 11–15) and “serves to silence popular histories of the bloodless revolution . . . largely those of the organized Left” (*ibid.*, 23).

The EDSA Shrine thus memorializes the conflation of the body Catholic and the body politic through which members “will never know most of their fellow-members . . . yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson 1991, 6). There at the People Power Revolution itself and in its subsequent place in the official church’s memory, this imaginary has taken dramatic center stage and reached its symbolic summit.

As with the EDSA Shrine, this imaginary has been carved into CWO and CBCP statements on nation and nationalism. It has not only manifested itself in those statements related to EDSA I but it has also appeared as the very framework of official church discourse. Given this dominant presence, a critical analysis of the bishops’ collective discourse must go beyond specific evaluation of statements or theoretical applications of constructs such as

“religious nationalism” or “civil religion.” It must provide what Asad (1993, 1) refers to as a genealogy of the imaginary of “Catholic nation,” that is, how it “has come to be formed as concept and practice” in the local landscape. In particular the genealogy needs to explore what lies beneath the textual surface and point to those historical and ideational forces that have facilitated the conflation of the body Catholic and the body politic. More than just comparing concepts behind religious community and those fundamental to the nation-state, “we have to discover what people do with and to ideas and practices before we can understand what is involved in the secularization of theological concepts in different times and places” (Asad 2003, 194).

First, unlike in the European experience, this conflation was made possible through a singular yet complex historical process starting from the sixteenth-century entry of colonization. Moreover, the same geographical and linguistic infrastructures that were introduced by colonial and missionary establishments provided the bases for this interwoven formation of both communities and, therefore, of the imaginary of Catholic nation.

The geographical establishment of reductions (Rafael 1988, 87–91) facilitated this interwoven formation. Settlements based on kinship, alliance, and trade were now organized within the juridical agreement between the Papacy and the Spanish monarchy and according to the Spanish grid pattern, which featured a central plaza where church, civil buildings, and residences of the prominent were contiguous to each other (Galende 1987, 10–15). Spanish missionary Juan de Oliver’s comparison of the body to Christian settlements symbolized this interwoven formation (Cruz 1995, 1–3). Like Christian settlements that must be vigilant to desertion by its members or to intrusion from the outside, so must the Christian’s body be protected with the Sign of the Cross over the forehead, chest over the heart, and lips against the devil’s entry. Thus those who ran away from reductions were called *remontado*, signifying apostates from both Christianity and colonial civilization.

The linguistic infrastructure involved the transformation of the South Indian syllabic script of native languages (Goody 1993, 51) into the Roman alphabet, the conformity of these languages’ structure into that of Latin and Spanish, and the standardization of their usage through bilingual dictionaries of native words explained in Spanish. No longer limited to oral communication between native speakers and hence greatly dependent on local context for clarity, Tagalog as well as other native languages became accessible to nonnatives and available for multiplication, initially through

xylographic means and in the seventeenth century with movable printing presses (Javellana 2010).

Thus incorporated into the hierarchy of sacred languages, Greek and Latin, that were central to religious community (Anderson 1991, 13–14), but mediated through Spanish (Rafael 1988, 55–83), the native languages produced native Christian discourse through works by missionary and native authors (Francisco 2001). Moreover this infrastructure provided literacy, empowering natives to communicate through speech and in writing among themselves and with nonnative others. Best exemplified by the *caton*, a pamphlet using Christian prayers to teach the new alphabet, literacy enabled native men and women to write for religious aims and on other matters as well (Santiago 2003, 561), and thus helped the formation of the body Catholic and emergence of the body politic.

Second, underlying ideas regarding time and space similarly proved significant in the relation of religion and nation. Although Asad (2003, 193–94) and Anderson (1991, 12–36) noted the boundaries between eternity and the present as well as between this world and the other world, which differentiated the complex medieval Christian universe and the modern doctrine of secularism, they did not consider these boundaries closed and absolute. When Christian discourses succumbed to forms of dualisms influenced by Manichaeism and neo-Platonism among others (Ricoeur 1967, 279–305), church conciliar teaching consistently rejected them because of Christianity's central doctrine of the Incarnation, that is, the divine becoming and assuming the human (Neuner and Dupuis 1982, 115–16). Hence the boundaries between salvation history and human history as well as between “this world” and “the other world” proved two-directional, a point also suggested by the Philippine experience.

The salvation history that was propagated through preaching, devotional texts, and religious practices in local languages provided the metanarrative that functioned as the Christian epic for native society. This epic, which was relived within the rhythm of life in Christian resettlements, was expressed in magisterial form in the *Pasyong Henesis* and its translations as well as in its many analogues in other Philippine languages (Javellana 1988, 237–39), but more significantly, as Schumacher (1982) insisted, through the entire ethos of Christian practices. Although local appropriation certainly varied, it provided the idiom for personal devotion and even social movements as discussed by Reynaldo Ileto (1979).

Spatial boundaries, too, were viewed as continuous rather than absolute. Although “heaven,” however imagined, has remained humankind's true home, divine omnipresence implied this presence in particular places. Christianity has “consecrated,” that is, set aside certain sites of intense divine presence such as local shrines and communities believed to be paradise, heaven, or the kingdom of God. In communities like Ciudad Mistica, Tres Persona Solo Dios, or Bromoki, which have localized divine presence, “the geography of Mount Banahaw is mapped out by the events of the Christ story,” and “in effect . . . this tropical mountain [is] re-discovered as Bagong Herusalem [New Jerusalem]” (Francisco 1992, 57; 2010, 194). Although Spanish missionaries considered this localization apostate, their own closely defended Christian reductions had the very same aim as these communities—to mark some space where the Christian story could be relived.

This genealogy of historical and theological forces sowed the seeds of the imaginary of the Philippines as “Catholic nation” in official church discourse. Parsed within its context, the textual surface of CWO and CBCP statements broke open and revealed lines of kinship and affinity in the construction of the imaginary.

The CWO Texts (1945–1965): Defense against Nationalism

Most pronouncements on nationalism were issued after the 1946 declaration of Philippine independence, which generated popular nationalist sentiment as well as fundamental debates over Filipino nationhood. These debates “shifted from dissatisfaction with American rule to criticism of military, economic, and cultural ‘neo-colonialism’ manifested in U.S. military bases, lopsided economic agreements, and the ‘Americanization’ of Filipino culture and consciousness” (Abinales and Amoroso 2005, 186).

The initial carriers of this postwar critique were linked to the Central Luzon Huk movement against unjust agrarian structures, to what Ileto (2010, 226) describes more broadly as “alternative visions of nation building that found expression in the failed revolt [of the Communist Party of the Philippines] and could very well surface in other forms.” In urban centers this critique “was picked up by nationalists such as senators [Jose] Laurel and [Claro] Recto”—who “became the ideological spokesmen of the ‘nationalist business class’ that supported [Carlos] Garcia's Filipino First policy”—and by “a small but vocal group of students at the University of the Philippines

and the Laurel family-owned Lyceum College” (Abinales and Amoroso 2005, 186).

These bearers “saw themselves, in fact, as carrying out ‘the second Propaganda movement,’ a repetition of the consciousness-raising activities of Filipino reformists and nationalists in the late 1800s,” now honored as Philippine heroes (Ileto 1998, 181). In 1951 communist raids against government installations were carried out “to coincide with important anniversaries such as the Huks’ founding on 29 March and Bonifacio’s ‘Cry of Balintawak’ on 26 August” (Ileto 2010, 225). Then during the 1957 elections presidential candidates Garcia, Recto, and Laurel courted voters by using patriotic catchwords and “were soon heard to be urging the people to carry the ‘unfinished revolution’ with a tinge of anti-Americanism” (Ileto 1998, 181).

The Catholic response to this nationalist wave was understandably guarded and defensive, given the collateral damage to the Catholic Church of both Spanish and American colonization. This second wave evoked memories of the late-nineteenth-century movements that dissolved the Catholic Church’s juridical link and frequent alliance with the Spanish government, to the detriment of the native population; included “the Filipinization of the Church [as] one of the most prominent, if secondary, aspirations of the Revolution”; and profoundly altered its personnel, institutions, and ethos (Schumacher 2009, 247).

In the church’s recent memory, the American occupation brought thorny issues and negotiations that involved Filipino nationalists, native clergy and Spanish missionaries, American civil and religious leaders, and the Holy See (Arbeiza 1969, 157–75). Issues ranged from the transitional, like the disposition of friar personnel and estates as well as the return of regular church structures, to the more long-term, such as governance and juridical relations between church and state under a different civil framework (Connolly 1992, 1–6). In addition the presence and activities of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, progeny of the revolutionary movement, and of the newly arrived Protestant churches and organizations made the situation even more difficult. Coeli Barry (1999, 60) observes that “in the Church’s rendering of the American-era . . . the dominant trope has been one of loss: lost opportunities for the Church to re-integrate itself with secular powers and the threat of the loss of the nation to secularism, Protestantism and breakaway religious movements.”

This defensive stance was taken partly because “the institutional church in 1920 remained essentially Spanish in language, culture, and outlook—its hierarchy, diocesan clergy, principal older religious orders, and the larger part of its educational system” (Schumacher 2009, 251). The Spanish language, for example, continued to be used in its prominent schools and seminaries, although some of the newly arrived non-Spanish foreign priests and nuns had begun to use English. But there were other considerations at play—how long the American occupation was thought to last, how American educational policies were implemented, and how Philippine languages fit into the new dispensation (De Castro 2010). These linguistic battles assumed significance not only in relation to the subsequent saga of the national language issue in the Philippine landscape but also because of the intellectual tradition in Tagalog and other local languages that writers like Lope K. Santos forged during the early decades of the twentieth century.

Even after the 1946 declaration of Philippine independence and with the increasing number of Filipino priests and bishops, signs of this Spanish ethos persisted in the publication in Spanish of the official *Catholic Directory of the Philippines* until 1950 and of sermon outlines and news in the *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* until 1961 as well as in the appointment of papal nuncios not fluent in English (Schumacher 2009, 256).

One may summarize this complex situation of the Catholic Church in the American era and after in terms of what Barry (1999, 60–61) calls

polyglot Catholicism [which] can be described as the multiplicity of languages, national and religious, present in the multi-national Church, expressed within different idioms of Catholicism, civic, educational, ritualistic and social reformist and articulated in different voices, male and female, Western European, North American and Filipino.

With this historical memory and the recent devastation wrought by the Second World War, the CWO, in Quitorio’s (1996, xxiii) reckoning, “was principally concerned with the defense, protection, strengthening and furtherance of the vital interests of the Catholic Church as a social institution and of supernatural values.” In this spirit it issued at least six, out of the total of thirty, Catholic Church statements related to nationalist concerns, the greatest number on a single topic.

Defense of Church Domain in Education

The Catholic Church deemed education essential to its mission of passing on its faith and, under the circumstances of American colonialism, for its continuing role in Philippine society:

largely through its private educational system, the Catholic Church provided the older elite as well as the newer ones with educational skills to thrive in the modernizing Philippines. Invoking 'timeless' Catholic traditions, the Church could meet the demands of a modernizing nation-state while affirming the legitimacy of Catholicism of the nation and its ruling classes. (Barry 1999, 60)

But with the loss of its monopoly in education to government-funded public schools and Protestant institutions, the church became gravely concerned over three issues that could undermine its educational enterprise—religious instruction in public schools, nationalization of schools, and inclusion of nationalist publications in the general curriculum. The first issue emerged as a result of the separation of church and state borrowed from American constitutional practice, while the other two had roots in the nationalist ferment during Spanish colonization.

First, concern over religious education focused on Catholic students in public schools. On 25 January 1953 Manila Archbishop Rufino Santos issued a statement after the church's First Plenary Council supporting "the militant spirit of the different entities of Catholic Action of the Philippines in the defense of the Constitutional rights of our citizens concerning optional religious instruction in public schools" ([PL 5] Quitaro 1996, 121). Then came a more strongly worded statement from all bishops and other episcopal leaders accusing three Department of Education officials of being members of "a secret Committee for the Elimination of Religious Instruction in Public Schools, organized by the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippine Islands" ([PL 6] *ibid.*, 122–23). Thus in their 14 January 1954 text they prohibited Catholics from joining Masonry and excommunicated those who had ([PL 8] *ibid.*, 136).

In their comprehensive statement on education dated 10 April 1955 to coincide with the twenty-fifth anniversary of Pius XI's encyclical on Catholic education, the CWO noted that "no Catholic parent should be compelled to send his child to a public school," but also recognized that "four fifths of

our Filipino children go to public schools" and "the compelling cause is economic" ([PL 10] *ibid.*, 159). It criticized attempts "to replace morality" with good manners and appealed to "our Legislators and civil authorities to make actual and effective the constitutional provision for optional religious instruction in our Public Schools" (*ibid.*, 160).

Ten years later, the CWO issued a statement on 6 June 1965 commending Mariano Cuenco's proposed legislation that "authorizes public school teachers to teach religion in public schools voluntarily" ([PL 15] *ibid.*, 251). It enumerated arguments from different perspectives—religious (parents' right over children's education; lack of religion, rather than itself, as the cause of criminality); constitutional (nonviolation of the separation of church and state or of the rights of the non-Catholic minority); and various practical considerations (voluntary religious education being neither divisive for students nor burdensome for public school teachers) (*ibid.*, 252–57).

Church victory came much later, not surprisingly with the constitution promulgated under Pres. Corazon "Cory" Aquino in the wake of the People Power Revolution. The CBCP statement of 15 July 1987 praised the constitutional provision allowing religious instruction in public schools, to be taught voluntarily by government teachers during school hours to students with their parents' written consent ([PL 21] *ibid.*, 659).

Second, the role of non-Filipino citizens in educational institutions was another concern. The CWO's 28 January 1959 statement protested against the proposed nationalization of all schools (Bill No. 38 in the Senate and Bill Nos. 202, 222, and 381 in the Lower House), which would prohibit non-Filipino citizens from heading educational institutions, nonnatural-born Filipinos from teaching social science subjects, and noncitizens from constituting more than 40 percent of the membership of the governing bodies of schools ([PL 12] *ibid.*, 209).

According to the CWO statement, the basis for determining educators' competence and impartiality ought to be professional training rather than ethnic origin or citizenship. But while acknowledging the lack of Filipino educators and the important contribution of foreign missionaries, it could foresee that "our Catholic educational institutions will be in the hands of Filipinos" through "the natural development of our religious Orders and Congregations," but not "hastened by legislation" (*ibid.*, 215).

Such stance was their reaction not only to memories of the aspirations of the native clergy during the Spanish colonial period but also to the

clamor then of some Filipino religious priests. Although their clamor for Filipinization was thought to have been appeased with the arrival of “non-Spanish foreign priests and nuns [who] could simultaneously connect the Philippines with its Catholic past and do without evoking Spanish colonial associations” (Barry 1999, 60), these Filipino religious priests “call[ed] attention to the appallingly low rate of Filipino membership and leadership in men’s religious congregations” (ibid., 61). Two years before the CWO statement against nationalization, they held public protests. A leader of this group, Fr. Hilario A. Lim, SJ, later wrote to the Pope saying, “NO FILIPINO HAS EVER BEEN SEEN MUCH LESS HEARD IN ANY GENERAL CONGREGATION OF ANY OF THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS OR INSTITUTES OF MEN OR WOMEN IN THE HOLY ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH SINCE WE BECAME CHRISTIANS FOUR CENTURIES AGO” (ibid., 73; capitalization in the original).

Third, the inclusion of nationalist books in the general curriculum also evoked strong objections. Rafael Palma’s (1949) biography of Rizal, *Pride of the Malay Race*, and Rizal’s novels, *Noli me tangere* and *El filibusterismo*, were perceived as anti-Catholic and anticlerical attacks.

The 6 January 1950 CWO condemnation of Palma’s biography advanced the bishops’ assertion: “We believe that we would seriously fail in our duty if we did not raise our voice of warning and protest against the attempt by the enemies of the Catholic name to impose on the young people in our public schools the reading of a book written by a well-known anti-Catholic, which is highly offensive to the religious sentiment of over 80 per cent of the population of the Philippines” ([PL 2] Quitaro 1996, 53). The CWO used this same justification against “the proposed compulsory reading in their entirety of such books [Rizal’s novels] in any school” as “We [the Philippine Catholic Hierarchy] cannot permit the eternal salvation of immortal souls, souls for which We are answerable before the throne of Divine Justice, to be compromised” ([PL 11] ibid., 194). The hierarchy’s monolithic view of the Catholic population was unfounded in the absence of written appeals made by students to read expurgated versions of the novels—a requirement, which was virtually a compromise, added to the approved legislation (Schumacher 2011).

At the core of the CWO’s response to these three issues was the bishops’ fear of losing their control over the education of the young in religious matters. Thus they condemned all proposals that they perceived would

threaten this control, especially any form of nationalism independent of the church.

Construction of “Catholic Nation”

In order not to appear to be against nationalism, the CWO issued a statement dated 3 December 1959 offering a positive view of nationalism based on the social nature of humankind, the search for the common good, and even the history of Israel and the Gospel teaching of Jesus ([PL 13] Quitaro 1996, 222–23). But at the same time the CWO criticized concrete nationalist proposals of the “National Progressive Movement” because of “its avowed opposition to the Catholic Church” (ibid., 225).

Numerous bishops’ statements sought to identify their adversaries, as in the following: “We see all around us today the deplorable consequences of excluding religion from the national life in the name of a false liberalism, and of attempting to inculcate morality and civic efficiency in the youth to the exclusion of religious principle . . . and, working behind all these fatal weaknesses, exploiting them with preternatural cunning, [is] the evil genius of atheistic Communism” ([PL 6] ibid., 125). Fully aware of the Cold War ethos promoted by geopolitical forces then and reinforced by criticisms from the Catholic Church’s earlier papal encyclicals, the bishops raised the specter of communism and, in their text of 6 June 1965, even compared the communist view of the separation of church and state to a “Berlin Wall” ([PL 15] ibid., 257). Moreover, although silent on the active and passive involvement of Christians in the totalitarian ideologies of the Second World War, they spoke of the nationalization of schools as “precisely the brand of nationalism against which we want to warn our faithful. This is nothing but the old Nazi dogma of racism” ([PL 12] ibid., 212).

As counteroffensive to Masons, Communists, and the never-defined adversary of “false liberalism” whom they all perceived to be promoting nationalism against the church, the CWO’s construction of the imaginary of the Philippines as “Catholic nation” conflates the body Catholic and the body politic in terms of its God-given role in non-Christian Asia. The document dated 25 January 1953 tells the Filipino nation that “you are a Catholic people, and as such are determined to live and die” ([PL 4] ibid., 117), and contrasts this Filipino Catholic nation to “ancient and once-Christian nations stricken with paralysis by domestic strife, even while the massed forces of evil rise like a mighty sea against their borders” (ibid.,

118). Its 2 February 1964 letter further employs the imaginary of “the only Christian nation in the Orient” as basis for the Philippine church’s singular responsibility for mission ([PL 14] *ibid.*, 237).

With this mission to non-Christian Asia, the imaginary also links citizenship to being Catholic, as expressed in the CWO’s statement of 21 May 1949 asking Catholics “to practise piety towards the Country, as an extension that it is of the family, so much so that its original name derives from that of **Parents**—‘Patria’” ([PL 1] *ibid.*, 37). This statement further conflates the two meanings of “Patria” as familial locality and as territorial nation-state: “We are born in it and from it we continually receive the natural means of perfection. We ought to love her, honour her, serve her and defend her, if need be, with our blood” (*ibid.*). Moreover, its 10 April 1955 letter uses this link to justify Catholic schools because they are “qualified to develop moral character, personal discipline, civic conscience and vocational efficiency, and to teach the duties of citizenship (1935 Philippine Constitution Article XIV, Sec. 5),” and therefore serves society at large ([PL 10] *ibid.*, 162).

This imaginary was promoted through official statements issued during important occasions, among them the Holy Year (1950–1951), Marian Year (1954), and the Second Eucharistic Congress (1956) as well as other patronal feasts and religious assemblies. For the 1954 Marian Year, when “our people . . . should partake in a special degree, of the graces, which such dearly beloved Mother will shower” ([PL 9] *ibid.*, 138), the bishops enjoined all priests “to enhance the devotion of the faithful toward the Mother of God by means of sermons, conferences, novenas, pilgrimages, and other means that their zeal might counsel them” (*ibid.*, 144).

Symbolic rituals on these occasions underscored the imaginary, as in the 1954 Second National Eucharistic Congress when Philippine president Ramon Magsaysay dedicated the nation to the Sacred Heart. Barry (1999, 71) has teased out the implications of such action: “In this Cold war climate, American-inspired anti-Communist ideologies resonated within the Church and assertions of the unique role of the Philippines as the bastion of Christianity in Asia, which were the hallmark of these grand religious events, took on an added meaning.”

One is thus not surprised that official church discourse used all means to promote the imaginary in order to safeguard its domain in education, particularly of the young whom the church expected to carry the torch of the Christian faith. Thus CWO statements rallied the faithful to be “stir[red]

to righteous wrath” by “this undisguised hostility to all that is called God, this aversion from faith and from the principles of revealed religion” ([PL 3] Quitaro 1996, 75) and warned of possible victories during elections of “evil men” in “a Christian nation, whose indestructible basis of unity is the brotherhood of all men under the Fatherhood of God” ([PL 7] *ibid.*, 132).

The CBCP Texts (1967–2013): Catholic Nation at Work

The CBCP statements related to the imaginary of “Catholic nation” have taken a different form because of the changed historical situation in church and society. The Second Vatican Council undoubtedly had a widespread and fundamental impact on the self-understanding and social mission of the Catholic Church—an impact that filtered through church life and institutions with uneven facility and in differing forms (Moreno 2006, 3–5). Moreover, this tumultuous period of transition coincided with the institutionalization of authoritarianism starting with the 1972 declaration of martial law. What had emerged then, in Barry’s (1996, 310) words, were not “two Churches; but rather multiple Catholicisms” generated by the words and ethos of the Second Vatican Council.

Amid these differences, even conflicts, the church faced “two accusations which have plagued it”—“elitism” and “its un- or anti-Filipino character”—and it responded to both under the rubric of being “with the people, especially the masses” (*ibid.*, 315). It had been transformed “into an institution, evidenced by the fact that during EDSA in 1986 the Church hierarchy had defied the Marcos state and sided with the ‘Filipino people’” (*ibid.*, 305). This transformation was dramatically illustrated when the Immaculé Cœur Marie (ICM) and the Maryknoll Sisters closed their flagship Catholic schools in Manila because “charitable acts on the part of well-to-do St. Theresa’s [an ICM school] girls were unacceptable in a climate of working with the masses, not them” (*ibid.*, 269, underscoring in the original).

Although such a move was neither unanimously accepted within these congregations nor followed by other congregations, church discourse related to nationalism and nation has shifted from its earlier narrow focus on religious education. From 1967 onward the CBCP has issued no less than 170 statements, perhaps the greatest number from any local episcopal conference and on topics from general concerns such as rural poverty to specific events like the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

These statements not only highlight the Catholic Church's regained confidence and prominent role, among other social actors, in pre- and post-EDSA I situations, but also exemplify the imaginary of "Catholic nation" at work in the task of national development.

For example, its statement of 9 July 1970 carries the declaration, "the Philippines is a Christian and a democratic country" ([PL 16] Quitaro 1996, 330). Moreover, this status is seen once more as God-given and now linked to the papacy: "When some 400 years ago in the Providence of God the Filipino people began to embrace the Catholic faith, they entered upon a long history of close unity with the Roman Pontiffs ([PL 17] *ibid.*, 333). After obliquely referring to changes brought about by the Philippine Revolution and American occupation as "certain critical religious events," it asserts that "from the very moment of Spain's occupation . . . it became the chief and most earnest endeavor of the Roman Pontiffs . . . to convert the inhabitants of these islands to the faith . . . (and) Catholic interests progressed in the Philippines under the patronage of the Roman Pontiffs" (*ibid.*, 334).

This special status has provided the basis for much CBCP critique on aspects of Philippine society: "But why should this be so in a nation where the vast majority of the people are Catholic and Christian? Our faith in God has played a key role in major events of our history—even in a decidedly political matter like the People Power Revolution of EDSA" ([TNM 1] Quitaro 1999, 95).

Within the horizon of this imaginary, the CBCP has devoted approximately two thirds of its statements to social concerns and often has mentioned them in others focused on internal church matters. Quitaro (1996, xxvii–xlvi) has classified these statements in terms of the following periods: difficult transition (1966–1975), awakening and prophesying (1976–1986), and renewal of vision for the church and society (1987–1995). But more crucial than this periodization is the fundamental pastoral logic that links the church's self-understanding and various national concerns.

This link, aptly described using the Second Vatican Council vocabulary as "reading the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel," has informed not only the CBCP's statements on specific issues but most especially its three central texts, each of which is "a full-length pastoral letter dealing with an aspect of Philippine life which in their [the bishops'] view urgently needs change and renewal according to the Gospel" ([TNM 1] Quitaro 1999, 89). Discussion of these three comprehensive statements—the 1997 statement

on politics (POL), the 1998 statement on the economy (ECO), and the 1999 statement on culture (CUL)—illustrates the Catholic nation at work on matters deemed to be of national consequence.

"Reading under the Light of Catholicism"

The Second Vatican Council document *Gaudium et spes* ("Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World") articulates the Catholic Church's engagement in the modern world: "The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well" (Flannery 1981, 903). Its letter and spirit have engendered authoritative texts—such as "Justice in the World" from the 1971 Synod of Bishops and the papal social encyclicals of Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI, which have updated the tradition known as Catholic social teaching dating from the late nineteenth century—and galvanized various forms of social involvement by Catholic institutions, communities, and individuals. From this broad tradition, particularly the 1971 Synod of Bishops and John Paul II's *Evangelii nuntiandi*, the CBCP was able to obtain supportive texts for its 29 November 1982 statement condemning the increasing military repression by the Marcos regime ([PL 18] Quitaro 1996, 562–63). This statement also offers an articulation of the religious foundation and moral norms behind the CBCP's statements on social involvement.

First, the CBCP statements insist that Catholic social involvement is based on God's call. All three comprehensive letters indicate this religious foundation. For instance, the POL letter states that "the Gospel must influence every phase of life, every stratum of society, and 'restore all things under Christ' (Eph. 1:10)" and that "God's call to the Church is to preach the integral Gospel, the Gospel with all its social dimensions" ([TNM 1] Quitaro 1999, 97). As religious foundation for social involvement, this integral Gospel then "is concerned not only with the individual but also with the community," identified as "the Body of Christ, 'a holy nation'" (*ibid.*, 99). Such involvement stems from its mission of being a "Catholic nation" and promotes social development.

Second, integral human development is taken as the moral norm for this involvement, which is described in the POL letter: "As part of its God-given mission, the Church has the right and duty to work for total human development, freedom and justice, respect for human rights and peace"

(ibid., 104). Using the term “human development” current in United Nations discourse and social advocacy, the CBCP texts insist on “a caring economy and development with a human face” as described by the social encyclicals of John Paul II ([TNM 2] *ibid.*, 174–76). These texts include the word “integral” in a double sense—“the authentic realization of all the fundamental rightful aspirations, material and spiritual, of the human person” as well as “of all persons” ([TNM 1] *ibid.*, 104).

Given this moral norm, subsequent texts have specified two moral principles related to social concerns. First, the human person and human solidarity are put at center stage: “The subject as well as the aim of development is the human person, an individual as well as a social being, characterized by freedom, responsibility, and human rights” (*ibid.*, 163). Second, the universal purpose of created goods and private property is tied to “the biblical truth that God created the earth and its natural resources for the good of all, to be fairly shared and enjoyed by all. This is the fundamental reason why the right to private property, as a natural right and an extension of human freedom, has a basic social orientation” (*ibid.*, 165–66).

Using these principles based on integral human development and the integral Gospel, CBCP statements have articulated the bishops’ reading of the state of the nation under the light of Catholicism.

“Reading the Signs of the Times”

With this powerful light, the CBCP has scanned, observed, and examined Philippine society, at times from a bird’s eye view like the three comprehensive statements, at others in extreme close-up as in pronouncements on human rights violation in the case of forty-three health workers in Morong, Bataan (CBCP 2010); the value-added tax (CBCP 1994); and the workers’ plight in Hacienda Luisita (CBCP 2005). These statements usually describe the situation, evaluate it in the light of the integral Gospel and integral human development, and propose paths for reflection and action. Through this pastoral logic, national concerns are read as signs of the times within the imaginary of “Catholic nation.”

First, one notes the breadth of national concerns that have elicited the CBCP’s voice. Their texts indicate the wide-ranging interest of the leaders at the helm of “Catholic nation.” Many have dealt with expected topics—no less than nine statements during the Marcos regime; since 1986 around sixteen texts supporting national constitutional processes; around fifteen

related to poverty; and close to twenty related to family and reproductive health issues. Other topics have been less expected or known—the war in Iraq (CBCP 2003), the apology for sexual abuse of minors by clerics (CBCP 2002), or the sale of bodily organs by the poor (CBCP 2008a).

Second, reading the signs of the times according to the pastoral logic of the CBCP has appeared straightforward when applied to specific instances. Many statements that are either against human rights abuses or supportive of the poor and marginalized describe how moral principles based on integral human development and the Gospel have been violated by existing conditions. Even the historic postelection statement on 13 February 1986 follows this logic by establishing the systemic fraud during elections, appealing to moral grounds regarding the illegitimacy of the Marcos victory, and finally urging people “to speak up,” “to repair the wrong,” and to do so in a “systematically organized” way ([PL 20] Quitariorio 1996, 623).

However, in the more comprehensive statements on politics, economy, and culture, the general overview of these systemic features in Philippine society differs in form and approach. The POL statement simply describes the local political scene and culture—enumerating well-known practices governed by self-interest and patronage and reporting fraudulent activities before, during, and after elections ([TNM 1] Quitariorio 1999, 89–96). The ECO text employs technical data and analysis from reports of local and foreign institutions, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), which it then criticizes for imposing liberalization, deregulation, and privatization policies ([TNM 2] *ibid.*, 154–62). The CUL document takes an anthropological perspective on traditional values, such as family-centeredness, that are found across different ethnicities and religions ([TNM 3] *ibid.*, 195–201) as well as on “some emergent values” the bishops consider as having “started to take root in Philippine society and now and again burst into public consciousness and play pivotal roles in our national life” like democracy (*ibid.*, 201).

Despite differences in style and quality that can be explained in terms of their unnamed authors, the statements point to areas not aligned to the integral Gospel or integral human development and then propose activities for concerted thought and action. Voters are advised to vote wisely, resist the ills of patronage politics, and participate in organizations like the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) and the National Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel) ([TNM 1] *ibid.*, 106–12).

Government and business are questioned about “development models be they Western or Asian, with their variants and combinations, [which] tend to produce the same inequality of income, growth disproportionately against the poor, persistence of poverty and increased possibilities of social conflict” ([TNM 2] *ibid.*, 162). Filipinos, both praised and criticized for valuing family, are challenged “to work harder to correct such excesses and defects in [our values] . . . that make them less of the Kingdom” ([TNM 3] *ibid.*, 215).

Although these directives for action have been regarded as timely and significant, the link between them and their religious foundation has been neither straightforward nor exclusionary. As the POL text itself admits, “the Gospel does not prescribe only one way of being political nor only one way of political governing whether monarchical, presidential, parliamentary, or whatever . . . Hence there can be no one political party nor one political program that can exclusively claim the name Catholic. That is why there is normally no such thing as ‘the Catholic vote’” ([TNM 1] *ibid.*, 105). As such, one is not surprised at the range of responses to any CBCP statement, including criticisms from within the Catholic Church.

As a whole, nevertheless, the corpus of CBCP statements has left a significant mark on the national landscape. The CBCP’s efforts to read the signs of the times under the light of Catholicism have compelled it to speak on behalf of political prisoners, indigenous peoples, and migrants; to support legislation for agrarian reform and student rights; and to collaborate with other social actors on matters of national importance. Although the question of how much these words are reflected in action remains open, the CBCP statements have received much approval and support from constituencies inside and outside the Catholic Church, and have thus illustrated the imaginary of “Catholic nation” at work.

Prospects for the “Catholic Nation” Imaginary

Like other family trees, the genealogy of “Catholic nation” traces past lines of kinship and affinity. Across the Philippine landscape, historical and ideational forces have sown seeds for conflating the body Catholic and the body politic—the imaginary that the church’s official discourse has created and nurtured. During the latter half of the twentieth century, when turbulent and profound changes touched every aspect of Philippine society, this imaginary gave the Catholic Church a working platform from which it could speak and act to promote its interests and to engage in social issues. In the

wake of postwar independence and nationalist fervor, the CWO documents use the imaginary as defense against threats to its educational enterprise. In the uncanny convergence of the Second Vatican Council’s call for renewal with resistance to government authoritarianism, the CBCP statements put the imaginary in the service of national development. With this historical weight and contemporary utility, the imaginary’s enduring dominance has not been surprising.

At the same time, however, the genealogy also exposes areas of fragility and impasse by identifying lurking presuppositions behind the imaginary. Moreover, as with any imagined community, the imaginary of “Catholic nation” calls for continuing recreation if it is to remain dynamic in the face of new global challenges.

Uncovering Presuppositions behind “Catholic Nation”

Further critical analysis points to presuppositions embedded in official discourse and therefore behind the imaginary. The historical forces that have brought about the interwoven formation of the body Catholic and the body politic raise questions regarding the official church account of the link between evangelization and colonialism, while the theological views about the relation between “this world” and “the next” cast doubts about the adequacy of the pastoral logic governing concrete social involvement.

First, both the CWO and the CBCP statements have created and promoted the imaginary of the Philippines as “Catholic nation” through an incomplete account of the links between evangelization and colonization. For instance, the CBCP statement for the fourth centenary of evangelization asserts that

as Catholics the year 1565 is sacred to us for that was the year when the preaching of the Gospel in these islands began in earnest. As Filipinos that year is also of great significance to us because that was the year when the Philippines as a nation came into being. As the Gospel was brought from one island to another, the Philippines as a country, as one nation emerged. ([PL 14] Quitaro 1996, 237)²

This conflation of Catholicism and nation is further reinforced through an appeal to “Divine Providence [that] has truly chosen our country to be the ‘lighthouse of Catholicism’ in the Orient, as John XXIII said [Address to Pres. Macapagal, July 1962]” (*ibid.*, 239).

Such an account does not only deny the continuous thread of particular instances and organized movements of native resistance but it also glosses over the discrimination, exploitation, and violence perpetuated by both ecclesiastical and colonial authorities. This distorted account, which is echoed in many other statements, has been propagated in Gregorio Zaide's history textbooks universally used in Catholic schools until the introduction of the critical work of historians outside and within these institutions in the late 1960s.

Moreover, in rejecting the legislated nationalization of schools, the CWO statement gives unadulterated praise to all missionaries:

they endure[d] the hardships of their work because they love God and for His sake they love the Filipinos entrusted to their care by God's Church. They came to the Philippines not to enhance the prestige of their own country, not to promote trade relations to fill the coffers of their country's banks, not to seek personal glory and aggrandizement, but only to work for the glory of God and the salvations of souls. ([PL 12] *ibid.*, 216)

Although the church did contribute to native society through social and health services as well as general and technical education, and some missionaries even defended natives against colonial abuses, such a blanket statement of praise is at best naïve, if not historically distorted. There can be no denial of abuses by missionaries or of the economic participation of religious groups in the colonial economy. Only on the centennial of Philippine independence would the bishops' official discourse acknowledge this by "apologiz[ing] for the ambiguous stand some Church people held during the revolution, which partly explains the rise of the religious revolution" (CBCP 1998). Here the word "ambiguous" fails to capture the entanglement of the church and its personnel in the colonial enterprise.

Furthermore this distorted account has contributed to and even legitimized the marginalization of non-Catholic Filipinos. Given its perspective and the competition and even animosity then existing between Protestants and the dominant Catholics, the CWO was oblivious of any religious basis for ecumenical relations and thus thought nothing of appropriating the name "Christian" in practice. This practical marginalization extended to Filipinos with no religion or those from religious traditions

other than Catholicism, especially the significant Muslim minority with its long history of resistance against waves of colonization. Thus organizers of the early anniversary celebrations of the People Power Revolution saw no problems in putting at center stage a Catholic Mass, at times introduced by token invocations from Filipinos of other religions.

Second, the theological views on the interaction between this world and the next raise questions about the one-directional path through which the CBCP statements exemplify the Catholic nation at work, that is, by reading the signs of the times under the light of the Gospel. As illustrated especially in the general statements on the political, economic, and cultural situations, this pastoral logic emphasizes the religious foundation of the Catholic nation at work in social development and leads to the application of religious and moral principles on particular issues in Philippine society. Thus it moves one-way from religious principle to application and is deductive in nature. Even with this deductive logic, the official discourse has produced many proposals that have met with widespread approval, especially during the Marcos period, when Philippine society faced many challenges.

Nevertheless one finds underlying presuppositions behind this logic that carry adverse consequences. For example, the deductive logic often results in the presumed a priori conflation of "what is Catholic" with what is "the common good" or "Filipino" and vice versa. The church's insistence on integral human development in Catholic social teaching recognizes this concept of common good as basic to governance and civil society. Thus the CWO and the CBCP have pointed to the common good and natural law as a path accessible to all, especially in the face of accusations concerning the imposition of Catholic beliefs on non-Catholics.

One of the CBCP's major statements against the reproductive health (RH) legislation addresses all "our Filipino brothers and sisters" and cites the constitution to insist that the RH bill is "far from being simply a Catholic issue" ("hindi batay sa mga katuruan ng Simbahang Katoliko lamang") (CBCP 2011a). Its rejection of contraceptive use is based on two of the core principles commonly shared by all who profess belief in God, that is, the sanctity of the gift of human life and the primary right of parents over their children's development (CBCP 2011b). This rejection is presumed to be the only conclusion all believers could draw from these two principles—a presumption belied by other believers, Christians, Muslims, and even

Catholics, who have reached a different conclusion. Even if we bracket aside the existence of different conceptions of “natural law” within the Catholic tradition as well as other alternative frameworks in the search for the common good, official church discourse as represented in this statement cannot just assume that any divergence from its conclusions is “the product of the spirit of this world, a secularist, materialistic spirit that considers morality as a set of teachings from which one can choose, according to the spirit of the age” (CBCP 2011c).

Another adverse consequence of the deductive logic is how official church discourse has equated values it calls “Filipino” with being “Catholic”: “Love and cherish our Christian traditions and culture because they belong to the basic elements of our nationhood. Love and cherish our national symbols” ([PL 13] Quitaro 1996, 227). This uncritical perspective that Barry (1999, 63) has called “conservative retrenchment” “promotes national ideals and progress by being loyal to the traditions of the Church and by embracing the duties of citizenship,” thus conflating what constitutes Filipino and Catholic. Although some statements have criticized certain “Filipino” values and practices, this conflation has become a weapon against perceived adversaries from the “Westernized” or “modern” world such as “false liberalism” or “secularism.” For instance, the CBCP ([PL 22] Quitaro 1996, 831) idealizes “our own traditional Filipino-Christian values of true femininity” in terms of combining “her [the woman’s] role as a mother, wife and co-provider of the family with her own desire for self-fulfillment” and contrasts it to “the western ideology of feminism [that] fails to recognize this and fights for the exaggerated individualism of the woman.”

Furthermore, this unidirectional and deductive logic is linked to the clear boundaries the CBCP has drawn between the “moral” dimension—its avowed focus on social involvement—and the technical aspects that it consigns as properly belonging to the laity. Its statement on politics acknowledges various ways of being political based on the Gospel ([TNM 1] Quitaro 1999, 105), while the one on the economy admits its lack of competence in offering “technical solutions to the many complex problems of the economy” ([TNM 2] *ibid.*, 162).

However these presumed clear boundaries between the social and the moral, somewhat analogous to those between this world and the next, are not as easily marked or closed. This ambiguity is best and most dramatically illustrated by comparing the CBCP statements and actions related to successive

political crises of three presidents. In the historic People Power Revolution against Marcos, the CBCP statement of 13 February 1986 appealed to moral grounds to declare the Marcos victory as illegitimate because of systemic electoral fraud and asked the nation to act “in a systematically organized” way ([PL 19] Quitaro 1996, 623). When Pres. Joseph Estrada was charged with plunder, the CBCP often wrote against political corruption in government, and bishops participated in mass demonstrations leading to his ouster in what is known as EDSA II. But when Estrada’s successor, Pres. Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, faced similar allegations in 2008, CBCP president Angel Lagdameo called church involvement in EDSA II “embarrassing” since it installed a president who later on was judged by surveys as the most corrupt president (Infante 2008). Moreover, much to the dismay of groups within and outside the church, the CBCP (2008b) issued a statement simply asking the president to combat corruption rather than calling on people to demand her ouster. Regardless of one’s agreement or disagreement with these pronouncements, clearly the bishops’ statements were based on different readings of “the signs of the times”—assessments not derived deductively from Catholic beliefs and therefore needing to be transparent and open to as many competent voices from within and outside the church.

Moreover these assessments must be allowed to interact with, even interrogate, the very principles that are the basis of pastoral exhortation and action. For example, numerous CBCP statements related to family have emphasized rightly the church’s teaching on the unity and indissolubility of marriage as well as the profound responsibility of parents for their children’s welfare. However, in assessing the state of Filipino families today according to this deductive pastoral logic, they are often reduced to lamenting the lack of proper Christian formation of parents and the impact of poverty, migration, and what they refer to as neoliberalism and secularism.

A more nuanced assessment of these contemporary developments would ask if the church’s view of marriage and the family is not tied to the image of a traditional nuclear family with a sole breadwinner receiving what it calls a family living wage. This traditional view is suggested in the following CBCP statement about a woman’s role in the family: “The womb qualifies a woman’s quality to love. Although many women work merely to supplement family income, in urban areas at least, there is a trend for work—or career—to exert such an appeal as to begin to alienate women from their womb. We believe [sic] that many of our women are still oriented towards motherhood”

([PL 19] Quitaro 1996, 802). Such a statement does not only negate the church's enduring recognition of celibacy for those dedicated to service, be they ordained, religious or lay, but also makes maternity the primary basis of a woman's worth, although another CBCP statement mentions "desire for self-fulfillment" ([PL 22] *ibid.*, 831).

Similar statements fail to consider sociocultural presuppositions behind what the church proposes and thus seem to point to opting out of the modern world in favor of a return to some idealized version of the past. Without accepting migration or globalization uncritically, official church leaders can better help families live their faith and navigate through these developments. For instance, no church statement has devoted much attention to how extended families may promote the nurture of children and perhaps even the indissolubility of marriage. Answers to such issues are not easy but the actual situation must be allowed to interrogate the presuppositions of religious teaching. As Gula (1989) writes, although church practice has often been deductive, moving from principle to situation, Catholic moral theology includes a more inductive process through which consideration of the particular helps uncover the principle's very core.

For official church discourse in the bishops' statements to contribute better to the discovery of the common good, it has to incorporate a multidirectional pastoral logic involving religious/moral foundations and situational assessments based on multiple voices from within and outside the Church.

Ongoing Dynamic between "Catholic" and "Nation" in a Global Context

Even with the dominance of the imaginary of "Catholic nation," tension between "Catholic" and "nation" appears inevitable. In the words of Asad (2003, 255), appeal to the moral aspects of social concerns is not the exclusive domain of religion given that the secular nation-state is itself "a complex arrangement of legal reasoning, moral practice, and political authority." This tension has been present in Philippine historical experience through related forces that have pulled "Catholic" and "nation" apart.

From the mid-nineteenth century onward, the town center became "the scene of competing realms"—that of the church-*convento* complex and of the town elite (Ileto 1998, 81). Education and access to knowledge, which used to be the sole domain of the church, opened up with the

entry of foreign publications and the possibility of studies abroad. Even Christian influence itself had to be differentiated between "official and popular practices" (Lehmann 2002, 412) or between the institutional and the symbolic, what may be referred to as "Christianity as church and as story" (Francisco 2005, 185–221).

Given these forces, Catholics have played multidimensional, even contradictory, roles in movements that have separated "Catholic" and "nation." Those Catholics centered on the church-*convento* complex often colluded with Spanish colonial forces, while others, including priests, played an active role in the nationalist movement (Schumacher 1981, 37) or participated in anticolonial struggles in terms of following Christ (Ileto 1998). Later in the twentieth century, the 1956 strike at the Dominican University of Santo Tomas put Catholics on both sides of the picket lines—the Dominican management and Catholic hierarchy with its official group called the Catholic Action of the Philippines (CAP) versus the labor union affiliated with the Federation of Free Workers (FFW) inspired by Jesuit mentors and formed by their alumni (Fabros 1988, 66–81). A similar portrait emerges from Robert Youngblood's (1990, 172–203) study of the People Power Revolution and from Antonio Moreno's (2006) study of the postauthoritarian period. Catholics have reflected not only the entire spectrum of political and ideological differences in Philippine society but even some church leaders—bishops and major religious superiors—have also been on opposite sides. A public manifestation of this division is the issuance of two contradicting documents on the 1976 referendum-plebiscite on the Marcos constitution—"That All May Be One" from seventeen bishops opposed to participation and "And the Truth Shall Make You Free" from two CBCP officials in favor of participation (Youngblood 1990, 194).

Recreating the Imaginary?

Because of the inevitable and persistent nature of this dynamic between "Catholic" and "nation," the Catholic Church will have to reexamine the imaginary in the face of current challenges in the Philippine and global contexts.

First, such a reimagining can no longer be founded on an uncritical account of Christianity's history in the Philippines, or function solely on a deductive pastoral logic in its involvement in social issues. These presuppositions have contributed to the marginalization of those from

other religious traditions or perspectives as well as from others within the church, and therefore to the exclusion of their possible contributions to the church's reading of the signs of the times. Listening to these voices does not mean compromising religious commitment but being more discerning in the search for the common good. Thus can the church's social involvement together with other voices in Philippine society become more deeply rooted and transformative.

Second, the church's recreation of the imaginary will have to take place within and in recognition of the public domain, the space "we now retrospectively call the social, that all-inclusive secular space that we distinguish conceptually from variables like 'religion,' 'state,' and 'national economy' and so forth" (Asad 2003, 190–91). No longer is there recourse to a clear-cut differentiation of realms as proposed by the secularization thesis (Casanova 1994, 11–17). Asad (2003, 200) concludes in his discussion of Islam in contemporary Europe and Egypt that if this thesis "no longer carries the conviction it once did, this is because the categories of 'politics' and 'religion' turn out to implicate each other more profoundly than we thought, a discovery that has accompanied our growing understanding of the powers of the modern nation-state. The concept of the secular cannot do without the idea of religion." Given this integral link between the religious and the secular, the imaginary will have to be recreated in this space that is shared with all stakeholders in Philippine society.

This point is confirmed by Joaquin Bernas's (1991, 17) analysis of the Philippine Constitution's fundamental principles regarding religion—freedom of choice and separation of church and state—that "are complementary" but "sometimes overlap." These principles establish that "neither side [church or state] may pass law for the other" (ibid., 21). Moreover, "the free exercise clause contains two guarantees: the guarantee of freedom to believe and the guarantee of freedom to act according to one's belief" (ibid., 17), but "care must be taken that no infringement of the religious liberty of others be committed" (ibid., 23).

In fact the church's official discourse has capitalized on this overlap. When accused of imposing their views on non-Catholic sectors, the CWO and the CBCP statements have insisted that they sought no special concessions but rather the implementation of constitutional provisions. But when objecting to the inclusion of Rizal's novels in the general education curriculum or to the RH bill on the grounds that both are inimical to the

Catholic faith, they appeal to the principle of freedom of religion only and in effect deny the state's rightful role in matters that pertain to all, such as education and health. As Bernas (ibid., 22) explains, "everything that is arguably religious is protected by the free exercise clause, and everything that is arguably non-religious may be the object of government support and involvement." The word "arguably" in both cases indicates the constant need for navigation between religion and nation/secular, as reflected in the history of Philippine church–state relations under different regimes (Schumacher 1976, 62).

Third, the church's reimagining of the Philippines as "Catholic nation" must now contend with the growing impact of global forces on both religion and nation. Emerging patterns in the religion–globalization nexus identified by Lehmann (2002, 426)—"the cosmopolitan globalization of religion in which institutional and popular forms of religion cross-fertilize one another" and "a global dynamic in which religious movements and cultures create strong transnational ties of belonging and similarity"—have been evident in the global spread of Filipino charismatic groups like Couples for Christ and El Shaddai as transnational communities imbued with the mission of Catholic nation (Francisco 2014).

But more than these, what is bound to have greater impact on the recreation of the imaginary is how multiple forms of globalization create new configurations of space and time and, therefore, new forms of community such as in social media. Diverse forms of linkages within and across national boundaries have reshaped all aspects of individual and social life as well as the status of the nation/state. With massive, sustained, and multidirectional movements of populations, a space "between here and there" has emerged, erasing distinctions between geographical places of origin and of destination or creating virtual spaces for encounter (ibid., 580–92). With accessible and far-reaching digital communications technology, "real time" can now be experienced simultaneously throughout the globe; for instance, family and friends all over the world are now able to attend a deceased's *e-buro* (an electronic wake) through cyberspace.

Given these extensive and profound changes, the relation between the body Catholic and the body politic may call for imaginaries similarly radical. Just as the formation of religious community and nation involved time-space considerations, these new configurations undoubtedly would shape the nature of religious community and the nation, and thus challenge the Catholic Church to rethink the imaginary of the Philippines as "Catholic nation."

Abbreviations Used

- CBCP** Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines
- CUL** Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Culture, 25 Jan. 1999 (Quitorio 1999, 194–218, also referred to as *TNM 3*)
- CWO** Catholic Welfare Organization
- ECO** Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Economy, 10 July 1998 (Quitorio 1999, 153–80, also referred to as *TNM 2*)
- PL 1** Joint Pastoral Letter of the Hierarchy of the Philippines on the Virtue of Justice, 22 Jan. 1949 (Quitorio 1996, 32–41)
- PL 2** Joint Statement of the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines on the Book, "The Pride of the Malay Race," 6 Jan. 1950 (Quitorio 1996, 53–56)
- PL 3** Joint Statement of the Philippine Hierarchy at the Close of the Holy Year (1950–1951) (Quitorio 1996, 70–112)
- PL 4** Unity, the Prime Witness of God: Joint Pastoral Letter of Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines at the Close of the First Plenary Council of the Philippine Islands, 25 Jan. 1953 (Quitorio 1996, 116–20)
- PL 5** Joint Statement of the Hierarchy on the Defense of the Constitutional Rights of Citizens concerning Optional Religious Instruction in Public Schools, 29 Jan. 1953 (Quitorio 1996, 121)
- PL 6** A Time to Speak: Joint Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Hierarchy on Religious Instruction in Public Schools, 18 Feb. 1953 (Quitorio 1996, 122–27)
- PL 7** Joint Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines on Elections, 12 Sept. 1953 (Quitorio 1996, 128–33)
- PL 8** Statement of the Philippine Hierarchy on Masonry, 14 Jan. 1954 (Quitorio 1996, 134–37)
- PL 9** Joint Pastoral Letter of the Philippine Hierarchy on the Marian Year, 9 Apr. 1954 (Quitorio 1996, 138–45)
- PL 10** Joint Pastoral Letter on Catholic Education, 10 Apr. 1955 (Quitorio 1996, 154–63)
- PL 11** Statement of the Philippine Hierarchy on the Novels of Dr. Jose Rizal: *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, 21 Apr. 1956 (Quitorio 1996, 184–95)
- PL 12** Statement of the Philippine Hierarchy on the Nationalization of Schools, 28 Jan. 1959 (Quitorio 1996, 209–17)
- PL 13** Statement of the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines on Nationalism, 3 Dec. 1959 (Quitorio 1996, 222–27)
- PL 14** Joint Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Hierarchy on the Fourth Centenary of the Evangelization of the Philippines, 2 Feb. 1964 (Quitorio 1996, 236–41)
- PL 15** Joint Statement of the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines on the Religious Instruction Bill, 6 June 1965 (Quitorio 1996, 251–64).
- PL 16** Statement on Civic Responsibility, 9 July 1970 (Quitorio 1996, 330–32)

- PL 17** Joint Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines on the Visit of the Holy Father, 22 Sept. 1970 (Quitorio 1996, 333–37)
- PL 18** A Statement Concerning Current Issues that Affect Church–State Relationships, 29 Nov. 1982 (Quitorio 1996, 562–64)
- PL 19** Save the Family and Life. A Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines on the Family, 13 July 1993 (Quitorio 1996, 799–805)
- PL 20** Post-election Statement, Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, 13 Feb. 1986 (Quitorio 1996, 621–23)
- PL 21** Religious Instruction in Public Schools, an Opportunity and a Challenge: Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, 15 July 1987 (Quitorio 1996, 659–61)
- PL 22** "I Will Make a Suitable Companion for Him" (Gen. 2:18). Statement on the Forthcoming Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 9 July 1995 (Quitorio 1996, 829–32)
- POL** Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Politics, 16 Sept. 1997 (Quitorio 1999, 89–113, also referred to as *TNM 1*)
- TNM 1** Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Politics, 16 Sept. 1997 (Quitorio 1999, 89–113, also referred to as POL)
- TNM 2** Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Economy, 10 July 1998 (Quitorio 1999, 153–80, also referred to as ECO)
- TNM 3** Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Culture, 25 Jan. 1999 (Quitorio 1999, 194–218, also referred to as CUL)

Notes

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- 1 Specific titles of these primary materials in the form of statements and pastoral letters, listed chronologically according to their dates of issue, are given in the list of abbreviations. Materials cited from the *Pastoral Letters, 145–1995* and *CBCP: On the Threshold of the Next Millennium* are designated with *PL* and *TNM*, respectively, followed by a number.
- 2 Here the formation of the Philippine nation is located within sixteenth-century evangelization, thereby distorting its actual emergence in the nineteenth-century nationalist and revolutionary movements.

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