



Mission Sparks

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People of different religious traditions
on a spiritual journey.

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An Editorial Note

In many religions one can find the praxis of pilgrimage. It is a long journey made by believers to places considered as sacred – travelling as part of religious devotion.

This edition of Mission Sparks contains experiences of people who undertook trips to places of spiritual significance. The authors' deep insights on 'pilgrimage' is inspiring, even to a sober Reformed Christian as myself.

Some of the writers observe the praxis in different religions, describing the astonishing dynamics of this phenomenon in a lively yet objective and critical manner.

Annually, hundreds of thousands of Catholic and Orthodox Christians go on pilgrimages to holy sites such as *Lourdes*, *Santiago de Compostela*, Rome and Jerusalem; millions of Muslims undertake the *Hajj* or *Umrah* to Mecca and Medina; Hindus come in masses to *Kumbh Mela* to take a dip in the holy river Ganges; Buddhists travel to Lumbini; and so forth. Last but not least, more and more Protestants are getting in the mood of "religious tourism" too, be it to places of the Reformation of Martin Luther in Germany and Jean Calvin in Switzerland, or to sites of past missionary glory such as Mansinam Island in West-Papua.

Herewith, I invite the readers to join in this enriching discussion on what travelling to places of religious gravity can do to your spiritual life.

Sonia C. Parera-Hummel, M. Th.
Chief Editor and
UEM Executive Secretary for Asia



Walking in Newness of Life: The Black Nazarene *Traslacion*

Rev. Sophia Lizares

The largest and most significant procession in the Philippines is the annual *traslacion*, the commemoration of the relocation (*traslacion*) in 1787 of a life-size image of the Black Nazarene from a church in the walled city of Intramuros to Quiapo, Manila's old city centre. Rather than wane over the intervening 230 years, the procession and its attendant rituals has swept up increasing numbers of devotees with an estimated 12 million participating in 2017 when the procession took 24 hours to complete.

Msgr. Jose Clemente Ignacio, rector of the Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene, describes the procession as "imitating the Calvary experience: the sacrifice and suffering that our Lord endured for our salvation like when Jesus was walking barefoot, carrying the cross to Mount Calvary."¹ In its highly sensuous way, the procession reflects the Filipino "culture of touch and, significantly, in a way we want to touch heaven."²

Eduardo Alegria, a recovering drug addict, says, "it is really hard pulling the rope. You run out of energy. I pushed myself to my limit just to be able to hold on. When I see the Nazarene, I see God. You have challenges in life ...and doing this gives me strength."³

¹ "Understanding the fierce devotion behind the Black Nazarene", Antonio Anup Gonsalves 5 January 2017. <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/understanding-the-fierce-devotion-behind-the-black-nazarene-83225/> accessed 14 September 2017.

² <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/understanding-the-fierce-devotion-behind-the-black-nazarene-83225/>

³ Joseph Hincks. "Redemption at the Feast of the Black Nazarene: A Maroon Tide Sweeps Through Manila" <http://time.com/4627533/redemption-feast-black-nazarene-manila/> accessed 28 August 2017

Said to mirror a confused country, this complex devotion has alternatively been viewed as a “folk” ritual expressing the superstition, fanaticism and superficiality of the poor; or, as an “extravagant” embodiment of “a prayer life bordering on the mystical.”⁴

This essay examines the *traslacion* as pilgrimage not only as a performative movement out of the mundane toward the sacred, but also as a lifelong commitment to transformation. Using socio-historical inquiry, it considers the colonial history of the procession, the mystique of a Suffering God, and the implications for transformative evangelization and mission for the Philippine church at a time when the poor are the targets of a vicious government-initiated War on Drugs.⁵

Participating in the suffering of Christ

The *poon* (icon) at the center of the pilgrimage is an elaborately attired statue of Jesus carrying the cross. Brought by evangelizing Recollect friars who arrived from Spain in 1606, the statue represents various strands of Christianity reaching the Philippines when it was a dependency administered by the Viceroyalty of New Spain in México. Sculpted in Mexico, the *Nazareno* is of a Christ “naturalized” in the Philippines bearing a heritage of traditional religions from Spain and North Africa propagated by Spanish and Mexican peasants who became missionaries sent to evangelize the Philippines in the 17th century.⁶ This amalgam of folk Christianities and indigenous religious beliefs characterized by magical thinking and the veneration of saints/ancestors persists in the Philippines.

⁴ Mark Joseph Calano. “The Black Nazarene, Quiapo and the Weak Philippine State” in *Kritika Kultura* 25 (2015), 167.

⁵ Paterno Esmaquel II. “Devotees mark Nazarene feast in time of killings,” 8 January 2017. <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/157653-devotees-feast-nazarene-killings-war-drugs> accessed 28 August 2017

⁶ Douglas Elwood and Patricia Magdamo. *Christ in Philippine Context*. Quezon City: New Day Publishes, 1971, 2 in Karl M. Gaspar, CSsR. *The Masses are Messiah: Contemplating the Filipino Soul*, Research on Spirituality Series Number 7, Institute of Spirituality in Asia, Quezon City, 2010, 139.

Along with the Child Jesus (*Santo Niño*) and the dead Christ (*Santo Entierro*), the Black Nazarene is one of the most important icons of Christ in the Philippines. Walking, pulling the heavy cart that bears the statue, or wiping it with a towel allows barefoot pilgrims to connect with the suffering Jesus who is believed to impart grace to whomever or whatever touches or is close to the image. This very intimate and material devotion falls within Foucault's arts of existence –

those intentional and voluntary actions by which men [and women] not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an oeuvre that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria.⁷

Starting from the 1st of January each year, a novena of prayers culminates on the 9th with the procession. During this novena period, devotees patiently line up for as long as seven hours without complaint to pray and touch the image. There are long queues for confessions. Participation in the annual procession alone exceeds five million. Counting the crowd in the evening prior to the procession and the multitude that goes into the basilica during the festival days, about 12 million Christians and non-Christians are estimated to be involved. Anecdotal information also indicates long-term devotion and commitment passed down the generations.

Apart from the annual procession, there are about 10 weekday Masses and regular healing services around the statue. The devotion extends beyond the basilica to every Catholic church which has been given by the basilica a crucifix "so that devotees are nourished in their devotion to the Black Nazarene". For 2017, Ignacio estimated a 30 percent increase in the number of individual participants as well in the number of dioceses

⁷ Calano, 170. citing Michel Foucault History of Sexuality, Volume 2: The Use of Pleasure. New York: Random House, 1985, 10-11.

asking for crucifixes from the basilica. The pilgrim image also visits parishes and dioceses. The basilica's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/quiaopochurch/>) livestreams prayers, Mass and devotions to close to 800,000 followers, and gets about 40,000 views daily. Through Facebook, the round-the-clock broadcast of live, and recorded shows, the basilica is a church that is always open. Also available through the church are legal aid and a rehabilitation program for those involved in illegal drugs.

Dolorous Christianity - The veneration of the Black Nazarene typifies the "dolorousness" that characterized Christian mysticism in the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment in Europe. This focus on the physical and psychological agony of Jesus bears the marks of "masochistic substitutionary satisfaction."⁸ The statue is venerated through "kinetic rituals," largely learned katapathic forms of bodily, material and symbolic expression that constitute the devotees' *habitus*.⁹

Nowhere is this learned behaviour for "dolorousness" seen more in the Philippines than during Lent when bands of men and women dressed as penitents walk barefoot on hot asphalt, crowns of thorns or barbed wire on their heads, and a heavy wooden cross on their shoulders. A good number would carry whips with razor blades at the end of ropes that they use to flog to themselves as they walk. Men and a few women have had themselves crucified. In the evenings of Holy Thursday and Good Friday, hundreds join solemn processions through towns following images of their chosen saint and most importantly the *Mater Dolorosa* (Sorrowing Mother) and the *Santo Entierro* (Holy Body of the Dead Christ). From Holy Wednesday

⁸ Dorothee Soelle. *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance*. Barbara and Martin Rumscheidt (Trans.) Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001, 141. Soelle cites Peter Dinzelbacher, *Christliche Mystik im Abendland: Ihre Geschichte von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des Mittelalters* (Paderborn, 1994).

⁹ Simon Coleman and John Eade. "Introduction" Reframing Pilgrimage" in *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion*, Simon Coleman and John Eade (eds.) Routledge, London and New York, 2004, 2. The term "kinetic ritual" is attributed to Edith Turner in Turner, V and Turner, E. (1978) *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press.

to Easter Sunday, it is as if Christian Philippines is thrown back in time and in another space more like Spain and Mexico 400 years ago.

Behind the durability of the practice is its institutionalization in family tradition, religious societies, and the Roman Catholic Church itself. Organizing the activities surrounding the *traslacion* is the responsibility of a voluntary lay organization that traces its history to the organization in 1620 of the Cofradia de Jesus Nazareno, the first confraternity dedicated to Jesus in the Philippines. Composed of men with a strong devotion to the Black Nazarene, the Cofradia was officially endorsed by Pope Innocent X in a Papal Bull in 1651. The Philippine confraternity parallels such groups as the Penitential Brotherhoods of the Sweet Name of Jesus Nazarene founded in Spain starting the late 16th century and which continue in Spain today.¹⁰ John Paul II recognized the church where the statue is enshrined as the Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene because of its role in strengthening a deep popular devotion to Jesus Christ and because of its cultural contribution to the religiosity of the Filipino people.

Prayers as indicators of commitment and transformation – Participating in the *traslacion* is both as sign and reinforcement of that commitment to the Black Nazarene and a testimony to God's mercy, Divine Providence, and healing.

The relationship of the devotee with the Black Nazarene is highly personal with some devotees referring to the image as "si Nazareno" (he, the Nazarene) as if it was human. Also used are Señor (Lord, Mister), Tata (Father), "number one in my life" to whom "every pain, every hurt can be poured out." This sense of nearness and touch is shown in this and similar prayers on the Basilica Facebook page: "*Poong hesus nazareno haplusin mo ang karamdaman n dumapo s akin at kalusugan po bawat isa ng buong familya ko AMEN* (Lord Jesus Nazarene, touch the ill-

¹⁰ See for example, [http://www.wikiwand.com/es/Cofrad%C3%A1da_Penitencial_de_Nuestro_Padre_Jes%C3%BAس_Nazareno_\(Valladolid\)](http://www.wikiwand.com/es/Cofrad%C3%A1da_Penitencial_de_Nuestro_Padre_Jes%C3%BAس_Nazareno_(Valladolid)) accessed 4 September 2017.

ness that has affected me and [I pray] for the health of each of my family members. Amen.)”¹¹

Obusan, in a study of Filipino mysticism in Quiapo, finds that prayers to the Black Nazarene revolve around pleas for help and guidance in relation to personal and family concerns (e.g., health and wellbeing, work, education and safety), forgiveness, and *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) and commitment.¹² The Nazarene is the savior in whom the pilgrim has “total hope” and “utmost faith”, the source of inner peace and strength as they resolve their fears and problems.

From this savior, they seek guidance and to him they entrust their children and their daily lives. “*Gabay mo po kami at pangunahan sa araw araw at ilayo ninyo mo po kami sakit. Itinataas ko din po yong mga anak po namin nasa tulungan po ninyo kaming pagpalaki na may takot sa Diyos.* Amen Than you Lord for Everything. (Guide us and lead us every day and keep us from illness. I also lift to you our children. Please help us raise them to be God-fearing.)

Petitions specifically related to the War on Drugs started as the government rolled out its relentless deadly campaign. Among the prayers are for the dead to rest in peace: “*Sa pamangkin kong namatay, sana kung saan man siya ngayon naroroon, matahimik din ang kaluluwa niya kahit gano'n ang nangyari sa kanya.* (For my nephew who died, wherever he is right now, I wish his soul rests in peace even if such a thing happened to him.)” There are prayers of encouragement and strength to grieving families: “*Doon sa mga kapwa ko deboto na may kamag-anak o kapamilya na natokhang, huwag kayong mawalan ng pag-asa at saka magtiwala pa rin sa Panginoon*” (For my fellow devotees whose relatives have been killed in the war on drugs, do not lose hope and continue to have faith in the Lord.)” Appeals for divine intervention are included: “*Sana*

¹¹ Accessed 19 October 2017.

¹² Teresita B. Obusan. *Mystic or Mistake: Exploring Filipino Mysticism in Quiapo*. Research on Spirituality Series No. 4. Institute of Spirituality in Asia, Quezon City. 2008.

maghimala ang Mahal na Poong Nazareno sa ginagawa ng mga tao na 'yan,' (May the Beloved Lord Nazarene make a miracle out of what those people do [referring to continued killings])."

Devotees' prayers indicate the centrality of the Nazareno in their lives, an intimacy that allows them to enter into Christ's suffering and to live from there, and a deep faith that God will move on their behalf. The prayers are not one-off events but are imbued with *debusyon* (devotion) as carried out in *panata* (vows), *sakripisyō* (sacrifice) and *serbisyo* (service). The vows can be life-long and even passed on as a legacy to the next generation.¹³

As they carry out concrete actions of devoted sacrifice and service, pilgrims say that they have become better persons, better parents and better Christians. Although some devotees say their prayers include wider intentions, the appeals and expressions of gratitude generally focus on favours for family and clan reflecting what has been observed in the literature on Philippine religiosity.¹⁴

The Suffering Christ: more helpful than a risen one?

How might the mystique of suffering transform a people who have been through centuries of oppression? How might folk religion around a Suffering God be relevant today?

Pilario argues against taking an "overly 'mentalist' or intellectualist religion," which is critical of the rituals of "the wiping, the dancing, and the believing." Filipino devotions to Jesus show "what Christian life truly is as it is lived on the ground: a curious mix of prayer and action, trust and resistance, mysticism and prophecy. These devotions also serve as a window that leads us to a view of the life of Jesus as mystic and prophet."¹⁵

¹³ Obusan, 65-86.

¹⁴ Gaspar, 2010, 288

¹⁵ Danny Pilario, "Santo Niño and Nazareno: A Human God Defiant against Suffering" 26 January 2016. Accessed 26 October 2017.

The points out that the *traslacion* rituals can be done and understood “only by those who are socialized in them.”¹⁶

Christian concepts of fortitude in the face of suffering might also be useful where suffering seems endless and problems are unresolved. In her work on mysticism and resistance, Dorothee Soelle writes about Reinhold Schneider, an anti-nuclear activist who remained faithful in the face of an impotent God who could not stop science and the nuclear enterprise. Christ “the one who suffers with us on earth...is more helpful than the risen one,” she quotes Schneider as saying.¹⁷ He refused to be numbed by years of frustration and hopelessness and chose to remain steadfast in his agony which he made the ground of his resistance.

No doubt religious traditions can be reduced to fanatic, superstitious, and uncritical religiosity with a layer of tourism and commercialization and thus be instrumentalized to reproduce social inequality. Indeed each year, politicians and movie stars appear at the procession to boost their popularity. Nevertheless, the seemingly choreographed movements and prayers while durable are open to improvisation. Using Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, Pilario and Calano note that rather than keep persons in stasis, habitus is endlessly authentic, creative and inventive. In times when people are blocked from accessing justice through institutional channels, they resort to “oblique ways to pursue poetic justice” and “other tactics of the weak” this way overcoming fear and paralysis, or stoking courage and resistance.¹⁸

In the Philippines, icons and religious ritual have been used to great effect in secular and even more specifically political activi-

¹⁶ Daniel Franklin Pilario, CM “Praying Bodies, Dying Bodies: Reflection on the Nazareno and the Santo Nino” in Philippine Sociological Review (2017) Vol. 65, pp 155-161.

¹⁷ Reinhold Schneider, *Winter in Wien: Aus meinem Notizbüchern, 1957-58* (Freiburg, i.Br, 1958). In Soelle, 154-155.

¹⁸ Pilario, 161. Among the practices related to grieving murder victims is the placing of chicks on the coffins of the dead in the belief that the birds would peck at the conscience of the killers.

ties. The community recital of the *pasyon* (passion of Christ) during Holy Week worked to strengthen resistance in the Philippine Revolution against Spain, with Filipinos identifying their sufferings with that of Christ. In 1986, an image of the Virgin Mary was used as a rallying point during the People Power Uprising. That no shot was fired during those four days leading to the ouster of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos is seen as a miracle. Since then a larger monument to "Our Lady of EDSA" has become a popular protest venue. Icons can mobilize beyond their traditional uses when they are accompanied by specific acts of legitimisation by a credible church authority, 'packaging' and semantic contestation.¹⁹

The Philippine Catholic hierarchy has also been attuned to how "popular religiosity can lead people a true encounter with God in Jesus Christ" ("*Evangelii Nuntiandi*," #48). As the number of extra-judicial killings in the Drug War mounted, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines called for the traditional rites of mourning in 40 Days of Prayer for the Dead and prayers to the killings will stop. Included in the prayers is the "*De Profundis*" (Psalm 130) which with its first lines --"Out of the depths, I cry to you, Lord"-- draws on the grief of thousands of poor, fearful families, who feel judged not only by the state agents but also their neighbours.

Bereft of familiar religious symbols and rituals to rally around, the country's minority Protestant population may have to delve into the Filipino religio-cultural well for models of pilgrimage and mysticism that do not abstract from social reality.

¹⁹ Julius Bautista, "The Rebellion and the Icon: Holy Revolutions in the Philippines" A.J.S.S. 34:2 (291–310) 2006 Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, accessed 12 October 2017. Also see *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Uprisings in the Philippines, 1840–1910* (1979) by Reynaldo C. Ileto and Resil Mojares' *The War Against the Americans: Resistance and Collaboration in Cebu, 1899–1906* (1999). Bautista notes that the books illustrate how Filipino piety or even cooption to the agenda of their colonizers became, ironically, the basis for anti-colonial revolution.

Journey to Newness: Traslacion and transformation

Rather than the Christus Victor, the Triumphant Christ, or the God of Glory, it is the Suffering God who has been leading Filipinos through their personal struggles and the dark nights of the country's soul. By identifying with pain and suffering, devotees are shielded from despair or numbness that make people turn to narcotic drugs, or remain indifferent in the face of the cold-blooded killings. How then might the Church respond to this leading?

Through *panata*, *sakripisyo*, and *serbisyo*, the devotion to the Black Nazarene contains seeds of transformation as people tap into the mystical traditions of prayer and suffering. Well-oriented, the devotion has the potential of transforming an infantile faith to suffering with God the godlessness of the world. At the root of the transformation is the people's relationship of the Black Nazarene in whom they experience God as --

Jesus with the loving, nonjudgmental gaze [...] not a religious hierarch, but a prophet of popular piety, speaking to crowds much like those of the *traslación* and feeling their anguish. Many Filipinos live in wretched circumstances, with little relief from the government, from civic organizations, from families and communities broken by the pressures of contemporary life, from the official Church. Those who turn to the Nazareno turn to the only one they can trust unreservedly.²⁰

Rather than seeing the hordes of devotees as superstitious idolators, it has thus been suggested that the Church start from where the people are, viewing them as "suffering individuals called to discipleship."²¹ The Basilica's rector Ignacio says he would look at them as at the "vast crowd" in Mark 6:34: "His

²⁰ Eleanor Dionisio. "The gaze of the Nazarene" 9 January 2016. <http://www.jcicsi.org.ph/the-gaze-of-the-nazarene> originally published as <http://opinion.inquirer.net/91869/the-gaze-of-the-nazarene>. Accessed 30 October 2017.

²¹ Ibid.

heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things." The idea is to adopt "the gaze of the Good Shepherd, who seeks not to judge but to love" ("*Evangelii Gaudium*," #125).

Pilario, who has worked among the poor for decades, writes: "If the Church is to help mediate and channel God's salvation into the human community, these practices should be considered as the way in which the Church must walk and think, for it is here that people articulate the acts of God experienced in their everyday life."²²

This pastoral approach to the Nazarene's devotees opens avenues for faith formation, deeper liturgical life, prayer, and contemplation. It also facilitates the prophetic dimensions of presence and witness, commitment to social development, and human liberation. With the Nazarene's power to draw those from other faiths, the devotion could be a starting point for interreligious dialogue, now increasingly important in view of the expansion of ISIS in the Philippines.

Intrapersonal transformation –The devotion to the Nazarene rejects the notion of the modern *homo faber*, a producer and consumer who fashions even his own life. Testimonies of devotees show that instead of relying on the human will, they surrender to God's will, reorienting their heart and mind even as they create a culture of worship and caring. Casting their lives on God's grace, devoted pilgrims search of heaven on earth and in the process assume a new identity as "a foreigner in the world" or in Hauerwas' term a "resident alien" standing firmly against the illusions, pretensions, and eroding values of today's world.²³

²² Pilario, 160.

²³ Mariano Pasquale Barbato. 2010. "Conceptions of Self for Post-Secular Emancipation: Towards a Pilgrim's Guide to Global Justice" in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 39 (2) pp 547-564. And Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* Abingdon Press; 25th Anniversary edition. 2014.

Individuals standing against forces in the world, however, are not meant to stand alone and could potentially trigger or respond to transpersonal and institutional change.

Transpersonal change – Pulling on the ropes and helping each touch the statue signifies a common struggle for access that creates new social bonds between individuals. The close physical contact and religious identification among those in the *traslacion* supports the formation of friendships that humanize the stranger. This may prevent stereotyping or scapegoating and has the potential for convergence, creating little zones “where the beloved community is manifest....help people envision the common good –a situation where all are safe, free and able to thrive.”²⁴ New communities might recall the historical Cofradia, which provided opportunities for lay leadership and belonging. Obusan notes how barriers are broken as people from different social classes and parts of the country join the procession and the prayers, providing a glimpse of a “classless society.”²⁵

As the War on Drugs creates suspicion and shame, tearing apart social supports at the grassroots, the Catholic Church is stepping up the organization of Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs). The Church has declared 2017 as the Year of the Parish as wellsprings for mercy and renewal. These “small lay communities are building blocks of our Church. Like the family, these communities must be responsive to the needs of the brethren (sic) affected by brutalities,” pointed out Father Rolando de Leon, head of the ecumenical movement Promotion of Church People's Response.²⁶

Father Teoderico Trinidad, vice director of the Basic Ecclesial Communities in Malolos Diocese, emphasized the importance of parishioners to understand their role in putting an end to the

²⁴ Brian D. McLaren. *The Great Spiritual Migration: How the World's Largest Religion is Seeking a Better Way to be Christian.* (New York: Convergent) 2016, 168

²⁵ Obusan, 91.

²⁶ <https://www.ucanews.com/news/lay-groups-explore-role-in-philippines-anti-narcotics-war/80576>

killings. The priest said communities that have been terrorized by the spate of killings are part of basic ecclesial communities. Christian communities "should not just convene to pray" but must attend to "integral human development."

Structural or institutional change -Since Vatican II, the Catholic Church in the Philippines has sought to create institutions that model the love of Christ and his preferential option for the poor. Start from its own backyard, the hierarchy convened the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) in 1992, issuing a declaration that the Church was called to be the "Church of the Poor." This meant not only evangelizing the suffering and struggling poor, but also "that the poor in the Church will themselves become evangelizers. Pastors and leaders will learn to be with, work with, and learn from the poor. A 'Church of the Poor' will not only render preferential service to the poor but will practice preferential reliance on the poor in the work of evangelization" (PCP II, 132).

With protests against the Drug War, the unresolved conflict with the minority Muslim population, and the attacks against democratic institutions, *kairos* is upon the Philippines again. The Church is taking bold moves that disturb the Duterte government and those who prefer the status quo. Parishes have provided sanctuary to witnesses in the drug killings and recently church leaders have informed government that they are giving refuge to gunmen who have confessed involvement in alleged extrajudicial killings in the country. The record of clergy sexual abuse, however, has been used by the President in attempts to discredit the church.

The challenge then is for the church to model a new set of ethics that grounded in the transforming life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Motivated not simply by ideology but by conscience, compassion and solidarity with the suffering and struggling people, the church as both as lay and clergy, might thus participate in challenging and changing political, economic, religious, and social structures that harm people.

The persistence and continued growth in participation in the *traslacion* underscores the power and relevance of this pilgrimage. Devotees of the Black Nazarene hold lifelong commitments to journey to touch a Suffering God who understands their pains. Their spirituality is intense, expressive, frequent and periodic, and consistent. Although God might be seen as a subject to transactions for family wellbeing, it is a God who is trustworthy, directly accessed (unmediated), and central to the dominant Philippine culture and religion. For devotees, it is the Suffering God who leads the way, shaping norms that frame habitual decisions as individuals and communities. Looking at the suffering people as the Good Shepherd would, reminds the church to truly be the Church of the Poor and thus spur efforts to fashion beloved communities in the face of suspicion and shame caused by the War on Drugs.

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Why Pilgrimage to Holy Land? An Indonesian Perspective

Dr. Zacaria J. Ngelow

In the last two decades more Indonesian Christians visit Palestinian land in tour groups, commonly known as Holy Land Tour (HLT). There are many tour agencies in the country that offer tour services to Christians for a group pilgrimage that is usually lead by a pastor. Pros and cons are expressed on the Holy Land pilgrimage, which is based on the theological perspectives as well as political and economic aspects. This short article is an attempt to share some different views on the topic.

Why Pilgrimage?

Before modern tourism, there was religious pilgrimage. In the Bible, the people of God was obliged to visit Jerusalem in some religious occasions every year. Christians are followers of the Way (Acts 9:2). Since 4th century, pilgrimage became common among Christians; notably during and after Crusades. But in 16th century, Protestant reformers rejected pilgrimage as it was associated with the abuses of medieval superstitions and relic worships. Luther was

quoted by saying that “Let every man stay in his own parish, there he will find more than in all the shrines. In your own parish you will find baptism, the sacraments, preaching, and your neighbor.” John Calvin, ever anxious that the physical realm would distract the heart from God, was more cautious about pilgrimage and even the sacraments. For the most part, he saw pilgrimage as part and parcel of a superstitious commercialization of devotion. Whereas Luther believed that the potential sin of pilgrimage was a failure to trust God’s work in one’s local church, Calvin seemed to believe that the temptation for pilgrims was idolatry—the base fusing of the physical with the spiritual¹.

But pilgrimage was revived in the following centuries, not only among Roman Catholics but also Reformed Christians and other denominations as well. Pilgrimage destinations also emerged in different places. Among Christians, favorite places besides Holy Land (Jerusalem and Bethlehem) among others are the Our Lady of Guadalupe Basilica in Mexico City, Lourdes in France, Santiago de Compostella in Spain, Medjugorje in Bosnia, etc.

John Gatta – from the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee – raised questions of why, in this information era where one can visit or be visited virtually by the reality of different places; people still enthusiastically go to pilgrimages to holy sites in different countries. He posed a theological question:

Why should physical geography or place-oriented pilgrimage matter at all, in the face of Jesus’ assurance that God’s presence is no longer to be under-

¹ Julie Canlis, “Pilgrimage, Geography, And Mischievous Theology” <https://theotherjournal.com/2015/02/24/pilgrimage-geography-and-mischievous-theology/>

stood as localized but instead discovered in the believer's own heart and wherever two or three faithful are gathered?

Yes, why pilgrimage attracted many Christians? An answer was tapped from some writers which "richly elaborated an insistence that every Christian is called to travel the pilgrim's way—at least in the inward, metaphoric sense of pursuing a life-project extending toward eternity—and that most Christians would also derive substantial benefit from pursuing some form of physical peregrination."² Renowned Biblical scholar, N. T. Wright, one of the writers, was on the view that the practice of pilgrimage, physically enacted, "as a metaphor, even a sacrament, for and of the pilgrim's progress through the present life to the life that is to come."

Wright affirms that physical journeying and the veneration of holy sites can indeed nurture our faith—so long as we understand such practices to be signposts or icons of the deeper reality we seek. Otherwise they are apt to become distractions or delusions. He reminds us that "pilgrimage, therefore, remains ambiguous for the Christian," so that "those who imagine that going on a geographical pilgrimage will automatically make them holy, or bring them closer to God, are doomed to disappointment or worse". Moreover, "it is not we, ultimately, who are on a journey for God in the face of Jesus. It is God who is on a journey looking for us".³

² Ibid.

³ John Gatta, "Toward a Theology of Pilgrimage" <https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/270260.pdf>

Marlene Kropf, from Mennonite Church USA, mentioned an academic conference in January 2000, in Gloucester, England, defining pilgrimage as “a journey to a special or holy place as a way of making an impact on one’s life with the revelation of God associated with that place”. The conference reviewed Old and New Testament perspectives on pilgrimage, in which both their literal and metaphorical role is examined, along with the revitalizing of our sacred spaces as experienced in the coming of Jesus and the missionary activity of the church. The discussion of the spiritual meaning of pilgrimage. NT did not encourage pilgrimage and so did the Reformers but many Christians “long to see and experience the places where Jesus lived, taught, suffered, died, and rose again. Also, the lure of locations associated with the saints or vibrant Christian communities continue to have broad appeal.”⁴

Marlene Kropf mentioned both the potential and pitfalls of pilgrimage. She wrote: “The sense of Christian community that emerges among a group of pilgrims and the *transforming encounters* with local Christians in pilgrimage locations are wondrous gifts. So is the opportunity for prayer and reflection in places of incredible natural beauty. Because pilgrimage often strips one of the usual sense of security and certainty, pilgrims are opened to new perspectives on life, vocation, and the church.” But she added, “Admittedly, no pilgrimage can guarantee such an outcome”.⁵

Julie Canlis mentioned that she could receive from a book what she expect to get from a pilgrimage. She asserted

⁴ Marlene Kropf, “Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage”
<https://uwaterloo.ca/grebel/publications/conrad-grebel-review/issues/winter-2006/explorations-christian-theology-pilgrimage>

⁵ Marlene Kropf, “Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage”.

that in the New Testament, there are clearly no holy sites: God's presence has been thrown open to everyone in Christ Jesus, and Jesus is the true holy site and according to her, the original purpose of pilgrimage was empathetic, that is to be able to enter into the life and sufferings of Christ more deeply. It is pilgrimage that is called pastoral therapy or Prozac pilgrimage. She also mentioned some abuses the judicial pilgrimages that were imposed as disciplines upon sinners to help them meditate upon their ways or of the vicarious pilgrimages that were meant to curry favor in heaven and for which the wealthy could hire someone else to go as their proxy.

Indonesian Perspectives

Some Indonesian writers expressed their opinions on the Holy Land tours. Stefanus Tay and Ingrid Listiati wrote that while God is omnipresent, God also reveals Her/His existence in certain places. While it is not compulsory, it is good if Christians have opportunities to visit those places so that they can feel deeply how big Jesus Christ love us.⁷

Rev. Samuel Sie, a pastor of a congregation of Indonesian Bethel Church – a Pentecostal Denomination, had led many Holy Land tours and revealed in an interview some of the reasons of being a Holy Land tours leader. First, the curiosity to know the situations and conditions in the Holy Land. As a teacher and preacher, he need to know more about the cities and places that are mentioned in the Bible. Secondly, a need to invite other people to share the same experiences of visiting these places. He added a

⁶ Julie Canlis, "Pilgrimage, Geography, And Mischievous Theology"
<https://theotherjournal.com/2015/02/24/pilgrimage-geography-and-mischievous-theology/>

⁷ Stefanus Tay dan Ingrid Listiati, "Apa gunanya berziarah ke Holy Land?"
<http://www.katolisitas.org/apa-gunanya-berziarah-ke-holy-land/>

third reason of what he called as a mystery of the signs of the times, related to the existence of the Jews and the restoration of the Temple. Antichrist is present and the second coming of the Lord is imminent.⁸ He also mentioned some specific blessings to the participants of the tour such as economic improvement or a couple was blessed with a long awaited pregnancy after the tour. The same also happened to Rev Sie as his 42 year old wife was pregnant after the tour to the Holy Land, an answer to their prayer of having a baby girl.

The Holy Land tour last about 8 to 12 days, some take more days, it depends on the tour plan the agency offers. The route from Indonesia to Holy Land are commonly via Egypt or Jordan. Prama Hadi wrote his visit to Holy Land with detailed places in Jordan and other Holy Land tour destination places in Israel and Palestine.⁹

Imchie Liemshe, an Indonesian who lives in Germany, joined the Holy Land tour from Germany. She wrote in her blog (in 2015) that Holy Land tour became an obligation among Christians, notably for pastors. She had an impression that Holy Land tour became a routine for Indonesian Christians as Indonesia is the second of the countries with biggest number of visitors to the Holy Land. She was of the opinion that Holy Land tour is just a visit to another country, like Hong Kong, the Netherlands, Germany, etc. Pilgrimage to the Holy Land is a secular tourism and is one of the main income resources of Israel's economy.

⁸ Samuel Sie, "Petualangan Di Israel" online at <https://www.jawaban.com/read/article/id/2007/09/20/59/070918161405/Petualangan-Di-Israel>

⁹ Pramana Hadi, "Perjalanan Tiada Duanya Wisata Rohani ke Yerusalem", online at https://www.kompasiana.com/pramanahadi/perjalanan-tiada-duanya-wisata-rohani-ke-yerusalem_550059fca33311e0725109bc

Visiting Israel is just an exploration of the historic places to know its historical significance.¹⁰ Liemshe expressed her fundamental critics to the reality of Palestinian tragedy under the Zionist regime as delegitimization of the country label as “holy land”.

Samuel T. Gunawan, a pastor and theologian, while he is not totally against pilgrimage to the Holy Land, mentioned four concerns related to the phenomena of pilgrimage to Israel. First, from pastoral perspective there would be unhealthy spiritual growth if Holy Land pilgrimage experiences become the norm of obedience to Christ. Second, from doctrinal-theological perspective, pilgrimage develop a self-centered Christian, replaced revelation of Jesus Christ in the Holy Scripture. Third, from social-economic perspective, Holy Land tour is an expensive program only affordable to some Christians. Some people was in trouble with debts, others became victims of an MLM (multi-level marketing) like system. Fourth, from psychological perspective, there is an emotional sensation of spiritual pride and the feeling of being better than other Christians after the pilgrimage.¹¹

Gunawan also mentioned the importance of the difference between Israel and the Church; Israel is a nation or an ethnic, while the church is a communion of people of different nations and ethnicity. Among Christians, there are different traditions concerning the place of Israel as people of God in the history of salvation. Some are at the opinion that restoration of Israel as people of God and their return to Palestine, the promise land, is part of the process of the fulfillment of the promise of God.

¹⁰ Imchie Liemshe, “Sekelumit refleksi tentang the so-called ‘Holy Land’ Doakanlah mereka semua!” <http://imchieliemshe.blogspot.co.id/2015/11/sekelumit-kisah-dari-holy-land.html>

¹¹ Samuel T. Gunawan, “Fenomena Ziarah ke Israel” online di http://artikel.sabda.org/fenomena_ziarah_ke_israel

Some people thought that water baptism is salvation, Gospel and cleansing the sins, especially if it is done in Jordan River. Gunawan cited some New Testament texts to argue that baptism is not a requirement for salvation, but as a sign of repentance and unity with Christ. Some couple renewed their marriage vows in Cana, the place of Jesus' first miracle by turning water into wine at a wedding.

Another theologian, Fredrik Y. A. Doeka, wrote a provocative articles, "Jerusalem Is Not a Holy Land".¹² Doeka denied the holiness of the city because of the never ending conflict between Israel and Palestinians, and therefore pilgrimage to the city has no solid ground. He also criticized the self-imposed person with debts to finance the expensive tour.

He mentioned that idealization of Jerusalem was promoted by the Psalmist (eg. Psalm 122: 3-4; 137: 5-6; 147:2). He cited some Moslems and Christians interpretations of Jerusalem as a holy city that belong to Israel/Jews. But because they were unfaithful to God, they were expelled and the land were under foreign rulers before it was occupied by the Arabs since 637 AD.¹³ It was after the land was taken by Britain from the Ottoman Empire in 1917 that a plan was developed to create a country for the diaspora Jews. Eventually Israel was founded as an independent country on 14 May 1948.¹⁴

¹² Fredrik Y. A. Doeka, "Yerusalem Bukan Tanah Suci" online at <http://oaseintim.blogspot.co.id/search/label/Yerusalem>

¹³ "The History of Israel - Time Line", online at http://history-of-israel.org/history/time_line.php

¹⁴ "Timeline of Israeli history", online at www.timeforkids.com/destination/israel/history-timeline

Some opinions mentioned here can be summarized that from the perspective of faith, pilgrimage is not necessary. Pastorally, pilgrimage is not an obligation nor an important aspect of spiritual nurture. Reformed tradition of Luther and Calvin rejected pilgrimage as part of the veneration of the saints. For Protestant faith, it is believed that in Christ the sacred or holy places have been neutralized: the whole world has been sanctified to become a holy place to meet and worship God (cf. Jos 4:21 ff.). It also rejected any notion that spiritual experience of pilgrimage replaced or supplemented the revelation of God. Julie Canlis noted:

Pilgrimage is not magic; it will not in of itself draw us into Christ. But embarked upon rightly, with the faith and hope that our bodies matter to the Lord, it is a defiant theological act in this excarnate age. It may not require kissing a saint's knucklebone at the end, but we won't be far off if we pause for a minute and kiss our neighbor's.¹⁵

From economic perspective, pilgrimage to the Holy Land is affordable only by well to do Christians, and therefore should not be recommended to member churches in doctrinal way. Among Pentecostal-Charismatic circles developed some questionable superstitious notions of the effect of pilgrimage as promoted by Rev. Samuel Sie.

Some local government agencies facilitate pastors in the region to join pilgrimage to the Holy Land, following the government policy to facilitate Muslims for their pilgrimage to Mecca. Some people criticized the policy because

¹⁵ Julie Canlis, "Pilgrimage, Geography, And Mischievous Theology"
<https://theotherjournal.com/2015/02/24/pilgrimage-geography-and-mischievous-theology/>

the government spent social budgets designated for the welfare of the people.

As a closing remark, let me mention a criticism by a renowned Palestinian pastor and theologian, Mitri Raheb. We visited some ordinary sites in Palestine as part of our interchurch consultation in Bethlehem. He said to me that there are many Indonesian Christians visiting his country every year, but they came only to visit stones and buildings. They did not seek contact with their Palestinian Christian brothers and sisters, who suffered severely under Israeli oppressions.

Palopo, Indonesia, January 2018

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Interfaith Dialogue as a Spiritual Journey

Dr. Andreas Obermann

1. A spiritual journey

“Pilgrimage as a spiritual journey” is the theme of this Mission Spark’s issue. Normally, we can remember that the title means a journey of a believer to a special place, where his community remembers a special person, a special event or a special location of their tradition and/or history. A pilgrimage is an activity either for an individual or for a group. And also who starts a pilgrimage alone, will at least at the gathering point meet with other pilgrims. A pilgrimage is done in special time. Usually, a pilgrim might cut short his daily activities because in the time of pilgrimage he has to leave his home, his business and all other burdensome things in the hope that he will succeed to reach the target of the pilgrimage without these things. Moreover, pilgrimage is considered a special time because of the hope to have transcendental experiences on the way, to be in the move with the community or being alone himself. He stays at the special place gaining special experiences and traditions which opened new perspectives and experiential dimensions, wherein someone couldn’t have at other places in this intensity.

Pilgrimage also means movement, to start and goes on the way with a fixed destination in front and a fixed expectation behind. In which pilgrimage means beside the way and the way back specially the way beyond the destination to understand the whole life as a common way of all pilgrims (and religions) in the foreign (peregrinatorisch) destination. In this sense a pilgrimage is a spiritual journey because it puts the pilgrim in a wider context. The pilgrim tries to see himself in a new light, he is open for new – also spiritual – experiences and hopes to revitalize his faith. For the pilgrim this kind of journey is con-

nected with the question for the sense of his life and the truth of his thinking. Here, it culminates the expectations of the way to the pilgrim place. Today, a pilgrimage is more than ever connected with the search for truth in a plural world, in which an orientation becomes increasingly difficult.

A journey of a particular kind such as a visit to Israel and Palestine is for Christians (as well as for Jews or Muslims). This kind of journey gets almost automatically the character of a pilgrimage, because the expectations are huge to see biblical sites at first hand, to smell the landscape and to experience the atmosphere. The "Holy Land" has its own truths, through these the expectations of the pilgrims will be forced, changed, renewed or totally aligned.

In my experience, Israel and Palestine seemed to be worldwide a unique pilgrim place with its density and vastness and its concentration and disunity at the same time. There is no other area worldwide which is overlapped by so many religions and their traditions like Israel and Palestine from antiquity up to today. In the "Holy Land" no pilgrim will stay alone with his religion and visit "his" traditional places alone. Everywhere he will meet his religious traditions with his own subjective truths only in the context of other religions and their truths.

To have a pilgrimage in the "Holy Land" means in my opinion to be in a dialogue automatically with other religions, world views, truths and meaning drafts. This dialogue may also conduct a pilgrim who closes up to other traditions, who thinks highly of his traditions and for whom only his faith seems to be true. His secretiveness is an expression of a wordless communication, namely an introvert self talk without spiritual width. Only a pilgrim who travels with open mind and open eyes will experience Israel and Palestine as dialogic and with a spiritual width. Solely in this way he will recognize other religious traditions and truths beneath himself and discover those as an enrichment.

2. Interfaith Dialogue as a Spiritual Journey

“Interfaith Dialogue as a Spiritual Journey” – by these words a study visit of selected evangelical priests delegation from Indonesia in August 2017, thru the initiative of UEM Asia Region, (<http://www.vemission.org/en/news/details.html>), to Israel and Palestine can be described. As a Christian minority among a Muslim mainstream society Christians suffer in Indonesia - despite of all experienced tolerance and recognition - more often reprisals of different kinds. During the entire duration of the visit in Israel and Palestine the participants engaged in interfaith dialogue and peace work. They wanted to be informed about the opportunities of a peaceful understanding and to learn from peaceful conflict resolutions in Israel / Palestine for their own engagement in Indonesia. Because this trip was the first visit in Israel and Palestine for most of the participants this journey also had the characteristics of a pilgrimage: All visited biblical sites, known by the participants since childhood from the Bible and church services and became the religious and emotional targets they were looking forward. One visit led them to the old city of Hazor, which was connected to the name of King Solomon (1 Ki 9,15). Diversed inspiration yield when they saw the archaeological discoveries and discussed about interreligious encounters, assimilation, and occupation, which were all connected to Tel Hazor (f.e. Jos 11,1.10-13; 12,19 or 2 Ki 15,29): Tel Hazor is an artificial mound of 21 layers where people first settled in the early bronze age. This Tel opens a grandiose view through the ages, meanwhile people with different cultures and religions lived there successively and from time to time together. Temples were destroyed and rebuilt, rededicated or simply expanded with new deities or conquered by new deities. Palaces and thrones came and left, traditions stopped or were newly founded.

Especially the conquest of Israel by Joshua, it was very ambivalent for the Christian delegation: On the other hand, they had great feeling to be at the place where Joshua conquered after the wilderness journey with Moses. In addition, this place reminded them that every conquest at the same time also meant

occupation, violence and defeat. During their conversations about these themes they looked from Hazor and Jericho into the present, which showed - among other key signatures and other political circumstances around the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948 and the beginnings of the struggle in the land of Israel / Palestine – some analogies in the past. The importance of the conquest by Joshua was discussed analogous to the visit at Tel El-Sultan. The victory of Joshua means for the inhabitants from Jericho the loss of their sovereignty and freedom. The event appeared in different light depending on the view of the conqueror or of the one who was conquered.

Also the question about the truth of the Holy Scriptures was important in Jericho: How can we understand and interpret the Holy Scriptures at a site where our archaeological knowledge contradicts with the Biblical Words? Because in the time of Joshua the city of Jericho barely fortified the heroic story of the conquest which cannot be literally true. The Biblical Words can't be understood as a report in our modern sense. The Biblical report is rather to understand as an identity endowing narrative with a great theological and sociologically character than a factual account.

The journey was a pilgrimage in dialogue, which deduced biblical sites in a new way and which showed religious tradition with their diversity in a new light. The mere encounters with people and the places visited didn't change the perspectives of the participants but because of the dialogues the study visit became a spiritual journey which opened new knowledges and insights. This spiritual journey forged a link between people, cultures and religions. The hermeneutical reflections activate to think about the truth of the Holy books, when they started a dialogue with Science and other Holy Scriptures. This happened especially in view of traditions of different religions, which are remembered despite of their divergence at one and the same place. Diverging traditions at one and the same place are found e.g. in Jerusalem on the temple mount (or Arabic "Haram al Sharif") with the Jewish tradition of the binding of Isaak (Akedah) at mount Morijah on the one hand and the Muslim tra-

dition of the Heaven's journey of Mohammed from the rock beneath the 'Dome of the Rock' on the other hand. Travelling with open eyes through Israel and Palestine has a consequence to meet with other religious traditions and their truth.



The strange traditions became lively and for the understanding of its own tradition it was important or useful in the encounter with people (pilgrims) who live in this 'strange' traditions. The discussion about the traditions and the artifacts of the different religions activated the dialogue of the pilgrims.

In this way the group from Indonesia looked for the spontaneous interfaith dialogue with Jewish inhabitants, e.g. in the Abuhav-Synagogue in Zefat (Safed) as well as with the Palestinian inhabitants in the southern hills of Hebron on a tour with "Breaking the silence."

The density and concentration of the different religious traditions in Israel and Palestine became clear on the one hand at the historical sites and the present religious buildings.





On the other hand, these diverse traditions find their precipitation in the experiences and events, in the memories and hopes, in the narratives and paintings, in the subjective attitudes and political aims of people, who live on both sides of the visible and the nearly invisible borders.

In all the meetings, the personal witnesses activated the self-reflection of the participants and opened the multiperspectival view to the other religious traditions and rituals. In a way, the view of their own religious idea was changed automatically by these encounters. The open and serious perception of the other one in dialogue and the confrontation with strange positions opened a new view to their own attitudes. The interfaith dialogue moved positions and changed people. Dialogue means movement and development.



Besides understanding the people, the interfaith dialogue made a way especially the encounter from "I" and "You" and created a partnership to a "We" (Martin Buber). The dialogue moved the human being in the main focus of the encounter and of the communication. In the process the dialogue got a spiritual dimension, if the interfaith dialogue developed spiritual power. The mutual perception of the experience of faith and of the life before God became a spiritual bridge between people with different religions and faith.¹ A lively example of this kind of authentic dialogue we got from the invitation to the 'Rossing Center for Education and Dialogue' (former Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations) and our discussion with Dr. Sarah Bernstein, director of the Rossing Centre (www.rossingcenter.org): After an introduction in the important and impressive work of the Rossing Center we debated intensively about the role and function of the Jewish-Christian relationship in Israel / Palestine and also about some theological questions, e.g. the meaning of forgiveness in Judaism and Christianity.



¹ Compare Andreas Obermann, Gemeinsam das Leben vor Gott zur Sprache bringen? Überlegungen zum Gebet und seiner Bedeutung für den christlich-islamischen Dialog, in: PTh 96 (2007/6), 220.



In Israel and Palestine, this became concrete on a tour with “Rabbis for Human Rights”, as the group was guided by a female Rabbi in East-Jerusalem. It was very impressive when the Rabbi, going out from her Jewish ethics, spoke up for the human rights of the people from other faiths in a country which was

occupied by her own government. Such an interreligious engagement softened prejudices and built bridges over trenches of mistrust. Comprehensibly, it was also the hope that the interreligious dialogue would become successful. The confidence to be on the right way of social and political compromise could be seen in the meeting with “Combatants for Peace”, whose speakers always appeared as a pair of an Israeli and a Palestinian speaker. This concentration was not only on one tradition and one speaker but from both sides that showed the dialogue character, which alone was able to establish compromise and peace between Israel and Palestine. Even in a mostly secular aligned organization like “Combatants for Peace” the intrinsic motivation and power was noticeable, so that their engagement could be called spiritual.

In Nes Ammim, the only Christian kibbutz in Israel, the dialogue between religions, especially between Judaism and Christianity, is the main focus of this special community. Nes Ammim – עֲמָמִים (Jes 11.10), which means “sign for the nations”, was founded after World War II to be a place of dialogue and an opportunity for peace work of all religions and cultures. Nes Ammim should be a place of reconciliation between Jews and

Christians with special consideration of the debt history of the Holocaust. The relationship of the three monotheistic religions was the main theme of the discussion with members of Nes Ammim: It started with a meditative contemplation of a clay sculpture in the forecourt of the “house of prayer and study”, which is open for all religions and all believers, it opened the view for the similarities of religions while respecting the particularity of a religious tradition.

In the centre of the sculpture stands a three-sided cylinder. Each of the three sides is designed equally. The cylinder is upward open. The middle part of the cylinder is empty. In front of every side stands a group of 10 people – following the Jewish tradition a synagogue service can start when there are 10 men. The sculpture shows all believers in their specific prayer pose. While all prayers are turned to the empty centre all the people are simultaneously facing each other. Although each of them follows his own tradition and is praying in his tradition they are united in their alignment to the One God. The heavenwards opened centre symbolizes incisive the One God, who is known by each believer from his own Holy Scriptures. At the same time remains the One God incomprehensible and unavailable.

The sculpture is a symbol for the mutual appreciation of Judaism, Christianity and Islam and for the tolerant respect for the serious alignment of all three religious groups to the unavailable one God despite of all differences in view of the material religious ideas. If the sculpture symbolizes the relationship of the three religions in the above described way, in that case the individual becomes evident as a human believer behind his tradition. The human encounters his opponent prayer as a human and primary no longer as representative of a strange religion or tradition. The mutual appreciation from human to human constitutes not only the real base for an authentic dialogue, but also the cancellation of mutual missionary activities: Standing

face to face in mutual respect and acceptance at eye level the mutual efforts for conversion is inapplicable. To this cancellation of all Christian missionary activities towards Jews can be deeply reasoned from Mt 28 and Romans 9-11, the Nes Ammim community is committed themselves since their foundation.²

3. Interfaith dialogue and the question of truth

“When we stand before God, this will be the only truth that matters” – with these words David Elcott concludes his thoughts about the meaning of truth in an interfaith dialogue. From this outgoing statement I will now lay my focus on a model that explores religion in the light of religious education with the main target, how to recognize a human being in my neighbor or dialogue-partner.



My own background is in religious education working in vocational schools, where we only have multi-religious and multi-cultural classrooms. Although the subject is officially called “Evangelischer Religionsunterricht” – it is a Protestant religious education – where all students sit together in the classroom, regardless of whether they are Protestant, Catholic, Muslim and sometimes, though not often because of our history, Jewish students.

² As a consequence of this theological conclusion the Evangelical Church of Rhineland, which is closely connected with Nes Ammim, declares 1980 to renounce any mission activities towards Jews and renew the relationship of Judaism and Christianity (compare http://www.kirche-und-israel.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=155&Itemid=50 and http://www.ekir.de/www/downloads/ekir2005sonderdruck_christen_juden.pdf).

Most students in Germany are non-religious, approximately 35% of all inhabitants. I think you can imagine that there are many fake news and prejudices among these young people – and they are susceptible for all new fake news they hear from each other, on TV, Facebook, and other social media. And they love conspiracy theories, often caused by fake news. These fake news and prejudices separate them from each other.

Therefore, it is an important task in our multi-religious and multi-cultural world to discuss the information they receive, their perceptions and knowledge and to promote their understanding of each other and how to communicate with each other. This also needs to happen in view of the refugees who arrived in the last two years in Germany, in view of the integration of young people from abroad into German society. Our goal is close to what Paul says in Romans 12,18: “If it is possible on your part, be at peace with all people.”

In order to have peace and to be in peace with my neighbor, it is helpful to know him / her so that trust can grow and increase. Therefore, it is necessary that the students learn from each other - in our classrooms with their different religious views, whether they have religious or non-religious background.

When talking about religious education, it is necessary to consider what we understand under the term ‘religion’. You all know how difficult it is to define religion. Additionally, in teaching religion we have to take into account whether we have more material or more functional approach to our religion and the religions of others.

Today I want to suggest a four-fold scheme in religious education, which allows integration of all students, independent of their religious or ideological settings. The scheme was first published by Detlef Pollack, a German professor of "Study in Religion" at Munster University.³ With Pollack I will separate two different dimensions, which are important to describe the phenomenon of religion: Religion happens in the tension between (1.) transcendence and immanence: a human being has experiences that will become so important, that he/she sees him/herself in a bigger and wider context. Beside this, religion has (2.) the tension of experiences of consistency and contingency: A religion offers an explanation of an experience that doesn't seem to be from this world and provides this explanation as a hypothetic alternative to common explanations. In this double tension between immanence and transcendence on the one hand and contingency and consistency on the other hand, Pollack sees religion typically in a four-fold-scheme:

	Consistency	Contingency
transcend- ence	1. religious routine (religious answer without religious question)	2. vital religion (religious question and religious answer)
immanence	3. pragmatism (no question and no religious answer)	4. searching religion (religious question without a religious answer)

In deciding which category to assign students, first their individual attitude to religion and existential religious questions are to be considered rather than their (material) religion. Often, these questions are influenced from experiences of transcendence and contingency like this: Where do I come from? Where do I go? How can I interpret an experience in and for my life, which I can't explain rationally? What happens after death? Is

³ Pollack, Detlef (1995): Was ist Religion? Probleme der Definition, in: ZfR (3), 163-190.

there any kind of forgiveness?

The big advantage of this four-fold scheme is that, the (material) religion no longer separate the young people in our multi-religious classrooms. Because they articulate their questions and meanings from their individual and existential standpoint, they learn from each other, they begin to know each other and they can judge the religious setting of each other. Now they can recognize that fake news about religions, that often produce separation and unrest, that are not true and say nothing about the setting of their neighbor. This is the basis on which they recognize a fake news where they couldn't do this before. Now they can also begin to discuss their material religious themes. But now they have a basis for being in peace and have freedom with their neighbors, who follow different religions than theirs.

What is the main focus of this four-fold-scheme in view of the interfaith dialogue? First, the four-fold-scheme shows how it would be possible to arrange a discussion in which every member is viewed as a human being first. Second, the four-fold-scheme does not separate people in different religions in a material way. Third, the four-fold-scheme includes on the other hand all people of all religions in a matrix that allows a controversial discussion and a common research for the sense of life and the truths of religions and all world views. Finally, the four-fold-scheme categorizes religious questions and answers of all believers and opens in this way a dialogue outside the material differences of the religions and between the believers as human beings.

4. Conclusion

The interfaith dialogue changed the minds, attitudes and the expectation of the pilgrims towards the visited pilgrim places. During the visit of the group from Indonesia in Israel and Palestine and their journey through the ages and borders, there were many prejudices corrected and revised, new perspectives gained and wider horizons perceived. Especially the meetings

with people, independent in religion or culture, their encounters stimulated the dialogues and instituted a spiritual community across the borders of religions and cultures. Every time when dialogue results in a better understanding of each other, a distinctive perception of their own faith as well as of the strange faith and a cancellation of being better or higher than the others, the communication becomes an authentic encounter from face to face (eye level).

Then, the interfaith dialogue changes (develops) into a trans-cultural dialogue (Wolfgang Welsch), which integrates the different religions and focuses each person as a human being in the centre of all considerations and activities. The interfaith dialogue as a spiritual journey opens every believer to a process of a new religious positioning among the community of the religions and activates each subject to engage in a dialogue peace work. The experience of a sincere encounter in view of the faith to God and the responsibility for the world causes a trans-religious identity and community excluding to be no longer a follower of their own religious tradition. This human approach comments in the engagement in the practice of love (care) for the neighbour and the whole environment (contemporary world). In addition to this engagement there can emerge an intrinsic solidarity (community) which could be the base of a spiritual fellowship. This partnership can result a common spirit, which reveals a spiritual community and gives motivation and serves as a poser for a common engagement for dialogue and peace working.

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Religious Tourism as a Protestant Version of Pilgrimage

Dr. Uwe Hummel

“Blessed is the man whose strength is in You,
whose heart is set on pilgrimage”
(Psalm 84:5)

In this essay, I would like to discuss the contemporary phenomenon of “religious tourism” for which there seems to be a great need in Protestantism generally, and in Indonesian churches of the Reformation particularly. Is this travelling to religiously significant sites just a touristic trend, or is it a specific kind of pilgrimage? What is its significance for Christian believers? What is the theological basis, considering the rather negative views on pilgrimage by the Protestant reformers of the 16th century? Is travelling to religious heritage-sites more than recreation with a cultural tint? Or is it perhaps even a hypocritical excuse to just have a frivolous holiday-trip? In order to offer some answers to these questions, we should have a brief look at the foundation of pilgrimage in the Bible and how this was implemented in the life of the Christian church. As a concrete example of contemporary religious tourism in Indonesia, I shall pay special attention to the annual “pilgrimage” on the 5th of February of thousands of people to Mansinam Island in West-Papua.

Pilgrimage in the Bible and its role in Church History

In the holy scriptures of both the Old and the New Testament, there are texts on pilgrimage. Figures like Abraham

and Sarah, Moses and the people of Israel, may be called pilgrims because they have been called by God to leave their homes and go to a place of divine promise. After the 12 tribes of Israel had settled in the Promised Land (Canaan), they regularly walked for more or less long distances in order to gather and celebrate the big feasts of commemoration in places of religious significands such as Gilgal, Bethel, Dan and Beersheba. Later, perhaps as early as the year 1000 B.C. when King David conquered the Jebusite stronghold of Jerusalem and turned it into the political and religious centre of his kingdom, this gradually became the main destination of pilgrimage.

Presumably, since the rule of King Solomon,¹ the son of David, the temple on mount Zion in Jerusalem became the centre of Israelite worship. Easter, Pentecost and Tabernacles were the most important of such feasts of pilgrimage celebrated there.² The beautiful “songs of pilgrimage”, the *syir hamma'ilot* of Psalm 120 to 134, express the joy, happiness and great expectations of such communal excursions.

According to the Gospel of Luke, the parents of Jesus Christ also undertook such annual tours in order to celebrate Easter in Jerusalem. Most likely after his *Bar Mitzvah* on the age of 12, Jesus himself joined this pilgrimage (Luke 2:41ff).³ Later in His life, Jesus Christ often journeyed on the road, living the constant life of a pilgrim,

¹ According to 1st Kings 6, the building-activities of the first Temple of the LORD on Zion were begun in the 4th year of the reign of King Solomon. The dating is approximately 957-950 B.C.

² Deuteronomy 16:16, “Three times a year all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Weeks and the Festival of Tabernacles. No one should appear before the LORD empty-handed.” (cf. Exodus 23:14-17 and Ex. 34:22-23).

³ Jewish boys usually celebrate their *Bar Mitzvah* (comparable to a kind of confirmation in Protestant churches) on the age of 12. Girls have a similar *Bat Mitzvah*. This ceremony marks the entrance into adulthood. These young people now have become full members of the religious communities, with all of its rights and duties, one of which was/is pilgrimage.

sleeping in the wilderness, occasionally finding refuge for a few days when invited to homes. Jesus warned those who wanted to follow him, saying: “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.” (Luke 9:58).

Jesus' life as pilgrim was imitated by the apostles. Paul, Peter and many others left their comfortable homes and went out on dangerous trips in order to proclaim the gospel, plant churches and visit the new brothers and sisters in the faith in faraway places.

Surely, since the 4th century A.D., Christians started pilgrimages to places considered holy. This included the places where Jesus Christ had taught, healed, suffered, died, and risen from the dead, as well as the graves of martyrs and confessors of the Christian faith. The more these places were frequented by pilgrims, the better became the facilities such as beautiful church buildings, hostels (often monasteries with hospitals), and markets. Places of pilgrimage became centers of commerce, making it a lucrative business for the church and others. In order to raise the attraction of the shrines, relics (remains of the saints or other objects considered holy) were placed under the altars.⁴ For most people pilgrimage became a religious exercise for purifying their souls, doing penance for grave sins, and obtaining remission of guilt, while some monks considered “travelling for Christ” (*peregrinatio propter Christi*) as the most appropriate way of fulfilling the missionary calling of the church.⁵

⁴ The Seventh Ecumenical Church Council of Nicaea in 787 A.D. decided that pilgrims are forbidden to pray (*adoratio*) to the saints or to holy icons, but they are allowed to honour them (*veneratio*).

⁵ The Iro-Scottish Monastic Missionary Columba (521-597 A.D.) left Ireland in order to build a monastery on the island of Iona. From there, the monk-missionaries brought the gospel to the Picts, the indigenous people of England, and the Scots; later Columbanus (563-615 A.D.) left the monastery permanently in order to evangelise on his travels through France, Germany, Switzerland, and eventually in Italy.

Objections against Pilgrimage by the Reformers

In the course of history, the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches developed a theology of pilgrimage. It has become a very important part of religious life as a spiritual path for strengthening faith and accomplishing remission of sins (indulgence).

This, however, has been rejected downright by the Protestant church reformers of the 16th century, such as Martin Luther (1483-1546), Jean Calvin (1509-1564), and others. They believed that pilgrimage was an utterly useless business. And as self-justification before God – as if a human could strengthen his/her bargaining position in the Last Judgement – pilgrimage was considered very dangerous and strictly forbidden in Protestant communities.⁶ Simple minded people were fooled by an irresponsible church to believe that by visiting holy places they could reduce their years in purgatory or even get a ticket to enter heaven. The church reformers considered pilgrimage heresy since there was no proof from Scripture that the church, let alone the Pope in Rome, had the power to forgive trespasses committed against God based on pious acts such as pilgrimage. The fact that pilgrimage was usually connected to worshipping relicts made it even worse in the eyes of Protestants.

Internal pilgrimage

The above-mentioned positions of the church reformers indeed prevented any pilgrimage from taking place in Protestant circles for centuries. The idea, however, remained alive in some Protestant circles, albeit in a differ-

⁶ Cf. Detlef Lienau, "Pilgern – Abgöttisch' Narrenwerk oder Chance? Lienau explains that Martin Luther wrote about 250 times rejecting pilgrimage. In 1537, the Lutheran Church of Norway prohibited pilgrimage strongly. The death penalty was implemented against pilgrims.

ent form. In Puritan and Pietistic circles, the life of a saved sinner was sometimes illustrated as an “internal pilgrimage”. A very popular example is the booklet of John Bunyan (1628-1688), titled: *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.⁷ In this illustrated novel, Bunyan draws a religious allegory of the spiritual journey of a sinner (named Christian) who lives in the “City of Destruction”, chained by the devil in sin and lust. By the grace of God and the preaching of an Evangelist, he is ushered towards the “Wicket Gate” which he must pass in order to get on the straight and narrow “King’s Highway”, on which he henceforth follows the strenuous path of piety and progresses towards holiness. Eventually, despite many temptations and hardships, he reaches the blissful goal: the “Celestial City” (heaven).

Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, and other such devotional literature, were eagerly read by holiness groups such as the Puritans, Pietistic Calvinists and Lutherans, Moravians (Herrnhut), and Methodists, first in Europe and North America, and later also on the “mission fields” all over the world. It had a profound impact on the Great Awakenings in America and the Revivals of the late 18th until early 20th centuries in England, Netherlands, Germany, and even as far as Nias on Sumatra (*Fangesa Dödö Seuba*, starting in 1915). Even now the concept of internal pilgrimage is well known in many pious circles in Indonesia.

Charismatic events similar to Pilgrimage-Spirituality

Besides internal pilgrimage, the revivalist and charismatic movements in Protestantism since the 18th century have known other activities somewhat similar to pilgrimage. Here we have to mention mass-worship services, mission

⁷ John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. London 1684-1686. Recent publication: John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. Cf. *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

festivals and missionary journeys as such. The founders of Methodism (the Wesley brothers⁸ and George Whitefield⁹), as well as the star-preachers of the revivals in the Rheinland (Krummacher¹⁰) and Westphalia (Volkening¹¹), often performed their mass rallies and mission festivals on open fields, in forests and in the mountains. Thousands flocked to these events. An excursion to a revival meeting was (and still is being) felt to be a kind of pilgrimage to mount Zion, just like in the Psalms.

Of course, there are significant differences compared to Roman Catholic pilgrimages. Instead of the magic of a holy shrine, pilgrims experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in the assembly; instead of remission coming from powerful relicts, blessings would flow from the lips of godly preachers.

Theologically, these excursions are not considered “good works”, but it cannot be denied that they gave (and still give) great satisfaction to the participants. Arguably, the communal joy and the spiritual fulfilment of these revival meetings is quite like that of pilgrimage.

Religious Tourism

During the past decades, a growing number of Protestants feel the need for visiting sacred places such as Jerusalem,

⁸ John Wesley (1703-1791) and his brother Charles Wesley (1707-1788) were the founders of the Methodist movement inside the Anglican Church. Only after they died, their followers formed independent Methodist churches. Methodism is the second largest denomination in the USA and much involved in social and political matters.

⁹ George Whitefield (1714-1770) is also one of the pioneers of the Methodist movement, leaning towards classical Calvinism (including predestination, and therefore opposed to the Wesley's). Whitefield became an influential preacher in America.

¹⁰ Friedrich W. Krummacher (1796-1868). For 22 years, he was a pastor in Barmen and Elberfeld (later known as Wuppertal), the centre of the Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft (RMG). Krummacher may be considered a kind of a revivalist star-preacher (cf. Harald Schroeter-Wittke, *Unterhaltung*, 2000).

¹¹ Johann H. Volkening (1796-1877).

Geneva (the city where Jean Calvin worked and was buried), and Wittenberg (where the reformation, led by Martin Luther, started in 1517). Many Protestant Bataks from Sumatra travel to Nordstrand in Northern Germany, a small island and the birth-place of Ingwer Ludwig Nommensen (1834-1918), the great missionary of the Rhenish Mission on Sumatra and first bishop (*ephorus*) of the huge Batak Protestant church (HKBP).¹²

Lately, ever more Protestants are also visiting Roman Catholic sites such as the Vatican in Rome, Santiago de Compostella in Northern Spain (the sanctuary of Saint James or Jacob), Assisi in Italy (Saint Francis), etc. This religious tourism does not only strengthen ecumenical ties, but, despite some obvious disadvantages of mass tourism, should be considered as a new form of pilgrimage-spirituality.

Both religious tourism and contemporary mass-events such as *Kirchentag* in Germany are authentic expressions of interest in the heritage of Christianity, the various sides of Christian faith, worship, art and architecture, a true appreciation of the community (*koinonia*) of Christians, coming from various backgrounds and travelling together to a destination of religious significance.¹³ Especially the international Christian youth, or a significant part of it, seems to have abandoned the prejudice against called dubious “Catholic practices”.¹⁴

¹² In 1985, the author, his wife and daughter joined such a religiously motivated journey to Nordstrand together with a large group of Batak Christians.

¹³ Protestants and Catholics each convene a *Kirchentag* biennially in a German city or region during 4-5 days. Occasionally, the *Kirchentag* is convened together in an Ecumenical manner.

¹⁴ The term 'ziarah' (*pilgrimage*) has recently become acceptable in Protestant circles as can be seen from the book presented to the Dutch Missiologist and former missionary to Indonesia, Rev. Prof. Dr. Jan Arie Bastiaan Jongeneel, SH, for his 75th birthday, titled: *Ziarah dalam Misi* (Karolina Augustina Kaunang, ed., KIT Press 2014).

Inside Indonesia there is quite a lot of religious tourism as well. Muslims undertake pilgrimages to the graves of the *Wali Songo*, the 9 Muslim saints who spread their faith and built Islamic civilization on Java in the 14th and 15th centuries.¹⁵ Protestants have been travelling to the grave of Ingwer Ludwig Nommensen in Sigumpar, North Sumatra, for a long time. Young people or whole congregations on excursion enjoy the serene panorama from *Salib Kasih (Dolok Siatas Barita)*, a huge cross and open-air worship-site near the rock where Nommensen had knelt and spoken prophetic words about the successful Christian mission among the Batak of Silindung in Tapanuli.

Annual Event on Mansinam

Even more popular and frequented by many thousands every year is a religiously defined event on the islet of Mansinam in the Doreri Bay of the regency Manokwari in the province of West Papua, Indonesia.¹⁶ Annually on the 5th of February, especially so every five years, there is a wave of mass tourism to this little island and the adjacent city of Manokwari. Most of the visitors are Reformed Christians from Indonesian Papua, but among the “pilgrims” coming to this Feast of the Gospel (*Pesta Injil*) there are also Catholics and Muslims, as well as foreigners from neighbouring Papua New Guinea and other countries abroad.

¹⁵ Cf. Amalinda Savirani. *The Wali Songo Pilgrimage*. Latadmin, 2014. See also on the web of Java Indonesia Tour Operator. *History of Wali Songo: Legendary 9 Saints Disseminated Islam in Java, Indonesia*, 2012.

¹⁶ The author has written about this topic among others in the *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 1 (2012) and in the *Buku Ucapan Syukur 60 Tahun Pdt. Dr. Mangisi SE Simorangkir M.Th: Misi: Dari Mana-Mana Ke Mana-Mana*, Tuhoni Telaumbanua (ed.), Percetakan STT BNKP Sundermann, 2012, 380-396.

Why is the date of 5th of February so important? Because it was on this day in the year 1855 that the first two Christian missionaries arrived on New Guinea, specifically on Mansinam. They were Johann G. Geissler¹⁷ and Carl W. Ottow.¹⁸ Geissler and Ottow originated from Germany. They were trained first by Pastor Gossner¹⁹ in Berlin and then by Rev. Heldring²⁰ in Hemmen, Netherlands. When they set foot on the beach of Mansinam, they reportedly fell on their knees and prayed to God with the words known to almost all Papuan Christians: "In the name of the LORD we step on this land."²¹

Ottow and Geissler gradually got to know the language and culture of the local people. They dug a deep well for fresh water, build houses and a school, translated the Gospel of Matthew as well as a hymnal consisting of 27 songs in the vernacular Bahasa Numfor. After they built a church, in 1861, this became the centre of religious activities. Worship services took place on Sundays in the morning and in the afternoon, as well as during the week in the Christian households.

Ottow died on Papua on the 9th of November 1862 and was buried at Kwawi, on the Manokwari mainland, vis-a-vis Mansinam, whereas Geissler returned to Germany. He was buried in Siegen.

¹⁷ Johann Gottlob Geissler (or Geißler). Born on 18th February 1830 in Langenreichenbach in the Torgau region, Kingdom of Saxony. Geissler died on 11th June 1870 during a furlough in Siegen, Westphalia (Germany).

¹⁸ Carl Wilhelm Ottow was born or 24th January 1827 in Luckenwalde, Mark Brandenburg, Kingdom of Prussia (Germany).

¹⁹ Johannes Evangelista Gossner (1773-1858).

²⁰ Otto Gerhard Heldring (1804-1876).

²¹ In German: "Im Namen des HERRN betreten wir dieses Land."

Whereas Papuans sometimes pay visits to the cemetery in Siegen, the main show goes on in Manokwari, especially on Mansinam. While the local Christians build tabernacles along the road and in the gardens where they celebrate, and perform a carnival-like parade in the streets of Manokwari on the 4th of February, the centres of attraction for the visitors are the grave of Ottow (which has been turned into an impressive monument on the compound of the Protestant church/GKI-TP), and, of course, the well (now considered containing sacred water) and church-building on Mansinam.

In the past 10 years, a big industry for religious tourism has developed in Manokwari. Most visitors do not stay with local residents but in hotels. From the harbour of Manokwari, one can take a canoe or tourist boat to Kwawi or Mansinam,²² which takes less than an hour.²³

Especially on the 5th of February, the 450-hectare islet is absolutely packed with people, so much so that even the VIPs have difficulties to path their way to the worship site.²⁴

²² “Tanah Papua” (and also “Bumi Cenderawasih”) are terms used by Indonesian Papuans whenever they refer to the whole region of Indonesian Papua. Until the year 2000, Indonesia referred to the Papuan province as “Irian Jaya”.

²³ On 26th October 2009, during the birthday-celebrations of the Protestant Church of Papua (GKI-TP), both the Indonesian GKI-TP and the ELC-PNG of Papua New Guinea signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to seal a cross-border church-partnership. The author attended this ceremony in Jayapura as witness representing the United Evangelical Mission (UEM).

²⁴ Since 2010, a white cross was erected in the centre of the festive space. Greenpeace supported this project with solar-energy and wind-energy equipment. Therefore, all of the lights, loudspeakers, music-equipment etc. can be operated in a manner friendly to the beautiful natural environment. Cf. *Inisiatif Energi Terbaru di Pulau Mansinam: Revolusi Energi berawal disini!* Greenpeace internet web-site, Greenpeace/Shailendra Yashwant; Ichwan Susanto, *Puluhan Ribu Peziarah Padati Pulau Mansinam*, newspaper article in KOMPAS, 05.02.2010.

In 2012, a big monument (*situs*) consisting of a massive cross, buildings for the maintenance and security crew, an anchorage, a road around the island, electricity, etc. have been completed and dedicated in a huge ceremony.²⁵ The Birthday of the Papuan Church (*HUT Pekabaran Injil*) on Mansinam-West-Papua has become perhaps the biggest event of religious tourism in Southeast Asia.

The motifs of Religious Tourism as Protestant Pilgrimage

Religious Tourism in Protestant communities in no way is considered as a method leading towards salvation. But it is valued highly as a religious exercise in order to increase knowledge about religion, strengthen Christian identity, enjoy Ecumenical Christian communion and specially to gain an event-like experience.

Of course, there is the negative side of commercializing religion. The *situs* on Mansinam surely has a political side to it as well, since the governor of West Papua (a retired admiral), in the 2012 inauguration presented a militaristic show with parachutists landing on Mansinam, which was quite contrary to the humble and peaceful character of Ottow and Geissler's missionary endeavor.

Nevertheless, this kind of religious tourism answers a deep religious desire among Protestants, very much similar to a pilgrimage. Modern Christians are not satisfied with just "internal pilgrimage" (Bunyan). Presumably, the modern religious tourist, as much as pilgrims through the ages, is primarily in search of the "heavenly homeland" (Hebrews 11:13b-16). But this does not exclude the experience of an earthly pilgrimage towards that end. The

²⁵ The Indonesian government invested 165 billion Rupiah of the Papua-Autonomy-Fond (*Dana Otonomi Khusus*). Both Papuan provinces, as well as the regencies, allocated huge funds in the project as well.

Bible does not separate absolutely between the spiritual and the physical life of humans. Redemption, salvation and the peace in the heart are all part and parcel of God's grace. The body wants to join the soul in worship.

Conclusion

Religious tourism as a modern form of pilgrimage is a holistic form of worship. It is a mental, physical and spiritual exercise which helps to strengthen faith and to share it in a communal setting. Religious tourism has the potential of building ecumenical and even inter-religious relations and networks. It combines unique experiences in nature, cultural studies, and religious excitement.²⁶ Travelling on foot, horse, camel, by motorbike or bus gives ample opportunity for contemplation and deep talks, as well as qualitatively significant encounters with oneself, one's fellow travelers, and God. Pilgrimage is a form of constant prayer, both with the heart and the feet.

As with every pilgrimage, religious tourism bears its temptations. It can even be a hypocritical business if one pretends to be on pilgrimage, but really is more interested in shopping and beach-parties. Sight-seeing, however, is indeed part of modern-day religious tourism, as long as it is part of the devotion offered to God on the pilgrimage to the Celestial City.

²⁶ Wikipedia, *Pilgrimage*. Quotation by Michael S. Metti: "Jerusalem – the most powerful brand in history", 2011.

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Mudik = Going home: A Reflection of Spiritual Pilgrimage

Rev. Petrus Sugito

Coming home every year to celebrate the religious day is very meaningful. The travel is long and expensive and tiresome. But everything is worth it, when one arrives in his or her own village, relatives and friends are there to give their warmest welcome.

During the *Eid al-Fitr* celebration of Islam in Indonesia, people go home to their places of birth to celebrate the occasion with their families. This tradition is called *mudik*. The Indonesia Development and Islamic Studies (IDEAS), projected that there are 33 million travelers during the *Lebaran* season in 2017. The data was taken from the movement of travelers in the Java region.¹ The data was released by IDEAS Director, Yusuf Wibisono, published by Liputan6.com.

In comparison, according to the Indonesian Ministry of Transportation's Research and Development Survey, it predicted that by 2016 there will be 25.5 million people traveling in nine agglomeration areas, namely *Jabodetabek* (13 million), *Gerbang Kertasusila* (4 million), *Bandung Raya* (2.9 million), *Mebidangro* (1.7 million), *Kedungsepur* (1.5 million), *Jogmantul* (723 thousand), *Bandar Lampung* (500 thousand), *Banten* (470 thousand), and *Sarbagita* (400 thousand)

¹ www.ideas.or.id, 21 Juni 2017.

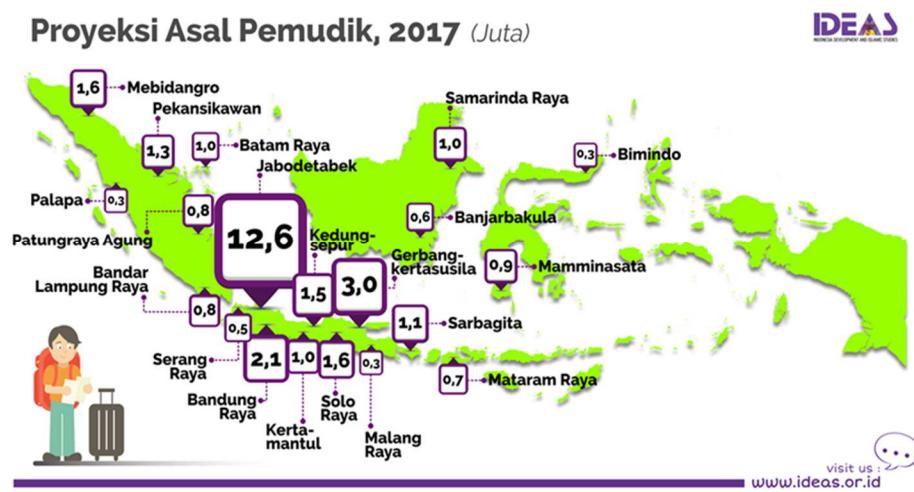
The number of travelers from year to year, continues to increase. This is shown from the data released by IDEAS:

Estimated trend of the number of travelers:



Most of the travelers were from *JABODETABEK* (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi) heading to the rural and towns of West Java, Central Java and East Java. As shown from the data below, issued by IDEAS.

Projection of origin of homecomers:



The rapid flow of people to their respective villages during this occasion is a strong signal of the rapid growth of urbanization; rural and urban social inequalities, and uneven employment opportunities in villages.

Meaning of "mudik"

The word *mudik* comes from the word "*udik*" which means south / upstream. At that time in Jakarta there are areas named *Meruya Uzik*, *Meruya Ilir*, *Sukabumi Uzik*, *Sukabumi Ilir*, and so forth. Go home = *udik* = village / *kampung*. At the time when Jakarta was still called Batavia, the supply of crops of Batavia city was taken from areas outside the city in the south. The farmers and traders bring in their wares through the river. From there came the term *milir-mudik*, which means the same as back and forth. Thus *mudik* means going home or going to the countryside, returning from the city and back to the fields.²

According to the Dictionary of Bahasa Indonesia online version, the word "*mudik* = homecoming" means 1. (sailing, going) to the hill (upstream, inland); 2. go home.³

Among Muslims, going home is to celebrate the feast of *Eid al-Fitr*. Activities performed on the day are *halal bi halal*. KH. Fuad Hasyim (alm) Buntet, Cirebon (Lahu Al-Fatihah), at Halal bi Halal at *Pesantren Mambaul Ulum Tunjungmuli Purbalingga*, organized by Alumni *Ponpes Lirboyo* in December 12, 2002/9 Syawal 1423H, explains the history of the term *halal bi halal*. The basic meaning is a place to forgive each other and reconciliation.⁴

Furthermore, Fuad Hasyim stated that the initiator of the term "*halal bi halal*" is KH. Wahab Chasbullah. He was asked by Pres-

² http://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/mudik#cite_note_7.

³ <https://kbbi.web.id/mudik>

⁴ <https://mwcnukarangmoncol.wordpress.com/2012/08/18/halal-bi-halal-awal-sejarahnya>

ident Sukarno to find ways to bring together political elites to prevent the disintegration of Indonesia around 1948. Kyai Wahab advised Bung Karno to hold *Silaturrahmi* (hospitality), in welcoming *Hari Raya Eid al-Fitr*, where all Muslims are obliged to *silaturrahmi*. Then Bung Karno replied, "*Silaturrahmi* term is too common, I want another term".

"That's easy," said Kyai Wahab. "You see, the political elites do not want to unite, it's because they blame each other. Mutual blame is a sin. Sin is forbidden. In order to have no sin (*haram*), it must be justified (*halal* / lawful). They must sit at one table to forgive each other, mutually. Therefore *silaturrahmi* later is used to the term '*halal bi halal*' ", explained Kyai Wahab.

From Kyai Wahab's suggestion, then Bung Karno on *Eid al-Fitr* at that time, invited all political figures to come to the State Palace to attend the *silaturrahmi* entitled '*halal bi halal*' and finally they could sit at one table. This new chapter is composed of strength and unity of the nation.

In the Big Indonesian Dictionary, *halal bi halal* is defined as forgiveness after performing fasting *Ramadan*, usually held in a place by a group of people.⁵

Mudik and Social Economic Effects of Travelers

The phenomenon of *mudik* has an enormous socio-economic impact. Generally, the travelers bring cash, goods as gifts; as a sign of successful life in the city.

Iqbal Fadli M in the 'Pontensi and Efficiency Mudik', said that the movement of tens of millions of people and motor vehicles in a relatively concurrent time, no doubt requires a very large expenses to finance the travel back and forth. IDEAS Research projected the total expenditure of 32.2 million travelers during

⁵ <https://kbbi.web.id/halal bi halal>

the homecoming and return of 2016 with Rp 124.4 trillion. The average expenditure of Rp 3.9 million per person is projected to be used by travelers to finance accommodation, transportation, food and beverage, and entertainment and recreation services during the homecoming season. These homecomings are purposely used by travelers to bring their savings from hard-work overseas (remittance). Taking into account the THR (holiday allowance) policy and the minimum wage rate, IDEAS projected that an estimated 14.8 million overseas workers in the workforce will bring in remittances of Rp 60.6 trillion during the 2016 homecoming season. Thus, IDEAS projected that the total turnover of money during the 2016 season is at Rp 185 trillion.⁶

Aviani economic observers from the University of Indonesia in Metro Prime News, June 26, 2017 at 5:15 pm predicted that remittances from Indonesians working abroad at Rp. 2 billion. In the same source, the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia declared that 23 million travelers are driving the economy and upgrading infrastructure improvements. Cash circulation is up by 15% during *mudik*.

Meaning of Mudik in Sociological and Cultural Perspectives

The author is also a traveler during *mudik*. Every year, this writer who happens to be a pastor, returns home to take part in the celebration of *Eid-ul-Fitr* with his parents who traditionally celebrated the occasion for a long time. There is a sense of guilt when not being able to go home. One of the activities during mudik was attending the Meeting of *Keluarga Besar Dullah Partawikrama*. This meeting is to celebrate *Idul Fitri*. Not only Muslims are present during this event, but non-Muslims as well.

Paguyuban = The Group of Friends/Relatives held a meeting on 27 June 2017. It was Yustami, a Catholic. She and her husband rode motorcycles from Jakarta to her hometown for 15 hours,

⁶ REPUBLIKA.CO.ID, JAKARTA, 17 Oktober 2016.

in order to come home during the occasion. She says that doing so is not a sacrifice, but an obligation to fulfill. Every year, to go home means meeting and reuniting with families and relatives. Though very tired, her fatigue is equivalent to inner satisfaction. They will feel uncomfortable if they will not come home during this occasion.

Doyo, a Muslim, wanderer in Borneo. During the *Idul Fitri* 2017, he came home with his entire family, aboard the ship. They spent 2 days and 2 nights. The expenses of returning home must be saved for one year. According to him, all this is done to fulfill obligations of returning home once a year.



Photo: Pertemuan Paguyuban Dullah Di Salatiga tahun 2016 (Petrus Sugito)

In the context of Jakarta, Gumilar R. Somantri, a Sociologist from the University of Indonesia, stated that in the early days of community integration in Indonesia the world economic system, the level of rationalization of Jakarta society is relatively undeveloped (Somantri 2001). The homecoming phenomenon of that period is related to the traditional socio-cultural "energy" replenishment motif of the urban citizens that eroded in contact with modern-metropolitan life patterns. So, homecoming is a regular affirmation of membership of Jakarta resi-

dents in communal areas of origin. People who are not going home are usually interpreted based on a familiar reason: being unable or starting to "forget" their origins. It seems that globalization has shifted the homecoming motive in a more rational direction. For residents of Jakarta, going home has for practical reasons: 1) family recreation in a family atmosphere; 2) extensive family meetings that are practical, efficient, and at the right time.⁷

Mudik is an inclusive tradition, which contains the very inner bonding seed in the noble family. The homecoming tradition every year is a process of a long-running dialectic-culture. A tradition that has united unlimitedly uniquely in our society, in which a real life (real) display of the dynamics of Indonesian culture is captivating.

Agus Maladi Irianto stated that homecoming is not only closely related to the celebration of *Eid al-Fitr*, but also closely related to the various dimensions of human life. He says there are at least three interesting dimensions in the homecoming tradition. First, the homecoming has a spiritual-cultural dimension. *Mudik* is considered a tradition of inheritance owned by most Javanese people. It is as revealed by Umar Kayam that the tradition of going home is related to the habits of the Javanese peasants visiting the homeland for a pilgrimage to the graves of their ancestors. For most Javanese people, worldly life can not be separated from later life in the realm of eternity. Similarly, the inner bond between the living and the dead does not just escape by the loss of life in the body. Therefore, they consider that pilgrimage and praying for the ancestors is a duty. Hence the tradition of pilgrimage arose in a certain period of time although separated by geographical conditions. The spiritual value embedded in this pilgrimage tradition which then dialectics with the culture of society which then bring up to the tradition of going home. In addition, *mudik* has a psychological dimension.

⁷ <http://staff.ui.ac.id/system/files/users/gumilar.r09/publication/kompilasi-buku.pdf>

Going to the hometown is not only limited to celebrate *Lebaran* with family, but also to relax from fatigue workload in the city. The harshness of city life, the noise of the city, and other pressures of work make these migrants experience stress in the workplace. The calmness of the hometown, the coolness of the countryside, the friendliness of family and relatives are reasons that cannot be denied for not going home. Nostalgic family life in the hometown is also one of the elixirs to relieve stress from urban migrant communities. Besides containing the spiritual and psychological dimensions, going home also contains social dimensions. Being a city migrant with a stack of success stories is a pride. *Mudik* became the medium to communicate success stories as well as to raise ones position in the social strata. Success stories of living in *rantau* (big cities) are usually manifested in various forms of accessories and lifestyle of migrants in their hometowns.⁸

Extended family system in Indonesia, become the fertilizer of *mudik* culture. The Sociologist from the University of Gadjah Mada Jogkarta - Aries Sudjito, stated that there are four *mudik* destinations named which have meanings, these are: to seek blessings and to meet with family and relatives, to treat loneliness while overseas, because meeting family and relatives gives psychological therapy, to refresh and to retreat, and to self actualize.⁹

Mudik: A Religious Pilgrimage Reflection - A meeting point towards peace and harmony.

This research is to support that the celebration of a religious day, has been celebrated in an inclusive manner. This is in line with PERCIK's research of an NGO based in Salatiga who conducted research on potential conflicts and conditions of freedom of religion / belief in Central Java in some cities / regen-

⁸ <https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/5034-ID-mudik-dan-keretakan-budaya.pdf>

⁹ <http://www.rindra.id/2012/08/tradisi-mudik-dan-maknanya-dalam.html>

cies such as Sragen, Boyolali, Semarang, Temanggung, Purworejo, Banyumas, Jepara, Pekalongan, and city of Pekalongan.

PERCIK concludes that: "Over the long period of pluralism, religion has been well received by society in everyday life. In some places it is shown that there are worship facilities and educational institutions of different religions that lie adjacent without any problems, even their citizens work together in supporting the implementation of their respective religious worship. "

This study documents good practices of social harmony in different study areas. In the village of Getas, Kaloran Subdistrict, Temanggung Regency, for example, there is a tradition of mutual aid where people build places of worship for various religions. In Kemiri, one of the hamlets, it also has local traditions such as Nyadran and Suronan which are celebrated by its citizens from various religions. In Jepara, the Government of Plajan Village, Pakis Sub-district, initiated the interfaith Istigosah activities, conducted twice a year, for the safety and care of the plurality of its citizens.¹⁰

Mudik as a forum to maintain diversity and maintain a peaceful community. This is in line with Prof. Dr. HM. Ridwan Lubin in Achieving Peaceful Community for All within the viewpoint of Islam, declaring the path to a peaceful community is to preserve diversity. "The discourse of diversity should always be grounded in the attitude of moderation in order to realize the mission of religion as a bearer of mercy for all nature (*rahmatan lil'alamien*).¹¹ *Mudik* is a form of diversity of life. Thus, this tradition should be preserved, can be used as a pillar to bring peace and a harmonious life.

Mudik has become a tradition. Maintaining tradition is an important part in maintaining and caring for a harmonious and

¹⁰ Peta Potensi Konflik dan Kondisi Kebebasan Beragama/Berkeyakinan Di Jawa Tengah, Salatiga: Pustaka PERCIK, 2016.

¹¹ Mewujudkan Komunitas Damai untuk Semua: Buku Pengucapan Syukur Jubilium 50 Tahun CCA, Medan: PGI Wilayah Sumatra Utara, 2007

peaceful community. Bungaran Antonis Simanjuntak conducted a sociological research on tradition, religion and acceptance of modernization in rural communities. This research was conducted in rural slope of Merapi Yogjakarta. (Simanjuntak, 2008, Tradition, Religion, and Acceptance of Modernization in Rural Communities, Medan: Bina Media Perintis), in the publisher's preface, it stated that "tradition can be viewed as yeast; to develop religious values coming from outside. "At the end of the study, Simanjuntak commented" that for rural Javanese society tradition is not something of value and institution that can easily be abandoned. Because tradition circles and flows throughout the living elements of the community into their marrow of life".¹²

This tradition can be a way to nurture an inclusive attitude, develop a community with a paradigm of pro-existence in addressing diversity.

Interfidei-Yogjakarta (2012) publishes a collection of thoughts and reflections of Andreas A. Yewango which is regularly written in the daily Suara Pembaruan in the "Point of View" rubric during the period 2001-2006 (The Point of View of Indonesian Society Development). Yewango in one of his reflections states that togetherness in diversity has been deeply rooted before the formation of Indonesia. He said that "Indonesians are very diverse in tribes, religions, races, and classes are something" given ". Not something to be sorry for. Uniformity is certainly good, but diversity is much better. Soekarno, more or less stated: "Let various flowers grow and thrive in the garden of Indonesia". In Indonesia, there is a kind of authentic harmony, harmony that does not need to be regulated and directed, harmony as a value that does exist in society. In villages, if a Muslim person celebrates *Eid al-Fitr*, Christian friends spontaneously

¹² Bungaran Antonius Simanjuntak: Tradisi, Agama, dan Akseptasi Modernisasi pada Masyarakat Pedesaan, Medan: Bina Media Perintis, 2008.

¹³ Andreas A. Yewangoe: Titik Pandang tentang Perkembangan Masyarakat Indonesia, Jogjakarta: Interfidei, 2012.

celebrate with, at least to make a visit. Same thing happens with the celebration of Christmas Day.¹³

Sri Wismo Adiwahono (Pro-existence: a collection of writings to refer to life together (published posthumously), 2004) states that in the inter-religious relationship is not enough just to the level of tolerance or co-existence. It should be to the next level of pro-existence. Here, religions no longer exist for themselves, but exist for existence and life together. Pro-existence is necessary because, in this era of globalization where no one can live alone, nor able to solve all the problems by themselves. There is interdependence with each other, including in interreligious relationships. Pro-existent attitudes, emphasizing the "live" keyword. Life is a gift or given, not a human creation. Action against life and life is opposition to the Giver of life and life itself. Wisma Adi also emphasizes in the attitude of pro-existence, every religious person finds solid foundation and motivation to get closer with each other, even to build a true brotherhood. In this true brotherhood, shared vision and mission can be described in the form of joint activities and / or co-operation.

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Kemukus Hill Spiritual Pilgrimage

Dr. Retnowati and Dr. Febri Jati¹

Introduction

Kemukus Mountain, or more precisely called Kemukus Hill is a spiritual pilgrimage which is considered to have a very strong magnetism the very reason why up to this time thousands of pilgrims visit it every year.

Geographically, Kemukus Hill is only 300 m above sea level. At the peak of the hill, there everyone can see the graveyard of Prince Samudra and his lover, who was also his mother, Dewi Ontrowulan. Along with them were the graveyards of his seven companions and his horse. That place is considered as a sacred place; it has supernatural power therefore when somebody wants to enter this place, there is a sequence of rituals that should be done by the pilgrims. Then and now, the numbers of visitors are not reduced. They come from various areas of Java Island. Historically, this religious tourism located in Sragen Regency, Central Java Province is a development from the history of Prince Samudra, a figure who had been believed to have su-

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pernatural power to grant the dreams and hopes to the pilgrims who come to Kemukus Hill. These pilgrims come with an aim, that is “*ngalab berkah*” or looking for blessings, luck, advancement and success for their body and soul. But what is interesting is that this supernatural power can only materialize if the pilgrims execute one of the rituals, that is by having sexual intercourse with their opposite sex who is not their spouse (not their husband or wife). And that act should be done for seven times in a row according to the correct day of Javanese Calendar, especially on Friday Pon and Friday Kliwon.²

This belief becomes a source of strength for Javanese people to conduct spiritual pilgrimage in Kemukus Hill as an act to reach better life.

Kemukus Hill pilgrimage phenomenon is interesting to write as it gives knowledge about Javanese spirituality that is implemented through rituals and pilgrimage in Kemukus Hill. Pilgrimage to Kemukus Hill is also done as a religious excursion, in order to bring them closer to the god through some rituals that are done through Prince Samudra in order to have peace for their body and soul.

Research Method

Methodologically, this research uses descriptive analysis to ana-

² In Javanese calendar, Friday Kliwon is known as a sacred and haunted day. This day is considered to have superspiritual power and it is assumed that it is able to open the window separator between the genie world and human world

lyze the existing phenomenon which is available in anthropology perspective by using qualitative approach. Data collecting method is implemented through interview and observation. The subject that is being interviewed is the Kemukus Hill caretaker. He is the person who manage the area of Kemukus Hill and also who acts as a mediator of the rituals implementation that is done by the pilgrims. An interview is also conducted to the pilgrims and the people who know the areas of Kemukus Hill very well. A close relationship with the subject that is being examined becomes an important point in data collecting process to have the real and deep information and knowledge, also the correct appreciation that is related with all the things that is done by the subject that is being examined (Cresswell, 1994: 148-149), in this case is the pilgrims or spiritual doers of Kemukus. They are the people who have a belief that what is done is not only to satisfy "body" needs in form of material, success, glory, and wealth physically but also spiritually, that is the strength of the soul.

In order to get the objective, deep, and detailed data then data collection method through participant observation had been done. The researchers stayed in Kemukus for unlimited time (until we get bored). The data is collected through experiencing the process and get involved directly in the whole rituals processions that are done by the pilgrims or by conducting deep observation on the pilgrims' behavior and finding out why they behave like that.

The Rituals and Kemukus Hill

Bell (1997: 233-251) offers three important aspects in conducting approach on ritual. First, a ritual that is related with a motive on how to act in the cultural and social context. Second, a ritual that relates to the quality of action in the ritual which appears in the gesture and special room that is constructed, and it is functioned to rearrange the values of the environment. Third, a ritual of promoting authority of power for the knowledge of the ritual doers to usher their experiences, according to the value of the ritual. Still according to Bell, the characteristic in ritual activities that develops in the society includes ritual with formal characteristic in which it is very different with the daily activities. It appears through gesture, utterance, behavior, expression that characterize traditional culture and locality. Second is traditionalizing, traditional characteristic that characterizes tradition locality and culture of certain community.

The graveyard of Prince Samudra and Dewi Ontrowulan becomes the venue of rituals for the pilgrims of Kemukus Hill as their motivation to get blessings (*ngalab berkah*). The action of the pilgrims that is done in every process of the rituals has a deep meaning for the success of this pilgrimage. It started with the activity on the pavilion until the sexual activity that should be conducted as the ritual perfection. All pilgrims should do a series of rituals as requirements to make their dreams and wishes come true.

In the area of Kemukus Hill, there is a pavilion which is used by the pilgrims as the center of pilgrimage in conducting the rituals. Besides that, the pavilion is also used to have a rest before and after running the rituals in the graveyard. The inside part of the pavilion is guarded by the caretaker to keep the room from every pilgrim who is coming in and out of the room. All pilgrims should report to the caretaker before they enter the pavilion by bringing offerings, money, and flowers. The pilgrims are allowed to enter the pavilion after they hand over the offerings to the caretaker.

The night of Friday Pon is believed by the pilgrims as the perfect night to do the rituals and to visit the graveyard of Prince Samudra. There is a series of rituals that should be done by the pilgrims. Those are as follows: clean their body in *sendang*, pray in Prince Samudra's graveyard by bringing offering, and have sexual intercourse with their opposite sex who is not their spouse. Before praying, the pilgrims are required to clean their body in Ontrowulan *sendang* by washing their face, hands, and legs or taking a bath. *Sendang* is a kind of bathroom so that the pilgrims can take a bath and clean the body freely. The pilgrims often bring bottles to be filled with water of the *sendang* and take it home. They believe that the water may bring success and health for their life. If there is a pilgrims' family member who is sick and then get in touch with the water from *sendang* then he/she will be healed. Besides that, the power of water from the *sendang* can bring success for any kinds of their

business.

The next ritual is bringing the *sendang* water, flower and incense to the graveyard to be handed over to the caretaker to be prayed. However, the pilgrims also have to pray by themselves near the tombstone of Prince Samudra to beg for all of their wishes. After all those ritual processes are done, the pilgrims will end their rituals with sexual ritual activity. The pilgrims should go to the rooms that are rented around the Kemukus Hill with their partner to have sexual intercourse. This sexual ritual is the final ritual and it is important to the completion of all the rituals that have been done previously.

In order to facilitate the sexual ritual activity, there are “sexual partners” who are provided for the pilgrims to have sexual intercourse by paying them Rp. 50.000 – Rp. 100.000 per night. The pilgrims are also allowed to bring their own partners if they don’t want to have contact with the available partners prepared by Kemukus Hill. By doing this sexual ritual, the pilgrims highly believe that their wishes will come true.

After receiving success that they wished for, then the pilgrims will have a kind of thanksgiving ceremony as a form of their gratefulness. The ceremony is held in the ritual venue according to the schedule that has been determined by the caretaker. After getting the date for the ceremony, the pilgrims will come to Kemukus Hill according to the schedule that has been determined for them by bringing the completeness for the ceremony. They need to bring a chicken that is cooked in *ingkung* (a

whole chicken that is cooked in coconut milk and various spices) style, rice and the side dishes, etc.

The thanksgiving ceremony begins with a prayer that is led by the caretaker who is using *kromo inggil* of Javanese language in reciting the prayer. *Kromo inggil* is the highest level of Javanese language in which it is usually used by the Javanese nobles and the prayer is also combined with Arabic language. The prayer is intended for Prince Samudra as an expression of gratefulness for the blessings that have been given to them. The food that has been prayed will be eaten together with the people who join in the ceremony and it is believed that the food may bring goodness and peace for the body and soul of the people who eat that. They even believe that the rice that is used in the ceremony can cure various diseases. To use the rice as medicine, they dry the rice first then pour it with hot water and then give it to the sick people to be consumed. With that belief then Kemukus Hill and pilgrimage in Kemukus is an event and spiritual experience which has a deep meaning for the pilgrims.

Kemukus Sexual Rituals in Javanese Cosmology

Sexual activity in Javanese cosmology is a ritual to gain peace, blessings, and supernatural power. Sexual act in Javanese puppet show is affirmed by Arjuna, who becomes the basic for sexual act as supernatural power. Sexual intercourse activity is the highest ritual to get closer with the god, as a means of releasing the burden in the real world. In Kemukus context, conducting the sexual ritual is the top of the ritual processes because it

is believed that it is the perfection for the previous rituals that have been done before. Through this sexual ritual activity, the pilgrims will receive peace and able to release their life's stress. In doing the activity of sexual intercourse, it is not being understood as an impulse lust and immoral action. However, it is viewed as a sacred activity; it is the highest spirituality that is implemented by the pilgrims to gain peace and also serves as a true release from various pressures and miseries in the real world. Sexual activity is a form of meditation, a full contemplation that leads to the true, immortal, and supernatural power.

Kemukus Pilgrimage as Religious Excursion

The pilgrims who go to Kemukus Hill who are not aimed to “*ngalab berkah*” or get blessings physically only, but it is also as a religious excursion which is done only in *Suro* month in Javanese calendar.

Suronan is a ritual of finding blessing; it is only one in *Suro* month in Javanese calendar. This moment is usually called as a religious excursion in Kemukus Hill. At the night of first *Suro*, the number of pilgrims in Kemukus Hill may reach 8000-9000 persons. They are there for two until three days. It begins with their arrival two days before the night of the first *Suro*. *Suronan* ritual procession begins from the night approaching the first *Suro* by praying together or *tahlilan* in Prince Samudra’s ward. The prayers are upheld at the graveyard of Prince Samudra and is continued with *melekan*, or they do not sleep all night so that their life will be blessed and simplified. In the morning,

after not having sleep for the whole night, the pilgrims continue with *kirab gunungan* ritual that is walking together while bringing a mountain of food in Kemukus Hill. This activity is a relatively new tradition that is initiated by the local people as a form of their gratefulness for the blessings that have been given by God through Prince Samudra.

The people who live around Kemukus Hill make a *gunungan* (a mount shape of various food or agricultural products) as earth alms. *Gunungan* is made of agriculture products or crops that are offered to the god by the community. Usually, their best agricultural product is the one that is used for the offerings. Then the *gunungan* is taken to the harbor. This ritual of earth alms is a grateful symbol to the god and to the earth which has provided them with agricultural products and wealth for the villagers. Then, this ceremony is closed with “*rebutan*” or fighting over the food, vegetables and/or fruits that are arranged in the *gunungan*. They believe that every food that they get from this fighting will bring success for their life.

After *gunungan* the people continues the procession with *larung langse* ritual. *Larung langse* is a ritual of opening the curtain that covers the grave of Prince Samudra. The curtain then will be washed and replaced with the new *langse* (curtain). *Larung langse* ritual started when the caretaker takes off the curtain and places it in a rattan box then it will be washed in the streams of Kedungombo reservoir. The curtain that is put in the rattan box then is marched by a brigade and the village's

elderly. This procession is consisted of the caretaker, officers from tourism agency, head of district area, head of sub district, head of the village, and representatives of other community figures. This march walks along with the music and *kerton* dance. Behind the dancers are the figures of the village and the government, then the caretaker brings the curtain in the rattan box in which the curtain will be washed by dipping it into the water of Kedungombo reservoir. The water that has been used to wash the curtain will be fought over by the pilgrims. It is because they believe that the water will bring blessings and success for their business. The pilgrims who can't get this water can buy it from the local people who get the water in large amount. The price of the water is from Rp. 5000 - Rp. 50.000. Next, this *gunungan* procession will end with a puppet show performance.

Closing

Kemukus ritual procession has a dimension until liminality condition of life. As it is explained by Turner, liminality is an event or conditions that has the presence in a transformation where there is distortion of ambiguity, openness, and certainty (Turner, 1974: 236). In this liminal state then changes are possible to occur, such as social status, personality value or personal identity. The pilgrims of Kemukus Hill conduct pilgrimage and rituals to cope up with liminality in their life. Regarding with objective condition of the pilgrims, there are some liminal conditions for example when they have economic problems and

difficulty such as getting involved in debt, their business doesn't work well, etc.; have problems or crisis that is related with position and/or want to maintain the position; job problems and/or want to have a job after being jobless for a long time; family crisis and/or want to start a family or have a spouse, etc. In this boundary of liminal condition, the pilgrims do the pilgrimage to Kemukus Hill in which they also carry their life's burden and soul anxiety. This Kemukus spiritual act is a method to gain positive strength and energy which is able to take the pilgrims for a new life and hope.

The peak of Kemukus Hill pilgrimage is the sexual activity ritual in which it is believed that it can make them closer with supernatural world. Through this sexual activity all burdens will be released (microcosms) and it can give them blessings from the supernatural world (macrocosms). Sexual ritual has reconciled the microcosms and macrocosms, as it is stated by Bell, (1992). The sense of ritual appears when the people face various situations in their life and can't finish it using their own power. Ritual is a strategy about how to act in a special social situation that is called as ritualization. Ritualization strategy is rooted from the social body. A body or social structure is related with the community cosmology experience; therefore, a ritual has a role in building the body or social structure. Therefore to understand the rituals in this context then we have to understand the context of ritual act that has social context or the environment.

The graveyard of Prince Samudra and Dewi Ontrowulan



The Rituals in Kemukus Hill



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PRAYING WITH OUR EYES WIDE: How Worship (liturgy and music) Re-routes Theological education and the Life and Work of the Churches in the Philippines

Dr. Ferdinand A. Anno

Our study tour started with a video presentation on the whys *of the Reformation* while the presentation that will immediately follow mine focuses on *the impact of this Reformation on church music and liturgy*. My presentation in this light comes like an unrelated insertion at least at this point of the sequence.

If the two themes are presented one after the other, it would be like the *lex credendi lex orandi* approach: of the Reformation as a new creed creating and shaping new or alternative musical and liturgical traditions.

Conversely, as suggested by the theme constructed for me “the role of church music and liturgy in theological education and in church life in the Philippines”, my approach would be some kind of a *lex orandi lex credendi* approach, meaning, how the ‘rules of praying (*lex orandi*) or the liturgy and its musical content is/are re-shaping and re-routing both theological education and church life in the Philippines. Since this is a study tour on the Reformation, I would take the theme to mean Protestant Christian worship. If I pursue music and worship in the Philippines in general then that would mean covering a topic that we would not be able to manage within the duration of the study tour.

PROTESTANT WORSHIP AND MUSIC IN THE PHILIPPINES

Let me start by citing to you several developments in the worship of Protestant churches in the Philippines today. I will start with the UCCP and may surface other Protestant liturgies and church music outside of the UCCP if relevant and necessary.

There are two big revolutions that are currently convulsing the worship life of the UCCP and other Protestant communities nowadays. One is ecumenical worship and the other is neo-Pentecostal worship. The second is also labeled “contemporary worship”, or in popular lingo, “praise and worship.”

Ecumenical worship is more directly linked with formal theological education centers while the other (neo-Pentecostal worship) has some genesis in “alternative theological centers.” These alternative theological centers include theological centers that are not necessarily and officially sanctioned by the church.

Ecumenical worship proceeds from mainstream Protestantism drawn mainly from both the Reformed and Methodist traditions and from these churches’ current ecumenical commitments and advocacies [textual and thematic] for justice, peace, integrity of creation and human rights.

This ecumenical worship evolved with the history of representative Protestant churches in the Philippines like the UCCP. The history of Protestant worship and its musical component also presents to us the correspondence between our songs and prayers on one hand, and our theological curricula, our life and praxis as church on the other.

PRAYING IN THE VERNACULAR AND POSTCOLONIAL PROTESTANTISM

Protestant worship in the Philippines started with the translation of the hymns of American denominations. And the translated hymns sang in the vernacular served as the null curriculum that helped form the postcolonial Protestant. Translation, according to cultural historians, was not a harmless exercise. Translation has worked not only to favor the American missionaries in their mission work. Translation also worked to contract colonialism – for the Filipinos’ “dismantling of their master’s house” – to use the language of resistance studies. What I am saying here is that translation also formed and accented the postcolonial mind and anti-colonial politics of the Protestant Filipino.

The use of the vernacular points to the budding of nationalist resistance to the American colonial projects – as it did during Spanish rule of the Philippine islands.

This postcolonial Protestant found its fuller expression in the organic formation of the UCCP. This, too, was the story of other Protestant churches in the Philippines like the *Iglesia Metodista En Las Islas Filipinas* (EMELIF), the Philippine Methodist Church (PMC), and the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* (IFI), too.

I have highlighted this point because of the importance of vernacularization even in the work of the 16th century Reformation churches.

PRAYING WITH THE PEOPLE AND THE CHURCH MILITANT (*Ecclesia Militans*)

Secondly, in more recent times, Protestant worship in the Philippines has started singing the voices of the marginalized ma-

jority and praying the laments of the oppressed and repressed. It has started reinterpreting and celebrating traditional symbols of the faith through the lenses of its solidarity with the poor in its explicit liturgical curriculum.

From these developments in the liturgical front, the church has since reviewed its polity toward more democracy and increased participation in church life and worship; and its programs rerouted toward socially engaged ministries. This is not a chicken-egg correspondence between liturgy and music on one hand and ecclesiology and mission on the other, but more of a dialectical conversation leading to a church that both sings and lives out its solidarity with the poor. Notwithstanding, a case can be established on liturgical renewal program having played a leading role in the conscientization of churches. It was through worship and the singing of the church militant that the church's spiritual concern for justice and human rights was nationalized and popularized. Even those areas of the country that benefited from authoritarian rule started realizing and questioning their own "Babylonian captivity" to culture-protestantism.

It is also true in many cases that the songs and prayers of struggling communities were imported into seminaries from and through the students or seminarians' immersion programs. The students have made significant contributions in introducing this as an implicit curriculum for seminaries. They have brought back with them popular ways of doing worship, new songs and prayers and put them together during the regular liturgical gatherings in the seminary. These are liturgical productions that challenge both the text and form of traditional denominational worship. These liturgies have incorporated elements from: folk culture, popular religion, indigenous spirituality, high church liturgical traditions, flower era-like counter-culture, protest ritualizations, inter-religious dialogues amongst others.

PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT AND INDIGENIZATION

Thirdly, Protestant worship through the initiatives of local congregations in indigenous communities and theological education centers have started singing and praying with their indigenous musical, artistic and religious traditions. These made the churches take a second look at their pre-Christian spirituality and religious traditions. The project of indigenizing the faith started first with the adoption of indigenous musical forms to proclaim and teach the Protestant gospel. This was a necessary step to giving indigenous religious traditions a “third look” which, while still unpopular to most churches, has already started to revolutionize our theological education centers. This was made a proposal of interest because of the reality of ecological decay -- which mainstream Protestant spirituality is still unable to respond to in a coherent way.

The Reformation movement’s decentralization and nationalization of the expressions of the faith served as a prototype of nationalization in contemporary postcolonial Protestantism. Like some developments in Scottish Presbyterianism where the embracing of indigenous spirituality in Christian-modified Celtic traditions, some denominational heirs of the reformation are now in the forefront of contextualization, inculturation, and indigenization. In the Philippines, there are ethnic communities in the north that are starting to graduate from their translation level of appreciation into seeing their songs and prayers also as “sparks of divinity”. Indigenization follows the logic of the Reformation movement. The Babylonian captivity of the church is not only true to post-feudal Europe. It is also true to post-colonial churches against their “Babylonian captivity” from colonial Euro-American Protestantism

PRAYING WITH THE STUGGLING PEOPLE OF GOD AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Always the immediate link between the peoples and the church is the liturgico-cultural. This, actually, is the story of the “theologies of struggle” in the Philippines. It started as the liturgical articulations of the “suffering but struggling people” using popular Catholic forms, indigenous religious forms, and fervent evangelical liturgies of the Word— maybe ranging from the Lutheran/Calvinist emphases through the Zwinglian to Munzterian militant evangelicalism.

These liturgical expressions and articulations became one of the chief sources of theologizing for a significant number of engaged Filipino theologians. And after a brief period of ‘apologetics’ and the academician’s predominance, the more current calls for the theologies of struggle is to “de-literalize” and to go back to its original habitat and form, these are: the “zones” and prayers of people’s struggles. What can be discerned from this Filipino experience is the inseparable link between people, their everyday struggle, music, and religion.

CONCLUSION

In all the above historical stages in the evolution of Protestant worship, church music and liturgy proved to be :

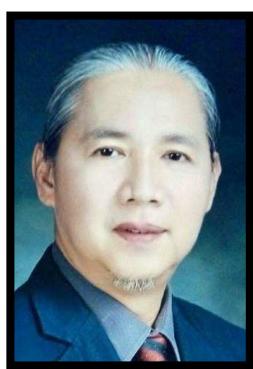
The BRIDGE that relocated people’s everyday lives and historical struggles into the liturgical narrative, and

The BRIDGE that relocated the liturgical narrative into the matrix of people’s lives and struggles.

Now, this dialectical conversation between the “rules of prayer” and the “rules of belief” serves as a curricular challenge to the church and its theological education programs.

However, theological education centers, revolutionized by the dictum *lex orandi lex credendi* are now long conscious of the liturgical curriculum - from the publication of new liturgical resources and guides or books of worship to the putting up of institutes and schools for liturgical music and the arts that are celebrative of the Asian or indigenous expressions of the faith. Theological education centers of the church ecumenical are now very intentional in re-forming the church via the curriculum of worship.

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A Journey with Heart, Soul and Mind

An Interview with Prof Dr. Syafaatun Almirzanah (Syafa) on her journey to Mecca by Sonia Parera-Hummel (Sonia)

Q. Sonia: Every year, millions of Muslims from all over the world travel to Mecca. For most people it is a tiring and costly journey. Yet even simple and old people are going to this pilgrimage. Please explain about the teaching of Islam behind this religious event.

Also, after the Hajj, a Muslim will be called a haji. What is the impact of the Hajj on the life of a Muslim?

A. **Syafa:** Muslims are drawn to Mecca like filings to a magnet, attracted by the integrative power of a journey to the heartland. More than a city, Mecca is a principal part of speech in a sacred language and the direction Muslims pray throughout their lives. Simply to set foot there may answer years of longing.

The tradition of Islam is expressed through the practice of five pillars. Declaring one's faith, prayer, charity, and fasting are activities pursued repeatedly throughout one's life. Condition permitting, each Muslim is additionally charged with undertaking a pilgrimage to Mecca once in a lifetime, which called this fifth rite as Hajj. Among Muslims, the hajj embodies a vital experience for millions of new pilgrims every year. In spite of modern content of their lives, it remains an

act of obedience, a profession of belief, and the visible expression of a spiritual community. For majority of Muslims the hajj is an ultima trip of a lifetime. It is one of mankind's most enduring rites. For almost fourteen hundred years, it has provided a spiritual destination to million of men and women around the globe. The point of this journey is to detach a representative number of people from their homes and, by bringing them to Islam's birth place, to emphasize the unity of all human beings before their Creator.

The Hajj is both a collective celebration and an intensely personal experience, the religious apex of a Muslim's life, filled with feats of daring and endurance, with moments of heightened religious perception and great risk. A chance to join a social elite has also remained a powerful inducement to pilgrims to go for Pilgrimage/Hajj. Hajj was not simply a few days of ritual in Mecca and its vicinity. It was not so much as an act but an experience, and so for many that experience began thousands of miles from the Holy City. The Hajj is performed annually only in the month allotted to the pilgrimage, which changes yearly with the lunar calendar.

What are the engine of the Hajj—religious, political, economic, and cultural—that have enabled this vast system to run year after year for so many centuries?

Islam is a world religion with a journey at the center of its practice. All Muslims are required to go on the Hajj once in a lifetime, provided they are healthy, sane, mature, and unindebted, endangered by neither war nor epidemic, and have the means both to make the journey and to support any dependents left behind. The annual pilgrimage is a strict appointment, too. It begins on the eighth day at the last month of the Muslim lunar year, and those who miss its central rites commencing on the ninth day miss the Hajj altogether, although they may return another year. The Lesser or Minor Pilgrimage, the Umra, contains some but not all the rites of the Hajj and may be performed at any time.

The Pilgrimage to Mecca can be seen as how the concept of the sacred and the profane, belief in spirits and divinities, and actualized religious rites came together in the consciousness of all the world's principal faiths. As religion is not only internal or internalized but also a social process. The Hajj can certainly be seen as part of this discourse as well, as a pilgrim's life often changes in many ways when he or she returns home to the everyday sociality we all inhabit. The Hajj, as Habermas said, might have been part and parcel of the concept of the public sphere, a space in which Muslims could make community in ways often unsanctioned by the modern state. Thus, the Hajj as the ultimate non state space, open and channeled at the same time, and repeating itself in time year after year.

Pilgrims who perform Hajj are taking part in a drama that reached back to the first prophets and to the testing of the human family's faith in God. In this sense, the Hajj is a journey through the time as well as space for the purpose of bonding people to primordial religion, the ethical monotheism of Abraham. This is the sacred dimension of the Hajj that penetrates its entire ritual process, connecting the present moment to the past.

All the initial rites of the Hajj take place inside the *Haram Mosque* in Mecca (The word *haram* means "sanctuary". "All of Mecca is sanctuary." Only Muslims may pass into this precinct, where special laws of the sanctuary take over). Pilgrims routinely refer to it as the *Haram Mosque* or *Haram al-Sharif*, the Noble Sanctuary. They may also call it *Bayt Al-lah*, God's House, or simply the House. The core of this building is an immense open courtyard with the stately granite cube of the *Ka'ba* is its center. This mosque is the only mosque in the world built in the round. Its surrounding prayer halls all faces the *Ka'ba*, and the whole building is organized around it. The *Ka'ba*, the lodestone of Islam, stands fifty feet high and is draped in an embroidered black

silk cover called the *Kiswa*. Pilgrims often refer to this sanctum sanctorum as the Shrine. It contains no relics and is not itself an object of prayer. Rather it provides spiritual focus, marking the direction in which all Muslim pray throughout their lives. Simply to have the *Ka'ba* physically before them brings tears to many pilgrims' eyes, and day or night it serves as an object of prayer and meditation.

There are many legends surround the *Haram Mosque*, but the chief ones from a circle of myth reflected in the building's architecture. These stories and the Hajj rites that express them illustrate in different stages the birth of ethical monotheism in the Middle East. To commemorate the founder of this project, there stands to one side of the Shrine a smaller, booth-shaped station, the *Maqam Ibrahim*, named for the *Ka'ba*'s original architect, Abraham. On the *Ka'ba*'s northwest side, enclosed by a marble railing, lie the legendary graves of Hagar and Ishmael, Abraham's wife and son. The lives of these three foundational figures are familiar to every Muslim child. They form a mental geography of which pilgrims are inescapably reminded as they move about the sites of the Hajj and execute its rites. Particular part of the story are emphasized in Mecca, how Abraham, in deference to Sarah, first consigned Hagar and her son to exile in a desert sanctuary; how in repentance he constructed the *Ka'ba* there; how the family's faith was tested by God's command to sacrifice the son; and how his life was spared at the last moment by the substitution of a ram. This timeless test of faith and mercy forms the ethical backbone of the Hajj.

The Hajj ritual performances:

Pilgrims entering the Haram territory assume a sanctified condition, call *Ihram*. The term indicates an adopted state of consecration or dedicated abstinence, symbolized by special *Ihram* clothes. Arriving at one of the five stations, called *miqats*, all hajis bathe and state their intention to make the Hajj. Women may wear national dress, although

may change into robes of a light color, leaving their hands and faces bare. But for men, the demands are more specific. They must go bareheaded and unshod and replace their daily clothes with two plain lengths of unstitched cloth, one worn around the waist (it may be belted), the other draped over the left shoulder, leaving the right shoulder bare. The custom is pastoral, prehistoric, and symbolic: *Ihram* clothes are an outward sign that while inside the territory, pilgrims agree to obey the *Haram* laws and to behave in ways conducive to peace and spiritual dedication. Sexual activity is suspended for the time being. Violence is forbidden in all its forms, right down to disturbing local wildlife and expressing anger or impatience. Likewise, unseemly attention to one's appearance is proscribed, from cutting the hair and nails to wearing cosmetics. *Haram* law also requires pilgrims approaching Mecca to repeat in unison around of verses, the *Talbiyya*, indicating spiritual readiness: "Here I am, Lord, at your service. Here I am." *Ihram* is the recommended condition for anyone entering the *Haram* Territory and is required for a pilgrimage. Its simplified, uniform appearance blunts the usual distinctions of wealth and station and helps to render everybody equal, in keeping with the Hajj's purpose.

The initial ritual, city-centered ceremonies include completing seven circuits around the *Ka'ba*, visiting Zamzam Well, and walking seven times between Safa and Marwa hills. The seven circuits around the *Ka'ba* are called the turning, or *Tawaf*. It is a form of prayer at the Meccan mosque, and visitors may perform it often.

A pilgrim's first Turning of Arrival should take place sometime before the desert procession from Mecca on the eighth day of the month. Immediately after their last circuit, pilgrims repair to the Zamzam Well in a symbolic act of spiritual refreshment. The story of the well is linked to the rite of running (*Sa'y*), which follows next. To perform it, pilgrims cross the mosque of the east side of the building, where a course about a third of a mile long, the *Masa'a*, stretches between the Shaafa and Marwa hills. Here Ishmael's mother,

Hagar, is said to have run back and forth seven times in a frantic search for water in the desert. During her final lap, the child cried out. Returning, she found an unearthed desert spring. *Today, this rite gives pilgrims a participatory taste of a timeless drama in which parental love and religious faith are weighed in the balance.* At an ethnic level, the story explains the survival of all Arabs, Ishmael being their progenitor.

On the eighth day of the Hajj month, pilgrims, wearing their *Ihram*, all leave the city and move five miles east, into Mina Valley, where they spend the night in tents. This exchange of urban comfort for a more timeless desert life further dissolves class distinctions and binds the Hajj community more closely. The next morning the exodus pushes another five miles east, to Arafat. Here the zenith of the Hajj takes place in the form of a group vigil, called the Day of Standing Together before God (*Yawm al-Wuquf*). Arafat, with its signature hill, Mount Mercy (*Jabal al Rahma*), forms a broad plain lying a short distance outside the Haram territory. Appropriately, the legends informing this supreme Hajj rite transcend remembered time, stretching back past Abraham to the days of Genesis. Here, in a volcanic negative of the Garden, mankind's parents, Adam and Eve, are said to have rendezvoused after the fall and been taught by Gabriel to pray—in a stone niche on the west face of Mount Mercy. Muslims then see Arafat as a place set aside for spiritual reunion, where pilgrims travel to re-form family ties, seek pardon, reclaim faith, and re-collect their spirits. In addition to a limitless past, Arafat has an impressive future too, being yearly rehearsal place for the Day of Judgement. In every sense, the Hajj reached its outer limits here.

From the moment the Hajj leaves Arafat, at sunset, the procession becomes a recessional, turning back on a westward path to Mina Valley. The first night, the crowds accomplish half the journey, stopping at Muzdalifa, a group of hills three miles down the plain. Here they camp beneath the stars and undertake a second vigil, this time within the Ha-

ram Territory. During the night, they meditate and gather pebbles from the next day's rite.

At dawn, the hajjis begin their return to Mina Valley, a few miles farther west, where they celebrate the Feast of Sacrifice (*Id al-Adha*), a major holiday throughout the Muslim world. Before the feasts, however, pilgrims first proceed to a part of Mina especially reserved for three tall pillars (*Jamarat*). These mark three legendary spots in another chapter of the Abrahamic story. Here it is said that the angel of darkness appeared to tempt Ishmael, arguing that God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son was a product of Satan's work and Abraham's madness. Ishmael, who knew the difference between Satan's voice and God's, responded by stoning the devil seven times. Pilgrims today follow his example, stoning one pillar on the first day and all three pillars on the next two days. In the vicinity of the third pillar, it is said, there grew bush in which the sacrificial ram was caught and slain.

Pilgrims are freed from most of the *Ihram* restrictions after their first throws. They are, however, required to return to Mecca sometimes in the next three days to perform a return, *Tawaf*. In coming days, most pilgrims who have not already visited the Prophet's Mosque (*Masjid al-Nabi*) in Medina will travel north to pay their respects at Muhammad's grave site. Before departing, however, pilgrims should perform a final tawaf, after which they leave the mosque by the Farewell Gate.

The real goal of Hajj is to perform it well. In the final analysis, its admissibility is up to God. It is something one offers.

- Q. Sonia: You went to Mecca yourself. Afterwards you wrote quite a critical book by the title of: *When Mecca becomes Las Vegas*. Why?

Do you consider the policy of the Arab Saudi government as helpful for this ritual and which regulations may actually be hampering the worship?

- A. Syafa:** The above-mentioned title was used for two purposes: a literal and symbolic purpose. In reality, in the last three decades Mecca has undergone great changes, which caused many differing opinions among the Muslim population in the whole world. A small desert town has been transformed into a metropolis with skyscrapers, malls and luxury hotels. The concern is that Mecca has become a kind of "Middle-Eastern Las Vegas" and has lost its spirituality due to the commercial buildings around the religious sites. Billions of dollars have been spent to build places of commerce and entertainment as well as luxury real estate in this holy place.¹

International Business Times published an article by Annisa Haddadi called "Hajj 2011: Is Mecca Becoming a Spiritual Las Vegas?" She writes that Mecca has become both a symbol of Islam as well as capitalism because of the hajj souvenirs such as gold and diamonds that are sold to the pilgrims. A matter of great concern is that the design of the new city has destroyed a lot of the existing historical archeological heritage. The Islamic heritage foundation found many historical sites that had been destroyed during the construction of the new buildings. These include parts of the *al-Haram* mosque from the ancient Ottoman era, the birth house of the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w., as well as the house of the prophet Hamzah's uncle. Pictures shown in an article from The Independent show that drills and heavy machinery had started to destroy the eastern part of the *al-Haram* mosque. The only remaining part of this mosque is hundreds of years old and forms the perimeter of the upper marble tier surrounding the *Kaaba*. The photographs that were taken a few weeks before the article in The Independent was published on March 15th 2013 caused concern among archeologists and even caused Prince Charles - who is an avid supporter of maintaining the heritage of historical

architecture – to fly to Saudi Arabia on March 14th 2013 to view the situation for himself together with the Duchess of Cornwall.

The Ottoman and Abyssinian parts of the mosque are interesting, as they are filled with Arabic calligraphy which describe the names of the Prophet's friends and important events in the life of the Prophet. One part that is believed to have been destroyed is actually a meaningful place because there is a description of how the prophet Muhammad started the Night Journey (*Isra*) on the steed *Buraq*, who took him to Jerusalem and the heavens in the course of a single night.²

King Abdullah has appointed the prominent Wahabi leader and Imam of the *al-Haram* mosque, Abdul Rahman al-Suadis, to be the person responsible for the expansion of the mosque. The Saudi Binladin Group – one of the biggest construction firms in the country, won the contract for the construction. According to officials in charge of managing the pilgrimage, the Binladin Group plans to demolish the Ottoman-style galleries and re-build “identical” galleries elsewhere, in order to improve the area of the *al-Haram* mosque. These galleries were partly built in the 16th century and even include a pillar from the 8th century, says Hatoon Al Fassi, a local from Mecca and professor at the King Saud University in Riyadh. These Ottoman Galleries are a valuable Islamic heritage that is being destroyed. Other historical sites include the houses of close friends of the Prophet as well as smaller mosques that have existed since the early days of Islam.³

As such, the expansion projects are not a bad thing. Many agree that the initiative of the Saudi officials to expand the infrastructure in order to accommodate the many pilgrims whose numbers rise each year is good and necessary. However, many criticise the Saudi regime as being an autocratic

¹ Melanie Smith, *Issues in Cultural Tourism Studies*, Routledge, 2009, p. 44

government controlled by extremist *Wahabis* and for their random demolishing of important archeological, historical and cultural Islamic sites without understanding the importance of these sites for the two sacred cities.

Mecca, which used to be a desert pilgrimage town, has become a metropolis with skyscrapers with giant malls, luxury apartments and five-star hotels, which are higher than towers of the *al-Haram* mosque. On the demolishing of the pillars from the Ottoman and Abyssinian era, Irfan al-Alawi, who specialises in historical buildings, said that these actions will cause future Muslim generations to not value the importance of preserving historical religious sites. "It matters because many of these columns signified certain areas of the mosque where the Prophet sat and prayed," says Irfan. "The historical record is being deleted. A new Muslim would never have a clue because there's nothing marking these locations now. There are ways you could expand Mecca and Medina while protecting the historical heritage of the mosque itself and the surrounding sites".⁴ In his essay "Turning Mecca into Las Vegas, Saudi Wahhabis Continue Assault on Islamic Heritage," al-Alawi writes "Saudi plans indicate that commercial ambitions outweigh the protection of the spiritual and cultural history of Islam."⁵

"It is truly indescribable," says Sami Angawi, an architect and founder of the Jeddah-based Hajj research centre, which for three decades now has done research and documentation on historical buildings in Mecca and Medina. He says only a few are left. The house of the Prophet's wife, Siti Khadijah, has been demolished to make way for a public toilet. The house of Abu Bakr has been replaced by a Hilton hotel and the house of one of the Prophet's grandchildren was demolished and it is now the site of the royal palace. "They are turning the holy sanctuary into a machine, a city which has no identity, no heritage, no culture and no

² Jerome Taylor, "The photos Saudi Arabia doesn't want seen – and proof Islam's most holy relics are being demolished in Mecca Archaeologists fear billion-pound development has led to destruction of key historical sites," , *The independent*, Friday 15th March 2013

natural environment. They've even taken away the mountains," says Angawi.⁶

It is ironic that Mecca of all places, which was founded by Abraham in the spirit of simplicity and modesty, which stood in contrast to mosques in other parts of the world which were built with the arrogance of the ruling powers, a place where the Prophet emphasised the principle that all Muslims are equal, has now become a playground for the rich.⁷

On March 10th 2007, The New York Times published an article by Hassan M. Fattah with the title "The Price of Progress: Transforming Islam's Holiest Site." In this article, he describes how Mecca, a town where all Muslims focus on facing God five times a day, a site believed to have been founded by Abraham as a "temple to God", a place that should be visited by each Muslim at least once in their life, has, in essence, changed completely. Now, while performing the hajj dressed in simple white clothing symbolising simplicity and equality, they do not just look towards a simple black building called the *Kaaba*, which literally stands for the centre of the Muslim world, they also look towards Starbucks, Cartier, Tiffany's, H&M and Top Shop, which stand out even more.⁸

The Abraj al Bait shopping mall⁹ – one of the largest in Saudi Arabia, equipped with screens and advertisements, neon lights, tourist attractions, fast food restaurants and even underwear stores – is located opposite the holy site of Islam. The apartment and hotel complex spans approximately 1.5 million square metres, which is larger than the Pentagon and the Palazzo Hotel in Las Vegas combined. The majority of the rooms face the Kaaba and therefore the prices are high: a studio apartment will cost you at least

³ Hatoon Al Fassi, The Bin Laden Conglomerate "wants to turn Mecca into Las Vegas," *Les Observateur*, 29/11/2012, see <http://observers.france24.com/content/20121129-bin-laden-group-mecca-construction>

\$650,000.¹⁰

"Mecca is becoming like Las Vegas, and that is a disaster," said Ali al-Ahmed, director of the Institute for Gulf Affairs in Washington, an organisation which opposes the Saudis. "It will have a disastrous effect on Muslims because going to Mecca will have no feeling. There is no charm anymore. All you see is glass and cement."¹¹

What was said by Ali Ahmed is true. A few months ago, I visited Mecca for Umrah and saw what he described. I saw the hotels and the shopping malls selling non-essential goods, from gadgets to gold and diamond jewelry. The streets are lined with tall buildings. As a scholar, I am familiar with the tales of the struggles of the prophets, especially in this case Abraham, Ishmael and Muhammad and their friends and family and I know the meaning and importance of Muslims performing Hajj at least once during their lifetime, if able. Other than that, my field of study is the theosophical society. Therefore, I was particularly disappointed by what I saw. I thought to myself, is this what God wants for his people when following his calling? None of what I saw showed that this was a place where the prophets whom I adore and respect spent their childhood and fought their battles. None of it was an indicator that this place was the birthplace of Islam. Which ever direction we walk to, no place reminds us that the Prophet walked the same paths during his time.

The ancient Mecca, the birthplace and domain of the Prophet, is gone. If you ask where the Prophet was born, you are directed towards the Hilton Mecca. And, as mentioned be-

⁴ Jerome Taylor, "The photos Saudi Arabia doesn't want seen – and proof Islam's most holy relics are being demolished in Mecca Archaeologists fear billion-pound development has led to destruction of key historical sites," *The Independent*, Friday, 15th March 2013

⁵ Irfan Al-Alawi, "Turning Mecca into Las Vegas, Saudi Wahhabis Continue Assault on Islamic Heritage," Gate Stone Institute, December 12, 2012 di <http://www.gatesstoneinstitute.org>, di akses pada Agustus 25, 2013

fore, on the place where the house of the Prophet's wife used to stand, there is now a public toilet. Wherever you look you see billboards advertising famous brands such as Cartier, Tiffany's, Starbucks and H&M. When you walk towards the al-Haram mosque, all you see is tall buildings, and the clock tower of the *Abraj Al Bait*, which is six times the height of Big Ben in London. The buildings seem to look down on us in arrogance as a disturbing symbol at this place of worship. The hajj is to be performed in modesty, full of humility before God, symbolised through the white garments. The mosque and *Kaaba* which used to be dominant sites which could be seen from far away, are now merely a small point on the skyline, surrounded by tall buildings and the narcissistic and arrogant-looking royal palace.

The Huffington Post posted an article called "Mecca Clock Tower Photo Shows Kaaba In The Shadow Of Abraj Al-Bait Building." The article starts with "*The Kaaba once took center stage, but now it appears as a minute structure at the foot of a clock tower and hotel, which opened in 2012. The Abraj Al-Bait Towers loom over the Masjid Al-Haram in an ostentatious show of luxury that stands in stark contrast to the piety and history symbolized by the Kaaba, a cube-shaped structure believed by Muslims to have been originally built by the prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael.*"¹²

This lost meaning is what I wanted to express when choosing the above-mentioned title. This is what happens when religion becomes an empty shell, filled with meaningless and dry rituals.

⁶ Oliver Wainwright *The Guardian*, Selasa, 23 Oktober 2012

⁷ Haddadi, *International Business Times*, p. 3

⁸ Hassan Fatah, "The Profane crowding out Sacred in Mecca," *The New York Times*, 10 Maret 2007

I felt disappointed that these historical sites with such an important cultural and spiritual meaning are not preserved and respected. Why is a cultural genocide being performed by those who style themselves “guardians of the holy cities”? Ancient and meaningful places become a target of commercial ambition. Pillars in the *al-Haram* mosque, porches and galleries designed by legendary Ottoman builder Mimar Sinan (1489/1490-1588) whose works and those of his students are seen in the entire Islamic works from Bosnia to India, all destroyed.¹³

Q. Sonia: I once read about an experience of a very sick woman. She went to Mecca as she prepared her last days here on earth. In fact, a miracle happened and she was healed. Are there parts of the ritual or places around Mecca in which a devout Moslem could find comfort and healing?

A. **Syafa:** An incredible discovery was made by the famous neuroscientist Andrew Newberg MD, together with therapist Mark Robert Waldman. Similar to their book “Why God Won’t Go Away”, in their second book called “How God changes your Brain” they give a comprehensive explanation on how faith and spiritual experiences can cause changes in the

⁹ This mall was built on the site of an Ottoman castle (Turkish: Ecyad Kalesi). The castle was built in 1781, The Ottomans had done a good job preserving and documenting their historic sites. Their careful efforts have now been undone by the demolitions by the Arabs, who have destroyed an important part of Ottoman heritage. The Saudis demolished the castle in 2002 and received a lot of criticism from the international community. Ankara criticized the demolishing of the Ajyad, which was located on a hill facing the Kaaba. The castle and the mountain were demolished using dynamite to make way for skyscrapers which are higher than the mosque itself. The Turkish minister for culture deemed it an “act of barbarism”. The Saudi Minister for Islamic Affairs replied by saying “No one has the right to interfere in what comes under the state’s authority.” Cf. Tim Hume and Samya Ayish, “Mecca Redevelopment sparks heritage concern, CNN, February 7th 2013 and Oliver Wainwright *The Guardian*, Tuesday, 23rd October 2012.

¹⁰ “A Saudi tower Mecca versus Las Vegas, Taller, holier and even more popular than (almost) anywhere else,” *The Economist*, 24th June 2010, print version.

¹¹ Hassan Fatah, “The Profane crowding out Sacred in Mecca,” *The New York Times*, 10th March 2007

brain and a better life quality. In their research, they show that science and religion can be closely linked.

Based on the evidence they gathered by looking at neuro images of patients who regularly meditated, web-based surveys of religious people and people who have had religious experiences as well as the analysis of images of adults about God, they found that active and positive faith or spirituality enhanced the function of human brain. They also came to the conclusion that “actual faith isn’t always necessary: atheist who meditate on positive imagery can obtain similar neurological benefits.”¹⁴

Therefore, what was experienced by this sick woman must also be possible for others, especially in places which they deem to be holy or sacred.

For me, the place where I can feel comfort and healing at its best is in a mosque. Not just in the mosque in Mecca, the Prophet’s mosque in Medina can also be a place for meditation or getting closer to communicating with God. I could spend hours there. I often asked my driver to take me to the mosque so that I could be there in silence.

Q. Sonia: Is it allowed for people of other religions to enter Mecca?

A. **Syafa:** As far as I know, until recently, it still not allowed. As mentioned before, the mosque in Mecca is called, the *Haram Mosque*, and the word *haram* means “sanctuary”. “All of Mecca is sanctuary.” Only Muslims may pass into this precinct, where special laws of the sanctuary take over.

Q. Sonia: Looking back to your own pilgrimage to Mecca, were there moments where your spiritual life was enriched in a significant way?

A. **Syafa:** Well, not only Mecca, but places where the Prophet Muhammad (saw) with all his family and friends (*sahabat*)

lived and struggle to spread the loving messages, always give significant feeling for me. Besides, almost every place where great prophet or religious leaders were there, enriched my spiritual life, such as Rome, in Italy where the popes were buried, Assisi, where saint of Assisi is buried. Big churches and mosques where the words of God is proclaimed, all influence my feeling. As Rudolf Otto said in his book *Idea of the Holy*, the Almighty is called *Mysterium tremendum et Fascinosum*. Entering big and beautiful churches, when I was in the Netherland and Mosques in Egypt, all gave me a nice and beautiful experiences how I can really feel The *Mysterium Tremendum et Fascinosum*.

Q. Sonia: What would you advise Moslems before going to Mecca and after they become haji?

A. **Syafa:** Better to learn more what it means to go for Pilgrimage, and always remember that we come for IBADAH, so, remember to be sober, calm, patient and not arrogant but humble. Doing hajj/umra should not be egoistic which making us forgetting to be calm, patient and humble.

This means, when worshipping we must remember that we are trying to get closer to God together with others. We should try not only think for ourselves and push others away to get ahead.

Q. Sonia: Which other place would you like to visit one day as enrichment for your spiritual life?

A. **Syafa:** Each place has its beauty, so I love to go to many places, as all places are BUMI ALLAH (God's Earth).

¹² See, *The Huffington Post*

¹³ Irfan Al-Alawi, "Turning Mecca into Las Vegas, Saudi Wahhabis Continue Assault on Islamic Heritage," Gate Stone Institute, December 12th, 2012 on <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org>, accessed on August 25th 2013.

Q. Sonia: Thank you, Prof Syafa, for sharing your experiences and convictions with us

A. **Syafa:** You are very welcome sister.



Information about Prof. Dr. Syafaatun Almirzanah:

Prof. Dr. Syafaatun Almirzanah is a Professor of Religious studies at The State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta Indonesia. She was a visiting professor and a Malaysian Chair for Islam in SEA at Georgetown University, Washington DC. She is also an activist on interfaith dialogue nationally and internationally. Almirzanah specializes in Sufism, interfaith dialogue, and comparative mysticism. Her books include: *When Mystics Masters Meet: Towards a New Matrix for Christian-Muslim Dialogue*; *Scriptural Hermeneutics, An Interfaith Discussion*; *When Mecca Becomes Las Vegas: Religion, Politics, and Ideology*.

Dr. Almirzanah has been interviewed in *The Chicago Tribune*, *WTTW (Chicago Tonight)*, *US. Catholic Magazine*, and she wrote many articles in journal and news papers.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Rev. Sonia Parera-Hummel M.Th. was born and raised in Ambon, Indonesia. She did her theological studies at the Theological Faculty of the Protestant Church of the Moluccas (GPM), at STT Jakarta and at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen in the Netherlands. While doing her vicariate in Ternate - Indonesia in 1976-1977, she taught Greek, New Testament and Dogmatics at the Theological School of the Church of Halmahera (GMIM). From 1995 to 2001, she taught New Testament, Greek and Liturgy at the STT BNKP Sundermann on Nias. Presently she is leading the Department for Asia in UEM and is President of Eukumindo – European Working Group for Ecumenical Relations with Indonesia .

A Long and Winding Road to Santiago de Compostella

Rev. Sonia Parera-Hummel

An Interview with Jens Friedrich on his journeys with youth groups to Santiago de Compostella

Q. Sonia: Jens, you regularly go on quite long journeys with teenagers and young adults to Santiago de Compostella in Spain. My son, Brudy Hummel, who once made this journey together with you, described it as a “long and winding road”. What is so special about this road and its destination?

A. Jens: The Road to Santiago de Compostella is actually called the Camino de Santiago. It is the way of Saint James, one of the disciples of Jesus Christ. It is situated in Northwestern Spain and today a world heritage site. First pilgrims walked this road after the remains of Saint James had been discovered there in 812 AD. St. James was buried in Santiago. Later, between 1060 and 1211, a big cathedral was built in his memory. Today it is a major Christian pilgrimage route with more than 200,000 pilgrims each year.

The road itself is well developed with accommodations of various categories and other facilities for overnight stays. The “*auberges*”¹ offer simple food or cooking facilities, beds and washrooms for a small token fee.

Along the road, there are many signs of faith, like chapels, crosses and milestones that reminds one of the fact that this way was founded for a very particular spiritual reason. The way to Compostella is a spiritual pilgrimage that makes us think about the milestones of our lives, the joys and sorrows. We meditate about our faith in God. The road calls on us to deliberate on our lives and our faith.

Q. Sonia: This seems to be a hard trip. Yet so many people, young and old from all over the world, go there. What moves the youth who go along with you?

A. Jens: They are mainly fascinated by the idea of going on a pilgrimage. Secondly, the interest of visiting a foreign country. The combination of both is the main reason.

Most of the teenagers and young adults have no experience with pilgrimage. They do not really know what awaits them. They start on the walk as a fun experience and during the journey they become aware of its spirituality. This changes their expectations and outlooks.

¹ French word for small inns, could also mean restaurants or combination of both.

Q. Sonia: Besides walking, eating and sleeping, what religious activities do you do on the road and when you reach the destination?

A. Jens: My theme is called reflecting on the “colors of life”. We use pieces of jute with different colors and make knots as we wander. Each color represents a different station or fact in our lives. Red, for example, is for people I love and who love me; blue is for experiences in the past; green is for hope; white stands for what I can discover and develop for my life. Questions like: “What makes my life viable?” are asked to be pondered upon.

We usually take along songbooks and a catalog of questions that we have to reflect upon while walking.

Q Sonia: I could imagine some of the teenagers and young adults are moved by this experience; or in a way changed by this experience. Would you like to share your observations on this?

A. Jens: They all are mostly impressed by walking quietly while thoughts flow through the mind and silent interaction takes place with other pilgrims. We met two people from Japan in an *auberge* who taught us origami. The interest, to meet people from different countries and share their life experiences changes the outlook on your own life.

Q. Sonia: Did you ever meet a fellow pilgrim that made you think: "this person should not be doing this journey at all"?

A. Jens: We met a group of very young teenagers from Spain. Our youngsters had fun with them. But I thought these guys were a bit too young. On our second trip, we had two boys in our group who turned out to be very immature. This was difficult to deal with. I think teenagers under the age of 16 should not go.

Q. Sonia: Looking back on your journeys, were there moments where you felt touched in a special way?

A. Jens: I have been on this pilgrimage twice. Each time it is something different that moves you. Looking back, walking through the vineyards situated on hills presented us with very special views. Having reached an *auberge* on a hill, makes you thankful for the rest. The mornings, starting at sunrise after it had snowed, or having a wonderful panorama over the mountains of Galicia, makes you humble and aware of God's creation. One stop on our way there was an enormous wooden cross. It is decorated with personal prayers written on small pieces of paper that are tied on it by the pilgrims that pass by. This touched me deeply as well.

Q. Sonia: what would you advise others who like to make the journey on this Saint James' road?

A. Jens: I only do 250 KM from Astorga to Santiago. This is a good distance to walk. Do not do the last

120 KM from Sarria to Santiago only. It is very commercialized and busy. Start at León or Astorga. This way you can really experience what a pilgrimage is all about. Go with an open mind, well prepared for walking long distances.

Q. Sonia: I have a shell that my son brought back for me from this journey. Can you explain its significance?

A. Jens: Along with the credential, a passport that is stamped at each station, a shell is the symbol of pilgrims who walked the Camino de Santiago. Carrying the shell, people recognize other pilgrims on the way. In former times, it was used as a cup to drink or a spoon to eat. At the end of your pilgrimage you receive a certificate in Latin stating that you have done the pilgrimage.

Q. Sonia: Is there another place on this planet that you would love to visit to enrich your spiritual life?

A. Jens: I would like to go to Taizé in France once again. I shall walk the St. James pilgrimage in Spain once again starting at a different point. For example from Sevilla to the North. There are so many different St James walks and pilgrimage-paths in Europe, each one is fascinating.

Q. Sonia: Thank you, Jens, for sharing your experiences and convictions with us

A. Jens: I hope you too have the chance to experience and explore the significant exposures of walking the Santiago Pilgrimage.



Information about Jens Friedrich :

Jens Friedrich was born in Hamburg in 1969. Presently, he serves as a Deacon for youth in the Lutheran church of St. Peter Gross-Borstel and the Alsterbund region. He is also a therapist for animal-assisted therapy.

Jens Friedrich grew up in the rural part of Hamburg. After finishing his Civil Service, he studied Social-Work and Theology at the Rauhes Haus College in Hamburg.

Jens Friedrich is married to a social-worker, Renate Babiels, and is a foster father to three boys.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Rev. Sonia Parera-Hummel M.Th. was born and raised in Ambon, Indonesia. She did her theological studies at the Theological Faculty of the Protestant Church of the Moluccas (GPM), at STT Jakarta and at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen in the Netherlands. While doing her vicariate in Ternate - Indonesia in 1976-1977, she taught Greek, New Testament and Dogmatics at the Theological School of the Church of Halmahera (GMIM). From 1995 to 2001, she taught New Testament, Greek and Liturgy at the STT BNKP Sundermann on Nias. Presently she is leading the Department for Asia in UEM and is President of Eukumindo – European Working Group for Ecumenical Relations with Indonesia .

Being on a Marian Pilgrimage: A Journey with God, a Journey with God's People

Conversations with Rev. Fr. Ben Alforque, MSC

Interviewed by Melinda Grace Aoanan and
Zhara Jhane Alegre
Written by Melinda Grace Aoanan

Father Benjamin Escosura Alforque, a Filipino priest of the religious congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC), led a group of Filipino-, Hispanic- and European-Americans on a Marian Pilgrimage. He was an appropriate leader for the group because aside from coming from the religious sector, he had a facility for languages and had visited the places they were going to. They visited Marian shrines in different countries including Lourdes in France, Fatima in Portugal, Guadalupe in Mexico, and more shrines in Spain. Marian shrines are places where the Blessed Virgin Mary have reputedly appeared. Churches now stand in these places of apparition.

Lourdes is famous because aside from being an apparition site, it is also a place of healing. There is a spring there where people bathe to get healed. The spring was purportedly dug up by a 14-year-old peasant girl named Bernadette as per instructions of the Lady who appeared to her. There are evidences of healing that people leave behind at the site, for example crutches. But then of course, healing happens in different ways. It is said that healing is dependent upon the depth of a person's faith. But who can really fathom the depth of one's faith?

From the perspective of faith or theology, Father Ben believes that the intervention of God through Mary in human history is possible and can happen especially at the crossroads of events in history. In the places where apparitions have been reported and confirmed, this premise of Father Ben is apparent and at play.

For example, the Blessed Virgin Mary reputedly appeared in Guadalupe, Mexico, in the time of the Spanish conquistador oppression. Her message to the people through an Indian named Juan Diego was that she was their Mother so they shouldn't be oppressed, that they must be treated equally.

Mary appeared to three children (Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta) in Fatima, Portugal, where the conflict between Muslims, Christians and Jews was historically strong. It seems that she wanted to tell people that even the Muslims are her children. For the three children to whom Mary appeared, “sinners” were defined not as non-Catholics, but those who did “acts of injustice and had a lack of charity towards the poor, widows and orphans, the ignorant and the helpless”. In fact, the apparition of Mary in Fatima, in the modern times, happened in a situation of internal political conflicts and the looming world war. She asked that the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary be spread, to pray the *Rosary* and with the essential message of peace.

In Lourdes, France, Mary appeared several times to Bernadette at a time when people were becoming more indifferent to the needs of others and complacent to what was happening around them. It was the advent of selfishness. The temper was that people no longer needed faith; the age of reason and science had taken over. Mary revealed to her that she was the *Immaculate Conception* and invited her to pray the *Rosary*. Her message given through Bernadette was that she is still the Mother who cares and the evidence of this would be the miraculous healing. Until today, evidences of healing related to Lourdes take place.

These are some of the things that are probably difficult to explain. Is this contradictory to science? Is there a contradiction between science and faith? Father Ben explains: more and more, at least on the side of Catholics, they see that there is no contradiction between faith and science. From the philosophical side, science works also on convention, on a certain faith.

For Father Ben, the clearest evidence of God's intervention is probably the spirit of the gospel of healing, which is also what Jesus did. If one notices the things that Jesus did, all of these are works of healing. When healing happens, whether individually, as a family, or as a society, that is a sign that the Kingdom of God is present. This is true even to this day, in these crossroads of our history. God is saying, "I haven't forgotten you, I am still around, and I am sending this Lady to tell you that I love you and that I am here."

People are searching for something that they can hold on to. The people's aspirations for God's listening are met in the person of a woman. For Father Ben, Mary is the woman of the new time, of the new history, the woman who ushers in the coming of the Kingdom through the Son.

There is a popular religiosity that draws people to this woman, as she provokes in them the hope for the new things that everything is going to be alright. Even if they cannot fight evil, things will be alright. Probably in their dire need, especially physical dire need of healing, they will submit themselves to this and they don't have to explain. They just have to sing their song, to tell their story, to dance their joy. Popular religiosity has a hidden power that must be unleashed in order to effect social transformation. When individuals are changed, when communities are changed, they become a potent motive force for change.

When asked what his personal intentions were in doing the Marian pilgrimages, Father Ben offered that there were certain things that he wanted to be healed of. He needed physical healing. He also wanted psychological and spiritual healing, which he says maybe he needed more than others because, according to him, he is a very bad person, to which I vehemently disagreed. He also wanted to go back to the shrines with the group he led in order to experience with them what it means to be in a pilgrimage. Of course, he was also excited to go because he could explain to the other pilgrims regarding this, which he immensely enjoyed being a true teacher at heart.

Did Father Ben experience healing? He said it was difficult because he says he has hardness of heart. For the physiological healing, he had to be cared for by a doctor after the pilgrimage. Spiritual and psychological healing was not instantaneous. After several years of being in the United States, it helped Father Ben that he was able to come back to the Philippines to be once again with the poor but struggling masses who he dearly loves.

Father Ben has also been to Rome several times, not only for pilgrimages, but also to study at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, and to visit the Pope—three Popes, as a matter of fact.

It was indeed a pleasure to be in conversation with Father Ben one auspicious evening at the end of January. He is not only a very good friend but a renowned and well-admired theologian, and a trusted and respected co-sojourner in the work of ushering in God's reign of love, justice and peace, serving God and God's people. We talked that evening not only of pilgrimages, but of other different important matters—topics for another time.

But the topic of Mary is one that is especially close to my heart—she who sang the Magnificat, introducing us to the real God that she believes in. We raise her up even as she raises us up as we seek and work for healing of the world, the transformation of the world. She is indeed blessed among women, an obedient instrument and true manifestation of Immanuel: God with us. Amen.

Information about Father Benjamin E. Alforque :

Father Benjamin Escosura Alforque is a priest of the religious congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC). He is currently the Program Director and a Board of Trustees member of the Communication Foundation for Asia: Media for Total Human Development. Father Ben teaches at the Maryhill



Father Ben Alforque (middle) with Melinda Grace Aoanan (right) and Zhara Jhane Alegre (left)

School of Theology in Quezon City, and was dean of studies at his congregation's Sacred Heart Scholasticate. He is a convener of the church-based Rise Up for Life and for Rights, an alliance of human rights advocates, church people and families of victims of extrajudicial killings. He also co-chaired the Justice and Peace Commission of the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (JPC-AMRSP) and the Promotion of Church People's Response (PCPR). He was spokesperson for People's Rights International Solidarity Movement (PRISM) and president of The National Alliance for Filipino Concerns (NAFCON-US). Indeed, Father Ben Alforque is a true disciple of Jesus Christ, one who would give his life that others may live (I John 3:16).



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